

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

Volume 53, No. 10 • May 7, 2004

*Jesus lives to  
intercede  
for us*

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*Faith that  
justifies never  
stands alone*

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*A shortage of  
organists*



J. Visscher

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# The Organist as Dinosaur

*As you can guess, I am not in favour of relegating either organs or organists to the ash heap of history, much less to the Tyrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta.*

We all know what happened to the dinosaur, or at the very least we think that we know – it became extinct. You will not find one to look at or to pet in any local zoo. Bones abound in various museums, especially in places like Alberta. Drawings or artistic images are everywhere, along with computer generated movies, but the real thing has disappeared.

## A shortage of organists

Does this same future await the organist, and in particular the church organist in the ranks of the Canadian Reformed Churches? I have been led to ponder this thought as more and more news trickles in about the growing shortage of organists in quite a number of our local churches. There are churches that have not even one qualified or trained organist. Some churches have resorted to contacting neighbouring churches who have more than one to see if the other can be borrowed, rented or hired. In other places pianists are being asked to tackle the organ, often without knowing how to play the pedals or how to set the proper registration. Needless to say this last situation has forced some churches to make more use of the piano, since pianists are not in short supply.

## Other instruments

As such a move away from the organ to the piano is no heresy. I too enjoy some musical variety in the worship service. Nevertheless, from both observing and talking with any number of pianists, I am led to conclude that the piano will not do as a permanent alternative to the organ in any of our larger congregations. It will work fine as the occasional substitute. It will work great in combination with the organ, especially if both the organist and the pianists are accomplished players, but for the rest, the piano can not compete with the organ in a church worship setting.

As for whether or not any other instrument or group of instruments can, I am not able to say with professional certainty. I have heard that in Korea some of the very large congregations of our sister church make use of orchestras. How well that

works when it comes to accompanying congregational singing, I do not know. What I do know is that it would be virtually impossible for any of our churches to muster the talent needed for an orchestra. Add to that the thought of playing all of those different psalm and hymns selections twice on the Lord's Day and the preparation that this would require, and you have a double impossibility. And then we have not even discussed whether or not an orchestra would be deemed to be liturgically acceptable in our worship services.

## Congregational singing

Another important element to consider in all of this is the matter just touched on, namely congregational singing. Which instrument best suits the promotion and expression of such singing? Again, I realize that in another of our sister churches, namely the Free Church of Scotland, the answer is very simple and straight-forward, none! This church is of the conviction that instruments should not be used at all in worship. The human voice is the only suitable musical instrument. Naturally, such a position is to be respected, but it is not a position that has garnered any real degree of support in our churches or in most Reformed churches.

And then there is the band. It is a known fact that many churches have abandoned solo instruments like the organ, and even the piano, and opted for the band. Such a change is popular with the younger crowd seeing that they have grown up in a culture where rock music and rock bands dominate. Again, this is not to say that there is anything intrinsically wrong with a band. What is a band but a small orchestra made up mostly of drums, acoustic guitars and synthesizers?

Still, any one who knows our churches knows as well that just as a cappella singing does not have the support of most of the members, neither does the band. Many churches that have gone this route have experienced “worship wars” and in the end have had to settle for two different worship formats: a traditional one and a contemporary one. Such a “solution”



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

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**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:  
(subscriptions, advertisements, etc.):**

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One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202  
Email: [clarion@premierprinting.ca](mailto:clarion@premierprinting.ca)

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:  
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
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Subscription Rates for 2004	Regular Mail	Air Mail
Canada*	\$42.00*	\$69.00*
U.S.A. U.S. Funds  	\$44.50	\$57.50
International	\$69.00	\$103.00

\*Including 7% GST – No. 890967359RT  
Advertisements: \$13.50 per column inch  
Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$19.00 per column inch  
We reserve the right to refuse ads.

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

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Agreement No. 40063293; PAP Registration No. 9907; ISSN 0383-0438

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may have kept the peace somewhat but the price has often been a polarized and divided congregation.

**The organ**

So where does this leave us? It leaves us with the organ as still the best instrument when it comes to the maintenance and promotion of congregational singing. It also leaves us with the organ as the most flexible instrument to accompany any number of different types of musical performances and presentations outside of the worship service.

And this should not surprise us, for what is an organ but an orchestra that can be played by one person. Look at the stops on any decent size organ and you will see that they run the gamut of all sorts of musical instruments: trumpet, cello, viola, horn and so forth.

As a result, in some ways it is not at all surprising that organs are making a comeback. In particular, new custom-made pipe organs are in high demand today. Across North

**Inside . . .**

Since I am a resident of Alberta, I became quite excited when Dr. J. Visscher started his editorial with talk about dinosaur bones and museums in places like Alberta. But he was not really talking about dinosaurs. He's talking about church organists! Now what has a church organist in common with a dinosaur? You will have to read the editorial to find out.

It has been a while since Rev. P.G. Feenstra submitted an article for *Clarion*. We are very grateful that he was able to submit another article in his series, *Living by the Doctrines of Scripture*. He deals with the topic of "Faith that justifies never stands alone."

Rev. Cl. Stam presents us with his second instalment *What's New???* You will see that he deals with church news in his own unique style. Hopefully all the churches in our federation will start sending Rev. Stam their bulletins. Since this can be done via email, it should be an easy and quick thing to do. It is wonderful to hear what is going on in our federation and also the sister churches.

It has been a while since Rev. G. Wieske retired from the active ministry. Recently we received a submission with respect to his retirement and we are publishing it now. We wish Rev. and Mrs. Wieske the Lord's blessings during their well-deserved retirement.

We have an update from MERF Canada News as well as press releases from three Classes. We also have our regular columns *Treasures, New and Old*, *Children's Catechism* and *Education Matters*.

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America and parts of Asia many marvellous new organs are being installed. In Canada too there is a pipe organ renaissance underway as churches and concert halls are placing orders. Indeed, one of the newest and finest pipe organs in the world has recently been completed in The Francis Winspear Centre, Edmonton, by a French Canadian organ builder called Letourneau.

### What to do?

In light of all of these developments the question still remains: what to do about our organist shortage? As you can guess, I am not in favour of relegating either organs or organists to the ash heap of history, much less to the Tyrrell Museum in Drumheller, Alberta. To do so would be to do irreparable damage to our rich and biblical tradition of congregational singing in worship. It would have a major impact on our worship services. (If you are skeptical about that, please read Thomas Day's book, *Why Catholics Can't Sing*.)

Where does this leave us? It leaves us with a need to encourage and stimulate the training of new and younger organists.

### In our homes

The first place to look for such a revival is surely in our homes. Parents must do more to encourage their children to study music. Ours is a computer dominated age filled with strategy games, X Boxes, and GameBoys, but there is no indication that a lot of time spent devoted to such activities produces any dividends in terms of real personal development. Better to have your children practising behind the piano or the organ than to have them zapping the enemy on the screen. Hence parents need to make some serious choices about the sort of leadership and encouragement that they give to their children. Are they really prodding and paying for their children to develop the sort of skills and abilities that will enrich their lives, as well as the life of the church?

### In our schools

If parents can do and should do more, our Christian schools should also be more involved. Does your school have a music program? Does your school have a qualified music teacher? Does your school train young people to develop their musical talents, as well as their understanding of what constitutes good music?

It is possible for our schools to be culturally deprived places. Then most of the emphasis falls of the core subjects of language and math, with perhaps a little on the more practical areas of home economics and shop. As for art and music, they are left to sink to the bottom of the curriculum.

Little wonder, therefore, that in such a situation the church has a hard time recruiting organists, even pianists and other musically qualified people. When a culture prizes something

and esteems it highly, the effects will filter down and can enrich it in wonderful and surprising ways.

### In our churches

Still, parents and schools are not the only parts of the equation; the local church belongs to it as well. For opens the church should do all it can to support its organist(s). This can be done in various ways: paying for their music lessons and sheet music, urging them to attend conferences and workshops, ensuring that there is a good quality instrument to play on, and giving them an honorarium.

Most likely, the last two things just mentioned will raise a few eyebrows. What constitutes a good instrument? Here I am in full agreement with the Rev. W.W.J. Van Oene, who on more than one occasion in this magazine has expressed himself as being in favour of a pipe organ. Over the years I have preached in many churches and heard many an organ and without fail the electronic versions have always disappointed. I know that sometimes a good quality pipe organ is hard to find and can be costly, but in the end it is money well-spent.

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*Nevertheless, from both observing and talking with any number of pianists, I am led to conclude that the piano will not do as a permanent alternative to the organ in any of our larger congregations.*

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Then too, there is the matter of an honorarium. Should the organist be paid? The most common rejoinder to that is: "there are a lot of volunteers in our church who are not paid. Why single out the organist?" For the very simple reason that it is unlikely that anyone in the church, besides the minister, has spent more time in study, in taking lessons, and in preparation. If a church wants a quality organist, it must be prepared to honour him or her with an honorarium.

Why, from my perspective it would be even better if some of our largest churches were to pay their organists a salary and put him or her on staff. Such a development would do wonders for the musical ministry of the church. Think of how it would stimulate the children and young people, enhance choirs and create new ones, and promote the development of Reformed church music.

The opportunities are many. What so often holds us back is our lack of vision and determination. So how is it in your church? How is the music in your worship services? How is the congregational singing? Finally, what are you doing to prevent your organist from becoming a brontosaurus?



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# Jesus lives to intercede for us



MATTHEW 13:52

*Therefore He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them.*

Hebrews 7:25

**Read: Hebrews 7:11-28**

At this time of year, the church commemorates the ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into heaven. Ascension Day is not one of those cherished days on the Christian calendar such as Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter. We know that the birth of our Lord Jesus means that the Saviour came into the world, and we know that his death means that He took our sins upon Himself. We know that his resurrection means that He conquered sin and death. But what does the ascension of our Lord signify?

Concerning Christ's ascension into heaven, the Heidelberg Catechism identifies three benefits, of which the first is that "...He is our Advocate in heaven before his Father" (Lord's Day 18 Q/A 49). Indeed, the writer to the Hebrews says that we have a High Priest who is "...exalted above the heavens" (7:26) and who "...always lives to intercede for [us]" (7:25). Christ now applies the benefits of his death and resurrection to us by speaking on our behalf in the presence of his Father.

The Levitical priests were prevented by death from continuing in office, but Jesus has a permanent priesthood because He lives forever (7:23,24). Notice that the writer uses the Name "Jesus" within this context (7:22), thereby pointing to the earthly ministry of our Saviour. This is the Name of which an angel said to Joseph in a dream, "...you are to give Him the name Jesus,

because He will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). Because Jesus died but rose again, his priesthood is permanent and, as our ascended Saviour, He exercises his priesthood in the heavenly tabernacle. Jesus Christ sits at the Father's right hand, where He intercedes for us. This is the flow of thought when the writer says, "Therefore, He is able to save completely those who come to God through Him, because He always lives to intercede for them." Jesus Christ lives and therefore He acts as Saviour to this very day!

The Levitical priests appeared in the LORD's presence with the blood of goats and bulls, but Christ "...entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb 9:12). On the basis of his own blood which He shed for us on the cross for the forgiveness of all our sins, the Lord Jesus Christ can intercede for us with the Father. When we come to God for the forgiveness of our sins in the Name of Jesus, the Saviour speaks on our behalf. When we pray to God in the Name of Jesus Christ, Christ intercedes for us. We can approach God and enter the heavenly throne room in prayer since we have a great High Priest in heaven (Heb 9:19-22).

This is a tremendous comfort for us when we approach God in true faith. Christ is able to save us completely because of his redeeming work on the

cross, and He indeed intercedes for us with the Father to that effect. Sin was the great obstacle between God and us after the Fall, but Christ came to clear away the obstacle and reconcile us to the Father. We can again have fellowship with the Father.

There was a time when our accuser, the devil, spoke about us in the presence of the Father (cf. Job 1:6-11; 2:1-4). The devil entered the heavenly throne room to point out the weaknesses and sins of God's people, but after Christ's resurrection and ascension this is no longer possible (Rev 12:9,10). There is no longer someone appearing before God to make a case *against* us, but there is Someone making a case *for* us! There is no longer an *accuser* in heaven, but an *Advocate*! As John writes, "...we have one who speaks to the Father in our defence - Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (1 John 2:1). The good news of Christ's ascension is that our High Priest intercedes for us as our Advocate in heaven. As such, the Lord Jesus Christ applies his redeeming work to us.

The wonderfully liberating message of the text is that salvation is guaranteed for us as believers because Jesus Christ lives to intercede for us. As Paul writes, "...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus..." (Rom 8:1). Complete and eternal salvation is guaranteed in Christ Jesus for believers!



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# Faith that justifies never stands alone

*Our gracious God, without any doing of our own,  
transfers and deposits into our account the  
righteousness and holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

## Luther's difficulty

One of the main teachings of the Great Reformation of the sixteenth century was the doctrine of justification by faith alone. By the grace of God Martin Luther rediscovered this glorious truth when studying the book of Romans and coming across the phrase, "The just shall live by faith" (1:17). Luther's emphasis on the doctrine of justification by faith alone made it difficult for him to accept the letter of James as the inspired word of God. He had trouble deciphering what James meant when he wrote, "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone" (2:24). Luther's reaction was an overreaction. The fact that we are justified by faith alone does not take away the necessity of works. James does not overthrow the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Those who are justified are also sanctified. "Faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone" (John Calvin).

## Faith is not separated from works

The relationship between justification, faith and works is introduced by James in chapter 2:14. He writes, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has not deeds?" We may say repeatedly that we believe in the Lord, in the saving merit and grace of Jesus Christ, in the forgiveness of sins and in the power of the Holy Spirit. But what is the benefit

of such a claim if there are no fruits of faith? When righteous deeds are not the pattern of our life, all our pious talk goes out the window. It is an empty confession of faith because Christ's disciples are known by their fruits (John 15:8).

Faith in God is more than being able to speak eloquently about the doctrines of Scripture. Doctrine must always be applied. When we publicly profess our faith we declare that we believe the doctrines of the Old and New Testament. At the same time we promise to commit our whole life to the Lord's service as a living member of his church. Faith that stands alone, that is not followed through with righteous works, is dead. What is dead is useless. As believers we are to rid ourselves of the notion that a person can say he believes in God but in the meantime lives a very worldly life.

To make a point, James uses language that is far from complimentary. He rebukes his readers bluntly, "You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?" (2:20). To think you can be a Christian without showing any evidence of it in your daily task and calling exposes spiritual superficiality.

## Abraham as an illustration

Abraham, the father of all believers, is a clear example of the relationship between faith and works. James says, "Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar" (2:21). When James

refers to Abraham as "our ancestor" he speaks of him as the father of all believers. It's the same matter Paul discusses in Galatians 3:6-9 where he writes:

Consider Abraham: "He believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." Understand, then, that those who believe are children of Abraham. The Scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the gospel in advance to Abraham: "All nations will be blessed through you." So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

All believers are connected to Abraham by faith. The life of Abraham is a classic illustration of one who is justified by faith alone. At the same time his life exhibits very persuasively that the faith which justifies never stands alone.

## Does James 2 negate Romans 4?

Reformed believers have become confused by what James writes in 2:24, "You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." What does James mean when he argues that Abraham was justified by works? Does this not contradict what the apostle writes in Romans 4? Paul says, "What then shall we say about Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say?

‘Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness.’”

Whereas James says Abraham was justified by works, Paul argues that if Abraham was justified by works, he would have something to boast about but not before God. How can we make sense of this? Although we know Martin Luther was wrong, we can understand why he had trouble accepting what James writes. These two passages underline how important it is to read the Bible with precision. For there is a noteworthy distinction being made.

Romans 4:2 speaks about our justification *before God*. A person may pat himself on the back for all the good and wonderful works he does but his boasting will never hold up before the Lord. No one can be placed in the right relationship with God through works. Righteousness is imputed through faith. Every child of God is justified before Him by faith. The Lord transfers Christ’s righteousness to your account through the vehicle and instrument of faith.

All mankind is spiritually bankrupt before the Lord. Our gracious God, without any doing of our own, transfers and deposits into our account the righteousness and holiness of our Lord Jesus Christ. This is our justification before God. It is also the justification Abraham received. Romans 4 goes back to Genesis 15 where the Scripture says very definitely that Abraham “believed the Lord, and it was credited to him as righteousness” (Gen 15:6). Abraham heard the covenant promises of the Lord and responded in faith. The LORD, as it were, deposited righteousness into his account.

Righteousness and justification are never earned through our works but are always received as gifts of grace. Praise God for the marvel of salvation by grace through faith! We stand before the Lord with nothing! We are mere beggars with nothing to give. Yet God in his sovereign grace imputes to us the righteousness we need. He enables us to stand right with Him through Christ. Abraham experienced this when he believed the promises of the Lord. That is how the Lord works justification, whether that be with Abraham or with you and me.

What Paul writes in Romans 4 isn’t contradicted by James. In fact James also quotes Genesis 15:6 when he writes in 2:23, “and the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.’” James knew exactly what that passage meant. But the point he makes is different from that of the apostle Paul. His main concern is: how was it evident *before men* that Abraham was justified? Abraham’s justification was seen in his obedience to the Lord. This is what James means when he says, “Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar?” Note the distinction: Abraham was justified by faith *before God* but he was justified by what he did (by works) *before men*. Abraham’s faith in God, his justification and righteousness, were demonstrated by his works. The way in which someone can see that you and I are justified before God is through faith in action. Whereas Paul emphasizes our justification before God, James takes it one step further and shows how our claim to salvation is verified before others.

The word “righteous” as used in James 2:21 has two general meanings. It means “to acquit or to treat as righteous” but it also means “to show or to demonstrate as righteous.” In Romans 4 the first meaning is in the foreground – Abraham was acquitted, treated and described as righteous before God. In our text the second meaning is highlighted – Abraham was shown and demonstrated to be righteous by his willingness to sacrifice his son. At Mount Moriah we are given a beautiful example of how true it is that faith alone justifies, but the faith that justifies is never alone.

### Going back to Genesis 22

The story is told to us in Genesis 22. The Lord tests Abraham to display the genuineness of his faith. He tells Abraham to take his son, his only son, whom he loves and to go offer him for a burnt offering on one of the mountains. Such a request puzzles us! How can the Lord do this? Had God not promised that He would make Abraham’s children as

numerous as the stars of heaven? And was Abraham considered righteous because he believed it?

Abraham waited many years before this promise was fulfilled. After enjoying the child for approximately fifteen years the Lord says to him, “Take your only son, whom you love and offer him to me.” Yet we are not told of the remotest hesitation on Abraham’s part. His justification before God was clearly seen in his obedience. He did not argue with the Lord. Instead he makes a remarkable statement of faith. As they come to the edge of the mountain he says to his servants. “Stay here with the donkey; I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” The Lord said, “Offer up your son,” but Abraham says, “I will be back and Isaac will be too!”

We read in Hebrews 11:19 that Abraham considered God was able to raise men even from the dead. He went all the way, put Isaac on the altar, tied him up and was completely prepared to sacrifice him because he believed in the God who could raise the dead. Abraham believed in something which to that point in time had never happened! And yet his faith was so strong he believed that Isaac would go home with him even if it took a miracle – a resurrection from the dead. Having faith in the Lord he had the spiritual energy and fortitude to obey. Abraham believed God would keep his covenant and under no circumstance could ever violate his promise. In being willing to sacrifice his son, Abraham was willing to sacrifice himself in obedience.

James 2:22 summarizes what happened in Genesis 22, “You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.” Those who receive righteousness will display that righteousness because Christ dwells within their hearts. By our works faith is brought to its purpose and goal. Justification before God is manifest in justification before men. May the Spirit of Christ bring forth an abundance of fruit of his own work in our lives.

By our works faith is brought to its purpose and goal.



# Retirement of Rev. (and Mrs.) G. Wieske<sup>1</sup>

Sunday, February 23, 2003 will be remembered as a special day for the Church at Rockway for several reasons. The first was unexpected. A wintry storm in the early hours caused a power outage which sent various members of the congregation searching for camping lanterns and flashlights for use in the worship service. The morning service would be conducted by Rev. G. Wieske in a dark gym by the light of a camping lantern perched to the side of the pulpit. A reminder to us that the Lord in his providence determines all things! Secondly, we will remember this Sunday as eight young members made public profession of their faith before the congregation during the morning service. It was an occasion for joy to hear these young men and women respond to the precious promises of God sealed to them in their baptism.

But this day will be especially remembered as the last Sunday that Rev. Garrelt Wieske served as minister in Rockway since beginning his ministry in our congregation on June 15, 1997. On this day he retired from the ministry of the Word. This made the afternoon service special for our minister, the congregation, family and guests.

For his farewell sermon, Rev. Wieske chose Colossians 2: 6, 7 as his text and the theme: "Christ Alone – That's the Gospel!" This text was explained as the apostle Paul's instruction how we came to know Christ, how we must continue in Christ and how we must show love in

Christ. In introducing the theme, Rev. Wieske noted how he began his ministry of the Word in Rockway with a sermon on Mark 10:35. In that text, Christ instructed his disciples how office bearers in his church are called not to lord it over the flock, but to serve the church. In so doing, they must follow the teaching and example of their Lord, Who came not to be served but to serve and who gave his life as a ransom for many.

The text for the farewell service also shows how the Bible can be summarized

in one message, the gospel of Jesus Christ who left his divine glory behind, who came as a servant to redeem and transform his people. In the text, the apostle Paul spoke against the false teachers that were seeking to lead the Colossians astray. They taught that faith in Jesus Christ and Him crucified was not enough. Combining pagan philosophy and legalism, they taught that, apart from Christ, the believers needed something more, a special knowledge or wisdom which the false teachers could provide.





Paul reminds and stresses to the Colossians that he taught them the truth of Christ Jesus the Lord, whose name comprises the entire gospel. The name of Christ speaks of our Messiah, anointed as prophet, priest and king for his people. The name of Jesus is that most wonderful Name which tells us of God's great love that He will save his people from their sins. Outside of Christ, there is no godly wisdom. Being rooted in Him, we may find all that we need. In turn, this will also enable us to overflow in thankfulness overwhelmed by the gospel of Christ also. With this message, despite whatever sadness the congregation and the minister may have felt with his retirement, we were pointed to the unsurpassable comfort of the gospel of our Lord and Saviour who is more than sufficient for all our needs.

After the conclusion of the service, the vice-chairman of Rockway's council spoke a few words on behalf of the council and the congregation in appreciation of what the Lord enabled Rev. Wieske and Mrs. Wieske to do during his ministry in Rockway since June 15, 1997. Rev. J. VanVliet spoke on behalf of the churches of Classis Niagara, and on behalf of the Church at Lincoln which Rev. Wieske served as minister of the Word from October 6, 1985 to August 14, 1989. A representative spoke for the Church at Chatham served by Rev. Wieske as their minister from September 14, 1992 to June 2, 1997. A letter from the Church at Neerlandia served by Rev. Wieske from August 27, 1989 to September 13, 1992 was also read expressing the appreciation for his service at their congregation. The neighbouring United Reformed congregations were also represented by Rev. J. Bouwers who spoke a few words on behalf of the Immanuel Orthodox Reformed Church, at Jordan, Ontario,

and a letter of greeting was read from the Trinity Orthodox Reformed Church at St. Catharines, Ontario.

The following Friday evening, members of the congregation had their opportunity to bid farewell personally to Rev. and Mrs. Wieske. During the evening there were presentations by various groups in the congregation under the capable direction of br. Gordon Tenhage as the master of ceremonies. The children and young people set the musical tone for the evening with well-rehearsed contributions. Later in the evening the minister and congregation were serenaded in song by the young people's society and women's society. Skits by the deacons, young peoples, and our master of ceremonies kept the evening light-hearted. At various parts of the program, representatives of the various societies could express appreciation for the contribution of Rev. and Mrs. Wieske to our church life. The evening concluded with the presentation of a few gifts to Rev. and Mrs. Wieske and a prayer of thanksgiving and intercession that the Lord would continue to surround his church at Rockway and Rev. and Mrs. Wieske with his providential care.

During the evening we also had the benefit of a speech by br. Leo Rozema informing (warning?) Rev. and Mrs. Wieske of the busy daily schedules of "so-called" retirees. Rev. and Mrs. Wieske obviously took his speech to heart and have since been able to assist both the Churches at Neerlandia and Launceston, Australia. It is our hope and prayer that the Lord may continue to bless them with good health and enable them to continue to serve his church in this new stage of their lives together.

*<sup>1</sup> This article was submitted along with apologies for being late.*



## First Graduating Class at Lokichoggio Ministry Center

Forty-one men from south Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya have completed the first study term at MERF's new Lokichoggio Ministry Center. During the closing session each of the trainees had the opportunity to comment on his experience through the three month course. All expressed overwhelming joy at gaining greater knowledge and understanding of the Bible and theology. Several praised other things – such as the wonderful fellowship, medical care, nutritious food and the comfort of the facilities.

### A Graduate's Personal Testimony

The testimony of 34-year-old evangelist Simon Gail Riek is especially moving. Simon came from southern Sudan's Western Upper Nile state. He grew up in an animist family. His father died during inter-tribal warfare while Simon was still inside his mother's womb.

When he was twelve, Simon's entire village was forced to flee from government troops and foreign companies when oil was discovered in their area. Simon's family abandoned their home and moved south with a few goats and all the belongings they could carry. They were welcomed by other Nuer people and settled about ninety miles south of their native area.

It was there that the Lord's grace captured the life of Simon's eldest



*MERF's initial class of 41 Lokichoggio trainees were honored in a graduation service on February 8, 2004. The inaugural study term had begun November 10, 2003. The graduates have since returned home to serve.*

brother, who began zealously evangelizing to his entire family. At age sixteen, Simon committed his life to Jesus Christ. He was disciplined by his brother and another Nuer convert.

Simon's brother went away for several months and eventually returned

with an educated Nuer believer. Their vision was to educate and evangelize to the people. Simon was a beneficiary. He learned to read and write and do simple math as well as quite a bit of Bible and a little English. More importantly, Simon sensed a strong call to preach the gospel to the Nuer people. Simon married a young woman who shared his outlook. The Lord has blessed them with four boys, a few goats to support their family and a small piece of land to raise maize and vegetables.

Simon gave most of his energy to his work as an evangelist. In the 1990's, revival spread among many animist Nuer people in the Western Upper Nile. The Lord used Simon to convert several thousands! Simon organized five congregations. The largest is 4,500 strong today!

*Evangelist Simon Gail Riek recently completed a 3 - month training course at MERF's new Loka center.*







*Simon had never before travelled beyond his home area in south Sudan's Western Upper Nile state.*

Simon praised his Lokichoggio training experience:

"I had never been beyond our area in the western upper Nile. I had only seen mud and straw buildings. I heard about kerosene lamps and electricity, but had never seen anything of the sort, other than some lights of military vehicles used by the anti-government resistance when they came near. I went to board the plane in Koc to come here, after walking for most of a day. It felt like a dream!

"When the plane reached northern Kenya, I saw modern buildings for the first time. It took me several days to get used to sleeping on a bed and using the tap for water and understanding other things which use water. Until now it is difficult for me to actually believe we have light at night through some hanging lines. I came here quite a bit thinner. My stomach pains are gone and I feel very healthy. It took me many days to begin interacting with people here. Now I enjoy the fellowship of my fellow trainees throughout the day.

"I will miss this place and the people I met here; but I cannot wait to go back to my family and people to share with them my experiences and the riches of God's Word."

After a February 8th graduation service attended by approximately 200, MERF-chartered missionary aircraft flew the trainees back to resume ministry to their respective homes in Sudan.

### **MERF's Outreach to Lokichoggio's Turkanas**

Kenya's northwestern frontier town of Lokichoggio is a remarkably cosmopolitan place. It is built around one of the busiest airports in Africa. From dawn to dusk, engines roar as planes of all sizes take off and land, mostly transporting relief supplies to southern Sudan as well as Uganda, Congo, Somalia and Ethiopia.

Built on Turkana tribal land, Lokichoggio is home to huge UN relief facilities as well as office and storage compounds of numerous non-government organizations (NGOs). Streets are busy with supply trucks and four-wheel drive NGO vehicles. Kenyans of various tribal backgrounds have moved to Loki in pursuit of UN and NGO jobs. Yet, indigenous Turkanas remain the most numerous people group. Thousands live in mud huts surrounding the airport and the modern buildings of the various NGO's. While Turkana land constitutes over 25% of Kenya, it remains one of East Africa's most underdeveloped regions. Most Turkana people live primitively and remain poor.

Soon after its new compound opened in Lokichoggio, MERF began ministering to the local Turkana people. Sudanese Pastor Tut Wan, MERF East Africa Coordinator, has established many helpful contacts with local Turkanas and their leaders. MERF recently appointed Kenyan Pastor Jeremiah Nyarango to serve as an evangelist and Bible teacher among the Turkanas.

Please pray for the Lord's provision of additional workers to minister to these needy people.

*Yours' in the Lord's service,  
J. Mulder, Chairman  
J. VanDam, Secretary*



*Over 150 local Turkana people regularly attend Sunday worship services in MERF's Lokichoggio chapel.*



# What's New???

Rev. Cl. Stam is minister of the  
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## Yearbook 2004

As we look at what's new over the past months, perhaps it is good to begin with the publication of the Yearbook 2004. This yearbook was received at the end of March, and is a very functional tool for those involved in church life. It should actually appear in January of each year, but that's probably a pipe-dream. We are grateful that it is published at all.

I am not going to give a review of this yearbook; the idea is that you read it yourself. I want to mention that the Church of Ancaster is the largest (555), while the church at Denver is the smallest (32). Smithville comes close to the higher ranking in numbers with 542 members. I remember what a brother said in the time when we were thinking about institution in Attercliffe: Attercliffe will never grow and Smithville will die out. Well now, a prophet is known by the truth of his words. Meanwhile churches in Grassie and Dunnville have been instituted, and still the Niagara area is booming with church growth. It's a good thing we did not at the time listen to the doomsayers.

I am notoriously bad at simple arithmetic. But if I have added the stats up correctly, our churches have grown with 402 members. That's not bad, considering that many churches all over the world are losing membership. Numbers are not really important as such. At the same time, a living church must be a *growing* church. Kudos to Dr. J. Visscher for his excellent editing work on this project. Hamilton's missionary, however, is not B. de Graaf but A. de Graaf (Bram whose real name is Abram).

I know by experience that it is easy to become a little confused.

I do not know if every church still has the custom of handing out these yearbooks free to each communicant member. That may have been a good thing years ago, but nowadays in our postmodern society we should be charged for at least part of the cost. "Freebies" belong to the past, when we were all poor immigrants. There is much money spent on other items that are less important. Hopefully the publisher will not be duped when churches start charging for these yearbooks.

The new yearbooks are here; use them well, lest they become dust collectors on the shelves in some forgotten corner.

## New E-mail address

We have this email address @[canrc.org](mailto:canrc.org). Something strange is happening there, however. Someone is using that list or name to send corrupt emails to ministers (and other unsuspecting persons), mails which contain worms or viruses and other yucky stuff. Hence I am always cautioned by my server not to open attachments. This really cramps my style.

I have a new email address. Please send all matters related to this column to: [clstam@mountaincable.net](mailto:clstam@mountaincable.net). Yes, I have gone on cable and someone even suggested that it's "digital," but I don't know what that means. Please use this email address when sending items for the *What's New???* column. Then you will be assured that it will arrive and maybe even published.

## Close to home

We start our survey close to home. In the Hamilton area there is a "Participation House" for the handicapped. The church at *Glanbrook* has decided that a new outreach program for this house is necessary. From the bulletin we glean the following, "The formal part of the evening will start at 7:00 p.m. and will run no later than 7:45 p.m. It will include Bible reading, a brief presentation based on Scripture, singing and prayer. Thereafter, there will be time to visit informally with the residents in the common room." This is a good initiative, although one might wonder what effect this can have.

Through the years I have participated in many such programs in care homes and residences for the elderly. It took a lot of time and effort, but often I wondered if we were really getting through. The bulletin tells us that thirteen men have made themselves available as "future speakers." Wow. Hopefully this grand initiative will be sustained. It is important for a church to be involved in "outreach."

Another item from *Glanbrook's* bulletin is a little confusing. We read under the heading "Glanbrook Gobble and Go" that the "YPS would like to remind all who are interested and have not already done so, to sign up for the all new Gobble and Goat the back of the church." Yup, that's what it says. The word *goat* must be a typo while there is also a word missing in the sentence. Can you find the missing word? I find the expression "gobble and go" rather intriguing. I don't think it suggests that the members there are a bunch of

turkeys. Sometimes an attempt at alliteration can lead to wrong conclusions. Turkeys and goats, what a combination. Everything's possible in the country.

The Church at Ancaster has the pleasant duty of extending a call to the new professor, Dr. A. de Visser. Rev. G. van Popta gives the following explanation, "This morning the council announced that we have decided to extend a call to the Rev. Dr. A.J. de Visser of Pretoria, South Africa. Why, you may ask, are we calling another minister? The past General Synod appointed Dr. de Visser to serve as a professor at our Theological College. Why is Ancaster calling him?"

There is a good reason for this call. In the Reformed churches, ministers are always bound to a specific local church. We state this in Article 6 of the Church Order (please see page 658 of your *Book of Praise*). The "special ministerial task" that Dr. de Visser will "be charged with" is the training of students of theology for the work of minister of the Word (see Article 19 of the Church Order, page 662, *Book of Praise*).

General Synod 1968 decided that if a Canadian Reformed minister is appointed to the College, he shall remain bound to the church he last served. An example of this scenario would be Prof. G.H. Visscher who remains a minister of the Church at Burlington-Waterdown. Synod 1968 decided that if a minister comes from one of our sister churches abroad, the church within whose geographical boundaries the College lies shall be asked to extend a call to him. An example of this scenario would be Dr. N.H. Gootjes who came from Korea. Ancaster Church was asked to call him. He is a minister of Ancaster Church but charged with the special task of teaching at the College. Dr. de Visser will be another example of this latter scenario.

It is a great honour for Ancaster Church to serve the federation of churches in this way. Because a call cannot be extended unless the congregation approves of it, the proposed call will be announced today and next Sunday. If there are no lawful objections, the call will be formally extended after that.

This call has a certain formality to it in that Dr. de Visser will not have any normal ministerial responsibilities in the congregation; neither will the congregation have any responsibilities towards the proper support of Dr. de Visser and his family. And yet the call is

important. We know of no such thing as a freelance minister. The professors are first of all ministers of the Word. The office of a minister is intimately tied to the local church. And so, as we have agreed in Article 6 of the Church Order, "No one shall serve in the ministry unless he is bound to a certain church."

In Hamilton we have three learned men who are now emeriti. It can be kind of intimidating to a local lowly minister to have such highly trained academicians in one's congregation. But I'm sure the Rev. G. van Popta is quite comfortable on the pulpit; he's had some practice with three other professors. One Dutch professor once assured me that "professors are such benevolent listeners." Yeah, sure.

From a previous Ancaster bulletin we also note the following (Press release of a council meeting), "An update on the current Streetlight finances is received. There can be thankfulness at the support that has been received so far. We will continue working towards setting sufficient funding in place to call a Missionary for Streetlight in due course.

Council also receives an updated list of members from within our Ancaster congregation who currently serve Streetlight in a volunteer capacity."

### Farther away

Trying to glean some information from parts farther removed, I have been promised various bulletins. These can be sent nowadays via email. But please do not send them as attachments, *but place them in the main body of the letter*. My computer program removes all attachments as being unsafe.

The Manitoba Church News, which is a printed in fine format (you need Adobe to open it) represents no less than five churches, namely, four in Manitoba and one in Denver. In the March 28 issue, Rev. K. Jonker gives an overview of some of Synod Chatham's decisions. It would be nice to see such an effort published in *Clarion*, so that we can all take note of it.

I noticed that two of the ministers mentioned in this bulletin are listed as pastor instead of "reverend" (Rev. for short). In *Nederlands Dagblad* I read some time ago that one of the ministers (a former missionary of one of our Canadian churches) in The Netherlands out rightly rejects the title "reverend" (or the Dutch *dominee*, from the Latin *dominus*, master) and wishes only to be

called "pastor." Our beloved colleague hit the national press with this request.

The title "reverend" would not be in accordance with Scripture. The text used was Matthew 23: 8-10. "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi'; for you have only one master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and He is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher' for you have one Teacher, the Christ." I love humility.

The reason I have not insisted on the use of the name *pastor* lies elsewhere. I have always understood that *all elders are pastors* (cf. Acts 20: 28). I was also taught that the office of the minister is a *distinct* office. The minister/pastor is first and foremost a preacher. The task of the preacher is that he above and besides the task of pasturing also has the calling to *preach the Word*, and is therefore rightly called a "minister of the Word." In fact, preaching (and teaching) may well be the minister's *main* calling, for which he has studied extensively. He should perhaps be called Preacher (or *Qoheleth*, Hebrew, as in the book *Ecclesiastes*).

If we consider the minister to be an elder, then of this elder it is written, "...the elders who direct the affairs of the church are worthy of double honour, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching." (1 Tim 5: 17, italics mine, C.I.S.). Preachers and teachers *especially* are worthy of double honour (hence probably the adjective "reverend"). This honour is also shown in the fact that these men have the right to be paid for their work (cf. verse 18). What's in a name? I only question a name when it is specifically altered and purposely chosen. Hopefully the respect for the office of a minister does not erode.

I do have a question, however. Does our confession teach a two office or a three office view? This may be of importance also in our discussions with Presbyterian brothers and sisters. As much as I love humility, I also love clarity. The reading of bulletins can lead to a far-reaching chain of thought.

### Signing off for today

Well, I've managed to get only from Hamilton to Winnipeg, and my space is long gone. So I'll have to sign off for the day. But please keep the bulletins coming.

There is so much happening! There is much that needs to be reported on. I promise not to hurt anyone's feelings. Well, I promise to try. Till next time.





J. Wiskerke van Dooren

# Lord's Day 10



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

The Lord God dwells in heaven. By his might and power He looks after all the things He created in the beginning. As the result of our sin, much sorrow and pain has entered into the lives of us all. I am sure you, too, know that. That was God's punishment which we deserve.

When they happen, you wonder why. Isn't God our Father and are we not his children? He promised to forgive

our sins, when we pray him for it. Why does He allow all those bad experiences to enter into our lives? Is that punishment? Did Jesus not take upon himself our punishment?

That is true; Jesus did suffer the punishment we deserve. But there is something else we should keep in mind. Imagine your parents would allow you to do whatever you like. Imagine they would never tell you to do something that is

hard. Imagine they would be friendly to you when you had been very annoying. What would be the result? You would be a spoiled brat!

Our Father in heaven is a good father. He wants us to grow up as people who believe Him and who are brave. He wants us to be people who trust Him always and everywhere. Do you know what that means?

It means that you trust him when you have enough to eat. And also when you don't have enough. When you are healthy and strong. And also when you are sick or disabled. We have to trust him whatever happens to us, good or bad.

God is your Father, but that does not mean you will experience only happy events.

The daily news reports tell you about earthquakes, famine, war – the list goes on and on. All kinds of bad things happen.

And you wonder: Is God not powerful? Would He not be able to prevent such evil things from happening? True, he could prevent these from happening. But often He does not do that. For He wants to teach us patience. He wants to teach us to rely on Him always.

Later, we may live on the new earth. No sin or pain or sorrow exists there. Then, we will also understand this better.





**A. Kingma and K. Sikkema**

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# Teachers Meet in the Hub of the Niagara Peninsula



*Conventions like these are certainly worthwhile events that teachers and boards continue to do well to invest in.*

On October 23 and 24, 2003, over 150 teachers converged on Smithville, Ontario, for a time of reflection, study, camaraderie, growth, and encouragement. The venue for the convention was John Calvin School (established 1964), as well as the adjacent church building and the local arena. This review highlights some of the events. Keynote speeches will be published separately in this column inasmuch as the presenters have agreed to do so.

Miss Jane Holtvluwer (Burlington), on behalf of the CRTA-East executive, opened the 2003 convention. She handed over the “reigns” to Mr. Keith Sikkema (Smithville) who made several announcements and introduced the three panellists: Mr. Lammert Jagt, Miss Judy Kingma and Mrs. Christine Van Halen-Faber. The panellists all addressed the question: What makes our Reformed schools unique?

## **Mr. Lammert Jagt**

Mr. Jagt discussed the organizational structures which make our Reformed schools unique. He discussed the importance and necessity of board members to educate and re-educate themselves as to what it means to run a Reformed school. He urged the board

to maintain vision and to have a plan that implements that vision for the school. Secondly, he stated that the necessity of parental involvement is key to maintaining a Reformed school, where parents are involved in the education committee, other committees, and in the day-to-day learning at school. If parental involvement simply means “paying the bills,” then the school doesn’t have or hasn’t shared with the parents their tasks in maintaining a Reformed school. Thirdly, Mr. Jagt urged schools to share and network together to maintain and uphold Reformed education: “We are each other’s best resources,” he stated. Boards, principals, and staff must keep networking as part of their vision to maintain Reformed education. Plans should be developed by boards, teachers and even CRTA to further this aspect of networking.

## **Miss Judy Kingma**

In her prepared statement, Miss Kingma highlighted four characteristics that define Reformed education. Our schools are first of all confessional. In the schools classrooms, teachers must “say the same as God”; in other words, they must see the Bible as normative over all content taught in the school,

over staff and students, and over the goals established by the school. For example, when we write units, we should not write units from a beautiful new textbook, but we should first think of what we want to teach, and then find resources and activities, including beautiful new textbooks, to implement our new curriculum units in the classroom.

Secondly, our schools are covenantal. Teachers and learners are children of a living God who established a relationship with his people and says, “I love you, love me in return.” Love is expressed in obedience to God and to the neighbour. Love without obedience is not love. Obedience without love is not obedience. Students and staff must walk in love, living in the household of faith, obedient to the God of the covenant.

Thirdly, Reformed education is antithetical. Miss Kingma quoted Prof. Holwerda who had once written, “May the theme of the great enmity seize us again. . . .” She stated that Reformed education involves that struggle between the woman and Satan. God’s victory over Satan is manifest in the daily loving obedience of the children at school. There will be a constant struggle

between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, but God will use the “praise from the mouth of babes and infants to still the enemy and the avenger.” It is therefore part of Reformed education to teach and prepare the children so that they may praise their Maker and Redeemer, and so that they may say no to the temptations and teachings of the avenger.

Fourthly, Reformed education upholds a unity of purpose. Here Miss Kingma paralleled Mr. Jagt by highlighting the necessity of a close relationship between home, church and school. Reformed education is a “hand-foot” task to parents. There is a communal dimension to Reformed education that needs to be maintained.

### **Mrs. Christine Van Halen-Faber**

Mrs. VanHalen-Faber grappled (a favourite word of hers) with the topic of pedagogy. She urged teachers to think of five key concepts for Reformed pedagogy:

1. Teachers must call upon the Name of the Lord. They need to ask the Lord to help them in their task of teaching and reaching to the students.
2. Teachers need “*mensen kennis*” or poorly translated as “people wisdom.” They need to knowingly speak, reprimand, re-teach, ignore or rephrase. They need to be wise in handling and teaching their students.
3. Teachers must be pedagogues. A pedagogue was a slave who picked up and brought children of the master to and from school, who walked and talked with the children along the way. They were the ones who dealt with the small things, unimportant to adults, perhaps, but important to children. Teachers must be faithful in the small things.
4. Teachers must be aware of God’s time. We live between the Garden and the New City. We live in shortened days; we live in a time where ungodliness is increasing rapidly in our western culture. We

- also need to realize that our days are numbered. So teachers should not be busy with all kinds of things (e.g. school activities, covering the curriculum), but with teaching. The curriculum could possibly be re-examined in the light of God’s time.
5. Lastly, teachers are professionals: in love to the Father. We need to do our tasks prayerfully, with depth of insight, sensitively, and with love for students and work. If we do not love students or our work, get out (of teaching), Mrs. VanHalen emphatically stated.

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*Mr. Jagt urged schools to share and network together to maintain and uphold Reformed education: Reformed education involves that struggle between the woman and Satan.*

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### **Discussion**

In the discussion it was acknowledged that Reformed education is hard to define. Is Reformed education covered totally in all the parts listed above, or is it greater than the sum of its parts? It is not just a matter of believing teachers following a list, but it is a matter of obedience, willingness, wisdom, sensitivity and the like which is worked in us by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the gospel. The Holy Spirit’s work should not be underestimated. The antithetical aspect of education was discussed further, not only looking at the work of Christ in humble submission to his Father’s will, but also looking at the need for teachers to know the “thetical” aspects of Reformed thinking and working that into our curriculums and classrooms. After

## **Church News**

Called by the church of Cloverdale, British Columbia:

**Rev. R.E. Pot**  
of Orangeville, Ontario.

Called by the church of Rockway, Ontario

**Rev. C.J. Vander Velde**  
of Yarrow, British Columbia.

the discussion, Mr. Henk Nobel, the moderator, made some concluding remarks on the topic, thanked the panellists, and urged us to enjoy the rest of the day.

During the rest of the day, teachers could attend, before and after a hearty and tasty lunch in the Smithville Arena, two of the eighteen workshops (wow!) provided. Topics covered “Get it Together” math, Four Blocks Phonics, Ultimate Frisbee, building a school website, substance use, healthy eating, student evaluation, French Plus, Life skills writing, The Courage to Teach, and yet other topics and a smorgasbord for all to choose from.

### **Rev. D. Agema**

Friday morning, the convention reconvened in the Smithville church building. Rev. D. Agema (Attercliffe) presented a devotional address on the theme for the convention, which was taken from Jeremiah 29:12-13: *Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.* Rev. Agema placed the devotional in the context of being child-like, as Jesus demonstrated in answer to the disciples’ question about who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. For them, as well as for the people in Jeremiah’s days who thought that the Babylonian exile would be of short duration, it takes humility and the recognition of one’s shortcomings and sins – of which they must daily repent – to “find Him” or to be in the kingdom of

heaven. God requires a heartfelt humility from us and from the children we teach. We also learn from the address in the Lord's Prayer that childlike reverence and trust in God the Father must be awakened in our lives. In that case, when we call upon him, He will listen.

## Workshops

After the devotional, teachers had a choice of eight workshops to attend, which catered to people interested in computers, special education, reporting, socialization, and personality traits, as well as teaching Bible and music. Following a break of chatting, nibbling and browsing, the CRTA business meeting generated some discussion on the presentation by members of the

Salary Committee and a number of proposed constitutional changes. The membership was quite willing to adopt changes that recognized current practice,

*So teachers should not be busy with all kinds of things, but with teaching.*

but not those that would lead to different interpretations of the association's aims. Some took the opportunity to take better notice of displays from various publishers and other organizations. Another delicious lunch was served by the local ladies auxiliary. Teachers then had the choice of

eight more workshops to attend, including one on archaeology, learning difficulties, dealing with evolution, bullying, and how to make the best of an hour of ice time.

Judging by the evaluations teachers gave of the convention, it was a good one. Much formal learning took place, but ample opportunity was also given for informally (re-)connecting with other (student-) teachers from Ontario and Michigan. The two days were packed, busy, meaningful and enjoyable. Conventions like these are certainly worthwhile events that teachers and boards continue to do well to invest in, as they can enhance and support the quality and character of reformed education in our schools.



## Press Releases

### Press Release of Classis Pacific East, March 25, 2004, held in Vernon, B.C.

On behalf of the convening Church at Vernon, Rev. J. Moesker welcomed the delegates to Vernon. He read from 2 Peter 1:1-11, requested the singing of Psalm 107:1,2 and lead in prayer. Rev. Moesker noted with thankfulness that the vacancy of a professor at the Theological College could be filled with the appointment Dr. A.J. de Visser. He also noted that Rev. W. Wielenga received and declined a call to the Church at Neerlandia and is now considering a call from the Church at Cloverdale.

The delegates from the Church at Lynden find the credentials to be in good order and Classis is constituted. It is noted the minister of Abbotsford, Rev. R. Schouten is not present due to health concerns in his family. The following officers are appointed, Rev. M. Moesker as chairman, Rev. M.H. VanLuik as vice-chairman and Rev. P.H. Holtvluwer as clerk. The agenda is adopted.

### Correspondence Received:

- a. A letter from a sister appealing the decision of her consistory to place her under discipline is received. The appeal is declared admissible. Classis deals with the matter in closed session. The appeal is denied.

### Reports.

- a. Classis receives a report from Rev. Holtvluwer on his delegation to the Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the United States March 9-11, 2004. The report notes that there are needy chapels in the Western Classis of the RCUS and there are possibilities for the churches to help in a financial way. It is also reported that the RCUS churches of the Western Classis are open to the possibility of pulpit exchanges as a way to promote greater knowledge of one another.
- b. Church visitors give reports on their visits to the Churches at Abbotsford and Vernon.
- c. Classis receives a report from the treasurer of Classis Pacific East. Words of appreciation are spoken for



the report and the work that the treasurer has done on behalf of the churches of Classis.

- d. Classis receives a report from the treasurer of the Needy Churches Fund.

Question period according to Art 44, CO.

All Churches affirm that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and that the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. There are two churches that need the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of their church

- a. The Church at Abbotsford asks for advice with regard to a matter of



discipline. Advice is given for the consistory to proceed with discipline.

- b. The consistory at Chilliwack asks for advice with regard to the discipline of six members. Classis gives advice for the consistory to proceed with discipline in all cases.

#### **Appointments:**

- a. The Church at Yarrow is appointed as the convening church for the next Classis. Classis will be convened in Yarrow on June 10 at 9 AM: alternate date is September 23, 2004.
  - b. The suggested officers for next Classis are: Chairman – Rev. M.H. VanLuik, Vice-chairman – Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer and clerk – Rev. R. Schouten.
  - c. The committee for examination of students for the ministry is reappointed.
  - d. The Church Visitors, Rev. J. Moesker, Rev. R. Schouten, Rev. M.H. VanLuik (convener) and Rev. W.M. Wielenga are reappointed as is the alternate Rev. C.J. VanderVelde.
  - e. The Church at Abbotsford is reappointed as church for taking care of the archives of Classis and the Church at Yarrow as the church to inspect the archives.
  - f. Brother R. Leyenhorst is reappointed as treasurer of Classis and the Church at Vernon is reappointed as the church for auditing the books of the treasurer.
  - g. The Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry is reappointed as well as the Committee for Needy Churches.
  - h. Appointed as deputy for preaching arrangements is Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer.
- Question Period was used.

The chairman thankfully notes that Christian Censure (Art 34 CO) was not necessary.

Acts of classis are adopted and Press Release is approved.

The chairman requests the singing of Psalm 107:12 and the chairman gave thanks in prayer.

*Rev. M.H. VanLuik  
Vice-chairman e.t*

## **Press Release of Classis Northern Ontario, March 26, 2004, held in Fergus, Ontario**

### **Opening.**

On behalf of the convening Church of Fergus, Rev. J. Louwse called the meeting to order. He requested the singing of Psalm 147:1,4 and then read from Revelation 1:4-end, after which he led in prayer.

### **Examination of the Credentials.**

The delegates from Elora examined the credentials and found them to be in good order. Three churches had requested advice.

### **Constitution of Classis.**

Classis was declared constituted. The officers are Rev. B. Berends – chairman, Rev. C. Vermeulen – vice-chairman; Rev. P. Aasman – clerk. The chairman welcomed all. With respect to matters of memorabilia, it was mentioned that Rev. R. Pot has received and declined a call from the Canadian Reformed Church in Neerlandia, Rev. J. Van Woudenberg had received and declined a call from the Free Reformed Church in Launceston, that the Rev. J. Van Popta was moving to Ontario and available for pulpit supply, and that a new professor, Rev. A.J. de Visser, had been appointed at the Theological College.

### **Adoption of the agenda.**

The agenda for this meeting was adopted after some minor alterations and additions.

### **Reports.**

- a. The Committee for Needy Churches for Classis Northern Ontario reported on their fund, and also requested Classis to appoint a replacement for brother C. Lodder, whose term had come to an end. Brother C. Van Raalte was appointed to replace him.
- b. Church Visitation report was read of visit to Owen Sound Church, and was received with gratitude.

### **Proposals and or Instructions of the Churches.**

In closed session classis dealt with two appeals.

### **Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order.**

All churches affirm that the ministry of the office-bearers is being continued and the decisions of broader assemblies are being honoured. The Churches at Orangeville, Guelph and Owen Sound requested advice from Classis. Advice was given.

### **Address by Observers to Classis.**

- a. Rev. A. Merwin passed on greetings from the United Reformed Churches via an email.
- b. Rev. J. Louwse presented a report about his visit to the Classis South-Western Ontario of the United Reformed Churches convened at Grace United Reformed Church of Simcoe County.

### **Appointments.**

Convening Church for next Classis – Grand Valley.

Suggested Officers for next Classis – Chairman – Rev. P. Feenstra; Vice-chairman – Rev. P. Aasman; Clerk – Rev. B. Berends.

### **Invitation of observers to the next classis.**

The Church at Grand Valley will receive and extend any invitations to the URC Classis.

### **Question period.**

Nobody made use of question period.

### **Censure according to Article 34 of the CO.**

The chairman thankfully noted that censure was not necessary.

### **Adoption of the Acts and Press Release.**

The Acts are adopted and a Press Release was approved.

### **Closing.**

The chairman requested classis to sing Psalm 16:1,4 and then led in prayer. The chairman closed classis.

*Rev. C. Vermeulen,  
for Classis Northern Ontario,  
March 26, 2004*

## Press Release of Classis Pacific West, March 30, 2004 held in Willoughby Heights, B.C.

### Opening

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. D. Poppe opened the meeting with the reading of Colossians 1:1-23 and prayer. He then invited the delegates to sing together from Psalm 92:1, 2 and extended some words of welcome, especially to Rev. William VanderWoerd of the Abbotsford United Reformed Church of North America. We reflected with thanksgiving and praise on the retirement of Rev. C. VanSpronsen following many years of faithful service. With thankfulness it is also noted that Cloverdale celebrated its 50th anniversary. Cloverdale has also called Rev. W. Wielenga. The Church of Smithers reports that there has been a member in Fort Babine who has publicly professed her faith. Rev. E. Kampen is congratulated for completing his Master's of Theology and it is noted that the Church of Langley has decided to call a second minister.

The Church of Cloverdale examined the credentials and found them to be in good order. Classis was declared constituted and the following officers were appointed: Chairman: Rev. C. VanSpronsen, Vice-chairman: Rev. D. Poppe, Clerk: Rev. J. Visscher. The chairman thanked the convening church and the agenda is adopted.

### Correspondence

A letter was received from Rev. E. Kampen as contact person for the churches with whom we have ecclesiastical fellowship. Classis decided to appoint a deputy as coordinator for maintaining contact with the URC, OPC and PCK as necessary via delegates to their classical assemblies and to inform Classis Pacific East of this decision.

### Reports

1. The classical treasurer reported on the income and expenditures of Classis for the year 2003 and was thanked for his work.
2. The Church of Cloverdale reported that the books of the treasurer were in good order.
3. The Church of Houston reported that the archives are in good order.
4. The church visitors reported on their visits to the Churches of Surrey and Willoughby Heights.
5. A report was given on a visit to Classis Western Canada of the URCNA held November 21, 2003 in Edmonton, Alberta. We adopted a recommendation to send delegates to these meetings on a rotating basis.

### Question Period

Question period *ad* Church Order Article 44 was held. The Church of Cloverdale asks and receives advice in two matters of discipline. In both cases Classis concurs with this church to proceed with the second announcement of discipline. The Church of Langley asks and receives advice from the members of Classis with respect to a pastoral matter.

### Appointments

- a) Convening church for next Classis, place and time:  
Church at Langley, in Langley's church building on June 22, 2004 with September 28, 2004 as alternate date.
- b) Suggested officers for next classis:  
Chairman: Rev. D. Poppe  
Vice-Chairman: Rev. J. Visscher  
Clerk: Rev. E. Kampen
- c) Committee for examinations:
  1. Coordinators/sermon – Revs. J. Visscher and E. Kampen
  2. Exegesis Old Testament – Rev. J. VanSpronsen
  3. Exegesis New Testament – Rev. E. Kampen
  4. Knowledge of Scripture – Rev. J. VanSpronsen
  5. Doctrine and creeds – Rev. J. Visscher

6. Church history – Rev. J. Visscher
7. Ethics – Rev. D. Poppe
8. Church Polity – Rev. E. Kampen
9. Diaconology – Rev. D. Poppe
- d) Church visitors: Revs. E. Kampen (convener) J. Visscher, and D. Poppe.
- e) Church for taking care of the archives: Smithers
- f) Church to inspect the archives: Houston
- g) Classical Treasurer: Br. R. H. Mulder, #208-6247 – 121 St. Surrey, BC, V3X 3J2, ph. (604) 596-6657
- h) Church for auditing the books of the treasurer: Cloverdale.
- i) Committee for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry: R. H. Mulder, M. VanDriel and J. Winkel (convener).
- j) Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Churches: H. Leyenhorst, R. VanOene, P. Vanderugutten (convener).
- k) Deputy for preaching arrangements in vacant churches: Rev. E. Kampen
- l) Deputy for contact with churches with whom we have ecclesiastical contact: Rev. E. Kampen
- m) Counsellors for vacant churches: Cloverdale: Rev. J. Visscher and Surrey: Rev. E. Kampen. The Church of Surrey and Cloverdale both request and receive pulpit supply once per month. It is decided to ask Classis Pacific East for aid in this respect.

### Closing

Delegates were given opportunity for question period. Opportunity was given for Christian censure. The Acts were adopted and the press release was approved. In closing we read from Ecclesiastes 12:9-14, sang from Hymn 46:1, 2, and the chairman closed the meeting with thanksgiving prayer.

For Classis Pacific West  
D. Ph. Poppe  
Vice-chairman at that time

