

# Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

2005  
YEAR-END ISSUE



*Let everything  
that has breath  
praise the Lord.  
Praise the Lord.*

Psalm 150:6



*Praise the Lord.*

*Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.*

*Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing  
greatness.*

*Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet,*

*praise him with the harp and lyre,*

*praise him with tambourine*

*and dancing,*

*praise him with the*

*strings and flute,*

*praise him with the*

*clash of cymbals,*

*praise him with*

*resounding symbols.*

*Let everything that has*

*breath praise the*

*Lord.*

*Praise the Lord.*





*To all our readers, best wishes and  
the Lord's blessing  
in the year 2006.*

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# New Beginnings

Editorial  
W.B. Slomp



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*Should we be anxious and scared  
as we look to the new year?*

## Despair?

As we reflect on what has transpired in this past year, there is much that saddens and concerns us. In the first place this year saw many "natural" disasters. There were earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. Thousands of people lost their lives and millions became homeless and destitute.

There was also a marked moral decline evident in society. In the past year, practices such as homosexuality, same-sex marriage, divorce, abortion, gambling, and other immoral practices became increasingly more acceptable. These practices have become the new moral values of society and are now vigorously defended and promoted. Indeed, as a recent poll done by the *National Post* showed, such moral values are now more important to Canadians than anything else. According to the poll they trump other issues such as crime, poverty, and possible infectious disease outbreaks.

Where does that leave us as Christians? Should we be anxious and scared as we look to the new year? Should we be afraid to bring children into such a world? Should we be afraid to let our voices be heard out of fear that we will be ridiculed or marginalized? Should we retreat and hide in our own little world? How do we deal with the chaos around us?

## Hope

Abraham lived at a time not dissimilar to ours. There were also "natural" disasters then. For example, he lived through a time of severe famine (Gen 12:10). He also experienced the destructive

forces of formidable enemies when foreign kings invaded the land in which he lived (Gen 14). And he lived at the time of the abominable practices of the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. It was so bad that God decided to destroy those wicked cities.

In spite of all this Abraham was a man full of hope. He responded to these challenges in faith. Instead of being defeatist he was optimistic about the future. He did not recoil from the world. In faith he faced the enemy and defeated the invaders.

He was not afraid of what the future would hold either. The Lord had promised great things. He had promised to make Abraham the father of many nations. And Abraham believed. He believed this promise in spite of the fact that he was advanced in age. Even though Abraham was as good as dead (Rom 4:19), God fulfilled his promise by giving him a son. And Abraham knew and believed that through his offspring a great nation would arise. He also knew that from his offspring the Saviour of the world would be born (John 8: 56).

He knew that even though we may see things as being hopeless and decaying, God does not – for He is the God of life. Abraham learned to wait for the Lord. He knew that God would fulfill his promises in his own good time. And He did.

## The long-awaited Messiah

At Christmas time we remember the birth of that promised Messiah. That day was a long time in coming. There was much apostasy, misery, decay, and unfaithfulness since the birth of Isaac. Humanly speaking things looked quite bleak at times. At one

**Christmas  
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that He is in  
control.**



time there were only a few hundred people left of that whole nation of Israel who did not worship other gods. It became so bad that the Lord sent his people into exile. There was also a lot of bloodshed, tears, and pain through all those 2000 years between the birth of Isaac and the birth of the Son of God. Yet, time and again God gives his people a new beginning. He gives new life when it is least expected. Out of that "dead" seed of Abraham comes new hope.

Christmas reminds us that God is the God of renewal, and that He is in control. He grants life and new beginnings where we see nothing but death and decay. That is what the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ is all about. It is only through Him that we have such a great and sure hope.

In Luke we read about the announcement of the birth of Christ. In the midst of this miserable world we see God at work. How magnificent! He sent his angel Gabriel to Mary. At that time Mary was only a young girl who just recently became engaged to be married to Joseph. Up until that time she had never been with a man. Yet, the angel tells her that she is going to become pregnant. When she asks Gabriel how that can be since she has never been with a man, he tells her that the Holy Spirit is going to come upon her and overshadow her. God does not need a man. God is going to act. He does not need anybody. He does not need Joseph for this either. Whereas Abraham still had a minor role to play, Joseph, Mary's husband, had to step out of the way. It was only through the power of God that this will happen.

## Faith

Although Mary does not understand yet exactly how that is going to happen, she believes. She believes that He will open her womb and cause that long awaited Messiah to be born. Through Him He will give eternal life to all those who believe.

That is also the message that He wanted to give to Israel of that day. Israel was also as good as dead at this point. It was totally under the control of the Roman Empire. Israel was but a small insignificant nation. God's people appear to be a people without any future. But, God breathes new life into that "dead" seed of Abraham.

You can be sure that God will do that for us today as well, for He promised that He will send his Son again. On the last day He will renew all things. Totally. Radically. There will no longer ever be any calamity or immorality.

And so, also at the end of this year, there is great reason for optimism. God gives new life to those who believe. As we embark on a new

year we know that where we may see doom and gloom, God does not. And therefore God calls us to faith. He wants us to believe in his great power, and in his love for those who belong to Him.

At times things may look hopeless to us. But God has made a covenant with Abraham and his seed. His seed ultimately is not his physical offspring, but his spiritual offspring. The promise of eternal life is given to all those who through faith are made alive. As we enter a new year, we therefore can be full of hope and joy – as long as we believe.

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God calls us to  
faith.**





## What's Inside?

If you want proof that another year is drawing to a close, here it is! Once our Christmas and Year End issue comes into your hands you know that it is just about time to change calendars.

In this special issue you will find some of the things that you have come to expect: an editorial, a Bible meditation, a Year End Review, as well as articles on Christmas, education, evangelism and church events. Also customary, but still special, is the MERF Newsletter and the report on the Guido Grad of 2005. All in all, it makes for good and varied reading.

Being the Editor also means that I get to work with some wonderful people. My special thanks to our Copy Manager – Mrs. Laura Veenendaal, our Printer – Mr. Bill Gortemaker and his able staff at Premier Printing, our Contributing Editors – the Revs. R. Aasman, W.B. Slomp and Cl. Stam, as well as all of our regular and non-regular contributors. We could not publish this magazine without your time and effort.

Lastly, my thanks to all of our faithful readers throughout the country, across the continent and around the world. May the Lord bless you richly at this time of year as you celebrate the Saviour's birth and as you prepare to step over into the year of our Lord 2006.

JV



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# The Shepherds near Bethlehem

*“And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby,  
keeping watch over their flocks at night.”*

**Luke 2:8**

The Holy Spirit makes sure we understand very clearly that Jesus was born in Bethlehem's stall, of David's line and in David's town of Bethlehem. Who this child is and what He will accomplish is now revealed by angels to shepherds who were awake that night in the vicinity of Bethlehem. An important question for us is, why shepherds? Why was the fact of Jesus Christ's birth first revealed to shepherds? We might be inclined to say: do not make too much of this. The fact is, the shepherds of that region were the only ones awake that night and they were nearby. In other words, this is a matter of convenience and haste: get the closest possible and available people to be eyewitnesses of the greatest event in history – Immanuel, God with us. There is merit to this logic. Some commentators stand by this interpretation. But is there more?

Many would say that the most obvious people to be informed of Christ's birth would be the high priest and other leaders in Jerusalem. After all, these are the men whose calling it was to bring good news to God's people. They

were the ones who proclaimed the gospel and foreshadowed the coming of Jesus Christ in the sacrifices and ceremonies of the law. Who better to be eyewitnesses of the all shadows and promises coming to fruition? Who better and more reliable to proclaim the birth of the Messiah? Good point. Certainly they would be better than shepherds who were regarded as shifty and untrustworthy in those days. In fact, according to Jewish law, no shepherd was allowed to be a judge or even an eyewitness in a court of law. They could not be trusted for that. So why should a shepherd be the eyewitness to the greatest event in history? Wouldn't you want the priests in Jerusalem for that? Who better and more reliable to proclaim the birth of the Messiah? Good point. And yet, we have a problem. Jerusalem was not interested. When the Magi came to Jerusalem announcing the birth of Israel's king, they were politely directed to Bethlehem but not one person went with them from Jerusalem.

The words of the apostle Paul come to mind: “We preach Christ

crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles.” You know that our Lord Jesus Christ also spoke with frustration during his public ministry how his own people – particularly the spiritual leaders of his day – did not accept Him. They had ears but would not hear!

There is a certain significance to the choice of God to use rough, tough, and lowly shepherds to be both recipients of the good news that Jesus Christ was born and to be the very first eyewitnesses. Again to use Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1, it is as if he were speaking about the shepherds: “Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things – and the things that are not – to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.”







**MATTHEW 13:52**

Does this not teach us something today? Is the gospel of salvation the special reserve of those who have an established place in the church, who may have been born into a well-established Christian family, who often have an important role in church and kingdom, such as being an office bearer, a teacher and so on? The very opposite is true. It is for anyone. It is even for one who may have spent a large part of his or her life in sin and darkness, far removed from church life and a lifestyle of holiness.

The good news of Jesus Christ is that it is not the wise and intelligent, it is not those of noble birth and influential status who have a special "in" with God. But it is for everyone who will stand in awe at Bethlehem's stall because of God's grace; it is for everyone who weeps quietly at Golgotha's cross because of his sins; it is for everyone who stands before God and puts his hand on his chest and cries out to God "Oh, you have been so merciful to me a sinner." For them the peace of God will flow down like a river, washing away every sin, renewing the totality of life, and preparing us for an eternal inheritance. Yes, there will be great joy in heaven among the angels, as they see God's sons and daughters praising God in this way. The shepherds heard the angels say, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favour rests."

*Give thanks to the LORD,  
call on his name;  
make known among the nations  
what He has done.*

*Sing to Him,  
sing praise to Him;  
tell of all his wonderful acts.*

*Glory in his holy name;  
let the hearts of those who seek the  
LORD rejoice.*

*Look to the LORD and his strength;  
seek his face always.*

*1 Chronicles 16:8-11*





J. Wiskerke van Dooren

# Lord's Day 50

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

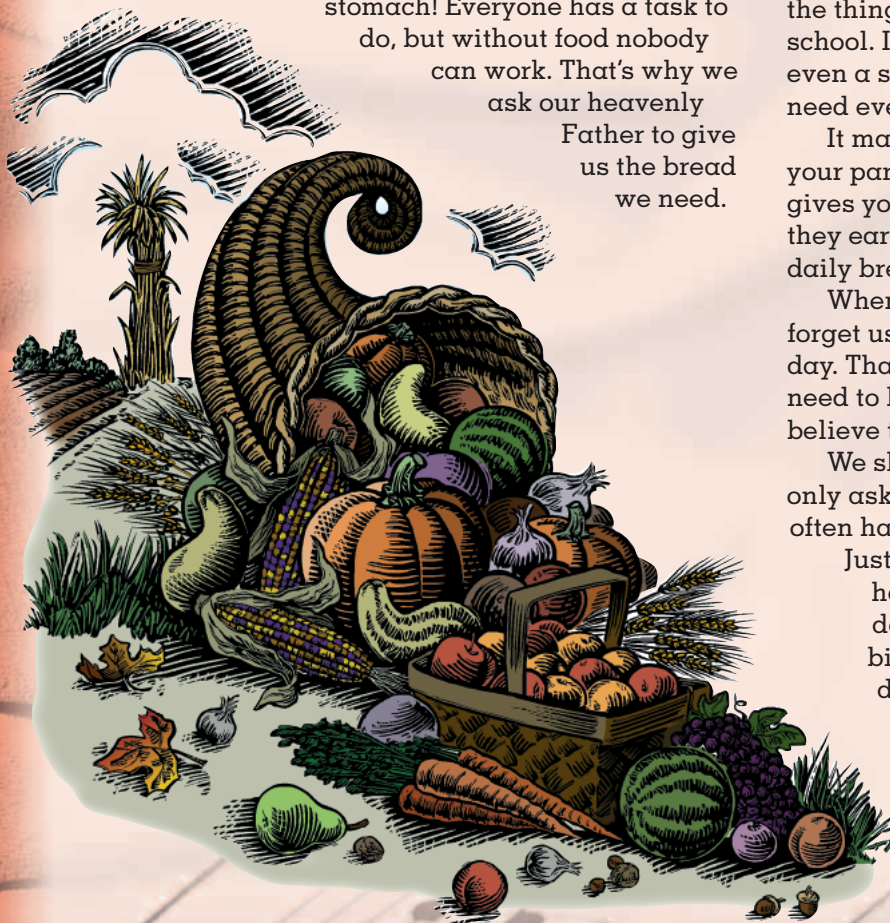


This Lord's Day is about the fourth petition, which says "give us today our daily bread."

Do you remember that we talked about our task last time? The Lord gives each of us something to do on earth. For now your task is mainly going to school.

But you cannot do that on an empty stomach! Everyone has a task to do, but without food nobody can work. That's why we ask our heavenly

Father to give us the bread we need.



We pray this for ourselves and also for others; the prayer speaks about our bread. And this request does not mean that we are only asking for bread. It includes potatoes, vegetables, fruits, and milk. It means everything our bodies need. Even our clothes and our shoes belong to this request. This petition includes all the things we need for doing our jobs and for going to school. If we need transportation, it means a bike or even a school bus. It includes all the things that we need every day.

It may seem as if all these things are paid for by your parents. However, they come from the Lord. God gives your parents jobs and the ability to work so that they earn money. That is why we pray to God for our daily bread.

When we pray we are not afraid that the Lord may forget us next week. Rather we ask for this food day by day. That is how the Lord Jesus told us to pray. We don't need to look far ahead when we pray, because we believe that God will always take care of us.

We should not be greedy when we pray. We should only ask for the things we need. But do you know what often happens? We receive far more than we ask for!

Just look around your bedroom at all things you have. And so often you get a special treat! And don't forget the presents you received on your birthday. You may enjoy all of these things, but don't forget to thank the Lord for them. And remember there are other people who have less than you and I have.

If we live and pray in this way then we learn more and more to trust our heavenly Father alone. He is a Father who takes care of his children.







# Conception and Birth

The Lord Jesus Christ was conceived and born. So were we and so shall our children and grandchildren be. Conception and birth form the normal way through which one enters this world.

Yet conception and birth is not the only way people have come into this world. The Lord God collected dust from the earth, formed it into the shape of a man, blew into his nostrils the breath of life, and Adam became a living being. No conception or birth there. From the living Adam God took a rib and out of it He made a second human – Eve. No conception or birth there either. So God is not limited to the process of conception and birth to bring humans into this world. Why, then, did He have Jesus conceived and born? Why not fashion Jesus from Mary's rib? How does Jesus' conception and birth affect our marriage bedrooms?

## Genesis

To answer the question, we need to go back to the Word of God in Genesis 3. Directly after the fall into sin, the Lord God addressed the serpent in the hearing of Adam and Eve. Said God to the devil: "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her; He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." We understand the promise: a child of the woman would triumph over Satan.

Adam and Eve heard the Lord say these things. So, when some time later Eve became pregnant (Gen 4:1), the thought will invariably have risen in hers and Adam's mind: will this be the child that will crush Satan? It turned out that the answer was no; Cain could not save. By the time her second child was born, Adam and Eve realized well that this child too could not crush Satan; they named their second child Abel, which is the Hebrew word for "vanity."

**Each mother and father, though excited at the prospect of pregnancy, invariably brings another sinner into God's world.**

That neither Cain nor Abel could crush the devil became apparent when the one rose up and killed the other. Sin held Cain in its clutches; the devil controlled him instead of Cain crushing the devil.

From where did Cain get his sinfulness? I read in Genesis 5:1: "When God created man, He made him in the likeness of God." The point of the word "likeness" is not that man looked like God; rather,

man was created able to image what God was like, to reflect God's holiness, righteousness, and perfections. I mention this because two verses later Scripture records: "When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image" (Gen 5:3). The passage does not want us to think that the baby looked like Adam; the term "likeness" here again catches the notion that the son reflected the attributes of the father. As Adam was sinful, so his son was sinful. And it's not just his first son that was sinful, or his third, but *all* his children. Sinfulness characterized every generation after Adam; that's why Genesis 5 repeats that relentless refrain: "and he died."

It's a disturbing thought. A man and woman come together, and their loving embrace results in pregnancy – it's exciting! But the child is sinful. The child in turn becomes a man (or a woman), receives a spouse and then a child, and that child is sinful too. As David testifies about himself: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5). So it goes from generation to generation. Each mother and father, though excited at the prospect of pregnancy, invariably brings *another sinner* into God's world. And *that* is a negative and a terrible thing! For God is holy and tolerates no



sinners in his presence – and not in his world either!

## Leviticus 12

In fact, this is God's instruction to Israel in Leviticus 12. The chapter relates what the people of Israel were to do when a child was born. Remember, the parents of Israel were to speak of God's ordinances with their children when they walked along the road and when they sat down, when they worked and when they played (Deut 6:7). That includes the material of this chapter! By God's ordinance, a mother was unclean for a period of forty days after the birth of a son and eighty days after the birth of a daughter. To my knowledge no one has come up with a satisfactory explanation as to why the longer duration of uncleanness with the birth of a daughter than with a son. But the fact is God specifies that Mom is unclean after birth. Then the Lord adds that after the period of uncleanness has run its course, mother "is to bring to the priest at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting a year-old lamb for a burnt offering and a young pigeon or a dove for a sin offering" (Lev 12:6). A burnt offering symbolized offering one's being completely to the Lord (see Leviticus 1). As a mother presents that burnt offering she thereby pledges to the Lord to be a fitting mother for this covenant child of his.

But striking in relation to our subject is the fact that mother must also present a sin offering. Why a sin offering? With a sin offering, an Israelite was confessing (unintentional) sin before the Lord (see Leviticus 4). What sin might there be in relation to childbirth? Why, precisely the fact that mother

(and father with her) has added another sinner to God's world. Man should image God and reflect His holiness; that's how God created him. But man does not do that. Each child that parents bring forth is a sinner, and therefore parents and child alike are deserving of God's judgment. In the words of the

**God caused something new to occur: a sinful woman conceived a perfect, holy child! He came for us and our salvation.**

Belgic Confession: "We believe that by the disobedience of Adam original sin has spread throughout the whole human race. It is a corruption of the entire nature of man and a hereditary evil which infects even infants in their mother's womb. As a root it produces in man all sorts of sin. It is, therefore, so vile and abominable in the sight of God that it is sufficient to condemn the human race" (Art 15).

That is why the mothers of Israel, as well as we today, need to see our little ones not as the innocent little angels we wish they were. Those little ones are corrupt, inclined to all evil, as much as we hate the thought. The Form for Baptism asks parents to state of their little child that he is "conceived and born in sin, and therefore subject to all sorts of

misery, even to condemnation." We cannot get around it: corrupt parents bring forth corrupt children (cf Canons of Dort, III/IV, Art 2). Try though one might to bring forth a child that can crush the head of the serpent, a child that can please God, *no one can*.

## Ecclesiastes

This hard reality puts a deep shadow over childbirth, and hence necessarily over the embrace of man and wife. This is part of the vanity and the meaninglessness the Preacher of Ecclesiastes was talking about – for *everything is meaningless* and vanity, including marriage, sex, pregnancy, and birth. No matter how hard a given generation tries, the children they produce are guaranteed to be sinful, corrupt, and inclined to all evil. To its dismay each generation learns again the hard truth that Adam and Eve confessed with the birth of Abel: all is *abel*, vanity, a striving after wind. We cannot produce a child that will crush the devil. Instead, every child we bring to birth is another sinner for God's world – and that requires a sin offering. My mother and father had to acknowledge it of me: I was conceived and born in sin. And I must acknowledge it of my children: each of them was a sinner from birth, yea, from conception. Perhaps it is better not to have children. . . did Jesus not say concerning the day of God's judgment: "Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed"? (Luke 23:29). Children are sinful, without exception; alas, then, that a parent is pregnant!! How deep the shadow over conception and birth.



## Matthew 1

But wait; what actually happened at Christmas? There was a granddaughter of Adam, as depraved as her ancestor, who was pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, himself also thoroughly depraved. But before the two got together in the act of marriage, "she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit" (Matt 1:18). God intervened in the normal process of how a child is conceived and caused this sinful woman to become pregnant *without the participation of a man*. The result is that the child was holy and without sin (Luke 1:35), imaging his Father in heaven! That, dear reader, is the marvel of Christmas: God broke the tragic cycle of corrupt parents bringing forth corrupt children by removing the sinful earthly father and causing the sinful earthly mother to be pregnant with a child not corrupted by sin.

This is a marvel of God's grace. Back in the Garden of Eden the Lord had announced that the offspring of the woman would crush the head of the serpent, and in the generations and centuries that followed the Lord had given each new generation ample opportunity to defeat the devil. But no generation could; though so many millions were born in the 4000 or so years following God's announcement in Paradise, each generation was as depraved as the preceding, and each individual in each generation was also as depraved as his neighbour. And it's true of every generation today still; that's why we repeat after God in Lord's Day 14 that "I was conceived and born" in sin; corrupt parents

invariably bring forth corrupt children. So God reached into the cycle of sinful parents bringing forth sinful children and caused something new to occur; a sinful woman conceived a perfect, holy child!

## Luke 2

Mary and Joseph knew that her little one was holy; the angel had said so (Luke 1:35). Yet Mary, after the prescribed forty-day period of uncleanness was over, did as the Lord had commanded in Leviticus. When the time of their purification according to the Law of Moses had been completed, Joseph and Mary went to Jerusalem "to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: 'a pair

**We cannot  
produce  
a child that  
will crush the  
devil.**

of doves or two young pigeons'" (Luke 2:22). Mary offered a burnt offering and so committed herself to the Lord's service in her new task as mother; she offered a sin offering because she had brought forth another sinner into God's world. . . yet the child she had brought forth was *not* a sinner; this child was holy! Why then did Mary bring that sin offering? Did she do it out of custom or superstition? Should she not have refrained from bringing that sacrifice?

No, she should not refrain. Though created to be holy, she was

not able to conceive a holy child on her own resources; she was no better than her neighbour. It was proper that she confess that fact through her sin offering. Besides, every sin offering presented by a mother of the Old Testament demanded a further sacrifice; never could the lamb or dove of the sin offering take away that (unintentional) sin of bringing another sinner into God's world (Heb 10:11); each sin offering cried out for the sacrifice of *the* sin offering, the offspring of the woman who would crush the serpent, the offspring that would cover in the sight of God the sin in which each person is conceived and born. With the birth of Mary's son, the sin offering was born, an innocent and perfectly holy child who would one day become the world's greatest sinner – not because He sinned, but because the sins of all God's own would be piled onto Him. With Mary obeying that command of Leviticus 12, the mandate for her holy son was spelled out clearly; He would have to die for sin and so crush the devil.

## Who?

Yet no child can crush the devil, even if he is innocent and perfectly holy. Which man can conquer the Prince of Darkness? That is why we need to note who the *Father* of this child of Mary actually is. From where did this holy child come? Who was He?

Before you and I were conceived we did not exist. That is the normal course of things; through the coming together of man and wife the Lord God brings into existence a new human being, one with no history. But with Mary's son was different. Before He went to the





cross to pay for sin, Jesus asked the Father in heaven to “glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began” (John 17:5). The Holy Spirit adds that “He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:2). In fact, the child born to Mary called God his Father because He was the *Son of God*, was with the Father in glory from all eternity. He came to earth and therefore was mighty to save.

Think about it for a moment and marvel! The only Son of God left the comforts and splendour of heaven and exchanged it for life with fallen, sinful man; those whom Paul describes as powerless, ungodly, sinful enemies of God became his mother, step-father, brothers and sisters, neighbours, playmates, and workmates. He exchanged the glory of heaven, where angels sang his praise without ceasing and covered their faces in his presence (Isa 6), for the humiliation of a stable, a feeding trough, and swaddling clothes – and the company of sinners. The contrast between what He had and what He took on Himself defies description. But this is the marvel of Christmas: “The eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took upon Himself true human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, through the working of the Holy Spirit” (HC, LD 14). How marvelous, how absolutely wonderful!

### Why?

And why? Why did the Son of God exchange the splendours of holy heaven for the squalor of fallen earth? He did it for your sake

and mine. No, He didn’t do it only for us; He did it for the benefit of millions. But those millions include you and me! “For us and our salvation,” says the Nicene Creed, the Son of God emptied Himself.

**God uses the coming together of husband and wife for his church-gathering purposes.**

He came to earth so that He might be the offspring of the woman who could crush the head of the serpent. He came so that He might accomplish what no child born to any woman since the days of Genesis 3 – no matter how strong and noble, how cultured and popular – could accomplish. He came, true God in the flesh, Immanuel, God with us, so that sinners might be reconciled to the God we offended in Paradise.

How awesome the thought! He came for us and our salvation. He came with me in mind when He became a man over 2000 years ago! Surely, this wonderful news cannot leave a person untouched or cold. Here is gospel most incredible!

### Implication

We’re mistaken, though, if we limit the fruit of that first Christmas to Christ’s work of reconciling sinners with God. Remember that because corrupt

parents invariably bring forth corrupt children, a shadow hung over every birth in the Old Testament; every mother in Israel, and the father with her, had to bring a *sin* offering to the Lord after her period of uncleanness was over. Man and woman had brought another *sinner* into the world and that deed needed atoning. That shadow over childbirth invariably extended to the coming together of man and wife in the embrace of marriage. Though sex was such a wonderful gift of God to a married couple, and Solomon could sing this gift up so delightfully in his Song, yet this same Solomon had to conclude in Ecclesiastes that all was vanity, meaningless – including marriage and intercourse. In the light of Leviticus 12, we understand that; sinful man and sinful woman bring forth another *sinful* child – one that cannot crush the serpent, one that needs redemption from bondage to sin and Satan.

But now that God has broken the tragic cycle of sinful parent bringing forth a sinful child, the futility of childbirth has been taken away. For that child born to Mary accomplished the mandate laid on Him when Mary brought her sin offering in Luke 2; He went to the cross to pay for sin – including the offence parents give to God when they bring another sinner into his world. There is total atonement even for that; and now God uses that broken mechanism for his own purposes! Though corrupt parents still bring forth corrupt offspring, God now sees us parents as holy in Christ and sees our children as holy in Christ also! We and our children are saints, thanks to



Christ's sacrifice; Jesus said of covenant children that the kingdom of heaven belonged to them (Mark 10:14) and Paul added that the children of believers are holy (1 Cor 7:14).

That is why the shadow is gone from childbirth today, and instead the sunshine of God lies over childbirth. The coming together of man and wife in loving embrace is God's primary method of gathering his church, For He entrusts his children-by-covenant to believing parents, and He does that not first of all through adoption but through birth. Because of Christmas, conception and birth is now *the* means God uses to bring his children into the world.

## Children

That in turn is why the psalmist of long ago, though he lived before God intervened in the tragic cycle of corrupt parents bringing forth corrupt children, could state so boldly that "sons are a heritage from the Lord, children a reward from him," and even add that the man was blessed who had his quiver full of them (Ps 127:3, 5). That is equally why the Apostle Paul, after God had intervened in the reproductive cycle to use it for his ends, could tell Titus to teach the older women of the church to "train the younger women to love their husbands and children. . . to be busy at home. . . so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:3ff). Notice Paul talking up the role of mother and the blessing of children (see also 1 Tim 2:15; 5:14). For God uses the coming together of husband and wife for his church-gathering purposes, *the* means to place his children-by-covenant on

this earth. What privilege there is, then, in childbirth!

## Response of faith

Precisely that sunshine God has brought over childbearing needs a response of faith. That response of faith praises God for the redemption He worked through the gift of his Son. So faith repeats after God the gospel of redemption: because of the holy conception and birth of Christ "He is our Mediator, and with his innocence and perfect holiness covers, in the sight of God, my sin, in which I was conceived and born" (HC, LD 14). It's a response each of us needs to make, time and time again, whether we be young or old, man or woman, married or single, parent or not. Christ's conception and birth is our salvation; He covers the sin, the depravity in which I was born – Hallelujah!

But the response of faith cannot be limited to delighting in the salvation God worked at Christmas; the response of faith needs to be completed with actions (James 2). Specifically, if the Lord God through Christ has sanctified conception and birth so that this is his primary means of gathering his church, couples need to see their loving embrace in that light. Sure, there is much more to say about intercourse than the blessing of conception; intercourse is first of all communication of love. That's an aspect, however, into which I cannot go into detail today. The fact of the matter is that God is pleased to give childbirth such a central place in his church-gathering work; the children believing parents may receive are holy, and that is why man and wife

may not leave the gift of children for some distant years down the track (till they are really established), and that is equally why man and wife may not quickly say that their quiver is full. Though our culture says that the world is full enough of people, and children are so very expensive, and you need to have time for yourself and for each other, *God speaks so differently about children*. Make no mistake: if God has caused the sunshine of redemption to shine over childbearing, if God would use the coming together of man and wife in his church-gathering work, you may fully expect the devil to protest, may fully expect the devil to whisper that children are a burden, a cost, a nuisance. . . and the Lord wants us to resist the devil! No, if we can at this time of year delight in the wealth of Jesus' holy conception and birth, we need to follow that faith through with action.

## Conclusion

By the grace of God we confess that the Son of God became flesh through the working of the Holy Spirit upon the virgin Mary. It's a glorious gospel that assures us of the forgiveness of our sins, including the depravity with which I was born. It's a glorious gospel that reaches even into the bedroom and how we behave in the secrets of marriage. And it moves us to awe and adoration: what a God, to give so much for our redemption. What a God, today to use the loving embrace of man and wife in his church-gathering work. How wonderfully, wonderfully rich! To Him all praise!







# Christmas and Missions

Is there any connection between Christmas and missions? Before I started writing this article, I had some ideas on this question. But, as I usually do, I thought I'd do some research before I started putting my own thoughts on to the computer screen. So, I did a search on Google for "mission and Christmas." One of the top results was for [www.northpole.com](http://www.northpole.com). They present a bunch of "mission ideas" for helping people to feel "the spirit of Santa love." We can all become Santa's missionaries:

Take on the North Pole Mission

Make a difference in your family, communities, or the world. Find something you like to do that makes a positive difference in someone's life. Find your passion. Then ask yourself, how can I do my passion and make a difference at the same time. It doesn't matter how big or how small. It only matters that you do it.

Well, that wasn't quite what I had in mind when I did my search. But it does illustrate something. Christmas can be entirely stripped of any reference to Jesus Christ. Christmas can become completely secularized and humanized. And yet the word "mission" can still somehow be attached to it! How does *that* work?

## Missionaries for Santa

It begins with what we could call replacement theology. Because we want to reach as many people as possible, we take the true living God out of the picture. We take his Son Jesus Christ out of the picture as well (what was Christmas originally about again?). But we still need a god-like figure. Enter Saint Nicholas, a.k.a. Santa Claus. Since Roman Catholic saints have long been accustomed to receiving prayers and worship from the faithful, receiving full deity is not too big a step for ol' Nick. After all, he is already credited with being all-knowing: "He knows when you are sleeping, he knows when you're awake. He knows if you've been good or bad, etc." The good news is that the new god appears to be even more benevolent than the One he replaced. Even if you've been bad, everyone gets at least some presents! Everybody deserves something. That's the kind of Santa love we want to spread around as a new evangel (good news).

So, it makes sense that some well-meaning people decide to become Santa's missionaries and encourage others to do the same. It's all about doing good and helping others with some religious overtones. But everybody knows that it's all just a fairy tale, one that nevertheless can inspire everyone

to be kind and helpful. There are no strings attached – Nick doesn't expect you to be totally committed to him. Nick is happy to be a part-time deity. I can be Santa's missionary and do an anonymous good deed everyday and for the rest, I live my life however I choose. A missionary calling with virtually no strings attached!

That's Christmas and mission without any reference to God and what He did in Jesus Christ – the completely secularized version. We have this concept in biblical Reformed theology called "the antithesis." At its root, the "antithesis" is the enmity that God has placed between the children of the woman and the children of the serpent. It is the dividing wall that separates the city of God from the city of man. The antithesis is there in principle, but it also needs to be put into practice in our daily lives. That includes how we think about Christmas and mission.

## The antithesis and Christmas

The first thing we need to do is strip Christmas of its pagan baggage. Christmas is about a gift, but it's not about trees, holly, Roman Catholic saints, and so on. When we've stripped off all the heathen veneer, we're left with the Saviour in a manger. We're left with God incarnate – God appearing in human flesh. That's



what Christmas is really about: it's about the incarnation of the Lord Jesus. In fact, I would suggest that we get rid of the name Christmas. It has its origins in the Roman Catholic faith; originally, it was "Christ-mass." The combination of our Lord and the Roman Catholic mass is an ugly sight. Let's call it "The Feast of the Incarnation." I know it's a bit longer (and I'm realistic that it probably won't catch on), but at least we get rid of combining our Saviour's beautiful name with an accursed idolatry. Doesn't the antithesis lead us in that direction?

Next, we begin thinking about what the incarnation means for mission. In the incarnation, God sent his Son into the world. John 1:14 tells us, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." The sending of the Son into the world is without parallel in the history of salvation, also up to the present day. No one else has been sent by the Father to be freedom and salvation for the elect of God. So, the mission (sending) of Jesus Christ was entirely unique.

In sending Jesus Christ, God gave a gift which brought all the promises of the Old Testament to a climactic head. This includes the numerous promises regarding the nations. Think only of what God promised Abraham in Genesis 12: "...all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." Similar notes can be heard throughout the Old Testament, especially in the prophets. Therefore we can say that, with the incarnation, God shows Himself to have a missionary heart. What He has created He will also redeem. People from every tribe, tongue, and nation will be bought back

from the sinful way of life inherited from their forefathers.

Before He ascended into heaven the Lord Jesus also commissioned his apostles, and through them the church of all ages and places. He sent them out to preach the gospel, to disciple people from all nations, to baptize and teach (Matthew 28:18-20). The Lord Jesus was sent into the world to redeem the people of God's choosing. Now, as a result of his incarnation and the redemptive work that followed, He sends out his church to gather in the fruits of his efforts (John 20:21). So it only makes sense to say that there would be no mission apart from the incarnation. The incarnation of the Lord Jesus is part of the foundation of mission.

### **Incarnation and mission in 2005**

That leads us to the Feast of the Incarnation in 2005. What does the incarnation say for mission in the here and now? First of all, consider what happened in the incarnation. God gave us the gift of his Son. God kept his promise to crush the head of the serpent. When we think about that, how can we not want to express our love and thankfulness to the Lord? One of the ways we express that is with our words to those who are outside of Christ. When God gives us opportunities, we're so filled with love for God that we can't help but speak about Christ. We pray for those kinds of opportunities! Furthermore, through our love and thankfulness, the incarnation also motivates us to care about what our "official" missionaries are doing. The Lord wants us to participate in praying for and supporting the families we've sent out to proclaim the gospel and establish and strengthen churches near and far.

So, the incarnation says something to the motivation for mission.

The truth of Christ's incarnation also encourages missionaries in the here and now. We know that when Christ took on our human flesh He did so for the purpose of revealing God's plan of salvation. As the Lord Jesus preached and taught, He experienced opposition. His enemies plotted to kill Him on more than one occasion. They had rabid hatred for the gospel of grace that He embodied and preached. The Lord Jesus anticipated that those He sends out would experience the same treatment. He said in John 15:18 and 20, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that that it hated me first ... if they persecuted me, they will persecute you also." These words, combined with what we read in Hebrews 4 about Christ being a high priest who understands, gives missionaries encouragement. They can know that the incarnation means that their Master understands their struggles and difficulties, whether those come from basic issues of day-to-day survival in an unfamiliar setting or from trying to communicate the gospel to those from another culture.

Finally, though I already mentioned that Christ's incarnation was unique, we can draw a valuable missionary lesson from it. In the incarnation, God gives Himself to us in a powerful self-sacrificial act of love. Love for God and love for our neighbour drive missions. Do we want to know what that love should look like? Then we should look to what God did: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"





# Press Review

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(John 3:16). From this we learn that mission is about self-sacrifice. A missionary gives up all kinds of things for the sake of the gospel – this can be hard, but it is how the gospel has advanced over the last 2000 years. Men and women have given their lives, sometimes literally, so that Christ would be worshipped far and wide. The incarnation of Christ remains a powerful picture of the self-sacrificial love that ought to characterize the mission of the church in the here and now.

So, the incarnation and mission – there are a number of angles by which we can see that the two are connected. When our Lord Jesus came into this world, it was to turn the world upside down. He began to do that in his life and ministry on earth and He continued to do so after He ascended into heaven through his church and its mission. He still does it today in a way with which Santa can't compete. The gospel of Jesus Christ holds out joy, hope, and peace, not only for the holiday season, but also for a life that lasts forever. This is so radically different from anything Santa or any other pseudo-religion can offer. Here we see the antithesis plain and clear. Believers have to stand on the right side and steer away from the Christmas pseudo-religion. The incarnation of Jesus Christ and the mission that follows is the only hope and light of the world.

## CRC Synod and the Honouring of Scripture

The July 2005 issue of *The Banner*, official magazine of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), was mainly about this year's Christian Reformed Synod which met June 11-17 at Trinity Christian College near Chicago. There were more than 200 delegates and advisors at this assembly. Though all offices in the church are officially open to females, the CRC has not accepted female delegates at synods thus far. However, women have served synods as nonvoting advisers since 2001. The matter of allowing female synodical delegates was a "hot" issue. *The Banner* stated the following:

Synod 2005 said "not yet" to including women as delegates, even for those classes that ordain women as pastors. The prevailing opinion was that taking such a step at this time would harm the peace that has come to the Christian Reformed Church. Instead, synod said it would revisit the issue of female delegates when a majority of classes has approved women's

ordination to the offices of elder and minister. Currently, twenty-two of the forty-seven classes have taken this step. . . .

This year's debate was lengthy, gracious, and passionate, respecting decisions of previous synods that said both perspectives – for and against women's ordination – honour Scripture.

You wonder how both perspectives – for and against women's ordination – can be declared as honouring Scripture. I would think that those who are against have already de facto compromised their position by agreeing to such a declaration, and that it's only a matter of time before they will have to completely give up their stand. Those who favour women in all offices just have to wait them out. You see this happening in *The Banner's* words:

Synod 2005 did further facilitate the ordination of women in classes where it is permitted by asking CRC Publications to provide ordination and installation forms that include gender-inclusive language. Also,

in classes where women may be ordained but where some churches object, examination for ordination may take place in a smaller classis gathering consisting of delegates who do not object. If a quorum is not possible, representatives from churches in a neighbouring classis may be invited to participate in order to achieve the required number. Synod 2005 also said that a classis may appoint a female minister to serve as a synodical deputy to neighbouring classes as long as a male minister is the alternate, out of consideration for neighbouring classes who object.

Things get pretty complicated when opposing views are both accepted as honouring Scripture. But those who oppose women in office on scriptural grounds are clearly being pushed into a corner. That was apparent at the opening worship service of Synod. In the same issue of *The Banner* editor Bob De Moor wrote the following:

Council Chair Mark Ward apologized to Synod on behalf of Palos Heights (Ill.) Christian Reformed Church for an incident that occurred at the opening worship service of Synod 2005. As host church, Palos Heights CRC invited elders from neighbouring churches, including Roseland CRC, to assist in serving communion at that service. Palos Heights was asked to present the service in a manner that it, the host congregation, is accustomed to. Since that

congregation has not ordained women elders, it expected to have only male elders serve. However, due to a mix-up, a female elder from Roseland arrived at the service and was prevented by Palos Heights CRC from participating, causing her embarrassment and distress. Rev. Tim Douma, Classis Northern Illinois, brought the matter to Synod's attention, which led to Ward's Friday-morning apology and a reconciliation of those involved. Even the best of intentions cause pain when differing values collide. This was one of many instances at Synod that reminded us our best efforts need to be bathed in God's grace.

Interesting that Palos Heights Church ended up doing the apologizing. What for? For maintaining its scriptural values! Unfortunately, this is the kind of confusion that results when a church is pluralistic, when it accepts opposing positions as both being scriptural and acceptable. You just can't have it both ways! And if we desire our efforts at anything to be bathed with God's grace, we first need to listen to the clear Word of God. Listen to another situation in

which this watershed issue came to the fore and was brushed under the rug. Each synod of the CRC approves the candidates for the ministry.

The President of Synod 2005 ruled that delegates would vote to approve this year's candidates for the ministry *en bloc*. In 2004, Synod voted for each individual candidate, allowing delegates opposed to women entering the ministry to register a negative vote or abstain from voting when a female candidate was considered. Synod 2003 also voted for the candidates as a group. Voting *en bloc* recognized that all candidates have successfully completed the requirements for candidacy.

We realize again that it's one or the other. And it's obvious that those who oppose women in office on scriptural grounds have lost their voice and are being treated as on the way out. For no one can serve two masters. It's either scriptural or not. The only way is reformation.







# reformedevangelism.com

## Knowing God: Living the Gospel Lesson 2: Praying for your Oikos

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In last month's column, we introduced the *oikos* principle of evangelism and showed how you could discover your own *oikos* or network of relationships God has given you.

### Your journey of faith

For most if not all people, coming to faith is a gradual process that could be compared to a journey. It would be helpful if the facilitator shared something about his own journey of either coming to faith or growing in faith. The groups should then share together the main stages of their journey of faith with one another, encouraging and affirming each other's stories.

### The journey


Once the groups have had an opportunity to share some of the main stages of their journey of faith, the facilitator should illustrate the concept of the journey from the Scriptures, for instance, Luke 15:11-32. It is possible in this story of the two sons to find seven stages in the younger brother's journey and one stage in the elder's. Once the group has been asked to see how many stages they can discover, the facilitator should identify and explain the following seven stages in the younger brother's journey: (1) running away; (2) living far away, having a good time; (3) sensing your need of your heavenly Father; (4) turning around to come back; (5) on your way home; (6) in the arms of your Father; and (7) taking your place in the family. Once the seven stages have been identified, the one stage in the elder brother's life – taking everything for granted – should also be identified. The point of this exercise is to show that sharing our faith is not simply seeing people come to a point of commitment, but also helping them move on to the next stage.

### Prayer and the journey

The main way we can help others move forward on their journey is to pray for them. Personally, I find the more I pray for people in my *oikos*, the more opportunities I see to meaningfully connect with them.

Conversely, the less I pray for the people in my *oikos*, the fewer opportunities I notice. The facilitator should have the group read out loud three passages from the Scriptures that show the significance of prayer: (1) the choosing of the twelve (Luke 6:12-16); (2) Epaphras (Colossians 4:12-14); and (3) Paul and the Galatians (Galatians 4:17-20).

Prayer is about listening as well as speaking to God. Personally, I have found it helpful to keep the following three areas in mind:

If you would like to view the outline of this lesson, go to [www.reformedevangelism.com](http://www.reformedevangelism.com) and follow the links. Next time, we plan to introduce "Serving your Oikos." 

#### Them — Ask God to:

- Pull them toward Himself
- Open their eyes to the emptiness of life without Him
- Help them see their need for forgiveness
- Remove the confusion they have about Him and the life He offers
- Help them grasp the meaning and importance of the cross of Christ
- Open the person's heart to God's love and truth

#### You — Ask God to:

- Help you live a consistent and attractive Christian life
- Make you authentic and honest as you deal with life's ups and downs
- Give you wisdom in knowing how to approach the relationship
- Expand your knowledge so you will be ready to share the gospel message
- Grant you appropriate boldness and courage
- Use you to help lead this person into a relationship with Christ and his church

#### Us — Ask God to:

- Cause depth and trust to grow in the relationship
- Open doors for spiritual conversations
- Guide those conversations in pace, frequency, and content

Adapted from *Becoming a Contagious Christian: Participant's Guide*, 12.





# Ray of Sunshine

*“Hallowed be your name.”* **Matthew 6:9b**

Jesus began teaching the disciples to pray with addressing God as our Father. As a Father, He knows what we need even before we ask Him. Yet Jesus teaches in prayer that first his Name ought to be hallowed. This hallowing of God’s Name is what we will consider further in this article.

First of all, we must look at what is meant by the word “hallowed.” This word actually means to make and keep holy; to esteem highly and give a great reverence to. We see an example of this in Psalm 115:1 where we read, “Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.” We learn in this petition that when the Lord Jesus teaches us what to ask of his Father in prayer our attention is immediately turned away from ourselves. At the very beginning of our prayer we are instructed to concentrate on God the Father and his works rather than on ourselves and our personal needs.

What should we pray to be our goal and purpose in life? “That we may so direct our whole life; our thoughts, words, and actions – that Thy Name is not blasphemed because of us but always honoured and praised” (HC, A 112b).

By first teaching us this petition the Lord indeed directs our mind to his Father. For this is what the Father wants to hear from us. In all we do in life it must be Christ first, others second, and ourselves last. However, we also know that God the Father is almighty. He does not need anything from us, for all that we have is his already. Yet have we not often out of sinful arrogance withheld what belongs to the Lord? We think now especially of a dedicated heart. This only makes us think back to what we learned when Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount. In one of the beatitudes Jesus again taught the disciples and us to completely give our whole heart; in all our thoughts, words, and actions; this gives glory to Him alone.

By this petition the Lord Jesus teaches us to grasp for the true and complete covenant unity which He as our Mediator has obtained for us. When we are united in true covenant love as we can read in 1 Corinthians 13, then we will not insist on our own ways, but we will make the Lord’s way our way. This can only be done

through God’s grace. It is in this way that we see the atoning sacrifice which Christ did by giving us his life for us. He so loved and obeyed the Father’s will. Through this petition we may see the very close bond with his Father into which He has brought us. All praise and glory to Him alone!

*Thy Name be hallowed evermore,  
Till all that live on earth adore  
And bless Thee, and with glad acclaim  
Extol Thy virtues and Thy fame.  
May we, Thy children here below,  
In all our deeds Thy image show.*

Hymn 47:2

## Birthdays in January:

- 2 **LIZ KONING** will be 45  
9905 152nd Street, Edmonton, AB T5P 1X4
- 7 **CHRISTINE BREUKELMAN** will be 34  
2225-19th Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4
- 17 **HENRY DRIEGEN** will be 50  
#19-31450 Spur Avenue, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5M3
- 17 **GRACE HOMAN** will be 50  
Anchor Home, 361, Thirty Road South, RR 2,  
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2
- 19 **EDWIN SCHUTTE** will be 22  
844 Bowman Road, Abbotsford, BC V3G 1S9
- 19 **JANINE SMID** will be 36  
510 2nd Street, RR 7, Strathroy, ON N7G 3H8
- 27 **HANK ORSEL** will be 75  
Maple Villa, Room #217, 441 Maple Avenue  
Burlington, ON L7S 1L8
- 30 **TYLER HOEKSEMA** will be 17  
6755 Lorne Drive, Sardis, BC V2R 2G3

Congratulations to all who are celebrating their birthday in this month. May our heavenly Father bless you in this new year with good health and happiness and may you enjoy your special day. Till next month,

**Mrs. C. Gelms and Mrs. E. Nordeman**  
548 Kemp Road East, RR 2, Beamsville, ON L0R 1B2  
905-563-0380





# “Why has God allowed this?”



Investigators examined the wreckage of Helios Airways flight 522 which crashed August 14, 2005 near Athens, Greece

## Cyprus shaken

The largely nominal Greek Orthodox island nation of Cyprus was utterly shaken recently when a Cypriot passenger plane crashed near Athens killing all 122 passengers and crew. About half of the dead were Cypriot youth on their way to participate in athletic competitions. Whole families perished.

One question lingered in the minds of many: “Why has God



Relatives of crash victims grieved at the Larnaca airport from which the Cypriot flight had departed

allowed this?” Please pray that such tragic events will turn many away from the distraction of worldly concerns to search the Scriptures and find peace in Christ.



Growing numbers of visitors and residents are attending the International Evangelical Church in Larnaca

The International Evangelical Church in Larnaca, Cyprus (which worships in Trinity Chapel of MERF’s John Calvin Centre) has seen much growth among non-Cypriots. This year a few more native Cypriots have also begun to visit. Please pray that many Greek and Turkish Cypriots will turn to the Saviour through the witness of the local international congregation.

## Shaken in Egypt

Andrew is a twenty-three year old Egyptian believer who grew up in a Christian family. He recently attended MERF’s ten day study term for youth leaders at John Calvin Centre in Larnaca, Cyprus.

During his visit Andrew said, “You know, pastor, I should have



Andrew [centre] participated in a recent study term for youth leaders

not been here today.” Why? Andrew tearfully explained: “I should have been dead or at best seriously injured!”

Andrew works in Sharm-el-Sheikh, an Egyptian resort town along the Red Sea. Minutes before deadly car bomb explosions killed eighty-eight people there on July 23, Andrew walked about ninety metres from his workplace near the centre of the blasts. Even then, several people at that distance were either killed or injured by flying shrapnel.



A July 23rd series of car bombs killed at least eighty-eight and injured 200 in the Egyptian resort of Sharm-al-Sheikh







*Dr. Carl Bogue (Ohio, USA) taught at two recent JCC study terms*

Andrew added: "I am here because the Lord wants me to be here and I am sure it is for the best of purposes – to learn to live for Him and give my life to his service."

Please pray for Andrew and twenty-six other Arab youth leaders who just returned from Larnaca to serve their home churches in Egypt, Syria, and Lebanon after in-depth scriptural instruction.

## MERF training news



*In Cairo, Pastor Peter Cresswell provided two weeks of instruction to Sudanese and Egyptian study term trainees*

In July Pastor Allen Tomlinson (New Hampshire, USA) taught Syrian, Egyptian, and Lebanese Sunday school teachers for ten days in Larnaca, Cyprus. Pastor Peter Cresswell (England) taught two one week courses to Egyptian and Sudanese workers in Cairo, Egypt.



*Pastor Nathan Elgersma congratulated the sixth class of Lokichoggio graduates at their August 28th commencement*

Praise God for the August 28 graduation of thirty-five Sudanese, Kenyan, Ethiopian, and Ugandan workers who completed four months of intensive biblical training at MERF's ministry centre in Lokichoggio, Kenya. Pastor Nathan Elgersma (Illinois, USA) taught them for two full months.

Another group of East African workers have just traveled long distances to MERF's centre to begin training.

*"You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." Acts 1:8*

### Muslims ask serious questions

MERF's Arabic broadcasts are aired daily to the Middle East and four times a week to North Africa. The Lord continues to use them to touch the lives of many who would otherwise have no opportunity to hear the gospel.

A young lady from Syria was one of two listeners who separately wrote in response to an Arabic gospel broadcast less than one month before the London suicide bombings. The program was about Christ willingly sacrificing his life to save sinners who deserve to die. She shared what she heard with her mother and brother. Her mother (a devout Muslim) commented that this was "a radical contrast to the terrible teachings of some Muslims that it pleases Allah [God] when believers explode themselves to kill others."

### Thank you for your support!

May we again thank all churches and individual partners in the work of MERF for their regular and generous support. May the Lord bless you and the proclamation of the Good News of the Lord Jesus Christ among the Muslim population of the Middle East.

Please, make cheques payable to MERF-Canada and send them to the address below.

*With warm regards yours in the Lord's service,*  
Rev. J. Mulder, Chairman and  
Mrs. J. VanDam, Secretary

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*MERF records Arabic programs in Cairo and Beirut*

The mother didn't initially understand that this is actually the heart of the Christian message nor her daughter's attraction to it. The young lady's brother later reminded her that Islam does not accept the idea that Issa [Jesus] died on the cross.

Yes, the cutting edge of the gospel which people of all religions need to hear is this – our Saviour did not come to kill, destroy, or divide. He came to save. He died so that we who deserve eternal death might enjoy eternal life.

This is the only message that could truly change the heart of a Muslim suicide bomber or anyone else!

Thank you for making it possible for MERF to bring the message of life to millions of people over the airwaves and to give in-depth biblical training and support to faithful Christian workers in the Middle East, North and East Africa, and as far away as Indonesia.





# Commencement 2005 for Guido de Brès Christian High School, Hamilton, Ontario



*Pastor Marc Jagt, a 1990 graduate, addressed the class of 2005*

The day dawned bright and sunny as the Guido de Brès graduating class of 2005 prepared for their Commencement. Former classmates, families, and teachers started the festivities with a fabulous luncheon in Guido's gym. An excited buzz could be heard throughout the hall as friends mingled and enthusiastically reminisced over classes held long ago. They talked of things that had happened over the summer, along

with plans for the future. Cameras flashed as parents and friends took advantage of this opportunity to take home mementos of this memorable day.

After the luncheon, family, friends, and faculty made their way to Hamilton Place for the official graduation ceremony. The school's largest graduating class, 104 students, made their grand entrance as the processional was played. A large crowd of friends and family stood up to welcome them and then burst into song with the words of Psalm 100: "The Lord is good and evermore, His love and mercy will endure. All generations He will bless, In his unchanging faithfulness."

Mr. L. Kampen, Chairman of the Board, then opened the assembly with prayer and read from Colossians 1. He encouraged the graduands and also the rest of the assembly to contemplate the question "What's in a name?" The names of each of the graduands were carefully chosen by their parents; all of these names have a special place in a special corner of the Lord's heart. However, it is not until the Name above all other names is acknowledged and recognized that the students become who they are, having received "everything in Christ."

The principal, Mr. J.G. VanDooren, welcomed the graduating class of 2005 and continued the "name theme" as he remarked on how unique each of the graduating students is, each of them having been blessed with different gifts the Lord has given them. Mr. VanDooren also reassured the graduating class that the Alpha and Omega, the



*Christina Aasman delivered the valedictory address*



# The Class of 2005

Christina Aasman  
Pieter Agema  
Arie Alkema  
Timothy Bartels  
John Boerema  
Taryn Boeringa  
John Boot  
Bradley Bos  
Nicole Bosscher  
Robin Bosscher  
Stephen Bosscher  
Carissa Bouwman  
Justin Bouwman  
Richard Bouwman  
William Bowes  
John Broekema  
Emily Buikema  
Jonathan DeBoer  
Stefanie De Boer  
Rachel DeBoersap  
William DeJong  
Paul den Hollander  
Ian Dokter  
Andrea Feenstra  
Walter Feenstra  
Christina Geurts  
Daniel Gracey  
Tyler Groen  
Carol Groenwold  
Patricia Hartman  
Nicholas Havenaar  
Jonathan Heemskerk  
Andrea Hopman  
Joel Hordyk  
Stephen Horsman  
Feikje Huijgen  
Ashley Hutten  
Anjelynn Jager  
Jacqueline Jager

Brandon Kampen  
Sean Kampen  
Gregory Kamstra  
Aileen Kelly  
Laurence Kingma  
Lydia Kingma  
Laura Knegt  
Alisha Kok  
Marita Linde  
Jonathan Lootens  
Chantelle Ludwig  
Nicole Ludwig  
Gregory Morris  
Brandy Muis  
Danielle Nieuwenhuis  
Lindsey North  
James Oosterhoff  
Kaitlyn Ouwersloot  
Christopher Plantinga  
Ashley Post  
Petrina Post  
Jacob Ravensbergen  
John Ravensbergen  
Kristin Ruggi  
Lorissa Scholtens  
Gail Schoon  
Amanda Schulenberg  
Christina Schulenberg  
Jamie Schutten  
Katie Schutten  
Michael Schutten  
James Schuurman  
Martin Spithoff  
Robert Spithoff  
Sonja Stieva  
Megan Strating  
Jason Sutherland  
Bradley Tamminga  
Jonathan Tenhage

Shannon Tenhage  
David VanAndel  
Larissa VanAndel  
Leah VanAndel  
Matthew VanAndel  
Melissa Vanderbrugghen  
Amanda Vanderhoeven  
Amanda VanderVelde  
Loretta Vanderwoude  
Rachel VanDooren  
Kimberley VanDyk  
Rachel Van Halteren  
Gerrit VanIperen  
Erika Jansen Van Doorn  
Joanne VanLuik  
Gregory VanMiddelkoop  
Johan VanZanten  
Hannah Venema  
Wesley Vis  
Jessica Visser  
Michael Werkman  
Calvin Wieske  
Jessie Wildeboer  
David Winkel  
Jasmine Yeboah  
Aidia Yousif  
Tanya Zwaagstra







*Carissa Bouwman sang a farewell song.*

before the face of God. The graduands as well must live *coram Deo*; loving God must be their priority and, whatever paths they pursue, their lives must say "God matters."

After Pastor Jagt's speech, the graduands, dressed in black robes, came forward to accept their Ontario Secondary School Diplomas. When all 104 students were gathered on stage, the sea of black made quite



*The principal, Mr. J. G. VanDooren, congratulated Rachel DeBoersap, winner of the Student-of-the-Year Award*

God who reveals Himself as the first and the last, who was there at the creation of the world, will also guide and sustain each one of the graduands as they head off into the future.

After a marvellous Medley on Pachelbel's Canon in D, "Seek Ye First," performed by Gail Schoon and Feikje Huijgen, Pastor Marc Jagt of Ottawa spoke to the graduands. His address, entitled "The Secret of Being Human," challenged the students with the question, "What is life all about?" and encouraged them by explaining that Christ has saved them and calls them to be perfected in Him. Our Lord was passionate about the glory of God and lived at all times *coram Deo* –







*The Harry Aasman and George DeBoer Memorial Scholarships were awarded to the top academic students, Robert Spithoff, Rachel Van Halteren, and David Winkel.*

With these tools students build on the most solid foundation ever created – our Lord. In closing, Christina encouraged the students to use the tools they have been given to his glory and also gave thanks to our Heavenly Father for the love and support He continues to provide.

The afternoon was appropriately closed with the singing of Psalm 135: "Thy exalted Name, O Lord, will stand firm for evermore; Thy great glory and renown through the ages will endure." Mr. J.H. Vanderhoeven, former Chairman of the Board as well as proud father of a graduate, concluded the ceremony with a word of prayer.



*Feikje Huijgen and Gail Schoon performed a duet.*

an impressive sight. Following the handing out of diplomas, Carissa Bouwman, accompanied by Leah Burns (violin), Madeline Stieva (viola), and Mr. T. Nijenhuis (piano), sang "The Prayer." A number of students were then recognized for their outstanding academic or extracurricular achievements with the presentation of various awards and scholarships.

Christina Aasman spoke for the graduating class and likened their high school career to that of a trip to the hardware store. Teachers, like hardware sales associates, guide their students along and provide them with the required tools needed for future projects.







From the Publisher

# Growing Faith

*We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love everyone of you has for each other is increasing.*

**2 Thessalonians 1:3**

Global communication systems beam information from every part of the world into our homes. When something newsworthy happens, we will know about it in a short time. And so we know how other countries in this world are faring. It also makes us realize

we are living in an affluent society, unlike many peoples in other places who suffer from illnesses, disasters, and persecutions.

The Thessalonians were languishing physically under persecutions, and yet the church in Thessalonica was commended by the apostle Paul for their growing faith and love worked by the triune God. Hard times make people turn to God and one another. Think of some of the disasters in the past four years: terrorists' attack on New York City, earthquakes and tsunami misery in and around Indonesia, the Katrina hurricane consequences in New Orleans. Happenings like that make everyone realize our utter dependence on God and His mercy. By God's grace the Thessalonian church responded to the apostle Paul's preaching and the Holy Spirit's regenerating work: they show growth in faith towards God and love towards each other.

When faith grows it cannot but show itself in love towards all around us.

We who live in a land of plenty and enjoy the freedom God allows, should be the more eager to grow in the knowledge and faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. However, we observe so much weakness and decline in ourselves and in the churches concerning growth in faith. Consequently the love described in I Corinthians 13 is often not exemplified in our actions, firstly, towards our brothers and sisters, and secondly, towards our neighbours.

Once we let the Word of God dwell richly in our hearts, "...and make every effort to add to [y]our faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love" (2 Peter 1:5-7), we will bear one another's burdens. We will be truly thankful, also in a time of prosperity, for what the Lord has given us in his first-born son Jesus Christ. Let us continue to grow in Him and abound in love.

## Thank You, *Clarion* Team

It has been the aim of all who contributed to *Clarion* to spur you on in your life of faith. We heartily thank our chief editor, Dr. J. Visscher, for his supervising role and contributions. Mrs. Laura Veenendaal, our copy manager, continues to perform an admirable task in assembling, disseminating, and submitting all articles for *Clarion*. We thank her for her pleasant and punctual cooperation. Our co-editors, Rev. R. Aasman, Rev. Cl. Stam, and Rev. W. Slomp, provide us on a regular basis with their writings. We thank you for dividing the tasks and making the work for *Clarion* lighter. Our regular contributors, Dr. D. Moes, Rev. J. Moesker, Mr. Arthur Kingma and Mr. K. Sikkema, Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman, and Aunt Betty, help us to fill out the magazine. Thank you all. Then we have a myriad of contributors who provide interesting items for your reading pleasure. We appreciate the work you are doing for *Clarion* readers. A special thank you to the subscribers and advertisers. You all make it possible for us to publish the magazine regularly.

## Greetings

As the year draws to a close, we wish you God's indispensable blessings for the year ahead. May the Lord, who sent His only beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, cause you to grow in faith, so that you may share His love wherever you are.

W. Gortemaker

# Good Tidings

Many times in *Clarion* we read articles written as an expression of gratitude to the Lord for his gift to the local church regarding the arrival of a new pastor. This article is of that sort but is aimed at celebrating the universal as well as the local work of the Spirit in equipping Christ's church through the office of ministers of the Word.

Read Article 16 of our Church Order and you will get a sense of the immense impact the office of ministers of the Word has on the local body of believers: they are "thoroughly and sincerely to proclaim to the congregation the Word of the Lord, to administer the sacraments, and publicly to call upon the Name of God in behalf of the whole congregation; also to instruct the children of the church in the doctrine of salvation, to visit the members of the congregation in their homes, and to comfort the sick with the Word of God."

The minister is a gift given to the church and he himself receives the gifts of preaching and teaching. Through diligent study these gifts are shared with the congregation. This is the gracious work of the Spirit too, for in this way the whole congregation is equipped to live a life of thankfulness and faithfulness. When the minister works faithfully within that calling the church surely receives a blessing from God.



*Ministerial family Reverend Peter and Erica Holtvlüwer with their children, Lucas, Noah, Elliott and Gabriel*

However, the church is not a one-man show. The gifts of the Spirit are not for the glory of man but for the glory of God. The Lord equips his church with gifts of his Spirit. Not just the minister is a recipient of these gifts; each and every member receives these gifts and must employ them for the benefit of all.

## **A new pastor for Carman**

The congregation of Carman East acknowledges God's work in equipping his local church with the arrival of their "new" minister in April 2005. At the same time she acknowledges God's work in the

past years since the institution of the church here on the prairies. Indeed, "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isa 52:7).

To put this into our context in Carman we might say, "How beautiful on the prairies are the feet of those who bring good news." Over the years God has gathered, defended, and preserved his church here on the prairies by sending messengers bearing the good news. Rev. Holtvlüwer did not come to us outside of that historical context. He too is commissioned by the Spirit to use his gifts of teaching and preaching to continue that work of God.

Being one of the first established churches in the Canadian and American Reformed Churches federation, Carman has had a long line of messengers bringing the good tidings. Thus we took a quick peek at the "beautiful feet" of our former ministers and created a shelf with footwear that tell a little of the "feet" characteristics of each of them. This shelf was then presented to Rev. Holtvlüwer with the prayer that he would continue to walk in their footsteps, faithfully proclaiming the good news.







Presenting the  
"Beautiful Feet"  
shelf.

### Beautiful feet that bring good news

Rev. Scholten: a pair of *klompen*. He had the pioneering feet, coming to Canada and working hard at establishing the church of our Lord Jesus Christ here in this region.

Rev. Mulder: a pair of sneakers. He had youthful feet; he liked to spend time with the youth of God's church in their types of activities.

Rev. VanSpronsen: a pair of sandals. He had missionary feet that eventually led him to the mission field.

Rev. Geertsema: a pair of formal shoes. His were "academic feet" which eventually lead him to be a teacher at our Theological College in Hamilton; this also showed his care that the Word be proclaimed faithfully.

Rev. VanRietschoten: a pair of loafers or slippers. Not because he loafed around a lot but, exactly the opposite, because of his "pastoral feet" he was always carefully busy with the sheep under his care.

Rev. de Boer: a pair of shiny lace-up shoes. His feet were earnest in following the calling, proclaiming the truth with a


capital "T" and holding the office of minister in high regard.

Rev. Moesker: a pair of red sneakers with white toes. His feet were "heartening feet." He had his very serious side and his very humorous side but he never tired of proclaiming that good news. It was during Rev. Moesker's time that Carman became Carman East and Carman West. Carman West received Rev. Pol as their minister in August 2000.

### Rev. Holtvlüwer

That brings us to the present. We did not know enough about Rev. Holtvlüwer's character to really determine what kind of footwear we should get him so we

decided to get him a pair of work boots to symbolize the work that he has begun among us. Whatever his own particular characteristics are, we encourage him to continue the good tradition of having the beautiful feet of a messenger with good news for God's people in this place.

This he has done since his installation on April 17. Rev. VanRietschoten, who, as a retired minister, had done so much to help our congregation throughout the vacancy, installed Rev. Holtvlüwer as minister of the Word and sacraments in the morning service. In his inaugural sermon Rev. Holtvlüwer encouraged the congregation to use their gifts and he promised to use the gifts given him by the Holy Spirit, namely preaching and teaching, to work hard among his new congregation. May our gracious God allow our minister the strength and grace to do exactly that: our God reigns! 



Three faithful messengers:  
Rev. J. VanRietschoten,  
Rev. Ph. Holtvlüwer,  
and Rev. A.J. Pol.



# The Forty-fourth Annual League Day 2005

## Living in the Image of God

We travelled along rolling hills with a horizon of vibrant orange, yellow, russet, and red. The balmy autumn sunshine set off the tree line as it displayed the gorgeous fall colours! Destination: 317 women on their way to the Women's League Day hosted by the congregation of Fergus and Elora, Ontario. The theme for the day was "Living in the Image of God." In all God's stunning creation there is nothing in which He takes more pleasure than man, created after his likeness and in his Image.

The president of the League of Canadian Reformed Women's Societies, Sr. Adriana Vandervan, welcomed everyone present. The facilities at the Waterloo Regional Police Association were spacious and superbly decorated. We sang from Psalm 89:6, 7 and opened in prayer. After the reading of Colossians 3:1-17 the speakers for the day, Rev. Vermeulen, Sr. Wendy Koster, and Sr. Michelle Flach, were heartily welcomed. Announcements included that Sr. Francine Bergsma was voted onto the League Board as the new League Corresponding secretary. Sr. Chris Schutten will be the new secretary for the Inter-League Publication Board (ILPB). On this day an ILPB table was set up with a variety of Reformed books and study guides suitable for society use as well as for personal



Rev. Vermeulen

edification. We are thankful for the efforts of the ILPB, who are so diligent in promoting and providing indispensable Reformed literature.

A letter was read from the women's *Gereformeerde Bijbelstudiebond* in The Netherlands, wishing us a blessed day. Roll call was held; there were 317 women present representing almost every congregation in Ontario, and some even from as far as Bluebell and Australia! We then sang together our traditional League Song and read Genesis 1:20-2:25 in preparation for the morning speech. After the singing of Psalm 104:1, 4, 6, Rev. Vermeulen spoke on "Created in the Image of God: Meaning and Significance."

### Morning speech – "In the Image of God"

What does it mean that we are created in God's image? We are a visible representation of God in our task of ruling over creation. God is ruler over all and He has created us to act on his behalf on earth. Our task is so great, so all-encompassing. Even after the fall into sin, by which God's image in man became a broken one, man still has the task to subdue, to rule, to have dominion. As mankind increases, so does our mandate, whether it is in science, agriculture, medicine, engineering. . . of course, we see unbelievers doing these same things. How do we explain this? The difference lies in the







motivation behind what Rev. Vermeulen called the "cultural urge." Man still has the desire to develop the earth, finding better ways to build, heal, travel, but now to the glory of man rather than to praise the Creator! Man serves the idol of self, progress, and materialism in rebellion to God.

Thanks be to God, who has restored this image in and through Christ! He is the perfect image of God, the one who has fulfilled Psalm 8. We confess that man's mandate has not changed in Christ, although now it has the added responsibility of the gospel mandate, that is, to bring the good news to the ends of the earth. However, we are not called to abandon God's original plan for his image bearers. Rather, we teach others about Christ and point them back to the relationship as it was created! As new creatures we then serve Him busily within our place and context, within our marriage, family life, and our daily work. In these situations we live as God's restored people, promoting righteousness and holiness.

### The Image Applied

What does this teach us about our life in Christ within this world? God has created man to rule, not to be ruled by things created such as drugs, alcohol, pornography ... we live in the midst of a culture in rebellion to God, which develops the world in slavery to sin and the devil, serving the creature rather than the Creator. They do not like it that there are those in this world who are seeking to image God. That is why we rarely see Christians as leading forces in society, because they face the hostility of those who hate God. The antithesis of Genesis 3 works itself out, but only as God allows it as Christ continues with his church-gathering work. The world becomes more and more ripe for judgement as we live and work towards the new Jerusalem. Suddenly we realize that our lives are full of purpose! We should not fall in with the attitudes around us of "keeping our heads above water" in this "rat race" we live in! Rather, we have a task, responsibilities, obligations, and

must carry them out faithfully and deliberately. Salvation has everything to do with our everyday work. This prevents meaninglessness in our lives. We are to rule and subdue wherever we have been placed. This becomes the guiding principle in our tasks within our own domain, in our household, workplace, and neighbourhood. In every territory Christ's kingship must be acknowledged. How does this work itself out in our homes? They become places where we can come to rest, fostering an environment with good books, reformed literature, music which praises God, clothing which promotes modesty and decency, relationships which are characterized by respect and submission. Then we reflect Christ, the image of God, in our daily life!

Finally, it is within the church that we are transformed as we are called together within the communion of saints, united in faith, to assist one another in our task. Then in Reformed education also we are unified in our calling to teach our children what it means to carry out their tasks as image of God in this world.

### Discussion, Collection and Song

Rev. Vermeulen was thanked for his beautiful and insightful speech and we sang together Psalm 8. A spirited general discussion followed, in which we discussed how visible people can be the image of an invisible God, how unbelievers show the image of Satan, that it is only by grace through Christ that we can again show in our life that we are God's image. We also discussed the world's emphasis on self-esteem and concluded that it





would be better to speak of our esteem in Christ.

Discussion was closed and a collection was held for the work of native mission in Fort Babine as we sang Hymn 29:1, 2. We opened lunch with prayer and enjoyed a time of refreshment and fellowship. The afternoon session resumed with the singing of the national anthem and prayer after which the director of the local church choir, Br. Mark Veenman, taught us a new song "All praise to Thee, My God, this night," a perpetual canon also appropriate for a child's bedtime prayer. Perhaps many mothers with young children will take this home and, despite the many demands on our time and the effort it takes to finally tuck little ones in bed, will take a moment to sing with them to close the day.

### Afternoon speech – "Women of the Word"

We also sang Psalm 101:1-6 (as you can see, we did a lot of singing!). Sr. Arlene Medemblik introduced the afternoon speakers, Sr. Michelle Flach and Sr. Wendy Koster. We read from Romans 8 in order to prepare for the afternoon speech, "Women of the Word: Head, Heart, Hands, and Feet."

The devil, the world, and our own flesh are constantly hindering us from living in the image of God. We must, therefore, come to the knowledge of God in order that we may know all things for living and for salvation. If we do not know (head) his will, then it is our will that rules our lives. It is only through the daily opening of God's Word, by meditating on it, by studying the creeds and confessions, that we increase in the knowledge of Him and of his Word and will. Do we begin our

day by reflecting on God's mercies? Or do we rush through our mealtime devotions? Do we fill our mind with the Word of the Lord? Do we attend the worship services as much as possible? Do we make use of study societies? Do we seek communion with other believers who can hold us accountable? However, just knowing the Word is not enough. Knowledge without faith is nothing.

This is where our heart comes in. By the Word and Spirit we not only know God, we also now believe in the work of our Lord and Saviour. We understand that we have passed from death to life and our heart has been recreated to be full of Him. Then wisdom will abound and we will gain the ability to discern, to judge what is true, right, lasting. Then we receive the insight to discern what seeks God's kingdom and what does not. God desires our heart; it may not be divided! And it is with this pure heart that we are also able to live by the Spirit (Gal.5).

And so our hands (what we do) are recreated by the Spirit. We are to be doers of the Word, working

out our own salvation with fear and trembling. This does not come to us naturally, but we must practice it, so that the tree can be known by its fruit. So also the woman of Proverbs 31 not only knows God, but also excels in her task, a confident, hardworking, creative, generous, resourceful woman, whose husband praises her not for her beauty but for her love of the Lord! We learn further from Titus 2 that we must be godly, teach what is good, love our husbands and children, be pure, busy at home, and practice personal discipline. We must speak in a godly manner, not gossip or slander but rather walk away from situations which are ungodly. We must also set our hearts on loving our husbands and reject what the world teaches about relationships or submission even as we uphold our husbands in our prayers.

### Modeling the Word

Also for the sake of our children we must model our lives after Christ in the image of God, for then they will learn from our actions as well as from our words. Rather







than turning to worldly wisdom, we should seek one another within the communion of saints; therefore let the older women teach the younger women to live lives pleasing to the Lord and to the promotion of his Kingdom. Recreated by the Spirit in Christ, we reflect this also in our outward modesty, modeling ourselves not after worldly lustful fashion but after God's Word. We know so well that our own will seeks to take over despite our knowledge of what God requires. Yet we are called to practice self-discipline, and joy and calm should characterize our lives. Then we are keepers-at-home, teaching our daughters the beauty and art of homemaking, creating a pleasing environment for our loved ones and protecting them from the influences of the world. We learn to be kind and good, first to our family, then to others; as we daily practice displaying these fruits to our family they will take this attitude over! Colossians 3:12 teaches us to put on "compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience. . . ." Then we will be reverent in the way we live and will also be a witness to the world.

Then our feet will also "enter through the narrow gate," leading

to life, and only few will find it! Each step our feet take along the narrow road should be characterized by prayer. Within the communion of saints we come to realize that each life is unique and often the journey is difficult. Do we stumble? Do we take detours? Thank God, then, that we may trust in the forgiveness of sins and then, renewed by the Holy Spirit, we will attain the finish line. For underneath are the everlasting arms of our Father and only in Him can we walk in the way of righteousness and meet Him at the gate. Let us serve Him with such zeal as He requires, in gentleness, thanksgiving, reverence, and peace (Phil 4:4-7)!

### More Discussion

We all expressed our thanks to Sr. Flach and Sr. Koster for their work in preparing this speech and for the both humbling and inspiring words. We sang from Psalm 19:4, 5 and Sr. Adriana Vanderven invited us to share our thoughts in general discussion. Among other questions we discussed how to encourage the older women to lead and discourage them from thinking they have done their time. The

younger women are encouraged to humbly come to the older women for advice. Older women are cautioned never to give advice to someone who does not ask for it!

The sisters who prepared the speech cautioned us to be guard against the false doctrines of certain authors who have written books on this topic. We also discussed the role of single women in the church community and the importance of teaching delightful homemaking to the girls in our churches!

### Conclusion

At the conclusion of the day, the following announcements were made. The collection for Smithers Mission yielded \$1015.68. The ladies of Fergus and Elora were heartily thanked for the superb organizing. The next league day 2006 will be hosted D.V. by Grand Valley and Orangeville. We sang our final song from Psalm 19:6 and our league president Sr. Vanderven closed with us in prayer. Thank God for the freedom and opportunity to open Scripture, to sing praise to Him, and to have fellowship as God's children, holy and beloved.

May God continue to give us the desire to study his Holy Word together, that we may increase in knowledge and bear the fruit of it in our daily lives! And may we more and more reflect in our life the image of God the Father!



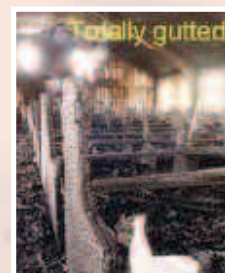


# Ebenezer Church in Burlington Celebrates Fifty Years of God's Faithfulness

The date was April 30, 2005, a beautiful Saturday afternoon, fifty years since Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church was instituted in Burlington, ON. The church was filled with members, founding and former members from all over. Our own Albert Smouter, also a (junior) founder, was the MC and welcomed us after we had sung the well-known words of Psalm 145: "I will exalt Thee, O my God and King, and bless Thy Name forever as I sing." Albert welcomed our two former ministers, Rev. M. Van Beveren and Rev. D. De Jong who was accompanied by Mrs. De Jong. Of the still living founding members outside of Ebenezer, fifty could still be contacted and a large number of these were present. He recited the words of Psalm 37: "Commit your ways to Him and He will reward all your upright endeavours" and from 1 Samuel 7:12: "Ebenezer. . . thus far the Lord has helped us." That is not about our faithfulness to the Lord, but more importantly the Lord's faithfulness toward us."

Albert concluded the introduction by welcoming the oldest member, Br. T. Vanderveen, 93, our longest married couple, Br. and Sr. W.G. Sikkema, sixty-three years, and Br. Abe Hartman, who served us as organist for all of the fifty years. Angelina Smouter, daughter of Albert J. and Michelle Smouter, is our youngest member (at three weeks).

Rev. M. Van Beveren, who was with us from 1978 to 1982, closed his address with: "May then our eyes constantly be directed to Christ. He will not forsake the works of his hands." Rev. D. De Jong, as he reminisced about his pastoral work during the six years among us, highlighted the following: "Besides the preaching of the Word I remember in particular the catechism instruction. Most of the catechism students were eager to learn and participated in discussions. I do not remember complaints from their side about preaching and teaching being too difficult."







A choir, composed of members of our congregation, sang "Great is Thy Faithfulness."

This was followed by *Historical Reflections*, written by Sr. M. Buist and read by her daughter Sr. Joanne Van Dam. It concluded with the following: "The church was very important in our lives as immigrants. When tragedy struck, sickness or death, we were there for one another. Many of our church community have gone to be with the Lord; what would we have done, how would we have survived without the comfort 'what is in life and death my only aid?' And so after fifty years Ebenezer stands on the same basis. The Word is still preached faithfully. The Lord has blessed us with much growth in numbers – Ebenezer has three daughters in Burlington. May the younger generation take over, as they already do. Ebenezer: 'Thus far has the Lord helped us.'"

Our musical Spithoff family presented a "Musical Interlude," with mom Aafke at the piano, daughter Karen, violin, and son Tony at the organ. It was beautiful.

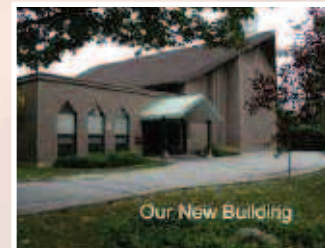
Br. Gus Buist, who delivered a very nice *Historical Reflections* twenty-five years ago, outdid that performance with a new "Fifty Year" update. It was an accurate and often humorous rendition covering our life in Ebenezer, ending with:

"Be this our confession, to this we consent:

it was all your grace, from beginning to end."

Our own minister, Rev. G. Nederveen, as the last contributor in a beautiful afternoon of remembrance, closed with these words: "And so tomorrow we commence our fifty-first year. Let it be a year in which we show ourselves to be thankful. Let it be a year in which we as a community of saints grow closer together, to be there for each other and to love the Lord together. Let this reflective celebration also set the tone for the younger generation. If I look around I see mostly older people and that is great, but the church is also the young people. May we, both young and old, indeed be a church community which desires to live for the Lord, not only reflective of the past, recognizing God's great mercies and gifts, but also in the trust that in the years ahead of us we may go forward under his blessings."

After we sang "Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation," we offered our prayer of thanksgiving to our Lord. We all left for the John Calvin Auditorium for refreshments and fellowship and watched a video presentation of events going way back to the 60's. This also gave us an opportunity to meet former Ebenezer members who had graced us with their presence at this memorable celebration.



Our New Building



Our New Interior



Rev. C. Van Doorn

Rev. D. Vanderboom

Rev. M. Van Boven

Rev. D. De Jong



Dr. & Mrs. Nederveen



# Peregrine Survey

*Mr. Keith Sikkema is a grade 8 teacher and vice-principal at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario. [ksikkema@istop.com](mailto:ksikkema@istop.com)*

At this time of the year, students and teachers should be ready for their first substantial break. In addition, volunteers are well established in their routines, as they continue to offer their invaluable help, through donations of money, time, or otherwise. Indeed, if up to thirty percent of a school's income is generated by donations, we do have a strong link with the community. This link is also expressed by volunteering in the board and committees, by parents who help in the school or enable others to do so, and the numerous hours invested in things that need to be done but are not specified in anyone's job description. Being active in the school is a good way to strengthen the bond we have in the communion of saints and it helps the school to be the best it can be for the children. Parental interest and involvement also has a positive effect on learning. The Lord blesses the schools with such commitment and those who participate thus also receive its rewards. We get accustomed to some things, but it is all a gift from God.

Despite a vibrant participation of the community in a variety of ways, Carman has been struggling to have a quorum at its membership meetings for some years. It proposed to modify its quorum requirements from sixty percent of all voting members to

sixty percent of voting members who have children at the school. One would hope and pray that declines in membership attendance (it is not an issue unique to Carman!) are not symptomatic of a decline in interest and commitment to the schools. Do we still receive thirty percent of the annual budget from members who do not have children in the school? Carman also embarked on another evaluation of the administration team.

**Parental interest and involvement has a positive effect on learning.**

This is accomplished through a questionnaire for staff, board, and education committee members and gives society members an opportunity for input as well. The evaluation "is to be characterized by mutual respect, trust, and encouragement, and to assist the administrators to become more effective in leading the school to achieve its educational mission."

For some years, Timothy Christian School (serving Ancaster, Glanbrook, and Hamilton) has been feeling the pinches of being both landlocked and increasingly

full. Although splitting the school was considered, the school society agreed to purchase another facility. It has since moved to the "Burkholder" building from the public board and sold its existing building for significantly more than expected. Meanwhile, a group in the Ancaster congregation entertains the option of starting a separate school by September 2006. It envisions that a local school would have social, spiritual, and educational benefits and would reduce travel times for their children. In nearby Burlington and Flamborough, after eighteen years of independent operation, John Calvin Christian and Covenant Christian school societies will proceed with a merger.

Fergus/Guelph has started the new year as two separate school societies: Maranatha elementary (grades 1-8), with Lydia VanVeen as principal; and Emmanuel high (grades 9-11), with Henk Nobel as principal. They continue to share the building in Fergus, but had to add three portables to house grades 6-8. Fergus' eighty-eight high school students hail from the Canadian Reformed congregations of Guelph, Elora, Fergus North, Fergus South, Grand Valley, and Orangeville, as well as several United Reformed families from Listowel. Interest has also been expressed from Owen Sound, and the chairman notes that "it is such a blessing to see our membership





continue to increase with each passing month. At the same time, it is encouraging to see the communion of saints pull together in support of one another and our children's Christian education." All around thankfulness is expressed for the help received in setting up the new school structure as well as the development and implementation of the program. The amount of work that needed to be done to accomplish this has been huge. May the Lord bless the new organizational format!

Neerlandia is expecting substantial growth. Rather than working with split grades, the school will have single grades in the future. It already added a classroom to its facilities, as well as two-way satellite for Internet access. "This system permits teachers to access the Internet from their classes, for all computers in the school to 'talk' to each other, and for Computer Outlook to troubleshoot and even do some repairs from their facilities in town." The Barrhead/Neerlandia community also maintains a Scholarship Committee to help area students pay for tuition at university or college. Donations are welcome.

Colleague Ed Vanderboom, principal at Credo Christian High in Langley for many years, has been appointed Deputy Inspector of Independent Schools in British Columbia. Colleague Harry Moes is now CCVHS principal. While public school teachers went on (an illegal) strike in British Columbia during October, independent schools could continue without interruption. Schools in BC are praying for wisdom for judges and people in authority because of the *Corren, Corren v. Ministry of Education* case before the BC Human Rights Tribunal. Peter and Murray Corren, a married gay couple, asked the Tribunal "to require the provincial government

to make the BC curriculum more inclusive of positive and accurate portrayals of persons and students who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered." This decision could impact on the curriculum of all schools in BC. In the fall, a decision was to be made whether the scope of these complaints included all areas of the curriculum or only Social Studies 8-12. The hearing is expected to continue next summer.

### The Lord continues to weave his tapestry and use us for his quilt.

Credo Christian Elementary's board decided to follow the lead of the church in the matter of URCNA membership not to propose changes to their constitution until the "full membership" stage is concluded there. It also decided to "recommend encouraging teachers to form an association for professional development in order to promote the profession. Give teachers specific projects in regards to promotion and give them ownership of these projects." As this column is sponsored by CRTA East, we look forward to a revival of CRTA West and fruitful cooperation between the two.

William of Orange is remembering its fiftieth anniversary, causing the principal to reflect on the tapestry God has been weaving with this school society:

There are a host of images that have made the tapestry what it is today. Throughout the year, hopefully some of these images can take on a more concrete form in stories and poems and anecdotes. For now

we get to stand back and look at the entire picture as the Lord has woven it over the past fifty years. It is not finished. So we only see part. It is not without flaws, but the Lord in his mercy has taken those flaws and made them an integral part of the entire tapestry. He has been incredibly faithful with us. And He weaves on.

Around the country, similar tapestries are being woven. They may not be quite as old or elaborate as William of Orange, but they all fit in the grand quilt of the church-gathering work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Gratefully using our gifts for the benefit of others as parents, as volunteers, or as paid employees of the school is one way in which we exercise the communion of saints. May the Lord continue to weave his tapestry and use us for his quilt.

*The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman [obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us](mailto:obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us)*



*P.S. Some people wondered what Peregrine Surveys are all about. The idea was, from the beginning, to "share things educational happening in and around our schools. . . Roving 'from sea to sea' in Canada and occasionally abroad; we also recognize that we are pilgrims (or peregrines) on earth, who train children for citizenship in a heavenly kingdom." As in 2000, I still draw primarily from local school magazines as I get them at home [ksikkema@istop.com](mailto:ksikkema@istop.com) or at school: John Calvin School, Box 280, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0. I look forward to receiving magazines from all schools. ks*





**Dear Editor,**

Like many others I have been glad of Rev. Slomp's counseling expertise, but I think his current article on the subject of counseling (Sept. 16) presents a flawed and potentially dangerous analogy. Rev. Slomp compares consulting a professional counselor with any other medical professional, or even a professional, or even a car mechanic – it might be nice if the person you consult is Christian, but, he says, it is hardly critical. Our primary concern should be whether they are "properly trained and licensed."

But while it's true that a mechanic's worldview might have but the barest impact on what he does (a Satanist probably changes a muffler much the same way as a Christian mechanic) the same can't be said about professional counselors.

For example, it was a group of "properly trained and licensed" counselors (the American Psychiatric Association) who in 1974 voted that homosexuality was no longer a disorder. This decision was based not on research or scientific findings, but simply the group's secular worldview. And when "properly trained and licensed" counselors were confronted with recent research that shows gays can change their sexual orientation, they decided en masse to ignore the research because it didn't fit in with their secular worldview. This secular worldview so impacts the counseling field that when anyone dares provide a Christian perspective they face persecution (I think here of Christian counselor Chris Kempling).

Selecting a professional counselor is not as easy as Rev. Slomp makes it out to be. Damage can even be done by Christian counselors who base their practices on secular theories. I once sat through a lecture by a Christian counselor who wanted all the men in the audience to admit we resented our fathers. He was obviously a follower of the theory that places the blame for most

mental problems on parents – a theory that stands in stark contrast to the commandment to honour our parents.

I believe it is vital that we realize just how great an impact a secular counselor's worldview can have on the treatment he prescribes. If we don't, then when a brother at his lowest point goes looking for help we might just direct him to a counselor that will do him great damage.

*Jon Dykstra  
Edmonton, Alberta*

**Response**

Dear Br. Dykstra,

My last editorial dealt especially with the mentally ill and the handicapped, not with those who need counseling because of immoral life styles. One would not expect an office bearer to be able to diagnose someone with autism, or Alzheimer's, or schizophrenia, or Prader-Willi Syndrome, for example. Only those who are properly trained are able to do that and give advice as to how to treat those disorders. Without their expertise parents and care-givers would deny themselves the resources that God has placed at their disposal. Your concerns regarding moral issues will be addressed, the Lord willing, in my next instalment. This is also what I promised in my conclusion of the last editorial. I wrote, "In the next editorial, the Lord willing, we will deal with those people who require help for other reasons. There are those, for example, who are alcoholics or drug addicts, or those who have severe marriage problems or other relational problems. . . both the counseling profession and the church must carefully consider their respective roles."

*B. Slomp*

*Note: the next instalment of Rev. Slomp's editorials on counseling will appear in Volume 55, Issue 5.*







# Press Releases

## Press Release for Classis Pacific West, September 27, 2005

On behalf of the convening church of Maranatha, Rev. J. VanVliet opened the meeting by reading and giving a short meditation on Luke 16:1-15. He requested the brothers to sing Psalm 73:8 and led in prayer. Rev. VanVliet welcomed the Revs. W. Bredenhof and T. Lodder, as it was their first time at Classis Pacific West. It was noted that Rev. Poppe has departed to Coaldale. The need for a minister in Houston Canadian Reformed Church (CanRC) and a missionary to serve the Bulkley Valley will continue to be remembered in prayer. The credentials were inspected by the Church at Smithers and all churches were duly represented. Classis was declared constituted. The suggested officers were appointed and took their places: Rev. E. Kampen as chairman; Rev. J.M. VanSpronsen as vice-chairman; Rev. VanVliet as clerk. The agenda was adopted and since the classical subscription form was unavailable at this time, Rev. Lodder gave verbal assent to the local subscription form and promised to sign the classical subscription form at a later time.

No correspondence or instructions were received from the churches. The following reports were received: a) The Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Students reports that there are no requests; b) The Committee for Financial Aid to Needy Churches reports that there are no requests. We thank the

Lord that the churches are being provided for; c) The churches at Smithers and Willoughby Heights present a report to Classis regarding Classis via electronic means. We give special thanks to Br. L. Wubs of Willoughby Heights for preparing this report. After discussion it was decided not to move forward with this proposal; d) Revs. Kampen and VanVliet report on a fraternal visit to the OPC Presbytery of the Northwest on April 22, 2005. The CanRC visitors were welcomed and could note with thankfulness that these churches show a strong desire to maintain the authority of Scriptures. At the same time, the examination of two students revealed some issues that warrant further discussion including their view on the "framework hypothesis" and paedocommunion. At our next visit, these issues will be brought up by the delegates; e) Revs. Poppe and VanSpronsen report on a fraternal visit made to Classis Western Canada of the URCNA held in Telkwa, BC on June 15-16, 2005; (g) The deputy for ecclesiastical contact reports that delegates from the OPC and the URCNA were invited to this Classis.

Question period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held. The ministry of the office bearers is being continued in all the churches, the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured by all the churches, and no churches requested the judgment and help of Classis for the proper government of the

church. The appointments were reviewed and no changes were necessary. The convening church for the next Classis will be Willoughby Heights on December 13, 2005 or if there is no material for this agenda, either March 28 or April 25, 2006. Suggested officers are: Chairman – Rev. VanSpronsen; Vice-chairman – Rev. VanVliet; Clerk – Rev. Lodder. In personal question period the suggestion is made that the Maranatha Church at Surrey explore what possibilities there may be for fellowship and edification among delegates after the business of classis is finished, if the agenda of classis is not so long. Prayers were requested for the Urban Mission Project and the work that Rev. Dong is involved in. Some comments were made on the regulations concerning Financial Aid to Needy Students. The treasurer is requested to review the present cost per km and provide a recommendation to the next classis. The chairman deemed that nothing in the meeting warranted the use of brotherly censure according to Article 34 of the Church Order. The Acts of Classis were read and adopted and the Press Release was read and approved. The chairman requested the brothers to sing Psalm 107:1 and led in closing prayer. The meeting was closed.

*J.M. VanSpronsen,  
vice-chairman, e.t.*



## ICRC 2005 Press Release

The sixth quadrennial meeting of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC) was held in Pretoria, South Africa, from October 13 to 19, 2005. A prayer service preceded the official opening, during which a message was presented with the theme, "Through the Jerusalem meeting God safeguards the unity and catholicity of the church." The venue for the conference was the Vrye Gereformeerde Kerk at Rietfontein, Pretoria. The host church, the Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (FRCSA), provided for the needs of the delegates with great generosity and consideration, as numerous members gave selflessly of their time and resources to make our experience in Pretoria a memorable one indeed.

### Members and visitors

During the meeting, three new members were added to the Conference – the Reformed Churches in South Africa, the Reformed Churches of Spain, and the Reformed Confessing Church in Congo – bringing the combined membership of the member churches to almost 700,000. The basis of the fellowship among the member churches in the Conference is a commitment to the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as confessed in the historic Reformed standards: the Three Forms of Unity and/or the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms. See sidebar for the list of ICRC members.

### Missions

One of the main purposes of the Conference is to encourage cooperation among the member churches in the fulfillment of the missionary mandate. The Conference received the report of its Missions Committee and noted the successful regional gatherings (Asia/Pacific in Thailand in February 2003 and Africa in the Democratic Republic of Congo in September 2003) since the last meeting. The Missions Committee also presented a summary of the results of the survey it had conducted regarding the worldwide missions work of the member churches. A new mandate for the Missions Committee was adopted, which included development of a list of mission contact representatives for each of the member churches who will be responsible for disseminating ICRC missions information and materials to their respective churches.

### Papers

The central theme of this meeting was "The Lordship of Christ," and four papers were presented to open up various aspects Christ's Lordship in the believer, the church, and the world. Discussions and workshops were conducted with respect to each of the papers.

The first paper was presented by Prof. Dr. A.J. de Visser (CanRC) on "The Lordship in the Life of the Believer." Prof. de Visser started by giving a biblical perspective on the theme, including the fact of Christ's lordship and its implications. He then discussed the question as to how the lordship of Christ

functions in churches in various parts of the world and suggested that the lordship of Christ is a powerful antidote against the widespread problems of both antinomianism and legalism.

The second paper was presented by Prof. Dr. J.W. Maris (CRCN) on "The Lordship of Christ in the Church." Prof. Maris began the development of his theme by discussing the relation of Christ to the identity of the church. He then explored Christ's three offices, especially that of king, and the consequences of the Christ's kingship for the church's obedience. The lordship of Christ also drives the agenda of the church in its mission endeavours, in its quest for biblical unity, and in its government. He concluded by observing some implications for the future of the church, noting that there will be no end to Christ being King and Lord of his people.

The final two papers were presented by the Rev. Messrs. Y. Dethan (GGRI) and D. Robertson (FCS) on "The Lordship of Christ Proclaimed in the World." Mr. Dethan focused on the proclamation of the gospel to pagans and on the suffering of persecuted believers. He challenged the meeting to bear in mind that, in bringing the gospel to pagans, we should not compromise, but rather confront them with the Scriptures, bearing in mind that this is our duty – the result is God's. He concluded by reminding the meeting that persecutions do not arise by chance. God allows them to test our faith, for our purification, and for his own glory. Mr. Robertson focused on the challenges of





proclaiming the lordship of Christ to a postmodern age, where institutions are suspect, the present is dominant, and there is no master story. In taking up this challenge, he encouraged Reformed churches to be real (rather than simply role play), to be radical (in the sense of taken everything back to the Scriptures), and to be genuine in developing relationships with unbelievers. He concluded with the plea that evangelism and church planting not be relegated to the peripheries in the life of the church, but to remember that the Lord uses the theology, government, and worship that arise out of our Reformed understanding of Scripture to build

up his church, to bring sinners to Himself, and glory to his name – whether in a post-modern, modern, traditional, or whatever culture or age in which we happen to live.

#### Proposed amendment to the ICRC Constitution

The meeting determined to propose the following amendment to the ICRC Constitution to the member churches (which must be approved by the major assemblies of two-thirds of member churches to go into effect); that Article IV.1.a of the Constitution be amended to read:

1. Those churches shall be admitted as members which:
  - a. adhere and are faithful to one or more of the

confessional standards stated in the Basis, as each church has adopted one or more of these as its own standards, or adhere and are faithful to Reformed Confessions which are equivalent in content to the Confessions listed in the Basis (Art. 2), and which confession (or confessions) shall be proposed to be added to Article II of the Constitution.

#### Other significant actions

Among the many actions taken by the meeting, three merit special mention. A conscious effort was undertaken to add members of the newer (to the ICRC) member churches to both the Interim





## THE TWENTY-FIVE MEMBER CHURCHES OF THE IRCRC

Committee and to the Missions Committee. It was also decided to combine Regional and Mission Conferences of the ICRC, and that, in general, the financing for such conferences should come from within the region, and not through the ICRC assessment. The meeting decided to ask the Interim Committee to appoint someone to assemble and distribute information on existing theological education programs and institutions of all the member churches.

### Retirements and appointments

The meeting expressed its thanksgiving to the Lord for the labours of Rev. M. Van Beveren (CanRC), who retired after more than twenty years of service to the Conference as Corresponding Secretary. The meeting confirmed the appointment of Rev. C. Van Spronsen (CanRC) as the new Corresponding Secretary of the ICRC. The meeting also expressed its thankfulness for the work of outgoing chairman, Rev. Jack J. Peterson (OPC), for his services on behalf of the Conference for the past eight years. The Rev. B. de Graaf (CRCN) was appointed as the new chairman of the meeting.

### Budget and next meeting

The meeting adopted a four-year budget (to the next meeting of the Conference in 2009) in the amount of \$135,000, or \$33,750 per annum (less than 5 cents per church member per year). The next meeting is scheduled to be held in 2009 in New Zealand, with the Reformed Churches of New Zealand as host.

Rev. C. Van Spronsen



- Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC)
- Calvinist Reformed Churches in Indonesia (*Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvinis di Indonesia N.T.T.*) (GGRC)
- Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC)
- Christian Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (*Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*) (CRCN)
- Confessing Reformed Church in Congo (*Église Réformée Confessante au Congo*) (CRCC)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of England and Wales (EPCEW)
- Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ireland (EPCI)
- Free Church of Central India (FCCI)
- Free Church of Scotland (FCS)
- Free Church in Southern Africa (FCSA)
- Free Reformed Churches in South Africa (*Die Vrye Gereformeerde Kerken in Suid Afrika*) (FRCSA)
- Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA)
- Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC)
- Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA)
- Presbyterian Church in Korea (Kosin) (PCK)
- Reformed Churches in Indonesia – NTT (*Gereja Gereja Reformasi di Indonesia N.T.T.*) (GGRI)
- Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Liberated) (*Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland – vrijgemaakt*) (RCN-Lib)
- Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ)
- Reformed Churches in South Africa (RCSA)
- Reformed Churches of Spain (*Iglesias Reformadas de España*) (RCS)
- Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland (RPCI)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA)
- Reformed Presbyterian Church of North East India (RPCNEI)
- United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA)

### Churches that sent observers or visitors to the Conference, several of which introduced themselves or updated the meeting on current work:

- Church of Christ in Sudan Among the Tiv (*Nongo u Kristu u ken Sudan hen Tiv*) (CCST)
- Ethiopian Reformed Presbyterian Church (ERPC)
- Evangelical Reformed Church in Sweden (ERCS)
- Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCC)
- Heritage Reformed Congregations in North America (HRCNA)
- Independent Reformed Church in Korea (IRCK)
- Mehrete Yesus Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Eritrea (MYEPC)
- Reformed Church in Japan (RCJ)
- Reformed Churches of South Africa (Soutpansberg Synod) (RCSA-S)
- United Reformed Churches in Myanmar (URCM)





By J. Visscher

Dr. J. Visscher is co-pastor  
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# Year-End Review

## 2005

It was not long ago that Queen Elizabeth II labeled a certain year as an *annus horribilis* because of all the distressing news that came out of her family. In some respects many will say that the year 2005 falls into much the same category. After all, the year began dominated by the news of a huge tsunami that had struck parts of Asia in December of 2004. It continued with almost daily announcements of terrorist suicide bombings in Iraq. It was filled with the tidings of hurricane after hurricane cutting swaths of destruction through the Caribbean, Mexico, and the southern parts of the USA. Later on it was hit with the news of yet another disaster, this time a huge earthquake in Pakistan and India that claimed tens of thousands of lives.

When you consider all of these disasters and add to them the almost regular mayhem that occurs on planet Earth, one can only conclude that 2005 was not a good year. Its litany of woe made many nervous about what the new year would bring. It raised the spectre of a creation that is steadily succumbing to the forces of death and darkness.

Thankfully most of our readers, living in Australia, Canada, and the northern parts of the USA, have been spared much of the devastation that visited so many places. Nevertheless, this is our world that we are writing about

and we too are touched by all of these calamities. Who can watch the news, read the stories, and not be affected? In addition, just because we may have been spared in 2005 does not automatically mean that nothing will hurt us in 2006.

So, how do we go on? How do we step over into 2006? We do so with the same resolute faith that the Holy Spirit worked in us during 2005. This is a faith that confesses to a world in turmoil that Jesus reigns and that it is high time for all to bow before the great King. This is a faith which believes that nothing happens by chance but that all things come out of God's fatherly hand. This is a faith which is convinced that out of all of the sorrows of today God is building a new world in which righteousness will dwell and in which He will be exalted.

It is out of such a perspective that we now review the highlights in our Canadian (and American) Reformed church life during the past twelve months.

### Looking at churches and ministers

The year 2005 was a year in which the number of churches held steady at fifty-three and the membership topped 16,000. This means that ours is not a large federation by worldly standards. Neither is ours a fast growing group of churches. If anything it

seems that "steady as she goes" sums up a lot of what is happening among us.

And that has both its positive and negative sides. Positively, it means that church life is generally stable and most churches are doing well. Negatively, it means that there is still much work to do. There can be no resting on laurels as long as sin constantly threatens us and we live in a society that loves darkness more than light. Thankful for what we have received in Christ our Saviour, we must forge ahead filled with zeal for the Lord and his great Name.

### The churches in the west

The last time that we did this review we moved from east to west. This time in fairness and for variety's sake we shall move from west to east. On the west coast of Canada and the USA one finds twelve of our churches. Up north in the Bulkley Valley, the church at Houston remains vacant after the departure of the Rev. D. Poppe. Its past track record as a great congregation for moulding new pastors will no doubt stand it in good stead as it searches for a new preacher and teacher. In the same area the church at Smithers continues to work on plans for a new church building.

The church at Smithers, as the calling church for native mission work in Fort Babine, was also gladdened by the news that the



Rev. C. Macleod of Scotland had accepted the call to be its new missionary. Personally, I think that it is a most exciting thing to see our ministerial ranks becoming more ethnically diverse. It's a living testimony to the catholic character of the church of our Lord.

Further south in another valley, the Fraser, things were also in flux. The church at Cloverdale received a new pastor to go with its new building in the person of the Rev. Th.E. Lodder.

Next door in Langley something new happened. With the arrival of the Rev. W.L. Bredenhof and his family, this church became the first in the federation to have two pastors serving the pastoral needs of one congregation. In the distant past the church at Burlington also had two pastors but then that congregation was divided into two wards. In Langley the decision was made to keep the congregation united.

Next door the church at Aldergrove remains vacant and, at the moment that this is being written, is awaiting word from the Rev. E. Kampen as to whether or not he will accept their call.

Further east the church at Yarrow received a new pastor in the person of the Rev. C. Bouwman who came from Australia. Perhaps that word "new" needs to be qualified as he is not an entirely new face, having served previously next door in the church at Chilliwack.

Speaking of Chilliwack, its minister Rev. M.H. Van Luik has been granted a sabbatical for the first half of 2006 in order that he can finish his M. Th. dissertation. We wish him, as well as the Rev. J.P. Van Vliet of Surrey who is also continuing his studies, every success.

Crossing the Rocky Mountains we come to Alberta. In the south of that province, the church at Coaldale received Rev. D. Poppe as its new pastor. In Taber, the church remains vacant but not idle as calls are being extended in the hope that their pastoral needs will soon be met.

In Calgary, the church was gladdened to see that its vacancy would soon be over. The Rev. J.P. Kalkman accepted its call. For those who do not know him, he had received and accepted a call to serve the RCUS church in Menno, South Dakota, but visa difficulties prevented him from taking up his work. As a result, he became eligible for call and Calgary now hopes to be blessed by his ministry.

Heading north, we come to Edmonton where everything seems to be going well in the three churches. One of the pastors, the Rev. R. Aasman, was on the first half of his sabbatical during the summer months. Next year, the Lord willing, he hopes to experience the second half.

Traveling further north, we come to Neerlandia where a new face graces the pulpit in the person of the Rev. J.D. Louwerse. Having moved from the west to the east some years ago, he has moved back to the west. And that's not all, for he now has the distinction of serving the Canadian Reformed church (CanRC) that is closest to the Arctic Circle.

From Alberta, we move on to Manitoba. In that province all of the churches have pastors. In Winnipeg, the pastor of the Grace church, the Rev. K. Jonker, received some time off to deal with personal health issues. He is currently trying to get back into the saddle and we wish him well. Next door, in the Redeemer church the Rev. T.G. Van

## Church News

Accepted the call to Orangeville, Ontario and declined the call to Aldergrove, British Columbia:

**Rev. E. Kampen**  
of Langley (Willoughby Heights)  
British Columbia.

Called by the church of Houston, British Columbia:

**Rev. C. Vermeulen**  
of Elora, Ontario.

Accepted the call to Brampton, Ontario:

**Rev. M.H. Luik**  
of Chilliwack, British Columbia.

### Appointment of new treasurer for Regional Synod West

Mr. John Moedt  
5308 - 52 Street  
Taber, AB T1G 1M1  
Phone: 403-223-3103  
Email: emoedt@telus.net

Raalte is hoping to take a lengthy study leave to pursue his doctorate.

Going south, we come to the churches in Carman. Carman East, which had been vacant after the departure of the Rev. J. Moesker for Vernon, received a new pastor, the Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer. By now he has probably made good progress on his welcome visits.

Crossing the line and going quite a ways south and west, we come to church at Denver. 2005 saw a decrease in membership as well as some earnest soul searching about its continued viability. This resulted in a new determination not to fold but to grow the church there. May the Lord bless your plans!





## The churches in the east

Continuing our journey from west to east, we come to Ontario, where most of our churches are situated. Stopping at Orangeville, we note that although this church remains vacant, attempts are being made to fill the vacancy. Just as the church at Aldergrove is waiting for the Rev. E. Kampen to make a decision about its call, so this church is waiting on him for the same reason.

Proceeding somewhat southeast we come to Canada's largest city, Toronto. The church there moved into a new building. After quite some time of planning, searching, dealing with bureaucrats, and living in temporary quarters, it could finally enjoy its new home. And what a home it is! Having been there on the official opening day (as a son of this congregation), I was very impressed with the layout, the space, the colours, and the enthusiasm of the members who put their shoulders under such a huge task. To get an idea of what it looks like, visit the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church website.

Close to Toronto is Brampton, and it too is vacant. The Rev. B.J. Berends reached the age of sixty-five years and decided that it was time to leave the active ministry and to retire to the Fraser Valley in BC. Meanwhile, Brampton church is busy searching for his replacement.

Not far away is the town of Fergus, where two of our churches are located. The church at Fergus North received a pastor in 2005 with the arrival of the Rev. W. Geurts. Meanwhile, the church at Fergus South became vacant with

the departure of Rev. J.D. Louwse and is seeking a new pastor.

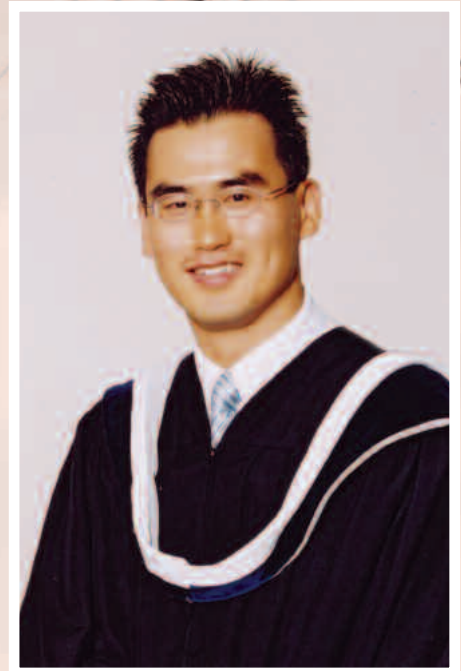
In the Burlington area, the Fellowship Church rented new facilities and decided to avail itself of the services of Rev. J.L. van Popta on a part time basis. The Flamborough church received a setback with regard to its property for a new building and continues to share the Waterdown building.

Moving on to Hamilton, we come to another vacant congregation. There too the work of calling is on the agenda as they look for a new pastor to replace the Rev. Cl. Stam. Almost next door in Lincoln, the same situation prevails as this church is vacant too. The minister of the Ancaster church, Rev. G.P. van Popta, enjoyed a well deserved sabbatical for part of the year and is now back at work. Close by, the Rockway church changed its name and is now officially called Spring Creek. News has reached me living in the far west that they too occupy, or are about to occupy, a beautiful new church building but I have not yet had this confirmed. Perhaps in due time confirmation will arrive as some pictures and a write-up find their way into this magazine.

Well, that brings my west to east review dealing with churches and ministers to a close. No doubt some highlights have been missed; however, the gift of omniscience is not one that I possess, so please bear with my oversights and contact me about any glaring omissions.

## The Theological College in Hamilton

One thing that became painfully obvious as we reviewed events in the churches during 2005 is the fact that a considerable number remain vacant. At present



*Graduate Dong Woo Oh*

the vacancy rate in our churches continues to hover just below 20%. What this means is that the need for ministers remains great.

Yes, and that brings us naturally to the Theological College (By the way, I wrote earlier and I still think that it needs a proper name and not a generic one. Please forward any and all suggestions to the Board of Governors.) In many and various ways this institution continues to be a real blessing to our churches. The fact that the churches are experiencing a time of peace and harmony, that there is such a good working relationship between the colleagues, and that there is a common commitment to the Reformed faith, has much to do with the College and the quality of its training over the years.

The past year saw the graduation of only one student. Br. Dong Woo Oh hails from Korea. Currently he is in Smithers where he is temporarily helping out in the native mission work. Thankfully, while there was only one graduate, three new students could be



admitted. This brings the total number of students studying at the College to seventeen. While not all of these students will be entering into the ministry of the CanRC, those that will should help to alleviate the shortage somewhat. Overall, however, the shortage will remain into the foreseeable future.

Therefore, parents encourage your sons and churches encourage your young men. In addition, churches that currently have pastors would do well to cherish them and pray that the Lord blesses them with continued good health. Oh, and you pastors, take good care of yourselves!

During 2005 the faculty at the College was up to full strength for the first time in a while. Prof. A.J. de Visser, the newest faculty member, continues to adjust both to his new academic and cultural surroundings. Hopefully his wife and children are also adapting well to life in Canada.

In addition to teaching a full load, Prof. G.H. Visscher continues to make progress in the writing of his Ph.D. thesis for McMaster University. No doubt both he and his family will be relieved when that onerous task is done. Prof. C. Van Dam has not only been teaching regularly but he has also been traveling extensively to South Africa, Cyprus, and other places. Prof. N.H. Gootjes, who has stayed closer to home, has been preparing himself to take over as principal for the next three years.

On a different but related topic, Prof. and Mrs. J. de Jong commemorated a twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Ordinarily such a milestone merits much celebration and thankfulness; however, the medical condition of Dr. de Jong added a real note of sadness to the festivities. It

underlines a continued need to pray for him, his wife Margaret, and their children, as they deal daily with the brokenness of life. Prayerful consideration should also be given to the widows of past professors, namely Sr. Deddens in The Netherlands and Sr. Faber in Hamilton.

### Ecumenical relations

A brief look at any of the recent Acts of General Synod soon reveals that our churches are busy pursuing ecumenical relations with other Reformed and Presbyterian churches near and far. This was no different in 2005. The various committees appointed to deal with unity talks with the United Reformed Churches of North America (URCNA) had a number of meetings. Delegates from our churches were dispatched to the major assemblies of sister churches in The Netherlands, South Africa, and the USA.

2005 also witnessed the coming together of those churches that are members of the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC). This time the gathering took place in Pretoria, South Africa. Our churches were officially represented by Elder H. Hoogstra and the Rev. C. VanSpronsen. The latter is also the secretary of the Conference. Also present at this meeting were Prof. Dr. A.J. de Visser who was one of the speakers and Elder H.A. Berends who serves as treasurer of the ICRC.

### The Foundation for Superannuation

Turning to a totally new but related subject, this review may also be a good place to introduce our readers to the existence of the Foundation for Superannuation.

As the name suggests, this has to do with retirement, and specifically it has to do with the retirement of ministers and professors in our churches.

How does it work? Well, the Board of the Foundation is composed of the members of the church councils of Cloverdale and Langley. This Board in turn has appointed a treasurer and an Administrative Committee. All the churches in our federation, as well as the Theological College, are eligible for membership and at present there is 100% participation. The member churches/college in turn are assessed using a special formula. The monies assessed and collected go into a special fund.

Should a church/college be faced with the retirement or permanent disability of its minister/professor, it notifies the treasurer of the Foundation and he receives approval to pay an annual fee to the church/college supporting such a minister. The fee paid out varies depending on whether the minister/professor is married or widowed. It also pays out to the church/college various sums if there are minister's or professor's widows, dependents, or orphans.

In the year 2005 the amount of monies that the Foundation paid out to its member churches/college increased by 50%. This increase was funded by a combination of increasing the assessments and dipping into the investments of the Foundation.

It is in this way that the churches are assisted as they take care of the needs of their superannuated servants and their families. For more information, there is a website that you can consult. It is [www.superannuation.ca](http://www.superannuation.ca).







## Home mission

There are many indications that the churches are becoming increasingly active in the work of evangelism or home mission. In many places evangelism committees are busy looking for opportunities and stimulating God's people to let their light shine. Women's Bible studies, Saturday Bible camps, Vacation Bible Schools, literature distribution, prison ministry, children's summer camps, visitation at seniors homes, and special events to which the community at large is invited are often the order of the day.

Streetlight Ministries is a special project of the Ancaster church, as well as members of surrounding churches. Richard Bultje as the full-time worker continues to lead the charge. He is being assisted these days by the Rev. C. Bosch. Plans to call a full-time minister to this work as well appear to be on hold. Perhaps once the ministerial shortage abates and finances allow, it will be revived. In the meantime, Br. Bultje and Rev. Bosch have a large and

able group of volunteers who they can call on for this inner city work.

The church at Toronto has formed a unique partnership with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) with a view to bringing the gospel to the Portuguese population in the Toronto area. The Rev. J. Barros spearheads this work.

The church at Owen Sound has been busy for a number of years already supporting the work done by the Reformed Churches in Quebec. In particular it has developed close ties with the congregation of St. George de Beauce and its pastor, the Rev. P. Bedard. It may also be mentioned that many of our churches hold collections both for these churches, as well as for their theological training centre called the Farel Institute.

Urban Mission, as it is often called, is a special work being done by the churches of Cloverdale and Langley among the Chinese population of the greater Vancouver area. Rev. F. Dong continues to serve as the pastor and home missionary of what is called the Chinese Reformed Church (un-instituted). As such the numbers are growing and he is

currently preparing eight attendees for profession of faith. There are also several elders in training.

Plans are also underway to employ Sr. Maple Zeng, who has completed her course of study at the Theological College. Her task description involves the translation of material from English into Chinese, editing material for the website, and assisting Rev. Dong in various ways.

Recently Rev. Dong completed a tour of the churches in western Canada. During that tour he shared with many church members some new initiatives that are being worked on. These initiatives, which can not be discussed here in the public press, were greeted with much enthusiasm and support.

Mention has already been made of the native mission in the Smithers area and the fact that Rev. Macleod has accepted the call extended to him. Needless to say, it will take some time before he arrives in Canada, undergoes a colloquium, and can begin his work in earnest; however, it is to be hoped that as the summer months come around he will be knee deep in the work.





## Summer camps

The highlight of the year took place in Owen Sound, Ontario, where Campfire! opened its new lodge and camping facilities. Although I have not been there, I have seen the plans for the site, as well as pictures of the new building, and they are impressive. If all unfolds as planned then here is a camp that should serve the children of both church and community well for many years.

In BC Camp Stepping Stones also has plans to move into a permanent site. During the summer the road into the new property near Deroche was widened, several cottages were renovated, and other improvements were made. Next, the large barn needs to be re-done in order to accommodate campers. Several large families have already rented the main house and surrounding facilities and more inquiries are being received. A number of trails have also been cut out of bush and mountain. All in all, much work has been done but more remains to do. Thankfully, willing hands and generous hearts are much in evidence.

## Radio broadcasting and other resources

During 2005 the work of the Voice of the Church continued in Ontario, Manitoba, and British Columbia. In BC the local committee decided to try a new format in the hope that this would be more effective and economical. In the Fraser Valley region of the same province efforts are being made to see whether or not The White Horse Inn, a popular program from the USA hosted by Dr. Michael Horton, can be broadcast.

In Ontario the weekly program "What Does the Bible Say?" is still being broadcast weekly. Apparently the Rev. C. Bosch is now also involved in fielding the questions that come in.

The work of the Reformed Evangelism Taskforce also proceeded. The *Evangel* magazine appeared regularly and makes use of many contributors. The revised Emmaus Bible Course was still being serialized in this magazine. As well, preparations are underway to produce a new edition of the sold-out booklet called "Introducing the Canadian Reformed Churches."

## Foreign mission

At present our churches continue to be involved in mission work in various parts of the world. The church at Toronto and its supporting churches have sent out the Rev. S. 't Hart and he is hard at work in Papua New Guinea. Some distance away but in the same country, a well-known Canadian and his wife, namely the Rev. Ian Wildeboer and his wife Nadia, are at work for the Australian churches in the city of Lae.

Also, the Rev. H. Versteeg, who was formerly a missionary for many years in Irian Jaya, the Indonesian half of the island of New Guinea, is still visiting the churches there on a regular basis.

The church at Hamilton and its supporting churches are actively involved in mission work in Brazil. Their missionary, the Rev. B. De Graaf, is situated in Maceio.

Meanwhile, the church at Smithville is the sending church for mission work in West Timor, Indonesia. They support the Rev. Y. Dethan who is actively spreading the gospel in that part of the world.



The church at Surrey, along with its supporting churches in western Canada, is actively involved in northeastern Brazil. Rev. K.A. Wieske lives and works in Recife. The Rev. E. Venema was living and working to the south in Japaratinga; however, due to health issues with his wife, he and his family are currently back in The Netherlands where she is receiving medical treatment. At the present time it is not known whether or not they will be returning to Brazil.

Mention should also be made of the fact that the Professors de Visser and Geertsema organized a very successful mission conference in Hamilton. This was attended by most of our missionaries and mission aid workers, as well as board members and other interested persons. From the comments that I heard, it appears that this is an effort worth repeating every few years.

## Relief work

Along with foreign mission work there are also any number of churches and organizations connected to the churches that are involved in relief work in different countries.







In Edmonton, Alberta, we find the headquarters of the Anak-Anak Terang – Children of Light. This organization is heavily involved in supporting the cause of Christian education in West Timor.

In Burlington, Ontario, we have the headquarters of the Canadian arm of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship which is involved in both mission and mission aid work in Africa and Asia.

In Burlington, Ontario, we also come across the headquarters of the Canadian Reformed World Relief Fund. Monies collected across the country find their way there and are then sent around the globe to support many different causes and organizations. Some of the support is of a regular nature and some of it is earmarked for disaster areas.

In Surrey, BC there is the headquarters for Mission Aid Brazil. Currently most of the support is given to support a large Christian school in Maragogi. Other projects are under consideration.

In addition, to the above support and involvement is also given to other organizations. Paul and Leslie Bartels, as well as Nathan and Kim Boersema, are working for Worldwide Christian Schools in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua respectively. Clarence and Jeanette Togeretz are

involved with the Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF) in Papua, Indonesia, where Clarence is flying into remote regions. If all goes as planned then in the near future Hugo and Erika Fuenekes may join them in working for MAF. Hugo is an aircraft mechanic and thus has valuable skills to contribute.

Not to be forgotten as well is the involvement of many of our churches in the Kits for Kids program operated by the Bible League. It provides boxes for children which are then filled with school supplies, Bibles, clothing, and personal items and shipped to poor parts of the world.

## Special needs

The needs of our special brothers and sisters also have the attention of many members. In Ontario, Anchor Home now has group homes in various places. In Alberta, the Rehoboth organization serves the needs of the handicapped. In BC, Bethesda operates many homes and services throughout the province and serves the Christian community well.

Care facilities for the elderly can also be found in every part of the country. The most common are apartments that can be rented. Intermediate and extended care beds in a Christian environment are somewhat harder to find. Much of this has to do with the special regulations that govern such homes and the extra expenses that they incur. On the whole, however, the elderly can not complain as more and more homes are being constructed.





## Christian education

The year 2005 saw most of the children in the churches being educated in one of the many Christian elementary and secondary schools throughout the country. In Hamilton, Ontario, a new and larger school could be purchased from the public system. In very short order it was decided to sell the existing building, begin a fund raiser, and buy what was offered. In Smithville, Ontario, the John Calvin School received something that it has needed for many years, namely a major upgrade and expansion.

As the one school year ended and a new one began, changes in personnel also took place. Perhaps the most noteworthy was the fact that Br. Ed VanderBoom, who had served as principal of Credo Christian High School in Langley for close to twenty-five years, decided to accept a senior position with the provincial government's Ministry of Education overseeing independent schools through BC and in China. His place was filled by promoting his faithful sidekick of many years, Br. Harry Moes.

Back in Hamilton, the Covenant Teacher's College continued to attract students for its various programs. As well, it now has a complete complement of staff members, both full-time and part-time. Efforts to become accredited by the government are ongoing.

In various places, some of our parents have opted for home schooling. This alternative has generated both discussion and disagreement. Parents who choose this route claim that it serves the

needs of their children better. Parents who disagree feel that it threatens the viability of a school system that is already under heavy financial pressure. Without getting into the fray, let it be said that the education of our children remains a parental responsibility for which every parent has to answer. At the same time parents in the church must be sensitive not only to the needs of their own family but also to the needs of others.

## Wrapping up

The year 2005 may have been a calamitous year in the affairs of the world, but for our churches it has been a good year. Freedom and opportunity abounded across the land. Peace and stability

prevailed in many of our homes. Prosperity and plenty were widely experienced. The Lord has been good to us.

Still, amidst all the benefits it is good to remember that at bottom it is all grace and more grace. Sometimes the thought creeps in that the reason we have it so good is because we are so much better or nicer or smarter. Nothing of the sort! Our plenty should make us humble and thankful. It should also motivate us to become even better stewards.

May the Lord who has spared us from so much suffering in 2005 continue to do so in 2006. And if not, rest assured that because He is our faithful and loving Father in Christ, it will still be good.





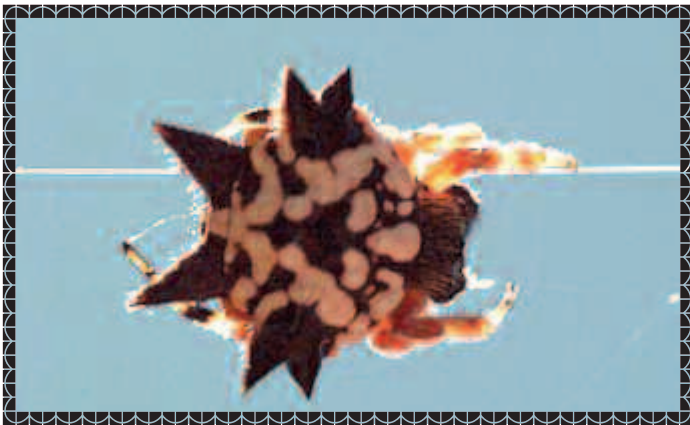
# Our Little Magazine

## Dear Aunt Betty,

Here in Armadale, Western Australia we celebrate Christmas when it is summer time. This means we spend a lot of time outdoors.

In this part of God's creation there are lots of different types of spiders in our bush. Many of these are harmless. One of the groups of spiders are called Orb spiders. These spiders make beautiful webs. Orb spiders come in all sorts of shapes and sizes. Many have very colourful markings. One of these is called the Christmas Spider. This small spider is very friendly and likes to walk on your hand. It has four small spikes on its back and has white, yellow and orange markings. Its size is no more than six centimetres long. Its shape is similar to a crab. We hope everybody will enjoy this Christmas.

From  
Travis and Neilson Bruning




*Let the children come to me,  
do not hinder them;  
for to such belongs  
the kingdom of God.*

*Mark 10:14*







*I will pour water on the thirsty land,  
and streams on the dry ground;  
I will pour out my Spirit on your offspring,  
and my blessing on your descendants.  
They will spring up like grass in a meadow,  
like poplar trees by flowing streams.  
One will say, 'I belong to the LORD';  
another will call himself by the name of Jacob;  
still another will write on his hand, 'The LORD's,'  
and will take the name Israel.*

*Isaiah 44:3-5*





# *Holiday Greetings*

from all of us  
at Premier Printing Ltd.

