

Clarion

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*An Empty
Building*

*Submit
Yourselfes*

*Psalms and
Hymns in the
Dutch
Reformed
Tradition*

John Calvin School Celebrates 40 Years





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An Empty Building

This old church building with a beautiful, scriptural confession carved into its stone has been turned into a building of immoral filth.

The city of Amsterdam is renowned for its rich cultural history, museums, breath-taking architecture, and its deep religious roots. If you walk around Amsterdam *Centrum*, amidst centuries-old buildings, along cobbled streets and tree-lined canals, you will see many old church buildings. Some are magnificent structures. Others are sandwiched between other buildings – you hardly see them until you are walking by. They are everywhere. But the sobering reality of these church buildings is that many are no longer used for worship services. Some simply stand as a monument or museum; others serve sinister purposes.

Believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and are like living stones built into a spiritual house.

As you pass by one older church building along a quiet street and canal, you read on the building, *Anno Domini 1685* – the year of our Lord 1685. That's a fairly old building. You also read in an older style of Dutch – and here I will translate – “God is our refuge.” It is a beautiful confession. These words cannot be removed because they are deeply inscribed on the stone façade of the building. It is not impossible that some of our ancestors worshipped in this building. But there is something else about the building. There are two entrance ways. Over the left front door of the building is a neon sign to which every eye is drawn, with these words spelled out: “Erotic Museum.” And to the side, inscribed on two doors which stand wide open are the words: “*De Burgh*.” This means, “The Refuge.” This was now a pub – the kind of pub where you not only can get a glass of beer but also marijuana and other drugs. The warped irony in the name of this pub is that one does not find

refuge in God but in a glass of beer or a joint. You almost have to see it to believe it. This old church building with a beautiful, scriptural confession carved into its stone has been turned into a building of immoral filth.

Nothing new

It is quite shocking to think that in the very building where sermons were preached, sacraments administered, weddings and funerals held, one can now find a place of such blatant immorality. But it is hardly unique. In Edmonton there is an old church building (old by Edmonton standards = ninety years) which eventually became a lounge and then a bar, and then it lay vacant for years. Recently it was revived as the Mustard Seed Church which ministers to the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of the downtrodden in the inner city. That's a happier ending. However there are many church buildings in Canada which stand empty, and not because they are structurally unsound: attendance has dropped off.

In the Old Testament God dwelt in the temple; today God the Holy Spirit dwells in us as a believer.

We should not think that we are dealing with a twentieth or twenty-first century problem. There is nothing new under the sun. We read in 2 Kings 21:7 about King Manasseh:

He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which the Lord had said to David and to his son Solomon, “In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever.”



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We read of Manasseh and his son Amon that they introduced a type of paganism to Judah and to the temple that was more horrible than anything that was practised by the Canaanites whom Joshua was to drive from the Promised Land. How bad did it get? It came to the point that Manasseh sacrificed his own son.

Now we learn that the Lord God effected a great Reformation through Amon's son Josiah. But it is clear that God was deeply offended by the paganism which was introduced to his people and into the temple itself. We hear the Lord saying as He looked at this paganism going on in his temple: "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever." Even though the temple was but a shadow or copy of the true dwelling place of God in heaven, it showed Israel what God was like and what was needed to deal with sin. It symbolized what the coming Christ would do for man's salvation. Everything about the temple, particularly God dwelling among his people, was designed to draw the people in faith to Jesus Christ. At the temple they had communion with God, they trusted in the coming Messiah, and so they were saved through faith. All of this was being mocked, trivialized, and rejected by means of Manasseh's and Amon's paganism.

Something different

However, one cannot draw a straight line from the temple in Manasseh's day to the church building in Amsterdam which serves an unholy purpose or the empty church building in Canada. We have said that the Old Testament temple was a shadow of what was to come. With the coming of Jesus Christ and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit there are new realities. In the Old Testament believers went to "the house of God" where God dwelt. In the new covenant era we do not go to a building which we call "the house of God" or where we claim that God dwells. Think of what Paul writes in I Corinthians 3:16,17:

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.

Think also of I Peter 2:4,5:

As you come to Him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – An Empty Building
— R. Aasman270

Treasures New and Old – Submit Yourselves
— D.W. Vandeburgt273

Lord's Day 37 — J. Wiskerke van Dooren274

Psalms and Hymns in the Dutch Reformed Tradition: The Nineteenth Century (I)
— R. Faber275

John Calvin School of Smithville: Forty Years279

In Memoriam: Maarten VanderWel — J. Visscher281

Book Review — reviewed by W.L. Bredenhof282

Foundation for the Future: An Appeal283

Press Releases – Classis Pacific East, Classis Niagara284



holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Today, the temple of God or the church of God is not a building of stone. God's dwelling place is in his people who are washed in the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ and are gathered together in the unity of a true faith. Believers are filled with the Holy Spirit and are like living stones built into a spiritual house.

What this means

What this all comes down to is this: the holiness of the church does not depend on keeping church buildings intact for their intended purpose. It could happen – and it has happened – that church buildings are physically taken away from us and we are forced to gather in secret, in a barn, in a gym, or even in an open field. This will not break up the church as the assembly of true Christian believers. Nor will it affect both the blessing of God and the call of God for the church to be holy as He is holy. God's blessings are administered through his Spirit and Word. God's call is for his people to respond in faith and obedience.

Therefore, as deplorable as it is to see what happens in some church buildings in our modern world, it cannot be our primary concern. What sometimes happens to church buildings is but the symptom of a deeper problem. The crucial concern is what goes on in the true dwelling place of God.

In addition to the texts we mentioned above, there is also Paul's exhortation in 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20: "Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honour God with your body." In the Old Testament God dwelt in the temple; today God the Holy Spirit dwells in us as believers. We are to keep that dwelling place holy in all that we think, say, and do. We are to refrain from every form of immorality and in concrete ways show that we wish to glorify God with our whole life.

In this way God prepares us for the great fulfillment when the dwelling of God will be in the midst of his people in the New Jerusalem.



D.W. Vandeburgt

Submit Yourselves



MATTHEW 13:52

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“Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake. . . to the king, as the supreme authority.”

1 Peter 2:13

As we consider these words of the Lord’s apostle to his church we take note of the context in which he writes them. He had written one verse earlier that the believers were to “live such good lives among the pagans.” In abstaining from sinful desires (v 11) and in embracing godly living (v 12) the apostle tells these scattered saints that God will be pleased to use their good lives to win over their pagan neighbours to Christ and the Christian faith. But what exactly constitutes living a good life among the pagans? Peter answers that question by addressing how we as Christians relate to authority ordained by God – the authority of the government, the master, and the husband. In each situation there is a command given, namely, submit.

In this word of God there is much for us to meditate on. For we live in a time wherein the authority relationships God has instituted in the world are being challenged and overturned. This is true of the relationship between management and labour. It is true of the relationship between husbands and wives. And, it is also true of our relationship to government. It is to this particular relationship that we give our attention with the words of 1 Peter 2:13.

The command is submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to the king, as the supreme authority. The word “submit” is, as I have already indicated, a word of relationship to authority. It means to willingly place oneself under the authority that God has instituted. In this

case it is the governing authorities that Peter mentions. Practically speaking this means that as citizens of the land we are to obey the laws of the land doing what is good and right. It means that in our personal as well as our congregational prayers we pray for all those who are in authority over us. It means that when we speak about those who govern us or address ourselves to them we show the respect and the honour due those in government.

We submit for the Lord’s sake. Our submission is a service we render unto the Lord Himself. It is not service simply to another human being. For if that be the case their failings, weaknesses, and sins would make our service to them seem unfair and an unnecessary burden. This is the natural inclination of the pagan – to see a person but not the office. As Christians however we see an office and behind that office we see the Lord Himself. And seeing the Lord Himself we abstain from that sinful desire to disrespect, disobey, and rebel against the governing authorities. This includes those governing authorities who fail to exercise justice and righteousness. It extends to tyrannies and dictatorships. As Peter refers to the supreme authority of the king, then he in his day was speaking of Nero, the godless pagan ruler who mercilessly oppressed Christians. Nevertheless, in this context he writes submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake. We are to obey the governing authorities in all things that do not disagree with the

Word of God. And furthermore in our obedience we must be willing to suffer even as Christ did at the hands of the governing authorities.

This word of God, which calls us to submission and obedience to the governing authorities even if that means suffering, should cause us as Christians to examine carefully our participation in any form of public dissent. As I write this meditation our minority government is being challenged on same-sex legislation even as it struggles with what is called the sponsorship scandal. It is tempting to join in with the pagans and register our public dissent. But all too often such dissent knows nothing of the honour and respect we are to hold the governing authorities in. It knows nothing of the Lord who stands behind these his servants, as wicked or corrupt as they may be.

As we strive on the one hand to hold up God’s truth among the pagans as it concerns the authority relationship of management and labour, husband and wife, let us not give away with the other hand his truth about the relationship between government and us as citizens. Indeed, let us particularly now submit to them for the Lord’s sake and pray for them that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. And may our gracious God be pleased to use our good lives for his greater purpose – the salvation of those who at present do not know Him.

J. Wiskerke van Dooren

Lord's Day 37

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



In this Lord's Day we are still speaking about the third commandment. It says that no one should abuse the name of God. If someone does abuse God's name, you should say something.

The oath was mentioned, too. Someone can say "Honestly, I did not do that. I swear!" Swearing an oath like that is not good. You would use the Lord God to be believed.

Does this mean that we are not allowed to swear an oath? Have you ever attended a worship service where a new minister was installed? He is sitting in the first bench. The



explanation of the work of a minister is read. At the end, several questions are asked. He does not swear an oath; no, he simply says: "I do." Likewise, new elders and deacons do not swear an oath. Parents who have their child baptized do not use an oath either.

The Lord Jesus said to all his followers that your "yes" should really mean "yes." Sometimes swearing an oath is allowed: when a judge says that you have to swear an oath, or when other people we have to obey require us to say an oath.

Let me give an example: someone set a house on fire. The police are trying to find who did it. They cannot find anyone who saw it happen. But then someone goes to the police and says, "I saw the person who did it from my window." Can the police simply trust this man? Or did he say that because he dislikes the man? Maybe he saw the flames and thought, "Now I can get even with him. I will say he did it." The police cannot tell by looking at him whether or not he is lying. In that case, and in worse cases, a person is asked, "Are you ready to swear this is the truth?" You can be sure he won't easily tell a lie. For if it is discovered that he lied, he himself will go to jail.

Swearing an oath goes this way: you have to put your hand on a bible, and you swear to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, "So help me God." You dare to ask God to help you tell the truth. You know that God has heard it. He will punish you if what you say is not true.

The name of the Lord God is mentioned with reverence when you swear an oath.

God will hear what you are saying, and He may punish you if you tell a lie.



Psalms and Hymns in the Dutch Reformed Tradition: The Nineteenth Century

(Part One of Two)

Introduction

The singing of hymns in the public worship services of the Dutch Reformed churches has received much attention in the last two centuries. This is due in part to the causes and consequences of the schism in the Dutch Reformed Church (*Hervormde Kerk*) known as the Secession of 1834. Congregations broke with the state church because church government had become hierarchical, and because ideas associated with Enlightenment philosophies and evangelicalism were reflected in the official song-book called the *Evangelical Hymns* (*Evangelische Gezangen*), which came into use in 1807. The reaction of the seceded churches to these hymns was treated in the year-end issue of *Clarion* in 2003.

The issue concerning the singing of these hymns was so great that it affected the churches of the Secession for much of the nineteenth century, and traces of it may be seen even today. While the liturgy of the state church experienced the influences of modernist and other philosophical trends, congregational singing in the seceded churches developed its own colourful history. That history is the subject of two articles, the first of which focuses attention on the nineteenth century. It will become clear that this history forms the background to the compilation of the *Book of Praise* of

the Canadian Reformed Churches, established by Orthodox Reformed emigrants from The Netherlands about fifty years ago.

Besides the Secession, there were several other developments in nineteenth century Holland which affected the teaching and practice of hymn-singing in churches and homes. The increasing separation of Dutch culture from the social values of the Reformed churches produced a movement called the Reveil (Awakening). This movement, more social than theological in nature, reacted to increasing materialism and apathy, and stressed the duties of the Christian in civic life. As we shall observe below, the ideals of this movement were expressed and promoted in many of the Christian songs penned at the time.

The exodus of conservative congregations from the state church in 1886, called the Doleantie, is also of relevance to our topic. So too is the union, in 1892, of the congregations of the Doleantie with those of the Secession; it produced the Reformed Churches (*Gereformeerde Kerken*), the federation from which the American and Canadian Reformed churches descend via the Liberated (*Vrijgemaakte*) churches. The debates and customs of the Reformed churches reinforced the caution our forefathers had inherited



A nineteenth century edition of Datheen's
150 Psalms of David

from the Secession, and thus hampered the progress of the Reformed understanding of the place of hymns in the worship services.

Churches of the Secession

We shall begin the sketch with the churches of the Secession, from 1834 until the last decade of the nineteenth century. The reader may recall that the Secession reacted to government legislation in 1816 which centralized ecclesiastical organization in a national synod, thus weakening the role of local consistories and broader assemblies. The seceders also sought to return to the



Title Page, *Stem en Snaren*
(Voices and Strings), 1882

worship of God according to the confessional norms of the Reformation-era churches. As far as the *Book of Praise* was concerned, this meant that most churches reverted to using only the metrical Psalms of 1773, while some employed the archaic edition composed by Petrus Datheen (1566). Several new editions of Datheen's *150 Psalms of David* appeared in the nineteenth century. Thus, while the state church continued to use the *Evangelical Hymns*, many of the seceded congregations did not.

It should be noted that the Seceded congregations' renewed interest in the 150 Psalms was not based on a doctrinal conviction that the singing of hymns as such was wrong. The reaction to the *Evangelical Hymns* was due to the unscriptural content of the songs in the collection and the hierarchical manner in which it was introduced. In fact, in 1840, the second synod of the seceded congregations in Arnhem considered a proposal to reinstate the use of the

Evangelical Hymns. Between 1840 and 1875 there were several other attempts by both congregations and classical assemblies to permit the singing of at least the "sound hymns" in the collection.

Due to the lingering influence of the Secession, however, Synod Amsterdam (1866) decided that it was "not advisable to grant the request... to appoint a committee to compile a collection of hymns for use in the public worship services." And at the Synod of den Bosch in 1875, the repeated request to reinstate the use of the less contentious songs in the *Evangelical Hymns* was rejected out of concern that unrest would arise in the more inflexible congregations.

The caution of the broadest assemblies in the Seceded churches during the nineteenth century resulted in the unfortunate separation of what was sung in the worship service and what was sung in the homes, schools, and society halls. At the Synod of Utrecht (1877) the wish was voiced that a collection of hymns and spiritual songs be compiled for use during the week. There was such a desire to sing hymns that by the middle of the nineteenth century the publication of spiritual songs for non-liturgical use increased considerably.

Voices and Strings

In 1882 a collection of Christian songs was published called *Stem and Snaren* (in English: *Voices and Strings*). This song-book was compiled by an inter-denominational "committee" representing an association for Reformed education, a Sunday-school society, and a publication consortium. The song-book was recommended for use in family

devotions, Sunday-school, and educational classes; it was not intended for the worship services. As the preface states, these songs offer a poetic expression of the Christian consciousness, and a witness to the truths of salvation as professed in the reformed tradition. *Voices and Strings* consisted of several old standards (by Martin Luther and others) and new compositions by contemporary Dutch poets including Isaac da Costa and Nicholaas Beets.

One premise of the new publication was that, whereas the Psalms sing of Christ as prophecies in the first dispensation, the spiritual songs in *Voices and Strings* treat the fulfilled gospel. The songs in this book deal with such topics as the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Ascension, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is instructive to observe that the complaint (which has recurred in several generations since the Reformation) about the insufficiency of the Psalms reflects the spirit of an age. In a time when the law in relation to gospel is disproportionately depreciated, when the harmony of the old and new testaments is viewed as imbalanced, and when the doctrine of sanctification is stressed over that of justification, a longing arises to replace the singing of Psalms with that of hymns. Lacking to this premise, however, is the fact that the believer sings the Psalms of David or Asaph with a deeper understanding of their meaning, import, and fulfilment than even the inspired composer.

Besides songs appropriate to the various times of the liturgical year, *Voices and Strings* includes patriotic songs about the fatherland (for example, the Dutch

national anthem) and songs of personal reflection in times of sorrow or joy. Most importantly, perhaps, the publication reveals that towards the end of the nineteenth century Reformed believers nurtured an appreciation for songs based on Bible passages, and not merely the Old Testament Psalms.

One song whose popularity gained it entry and reappearance in many hymn-sections of later Reformed books of praise is the so-called Christmas Psalm, based on the text of Isaiah 9. Readers raised in The Netherlands will recall the Dutch title, “*Daar is in 's werelds duistere wolken.*” It was becoming apparent that the traditional distinction between psalms and hymns is not as clear or solidly grounded as had been thought: songs based on biblical texts other than the Psalms are not therefore less scriptural. The refinement of the difference in the nature of the metrical Psalms and other scriptural songs was to receive further attention in the next generations.

The Reveil

A movement called the Reveil (or Awakening) influenced the composition, publication, and function of hymns and spiritual songs in nineteenth century Holland. Arising in part from English Methodism, and further developed in France, this international trend was not directed at the church as institution (with its teachings, confessions, order, and forms) but at society generally and individuals in particular. Reacting to lifeless orthodoxy and indifference, the Reveil sought to arouse in Christians their sense of moral and civic duties. It stressed the believer's personal relationship to God through faith in the

atonement of Jesus Christ. Since the strands within the Reveil varied from modernist to orthodox, the movement was propelled more by leaders in society than in the church.

Two leaders of the Reveil in The Netherlands were composers of Christian songs: Isaac da Costa and Nicholaas Beets. Stressing evangelism both within The Netherlands and abroad, these poets wrote songs concerning the basic themes of the gospel: sin and damnation, Christ's atonement, sanctification, and God's providence. Spiritual songs played an important role in this movement because singing was deemed a medium whereby faith is incorporated in the human heart. Studies have shown that while the Reformed faith in the latter half of the nineteenth century experienced doctrinal and ecclesiastical turmoil, the singing of spiritual songs and hymns was exercised widely and with little discrimination. Thus, whereas many of the spiritual songs composed by poets influenced by the Reveil were not sung during the

worship services of the Orthodox Reformed churches, they did advance a general re-evaluation of the place of spiritual songs in the liturgy.

Orthodox exodus and unification

There were two ecclesiastical movements in the last decades of the nineteenth century which affected the practice of hymn-singing in Orthodox Reformed churches: the Doleantie of 1886 led by Abraham Kuyper, and the unification of 1892. Besides reacting to modernism and unbiblical toleration, the motivation for leaving the state church was the hierarchical behaviour of the national synod. The *Evangelical Hymns* and the supplementary *Vervolgbundel* published by the *Hervormde Kerk* were seen as examples of imposition by an illegal church government. Consequently the churches of the Doleantie, like those of the Secession, abandoned the use of the hymns on the grounds that no properly constituted synod had approved them.

XII.
KERSTPSALM.
 (koos IX.)

Daar is in 's we - rlds duis - tre wol -
 ken Een Licht der lich - ten op - ge - gaan. Komt
 tot zijn schijn - sel, al - le vol - ken! En
 gij, mijn zie - le! bid het aan. Het komt de
 schin - du - wen be - schij - nen, De zwar - te
 schin - der van den dool; De nacht der zon - de

43

zal ver - dwij - nen, Ge - na - de spreidt haar
 mor - gen - rood.

2. Al leht ge, o God! vermostguldigt
 De graven van uw overloed,
 Wat laat het waar zich 't hart besuldigt
 En siddrend voor u krimpen moet?
 Gosa dubbelde angst van most of koren
 Verdrijft de smarten van een ziel,
 Voor wie de hemel is verloren,
 Omdat se, o Heer! van u verviel.

3. Maar nu, nu zullen we ons verlijden,
 Verlijden voor uw aangezicht!
 De volheid der belofte tijden
 Is voor de volken aangelicht!
 Komt, dat we aanbiddend nederknielen
 En juichend roepen: God is groot!
 Daar komt een oogertijd voor de zielen,
 De Heer zal oprijzen met zijn brood.

4. Gij wilt met vrede tot ons komen,
 Met vrede en vrijheid, vreugde en eer;

“Christmas Psalm” based on Isaiah 9
 (Stem en Snaren)

Church News

Called to the church of Houston,
British Columbia

Rev. M. Jagt
of Ottawa, Ontario.

Declined the call to the
Free Reformed church of
Kelmescott, WA:

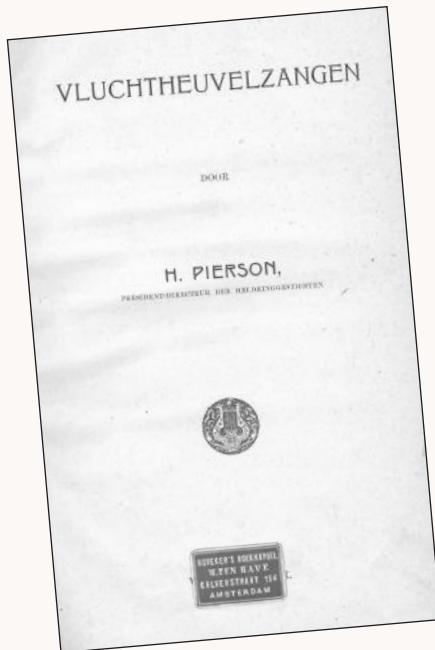
Rev. A. van Delden
of Rockingham, WA.

Called and declined to the
church of Lincoln, Ontario:

Rev. P.G. Feenstra
of Owen Sound, Ontario.

experience of the community as a whole. Thinking that the songs of the church ought not to be divorced from culture, Pierson used variations of melodies composed by great artists such as Mozart and Handel.

Together with other publications of this sort, Pierson's *Vluchtheuvelzangen* represents a stage in the development of the Christian song in the history of The Netherlands and the Reformed churches. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, leaders of the orthodox churches also began to re-evaluate the place of psalms and hymns in the liturgy of the worship service. As the negative impact of the unscriptural contents of the *Evangelical Hymns* and the improper manner in which they were implemented began to weaken, the newly formed federation bestowed more attention upon the principles of singing psalms and hymns. As the century turned, it became clear that the Reformed Churches needed to articulate more fully the biblical grounds for the singing of psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and their place in the worship service. That articulation was to occur in the first decades of the twentieth century, a subject we shall leave for another time.



Title Page *Vluchtheuvelzangen*, 1904

While the Seceded congregations had objected especially to those hymns whose content was contrary to Scripture and the confessions, the churches of the Doleantie discarded the two hymnals on formal, church-political grounds. Rejecting the nationalisation of the church by the parliamentary regulations of 1816, the two separated groups sought to return to the basis and structure of the Reformed church as expressed by the Synod of Dort (1618) and its church order. In this common desire the churches of the Secession joined with those of the Doleantie in 1892. As far as corporate singing during the worship services was concerned, the unified churches returned to the metrical Psalms as published in 1773 (the so-called *Staatsberijming*).

Vluchtheuvelzangen

While the newly established Reformed Churches were leery of introducing the liturgical singing of

hymns, the general trend in Reformed circles was to expand the repertoire of hymns and spiritual songs. It would be appropriate, therefore, to end this sketch of nineteenth century developments with the popular collection of spiritual songs called *Vluchtheuvelzangen*, by Henry Pierson. This poet-preacher, who joined neither the Doleantie nor Union of 1892, drew the title for his compositions from the name of the church he served at Zetten: “*Vluchtheuvel*” means hill of refuge, while “*zangen*” are songs.

Pierson did not wish to impose theological premises on his songs, and so he did not divide them according to the Christian calendar. Although he rejected the Methodist and Pelagian elements in it, Pierson was influenced by the Reveil movement. Not employing a systematic or doctrinal approach to the songs, Pierson infused a confessional character only insofar as the songs deal with the believer's profession of faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. The language of his poetry, too, does not reflect that of the Three Forms of Unity or the church order; that would be too restrictive for Pierson. Not subject to formulas or theological diction, Pierson's poetry appealed widely, to all who wished to experience the relationship with God as personally as possible.

Thus the spiritual songs of the *Vluchtheuvelzangen* recall the Pietistic songs of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; but Pierson places greater emphasis on the objective rather than subjective. The role of the Holy Spirit in the operation of faith is more often treated than the experience of the individual believer; so too is the

John Calvin School of Smithville: Forty Years

A Time for Reflection and Thanksgiving



The history of John Calvin School

“There is not one blade of grass, there is no colour in this world that is not intended to make us rejoice.” Those words were written by a man in whose honour a school was named forty years ago in Smithville, Ontario. John Calvin, who has been accused of generating a joyless Christianity, a man who taught predestination on the basis of Scripture, could not have imagined the joy and thankfulness that took place on October 1, 2004. The John Calvin School of Smithville bears the name of one of the sixteenth century Reformers whose influence has continued more than 400 years after his death.

When the John Calvin School of Smithville opened its doors in 1964, it was an answer to many prayers. The

immigrant parents who had been instrumental in the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church at Smithville in the early 1950s quickly came to the conclusion that the vows they made at baptism were not easy to uphold in the Canadian public education system. Although the public system was initially based on Christian standards and rules, in reality it had degraded to a point that Reformed parents could not in good conscience acknowledge they were doing the best for their families. Covenantal responsibility required their children's schooling to conform to the beliefs and values taught in the home and in church.

Although there were initially mixed thoughts on how to approach the responsibility, the underlying premise was the resolve to start their own school as soon as possible. Recognition of their dependence on the Lord united brothers

and sisters to exercise good stewardship and demonstrate their ambition, and challenged them to out-distance their own financial targets. This was richly blessed with responses that were only a short time before unimaginable. Even those sceptical at first supported the efforts so that the initial enrolment exceeded expectations.

The forty years were not without difficulties and challenges. Early board members had little or nothing to go on for previous experience or guidelines. For the most part they were charting new territory and the terrain was often rugged. In addition to the board members' daily work, many spent countless hours and restless nights plotting out the course. The building of a school was one thing, providing an education was another. Getting the students to and from the school proved one more test of wits. Three buses with routes that that wound their ways through the Beamsville, Dunnville, and Fenwick areas provided not only the transportation required for the students, but the topic for deliberation at many board meetings, coffee socials, company evenings, and supper table discussions.

The first staff had the daunting task of organizing a curriculum that was nearly non-existent, working together harmoniously, meeting board and parental expectations, and dealing with a student body so diverse that some even came from one room school houses. Yet through struggles, difficulties, sickness, and sadness the Lord continued to show his love and care for his people.



The reality of his covenant promises are especially perceptible to those looking back at the events. They were undoubtedly used to teach his children to live closer to Him.

One of the prominent features of the John Calvin School throughout the forty years of its existence has been growth. It would seem that no sooner had one project or solution to continued growth been completed, the next would not be far behind. Portable classroom upon portable classroom, expansion fund drive upon building drive were required to furnish the growth. In the early nineties the Attercliffe congregation decided to build their own facility. This provided a solution for a while but plans will soon become a reality as the further expansion of the John Calvin School will contain six new classrooms and a gymnasium.

But, if growth as a feature in itself would be used to measure the blessings, in the end it would be meaningless. The John Calvin School has served an important role in equipping young people spiritually, socially, and intellectually. It has served to assist parents in raising their children in the light of God's Word. Thankfully, it has been instrumental in developing an alumnus that has learned to live for God in a rapidly changing world with the ability to comprehend and assess their place in this world from the foundation of God's unchanging Word. Throughout the years, the Lord used the John Calvin School of Smithville to equip students for a life in thankful service to Him.

Fortieth anniversary celebration

It was on that basis that the celebrations took place on October 1, 2004. It was a day of festivities that started at the school and ended with an evening program of joy and thankfulness. Among the highlights of the day program were the hoisting of an official anniversary flag dedicated to the event and a mouth-watering lunch served by the school's Ladies Auxiliary. Afternoon activities allowed the students to enjoy the beautiful weather as well as happy atmosphere. The evening program included a senior student and staff musical presentation. Speeches were given from various people involved as founding board members, parents, former teachers, former students, and a student from the first Grade 1 class. A visual presentation helped all those involved to

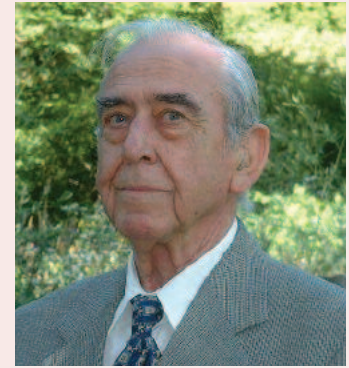
reflect and reminisce in the gallery of their minds and give others a glimpse of what took place in the past. Best wishes were conveyed by dignitaries in attendance from the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government. Congratulations were also expressed from the daughter school in Attercliffe as well as from the Canadian Reformed Teachers College in Hamilton. The board was presented with the special keepsake anniversary flag. After the official program there was adequate time to socialize and become re-acquainted with old friends and colleagues.

Whether we look back at forty years or 400 years we may undoubtedly see the Lord's rich blessings. The fruit of reformation and liberation is evident in the John Calvin School of Smithville. In celebrating we were reminded not to give recognition to our accomplishments but to give thanks for God's enduring faithfulness. As the school moves forward into a new phase of growth and development may it continue to equip future generations to steadfastly continue to remain faithful to his Word.



Maarten VanderWel

(December 17, 1926 – May 3, 2005)



On May 3, 2005, the Lord our God suddenly took out of this life his faithful servant, the Reverend Maarten VanderWel. Not many knew that he was sick or that he had been hospitalized already the previous week in the Chilliwack General Hospital. And that was the way he would have wanted it, as he was never a man to draw much attention to himself. Since retiring from the active ministry he had lived quietly for almost fourteen years in a picturesque corner of the Fraser Valley, near Cultus Lake, and now quietly he went to meet his Lord and Maker.

His life

Maarten VanderWel was born on December 17, 1926 in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. He was the third child in a family of four children. He was an apt student but he did not enter the ministry right away. First, he worked for a number of years as a stone mason and in the printing industry. On October 15, 1953, he married Sophia (Fieke) Kelderman and they were blessed in due time with a family of six boys: Wim, Harpert, Kees, Dick, John, and Maarten.

The Lord, however, continued to pull at him and so he entered the Theological University (Broederweg) in Kampen during the 1950s and graduated in 1962. Upon the completion of his studies, he was called to the twin congregations of Sneek and Koudum in Friesland. He accepted that call and was ordained on April 8, 1962.

After serving there for almost six years, a call was received from Canada. In the spring of 1968 he emigrated and on April 28 he was installed as the minister of another pairing of churches, namely the Canadian Reformed Churches at London and Watford in Ontario. There he adapted to a new land, learned the English language and laboured faithfully until 1971 when he was called by the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, B.C. He remained in this church until he retired on December 31, 1991.

From this overview you can see that the Rev. VanderWel served as an active minister for a little less than thirty years. Upon his retirement in 1991, he purchased his own home situated in the hills and mountains of southern B.C. The home, however, needed extensive renovations and he,

together with the help of family and friends, went to work and transformed it into a very suitable abode. The last thirteen years of his life were spent there.

Nevertheless, they were not always easy years. Upon retirement, sickness visited. Especially his wife Fieke was stricken by ill health and on September 21, 1998, she was taken home by the Lord. This meant that our brother now had to travel life's pathway alone. Thankfully, some of his children and grandchildren lived in the area and they, together with friends and church members, did their best to help and support him.

His ministerial work

During the years of his ministry Rev. VanderWel became well-known as a man who crafted his sermons with great care. They were always clear, concise, insightful, Christological, and faithful to the biblical text. They fed God's people well.

At times his hearers could be heard to comment on the calmness of his delivery. Why, he would even make a remark about it himself from time to time. But a fire-breathing prophet he would never be. That was not how the Lord made him nor how the Lord used him.

Still, he did his work with great dedication. His parishioners could count on him to be there in times of sickness, trouble, or sorrow. His catechism students could rest assured that his lessons would be solid and clear. His elders and deacons could be confident that he would do his share of the pastoral work. Often he did more, and many were not aware of all the work that he did in his own special and unobtrusive manner. Why, an elder was heard to remark after the Rev. VanderWel retired and a time of vacancy followed, "We never knew all the things that he did until he retired and then we suddenly had to do them ourselves."

His family

Besides being a faithful minister of the Word, Maarten VanderWel was also a loving husband to his wife and a loving father to his children. In many ways he and his wife Fieke balanced each other out and complemented one another. If he was quiet, she was more talkative. If he was a

model of caution, she was more adventurous. If his head was often in the clouds, she was always down to earth. If he was forgetful, she was sure to remember. Together they made a great couple.

To his boys, our brother was a father who was often gone. At night especially there were always meetings and more meetings – consistory, catechism, pastoral. Still, when it counted, he was there with his wise advice and direction. In addition, he was always there too with a pair of hands that could fix just about anything. Bikes, boats, cars, trailers – he could perform wonders on them all.

His colleagues

In addition to being missed by his family, friends, and parishioners, he will also be missed by his colleagues. He was a faithful and dependable friend. If you served together with him at an ecclesiastical assembly, you learned to appreciate his advice. If you were on a committee with him, you came to treasure his insight. If you asked him for counsel, you could be certain of receiving wise input. If you traveled or

relaxed with him, you were sure to be surprised by his wonderful sense of humour. In short, all of us who knew him as a fellow worker will always have fond memories of him.

In conclusion

In the end one can only be thankful for the Lord's gift of such a wonderful husband, father, grandfather, minister, friend, and colleague. He will be missed and it is our prayer that the Lord will comfort his family and all who mourn his passing. Remember, however, that where he is today there is no longer any sadness, any sickness, or any loneliness, but only "eternal pleasures" (Ps 16:11). Maarten VanderWel has entered into the joy of his Master.

"Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever." (Ps 23:6)

J. Visscher

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Book Review

Reviewed by **W.L. Bredenhof**

My Path to Liberation: Reflections on My Life in the Ministry of the Word of God

Written by *Douwe Van Dijk*,
Translated by Theodore Plantinga,
(Neerlandia: Inheritance, 2004).
Additional Information: Paperback,
370 pages, \$19.95.

In the last fifteen years, a number of books that make our heritage more accessible have been either authored or translated into English. Rev. Van Oene's *Patrimony Profile* was one such book. Two helpful volumes have also been translated by Theodore Plantinga, a professor of philosophy at Redeemer College in Ancaster, Ontario. The first volume was *Schilder's Struggle for the Unity of the Church*, published in 1990. This book is the second.

The author, Douwe Van Dijk (1887-1985), was a Reformed pastor in The Netherlands in a time of struggle and upheaval. In these memoirs, Van Dijk traces the journey of his life from his childhood in Friesland up till his

pastorate in the northern city of Groningen. The first six chapters are memorably descriptive and give a rich picture of village and rural life in The Netherlands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It would be helpful for readers to have a good map of The Netherlands handy as they read – Van Dijk's story involves a host of places, most relatively obscure for modern English readers.

Throughout the book, Van Dijk offers opinions on numerous subjects. In the fourth chapter we learn that Van Dijk is convinced that "the church of the Lord is not commanded to evangelize" (p 126). His arguments will probably not be found persuasive by many modern readers. In the last chapter of the book, Van Dijk opines about "beautiful church buildings." His experiences after the Liberation of 1944 led Van Dijk to conclude that such church buildings are a stumbling block for God's people. His argument presents a false dilemma between the preaching of the Word and a beautiful building. As such, it too will probably not be found persuasive. Nevertheless, since such

opinions still exist here and there, it is helpful to know where people are coming from.

Approximately half the book is taken up with Van Dijk's account of the Liberation of 1944. Van Dijk did not pretend to present a neutral description of what happened. Rather, our author very plainly had an agenda with what he wrote. Over and over again, we can hear the pleas he made to those who remained "bound" to the Synodical decisions. Repeatedly, the injustices and evils of those days are made evident. Van Dijk also provides what documentary evidence he can to support his case for the Liberation. So far as I know, this evidence cannot be found elsewhere in English.

A book like this makes great reading for those who are interested in developing a sense of our Reformed identity. At the least, it tells us who we were and why our forefathers had to take a stand at a certain point. Knowing that can also guide our understanding of who we are today as Canadian Reformed believers.

Foundation for the Future: An Appeal

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers' College, Hamilton, Ontario



Nestled in the city of Hamilton lies a gem, diminutive and relatively unknown. This tiny gem is a Reformed Teacher's College (CCRTC). It boasts a full time staff of three, and a supporting staff of five part-time lecturers. The College offers a one year Diploma of Education program as well as a three year Diploma of Teaching program. In the current school year, sixteen full-time students are enrolled in both programs. The College boasts alumni of 132 graduates, of which approximately fifty are still actively teaching in Reformed day-schools on the North American continent as well as in South America and Australia. Many of the others serve Reformed schools as board or education committee members.

Why is this College considered to be a gem? Because among the many and varied post-secondary institutions offering certificates and diplomas of education, this is one of the very few colleges that offer courses which train young men and women to become distinctively Reformed teachers. The programs include such courses as Religious Studies (Bible and Doctrine), Foundations of Education, Educational Psychology, History of Ideas, and Teaching Workshops and Practicum, to name but a few.

The exceptional, dedicated faculty members continuously engage in professional development activities, as well as serve the Reformed communities at large in a variety of ways. They provide ongoing support for the faculties of schools in which their graduates are employed, and serve on a variety of committees, as well as write

curriculum. They have also been speakers/lecturers at various (international) education conferences, in-service professional development days, and teacher's conventions.

Although CCRTC's Board consists of Canada-wide appointed governors, the core group of Ontario governors is, for the most part, responsible for the daily operation of the College. CCRTC's primary sources of funding are a yearly fee from the day-schools it serves, as well as tuition fees; however, CCRTC has time and again needed to rely heavily on private donations. Tuition fees have steadily increased to reflect the value of the education the College offers, and our donor base has consistently stepped in and provided significant funds needed to maintain the programs offered. We are very thankful to have had such support. However, funding needed to keep the college viable has not kept up with the increasing cost of operating the College. Therefore, it is time to develop a new strategy to keep CCRTC on a more financially solid footing, to ensure that this gem of a College has a future, thereby facilitating the futures of our Reformed day-schools.

Much more in-depth information about the College is available at www.covenantteacherscollege.com. As well, the latest newsletters about programs and activities at the College are available for downloading from this location. You can find more financial information available in these newsletters, as well as a breakdown of income and expenses.

At the last Canada-wide annual meeting of the Board of governors in March 2005 it was decided to spearhead a fund-raising initiative. The goal is to get the College through this current school year financially, and set the College on a fiscally viable course for the next number of years. This goal will take an influx of \$100,000 and upwards for this fiscal year alone.

We, the governors and faculty, share a deep commitment to the future of CCRTC, with the help of the Lord. We therefore appeal to you to prayerfully consider our appeal, and send your contribution of any amount. Your contribution will greatly assist in meeting our pressing financial need, not only for the immediate school year, but also for our future. Tax receipts will be issued.

May CCRTC continue to serve the Reformed communities in Canada and abroad, seeking always to honour the name of our Almighty God, and to faithfully work in his kingdom.

Please send your contribution to:
"Foundation for the Future"

c/o CCRTC
P.O. Box 20179
856 Upper James Street
Hamilton, ON, Canada L9C 7M5



Press Release of Classis Pacific East, March 10 and April 14, 2005, Held in Aldergrove and Yarrow, British Columbia

March 10, 2005: session in Aldergrove

Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, chairman of the convening church of Aldergrove, requested those present to sing Psalm 100:1, 4, and read the same Psalm. He then led in prayer for God's blessing on the assembly. Welcome was extended to all. Rev. Holtvlüwer noted that since the last classis, Rev. C. Bouwman of the Free Reformed Church of Kelmscott, Australia, has accepted the call extended to him by the Church of Yarrow, and is making preparations to move there. He also noted that he himself has requested release from this Classis to take up his task in Carman East. It was recalled that Prof. Dr. D. Deddens died in the Lord February 17, 2005, and his work at the college was remembered with gratitude to the Lord.

The Abbotsford delegates reported that the credentials were in good order. Two churches sent first alternate delegates, as Rev. Wielenga and Rev. Van Luik were detained elsewhere at the time. Classis was declared constituted and officers were proposed. Classis proceeded with the following officers: Rev. R.A. Schouten, chairman; Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer, vice-chairman; Rev. J. Moesker, clerk. The agenda was established.

A letter was received from the Subcommittee West of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas, drawing the attention of Classis to the decisions of Synod Chatham 2004 concerning the maintenance of contact with the RCUS. Chairman noted that this contact is already being maintained.

The Church of Aldergrove requested honourable release of Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer from Classis. The necessary documents were reviewed and found to be in good order. Classis granted most

honourable release to Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer from his duties in Classis as of April 1, 2004, and he was given a certificate of release. Classis appointed Rev. R.A. Schouten to represent Classis at the farewell evening for Rev. Holtvlüwer in Aldergrove on March 27, 2005. The Church of Aldergrove requested Classis to appoint Rev. R.A. Schouten as its counsellor. The Church of Aldergrove also requested Classis to arrange for a minister of Classis to preach in Aldergrove once a month. This request was approved.

The report of the treasurer concerning the Classis Pacific East Fund for 2004 was tabled. The year ending balance was minus \$11.44. The Church of Vernon reported that the financial records of the treasurer for 2003 and 2004 were reviewed by its council and found to be in good order. The treasurer was discharged of his responsibility for the years audited, and his work was noted with gratitude. The treasurer also requested that the amount Classis pays for mileage (\$.25 per km.) be increased. Classis agreed to increase the amount to \$.40 per km.

Report of church visits made to the Canadian Reformed Churches of Abbotsford (Jan. 27/05), Chilliwack (Jan. 28/05), and Aldergrove (Feb. 28/05) were presented. Chairman noted with gratitude that life in the churches is proceeding in a good and orderly way.

The churches of Classis were asked whether the ministry of the office bearers is being continued and whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. Delegates replied in the affirmative for all churches. It was also asked whether there are any matters in which consistories need the judgement and help of Classis. The Church of Vernon requested advice concerning a matter of church discipline. Advice was given to proceed with the second announcement of church discipline if necessary. The Church of Yarrow asked advice concerning members who have been excommunicated from sister-churches

and are attending Yarrow worship services. Advice was given.

The Church of Yarrow, in view of the expected arrival of Rev. C. Bouwman in April and his planned installation on April 24, 2005, requested Classis to organize a colloquium, as Rev. Bouwman is coming from another church federation. It was decided that the Church of Aldergrove will reconvene this assembly for that purpose on April 14, 2005, at 7:30 p.m. at the Canadian Reformed Church at Yarrow, BC, with Rev. M.H. Van Luik as vice-chairman. The clerk was directed to send a missive to the Church of Calgary, convening church for next Regional Synod, requesting a more definite date for this assembly. It is difficult for elders to let their names stand for election as delegates to this assembly if there is no established date.

The following appointments were made: Rev. W. Wielenga was appointed deputy for preaching arrangements. The Church of Abbotsford was reappointed to care for the archives, and the Church of Yarrow to inspect those archives annually. Brother R. Leyenhorst of Vernon was reappointed as treasurer for the Classis fund, and the Church of Vernon was reappointed to audit the books of the classical treasurer annually. Classis reappointed Rev. M.H. Van Luik (convener) and Brothers K.F. Huttema and J. Schutte as Committee for Aid to Needy Students. Brothers K. Louwse, G. Boeve, and B. Vane were reappointed as Committee for Aid to Needy Churches. Rev. W.M. Wielenga was appointed as deputy classical preaching arrangements. Rev. R.A. Schouten was appointed counsellor for the Church of Aldergrove. Rev. M.H. Van Luik will replace Rev. Holtvlüwer as deputy for contact with Western Classis of the Reformed Church in the U.S.

The chairman expressed thankfulness for Rev. Holtvlüwer's good and faithful work in Classis Pacific East, and wished him and his wife and sons the Lord's richest blessings as they move to Manitoba. Rev. Holtvlüwer thanked the brothers of classis for the good harmony

and the good memories. He wished the brothers God's blessing and expressed the hope that the vacancy in Aldergrove would soon be filled. The chairman requested the brothers to sing together Psalm 67:1, 3 and led in thanksgiving. He then closed this portion of classis with prayer.

J. Moesker, clerk

April 14, 2005: session in Yarrow

Classis was reconvened on April 14, 2005 at 7:30 p.m. in the Yarrow church building. The chairman, Rev. R. Schouten, welcomed Rev. C. Bouwman to the meeting. He requested the singing of Psalm 84:1, 2 and read from 2 Corinthians 5. After opening with prayer he welcomed the many brothers and sisters who are present and explained the purpose for a colloquium.

The chairman determined that the credentials for the delegates are in order. All the churches are represented at Classis.

Classis then entered into a colloquium with Rev. Bouwman. Rev. Schouten led the discussion on the doctrine of the church focusing on Lord's Days 25-31 dealing with the matter of the preaching and sacraments. Rev. Van Luik led the discussion on the Church Order. In closed session Classis discussed the colloquium and decided to approbate the call. After ascertaining that all the documents are in order, Classis approbated the call of Rev. C. Bouwman to the Church at Yarrow. Rev. Bouwman then signed the form of subscription. The chairman wished Rev. Bouwman the Lord's blessing in his ministry in the Church at Yarrow. The delegates and visitors at Classis were given an opportunity to congratulate Rev. Bouwman.

Reports: Rev. Van Luik reported on his visit as fraternal delegate to the Western Classis of the RCUS in Willows, CA on March 8-9, 2005. The Church at Yarrow reported that the archives of Classis have been inspected and were found to be in good order.

Appointments: Examiners for candidates for the ministry were appointed. It was decided to appoint delegates for Regional Synod at the September Classis since Regional Synod will be convened on November 22, 2005. The Church at Chilliwack was appointed as the convening church for next Classis. Next Classis is to be convened on June 9 with the alternate date set for September 15. The following officers were suggested for next Classis: Rev. M.H. Van Luik, chairman; Rev. M. Moesker, vice-chairman; Rev. W. Wielenga, clerk. Rev. M.H. Van Luik was appointed to represent the churches of Classis at the welcome evening of Rev. C. Bouwman.

The chairman thankfully noted that Christian censure according to Art. 34 C.O. was not needed and expressed gratitude for the good cooperation at this assembly.

The Acts of Classis were adopted.

The press release for the part of Classis held on April 14 was approved. The press release of the previous part of Classis on March 10 will be drawn up by the clerk and approved by the chairman and vice chairman of this Classis.

The chairman, Rev. Schouten, thanked the Church at Yarrow for hosting the last part of this Classis. He requested all present to sing Hymn 5, and led in prayer of thanksgiving. Classis was declared closed.

M.H. Van Luik, vice-chairman

Press Release of Classis Niagara, March 16, 2005, Held in Smithville

Opening

Rev. S.C. Van Dam calls the meeting to order on behalf of the convening church. Scripture reading is Matthew 27:27-54. Rev. Van Dam leads in prayer. All present sing Psalm 22:1, 3, 8. The delegates from Grassie report that the credentials are in order and Classis is

declared constituted. The moderamen is as follows: Rev. C.J. VanderVelde, chairman; Rev. D.G.J. Agema, vice-chairman; Rev. A. Souman, clerk. The chairman thanks the church of Grassie for its preparatory work. He mentions that since the last Classis both Dr. J. Faber and Dr. K. Deddens have passed away. The faithful service of both men is remembered with thankfulness. The proposed agenda is adopted.

Art. 44 C.O.

The chairman asks the required questions. The Church of Smithville asks advice in two matters of discipline. Advice is given in closed session.

Correspondence

Classis receives a letter from the Church of Ancaster re Fund for Needy Churches in Classis Western Ontario with an audit report for September 2003-2004. The clerk of the Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas asks the churches in Classis to take note of the decision of General Synod 2004 re the RCUS. The convening church for next Classis will send a letter of invitation to the neighbouring Classis of the RCUS. An audit report for the classical treasurer covering the period September 1, 2003 - August 31, 2004 is received. The books were found to be in good order.

Appointments

The convening church for the next Classis is Lincoln, and will be held on June 15, 2005. Officers will be: Rev. D.G.J. Agema, chairman; Rev. A. Souman, vice-chairman; Rev. C.J. VanderVelde, clerk.

Closing

After Personal Question Period and Censure ad Art. 34 C.O., the Acts are read and adopted. The Press Release is read and approved. The Chairman leads in prayer and closes Classis.

*For Classis,
Rev. D.G.J. Agema*

