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# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE



*Welcome of Rev. J. Huijgen and family  
Burlington-Waterdown*

## INSIDE:

- *New Opportunities*
- *The Vine and the Branches – No Covenant Automatism*





By R. Aasman



## New Opportunities

As Christians we are very much concerned and involved in the political life of our country. The Scriptures instruct us to pray for our leaders. In Article 28 of our church order we read this important instruction about the relationship between church and government:

As it is the office of the civil authorities to promote in every way the holy ministry, so all office-bearers are in duty bound to impress diligently and sincerely upon the whole congregation the obedience, love, and respect which are due to the civil authorities; they shall set a good example to the whole congregation in this matter, and endeavour by due respect and communication to secure and retain the favour of the authorities towards the church, so that the church of Christ may lead a quiet and peaceable life, godly and respectful in every way.

We may also think of Article 36 of the Belgic Confession which speaks about the civil government.

*“But if you’re a person who supports same-sex unions then you’re not a winner.”*

In my previous editorial (issue 19) I mentioned some sad and disturbing developments in our federal government and the Supreme Court of Canada. Decisions are being made about same-sex marriage and laws that would make any criticism against homosexuality a criminal offence. Because of this, some church members and one church council even made a request for a day of prayer. Their point is well taken. Hopefully there was not a church or family or individual in our federation of churches who did not bring this concern to God in prayer. In our congregation it was regularly addressed in both the preaching and public prayers.

### New developments

Since the time that editorial was written there have been two very important developments. We know that the federal government unveiled draft same-sex legislation in July after courts in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec ruled that traditional marriage laws calling for the union of a man and a woman violated the Charter of Rights. Furthermore, the Supreme Court of Canada had been asked to give its opinion on the draft bill, before referring it back to Parliament. That suggests that any legislation on this matter by Parliament is quite a few months away. But meanwhile, on September 16 a Canadian Alliance motion affirming the traditional definition of marriage failed by just five votes: 137 to 132. It is sad that this motion failed, but think about it: failed by only five votes! As one commentator stated on CTV, “But if you’re a person

who supports same-sex unions then you’re not a winner.” Since any legislation on this matter will not take place until well into 2004, this very close vote could be influenced in a positive fashion that would promote traditional marriage.

The second important development occurred almost one month later. On October 15, the Canadian Alliance and Progressive Conservative parties, under the respective leaderships of Stephen Harper and Peter MacKay, agreed to a merger that would form the new Conservative Party of Canada. The deal is to be ratified by the December 12 deadline. One wonders what new and positive things might come from this merger. One notes that Peter MacKay sided with Stephen Harper in the narrowly defeated Alliance motion supporting the traditional one man, one woman definition of marriage. Joe Clark, on the other hand, voted against the motion, siding with Liberal front benchers in favour of gay marriage. Clearly, Peter MacKay does not take his cue from the former PC leader.

### New possibilities

We will have to wait and see whether the merger goes into effect. We will also have to wait and see whether the new party – if and when it is formed – will be similar to the Alliance party and also reflect the social conservatism of Peter MacKay. There are concerns about this. For instance, the Agreement in Principle between the two parties makes no commitment to defend the one-man, one-woman definition of marriage. Will that change and will the new party – if and when it is formed – commit itself to defend the traditional marriage?

*The Agreement in Principle between the two parties makes no commitment to defend the one-man, one-woman definition of marriage.*

We said above that as Christians we are to be involved in the political life of this country. Right now we have a rare opportunity to make a huge impact on the future of our nation. Any influence on those who are working toward the merger of a new party could ensure that the principles of this party support traditional marriage, allow churches the freedom to speak openly and biblically about homosexuality, reject the decriminalization of marijuana possession, etc. We have seen how narrowly the motion to support the traditional marriage of a man and woman was defeated in September. Now there is a possibility of a new party, a party which can be moulded by the citizens of this nation, a party that could receive more support than the splitting of the


conservative vote in the recent past, and thus a party that can shape the direction of our nation.

**What to do?**

As far as politics is concerned, I have no desire to tell people what to do with respect to party membership. I also have a healthy respect for the Christian Heritage Party and all the fine people who have laboured within and for that party. Perhaps that is where you want to maintain your support. Perhaps you are disappointed that this editorial does not advocate support for the CHP. That's fine. You can always write and give your opinion. We publish all letters or Reader's Forums that fall within the parameters of editorial policy.

However, I feel that we should see all our options and possibilities. Anyone who joins either Canadian Alliance or the Progressive Conservative parties at this time will automatically become a member of the new Conservative Party of Canada. As the Canada Family Action Coalition made clear in a recent bulletin, that would get people in at the grassroots of a new party and thus be able to shape that party. Perhaps they will even shape the future of this country.

**God's blessing**

Having said all this, we know that all our plans and dreams are nothing without the blessing of God. Whatever we do and plan must be completed with humble prayer, and with the recognition that everything is subject to the will of our Almighty and perfectly wise God. 

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*What's inside?*

Some new developments in Canada could influence the whole same-sex marriage debate, as well as other moral issues. The editorial looks into this and makes some suggestions.

In a recent editorial, Dr. N.H. Gootjes reflected on some recent developments in The Netherlands regarding some members of our sister churches "liberating themselves." In this issue we have an article by Dr. F.J. Bijzet of South Africa which examines some of the developments leading up to this.

From time to time we read about the beautiful work of Campfire! Some amazing changes are being made and new opportunities are unfolding. Christine Farenhorst informs of some of these blessings.

In a press release of Classis Alberta we read about the release of Rev. J.L. van Popta from service in Coaldale. Our prayers go to Rev. van Popta and his family, as well as to the Church at Coaldale.

We note two important events that occurred during the past year and which are now presented in *Clarion*: the fiftieth anniversary of the Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg and the installation of Rev. J. Huijgen in Burlington-Waterdown.

We have our columns *Treasures*, *New and Old* and *Education Matters*, along with a letter to the editor.

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By J. Moesker

# The Vine and the Branches – No Covenant Automatism

John 15:5, 6

The Canadian Reformed churches have sometimes been accused of preaching a sort of covenant-automatism. It is said that we operate with the idea that as long as you're outwardly member of the covenant and church of God, then everything will automatically turn out fine for you in the end.

Now, that's not what is officially being taught in the Canadian Reformed Churches. However, even though we don't teach covenant automatism, it could be that we do give others the idea that we do believe it by not putting into practice what we believe about the covenant. We need to ask ourselves if we're really serious about our covenant relationship with the Mediator.

In John 15 our Lord Jesus Christ explained very plainly what it means to be members of Him in the covenant. "I am the vine," He says in verse 5. Almost every house in Palestine had its own grapevine. That's why it was often used as metaphor for God's people in the Old Testament. The Saviour says to his disciples, then, "I am the vine." He means that He is the reality to which all the Old Testament metaphors about the grapevine pointed. Israel was vine of the LORD in the Old Testament, but ultimately not a fruitful vine. Jesus Christ came to be the true vine, which would bring forth fruit of righteousness to God's glory. He is the Mediator of the covenant, the life of the covenant.

When the Lord adds in verse 5, "... you are the branches," He is speaking to his disciples, and in them to his whole church. So those words apply to us today too. "Vine and branches" is an allegory of the wonderful, close, living relationship between Christ the Mediator and his covenant people.

By nature we're all connected to that old, degenerate stalk of our first father, Adam. By nature we're branches

of that root through which sin and curse and death flow to all men. But as a covenant child you have been cut from that old stalk and grafted into the vine Jesus Christ. He is now source of life, new and holy life for you. Just as sap flows from the roots through the vine to the branches, so we have the promise that his Spirit flows to us so that we can live a new life and bear fruit for God.

Jesus continues in vs.5: "If a man remains in me and I in Him, he will bear much fruit." Our remaining in Christ and his remaining in us go together. In the covenant of grace you have the promise of forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ. The vine won't fail the branches, we could say. But that may never bring us to a false sense of security, as if now everything goes automatically. No! A relationship is a two-way street. That relationship is started by grace, and Christ promises to remain with us.

But there needs to be response for it to be a living relationship. Our covenant calling as branches of the vine is to remain in Christ by loving Him and seeking his Spirit through the Word and prayer.

Do we still take enough time for that? Do we not only make time for regular Bible reading at home, but also truly struggle to understand that Word? Do we pray regularly for his Spirit so we not only understand, but also obey his Word? Life is busy. But if you really embrace your Saviour who gave Himself for you in faith and love, then you'll also seek the living relationship with Him through his Word and through prayer. And you won't let anything else, whether work or pleasure, crowd the Word and prayer out of your day. That's what it means to remain in Christ.

What's the purpose of that remaining in Christ like that? Jesus says in our text, "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit." To remain in Christ means that He will give you growth so that you bear much fruit for the glory of God. After all, what's the covenant relationship with God in Christ is all about if it doesn't bring forth fruit of love and good works pleasing to God?

But the Lord Jesus warns in verse 6: "If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned." If you don't remain in Christ, you not only don't bear fruit anymore. You become a branch that dies off and falls from the vine and which is raked up and burned. And that burning is image of God's covenant wrath and curse. How often didn't God seek fruit in His vineyard in the Old Testament, but ended up finding nothing? He finally said, "That's it. They're dead branches, only worthy to be burned." Then the covenant itself doesn't help anymore. It only brings greater curse.

No covenant automatism here! If there isn't a living relationship with Christ in the covenant, a seeking of his Spirit in Word and prayer, then the relationship dies off and we fall away and we come under God's covenant wrath and curse. If we don't see much fruit in our lives, then we need to live closer to the Lord. In humble repentance we need to listen to his Word more, and be more fervent in asking for his Spirit in prayer. Then, as the Lord promises, it'll come to growth and to fruit again too. Much fruit!



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# Serious Tension in the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in The Netherlands

By Dr. F.J. Bijzet<sup>1</sup>

At this very moment I am writing this article, a rift is imminent in the above mentioned sister churches. In the magazine *Reformanda* dated July 16, 2003, Dr. P. Van Gurp writes: “the Reformed Churches Liberated can no longer be considered as the true church.” Those who have read the July 22, 2003 issue of the daily newspaper *Het Nederlands Dagblad* will know that there are members of this church who are considering withdrawing themselves from the church. Or perhaps they have done so already. (Indeed a few small groups have split off, CH). Some have joined another church and some are conducting services at people’s homes.

Everyone will agree that this is an extremely serious situation, which is also important for the churches in South Africa. Should this lead to a schism in the churches in The Netherlands, the churches in South Africa will have to consider with which church contacts will be maintained. This article is an attempt to clarify the situation the church members are faced with.

## Worrisome developments

It is indisputable that there are developments that cause great concern. For many of the church members there is a definite direction into world conformity. There is often little difference in the social life of the youth of the church compared with the young people outside the church. Adultery and divorce are much more common than in the past. Many people are absent from the second service.

There are also things happening with the leaders that cause concern: there are those who are unsure about the common confession of the churches. Last year one of the ministers wrote

under a pseudonym ‘Henk Jasperse’ in *Nederlands Dagblad*: “Tell me the old Reformed truth, and I am bored.” From many different sources he has put together something that looks like quilt work.

Sometimes one may see an expression about the Reformed Confession regarding God’s providence that would not be expected from a Reformed theologian.

*It is indisputable that there are developments that cause great concern.*

A number of ministers feel attracted to the charismatic movement, which is putting a lot of emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit. During a conference a Reformed minister said that he thinks we should consider the special gifts of the Spirit such as speaking in tongues. He then goes on and relates how a while ago he experienced the laying on of hands with the quick result that he could function better.

A minister in Zwolle who was appointed for special care for students together with a theological student, organized an inter church Youth Church called: “God Fashion.” This Youth Church does not have a consistory or is overseen by a consistory and non Reformed ministers can lead the service. (Drama is added to the service, CH).

There are consistories that no longer maintain the liturgy which has commonly been accepted, and are experimenting with all kinds of new things during the worship service. Many Reformed churches have launched evangelization activities with churches which are basically not Reformed.

Such developments are in my opinion cause of the great unrest in the Reformed Churches Liberated. The warnings about these aberrations are well placed.

## Crossroads?

Especially the magazine *Reformanda* (with the subscript *Ecclesia Reformanda Semper Reformanda* which means: a Reformed Church needs to continually reform herself) expresses concerns about the many things that are changing. And yes, often the warnings are to the point. But the sad thing is that the editors and writers of this magazine needlessly and even wrongly deal with matters and bring it forward in an aggravating manner.

Before the General Synod of Zuidhorn was going to meet, they dealt with a number of items, which in their view should cause this Synod to reject these matters. They stated in these articles that should the Synod Zuidhorn not reject these items, then that was a sure sign that the churches had left the Reformed track and had become a false church!

A brochure was published with the heading: “*To Be True, the impending general Synod Zuidhorn: churches at the crossroads.*” In my opinion this brochure focussed on matters that did not really deal with the degeneration of the church.

As an example, let me mention the appeal about the decision of the General Synod Leusden 1999. It is about a minister who had a sermon on the fourth commandment, and the supposed freedom we have on the Lord’s Day. (i.e. not go to church on the second service and do whatever you want to do). In addition to that there are the new forms for the Lord’s Supper celebration and new hymns. I will get back



to that later. With some examples, the readers of this magazine were encouraged to be active in changing the decisions of Synod Zuidhorn.

### Call to Reformation

However, the Synod Zuidhorn did not make the decisions that the editors and writers of *Reformanda* had hoped for. All the letters and appeals that were received have been carefully considered and discussed. But in most cases the Synod was unable to make a decision.

*This “Call to Reformation” resulted in many outraged reactions.*

One of the reasons was another brochure “*Let Us Repent*” showed up in the spring time. It dealt with the Reformed churches after Synod Zuidhorn. It was a call for reformation. At the same time some forty brothers and sisters placed a large ad in *Nederlands Dagblad* with the heading “*Call to Reformation.*” In this ad all the church members were asked to call the consistories to reject the decisions of Synod Zuidhorn. The readers of *Reformanda* could order an example of the letter to be sent to the consistory. In this letter the consistories are asked to reject the Synod decision within six weeks.

### Rashly condemned

This “Call to Reformation” resulted in many outraged reactions. It is remarkable that also many of the ministers, who shared most of the concerns of the *Reformanda* group, were also outraged in their reactions. Dissension arose even among those who belonged to the *Reformanda* group about the “Call to Reformation.” The general indignation was especially addressed against the disobliging interpretations and rashly condemning the decisions of Synod Zuidhorn. By way of caricature they explained what the Synod had decided and on the basis of that, the churches were called to consider that the Reformed way of thinking had completely and fully gone by the wayside. Let’s look at some examples.

### Rest on Sunday

Concerning an appeal about a sermon by a minister about the fourth commandment, Synod Zuidhorn as well as Synod Leusden 1999 determined that

in the Reformed churches, already starting with the Synod of Dordrecht 1618/19, there have been two views regarding the day of rest. But not everyone was aware of this, notwithstanding that the facts show this. To name but one example: the much beloved and honoured minister, Rev. Douwe van Dijk (Groningen 1887-1985) taught the same as the sermon of the minister that is now receiving the objection.

In addition to that, those who believe that the Sunday of the new covenant ought to be celebrated as the Sabbath of the old covenant disagreed amongst themselves how this rest should be observed. Therefore it would not be fair to quickly condemn a minister who favours one of the two positions. And especially so because this minister basically neither does nor wants to abolish the fourth commandment.

However, Synod Zuidhorn did not leave it simply as a fact that there have been two trains of thought on this matter. Therefore they appointed deputies and charged them to study how to safeguard the meaning of keeping God’s fourth commandment, and try to overcome the dilemma of having the two views side by side.

While the Synod has pointed out that there was a centuries old situation of two opinions, the people in the “Call to Reformation” made it sound as though the Synod created a new situation where from now on two views should be respected side by side. In this way the lie seemed to be a lawful complaint, that at the cost of the truth and wilfulness, the two versions were allowed to exist in God’s service.

### Divorce

Deputies that had been appointed to study all the questions relating to divorce and re-marriage, tabled a very detailed report to the Synod Zuidhorn. On the one hand the deputies were very radical in their call to follow Christ and deny oneself. On the other hand they quoted 1 Corinthians 7, and on the strength of that they wrote that the church in exceptional cases, because of the hardness of our hearts, should consider that deviation of God’s command be allowed. And discipline should not be exercised when an unlawful divorce is taking place.

Synod Zuidhorn, despite the appreciation for the deputies’ decision, did not want to accept their report. Especially the reference to 1 Corinthians 7 and their position regarding discipline caused very serious objections.

The Synod had come to the conclusion that the churches ought to study this topic more in-depth. For this reason the deputies have been charged to rewrite a shorter report to the churches, taking in consideration the critique brought forward at the Synod. The churches are urged to study this report thoroughly and provide the next Synod with their timely reactions.

In the “Call to Reformation” the burdened brothers and sisters wrote that the Synod by way of the committee report had already accepted an unlawful interpretation of Scripture and that in certain instances they can deviate from the clear commandment of God. This is a rash and unfair judgment. Because this is exactly what the Synod did not do!

### Not perfect, yet Reformed

It would be too much to discuss in this article all the decisions the Synod made. I hope that you can accept on the strength of these two examples that one can make far reaching judgments too fast.

*This is a rash and unfair judgment.*

The work of Synod Zuidhorn was surely not perfect. I was present at this Synod as delegate from our churches and I was not happy with all the decisions. However, those who want to judge the Synod decisions in a fair way will come to the conclusion that Synod Zuidhorn in all matters tried to keep the Reformed churches on the right track. On the other hand they tried to find ways to hang on to the churches and their members.

### Kampen

Not only was the Synod criticized by *Reformanda*, but also the Theological University at Kampen was considered by them to be a clear example of deformation in the churches. One case in point is the book *Word in Writing (Woord op Schrif’t)* by Dr. A.Th. De Bruijne. They claim they see here proof of Scripture criticism and according to them, the Board of Governors have shown that they protect Dr. De Bruijne.

However the Board of Governors has indeed more than once researched the publications of Dr. De. Bruijne and came to the conclusion that this lecturer, by creating certain formulations, has caused questions to arise, but he

could not be accused of Scripture criticism. And neither does he teach that a Christian is not bound to obey God's commandments, but only has to follow the call of Christ. They have twisted Dr. De Bruijne's words. For he says we must not obey God's commandments by compulsion, but we ought to do this because we fervently want to follow Christ. That means that we have to be prepared to do more than what the stern commandment asks from us.

In the meantime De Bruijne has published a number of articles in the daily paper *Nederlands Dagblad*. In these articles he answers to the critique on his publications. Without a doubt he gives clear evidence of his complete and unequivocal maintenance of the Reformed faith.

### No longer a true church?

In spite of all the rebuttals against the far reaching judgments of the *Reformanda*, Dr. P. van Gurp, the editor of this magazine has come to the conclusion that no one has heeded the "Call to Reformation." He states: "In general the church has refused to reject all that is in conflict with the pure Word of God. Then we must conclude without a doubt that the Reformed churches can no longer be considered true churches."

### Throughout the ages

With all my heart I hope that when you read this article there has been no schism yet in the Dutch churches. It seems that to the brothers and sisters of *Reformanda* it has become inevitable and they go from one consequence to the next. According to their conviction they are clearly past the crossroads. And there is no road that leads back.

Indeed, they are justified in expressing their concern about the many issues in the churches. There is more than one reason to be concerned about some of the developments. They are not the only ones who are concerned. But all in all, it is strongly exaggerated to put the stamp of false church on the Reformed churches at this time.

We ought to realize that throughout the ages, matters of great concern have surfaced in the church of Christ. After the Reformed churches were liberated from the decisions of 1942/44 and the battle they fought in 1967, there was a period of unity and unanimity with both the members and the ministers. And the churches established by emigrants in South Africa, Canada and Australia also could enjoy this wonderful unanimity. The older brothers and sisters

among us, to whom I also belong, have thankfully benefited from that. But when one in basically a short time span, compares with all that happened in church history, then we note that this restful period is more an exception than the rule. There have been struggles in the churches continually. And this will continue until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth and redeems his Bride from all her sins.

That does not mean that I take lightly the concern regarding deviations. And the church has the calling to fight against those aberrations. Indeed, *Semper Reformata Semper Reformanda*. A Reformed church ought to continually reform herself.

But we should not hastily brand a church a false church. The conclusion of *Reformanda*, that broadly speaking the churches in The Netherlands refuse to condemn "all that is in conflict with God's Word," is a great injustice to reality. Over against the concerns about developments, we can also rejoice in many good things that are visible in the churches in The Netherlands.

*There have been struggles in the churches continually. And this will continue until the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth and redeems his Bride from all her sins.*

### South Africa

How does one consider these things here? First, don't rashly condemn! And don't just be informed by one magazine but try as much as possible to get all the details.

Second, know yourself to be a sinner! Also you can have a wrong interpretation and carry that into the church because you are sure that you serve



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\*\*\*

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**Rev. R.E. Pot**

of Orangeville, Ontario.

the Lord by doing that. But that in the meantime is not so. And now with your mind made up, you judge your brothers and sisters.

And third, pray much and often for your churches and the sister churches elsewhere. Pray that the Lord may open the eyes in time to discern heresies and misconceptions and that we may not be asleep. But also, pray that there may not be rash and thoughtless accusations and mistaken diligence.

*Kyrie Eleison*, Lord, have mercy.

<sup>1</sup>Translated from South African into English by Cor Hoff. Wherever reference is made to South Africa, it also applies to Canada. The original article is found in the South African paper *KOMPAS* volume 12, # 9, September 2003



### *"Thank You" from Dr. and Mrs. DeJong and family*

As we have thanked the LORD for allowing Dr. J. De Jong to serve in the ministry these past twenty-five years we would also like to extend a heartfelt "Thank You" to all those in Canada and Australia who have encouraged us immeasurably at this time. You have expressed love, support and appreciation for us in many ways, and we truly have experienced the fellowship of our Father's catholic church. For this we are very thankful!

Above all, we cherish and covet your prayers which have daily ascended to our Father's throne of grace. May He keep us and make his face shine upon us all!

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# Bears' Claws and Beautiful Feet

By Christine Farenhorst

Recently I read the true accounting of a young man who worked for the Forest Service in Alaska. Out deer hunting one day, a huge grizzly bear suddenly charged him. He emptied his 7 mm magnum semi-automatic rifle into the rapidly approaching bear and it dropped down, much to his immense relief, a few feet away from him. It was still alive so he reloaded his rifle and shot it in the head. This particular over-sized, grizzly bear was over one thousand six hundred pounds. Even in death it was still terrifying. It had stood, if you can imagine, twelve feet six inches high at the shoulder and fourteen feet to the top of his head. The article went on to say that to get a good idea of how big this animal actually was, would be to think about the fact that you would be looking at this bear's belly button if he stood upright and that you would be looking him in the eye if he was on all fours. And if this doesn't impress you, just picture the creature standing on its hind legs easily able to peek over the edge of the roof of an average style single storey house. The bear in question, by the way, had killed at least two people, the last an estimated three days prior to his own death.

The above story inevitably turns the mind to 2 Kings 2, to a story about the prophet Elisha. Freshly bereaved from his beloved, spiritual father, Elijah, the prophet walked through Bethel. Some youths came and mocked him. "Go up, you baldhead!" they called out.

Elijah, we are told, turned around and looked at them. Not only did he look at them, but he also pronounced a curse on them in the name of the Lord. "And two female bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths."

A horrible story that makes one shudder, it is one we do not relish telling our children at bedtime. Nevertheless, it is true! And true biblical ac-

counts should always be reflected upon with some seriousness. Our human nature tends to think it might have been better to excuse, to blame the whole sorry mocking situation on environment and faulty upbringing and to send for counsellors. Yet Elisha was without a doubt justified in his curse because he was inspired by the Holy Spirit. Aware that these children had mocked the servant of the living God, he pronounced God's judgment on them. If we are to learn anything from this grizzly encounter, it is this: first, God, our Almighty and Heavenly Father, listens and is aware of all that children do and say; and second, we should redouble efforts to train children, to drive foolishness from their hearts, so that their days may be long in the land the Lord our God gives them.

In the fall of 2002, Bill and Shawnie Wildeboer were out for a walk on their property. The wooded path behind their home in Markdale, Ontario was alive with bright autumn leaves and it was a pleasure for them to walk and behold God's creation beauty. As they passed a certain spot on the path, Shawnie noted that it looked as if someone had travelled into the bush. Trampled down grass extended away from their path and propelled by curiosity, the couple decided to investigate. After following the unknown trail for a bit, right onto neighbouring property, they came to a clearing – a clearing which brought them face to face with a good sized hidden marijuana patch. Roots were wrapped up in jute and the plants were invisible from the air because of the surrounding tree cover. Bill and Shawnie, needless to say, left quickly, notified the police and consequently, over the course of the next few weeks, the perpetrators were apprehended and arrested.

God's way of providence often runs a strange road. In this case it ran past marijuana, because Bill and Shawnie,

having occasion to access and see some of this neighbouring land a few more times, came to the conclusion that it was more than suitable for the growth and development of the outreach program called Campfire!. Campfire! is a summer Bible camp – a camp which has run every summer since 1997 for the physical and spiritual welfare of both Reformed and inner city children, (ages K through teenage years).

Back now to the necessity of training children – especially children whose education with regard to God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ has been grossly neglected, whose view of authority has been muddled and whose life view has been injected with a possible lethal dose of humanism and Darwinism. It is true that a believer's first responsibility is to train up his own children in the ways of the Lord, but when Paul exhorts those who read the book of Romans to bring glad tidings, he is speaking about bringing these glad tidings to those who have not heard.

The amazing thing about Campfire! is that this last year over three hundred children came through the summer program. As well some one hundred and twenty-six counsellors volunteered in week-by-week stints. Six hundred youthful ears were being taught good things and at least two hundred and fifty-two feet ran beautifully in the race that is not to the swift but one that is to be run with perseverance. And who will believe their message? Will these inner city children believe it? It is good to remember that it is not our responsibility to make people believe but it is our responsibility to make sure that God's message is being put out.

The old Campfire! facilities, which were near Orangeville, Ontario, were perceived as inadequate and for some time people had been on the lookout for a new site. The property, discovered



by Bill and Shawnie, but set aside in his great providence by our Lord who desires that all his children should come to repentance, consists of 170 acres, most of which consists of Algonquin Park style forests. It includes about fifteen kilometres of walking/ski trails and three ponds, two of which have gravel bottoms making them suitable for swimming.

As an additional bonus during the time that the area is not being used for Campfire!, it is envisioned that the property might also be used for conferences, retreats, family reunions, and such. Construction of a large dining lodge, with washrooms/showers, and cabins will begin the spring of 2004. Presently, this fall of 2003, a lot of site preparation is underway.

The young deer hunter who worked for the Forest Service in Alaska killed an uncommonly large bear with a relatively small instrument – a 7 mm magnum rifle. (This bear was, as a matter of interest, the biggest bear ever recorded). The bear that preys on today's youth, called by Luther "the

prince of darkness grim" and more daunting than even a Guinness Book of Records bear, is felled by the utterance of one small word. That word is Jesus and it is to be carried joyfully and unquestioningly into the world. As Luther said:

*And though this world, with devils filled,  
Should threaten to undo us,  
We will not fear, for God has willed,  
His truth to triumph through us.* **C**

**The preliminary cost of the work on Campfire! has been estimated to be approximately \$100,000.**

**Anyone who feels moved to support this mission can send donations (payable to "Campfire!" marked "Property") to**

***Bill VanHuisstede***

Fortress Equity Management  
Suite 104-3425 Harvester Road, Burlington, Ontario L7N 3N1

The members of the Board for Campfire! are:

Allan Buist, Warren Hoeksema, Grant Kottelenberg,  
Ruth Meerveld, Henrietta VanHof, Bill Van Huisstede,  
Karl Veldkamp and Ian Wildeboer

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

**Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address.**

They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length. Please include address and phone number.

**Dear Editor,**

### **What Does it Mean?**

*Clarion* (September 12, 2003, Volume 52, No. 19, page 457) shows us a picture of a Canadian Reformed Church sign that is broken up, splintered, divided. The subscript is short, and reads: "Sign of the times?" Is this about a church (federation) that is broken up and divided, or is this sign showing us the hatred of the world with a vandalized church sign?

Even if you meant for the readers to interpret the latter, this picture is at least ambiguous, and at best still negative. Its purpose is questionable. It says in 1 Thessalonians 5: "Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing." The *Clarion* should not convey a mixed message.

I would hope that you agree that the said (sad!) picture was a mistake, due to its ambiguity. Let us be positive; that always serves us best!

*Bram Vegter  
Spruce Grove, Alberta*

• • •

The picture in question was submitted by a Calgary reader along with caption as it was published. This photo showed damage of the Calgary church's sign without identifying the congregation in question. It was not an editorial decision to publish this but the publisher's. If the readers find this picture harmful, we apologize.

*The publisher*

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# At the Centre of Things: The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg

By Jeff Dykstra

On February 14, 2003, the Grace Canadian Reformed congregation celebrated fifty years of the Lord's mercy towards them as the communion of saints in Winnipeg. Through all the usual congratulatory messages, pictures on the wall to look at, historical surveys, and songs of praise and thankfulness, there was the awareness that Winnipeg has been at the centre of much that is cause for reflection, and has prospered insofar as God has kept her centered on Him and his Word.

The opening song for the evening – Psalm 115 – stressed the need to put God's glory first:

Not unto us, but only to thy name,  
O LORD our God so great in power  
and fame,

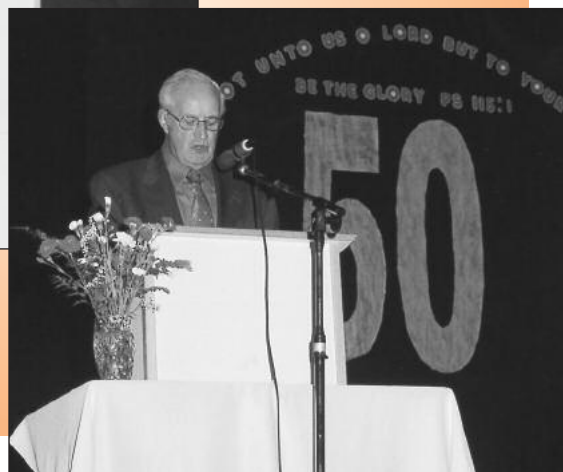
Ascribe and give the glory.

One way of doing that was to continue to maintain the centrality of our Reformed (in other words, biblical) identity, as Reverend F. Folkerts stressed in his congratulatory message. As the representative of the Providence United Reformed Church of Winnipeg, his words pointed to the great common ground that we are building on in our continuing relationship with the URCs: the Reformed confessions as a basis for our church life.

However, maintaining those confessions was not always easy, especially in the first dozen years of the Winnipeg Canadian Reformed Church's history. Winnipeg was at that time a centre of controversy. Several speakers alluded to the painful times leading up to and following the local church reformation of 1965. This event involved the reaction to the unwillingness of Winnipeg's minister at that time to subscribe to the Form of Subscription. The discipline of that minister, which proceeded in a seem-



Rev. K. Jonker



Mr. Len Toet

ingly slow but "church-orderly" way, caused splits not only within the congregation, but even within families. Yet even those difficult circumstances gave reason for thankfulness, because they showed that the Canadian Reformed Churches could avoid the temptations of both a lax attitude to the confessions and a hierarchical response to such an attitude.

God not only defended and preserved his church in Winnipeg; He also built it up. As well as being near the geographic centre of Canada, and containing the centre of Canadian Reformed publishing, Winnipeg has

been at the centre of other efforts on behalf of all the Canadian Reformed Churches, as Len Toet (one of the founding members of the Winnipeg congregation) mentioned. For instance, Winnipeg promoted heavily the sponsorship of immigrants to come to Canada, as well as the Superannuation fund for retiring ministers.

With all these reasons to thank God for keeping Winnipeg, as He does all his saints, at the centre of his attention, it was fitting that the evening's singing ended with the line "To Thee, our great Redeemer, fore'er be praise." Amen to that!



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# Installation and Welcome of Rev. J. Huijgen and Family on August 24, 2003

*By Lammert Jagt*

The day had finally arrived and what a beautiful day it was. The Huijgens had trekked across the country from the West, had safely arrived in Burlington-Waterdown some weeks earlier and had spent the time adjusting to their new environment. The time had come for our brother to be installed and assume his task of preacher and teacher in our midst. It had been two years since the departure of the Visschers and the congregation had waited with eager expectation for this moment. The LORD had heard our prayers. Prof G.H. Visscher led us in praise and worship; as his focus and theme in this service would centre around the power of the Word of God, we began by singing Psalm 33:1, 2. As text he had chosen Isaiah 55:10, 11 and his theme was "Through his Word God accomplishes his purpose." It would be worked out in two points: first, "the magnificent power of that Word," and second, "the majestic content of that Word!"

He began by illustrating for us the power and worth of today's media, the billboards, radio and T.V and contrasted that with the power of the Word of God. This he developed into the awesome task of a minister of that Word and that this Word would accomplish the Lord's purpose. He proceeded to lay out for us how the people of God had made that Word powerless and he illustrated how God through Scripture had "spoken" in creation and had "called" Abraham in Isaiah 51 and blessed him and made him a great nation. We see that culminate in the Word becoming flesh and how our Lord Jesus "spoke" to calm the sea and raise Lazarus from the dead. The Word was not impotent and empty!

How that Word is to be handled and how it is to be preached and taught from week to week then becomes the awesome task of the pastor. Some appropriate warnings followed that those having this responsibility should avoid preaching personal opinions. Only the gospel is to be preached, for it alone has the power of God for all those who believe. He exhorted the congregation not to expect the minister to be a social butterfly or counsellor for all situations, or expect a lecture or to be entertained. Isaiah 55 shows us God's grace and love and that when we gather for worship we gather for the administration of his Word; the pastor has the responsibility to "rightly handle the Word of truth" as we see further in 1 Corinthians 2. Our prayer as congregation should be that the preacher brings that Word effectively and that through the power of the Holy Spirit it may be blessed! Rev. Huijgen gave his "I do" after the Form for Installation was read, and the congregation responded with the prayer of

Psalm 134:3. After we had sung our Amen with the words of Hymn 40:1, 2 and received the benediction, the chairman of council, Br. R. Scholtens assumed the pulpit and officially welcome our brother and his family.

Rev. J. DeGelder on behalf of Classis Central Ontario and the neighbouring Church of Flamborough spoke some fitting words to Rev Huijgen and wished for continued good cooperation between the two churches. Br. Herman Faber passed on greetings and blessings from Burlington-Fellowship and Prof. Visscher as our former pastor (though still officially a minister of Burlington-Waterdown) presented him with a "seldom used gavel." The family was introduced and welcomed with a round of applause! Rev. Huijgen took the opportunity to thank the speakers, the council and congregation for the welcome and preparations that had been made for their arrival. He asked us all to remember our sister church in Cloverdale and the vacancy that had been created by their departure. A coffee social followed







giving us an opportunity to meet and greet our newest family.

The afternoon service had as theme from Psalm 99, "In the time in which we live, God's people are called to worship the Holy God!" He had three points: first, "with a view to the future," second, "a view to to-

day" and third, "a view to the past." Rev. Huijgen began with several questions. What is this joy of the congregation in the Psalm? What causes us to rejoice? Our relationship with one another may be okay, but does that mean we are church? Being "church" or the group God has made

his own, God calls us to worship! This view is placed over against a world view in which man becomes the centre and chooses not to worship. To illustrate this more clearly Rev. Huijgen used some contemporary examples, among them the current debate on same sex legislation where it seems man is celebrating evil. He continues by indicating that the battle for the honour of the Lord seems to be lost. We are reminded that we are placed as a city on a hill and that we must let our light shine; as we worship from Sunday to Sunday, God's holiness must always be in the centre of our existence. We are called to publicly acknowledge our sin and bow down at his footstool: He calls us into his presence! This is confirmed in God's faithfulness in the past and that He through the generations has shown the reliability of his work. The promise has been fulfilled through his Son and He calls us to declare his statutes and decrees so we can be found faithful. The world must hear the truth of the gospel!

On September 6, at the occasion of our annual church picnic, we had a relaxed opportunity to welcome the Huijgens. Br. John Hutten sr. led the proceedings, relating some anecdotes of times past and our development as a congregation. The family was presented with an album giving them a pictorial glimpse of the congregation; they were welcomed and invited by the young people's and women's societies, and they were given more "tools of the trade." Rev. J. Mulder as pastor emeritus took the opportunity to remind us that first and foremost he was our brother "one for whom Christ died" and so we must carry our pastor and family in our prayers. He extended a word of welcome and an invitation to the Men's Society. Rev. Huijgen accompanied by his wife thanked us for the useful "tools" they had been given and for the welcome they had received. Rev. Mulder led us in thanksgiving prayer and we partook of a delicious meal prepared by the ladies (some of the men barbecued!) and we enjoyed an afternoon and evening of good food and fellowship! May the Lord of the church, as He has throughout the generations, continue to guide and bless the ministry of his Word in Burlington-Waterdown!





## Defining Effective Reformed Schools: N.P.C. Conference 2003

By A. Kingma and D. Stoffels

Westjet had a sudden surge in business as Canadian Reformed principals from British Columbia, Alberta and Ontario booked flights through the months of June, July and August for the seventh National Principals' Conference. We all told our agents or typed in our computers the destination: Winnipeg, Manitoba. For us principals, going to Winnipeg for a National Principals' Conference was a first – a departure from the traditional “far western” and “far eastern” (for Canadian Reformed School standards) venues of “The Valley” and Hamilton. Some of us may have tried to get a flight straight to Gimli, Manitoba, a small Celtic town 76 kilometres north of Winnipeg, but our computers rejected that request and our agents shrugged, “I heard of it, but sorry.” On Tuesday morning (for the principals of British Columbia and Alberta) or afternoon (for those from Ontario) on September 16, most of us took flight and landed safely on the tarmac of the Winnipeg International Airport.

The twenty-three principals did not seek out Gimli to join the sailing competitions in the world famous Lake Winnipeg, the Icelandic Festival, or the 10-mile Road Race on Highway 7, nor did we come for a three-day get-away from our local schools and communities to recharge our batteries, but we came for professional development, for encouragement and for continuing our contacts among our twenty-six Canadian Reformed and one American Reformed schools. Twenty odd kilometres north of Gimli, several rented or owned Manitoban vehicles, and one Albertan vehicle, slowed down and turned right, off Highway 8, into the spacious acreage of Camp Arnes, a Christian Camp and Retreat.

### “Reformed”

The theme of the conference was “Defining Effective Reformed Schools.” To start us off, Dr. John Van Dijk from Dordt College, Sioux Centre, Iowa, addressed us with a keynote speech examining and exploring that very theme for us. He first explored the word “Reformed.” To him, the word involves five main concepts: “*sola scriptura*,” “transforming vision,” “corporate responsibility,” “the work of the Spirit,” and

*It is the Word that lightens our path on which we must walk.*

“continual reforming.” He then expanded on those five concepts. He explained that one who is Reformed does all things “by Scripture alone.” It is the Word that lightens our path on which we must teach and set up our schools. By the term “transforming vision,” he spoke to us about the need to share the gospel, fighting against the powers and “isms” that are in our culture, and transforming all for our Lord Jesus Christ, since it is He who is King over all creation. While we all agreed with “*sola scriptura*” for our Reformed schools, some of us did question Dr. VanDijk whether this “transforming vision” should truly be a basic element for our Reformed schools. Our Canadian Reformed Schools are not set up to be “mission” or “transforming” schools simply because we have set up our schools for our covenant youth, and also because we see that it is the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit which transforms young and old alike. Many Reformed Christian schools, however, are set up with a “transforming vision” purpose, Dr. Van Dijk assured us. He then explained the “corporate responsibility” concept which could be defined as the role of the school to help the church – a community of believers

called out of (*ekklesia*) the world. By stating that the work of the Holy Spirit is also an element of the “Reformed” school, Dr. Van Dijk meant that no Reformed man can claim that he works faith, and so no Reformed school can be faithful without the work of the Holy Spirit. We do not see Scriptures clearly because we have such good eyesight, but because the Holy Spirit works faith in us so that we can see, but then again, we only see God’s truth through the glasses of Scriptures, a pair of glasses that is often smudged by intellectualism, rationalism, materialism or any other false teaching that so easily affects believers. Lastly, being Reformed schools means that we need to continue reforming: to examine ourselves to see whether or not we are following scripture alone in our lives, in our schools and in our teaching.

### “Effective”

After listening and discussing, we broke for a hearty lunch, and then allowed Dr. VanDijk to complete the second part of his speech and to lead us in our workshops. Dr. VanDijk then addressed the other key term of the conference’s theme, the word “effective.” What makes a Reformed school effective? To further us in this discussion, Dr. Van Dijk stated an obvious truth: we cannot even begin to measure effectiveness unless we have some established goals for our school. We need to establish goals for the Reformed school, for curriculum or program development, for classroom management, for professional development, and for community needs. Not only that, he says, but boards and their communities must also determine how those goals can be achieved by the parents, board, committees, principal, staff and anyone else involved. Not until this is in place, can we begin to truly determine how effective the school is. He urged our school communities to establish these goals.

In our workshops, we were asked to write down what we thought our school’s vision of a Reformed school was. We were also asked to identify





how the Reformed vision was visible in our school, how we could implement that vision, and what some obstacles to that implementation would be. We did that with lots of enthusiasm and gusto, knowing that supper wouldn't come until we were finished writing answers to those questions and sharing them.

*We were also asked to identify how the Reformed vision was visible in our school, how we could implement that vision, and what some obstacles to that implementation would be.*

Between supper and our next meeting at 8:00, most principals spent their time in walking, swimming, phoning, snoozing or simply chatting with one another about our local school situations. We compared notes, one could say, on how we do things, or sought advice or information on how to do things better – a well needed and well used time to encourage one another in being effective principals.

### **Christian schooling around the world**

At 8:00, Dr. VanDijk shared with us all the other work in which he is involved. He is involved in giving teacher-training or school-establishing advice to Christians all over the world.

He cited that he was in the Philippines, in Indonesia, in India, in Hungary, in South Africa, in Russia and even in Peru. He is encouraged by all the Christian schools that are being established or that are seeking to improve their programs, despite the lack of resources, money, and hostility. He also visits Christian universities, who invite him and/or others with whom he works, to improve their teacher training programs. He is especially encouraged by secular universities in countries like China who desire to have a religiously based teacher-training program. Ironically, he also noted that he was very worried with the Christian school situation in North America because it is so plagued with and accommodating towards materialism, individualism, and other philosophies of our declining culture. He requested that we would remember in our prayers the work of Christian education worldwide. By 10:00, we ended our session with Dr. Van Dijk, had some snacks and retired to our "cabins" for thinking and dreams.

### **Effective evaluations**

On Thursday Mr. John Roukema of Credo Christian Elementary School in Langley, B.C., dealt with the question of effective teacher evaluation. He summarized the latest developments in teacher evaluation by referring frequently to the work of Charlotte Danielson of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). Mr. Hans VanDooren

from Guido de Brès High School in Hamilton, Ontario, then discussed the effective evaluation of principals.

Given that both topics dealt with evaluation, some common points appeared. Three common points they raised were that evaluation by qualified people is necessary for improvement; that there must be set criteria that have been carefully considered and are driven by the vision, principles and purpose of the school society; and that evaluation can be intended to be summative (for decision making so that we can assure quality teaching in our schools), formative (for growth) or both. In all cases, it needs to be clear to the party being evaluated what the purpose of the evaluation is.

*Ironically, he also noted that he was very worried with the Christian school situation in North America because it is so plagued with and accommodating towards materialism, individualism, and other philosophies of our declining culture.*

Both of these presentations underlined the need for carefully thought-out, properly supported and pro-active work on the part of boards and principals. We need to be professional and diligent if we are to serve our schools well.

### **Improving teacher evaluation**

In his presentation on effective teacher evaluation Mr. Roukema pointed out that we evaluate to assure quality teaching in our school and to promote growth. Self evaluation, peer assessment, portfolios and study groups are all ways to encourage growth among teachers. When principals evaluate, they need to follow biblical principles. Some of those principles are exercising or modeling servant leadership, due diligence, working to ensure the teacher's positive participation in the evaluation process, a spirit of love, assisting and building each other up, honour and respect for each other and the school community, helping teachers to take responsibility for assessing each other and accountability.



He then presented us with a number of ways of doing an evaluation, sharing extensively from his experience and expertise. We discussed issues like growth patterns, noting that it is unrealistic to see people grow continuously; rather, professional growth of an individual teacher tends to occur in an uneven manner. It is important to have a clear understanding of growth since the ideas about growth heavily influences the evaluation of teachers.

### Principal evaluation

Mr. VanDooren structured his presentation around the results of a questionnaire that he had distributed to all the principals a number of months earlier. As he presented the data he drew some conclusions and made some proposals.

The data showed that just over half of the current principals did not apply for the position, but were asked by their boards to take on the job. Only two-thirds of the principals had written job descriptions. These varied in length significantly. Sixty percent of principals had less than ten years of experience in the position and 25% had twenty years or more. This leaves a large gap in the ten to twenty year range. The reasons for this are not clear but certainly are worth investigating.

*Both of these presentations underlined the need for carefully thought-out, properly supported and pro-active work on the part of boards and principals.*

Mr. VanDooren proposed that in the early years of being a principal, professional development related to that task be undertaken. This needs to be strongly supported and encouraged by both the principal and board. Only after a principal has a number of years of experience should there be a formal evaluation conducted by appropriate persons. This evaluation should be repeated every three to five years to maintain the growth of the principal and school. It is crucial that an action plan follows from the evaluation and that the plan be followed by the principal and the board. He also proposed

that principals and boards be pro-active in identifying staff who would become good principals and provide a track to begin training for that position.

In the evening we heard reports on the educational situations in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, British Columbia and Washington State. It is good to be able to have knowledge of each others blessings and burdens, for it helps draw us closer as colleagues and gives an opportunity to share insights.

### School evaluation – why and how

Friday morning started in an accidentally cold manner, not familiar to Manitoba. The story I heard went something like this: During the night, one of the principals was so disturbed in his sleep with some noisy heater that he got out of bed and stumbled and mumbled around, and finally found a switch that turned off the noise. With deep inner satisfaction, he stumbled back to his room, and slept soundly until morning. Well, at the dining hall where the twenty-three extremely wide-awake principals gathered for breakfast, a Camp staff announced that it was not this bearded Albertan principal's fault, but that for the first time in seven years the fuse for the hot water tank that heated the water for the showers and the pool had broken. The only person who saw some benefit in the onslaught of cold showers was Mr. Ben Harsevoort, who had Friday morning's presentation. "At least all will be awake for my presentation," he stated. Guided by the chair of the conference, Mr. Gunnink, from Immanuel Christian School, Winnipeg, started us right on time again. After opening devotions, he gave the floor to Mr. Harsevoort, from Heritage Christian School, Jordan, Ontario, who shared his fifteen years of experiences with external school evaluations. He guided us through the steps that the Ontario Alliance of Christian School established for principal evaluations, the process they follow, and the topics they cover in a one-day, two-day or a three-day evaluation. He stated that for Christian School evaluators, of utmost importance is the fact that the school not only has written school goals or objectives, but that their policies, curriculum, atmosphere, communications and relations show those goals. He also shared that an external school evaluation is of no

value if the community, the board, and the staff were not wholeheartedly committed to seeing this evaluation as tool for improvement. He hoped that schools would use it to help them focus in developing five-year improvement plans or the like. It was good for all of us to hear how he has done this in the Ontario Christian schools, but it was also good to hear how others have experienced external school evaluations in B.C. In some areas, like Alberta, the government takes a more active role in evaluating the schools formally or informally, but not in the depth and thoroughness in which Mr. Harsevoort explained.

*...an external school evaluation is of no value if the community, the board, and the staff were not wholeheartedly committed to seeing this evaluation as tool for improvement.*

Mr. Harsevoort kept us involved and busy until lunch, after which we returned for plenary session and closing. From the responses around the table, each principal was happy and thankful for another successful conference. Some voiced that the success could not only be attributed to Mr. Gunnink's and Mr. VanSpronsen's super planning and organization, but also to the retreat-style venue which allowed us to mingle, study, eat, and exercise together, promoting a real spirit of camaraderie and unity. Principals can feel quite isolated in their communities, and thus, a conference like this in a retreat-type setting is wonderful. Most principals nodded in agreement. It was agreed that the next National Principals' Conference will be held somewhere in southern Ontario in 2005, the Lord willing.



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## Press Release of Classis Alberta, October 21, 22, 2003

### Opening

On behalf of the convening Church of Edmonton-Immanuel, Rev. W.B. Slomp opened the meeting in a Christian manner. In his prayer, he remembered the difficult situation in the Church at Coaldale. He welcomed the brothers, including Rev. W. Pols of the local URC, the Revs. K. Jonker and R. Schouten as deputies of Regional Synod, and the students of grades 5 and 6 of the Parkland Immanuel Christian School. He remembered the institution of the Church at St. Albert, the vacancies of St. Albert and Neerlandia, and the calls which were turned down by Rev. R. Aasman to Cloverdale and Rev. R. Schouten to St. Albert. After the constitution of Classis, the following brothers took their place as executive: Rev. R. Eikelboom, chairman; Rev. R. Aasman, vice-chairman; Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar, clerk.

### Reports

The Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Students for the Ministry submitted a report to Classis. Connected to this was a letter from Classis Manitoba which requested a split of the assets of this committee which was in existence before Classis Alberta/ Manitoba split into two classical districts. The committee report demonstrated that the split of the assets had recently taken place. Therefore the report was accepted with thankfulness.

The church for the inspection of the Classis archives (Edmonton-Immanuel) reported that the archives were complete and in good order.

### Request for the dismissal of Rev. J.L. van Popta

Classis went into closed session. The church at Coaldale requested approbation of its decision to dismiss Rev. J.L. van Popta according to Article 11, CO. Rev. van Popta also made a submission to Classis asking for release according to Article 11, CO. A number of letters from congregational members and former members were also submitted and dealt with. Because the chairman was directly involved as part of a Classis-appointed committee working

with the Coaldale council, he asked and it was agreed that the vice-chairman would chair this part of the meeting dealing with the requests re Rev. van Popta. It was decided to inform Rev. J.L. van Popta who was not at Classis that he would be given the privilege of the floor at the discretion of the moderator. Rev. van Popta joined the meeting. Later in the afternoon, Rev. W. Pols of the URC prepared to take his leave; he expressed his deep appreciation for how thoroughly the brothers of Classis dealt with the serious matter before it. By the following afternoon, with the concurring advice of the deputies of Regional Synod, Classis decided to approve the release of Rev. J.L. van Popta from service in the Coaldale congregation. Classis went back into open session. After some words of sympathy and encouragement to Rev. van Popta and his wife, and to the brothers from Coaldale, Classis took a moment of prayer and then had an opportunity to speak with Rev. and Mrs. van Popta. This was a very emotional moment.

### Reports

- a. The report of the Committee for Aid to Coaldale already functioned in the decision re Rev. J.L. van Popta's release from active service in Coaldale. Deep appreciation was expressed for the work of this committee. It was decided that the church visitors go to Coaldale as soon as possible – no later than the end of November – to offer assistance to council and to determine whether some of the concerns about the work of the office bearers are being addressed.
- b. Committee for Aid to Needy Churches: it was decided to grant financial support to one needy congregation.
- c. Church Visit reports to the churches at Calgary, Immanuel, Providence and St. Albert were dealt with in closed session. These reports were received with gratitude to the Lord that things are done decently and in good order in these congregations.

### Proposals and instructions

- a. A vacant congregation asked for advice on how to reimburse a minister

who preaches for them. Some advice was given pointing out that ministers are typically given reimbursement directly. However, Classis has no rules for this. It is up to a church to give how much it desires to pay.

- b. Financial arrangements regarding the church at Coaldale's provisions for Rev. J.L. van Popta were discussed. It was decided to form a committee of church visitors along with Harry Lubbers who is an accountant in the Coaldale area to work out an equitable arrangement between the Coaldale council and Rev. and Mrs. J.L. van Popta.
- c. A number of instructions were dealt with. It was decided to grant pulpit supply to the three vacant churches – Coaldale, Neerlandia and St. Albert – once every four weeks.
- d. Rev. W.B. Slomp was appointed as counsellor of the church at Coaldale.

### Question Period Article 44, CO

Some advice was requested by one congregation and it was given.

### Appointments

- a. The next Classis was scheduled to be convened by the church at Edmonton-Providence on December 7, 2003, with alternate date March 9, 2004. The proposed officers are: chairman, Rev. T. Lodder, vice-chairman, Rev. R. Eikelboom, clerk, Rev. R. Aasman. The following appointments were made: treasurer – John Buitenbos; church for auditing the books of the treasurer – Edmonton-Providence; church for taking care of the archives – Edmonton-Providence; church for inspecting the archives – Edmonton-Immanuel; church visitors – Revs. R. Aasman, R. Eikelboom, W.B. Slomp and E.J. Tiggelaar; committee for examinations – Revs. R. Aasman and W.B. Slomp; exegesis Old Testament – Rev. R. Aasman; exegesis New Testament – Rev. R. Eikelboom; knowledge of Scripture – Rev. T. Lodder; doctrines and creeds – Rev. W.B. Slomp; church history – Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar; ethics – Rev. R. Eikelboom; church polity – Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar;

diaconology – Revs. T. Lodder and W.B. Slomp; committee for financial aid to students for the ministry – Andy Leffers, John Moedt and Mike Tams; committee for aid to needy churches – Charles DeBoer, Walter Noot and John VanderDeen; deputy for contact with provincial government – Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar; observers/contact persons to RCUS and URCNA – Rev. T. Lodder to attend Classis of RCUS, Rev. R.

Eikelboom to check location of next URCNA Classis in the area for purpose of sending a delegate, and Rev. R. Aasman is contact person for the RCUS; pulpit supply coordinator – Rev. R. Eikelboom.  
b. Delegation to Regional Synod, November 18, 2003: elders: A. de Leeuw and C. de Leeuw; alternates (in order) J. Bosch and H. Oostermeier; ministers: R. Aasman and W.B.

Slomp; alternates (in order) E.J. Tiggelaar and T. Lodder.

### Personal Question Period

Several brothers made use of the question period.

### Closing

After the acts were adopted and the press release approved, the chairman closed the meeting in a Christian manner.

R. Aasman

## CLARION

## ADVERTISEMENTS

### Births

*I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made! Psalm 139:14a*

With thankfulness to the Lord for entrusting us with one of His precious children, we joyfully announce the arrival of our second child, a son

**BRANT NICHOLAS BOSCH**

Born August 17, 2003

**Colin and Katrina Bosch (nee DeHaas)**

A little brother for *Kristina*

3rd grandchild for Fred and Cora DeHaas (first grandson!)

3rd grandchild for Ralph and Alice Bosch

9703 - 155 Street, Edmonton Alberta T5P 2K8

Email Address: ckbosch@shaw.ca

Website: <http://members.shaw.ca/ckbosch>

*Give thanks to the LORD for He is good. Psalm 136:1a*

We give thanks to the Lord who has blessed our family with the birth of another one of His covenant children, a son

**WILLIAM MARC**

Born October 10, 2003

**Duco and Joyce Feenstra**

A brother for Cornelius and Henrietta

8670 Sideroad 25, RR 2, Belwood, Ontario N0B 1J0

*Sons are a heritage from the LORD, children a reward from Him. Psalm 127:3*

With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, the Giver of life, we happily announce the safe arrival of our firstborn, a son

**DYLAN ROBERT**

Born October 14, 2003

**Wendell and Marjorie Dallinga (nee Vanderwoerd)**

4th grandchild for Bert and Grace Vanderwoerd

10th grandchild for Dale and Annie Dallinga

6th great-grandchild for Opa and Oma Malda

14th great-grandchild for Oma Vanderwoerd

25 Briarlea Road, Guelph, ON N1G 3H4

### Advertisements:

Announcements of Weddings, Anniversaries (with Open House) should be submitted six weeks in advance.

*He has caused his wonderful works to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and merciful. Psalm 111:4*

With much joy and thankfulness to our heavenly Father who has made all things well, we announce the birth of our son

**WYATT JEFFERSON ENDEMAN**

Born on September 27, 2003

A little brother for *Lauren*

**Jeff and Hetti Endeman (nee Kottelenberg)**

RR #7, Orangeville, ON L9W 2Z3

*Praise the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits – who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases. . . from everlasting to everlasting, the LORD's love is with those who fear him. Psalm 103:2, 3, 17a*

Praise be to God, the Giver of Life, who has shown to us His mighty works and providential care. We thankfully announce that He has entrusted to us another daughter, His covenant child, and preserved her life through illness. We joyfully welcome

**JULIA BROOKE**

Born August 19, 2003.

**Garth and Alida Spanninga**

*Sara, Shane†, and Noah*

415 Scott Drive, Orangeville, Ontario L9W 4M1

*Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands. Psalm 119:73*

On October 6, 2003 the Lord blessed our family with the birth of another covenant child, our daughter and sister

**MALLORY RACHEL**

With all thanks and praise to God for this wonderful gift,

**Ron and Jeanette Werkman**

*Adam, Erin, and Kelsey*

51 Brewster Bay, Winnipeg, MB R2C 2X2

With great thankfulness, we **Mike and Brenda Bartels (Stegenga)** announce that God has blessed us with another child, a son whom we have named

**LUKE JONATHAN**

Born October 1, 2003

Excited big sisters are *Jane Antonia* and *Katie Jacoba*