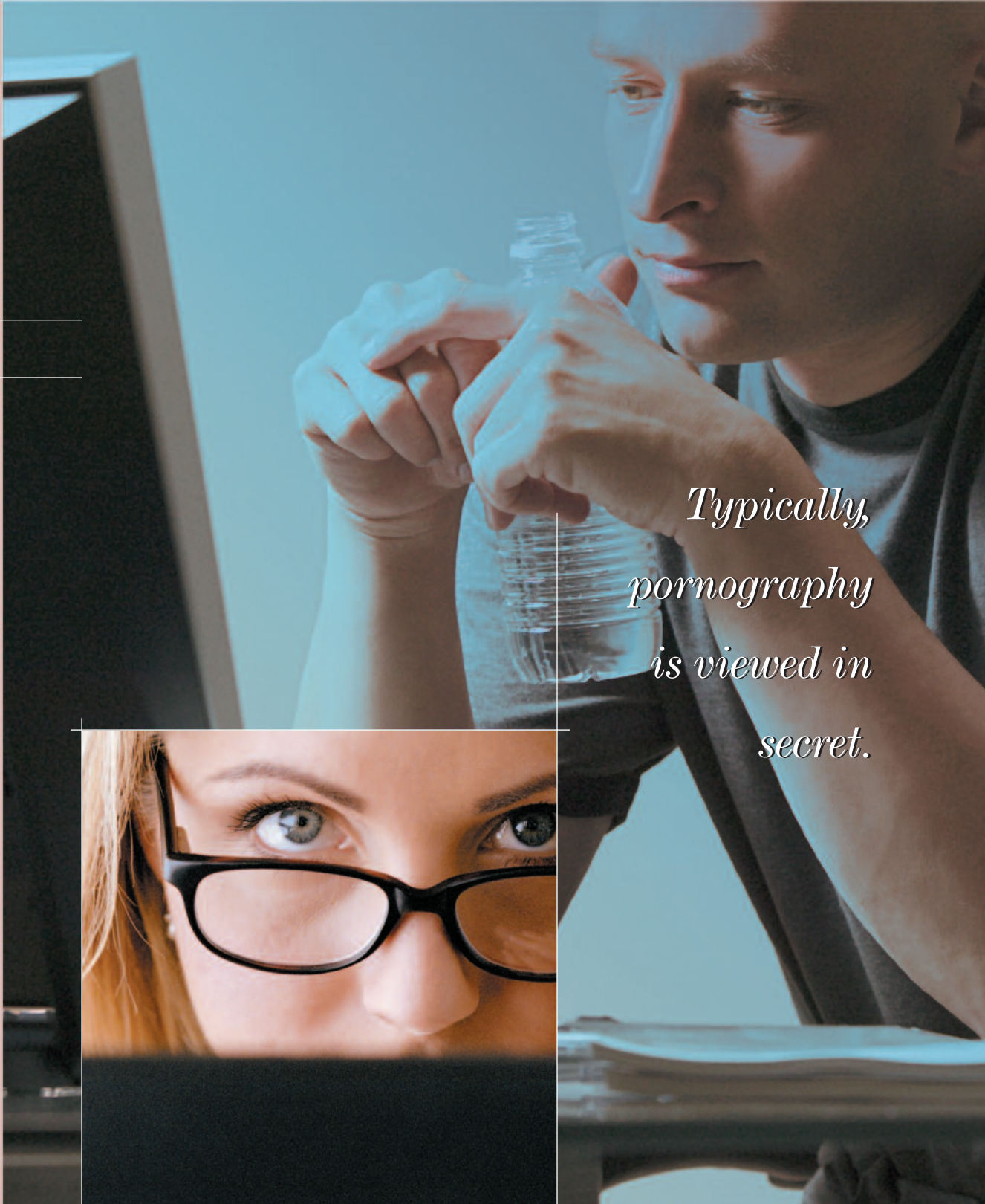


*Addiction to  
Pornography*

*Immanuel*

*Towards Unity  
with the  
Gereja-Gereja  
Reformasi di  
Indonesia-Nusa  
Tenggara Timur*



*Typically,  
pornography  
is viewed in  
secret.*





**W.B. Slomp**

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# Addiction to Pornography

*Pornography is more readily available in today's society than at any other time in the history of western civilization.*

## The Problem

The sins you find in the world, you will find in the church as well. God's people are negatively affected by the degradation in which they live. Sadly that is the case with pornography as well.

Pornography is more readily available in today's society than at any other time in the history of western civilization. Its lewd visuals are projected onto billboards, are embedded in magazines and movies, and are widely dispersed throughout the Internet. It is hard to escape pornographic images. Morals within society have changed considerably over the last few decades, allowing an avalanche of pornographic material to flood the market place.

Pornography is big business. It is estimated that \$10 billion to \$14 billion a year is spent in the United States alone. That is more than is spent annually on gambling! And like gambling, it is powerfully addictive.

Sadly, it is also a great problem for Christian men. According to Focus on the Family, sixteen percent of married men within the church, including ministers, have a serious problem with pornography.

Pornography and illicit sex have been with us since the beginning. When Adam and Eve fell into sin they immediately felt the need to cover their naked bodies. They realized that their desires for each other were no longer pure. As a result, they desired each other for selfish reasons and for selfish gratification.

Indeed, the presence of sexual sins and pornography can be evidenced throughout the pages of the Bible. As in the case of Adam and Eve, the beautiful gift of sex, intended for a lawfully married couple alone, has become perverted and distorted time and time again. For example, even a godly man such as David was sexually aroused when he watched Bathsheba bathing, and he subsequently committed adultery with her.

## Causes

What causes someone to turn to pornography? There is no doubt that the root cause of people turning to pornography is the sinful heart. It says in Jeremiah 17:9, "The

heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" When humankind fell into sin we became totally corrupt. We were no longer capable of wholeness. We became estranged from God, and estranged from others. An empty void emerged in our life that needed to be filled. Humans cry out for union, for completeness. We need to feel satisfied and we need to feel good about ourselves. As a result, we strive to fill this void.

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*People who are addicted to pornography do a lot of damage, not only to themselves, but also to the ones they love.*

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There are many ways to fill the empty void for the moment. For this reason, we are easily enslaved to one kind of addiction or another. And such slavery is very hard to break. The power of slavery is dramatically illustrated by the Israelites after they left Egypt. They were slaves to the Egyptians, but God, through Moses, set them free. However, once they were in the desert they wanted to go back to their slavery – they wanted to go back because their needs were no longer being met as rapidly as they wanted. They craved the immediate gratification of the flesh. They were not willing to wait for God to feed them and to give them drink. In Egypt, even though they had harsh taskmasters over them, they were well-fed and they felt safe and secure. But in the desert they faced an uncertain future, and they had to get used to new experiences. The Lord had to inflict harsh discipline in order to have them break away from their slavery.

The same thing is true of slavery to pornography. Like many other things, pornography is abhorrent, but it is also pleasurable. Once you are enslaved, the pleasurable aspects often win out over the abhorrent and familiar ones. And it is especially easy to succumb to the temptations when you are weak and do not trust in the Lord to deliver you.



## Consequences

People who are addicted to pornography do a lot of damage, not only to themselves, but also to the ones they love. For example, men who are enslaved by it will often treat women as objects of their pleasure, and shun intimacy. They are immature and do not want to invest in an intimate relationship. In their minds it is easier to relate to an inanimate object that does not require accountability. And as a result, relationships deteriorate and become broken. But these consequences fall in comparison to the effects that this addiction has upon the addict's relationship with God. The use of pornography results in a broken relationship with the Holy One. Paul says in Ephesians 5:3, "But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality... because these are

## Inside . . .

Rev. W. B. Slomp's editorial deals with the pernicious evil of pornography. Pornography pervades our culture – who can open a newspaper or turn on the TV and not be confronted with it? But it is not harmless. It destroys relationships among people and with God. It is important that we read this editorial and take it to heart.

In this issue of *Clarion*, we are starting a new column entitled *Reformedevangelism.com*. It is written by Rev. Dick Moes and will be published once per month. We look forward to insight and guidance on this important subject.

We have two articles which are written with our upcoming General Synod in mind. Rev. K. Jonker writes about the function of the church order within ecclesiastical assemblies. Pila Njuka, a fourth year student at our Theological College writes about unity with the *Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia*.

In this issue of *Clarion* we have the first press review by Rev. J. Moesker of Vernon, British Columbia. He writes about some developments regarding men who become ministers via Article 8 of the Church Order. We look forward to more such press reviews by our brother.

We have a continuation of the *Children's Catechism* series, our regular column *Treasures, New and Old*, a Classis Press Release, along with a Reader's Forum and two letters to the editor.

In issue 24 of last year, there was an article which was sent to *Clarion* and published under the title, "Bears' Claws and Beautiful Feet." I did not realize that it had been first published in *Christian Renewal*. We acknowledge that at this time.

RA

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improper for God's holy people." He says further that no immoral person has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. And so within the church of God sexual immorality should not be swept under the rug. We must deal with it.

### Correcting behaviour

It is very hard to correct behaviour – especially addictive behaviour. Satan wants to keep us in slavery. However, God requires us to deal with our sins, and to help others overcome their sins. We cannot do this without God's help. And so, correcting addictive behaviour has to be done prayerfully, with a true desire to live our lives to the glory of God. Our relationship with God has to be our first priority. Only He can fill the empty void in our lives.

Those who are addicted to pornography typically think, like the Israelites in the wilderness, that God must fulfill their needs. If He does not, they refuse to honour Him and his laws. Addicts must change this way of thinking and repent. Those close to the addicted – wives, elders, parents, etc. – must hold them accountable to God and his laws. The addicted are fornicators and adulterers and must be treated as such.

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*Those who are addicted to pornography typically think, like the Israelites in the wilderness, that God must fulfill their needs. If He does not, they refuse to honour Him and his laws.*

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In addition, addicts must also restore their relationship with loved ones, and deal with the reasons for their unwillingness, and apparent inability, to be truly intimate with others. It is possible that they have been hurt by others in the past. As a result they feel unloved and experience hurt. They are angry, and typically suffer from low self-esteem. They do not have intimate relationships because they are afraid to be hurt again and consequently they are lonely. All of these issues need to be dealt with openly and honestly in order to reverse these negative patterns.

Furthermore, those engaged in pornography have to allow themselves to be accountable to loved ones. Typically, pornography is viewed in secret. For example, a man will look at pornographic materials when his wife is not home or

when she has gone to bed; teenagers will keep their magazines hidden or watch pornography on the computer screen or a TV screen in a place where no one is watching. Therefore, in order to make addicts accountable, Internet, TV and movie access has to be monitored. Children should not have access to these media, except under carefully controlled conditions, and from a place open to all, such as the kitchen or the living room.

On the Internet there are also web sites available that help hold others accountable for Internet use. There is, for example, a website known as "The Covenant Eyes Program" (<http://www.covenanteyes.com>). When you join this program, you are asked to provide the names of at least one "Accountability Partner" who is a person with whom you have a mutually accountable relationship. Then, on a regular basis, each person will receive an accountability log that will show a record of all of the sites visited, including the web addresses and amount of time spent on the Internet. This log is e-mailed to the Accountability Partner. This program is maintained on computers somewhere in the United States, and so the history of sites visited by the member cannot be erased.

Finally, married men should agree to go to bed at the same time with their wife, and be willing to speak to their spouse about their life together.

Satan is out to destroy the church. He wants to destroy our youth and our marriages. Pornography is one of the tools in his arsenal. Let us not allow Satan to do his destructive work in the church. Let us destroy the work of darkness. We can do this in the victory of Christ. He has set us free from sin and the devil. And that must show in our lives. +



R.J. Eikelboom

# Immanuel

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MATTHEW 13:52

*“I am with you,” declares the LORD.*

Haggai 1:13

Immigrating. Making a new life in a foreign country. Building houses. And dreaming about church buildings and schools. Some of the older members of our communities remember doing just that. When you ask them about their experiences, they talk about living in trailers, in sheds, or even in wooden crates. They explain how they lived without electricity and running water. Some of them remember their fathers working long hours on a minimum wage, so that they always struggled to pay their bills. Then the thought of preparing a nest-egg for the future was only a pipe-dream.

When the Israelites came back home to Canaan, after their captivity in Babylon, they experienced something very similar. Of course, they did not know the harsh Canadian winters. But their cities and their houses had all been destroyed. Their farms had been ruined. And so, just like many immigrants came to Canada in the 1950s and started with nothing, so – in the days of Haggai – many Israelites also came to Canaan and had to start over with nothing.

Because these Israelites faced so many challenges, the project of rebuilding the temple was temporarily put on the back-burner. Oh, initially there was a “sod-turning ceremony.” A foundation stone was laid. And an altar was built. But after that? They concentrated on rebuilding their houses. They planted their crops. Because they reasoned: if we do not plant crops, there will be no harvest. Then there will be no food and nothing to sacrifice to the Lord. And – surely – that would do nobody any good. The Israelites first concentrated on building their own houses, and their own businesses. And the service of the Lord? The plan was that all that would follow – later – as soon as they could afford it!

And while the fact that the Israelites should have rebuilt the temple may be obvious to us, the reason is somewhat obscure. Why did the Israelites need a temple? Surely, it makes no difference to God. Because God does not live in a temple. Indeed, God does not need a temple, but Israel does. The reason for that is because the temple is the sign of God’s presence. The temple is proof that God is living in their midst and that He is their God! The children of Israel need a temple for the strengthening of their faith, so that they may be convinced that – in spite of all their miserable experiences –

they are still the people of God! And that’s why, as soon as the Israelites began to build the temple, Haggai came to them with the Gospel of Immanuel: the Lord is with you! Now that you have a temple again, you have a sign; a guarantee that the Lord is with you.

Today the Lord does not ask us to build temples. Instead He sent his Holy Spirit to live in our hearts so that we might be temples. And yet the Lord does command us to worship Him. The Lord does command us to read the Bible and to pray; to worship Him personally, and in our families, and together with the congregation. Sometimes we don’t have time or energy. Sometimes there are other things that appear more urgent. And then we push God aside. But Haggai reminds us that when we push God aside, we also rob ourselves! For when we read the Bible, God comes to us with the promise that, “I am with you!” But if we don’t read the Bible, we don’t hear this promise. And when we pray, the Holy Spirit works in our hearts the confidence that God is with us! But if we don’t pray, we don’t receive that confidence. And when we come to church on Sunday to hear the preaching and experience the communion of saints, in all this we experience the promise of God: I am with you! But if we don’t go to church, we miss out on that experience. The bottom line is that when we worship the Lord, we benefit ourselves, but if we don’t serve the Lord, we rob ourselves.

In the Old Testament God wanted his people to worship Him in a tabernacle, and – later on – in a temple. Why? Simply because God knew the hearts of his people. God knew what they needed, and God gave them what they needed. That’s the sort of God we have. God said: I want you to build a temple, for when you have a temple, you will receive my blessing. Then you will realize that I am with you.

Today God commands us to read the Bible and pray; to attend the worship services and experience the communion of saints. Why? Because God knows our hearts. God knows that we need these things, and God is pleased to work through them. Let us not be wiser than God. Instead, let us use the means that He has given to us. So that we may experience that He is always with us, just as He promised through the prophet Haggai more than two thousand years ago.





# Towards Unity with the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia-Nusa Tenggara Timur

*Pila Njuka is a fourth year student at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches in Hamilton, Ontario.*

## **A proposal from the GGRI-NTT**

The Gereja-Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia-Nusa Tenggara Timur (GGRI-NTT), also known as the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (in the province of East Nusa Tenggara), are seeking contact with member churches of the ICRC, including the Canadian Reformed Churches, with the hope of establishing sister church relationships. The GGRI-NTT acknowledge that the Canadian Reformed Churches are a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Two Indonesian synods have decided to make contact with the churches in this country. With a view to the upcoming general synod in Chatham, the GGRI-NTT have sent a formal proposal to the Canadian Reformed Churches with the purpose of making contact which may lead to establishing a sister church relationship.

Unfortunately, their proposal is said to be too late to be dealt with at the general synod, but it will be attached to the report of the Deputies for Churches Abroad. Now you may wonder what is the basis and the purpose of such contact or even of establishing a sister church relationship with a far-away church. For that reason I would like to outline aspects of the crucial basis of this contact and of this hope for a relationship.

## **The basis of unity**

There are several grounds on which the GGRI-NTT dare to approach a church federation in the Western Hemisphere. To begin with, there is a historical reason. The Reformed Churches in Indonesia, specifically in the province of East Nusa Tenggara, are the result of mission done by the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. In Indonesia there are Reformed churches in three provinces: Papua, West Kalimantan, and East Nusa Tenggara (where I and my family come from).

In this latter province there are sixteen established churches with thirty-eight mission posts. The GGRI-NTT is present on three islands of this province: Sumba, Savu, and Timor. In Sumba there are thirteen established churches; Sumba was a mission field of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. The first Dutch missionary came to Sumba in 1881. In Savu there are two established churches, and in Timor there is one established church. These sixteen churches are divided into four classes and they have synod every two years. To maintain their Reformed character, they also have a theological school in Sumba. *As a church federation that was born from their mother the Dutch Reformed Church, the GGRI-NTT resemble their mother church in many respects and therefore ought to seek a relationship with*

*other Reformed churches, particularly the Canadian Reformed Churches.*

First, there is resemblance with respect to the Bible. The GGRI-NTT accept the Bible as the true and infallible Word of God, and all doctrines are derived from it. It is clear that the GGRI-NTT is a true church of the Lord Jesus. The three marks of the true church as they are stipulated in Belgic Confession article 29 are displayed.

In the Bible, especially in the New Testament, we read in many places how believers should be one and should help each other because they are one people of God. We see this in the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ in John 17 and in Ephesians 4:1-6, where the apostle Paul commands the Ephesians to make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. *The unity is based on the fact that there is only one body, and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all.* This unity is a unity in the Triune God. Since the Ephesians and also Reformed believers today have all the above, they should also maintain unity. We are the church of one Lord and Saviour who has died for us. As Dr. C. Van Dam says in *The Challenge of Church Union*, "In Christ and in his atoning work we may find each other and be brothers and sisters together in holy unity."

Second, there is a confessional resemblance. The GGRI-NTT also have the three Ecumenical Creeds and the three Forms of Unity. They also have catechism preaching in the afternoon and the youth are instructed with the catechism. *The GGRI-NTT do not just have the creeds and confessions, but they uphold, honor, maintain them and adhere to them.* In Belgic Confession article 27 we confess that the holy catholic church is not confined to one particular place, or to certain persons, but is spread and dispersed throughout the entire world, and it is joined and united, heart and will, in one and the same spirit, by the power of faith. This holy catholic church is the church that the eternal Son of God has gathered, defended and preserved from the creation of the world to its end. This gathering work is done in the unity of the true faith (LD 21). Those who have the true faith form the communion of saints. This communion is manifested in every local church, in every federation, and can also be manifested through a sister church relationship.

Third, there is a link church politically. The GGRI-NTT do not produce their own church polity, rather, their church polity is a direct translation of the Dutch Reformed Church Order with some amendments. Our Church Order article 50 says that with foreign churches of Reformed confession a sister church relationship shall be maintained as much as possible. We can also say that a sister church relationship shall be sought to be established as much as possible. This article does not seem to give an active role for the Deputies for Churches Abroad to seek ecclesiastical fellowship with other Reformed churches, but assumes that a sister church relationship has been established.

Finally, there is also a liturgical reason for unity. This might not be a strong reason, but it certainly is a consideration

since the liturgy of these two church-federations is basically identical. In our worship services in Indonesia, the 150 psalms with Genevan tunes are used. All the forms that are found in the *Book of Praise* can also be found in *Buku Gereja* (Church Book) of the GGRI-NTT. So there are biblical, historical, confessional, church political, liturgical reasons for these two federations to become sister churches. If the Deputies for Churches Abroad of the Canadian Reformed Churches in general still need more independent information about the GGRI-NTT, this can be obtained from Rev. A.J. Pol who has served as a teacher in Indonesia, from the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, or from our Dutch sister churches.

### The ICRC

The idea of establishing sister church relationships is also encouraged by the ICRC and this is even one of the purposes of the ICRC. Both the GGRI and the Canadian Reformed Churches are members of the ICRC. The Constitution of the ICRC lists five purposes of the ICRC, and I quote 2 of them; they are:

1. To express and promote the unity of faith that the member churches have in Christ,
2. To encourage the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship among the member churches.

The second purpose comes to the fore now. If churches have unity in faith, they should work to establish the fullest ecclesiastical fellowship, which means having a sister church relationship with other true churches. *The Canadian Reformed Churches and the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi in Indonesia have the unity of faith – faith unites them.* This is the most important element in seeking and establishing a sister church relationship. It is this unity that should be expressed

through establishing a sister church relationship.

If you can possibly find a church federation in Asia that is very close to the Canadian Reformed Churches in many respects, this is the Gereja-Gereja Reformasi in Indonesia (including the Reformed Calvinist Churches on Timor, where Rev. Y. Dethan is minister and Rev. E. Dethan is a missionary). Indonesia may be far in distance but it is close in faith. *All of this shows that what can unite us is more than what might separate us.* Establishing a sister church relationship means that we acknowledge the work of the eternal Son of God through his Holy Spirit in other countries. The fact that we are brothers and sisters in Christ needs to be acknowledged and manifested. The acknowledgment and manifestation of the unity cannot be worked out through world-wide church organization or world synod, but it can certainly be worked out through a sister church relationship.

### Other considerations

When what was previously known as the Pilgrim Reformed Churches (GGRM), now known as the Reformed Calvinist Churches (GGRC), sent a proposal for ecclesiastical fellowship to Synod Neerlandia, the synod asked the question how the GGRM envisions a meaningful relationship between two federations so far apart geographically. This question is valid and can also be applied to the GGRI-NTT, a sister church of the GGRC. The synod also noted the importance of the decision of Synod Fergus that churches in Asia, Africa and Europe that want to enter into a sister church relationship should be directed to closer geographical federation. At the same time, Synod Neerlandia also upheld the decision of Synod Lincoln, which does not exclude world-wide contact.

Indeed, it would be inappropriate if the GGRI-NTT did not have contact and



sister church relationships with other churches in Indonesia and in countries closer by. They do have sister church relationship with the GGRC, the GGRI in Papua and West Kalimantan, and with the FRCA and the Reformed/Liberated Church in The Netherlands. Contacts, even though still limited, have also been made with the Kosin Presbyterian Churches in South Korea. *Distance, culture and language differences might be a challenge but must not be used as a reason to turn down the proposal of a relationship.*

As far as distance is concerned, the Canadian Reformed Churches also have sister church relationships with churches as far as Australia and Africa. Indonesia is not any different. As far as the language and culture is concerned, there are people in Canada, like Rev. A.J. Pol and Rev. H. Versteeg and others,

who know Indonesian language and culture. There are also people in the Indonesian churches who know English. This will certainly be helpful for further contact and the developing of a sister church relationship. The Canadian Reformed Churches established sister church relations with the Kosin Presbyterian Church in South Korea, although at that time no Canadian minister could speak Korean.

The Kosin Presbyterian Churches were accepted as sister churches also because of the relationship which had been established with them by the churches in The Netherlands. The same thing can be applied with the GGRI-NTT since they are the result of the mission done by the Dutch Churches. Some older people in Canada still remember hearing about Sumba in their younger

age when they lived in The Netherlands. This means that Sumba is not that alien from the minds and hearts of some people here.

### **A hopeful conclusion**

To recapitulate, the Canadian Reformed Churches should take into serious consideration the proposal of the GGRI-NTT. *The Canadian Reformed Churches can play an important role in the life and future of the GGRI-NTT.* Furthermore, we should not let the children of Ishmael dominate and control all of Indonesia. The spiritual children of Isaac should be helped and promoted in order to have a positive influence in a country where the majority of the population are followers of Muhammad. May the church of Christ continue to be gathered from all nations and united in the true faith!



## Dick Moes

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# Reformedevangelism.com

Welcome to our new evangelism column. This column is meant to replace *Outreach: a biannual publication of the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce to equip the saints for the work of evangelism*. It will appear once a month and is intended to continue the task of equipping the saints for the work of evangelism. Primarily this will be done by whetting your appetite for information we have on our new website, which you can access at [www.reformedevangelism.com](http://www.reformedevangelism.com). If you have a computer, why don't you have a look and see what our website has at this moment? As you will notice, it's only a modest beginning. But we plan to update it on a regular basis so that in the years to come, this website will be a gold mine of information for the work of evangelism. So, please bear with us and pray for us as we launch into our new venture.

## ALPHA

Besides our new website, we have another exciting new undertaking. I'm sure many of you have heard of ALPHA. Personally, I've seen all the ALPHA videos four times and co-taught this course for street people in an upper room mission. There are many good things that can be said about this course; not least, that the speaker, Nicky Gumbel, is an extremely effective communicator. There are, however, also some theological downsides to this course. Others have written about these; I have done so

myself as well.<sup>1</sup> Thus, I will not focus on them at this time.

What I would like to do is explain to you why ALPHA is so popular. This has to do with a shift that is taking place in evangelism. The emphasis is shifting from mass evangelism and seeker evangelism to process evangelism. While personal commitment is still made by raising your hand, walking down an aisle and one-on-one relationships, there is a renewed emphasis on making this commitment within a community of believers with a personal mentor. While tracts are still handed out and seeker services are still held, there is a renewed emphasis on the church as a caring community that receives people who eventually, by the grace of God, come to faith. ALPHA fits within this shift that is taking place, for it offers people interested in finding out more about the Christian faith a church community in which they can do this. The evenings begin with a potluck supper that lasts for about an hour. People fellowship together and talk about all sorts of things, building relationships as they do. Then, once the meal is over, there is a 45-minute teaching session and 45-minute discussion session.

## Not wise to recommend

Because of the theological downsides of ALPHA, the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce does not find it wise to recommend this course to you. It does, however, like the ALPHA concept of a

fellowship meal in a local church with a 90-minute teaching and discussion session. We believe that this is how the ancient church also did much of its evangelism.<sup>2</sup> That's why we looked for an alternative course that could be used within the same effective, biblical and traditional setting. We found such a course called *Emmaus: The Way of Faith*.<sup>3</sup>

## Emmaus: The Way of Faith

Like ALPHA, it's a course designed to welcome people into the Christian faith and life of the church. It aims to involve the whole church in evangelism, the nurture of new believers and ongoing Christian discipleship. It encourages a journey of faith that is life-changing and enduring in its impact on the community of believers as well as the individual. The course progresses through three stages: contact, nurture and growth. It begins by encouraging the vision of the local church for evangelism and giving practical advice on how to develop **contact** with those outside the church. The course material includes a 15-week **nurture** course that covers the basics of the Christian life and four **growth** books that offer Christians an opportunity to deepen their understanding of Christian living and discipleship.

While ALPHA emphasizes "telling," giving information about Christian faith in 45 minute videos and then breaking into discussion groups, EMMAUS emphasizes "discovery" over "telling." It's interactive

with discussion taking place throughout the whole lesson. While ALPHA's theology reflects its roots (charismatic Anglican), requiring you to make changes to adapt it to your own theological setting, EMMAUS' theology also reflects its roots (traditional Anglican). However, three Reformed churches in The Netherlands<sup>4</sup> have already put EMMAUS through a Reformed "filter," taking out the Anglican and Arminian bugs and augmenting the material with some good Reformed insights.<sup>5</sup> The Taskforce is in possession of the Dutch revision of EMMAUS and is incorporating these changes and adding some of its own. It is also in the process of developing some additional Reformed notes to augment the EMMAUS Leader's Guide.

### Personal note

On a personal note, we are using the EMMAUS material in the Surrey Covenant Reformed Church. The material is well-received by our congregation and is being used to

strengthen our missional calling. So far, we have gone through nine lessons, some of them with outsiders in attendance. Being familiar with both ALPHA and EMMAUS, my personal experience is that from a teaching and learning point of view, EMMAUS is to be preferred over ALPHA. In addition, the revised version fits much better within our theological tradition. The course has been introduced to the Home Mission Committees in the Fraser Valley and was well received. It has also been introduced to the Maranatha Canadian Reformed Church in Surrey where it was also well received. If you would like someone to come out and introduce the course in your congregation, we would be more than willing to do so.

Over the next 15 months, I would like to whet your appetite for this course. I plan to do this by way of giving you an insight into the content of each lesson as well as how the lessons can be taught.<sup>6</sup> At the end of each column, I will refer you to our website where you can

view the participant's guide. You can download this guide and adapt it to your own liking. Should you want further information, the Taskforce will be more than happy to provide it.

<sup>1</sup> "Nicky Gumbel and the Alpha Course (1)" "Nicky Gumbel and the Alpha Course (2)" in *Outreach* (October 2000 and April 2001). You can find these articles at [www.reformedevangelism.com](http://www.reformedevangelism.com) by hitting the link "Library."

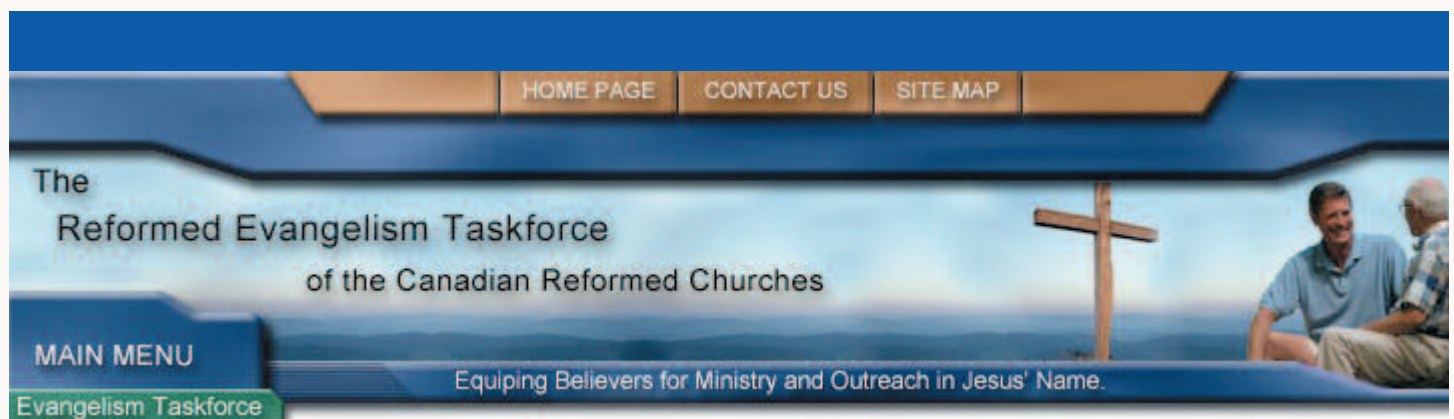
<sup>2</sup> See Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Evangelism: Making Your Church a Faith-Forming Community* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003).

<sup>3</sup> For the Emmaus website in England, see <http://www.natsoc.org.uk/emmaus/> Be sure to check the link "Resources" to get an idea of how comprehensive the EMMAUS course material is.

<sup>4</sup> Liberated Reformed, Free Reformed, Reformed Inner Mission Alliance.

<sup>5</sup> For the Dutch Emmaus website, see [www.emmauscursus.nl](http://www.emmauscursus.nl)

<sup>6</sup> I will be drawing on the Leader's Guide as well as offering some of my own insights.





**J. Moesker**

This is my first “Press Review.” I hope to be able to regularly contribute notes and anecdotes from other magazines to *Clarion*. Please bear with me as I “learn the ropes.”

Article 8 of the Church Order is not that well known among the Canadian Reformed Churches. This Article allows that men who have not pursued the regular course of study at a theological college are seen to have “exceptional gifts.” As far as I know, in the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches only two ministers were admitted to the office via Article 8: Rev. H. Scholten (who became minister in The Netherlands in 1947 and served the churches at Carman, Orangeville and Smithville and was lecturer at the Theological College until 1980) and Rev. W. Pouwelse (who became minister in The Netherlands in 1972 and served the churches at Burlington West and Langley).

Apparently Article 8 is also a little-used article of the Church Order in the sister churches in The Netherlands. In November Rev. Pier Poortinga was ordained as minister of the Word of the *Gerformeerde Kerk (Vrijgemaakt)* at Eindhoven-Best. As it has been more than thirty years since the last “Article 8 minister” was ordained (Rev. W. Pouwelse), the *Nederlands Dagblad* dedicated an article to this matter. Editor Roel Sikkema writes (my translation, jm):

... Poortinga was not just a candidate waiting for a call. He had not had full theological training, as is usually the case in the church federation of which he is a member. He is becoming “Article 8 minister,” as it is officially known. According to that article of the Church Order theological training is required for admission to the office of minister, unless it becomes convincingly apparent that someone has exceptional gifts “of godliness,

humility, modesty, good intellect, and discretion as well as the gift of public speech.” “Those are gifts which others should be able to point out in you,” says Poortinga. “These are things which you could never say about yourself.”

Little Pier wanted to become minister already when he was young, “just as my friends wanted to become fireman or policeman.” But it didn’t come about. Poortinga attended *HAVO*, afterwards went to the teachers college, met a girl and married at a young age.”

Over the following years Poortinga studied classical languages and some theology in Utrecht, but didn’t continue to pursue going to the Theological University in Kampen for financial reasons. Instead he became teacher, gave some catechetical instruction, and served many years as elder in the church of Zeewolde.

It was during that time that some people around Poortinga began to raise the possibility of “Article 8.” “I didn’t see anything in that at first,” he says. “I used to view that negatively. In my mind an octavist – as they were also called – was a second-rate minister.” He had settled on teaching Reformed Studies. “I felt that I was in the right place as teacher, God apparently found that this sufficient for me.”

Poortinga didn’t feel an “inner calling” to the ministry, though he did see God’s guidance in seeking an answer to the question of whether God ultimately wanted him to be minister. “God only calls you when

you’re called by a church,” he said. “That is why the first call I received was so important to me.” But he began to think differently about it all when fellow office bearers and some ministers in the places where he gave catechetical instruction kept urging him. “I thought: ‘If God wants me to become minister, that will become apparent. And if He has something else in mind, that will too.’”

The consistory of Zeewolde was positive. Classis briefly discussed whether Article 8 was still relevant today. In connection with that, the matter of Poortinga’s previous interrupted studies was raised. “But the consistory and the classis decided that the evaluation of the ‘exceptional gifts’ stood apart from my previous history. The question was: do you need to look to the past in order to mark out the way the Lord wants to go with you in the future?”

Classis was only just closed in 1998, when Poortinga announced that he was going to move. “I became the director of a school district in Zuidhorn. Many people didn’t understand that. They said, ‘You wanted to become minister, didn’t you?’ Yes, I wanted to. But at that time it was not certain at all that that would happen. You don’t control the way of Article 8 yourself, it just happens. I always said, ‘If you want to become minister, you need to go to Kampen.’ But at a certain moment



the Lord places you on the way of Article 8.”

The consistory of Zuidhorn carried on with the process of Article 8 and, in consultation with the Theological University in Kampen set up a program of supplementary studies for Poortinga. In 2002 he underwent a preparatory examination before Classis and was given three months to speak an edifying word in the churches in the classis. At the end of 2002 he was examined again by a Classis and he received four calls. He accepted the call to the church of Eindhoven-Best. Roel Sikkema continues in *Het Nederlands Dagblad*:

The new minister is not afraid that he will later be regarded as second rank minister. “The ministry is not primarily a matter of knowing a lot. Abraham Kuyper once said: you also need to inquire whether candidates who graduate from university have those exceptional gifts. He compared it to organists. There are some who cannot read a single musical note, but who can play the stars from the sky. There are also conservatory graduates who can play anything, but without much life to it.”

Rev. Pouwelse (seventy-five years of age) never felt like a second rank minister either. When he became minister in 1972 at forty-three years of age, he immediately felt fully accepted by the circle of colleagues. “I was quickly already delegated to general synod. I was also made secretary editor of the weekly magazine *De Reformatie*.”

Prior to entering the ministry, Pouwelse had been employed by Philips as developer of medical apparatus and computers. During the 1960s, when there were church conflicts which led to a church split, he was clerk of the consistory of Eindhoven. . . .

In 1968 Pouwelse moved to Apeldoorn where the past was repeated.

Also there he quickly became office bearer and was involved with a split which came about in 1969. The result was that besides his work, Pouwelse was busy evenings and over the weekends with ecclesiastical matters.

Around that time he began to ask himself if he couldn't become minister. “I was very interested in the ecclesiastical developments. Besides that, the split resulted in a great shortage of ministers.” He approached a number of friends for advice, and they proposed that he make himself available for call via Article 8. In 1971 the consistory gave a positive report, and the Classis was also positive. He then ended up at Regional Synod. “I was required to present a sermon proposal within a few hours, and was then subjected to further examination. The Regional Synod gave permission to pursue this direction. After that I was subjected to an examination by Classis, which was equal to that which Kampen graduates underwent, with one exception: I was not required to give exegesis from the original Hebrew and Greek.” This examination also went well, and Pouwelse was able to speak an edifying word.

Rev. Pouwelse received twenty-six calls! All four churches he served (two in The Netherlands and two in Canada) were larger churches. He completed active service as spiritual caregiver at “*De Wijngaard*,” a care facility for church members.

Like Poortinga, Pouwelse believes that becoming minister via Article 8 should remain the exception. “The normal way is via study at the Theological University. But I believe that God can also call men who have not studied at Kampen to the ministry.” Pouwelse is happy with the decision of Synod Zuidhorn last year concerning this. “It used to be that there were no guidelines. The one Regional Synod did it one way,

the other another way. I question the denial of some who tried in the past.”

At this time that judgement of the exceptional gifts is a matter for the consistory, and someone can only come to classis if he has followed some supplementary studies at the Theological University.

Poortinga is also happy with the new regulations which were implemented just too late for him. “Even so, I am happy with the way which the ecclesiastical assemblies dealt with me. I had a week to make a sermon proposal. I wouldn't have liked it to go as it did with Rev. Pouwelse, who only had a few hours to prepare a sermon.”

In a November 8, 2003 press release of a meeting of the Board of Governors of the Theological University of our sister churches in The Netherlands in the publication *De Reformatie* it was noted that eight students started their propaedeutic year at the university, and eighteen students registered for full time and fifteen for part time preparatory studies. The press release adds (my translation, jm): “The retiring principal, professor Dr. B. Kamphuis announced this happy news at the board of governors meeting held on the 1st of September, 2003, which was also officially the first day of classes. This number of students for the first time reverses the decline in enrollment seen over the past number of years.”

With the number of churches increasing and a number of ministers slated for retirement, we can be sure that it would also cause our churches and the College great happiness to see an increase of students preparing for the ministry and for mission in the Canadian and American Reformed Churches. . . . God bless!





J. Wiskerke van Dooren

# Lord's Day 2



Mrs. J. Wiskerke van Dooren published a Children's Catechism in Dutch. This has been translated with her permission.

You have to write a test. Are you allowed to look at your classmate's paper and copy his answer? May you copy someone else's answers? Of course not! It is your birthday, and you got a Lego box. Are you allowed to look at the instruction sheet and copy it to make a car? Of course!

What is the difference? Why is copying forbidden? At school there is a rule against cheating. You must give your own answer. You can call that a rule: cheating is forbidden.

When you cheat even one time and get caught, you feel bad. And yet, the rule that cheating is forbidden is for your own good. Wouldn't you become



lazy if you could cheat? You would not learn anything. And the result? You would not pass.

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*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.*

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You can say the same about the rules God has given: the Ten Commandments. You know them because they are read in church every Sunday morning. There are many things you have to do, and other things you may not do. It is hard to obey them all, isn't it? And yet, this law is for your own good.

If you look at these Ten Commandments, then you also see what you do wrong. If you follow these commandments, it goes well with you. But if you do not follow these rules, it really does not go well.

If you do all your homework, you don't have to cheat in class. But we always cheat with the Ten Commandments. We do not want to obey them. This teaches you that you need Jesus Christ. It is worse than failing a grade. Living without Jesus Christ is the worst you can do.

What do the Ten Commandments tell us to do? This is explained later in Lord's Days 34 and following. For now, only one rule is enough, and you should know that rule by heart. Jesus Christ himself gave us this rule: You must love the Lord above all, and you must love your neighbour (the people around you) as yourself. You can read this rule in Luke 10:27.

It is very easy to learn this rule by heart. You probably know it already. It is much harder to follow this rule in your life. Actually, no one wants to do that. Deep down inside us, something is terribly wrong.



# The Governing Body in the Church\*

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## Christ's rule

During the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the governing of the church became Reformed. Instead of pope, bishops and priests the true church instituted the proper New Testament offices of ministers, elders and deacons. These offices together represented the Lord in the church: his care, his rule and his love. The preaching replaced the central place of the mass, the home-visits replaced the confessional, and the deacons replaced the care of monks and nuns. The return to the Bible also gave biblical forms of church-government and support.

Upon his return to Geneva from Strasbourg in 1541, John Calvin introduced a Reformed Church Order, called the "Ecclesiastical Ordinances." This church order has provided the important principles for the Reformed Church Government: the spiritual rule is not centralized in a person or city, but is *locally* exercised by the consistory. The principle of "no lording over the other" was adhered to. The characteristic of living and working in the congregation became "ministerium," that is: service. The office bearer is nothing more than his Master, who came not to be served but to serve and to give his life for many.

The basis for our present Church Order (CO) was laid at the Convent of Wezel in 1568, via other Provincial and General Synods in The Netherlands (Embsen in 1571, Middelburg in 1581, and The Hague in 1586). Its final adoption was decided upon at the famous international Synod of Dordt in 1618/19. This Church Order regulates the scriptural and therefore spiritual order in our churches (see Belgic Confession Art 30).

## Church organization

The Church Order of the Canadian Reformed Churches is fully based on "Dordt." With common agreement (consent), all the churches of the federation pledge to abide by this Church

Order. With this order the churches recognize that all things in Christ's Church ought to be done decently and in good order (1 Cor 14:40). By accepting and adhering to this Church Order the churches live with each other and support each other in a federation of churches, also called a bond of churches. In this bond the governing body is the consistory of a local congregation. The local church remains autonomous but not independent. It is helped, supported and encouraged to grow in the Lord by the neighbouring churches, which form a Classis. The Classis, in turn, receives help and direction from an annual Regional Synod. Once every three years all the churches meet together in General Synod. As you know, our next General Synod will be convened on February 10 in Chatham, Ontario.

Office bearers of the local congregations are delegated to these "major" or "broader" assemblies. These assemblies are described as "major" or "broader" since a larger number of churches gather to deal with matters which the churches have in common or which could not be finalized in the "minor" assemblies.

## Authority

As stated above, the Lord Jesus Christ is the first and only authority in church. His authority is represented in the office bearers who form the consistory. The other assemblies, Classes and Synods, do not have authority of their own. The authority of a "broader" assembly is one given to them by all the churches belonging to a Classis, a Regional Synod or General Synod only for the period of meeting. In this case the Church Order speaks about "jurisdiction," CO Art 37.

Delegates are sent to the "broader" assemblies with "credentials." In these letters the delegating assembly declares that the persons sent may act on behalf

of them for the benefit of all the churches. The churches promise to receive the decisions of the "broader" assembly in accordance with Art 31 CO. The rule of Article 31 is that decisions of broader assemblies must be considered as settled and binding, unless it is proven that such a decision conflicts with the Word of God or the Church Order. All this clearly shows that Classes and Synods indeed are convened to help the local church of which we are members. So, take note, we are not members of the Canadian Reformed Churches but of a local Canadian Reformed Church.

## Anti-hierarchical

The main characteristic of Reformed church government is that it is strongly anti-hierarchical. Our Church Order clearly shows this character (see *Book of Praise*, p. 655ff). I like to highlight the following articles: Article 6 – The minister is only the minister of a local church; he is not a bishop or superintendent over a number of churches; Articles 3,4 – The office bearers are called by the congregation and not merely by the consistory; Article 24 – Our churches do not have elders and deacons for life but they serve for a term of three or more years; Article 30 – "Broader" assemblies cannot make up their own agenda. They can only deal with matters which the churches have placed on their table; Article 31 – Scripture and the Reformed Church Order are norms for decisions and not personal opinions and/or convictions. Articles 66-70 emphasize the active involvement of the whole congregation in discipline matters. Finally the "no-lording" principle is clearly expressed in Article 74 CO!

Christ's rule and authority is not invested in a single person or in a higher body over the local church to which we belong. The governing body in the church is our consistory.

*\*This article has been written with our forthcoming Synod in Chatham Feb. 10, 2004 in view.*



**Press Release of Classis Ontario West, December 10, 2003, held in Ancaster, Ontario**

**1. Opening**

On behalf of the convening church of Ancaster, Rev. G.Ph van Popta called the meeting to order. He read from Isaiah 40:1-5 and requested the delegates to sing from Hymn 11:1-3, after which he led in prayer.

**2. Credentials**

The delegates from Ancaster examined the credentials and found them to be in good order. It was noted that the delegates of Kerwood would come late. Classis was declared constituted. The officers are Rev. J. Slaa – chairman, Rev. J. E. Ludwig – clerk and Rev. H. Versteeg – vice-chairman. As the chairman was late, the vice-chairman took the chair until the delegates of Kerwood have arrived. Rev. Versteeg thanked the church at Ancaster for its work as convening church and welcomes everyone. With respect to matters of memorabilia, it was remembered that the Church of London has not yet been successful and is still seeking a pastor and shepherd for their flock.

**3. Adoption of the Agenda**

The agenda for this meeting was adopted after a modification.

**4. Question Period (ad Art 44 CO)**

All churches affirm that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of broader assemblies are being honored. The Church at London requested advice from classis. Advice was given.

At this point the delegates of the Church of Kerwood arrive together with Rev. John Ferguson, fraternal delegate from the OPC, Presbytery Michigan-Ontario. The delegates of Kerwood and Rev. Ferguson are welcomed. The vice-chairman hands over the chair to the chairman Rev. Slaa.

**6. Correspondence**

- a) A letter was received from Classis Ontario Niagara in which they propose to Classis Ontario West that, at the beginning of January 2004, each Classis assume responsibilities for its own needy church. The letter is received by classis but will be discussed under the proposals submitted by the Church of Ancaster as deputy church for the fund for Needy Churches.
- b) A letter was received from brs. Bredenhof and Wildeboer requesting that they may also receive permission to speak an edifying Word in the URC. Classis does not object that these brothers speak an edifying Word in the URC. Grounds: a) Synod Neerlandia 2001 decided “they shall open the pulpits to each other’s ministers observing the rules of the perspective churches” (Art 73 consideration 4.6.4).
- b) the URC have jurisdiction over their own pulpits.

At this point Rev. Joel Dykstra from classis Ontario South URC arrived and is welcomed to the meeting.

**7. Fund for Needy Churches**

- a) Classis received a report from the church of Ancaster, deputy church of the fund for Needy Churches. Classis acquiesced with the request from Classis Niagara that at the beginning of January 2004 each Classis assume the responsibilities for its own needy church.
- b) Classis concurred to support the Church in Grand Rapids with assistance at a level of \$54.00 per communicant member per annum commencing January 1, 2004.

**8. Fund for Needy Students**

Classis received a report from the Church at Chatham, the deputy church for the fund for needy students. Classis concurred to set the assessment for the Needy Student fund at \$12.50 per communicant member for the year 2004.



**9. Fraternal delegates**

Rev. Ferguson addressed classis on behalf of the Presbytery of Michigan and Ontario of the OPC with words of greetings and encouragement to continue to live as faithful churches. Rev. Versteeg responded.

Rev. Dykstra addressed classis on behalf of the Classis Southern Ontario of the URC, speaking about the ongoing progress of unity between our churches, recognizing each other increasingly as churches which desire to live faithfully to the LORD. Rev. D. Vandeburgt responded.

**10. Appointments**

- a) convening Church for next classis: Chatham
- b) suggested officers: chairman – Rev. D. Vandeburgt  
clerk – Rev. J. Slaa  
vice-chairman – Rev. J. Ludwig
- c) date: March 17, 2004; alternate June 9, 2004
- d) place: Church at Chatham

**11. Personal question period**

Opportunity was given for personal questions.

**12. Censure ad Article 34 CO**

Chairman thankfully noted that censure was not necessary.

**13. Adoption of Acts and Press Release**

The Acts are adopted and Press Release are approved.

**14. Closing**

The chairman requested classis to sing Psalm 86:1, 2 and then he led in prayer.

The chairman closed classis.

*H. Versteeg,  
for Classis Ancaster, Dec. 10, 2003*

Derek Stoffels and Arthur Kingma dutifully provided your readership with an accounting of the principals' conference in Gimli, Manitoba (issue 24). They made a big point of a minor issue in Van Dijk's presentation. First of all, why do we, as Canadian Reformed people, feel it is always necessary to criticize speakers when we report about a presentation made by someone not specifically Canadian Reformed? At least they were accommodating, I suppose, in admitting that only "some of us did question Dr. Van Dijk."

What did the two authors question? Apparently they do not agree with Van Dijk that a Reformed school has a "transformational role." According to Van Dijk, a school community works transformationally by equipping our students so that they can work under the umbrella of God's total sovereignty and to apply God's Word *in all areas of life*. These students must be trained so that they will take the gospel with them when they go into the world and work as a salting salt, and a shining light. Using the Kuyperian maxim, "that not an inch of this world, but it is the Lord's," the speaker emphasized the importance of employing the gospel in the total breadth of this world around us. Our Reformed students must accept the challenge to make a Christian impact on the culture of this world. My colleagues believe, however, that it is not the task of the school "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." Van Dijk did not propose that our schools, as such, stand on the street corners or take a place in the public forum to expound God's Word. More importantly, it's what the school does to model and enable students for the task they will have as adults.

Teachers at our Reformed schools work with the minds, and make an impact on the souls of our students, and therefore we must be keenly aware of the transformational challenge given to our schools (families and church) as

found in Romans 12:1. There the apostle Paul writes, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is. . . ." Every time we let God's Word shine (*sola Scriptura!*) on the disciplines of our instruction, we are helping our students learn "what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will," so that our students may take ownership of the calling they have as God's children in this world. The matrix of our Reformed Christian world view should become an integral part of their embedded mind-set so that they can function as prophets in this world (Lord's Day 12). The Reformed education we impart to our children would be seriously impoverished if we did not move beyond the insular and antithetical nature that some people apparently want our schools to be.

Kingma and Stoffels assert that "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." There are a few problems with the clarity of the above statement.

a) What do the authors mean when they contrast "mission" or "transforming" schools with the statement that our schools are set up "for our covenant youth?" The second clause appears to be a non sequitur. What do they really mean? Do we not equip our students to witness for Christ? Is life organized into mutually exclusive domains, e.g., of the family, school and church? Scripture teaches that we must equip our youth to recognize God's sovereignty in *all* disciplines of life, without mutual exclusivity (Deut 6:4-9). Therefore, when they become adults, committed to the LORD, they

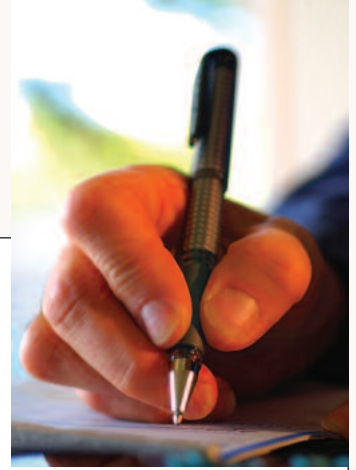
will speak about his sovereignty wherever the LORD calls them. Then, the Holy Spirit will equip them, and bless their efforts, as He does when students are still in school. My two colleagues, however, appear to give the impression that the work of Reformed Christian school teachers is juxtaposed over against the preaching of the gospel, and the work of the Holy Spirit which transforms young and old! Our schools would be dark and dead places if the Spirit was not working and transforming there with his Word.

b) The false dilemma which the authors appear to pose reminds me of a dualistic worldview embraced by Anabaptists or Roman Catholics. A confession that Christ is Lord of all means that life is integrated in its totality. Therefore, schools will have a *different emphasis*, but the purpose in life which we all share is nurtured and taught at home and the school, and taught and motivated by the proclamation of the gospel on Sundays.

Let me end with a quotation from Dr. N.H. Beversluis (*Let the Children Come*).

By Reformed is meant a way of understanding and obeying God's three great commands, which were given in the beginning in the garden and reaffirmed through Christ's restoration of "all things." These are the commands to love God above all, in personal piety; to love one another in human community; and, under the impulse and power of these loves, to do the world's work in cultural affirmation and transformation (p. 23).

Pieter H. Torenvliet  
Abbotsford, B.C.



**Dear Sir:**

Dr. Byzet's article (Volume 52.24) regarding the problems in the Liberated Churches in The Netherlands leave me with several concerns. I have read several issues of *Reformanda*, and am not sure that Dr. Byzet accurately represents what Dr. Van Gorp and his cohorts are saying. Dr. Byzet states that a group of people, "are considering withdrawing from the church." Dr. Van Gorp would not agree with that. He states clearly that they are liberating themselves in the same way we liberated ourselves in 1944. That has far more implication for us than if a group of people simply leaves. By "liberating" themselves from the Churches in Holland, can they not expect the same treatment from the Canadian Reformed Churches as we expected from the Christian Reformed Churches after our liberation? Further Dr. Byzet makes the point that the people in the *Reformanda* group bring things "forward in an aggravating manner." That is possible. But rather than considering that, is it not more important to deal with the issues they are bringing forward? It's always easy to find fault with the person(s) who express concerns and hide behind what might be considered to be their aggravating and unpleasant manner. One of the issues being brought forward by the *Reformanda* group is that of the Sunday issue. Dr. Byzet defends a second view regarding the Lord's Day. It's only of late that we are being told that this second view is quite acceptable, with this second view making it quite acceptable for church members to work in non-essential jobs on Sundays with impunity.

Why did our forefathers not always teach us this second view of the Sunday? Why were we always told that the Sunday was the Day of the Lord, and we must rest from our labours on that day? Could it be that it was based on solid scriptural reasoning? Dr. Byzet uses the example "much loved and honoured" minister to give credence to this second view. Wouldn't it be far more prudent to open Scripture and let it speak to us rather than using the opinion of a late minister? Consider the incredible damage it does when we hear the law being read every Sunday, only to hear our leaders, with Bible closed, tell us we can give another interpretation to it. The word "hypocrisy" will quickly come to the lips of people, especially our youth, and then it's hard for parents to argue that. Much more could, and should, be said regarding these issues. It's important that the actions of the *Reformanda* group be taken seriously, and that the concerns they express are dealt with in light of Scripture. If we do that, with humble prayers as sinners, we may depend on the Lord's mercy to guide his church through these times of turmoil.

*In Christ, H.A. Stel, Barrhead, Alberta*

**Dear Sir,**

Your introduction to "New Opportunities" in the November 21 issue is right on when you state that Christians should be involved with the political area of our nation. Over the past year, thanks to Christians, pressure was brought to bear on politicians. Even Mr. Harper finally jumped on the bandwagon to declare that "same sex marriage" is wrong. . . alas, too little and too late!

Mr. Harper has had many opportunities to stand for the right, but has chosen to avoid moral issues as much as possible. A recent example was when MP Larry Spencer was fired from his position as family affairs critic, and told to apologize. . . even though he spoke the truth – things that we believe to be true to God's Word. I understand the amount of pressure on Mr. Spencer, but when you're right, you're right. I regret that he made the apology.

The merger of the Progressive Conservative and the Canadian Alliance parties will further water down an already morally weak Party. Why? All for the sake of "power" and "beating the Liberals." This is shortsighted and devoid of any hope for a moral future for Canada.

If a party is based on nothing more than populism and chasing the polls to win the next election at any cost, it is on the wrong track. Fear of the media will continue to drive them to suppress honest biblical viewpoints, just as it did in the Larry Spencer affair.

I believe most of your readers know about the Christian Heritage Party. If Mr. Spencer had been an MP for the CHP, he would have been supported for his forthright and biblical statements about perverse sexual conduct.

Christians are going to be very disappointed to find that this "new" Tory party will not represent us, nor defend what we believe. Democracy is weakened if we do not each vote for the person or party who best represents our most deeply held views.

This country was founded on biblical principles that recognize "the supremacy of God and the rule of law." Only one Party in Canada will use the Bible as its handbook and hold itself accountable to God. I refer to the CHP.

You know what's right.

*Tom Kroesbergen,  
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