

Clarion

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*Preaching and
the Ministry*

*The Gifts of
the Spirit*



*Neerlandia receives
Rev. J. Louwense
and family*



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Preaching and the Ministry

A preacher, like his fellow believers, is a person who continues to struggle with his sins.

Introduction

“What did you think of the sermon this morning/afternoon?” “Did you get anything out of it?” Such questions are frequently asked after a church service, and often reflect a desire to be fed by the preaching of the Word. These questions are concerned with discerning the effectiveness of the preacher in delivering and presenting the truth of God’s Word. In his wisdom the Lord God uses the preacher to accomplish this task.

Believing comes through the hearing of the gospel. As Paul says, “How can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Rom 10:14) The message and the messenger are very closely related. When applied to God’s Word we cannot go so far as to say that the medium is the message – as Marshall McLuhan, a leading prophet of the electronic age, once stated. God’s Word, of course, is much greater than the messenger. Nevertheless, just as the message of the gospel is tremendously important, so is the messenger. The preacher has to make sure that he brings God’s Word in such a way that the people get the nutrition and the full flavour of the Word. He must be totally in tune with God’s message in the way that he proclaims it and lives it. He must be a living example of God’s Word. Through his actions the people must see God.

A preacher owes it to God’s people to send them home with joy in their hearts.

A lot has been written about the importance of preaching as such, but the importance of the minister as preacher has often been overlooked or underemphasized. For this reason,

the topic of this editorial will be the importance of the messenger in delivering God’s Word to his people. Specifically, the qualities of an effective messenger will be examined.

Humility

In the first place, the preacher must be humble. One of the things that made the apostle Paul an effective preacher was his awareness of his own sinfulness. When he preached, he included himself in his message. He was not effective because of his eloquent delivery, but because he came with the fullness of God’s Word and because he included himself in the message. He did not just apply it to others, but also to himself. In his preaching he did not string some general theological truths together, but applied the message to his own heart and to the heart of his hearers. His message wasn’t a dry doctrinal message.

For example, when he calls himself the worst of sinners (1 Tim 1:16) he does not make some general statement that can be applied to all men. No, he is specific and gives many examples in his letters of what a sinful man he was before his conversion, and of the continual struggles he faces with regard to his own sins. He does not present himself as someone who is superior to others, but as someone who is just as much in need of redemption as his readers. Paul clearly demonstrates that a preacher, like his fellow believers, is a person who continues to struggle with his sins.

This does not mean that the preacher’s life, and his struggles against sin, should become the focus of the message. God’s Word must always be central. But it does mean that the preacher is always aware that his message applies not only to his listeners, but also to himself. In this way, he must demonstrate humility and an awareness of his own shortcomings.



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Joy

The preacher must also be joyful. Preaching must be a great delight; the preacher must show that he is excited about the message he is bringing. After all, he imparts a tremendous message of joy and hope. It is not for nothing that Bible speaks about the beautiful feet of those “who bring good news” (Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15). It is a great privilege to be able to tell the people of the riches God gives them through no merit of their own. It is exciting to tell the people about God’s greatness and glory, and how they may share in it all.

Preachers are men of different temperaments and personalities. The one is not able to show his emotions as well as another, and so not everyone can share his joy in the same way as others. But that is no excuse for blandness and apparent indifference. God’s Word is wonderful news that must be reflected in the preaching. It must come across loud and clear.

A preacher owes it to God’s people to send them home with joy in their hearts, and with a sense of awe concerning God’s greatness and glory. God’s Word changes people from the inside out. The Holy Spirit works through the preaching to heal and renew, to comfort and encourage. If that is not done then the people will go home feeling empty and disappointed. They must look forward to going to church every Sunday so that they can be reinvigorated and have all the nutrients from God’s Word necessary to make it through another week.

The first thing that the apostle Peter did after the Pentecost was to preach. He told the hearers how God’s Word was fulfilled through Jesus Christ, and how He triumphed over death (Acts 2:32). He told them that He ascended on high and that He is now seated at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:33-35). Peter’s joy about these wonderful events was so infectious that “everyone was filled with awe” (Acts 2:43) and they praised God for his wonderful deeds (Acts 2:47).

Conclusion

As you can see, although the message of God’s Word is vitally important, so is the messenger. The qualities that he displays can either enhance or detract from the presentation of God’s message. Ministers of the Word need to exhibit humility and joy as they present the glorious message of salvation so that their work produces thankfulness and joy. If it does not produce thankful and joyful hearts then there is either something wrong with the hearer or with the preacher. And it had better not be the fault of the preacher.



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D.Ph. Poppe

Rev. D.Ph. Poppe has accepted the call to the Canadian Reformed Church at Coaldale, Alberta. dpoppe@canrc.org

The Gifts of the Spirit



MATTHEW 13:52

“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

1 Corinthians 12:7

Some time ago, a young woman in our congregation was approached by a group of young people. When asked if she believed in Jesus Christ and had been baptized, she responded yes. Then they wanted to know if it was a real baptism. At first she didn't know what to say to that. She responded that she had been baptized as a child, into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They told her that she had just experienced a baptism by water. What she now needed was a baptism by the Holy Spirit. And they informed her that if she were baptized by the Holy Spirit, this could be evidenced by the gifts of the Spirit in her life: things like speaking in tongues, or the gifts of prophecy or healing. Here the special gifts of the Spirit were sought as evidence that she was a true Christian. But should we expect this? What is the purpose of the special gifts of the Spirit?

When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, many different gifts were given to the church. Immediately we read that the brothers were able to speak in tongues so that men from around the world heard them speaking in their own languages. Later we read of other special gifts of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Corinthians 12, for example, it speaks of the Spirit giving people the message of wisdom, the message of knowledge, faith, gifts of healing, miraculous powers, prophecy, distinguishing between spirits, speaking in different kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, and the gift of apostles, prophets, teachers, and workers

of miracles. In Romans 12 it talks about some other gifts as well: serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, giving leadership, or showing mercy.

What is the purpose of these gifts? Paul addresses this issue in the letter to the Corinthians. Even though those in Corinth had been blessed with many spiritual gifts (1 Cor 1:5, 7), it becomes clear from 1 Corinthians 12-14 that they did not know how to use those gifts in a proper Christian manner. Some who had received special gifts of the Spirit had become proud and looked down in contempt on those who were not as rich in gifts. The apostle responds by pointing out the true purpose of spiritual gifts. In 1 Corinthians 12:7 he says, “Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.”

Paul elaborates on this point by comparing the church to a body. The body needs all its different parts to function properly. We couldn't operate if the whole body were an eye or a hand or an ear. In the same way, in the church God has given different gifts so that all the different needs of the church could be met.

Now it should be clear that there is a difference between the fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit includes things like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. This fruit of the Spirit is a requirement for everyone who calls himself a Christian. But Christ

gives the special gifts of the Spirit to each person individually. We cannot expect others to have the same spiritual gifts that we have. Nor can we say that to be a real Christian a person must have certain spiritual gifts.

In fact, it is questionable whether we should expect some of these gifts to function in the same way in our context as when the gospel was first going out into the world. When the gospel first went out to pagan people, the Lord used signs and wonders to confirm the preaching of the Word (Mark 16:20). In the book of Acts we repeatedly read that the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people (Acts 5:12). The expression “signs and wonders” reminds us of the signs and wonders that God performed when He delivered his people out of Egypt (Acts 7:36). Just as God demonstrated his presence among his people at the beginning of Israel's existence as a nation, so He manifests Himself at the beginning of the early Christian church following Pentecost (2 Cor 12:12).

Pentecostal groups who claim that in the established church today the Spirit still manifests Himself in gifts of healing, prophecy (as in new revelation), and speaking in tongues do not adequately appreciate the way God has moved forward in the history of salvation. Furthermore, if anyone claims that these gifts are needed before someone can think of themselves as a true Christian,

such a person should not think of himself as bearer of the glad tidings because he undermines the faith of God's children. We can be helped in this regard by Article 29 of the Belgic Confession. There we confess that true Christians are people who believe in Jesus Christ the only Saviour, flee from sin, pursue righteousness, love God and their neighbour, and crucify their flesh and its works. Pentecostal groups who insist that every Christian needs to have

special spiritual gifts stand in the line of the Donatists in the fourth century and the Anabaptists in the sixteenth century, who also sought a certain standard of holiness before people could be members of the church. We ought not to go in this direction for then we require more of people than what the Lord requires of us.

Now this does not mean that the congregation is devoid of spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit still pours out gifts of

wisdom, knowledge, teaching, service, exhortation, comfort, and many other gifts in the congregation. We should take note of these gifts and make use of them so that the body of Christ may be built up. We should demonstrate our love for God and for each other by taking to heart the words of the apostle Peter, "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Pet 4:10).



Children's Catechism

J. Wiskerke van Dooren

Lord's Day 35

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



This time we will think about the second commandment. Do you know it, or do you have to look it up? God does not want us to make a drawing of Him. He does not want an artist to make a statue of God.

It would be impossible to make a picture or statue of God. Never did we, sinful people, see Him. God is so great and glorious that people would become blind if they tried. Worse, they would even die.

God does not want us to make pictures or statues of Him, either. It is wrong to make an image of God. What about a statue of Sir John A. McDonald or of the queen? Would that be allowed? Sure! And we may hang a picture of our grandparents on the wall. That makes us think of them.

You must know the story of the golden calf in the desert, when Moses had gone up the mountain to meet God. The people said about the golden calf: "This is God who brought you out of Egypt." They were saying that when they looked at that golden calf, they were reminded of God, who had saved them.

You may think, "Was that so bad?" More people ask that question. I do, too!

But God says you may not make an image of an animal or of anything else to help you think of Him.

Church buildings may have beautiful windows with pictures from the Bible. But those pictures may never replace the Bible. Only the words of the Bible should make known the gospel. Therefore, on Sundays we listen with respect when the minister preaches from the Bible. And during the week we listen with respect to the Bible story the teacher tells. That is the way God's gospel is shared with us.

It is better not to perform Bible plays, or to imitate something from the Bible. You may have seen a picture of Jesus Christ in a children's Bible. People have seen Him when He was on earth, for He became a man to suffer for us on the cross. This kind of picture may be helpful for small children. But for older children God thinks the words of the Bible are enough. Those words are enough to fill his people with joy.



What is the Lord's Day?

Part 3: Observing the Lord's Day

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*To develop careless worship patterns is very,
very dangerous.*

It's about worship

How should we celebrate the Lord's Day? By worshipping God the Father and his son Jesus Christ who brought us into Sabbath rest. Hebrews 10:19-31 teaches us that we must meet together to worship our God. In fact, Hebrews 10 teaches us that to give up meeting together for worship is sinning defiantly and making oneself worthy of excommunication and eternal death. To quit going to church – to hear the Word preached, to use the sacraments, to participate in corporate prayer, and to give Christian offerings for the needy – is the unforgivable sin. To develop careless worship patterns is very, very dangerous.

Numbers 15:30-36 makes the distinction between “unintentional sins” and “sinning defiantly.” The Lord says that anyone who sins defiantly must be cut off from his people. A man caught gathering wood on the Sabbath day is sentenced to death for despising the command to rest and for making light of the Lord's command.

This episode finds a New Testament counterpart in Hebrews 10. Verse 25 says: “Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” This refers to the regular gathering together for worship which we know happened on the Lord's day – the first day of the week. But now listen as we keep reading.

For if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know him who said, “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” and again, “The Lord will judge his people.” It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb 10:26-31).

Hebrews 10 alludes to deliberate sin against better knowledge. There is no sacrifice available for this sin. It will be worse for the man who quits going to church on the Lord's day than for the man caught gathering wood on the Sabbath day. It will be worse for him who quits going to church for he has trampled the Son of God under foot; he has treated as unholy the blood of the covenant that had sanctified him; he has insulted the Spirit of grace. Such a member of the church will fall into the condemning hands of the living God, and it will not go well with him.

In the words of Hebrews 6, a brother or sister who abandons the church and

no longer worships within the communion of saints – who had once been enlightened, had tasted the heavenly gift, had shared in the Holy Spirit, had tasted the goodness of the Word of God and the powers of the coming age – such a brother or sister crucifies the Son of God all over again and subjects the Lord to public disgrace. Such members are like fields that drank deep of the refreshing rain only to produce nothing but thorns and thistles. In the end, God will curse them and burn them.

In the language of Hebrews 4, such a person will not enter God's rest; rather, he will be cut to pieces by the living and active Word of God. Like the stubborn rebels in the wilderness, they will not enter the rest of the Promised Land but will die in the desert.

The parallels between Hebrews 10 and Numbers 15 are clear. In Numbers 15 the example given as defiant sin worthy of excommunication and death is not resting on the Sabbath day. In Hebrews 10 no longer going to church is declared deliberate sin which results in excommunication and everlasting death.

And so the Lord's day is about worship. Going to church and worshipping our God. What did the early New Testament church do as it gathered for worship? It devoted itself to the apostolic teaching, celebrated the Lord's Supper, prayed, and had fellowship (Acts 2:42). We should not get hung up on the dos and don'ts. The Lord's day is not about refraining from gathering wood or lighting fires; it is about worship.

Early glimpses of Sunday worship

We have early glimpses of Christian worship from several sources. One source is Pliny's letter to the emperor Trajan. Around 112 A.D., Pliny, the Roman governor of Bithynia (a province in northwest Turkey), wrote to the emperor Trajan in Rome. Pliny needed guidance on the persecution of Christians, and he reported what his investigations had disclosed. Christians "met regularly before dawn on a fixed day to chant verses alternately among themselves in honour of Christ as if to a god." They would also eat ordinary food together.

From Justin Martyr, writing about 150 A.D., we have perhaps the most complete early description of Christian worship. In his *First Apology* he writes:

But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to his apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.

Justin Martyr describes the worship, and it sounds very familiar. It consisted of: the Word of God (both read and preached), corporate prayer (including the psalms), Communion of the bread and wine, and offering of one's possessions.

During these early years of the Christian church, the first day of the week was a work day for labourers and slaves. As Pliny tells us, the Christians would meet before dawn to worship. After worship, they would need to go to work. This changed in 321 A.D. when Emperor Constantine

decreed that Sunday would be a day of rest, a legal holiday.

Although the civil authority decreed Sunday to be a day of rest, the church kept the focus where it was to be, namely, on the call to worship. The teaching of Christ and Paul prevented the early church from falling into a Jewish Sabbatarianism in the observance of the Sunday. But then in the sixth century, we find Cæsarius of Arles teaching that the whole glory of the Jewish Sabbath had been transferred to the Sunday, and that Christians must keep the Sunday holy in the same way as the Jews had been commanded to keep holy the Sabbath day. However, the Council of Orleans, 538, rejected this tendency as Jewish and non-Christian. This indicates that the debate about whether the Lord's day is the Old Testament Sabbath day in New Testament clothes, or a new day, is a very old debate.

Sunday in Reformed Scotland

Christian History tells us how the first day of the week was observed in Reformation Scotland of 1560. A bell would ring about a half-hour before the first Sunday worship service, and the service began with the second bell. The lay leader would lead the reading of Scripture, some prayers, and singing metrical psalms. This part of the service lasted an hour. The minister then entered the pulpit. After more prayers and singing the sermon was delivered, followed by more prayers, the Creed, and the benediction.

The second service was usually held in the afternoon. It was devoted to teaching from a Calvin or Heidelberg catechism, or a catechism for children. Eventually, "the Catechisms" were required to be held in every church.

Faithful attendance was greatly emphasized for both Sunday services. For example, the Aberdeen town council insisted that all city officials,

Church News

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Declined the call to Aldergrove, British Columbia and Hamilton, Ontario

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Mission Conference

The Theological College invites all those interested to a Mission Conference to be held on Tuesday and Wednesday, May 31, and June 1, 2005. The purpose of this conference is to discuss the church's calling to do foreign missions. Two evening meetings are scheduled for the wider public. These will be held in the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church. For more detailed information, please visit www.canrc.org/college/index.html

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their families, and their servants attend worship. In 1598, they began to fine those who missed services; husbands were responsible for their wives' attendance, and masters for their servants'. In Glasgow, a piper was threatened with excommunication if he played between sunrise and sunset on Sunday. At St. Andrews, five men were imprisoned for three hours for missing the sermon. Some churches imposed a fine for leaving a worship service early; other churches posted guards at the doors.

The Lord's Day Act

For hundreds of years in the Western world, very little commercial activity was conducted on Sundays. Besides essential services, business and trades took the day off. Sunday was considered by most as the day to go to church. Various governments even passed laws forbidding or restricting certain activities.

In the seventeenth century, the British Parliament during the reign of Charles I legislated an Act for punishing abuses committed on the Lord's day. In Canada, the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada, founded in 1888, persuaded Prime Minister Sir Wilfrid Laurier to introduce a "Lord's Day Act" in the House of Commons in 1906. It became law in 1907. The Act aimed to restrict Sunday trade, labour, and recreation. Of course, for some the first day of the week was a holiday rather than a holy day.

Until only decades ago, Western society has largely been living with a Constantinian view of the Sunday. However, society has changed drastically. We now live in a culture where business and entertainment stop for nothing, much less for religious observances. The formal shift came about in Canada on April 24, 1985 when the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the Lord's Day Act in the Big M Drug Mart case on the grounds that it contravened the freedom of religious and conscience provision in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Mr. Justice Dickson concluded that the Lord's Day Act wrongly imposed Christian morality upon non-believers.

Post-Constantine era

We live in a post-Constantine era. Western society has been living off Constantinian capital for some 1600 years. The age in which the civil governments pass laws and acts that set the Sunday aside as a day of rest are over. The parking lots of Wal-Mart and Canadian Tire are as full on Sunday as on Wednesday. How do we live as Christians

in such a society? What about the command to worship, and to diligently attend the church of God on the Lord's day? Despite the era in which we live, the command to worship on the Lord's day remains unchanged, even if the changes in society make it more difficult for us diligently to do so.

Synod of Dort, 1618-19

We ought not to think that we are the first Reformed people to struggle with the question of the Sunday. Four hundred years ago our ancestors in Holland had to deal with it. What was one allowed to do on the Sunday? All agreed that Sunday was the day for Christian worship, but besides that, how were they to observe the Sunday? It was a huge question at that time. The General Synod dealt with it and came up with this formula:

1. In the fourth commandment of the Law of God, there is a ceremonial (or temporary) aspect and a moral (or permanent) aspect.
2. The rest on the seventh day after creation and the strict observance of this day laid specifically upon the Jewish nation was temporary.

The Lord's day is about worship.

3. That a specific and stated day is set aside for worship, and along with it as much rest as is necessary for worship and holy meditation, is permanent.
4. The Sabbath of the Jews having been set aside, the Lord's day must be solemnly hallowed by Christians.
5. The Lord's day (Sunday) has always been kept since the time of the Apostles in the early catholic church.
6. This day must be so set aside for worship that men rest on it from their regular work, except what is required by charity and present

necessities, and from all such recreations that would hinder the worship of God.

This formula gives good guidelines. But how do we work it out practically?

Getting practical

We need to keep in mind what the Lord's day is about, namely, worship – diligently attending the church of God to hear God's Word. Everything we do on the Lord's day, and even Saturday, ought to enhance our worship. What does that mean?

It means not staying out late Saturday evening, ensuring that we get a good night's rest Saturday night. In fact, I would not mind if, when it came to the Lord's day, we thought in terms of Saturday evening to Sunday evening. That would tend to keep us in our homes Saturday evening where we could, as families, do some singing and other holy exercises of godliness in preparation for the great event of corporate worship on the morrow. We think of Sunday as beginning at midnight and ending at midnight. I wonder why? In the Bible, a day was comprised of the period between sundowns. Is that not a better view? Here we can learn from the early church. Before and during the early middle ages, as with the Jewish Sabbath, the observance of the Christian Sunday began with sundown on Saturday and lasted till the same time on Sunday. This method of reckoning the Sunday from sunset to sunset continued in some places down to the seventeenth century. Would it not be great to do back to that? Would it not be great if we were all in our homes Saturday evening preparing for Sunday morning?

On the Lord's day we diligently attend the services and participate fully in the worship. And it's not just a matter of going to church with the rest of the day being ours to spend in selfish pursuits. The rest of the day, between the services and after, ought to be characterized by what we were doing in

church. It's the Lord's *day*, not the Lord's *hours*. The Sunday should be of one peace. Since we worship with the communion of saints, it only makes sense that the other activities we are engaged in reflect that. It is good to visit one another. It is good to perform works of mercy: inviting the lonely into our homes, visiting in a hospital or care facility, or singing in an old age home to give just a few examples.

When we are on vacation, the call to diligently attend the church of God follows us. We make plans for our vacations. Let's factor into those plans the call to attend church to submit ourselves to the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

Despite the era in which we live, the command to worship on the Lord's day remains unchanged.

What about working on Sunday? As much as possible, we need to stay away from Sunday work because of the command to assemble together in corporate worship. Working during the stated times for worship keeps one from worship; working before or after worship does not put one in a positive frame of mind for worship. Worship is not easy to do; it takes effort and focus.

This can be a bit of a mine-field. In our society, it becomes increasingly difficult for everyone to stay away from Sunday work all the time. Dort said: "This day must be so set aside for worship that men rest on it from their regular work, except what is required by charity and present necessities." Most people will agree with that; however, in one congregation there will be different opinions on what is a work required by charity or by present necessities. What one considers work that needs to be done on Sunday another says is non-essential work. Let me give an example.

A farmer has his crop cut, lying in the field ready to be harvested. He cut it Saturday and plans to harvest it Monday. He wakes up early Sunday morning and the weather forecast is 100% chance of a terrible driving rain, and maybe hail. What does he do? Does he let the rain and hail ruin the crop or does he harvest it? One farmer will say it is irresponsible to let the crop go to ruin, and he will harvest it. Another will let it lie there and plow it under Monday morning. Who is right? I think the whole matter of personal conscience comes into play here. But, as Paul said in Roman 14:5, "Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind."

What about Sunday recreations? For instance, would it be appropriate to attend a football or baseball game on Sunday? No. That would detract from our Sunday focus, which is worship and communion-of-saints activities. Further, we are being entertained by those who have disobeyed the command to worship. Why would we even want to be there that very day?

What about playing a baseball game after church with a group of young people? Absolutely. That is communion-of-saints stuff that flows out of what we are about on Sundays.

May we go shopping on Sundays, or out for lunch to a restaurant after church? We ought not to do that. First, it's out of character with what the Lord's day is about; but also, we are implicating ourselves in the sin of those who disobey the universal call to worship (Ps 96).

Should there be a Lord's Day Act?

Was the Laurier government of 1907 correct in proclaiming the Lord's Day Act? Was the Supreme Court wrong in throwing it out in 1985? I would answer "Yes" to both questions.¹ Article 36 of the Belgic Confession, which summarizes the Bible's teaching on the responsibilities of the civil government, would lead us to answer affirmatively to both questions. Beginning in about the

middle of the first paragraph, we say in our confession:

Their task of restraining and sustaining is not limited to the public order but includes the protection of the church and its ministry in order that the kingdom of Christ may come, the Word of the gospel may be preached everywhere, and God may be honoured and served by everyone, as He requires in his Word.

Everything we do on the Lord's day ought to enhance our worship.

Even without the famous twenty-two words of Article 36 (see footnote), and recognizing that this sentence first speaks about how the civil government must protect the church from persecution, our confession also points the civil government towards its responsibility to see that the church can do its God-given task. The civil government labouring in the physical sphere can only do things by passing laws. It does not work in the spiritual sphere; it does not have the task of promoting the gospel. Rather, it should – as God's minister (Rom 13) – enact a law restricting work and recreation on the Lord's day so that the church can fulfil its task in the world which is to call *all* people to worship our great God and Saviour.

¹ I would agree completely with the brief that nine Canadian Reformed ministers sent to the Ontario Law Reform Commission on the subject of Sunday Observance Legislation in 1970. The brief was published in *The Canadian Reformed Magazine (CRM)* of 1970 as follows:

The undersigned, all serving the Canadian Reformed Churches as ministers of the gospel, respectfully submit the following brief to the Ontario Law Reform Commission on the subject of Sunday Observance Legislation.

BINDING PRINCIPLES:

1. The local Canadian Reformed Churches are governed by their consistories according to the rules laid down in the Church Order, of which we enclose a copy for your reference (Acts General Synod Orangeville 1968, pages 118-127). We feel compelled to draw your attention to the Church Order (of the Canadian Reformed Churches) and in particular to Articles 67 and 68 which as a matter of course obligate our churches to:

- (a) observe the Sunday, Christmas, Easter and Pentecost
- (b) hold two worship services on the Sunday.

2. The doctrine of the Canadian Reformed Churches to which all communicant members have to subscribe by their Profession of Faith is formulated in the Doctrinal Standards (also known as the Three Forms of Unity), the Confession of Faith (also known as the Belgic Confession), the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort. (For your reference we enclose a copy of the *Book of Praise* containing the text of the Three Forms of Unity, pages 2 – 110.) The Canadian Reformed Churches subscribe to the Three Forms of Unity as containing the doctrine of the Old and New Testament (The Word of God). These Creeds therefore do not contain obsolete theories, but are still the standards for our faith and life.

3. We would like to stress what the Canadian Reformed Churches profess (in Article 36 of the Confession of Faith) concerning the Magistracy [then follows Article 36 of the Belgic Confession – GvP].

4. Further we draw your attention to what the Canadian Reformed Churches profess in Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism as an explanation of God's requirement in the fourth commandment of the Law of God [then follows Lord's Day 38 of the Heidelberg Catechism – GvP].

Having thus explained what we believe to be the will of God regarding the day of rest and also what, according to the Word of God, is the duty of the Government, we now come to the...

PRACTICAL EFFECTS:

1. The Canadian Reformed community has (regardless of any legislation dealing with Sunday observance in existence or to be brought into existence) no alternative but to strictly observe the binding principles enunciated above.

2. However, the undersigned are painfully aware of the great threat to the religious and social welfare of the Canadian Reformed community, posed by any lack of Sunday Observance Legislation.

3. As for the economic aspect, we wish to point out that changes in the Lord's Day Observance Legislation to a more "open Sunday" would result in unequal opportunities for our people. Those who, on the ground of the above mentioned articles of our Doctrinal Standards, would refuse to work on Sundays would without doubt lose their jobs and thus not have equal opportunities with other Canadians who would not object to working on Sundays. Thus they would be denied a right which has been guaranteed to them in the Canadian Bill of Rights. Briefly, as for example, we believe no Sunday Observance Legislation will result in

- (a) seven day work weeks for all business enterprise based on a five day shift schedule.
- (b) limiting the job market for persons who abide by the binding principles stated above.
- (c) disrupting the peace and quiet proper Sunday observance deserves.
- (d) further destroying any remnant of a deterrent remaining that contributes to preserving a good family life.

CONCLUSION:

We therefore respectfully submit that a strict Sunday Observance

Legislation is essential to our community and the community at large. We also wish to point out the important duty of the Government to protect the interests of the minority in any matter. The Government is under no obligation to enact legislation by which everyone is compelled to observe the Sunday as set out in our Doctrinal Standards, but it has the God-given duty by its legislation to render it possible for all who wish to observe the Sunday as stated above, to do so unhindered. With the exception of essential services (e.g. medical care) a strict enforcement of Sunday observance is not detrimental to the community at large regardless their creed, but can make a very strong contribution to the moral, spiritual, and social well-being of the whole nation. Dated this 28th day of April, 1970.

The Reverend W. Loopstra
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Hamilton, Ontario
The Reverend J. Faber, Th.D.
Professor at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Hamilton, Ontario
The Reverend W.W.J. Van Oene
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Fergus-Guelph, Ontario
The Reverend L. Selles
Professor at the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches, Hamilton, Ontario
The Reverend H. Scholten, M.Th.
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Smithville, Ontario
The Reverend G. Van Dooren, M.Th.
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington, Ontario
The Reverend D. Vander Boom, M.Th.
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Burlington, Ontario
The Reverend M. Vanderwel
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of London, Ontario
The Reverend C. Oly
Pastor of the Canadian Reformed Church of Orangeville, Ontario



Neerlandia Celebrates

Installation

March 6, 2005 was a long awaited and much anticipated day for the Canadian Reformed Church in Neerlandia. Our new minister, Rev. John Louwerse, his wife Annet, and their little son Joel had arrived, and we were gathering for a worship service in which Rev. Louwerse would be installed. Rev. W.B. Slomp, our former minister, was here to lead the morning service.

The text Rev. Slomp chose for his sermon was II Timothy 4:2, which outlines the ultimate task of the pastor as a messenger of the Word. This most important task, among others, is to preach, and to do so with dedication, conviction, and patience. We as congregation were reminded to receive our new minister as a messenger sent by God. He will bring us the good news, in season and out of season. Being very familiar with our farming community, Rev. Slomp knew that these words would appeal to us as congregation. Just as a farmer watches his flock day and night if necessary and also observes the climate and weather during harvest, so a pastor too will work with dedication. He will not be afraid of hard labour but rather, showing love to his flock, will expose and correct sin much like a farmer will eradicate weeds, while encouraging and exhorting his sheep. The ministry of the Word requires patience and love. When this is the case, we can all say the words of Romans 10:15, "How beautiful are the feet of him who brings the good news." Rev. Slomp encouraged our new minister, along with all of us, to receive this wonderful privilege of having the Word and to realize the great responsibility that comes with it.



Rev. and Mrs. Louwerse with their son, Joel, in front of the church.

Immediately following the installation service, our council chairman, Br. Lawrence Terpsma officially welcomed Rev. Louwerse into our congregation. Congratulations and words of welcome were received from several churches of Classis Alberta as well as from our local URC minister, Pastor Theo Hoekstra.

In the afternoon, we again gathered for a worship service. Our auditorium was filled to capacity. Extra chairs were required because of the many guests that had come to hear Rev. Louwerse's inaugural sermon. The text he chose was II Corinthians 5:20 – 6:2, with the theme: "By his ambassadors, Christ appeals for reconciliation," with the following points: the source of this appeal, the content of this appeal, and the urgency of this appeal. A minister does not act on his own authority but is a mouthpiece of the King, and speaks on behalf of God, his sender. Rev. Louwerse graciously appealed to us in the name of the King to be reconciled to God. We were urged to be at peace with the Lord through the sacrifice of our Mediator and Saviour, Jesus Christ. We were reminded that the following Sunday we would be celebrating this miracle of grace in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we are given this urgent appeal, not to receive God's gift to us in

vain, but to repent and believe each and every day. We are called upon to confess our sins and respond in faith to this royal message of peace and reconciliation.

After the service, which also included the baptism of one of our youngest members, little Tristin Froma, everyone stayed to enjoy refreshments in the church basement. Rev. and Mrs. Louwerse were invited to cut and share a large welcome cake which had been decorated with the following words: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Meanwhile, we all enjoyed a time of joyful fellowship and thanksgiving together.

Welcome evening

On Friday, March 18, 2005 a crowd of about 400 people, members of the congregation and invited guests, filled the Fellowship Hall in Neerlandia. A celebratory spirit was in the air. It had been two and a half years since we had gathered in this same building to say farewell to our last minister, and we were excited and thankful to welcome a new one. We began the celebration with the singing and reading of Psalm 85 and prayer. The evening was ably led by Br. John Froma.

There were many delightful highlights. The Women's Societies collaborated in writing and singing a welcome song outlining Neerlandia's ministerial history from the settlement days of 1911 to the present time. The last stanza was devoted to welcoming Rev. Louwerse and wishing him God's blessing in his task as well as informing him that, even though Neerlandia is on the map, it is best not to blink as you drive past. The Young Adults' Bible Study group presented a beautifully bound scrapbook containing a page introducing nearly every family in



Cutting the cake after the inaugural sermon.

the congregation. Most of the pages were crafted by the families themselves and a great deal of creativity was displayed. Rev. and Mrs. Louwerse will certainly find this gift helpful in putting names to faces in the congregation. On behalf of the Men's Society, Br. John Wierenga welcomed Rev. Louwerse and his family and expressed thankfulness that God has again provided us with a minister of the Word. He then went on to give a little history of the gifts which he was presenting, informing the minister and his wife that their gifts could have been sighted anywhere in and around the hamlet of Neerlandia before they were hunted, shot, and skilfully crafted into something very useful in this northern climate. The Louwerses were then called onto the stage to open their gifts, which they did with some caution and trepidation, only to find a pair of warm moose-hide mittens for each of them. The Men's Society also presented Rev. Louwerse with a framed Honourable Membership in the Men's Society outlining the benefits of attendance.

A rural community like Neerlandia can be a confusing maze of roads without names and houses without numbers. One may be told to go north one and a half miles, then east one mile on gravel roads without streetlights; it is very important to know some local landmarks and to understand directions like "go past Joe Fisher's road, up to Pete Mast's road and hang a left." Sisters Helena Olthuis and Marie Steenbergen, on behalf of the Women's Societies, assisted Rev. and Mrs. Louwerse in this adventure by presenting

them with a county map complete with a numbered listing and a small flag to mark all 137 households in the congregation. They were also told that if they do get lost, not to worry. Whomever they ask for directions will surely know the people they are looking for and be able to give them directions.

It seems that our new minister is a bit of a history buff and, therefore, will certainly enjoy Neerlandia's history book called *A Furrow Laid Bare* given to them by the church's Ladies Aid. This informative book gives a detailed history of Neerlandia beginning at the time of its settlement in the early 1900's. A few families in the congregation can trace their roots back to those early times and are even farming the very same land that was cleared so long ago. Four members of the Young People's Society briefly introduced each member with an interesting tidbit of information and gifted Rev. Louwerse with the game of Risk, a game many of the young people play often.

A special presentation was made to little Joel Louwerse from the twenty other babies born in 2004. Sr. Judith Dejong, the mother of one of those babies, welcomed little Joel on behalf of his new friends. A cheer went up from the crowd when Joel's dad held up a toy John Deere tractor for Joel to play with one day soon.

The final presentation was a gift from the council together with the congregation: a beautiful wrought iron table complete with matching mirror and lamp to grace the foyer of the manse. Br. Lawrence Terpsma, representing the council, quoted James 1: 23-25 to explain the significance of the mirror:

Anyone who listens to the Word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.

The lamp symbolized the words of Psalm 119:105: "Your word is lamp to my feet and a light to my path."

Rev. E.J. Tiggelaar of the Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead and Pastor Theo Hoekstra of the United Reformed Church at Neerlandia both spoke a few words of welcome to Rev. and Mrs. Louwerse and wished them God's blessing. Rev. Tiggelaar reminded Rev. Louwerse that he taught him catechism many years ago in Chilliwack when the younger minister was just "a wee lump of a lad". There was much humour and the MC even managed to make jokes about the unanticipated difficulties in getting telephone service to the manse. The evening was rounded out with several musical and poetic pieces including those done by individuals, the choir, a youthful band, a quartet, and a group of friends. One member of the congregation, Sr. Linda Koopmans, presented a poem that she wrote for Rev. Louwerse entitled *Whose Shoes?*, in which she used the symbolism of shoes to skilfully trace the various stages of a minister's life from "those itty-bitty baby shoes" through the active running shoe years, the studious sturdy shoe years, to finally "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Rev. Louwerse then spoke a few words for himself and his wife, explaining that their thoughts had turned toward Neerlandia after the birth of their son, that he felt confident that they had everything they needed to get to know everyone, and that they hoped we would be a blessing to each other. It was a festive evening, filled with joy, thanksgiving and good cheer.



The three ministers and Mrs. Louwerse enjoying themselves at the welcome evening.



Peregrine Survey

May 2005

Mr. Keith Sikkema is a grade 8 teacher and vice-principal at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario. ksikkema@istop.com

Now that most of the dust has settled around hiring teachers for next year, few vacancies remain to be filled, and newly-elected board and education members have accepted their positions, it is almost time as well to see how we have been doing this year. Have we met a reasonable number of our goals in terms of curriculum, transportation, facilities, and other accomplishments? What changes still need to be implemented for next year?

Several schools are expanding and remodelling their facilities. Cornerstone's (Lynden) building costs remained well below budget, and \$55,000 in pledges are still forthcoming. The money will go into a future remodelling fund. The school is committed to adding high school grades while keeping tuition at the same rate. It hired Denver's principal/teacher for its high school expansion, and some community members intend to benefit from work done at the CCRTC by going through a *Foundations of Reformed Education* course next year. William of Orange School in Surrey is getting a make-over and an adventure playground. Smithville's John Calvin School construction project included a number of improvements to the design, and went over budget. Occupancy of its six additional classrooms, gym, offices, and staff room is expected by September. A number of schools are speaking of adding portable classrooms for the coming year.

Carman's DCS is developing a new arrears policy, which aims to "ensure that all members are treated in a Christian, compassionate, fair, equal, and consistent manner." The basic principle that

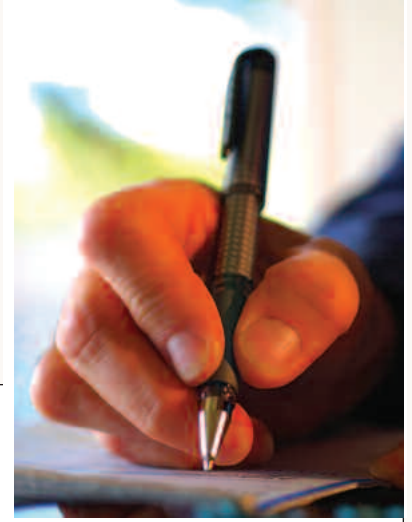
"members who are unable to pay their monthly contribution are helped out by the rest of the society paying a little more" has not been changed. The board finds that when members are committed to their children's Christian education, "arrangements between the member and the board are made well before involving the consistory" if difficulties arise in meeting their financial obligations. The policy will help ensure that "members in arrears will also know what to expect from the board and will know that they are being treated like every other member in a similar situation."

*The Lord has blessed us
all in a variety of ways,
and new initiatives
continue to pop up.*

Finances are not the only challenge our communities need to address. In April, the ASC (Assistance for the Special Child committee of the Ontario League of Canadian Reformed School Societies) sponsored a speech about "How to be an Advocate for Your Child in School—Elementary, High School, or College." Whether it concerns a special needs child, or a child who has received modified or special education courses, he or she needs to have a parent's full support, understanding, care, and action, especially when it involves changes within a school (the child gets a new teacher) or changes from school to school.

A new challenge is coming for some students of Guido de Brès (Hamilton) and Credo (Langley), as they will have an opportunity to participate in a three week exchange with Greijdanus College in Zwolle, The Netherlands. Greijdanus College will select ten students to spend time at each of the two Canadian schools in October 2005; this will be reciprocated when ten students from the Canadian schools will visit Greijdanus in March 2006. At the time of writing, over eighty Greijdanus students had registered for the program. More information is available at www.orangemaple.org.

In the same two schools some very different challenges are highlighted. Guido de Brès introduced a partial formal dress code (just tops) for its students this spring, based on the school's white and navy blue colours. If accepted by membership, it will be standard dress starting in September. The *Credo Chronicle* illustrates that the aggressive promotion of gay claims in our country also affects our schools. In this regard, the school is well aware of sensitive topics in its required Career and Personal Planning courses. This awareness was heightened by a local letter to the editor, which argued that "the absence of pro-homosexual instruction in public school" is a "denial of equal treatment." More information on the aggressive gay agenda can be found at www.bcptl.org/gay_print. On the same concerns, Fergus-Guelph's chairman comments, "While we deplore the direction given by those elected to public office regarding social norms and values, we may strive to prepare our



Letter to the Editor

children to contribute to society in a way that brings glory to God and seeks to advance his kingdom. As long as the Lord grants the opportunities for Reformed education, let us use them to serve Him: 'train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it' (Prov 22:6)." For reasons similar to those of Guido de Brès, this school is also considering the implementation of a school uniform.

Many grade seven and eight students in Ontario participated in science fairs this spring, culminating in the biennial fair at Redeemer University College, held on April 14 and 15. Some time ago, a Wiarton, Ontario area magazine reported on an impressive group of "well-behaved, enthusiastic children who asked very well thought-out questions about flying, how the planes worked, etc." The captain was commenting on a ground and air tour he did with students from Owen Sound Canadian Reformed School.

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College organized a lecture and seminar series on the work of educational philosopher, Nicholas P. Wolterstorff. The introductory lecture was presented by Dr. Benne Faber of Redeemer University College in Ancaster. The series was very well attended and generated lively discussions on fundamental aspects of Reformed education.

How well we are doing remains a question that needs to be answered locally. However, by the looks of it, Reformed education here is alive and well. The Lord has blessed us all in a variety of ways, and new initiatives continue to pop up. May He continue to do so in the remaining weeks of school, which are so often filled with a variety of special activities. As the summer looms, may it be a time in which parents, students, and teachers are reinvigorated for another year of learning.

Dear Editor,

After reading Professor Visscher's editorial in Issue 1 of this year, I had an urge to respond. Instead, I waited, hoping someone more qualified than I would do so. I do it now, because as of Issue 6, no one else has.

I wish to begin by saying that I agree with the professor's remarks about the reaction of some to recent changes in several congregations in the method of celebrating the Lord's Supper. This is wise and good advice.

I do have some questions, however, about his remarks under the heading "Principle or preference?" I wonder if he is, first of all, setting up a straw horse when he questions whether the "traditional" method of celebrating is prescriptive or descriptive.

The sacraments of holy baptism and the Lord's Supper are, as we confess, visible signs and seals which reinforce and make clearer what God tells us in his Word. How we perform the sacrament is vitally important! It's all about symbolism. We should keep those symbols intact. When members of the congregation get up to join with other members at the table we express our unity, as in Visscher's example of a family at dinner. What the table looks like or how we sit at the table is unimportant. These aspects are not mentioned in Scripture. But the fact that we sit together is part of what Christ has given to his church in the institution, even if we sit at more than one table. The fact that the members share a cup, as given in Scripture, is important, be it one or four. The language of our confessions and liturgy reflects these aspects as well. The Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism, as well as the form for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, speak of coming to the table, receiving from the hand of the minister, and sharing a cup.

I also question the actual use of a distinction between descriptive and prescriptive. Are we stepping dangerously close to the idea that allows for the negation of other Scriptural teachings? This is how women in office are justified, how the creation account is robbed of truth, how homosexual activity is accepted, and many other deformations.

One of the reasons given for changing the method of celebration is that it is said that the sacrament must follow the Word. Many congregations have adopted the use of the "B" order of worship. One of the premises of this liturgy is that the morning and afternoon worship services form two parts of a whole. If there is a real reason that a sermon and the celebration of the Lord's Supper cannot be held in the same service then the celebration could take place in the PM service. In the same way, baptism should also come after the preaching. Surprisingly, in some of the same churches where the pre-eminence of the Word is used as a reason to change the Lord's Supper, the administration of baptism is still done before the sermon!

If we are unable to observe the celebration in the biblical way, it would be one thing. But, are we unable or unwilling? Are we unwilling to continue in the traditions of our fathers? Are we unwilling to spend the time in worship? It is passing strange that we feel that we must keep the worship services to less than an hour but then are able spend a half hour socialising in the hallway and parking lot afterwards.

Those who wish to continue as we were used to are labelled “traditionalists.” In fact, we should keep the traditions of our fathers unless they can be improved or are shown to be unscriptural. The world loves to put Christians down as traditionalists. They say it’s because we are traditionalists that we can’t accept, for example, the homosexual agenda. Let’s not stoop to this kind of rhetoric within the church! We should honour the traditions that the churches returned to during the time of the Reformation. We must avoid self-willed worship and avoid causing division (BC Art. 32, HC Q/A 96). Those who wish to maintain what was historically practiced should not always have to give way for those promoting something new.

I can find some sympathy for those who feel that they cannot celebrate the new method of Lord’s Supper as it is done in their church. I also am a member of a congregation in which the members remain in the pew and receive individual cuplets. I feel cheated every time we celebrate. One elder said that I would get used to it. One can get used to many things, including sin, but it doesn’t mean we should. Holy Supper has lost much of its symbolism and joy. I do join in, however. I have made known my objections and, as Prof. Visscher wrote, it’s out of my hands and the consistory’s responsibility.

I cannot say that we are sinning by celebrating in this manner, but rather, we are diminished by this impoverishment of the Lord’s Supper celebration.

*Respectfully,
George Helder
Hamilton, ON*

Response

Dear Brother Helder:

I thank you for your response to my guest editorial. Let me state from the outset how much I appreciate the fact that, despite your concerns, you do participate in

the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. That is the proper ecclesiastical way and it does not have to stop you from sharing your concerns as you do in this letter.

I also agree entirely with your comments about the priority of the Word and thus the value of the sacraments coming after the Word. That is a good Reformed approach, which I have also attempted to implement in churches I have served.

As to the prescriptive/descriptive distinction, however, I must disagree and think you actually do as well. Whether consciously or not, we all make this distinction as we read the Bible; not everything that is *described* for us is *prescribed* to us. For example, the fact that the Lord Jesus taught in parables does not mean that all our teaching has to be in parables; the fact that Lord Jesus reclined at table does not mean that we always must recline at table. Thus, the cause of the many erroneous positions that you refer to cannot possibly lie here.

In the case of the Lord’s Supper, while you might prefer to walk to and sit at one table and drink from one cup, you would have a hard time proving that either Scripture or confession says that this is commanded. What is commanded is only this: eating and drinking from the sacramental symbols; and even then, we are warned at every Supper celebration “not to cling to the outward symbols”! A Reformed church knows of no “altar call.” The communion does not consist in the act of sitting around one table; rather, it consists in eating and drinking in communion with each other in Christ!

Furthermore, as to tradition, the difficulty is to establish which tradition is the oldest or the best, since there have been many traditions also in Reformed Churches. But Reformed churches bind themselves only to the Word, and not to tradition (BC Art 7), as you note yourself with the words “unless they can be improved.” Thus when pastoral needs warrant a change in practice, a Reformed church freely re-examines its tradition. And, in my judgement, when the adopted celebration involves less repetition and more attention and opportunity for the preaching of the Word, that cannot be called an “impoverishment.”

Actually, this manner of celebration forces the symbolism to focus exactly on that which matters: that Christ broke his body and shed his blood for us. Therein is all the joy.

G.H. Visscher

Press Release of the meeting of the Board of Governors of the Theological College held on February 10, 2005

The chairman, Rev. J. Moesker, opened the meeting in the usual Christian manner. He welcomed all the Board members as well as Dr. C. Van Dam who attends the meetings as principal of the College. The Board received word that Dr. Karel Deddens had died in the Lord earlier in the day. The chairman reflected upon Dr. Deddens' life and contributions to the College.

The minutes of the previous meeting and the proposed agenda for this meeting were adopted. As an incoming governor, Rev. G. Ph. van Popta signed the "Statement of Compliance" as found in the Board Members Handbook.

Reports

Finance and Property Committee:

The Board was brought up-to-date on the financial matters and the day-to-day operation of the College. Everything is operating well.

A status report on the Foreign Student Bursary Fund indicated that sufficient funding is on hand to allow the two current beneficiaries to complete their regular years of study.

Academic Committee:

The Committee presented a report regarding their visits to the lectures on November 23-24, 2004. The conclusion reads as follows: "As Governors we report with all thanks and praise to the Lord that the lectures we attended were given in faithful adherence to Scripture and the Confessions. The lectures were also of solid academic calibre which will certainly benefit the students in interacting with the sources they will consult when in the ministry."

The Committee had studied detailed reports from the Senate which had approved a proposal by Dr. A. J. De Visser in regard to the Diaconological department. The Academic Committee wholeheartedly endorsed this proposal and the Board approved the proposed changes.

The Academic Committee had also discussed a proposal from the Senate

that Rev. J. De Gelder be appointed as part-time lecturer in Church Polity. The Committee recommended that the Board appoint Rev. De Gelder as Lecturer in Church Polity from 2005-2008. This recommendation was approved by the Board. The Board also accepted the recommendation of the Academic Committee that Rev. De Gelder not be a member of the Senate.

Pastoral training program

Both committees had studied in more depth the decision of Synod Chatham regarding the Pastoral Training Program (PTP). The Academic Committee studied the relationship of the PTP to the College curriculum. The Committee is of the opinion that the PTP is working well as a program separate from and yet related to the College curriculum. Integrating the PTP with the curriculum would give rise to a number of practical problems; for example, for foreign students and for others who are seeking a Masters of Divinity degree but are not planning to pursue the ministry among the Canadian and American Reformed Churches.

The Finance and Property Committee investigated the financial implications. This Committee reported that while it is legally possible for the Board to pay wages to an interning student, it is strongly opposed to this course of action.

In light of the considerations of the two Committees the Board decided that the PTP should be kept separate from the College curriculum and that funding for student interns is the responsibility of the churches.

The secretary will prepare a proposal for General Synod 2007.

Theological education in South Africa

Synod Chatham had instructed the College to seek ways in which to help the South African churches set up theological training. Several items of correspondence were discussed. A letter from the curators of the Teologiese Skool suggested that Dr. C. Van Dam come to South Africa with a view to helping develop a plan for

theological education among the Free Reformed churches of South Africa. The Board concurred with the recommendation of the Academic Committee that our Principal go to South Africa to offer his counsel and advice.

Other business

The incoming correspondence was reviewed and the replies drafted by the secretary were approved for mailing.

Br. G. J. Nordeman requested to be released from his appointment as convener of the Permanent Principalship Committee. This is granted. Dr. G. Nederveen was appointed as the new convener and Rev. J. Van Woudenberg was appointed as an additional member of this committee.

After prayer by Br. L. Jagt, the chairman closed the meeting.

*For the Board,
G. Nederveen*

Mansfield area, Pennsylvania, USA



Photo courtesy J. Wanders