



# Clarion

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*Restoring the  
Family Dinner*

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*Investing in the  
Right Funds*

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*Does God  
Hate the Sin  
but Love the  
Sinner?*

*Family Dinner. . . A thing of the past?*



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# Restoring the Family Dinner

*Now, the family dinner is more of a nostalgic image from Norman Rockwell than a modern reality.*

Only a few decades ago, the family dinner was a typical pattern in every home. Those who were around in the sixties and earlier will remember what it was like in their own neighbourhood: by late afternoon, every dad had come home from work and the streets became quiet, because every family was sitting down for at least an hour for the family dinner. Perhaps in the evening dad would go to a meeting and mom might take some of the children to music lessons, but the dinner hour was inviolable. But how times have changed! Now, the family dinner is more of a nostalgic image from Norman Rockwell than a modern reality. The whole idea somehow seems quaint today.

## Too busy

Something like the traditional family dinner does not disappear because people don't enjoy it or appreciate it. In fact, when I talk with my neighbours,

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*The vanishing of the family meal is not just sad; it is harmful to our society.*

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their unanimous conclusion is that they all enjoyed family dinners while growing up but to their dismay they don't practise it in their present family life. They really miss it. At the same time they conclude that there is nothing they can do to recapture the family dinner. Why not? People are just too busy. For most families, having an evening meal together is a scheduling nightmare.

Both parents work and have different schedules. Children are in all kinds of extracurricular programs: swimming and music lessons, ballet, sports activities,

art classes, scout meetings, etc. Teenagers have part-time jobs. TVs and computers haven't been a great help either. It is not uncommon for teenagers and younger children to pop something in the microwave and then eat their meal in their bedroom in front of the computer screen. When dad or mom comes home, they do the same, often eating their food standing over the kitchen sink. That way they can rinse their plate and cup and be done with it.

## Sociologists are worried

As Christians we should know and appreciate the value of family time together and how the dinner table is a wonderful opportunity for growing together as a family and in our relationship with God. However, secular sociologists have long agreed that the simple act of families eating and talking together promotes close relationships and positive behavioural development. Family meals promote conversation, sharing of ideas, unfolding fears and concerns, and it creates an atmosphere of belonging. This is so important for children who have so many questions, fears, and doubts about the things they experience on a daily basis. When children feel that the family dinner table is a safe place to speak and be heard, to open one's heart, then parents and siblings can be a tremendous support to one another. Here children learn to speak openly about things that they might never dare to share with their peers. The dinner table can be one of life's most effective classrooms. It is where children learn values and manners and social skills. It is where they learn to listen, to interact, and to support.

Sociologists are worried that the family bond is fading and creating a vacuum for young people. The vanishing of the family meal is not just sad; it is harmful to our society. One high school counsellor





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writes, "The busier people get and the less time they spend together as a family, the more kids feel disconnected from their families and the more problems they have. . . I see way too many kids who are depressed and who are on medication for depression – kids who have everything going for them." A professor of child development writes, "At a time when kids are under a lot of stress for a lot of different reasons, having that regular mealtime that they can count on, that their parents are there for support – that can be very helpful."

**Recent studies**

2005 produced a number of major studies by universities and family-oriented groups that presented statistical analysis connecting the demise of the family meal with problems among the youth. Research suggests that at the dinner table children learn right from wrong. A study from Columbia University informs us of the following:

Teenagers who have dinner with their families at least five times a week – when compared to teenagers who don't – are 42 percent less likely to experiment with alcohol, 59 percent less likely to smoke cigarettes, and 66 percent less likely to try marijuana. Those who experience the dinner hour are also about 40 percent more likely to get A's and B's in school.

I realize that statistics seldom give a complete and perfect picture. Nevertheless, there is an undeniable logic here: closely-knit families who share time and talk together will naturally encourage and produce children with morals and values, good work ethic, and good manners.

**The Christian home**

As Christians we know the value of the family dinner. We take to heart a passage such as Deuteronomy 6:6-7: "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

It appears, however, that even in Christian homes the family meal is becoming less common. I witness this as a pastor. I do appreciate that we live in different times and this has a serious impact on the way we live. Our college and university students can have mandatory classes that take them from early morning to late at night. Certain careers necessitate working some evenings, right through the dinner hour.

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*Family Dinner. . . A thing of the past?*

We like to give our children swimming and music lessons, and suitable times can be hard to find. These are the pressures of the modern age which are not always avoidable. At the same time, our priorities can become seriously skewed. Permitting children to take supper to their bedroom to be eaten at the computer,

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*It appears that even in Christian homes the family meal is becoming less common.*

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having TV on constantly, feeling that every kind of sports activity is the most important thing for your children, working late to accumulate more possessions, or simply not wanting to put the effort in preparing a good dinner – these are things we need to avoid or to change. We may think more money or sports is extremely important, but wouldn't our children benefit more from a good meal together complete with good conversation than going to a soccer game, for instance? We need to prioritize.

At the dinner table a family can read the Word of God and pray together. Everyone can share experiences of the day. Fears and doubts and bad experiences can be voiced. Family members have opportunity to show empathy for one another and so be supportive. Questions about morality and choices can be raised and answered. Discussions about education, careers, friends, and marriage are incredibly helpful and satisfying as a closely-knit family unit seeks to help one another in a way that causes each person to grow within the family and in relationship to God.

### **Our neighbour**

We also need to consider our society where the traditional family is in serious jeopardy. I mentioned speaking about these things with my neighbours. Many bemoan the loss of the traditional family dinner. Many see the harmful effects that result. As Christians we can be a positive example to our neighbour – both by talking about these things and by showing in our experience how it is possible to maintain this great family experience of the family dinner.



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# Investing in the Right Funds



**MATTHEW 13:52**

(Matthew 6:19-24)

How are we using the possessions and material goods the Lord has entrusted to us? In Matthew 6:19-24 Christ speaks about where we invest our treasures. Do we invest what we have in the stock market of earth or do we place our stocks and mutual funds in the economy of the kingdom of heaven?

Where I set my heart and affections is really the critical issue. "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (6:21). As a child of God I need to invest treasures in the right place. All my activities will be subservient to this one goal. If I seek the things that are above where Christ Jesus is and invest in matters pertaining to the kingdom of heaven then this is also where my heart will be. Money, wealth, and possessions will not be a hindrance but a help in furthering Christian service.

When considering treasures on earth I might be inclined to think in terms of dollars and cents, bank accounts and investments. These things are included, but there is more. The treasures of earth lie in the realm of tangible, material things. Whatever means everything to me, that is my treasure. Whatever I find of great importance, that is my treasure.

Christ cautions us not to put our heart into earthly investments no matter how needful or important they are. Earthly things do not last! Moths can put holes into your clothing, rust wrecks your vehicle, and thieves can break into your home and steal your most valuable

possessions. All earthly treasures will ultimately perish. What moths and rust do not destroy, thieves can take away. We may put aside money to be financially secure once we retire, but if the market crashes and money loses all its value, our earthly treasure goes up in smoke. A tornado can flatten our home. We can lose our job or our health very quickly. The greatest thief, taking away everything, is death. Even if I am extremely rich, at the end of my life I will die a poor man if I have not invested in the economy of heaven. My earthly treasures will be given to someone else. Earthly treasures perish, no matter how hard we try to hang on to them. But the treasures we have in Christ are so different.

When the Lord Jesus instructs us to lay up treasures in heaven, He is teaching us to look beyond the "here and now" to the glory of the new earth. By storing up treasures in heaven we learn to regard what belongs to this world with a kind of detachment that allows us to use them but not to be bound to them. The Apostle Paul makes the same point in 1 Timothy 6:17-19:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a

firm foundation for the coming age, so that they can take hold of the life that is truly life.

We invest in the kingdom of heaven and lay a good foundation for the future by our willingness to share what has been given to us by the Lord.

An hour spent visiting the sick, helping the troubled, comforting the grieving, cheering the lonely, is never lost. Providing our children with an education that is in harmony with God's Word is a commitment that absorbs large sums of money and many hours of our time. But it is an investment in the kingdom of heaven. Treasures are being laid up in heaven as we go through life right now. We invest today! Honouring the Lord with our substance and the first fruits of our increase is putting treasures in the right place. Money spent for the support of missions, to help the poor, to aid a struggling family to pay for Christian education for their children – these are investments in the economy of heaven which are never lost because they are done for Christ's sake.

Where our heart is there is our treasure. When our heart is aflame with love for Christ and for his bride we will be willing to give of our time, our talents, and our money for the edification of the church and the furtherance of God's kingdom.

May the Lord fill our hearts with wisdom and a love for Him, so that we have the discernment to make proper investments.



# Does God Hate the Sin but Love the Sinner?

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## The present climate

In the present discussions about so-called same-sex marriage, talk wanders to the matter of the Christian church's stance on homosexuality. This can give opportunity for some good reflection and discussion among us. We can talk about how we ought to treat members of our church who might have personal struggles with homosexuality, or we can discuss how we ought to present the scriptural view of the matter to our fellow citizens or to those in government over us.

Unfortunately, the church's stance on homosexuality is often forced to be reactive. Whether we want to or not, we are drawn into responding defensively to those persons who accuse the Christian church of being homophobic or bigoted. For the charge quickly flies: "I thought Christians were supposed to accept everyone in love and not judge them. Isn't that what Jesus did, after all?"

## A tidy response

When it comes to deflecting angry charges of homophobia, or just trying to articulate a scriptural stance on homosexuality, one reply is regularly heard from the mouths of Christians: "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner."<sup>1</sup> Obviously, the thinking is that if this is the principle by which God views

homosexuality, certainly the Christian church should do the same when she takes her stance on the matter.

This conveniently simple and memorable principle seems at once to have the tone of being correct: "Of course God doesn't hate sinners – that's why He gave his Son to die for them." Some have even wondered if this little saying could be found nestled somewhere in the Scriptures.

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*It is hard for us humans  
to reconcile God's hatred  
and God's love.*

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Indeed, there is truth in this saying. We know from Scripture that God is antithetically opposed to any and every sin. For example, we hear God saying, "I hate robbery and iniquity" (Isa 61:8); and, "I hate divorce" (Mal 2:16). Proverbs 6 even lists six things that the Lord hates, seven that are detestable to Him: "Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood," and so on (vv 16-19). God does hate sin, for "God is light; in Him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

And again, who could dispute that God loves sinners? The well-

known John 3:16 is a shining summary of this scriptural truth. Our gracious God wants that no sinner should perish, but that everyone should come to repentance (2 Pet 3:9).

## Clarity from Scripture

As we evaluate this saying then, Scripture does tell us that God views sin on the one hand and those who *commit* sin on the other, in a different way. In this sense the saying has a small element of truth, but we must quickly say more. For not only is this saying not found in the Bible, it also suggests something that is contrary to the Bible's teaching. We know from the Bible that God *does* hate the sinner. His hatred of sin is so perfect that He cannot show love to those who reject his ways.

Especially the Psalms clearly illustrate that God's wrath rests on the sinner. Setting the tone for the whole Psalter, we read in Psalm 1:5, "The wicked will not stand in the judgment." And this thought is continued in Psalm 5, where it is said of God, "The arrogant cannot stand in your presence; you hate all who do wrong" (v 5). Psalm 11 is more graphic, "The Lord examines the righteous, but the wicked and those who love violence his soul hates. On the wicked He will rain fiery coals and burning sulfur; a scorching wind will be their lot" (vv



5-6). Here there can be no air-brushing away of God's fierce hate for sin and sinners alike.

The New Testament speaks similarly. Out of his intense hatred for sin, God shows fury against it: "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men" (Rom 1:18). Moreover, God has righteous anger for the unrepentant sinner as well: "Whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

While we – thankfully! – cannot dispute that God has love for sinners, we also cannot say that God has *only* love for sinners. The Scriptures are clear that He also has wrath for the wicked and even hatred for those who do not do his will.

### **"Problem and solution"**

The problem we might have in seeing through the error of this cliché is that it is hard for us humans to reconcile God's hatred and God's love. Scripture clearly speaks of God having both, yet in our minds, hatred (and that includes its expression in wrath) and love for the same object are usually mutually exclusive. As a trite example, if I love lasagne, I can hardly hate it at the same time. So then, the saying "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner" sounds correct because it puts God's love and God's hatred for humans as sinners into tidy compartments, without denying either of them.

But because of the greatness of God's attributes (or perfections), both love and hate for the same object can truly be expressed by Him, and without contradiction. That is, God can be justly wrathful against fallen man, while at the same time God can be filled with love for fallen man. Love and hate exist in God, side by side.

We must acknowledge our human limitations when we search

for a "solution" to this tension in God. As with some other sticky theological "problems," here we can only humbly repeat what Scripture says, as we have done above. And in this case we can look to Golgotha for the marvelous way that this love and hatred of God is worked out.

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### *Let the Christian church never give a false sense of security to those around her.*

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For it was at the cross that God showed the great depth of his just hatred for sin. He showed this hatred in cutting off his own Son (Matt 27:46) and in laying upon his Son the eternal curse that we deserved for our sin (Gal 3:13). But this intense wrath of God against Christ shows us at the very same time the great depth of God's love for sinners. The Father, though He was full of righteous wrath against both sin and sinners, still could love mankind so much that He chose to reject his Son in its place. Through his hatred for his Son on the cross, the Father accepts those who believe in Him back into loving fellowship.

### **Our response**

A tidy cliché quickly uttered will not help the Christian church in dealing with members who struggle with homosexuality. Nor will it help us in properly responding to those who attack the church for how we (allegedly) hate and mistreat homosexuals. Rather, we need to respond with the clear words that Scripture gives to us.

That is, we must say that if sinners do not repent, God's wrath remains heavy upon them. Even we who are members of the church are sinners and therefore of ourselves we all stand as "hated by God." But if we repent from our sins and

believe in Jesus Christ, God gives us abundant love, and He forgives us completely.

Today the accusation of being judgmental is often thrown at Christians. And it is true, are we not being judgmental of those who are homosexual when we call them names or share crude jokes about them? We might try to excuse our unchristian words by saying homosexuals deserve it because they are such vile sinners, or because homosexual sin is somehow worse than anything we might do. But we must not be judgmental, for this is not applying the same standard of judgment to others as to ourselves (cf. Matt 7:1-5). Again, let us remember that we are *all* vile sinners, and that all of us are called to repent every day from our disobedience.

We must not be judgmental of homosexuals nor of any other sinners, but we must judge, as Scripture tells us to do. In the humility that comes from first receiving undeserved mercy ourselves, we are called to point out sin wherever we see it and, as we have opportunity, we must not be shy in calling others to repentance. Pointing out sin, we then can also point out the path of forgiveness, opened through the cross.

Let the Christian church never give a false sense of security to those around her by repeating as gospel truth, "God hates your sin, but God loves you." Rather, let us say, "God hates your sin, and God hates it so much He gave his own Son to die for it. Yes, He gave his Son in love, so that if you repent and put your faith in Him, you will be saved from the deserved fires of eternal death."

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<sup>1</sup> On this saying and a helpful response to it, see D.A. Carson, *The Difficult Doctrine of the Love of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2000), pp. 68-69.

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## Knowing God: Living the Gospel

### Lesson 3: Serving your *Oikos*

In the first two installments we introduced the *oikos* principle of evangelism and showed how you could discover your own *oikos* or network of relationships that God has given you. In addition, we showed how you could pray for your *oikos*. In this installment we want to talk about serving your *oikos*.

#### Experiences of prayer

Before you talk about serving your *oikos*, spend some time reflecting on your experiences of prayer. Reflect on whether it was easy to pray in a disciplined way each day, whether you saw any answers to prayer, and whether you were inspired to do anything as a result of your prayer for members in your *oikos*. Be aware that this is a bit of a touchy area because it will expose your own prayer life or lack of it. I know I don't always pray in as disciplined a way as I should. I'm sure other members in your group have a similar experience. This will spill over in how you pray for the members of your *oikos*. The more disciplined you are in your regular prayer life, the more disciplined you probably will be in praying for your *oikos*. The less disciplined you are in your regular prayer life, the less disciplined you probably will be in praying for your *oikos*. It may be good to come right out and say this, so that everyone knows they are in the same boat.

Yet, be sure to stress the importance of praying for your *oikos*. My own experience in this regard – as I mentioned last time – is that the less I pray for my *oikos*, the less I will witness; the more I pray for my *oikos*, the more I will witness. There is clearly a direct connection between prayer and evangelism.

#### Serving others

Once you have prayed for members in your *oikos*, you may think the next step is to talk with people in your network of relationships about the gospel. If this opportunity presents itself, be sure to do so. But usually this is not the way things go. After prayer comes service. Before we begin to talk about the gospel, we should embody this gospel with loving acts of service and kindness. Be sure to stress that this service is a no-strings attached approach. You do not love and serve others simply so you can talk about the gospel. Nor do you love and serve others as a means to bring them into your local congregation. Loving and serving others is an end in itself, not a means to an end. This means that if your love and service of others does not lead to your being able to speak about the gospel as much as you would like, you do not then decide to stop loving and serving them. That would be an awful misrepresentation of the gospel!

Once you have stressed this, speaks about the servant heart and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Emphasize that Jesus came not to be served, but to serve, and He challenges us to do the same. Illustrate this with the story of the foot washing recorded in John 13:1-17.

#### Serving your *oikos*:

Now take some time and reflect on how you can best serve your *oikos*. Have the members of the group think about the different needs of the members of their *oikos* and how they could perhaps meet these needs. List these needs and possibilities on a whiteboard. Then encourage each other to put meeting these needs into practice by praying and doing.

End the session by encouraging the members of your group to read through various passages from the Scriptures that speak about servant love and that will be helpful in motivating them to acts of love and kindness. These passages include Isaiah 42:1-4, Matthew 20:20-28, Luke 16:10-15, Romans 1:1-6, Romans 12:1-21, 1 Corinthians 13, and Philippians 2:1-13.

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 "Building stepping stones to faith." Thanks for reading.





N.H. Gootjes

## Fall 2005

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After the summer break the work at the Theological College resumed in September. The College Evening was again a high point for several reasons. First of all, the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred to our Korean student, Mr. Dong-Woo Oh. It was the result of much hard and tenacious study. When I picked him up from the airport in Toronto four years ago we spoke Korean, as that was easier. However, when he addressed the audience in the auditorium of Redeemer College, he did so in proper English. He even started off with a funny observation on eating "droppies," where he held up a mirror to us all. It was also good that his parents could be present to witness the event. After the graduation, he departed for Smithers, BC, where he is currently working in the ministry among the native people in Fort Babine.

Another important feature of the College Evening was the speech presented by Dr. de Visser, entitled "A Vision for Evangelism: A Look at the Missional Church Movement." In this address he presented and evaluated this new approach to evangelism. With his background and specialization, Dr. de Visser will be able to contribute a great deal to the training for the ministry at the Theological College and to the churches in general.

Following the College Evening, we returned to the regular work of teaching and studying. Three new students were enrolled in the

Master of Divinity program. In the order of distance, the one who travelled the farthest is Rodney Vermeulen. With his family he came all the way from Australia. Ken Bergsma comes to us from Fergus, where he still lives with his family. And the third is someone from our own backyard, Ryan De Jonge from Ancaster. We are grateful for the steady flow of new students; there is no doubt that the churches need them.

One student did not return: Patric Wic, who had come to us from the Sudan. In his estimation, it would not have been responsible for him to leave his family behind. We acquiesce to his decision, though with regret.

In the meantime, the teaching at the College has resumed and classes are held regularly. It is hard to say much about the classroom interaction between teachers and students, but the heart of the work at the Theological College is in the day to day instruction, discussion, and testing.

Dr. de Visser had received an invitation to present a speech at the meeting of the ICRC which was held in South Africa. In his speech he dealt with the Lordship of Christ in the life of the believer. The full text of this speech will eventually be published in the Proceedings of the 2005 International Conference of Reformed Churches.

Special events provided all those who work and study at the Theological College with food for thought. Dr. N.D. Kloosterman,



*Dr. N.D. Kloosterman*

professor of Ethics and New Testament at Mid America Reformed Seminary, gave a lecture for staff and students entitled "Law and Gospel in Protestant Confessions." He argued that the Reformation recognized that the law and the gospel are not opposites. Rather, the confessions show that the gospel leads to the law, and the law in turn leads us back to the gospel. Dr. Kloosterman's speech was a refreshing immersion in Reformed theology, still useful for preachers today.

Another special occasion was the presentation by Dr. W. Helder, who has done so much for the rhyming of the Psalms in our *Book of Praise*. With many examples, he presented to the student body the ongoing work for the proper phrasing of the Psalms we sing. This speech, too, was greatly appreciated. It increased our appreciation for much of the work that is done behind the scenes, which makes it possible for us in our own time to praise God by singing the Psalms in church, school, and at home.

We are thankful to the Lord that the work at the Theological College is continuing and we hope that the study and teaching may benefit the churches.

# Official Inauguration of the Church Building of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto

September 10, 2005 marked the official opening of the new church building of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto. Invitations had been sent out, last minute touch-ups had been completed, and a program of presentation and fellowship had been organized. These preparations were all rewarded with a large attendance of an enthusiastic crowd of present and former members and of curious friends and neighbours.

Rev. den Hollander began the ceremony by reading from Genesis 28:10–22 and focused on: "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God." This phrase expresses the heartfelt appreciation felt by the congregation, council, and building committee. After many years of preparation and negotiations, after countless hours of volunteer work by



*Outside patio with the "younger generation"*



*Close up of the main entrance*

young and old, men and women, skilled and unskilled, and after many prayers in the midst of those who worked on the project and those who could not because of age or infirmities, a new place of worship has finally been completed. This project is a reflection of a commitment by everyone involved.

More significantly, Rev. den Hollander continued, the phrase is appropriate because the focus is on the meeting of God and man in this building: teaching, studying, preaching. It is not the building that is important but the message that is proclaimed in it, the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the gospel message that is awesome as it goes out from this

building to both the congregation and the community.

During the program a number of people had an opportunity to speak. Mr. Ed Veenstra, chairman of the building committee, expressed his appreciation for the co-operation of the volunteers, the congregation, the architect Mr. Glenn Reinders, the site supervisor Mr. Ken Matthews, the council, and countless others. Although there were many willing hands, it was God's hand that had directed this project and its outcome. Mr. Hank Kampen presented a plaque to the council as the formal hand-over of the building from the building committee to the congregation. Inscribed on the plaque is the text, "Unless the Lord



builds the house, its builders labour in vain" (Ps 127:1).

Mr. Vito Spatafora, the local member of the municipal council, noted the fact that the new building is located at the headwaters of several tributaries and thus is an appropriate location for the gospel going out. Mr. D. Hawkey, president of the construction firm, expressed his appreciation for the opportunity of working together and in this way enabling his firm to live by their motto: "Building together under his direction to accomplish his purpose." Our former pastor and teacher Rev. J. Mulder noted how we had been richly blessed by our Father in Heaven. Former member Mr. Art Blokhuis reflected poetically on "This Place" and "Its Purpose."

Interspersed were several musical interludes. The choir gave voice to songs of thankfulness, our organist Mrs. Annett Selles filled the auditorium with an improvisation on Psalm 65, pianist Mrs. Sarah Bosch soloed on the new grand piano and was then joined by Mrs.



*Main auditorium*

Betty Jansen on the organ for "Thanks be to God" by Handel. The organ is still the one originally built by Br. Hugo Pilon some years ago, although the presenting face has been changed.

We were also pleased to have in our midst our Korean brothers and sisters from the Covenant Independent Reformed Church. They regularly use our facilities on Sundays and bring a rich musical passion, which they shared with us in two songs of praise to our triune God. The children of Rev. Barros, of

our mission work among the Portuguese, capped the programme with a musical offering based on 1 Corinthians 13. After closing prayer by the vice-chairman of the consistory we all sang "O Canada" in recognition of the opportunities the Lord has given us in this land for serving and worshipping Him in freedom.

The formal part of the day was followed by an extensive time for fellowship, refreshments, and touring. Members new and old fondly reminisced about the years that had brought us to this occasion, about the buildings we had worshipped in before, about the challenges we had experienced, and about the ever present care of the Lord. It was a time for looking back and also for looking forward as we are now in a new community and have a congregation of many different gifts and backgrounds. It was a time for giving the building committee a quiet word of appreciation for a job well done. It was a time for humble thanksgiving to our heavenly Father. "Come and see what God has done, how awesome his works in man's behalf!" (Ps 66:5)



*Fellowship Hall with congregation and guests*

**Press Release of the meeting of the combined committees of the CanRC and URCNA to propose a common church order**

Held November 1-3, 2005 at the Ebenezer Canadian Reformed Church at Burlington, ON

Present were: Dr. N. Kloosterman, Rev. W. Pols, Rev. R. Scheuers, Rev. R. Sikkema, and Mr. H. Van Gorp representing the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA) and Dr. G. Nederveen, Mr. G.J. Nordeman, Rev. J. VanWoudenberg, and Dr. A. Witten of the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC). Dr. Kloosterman opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer.

The minutes of the August 8-10, 2005 meeting were reviewed and approved after some minor corrections were noted. The agenda and timetable for the next three days were circulated and adopted.

Correspondence was received from URCNA and CanRC consistories. The committee is encouraged by and thankful for the comments and reactions to some of the proposals formulated. It is an indication of the seriousness with which the work of the committee is being studied and assessed by the churches. It has also challenged the committee to revisit various matters and revise certain articles based on insights communicated to us in this way. Responding to questions and correspondence may not always be possible because the committee does not see its work to this point as a finished product as it remains open to further evaluation and revision.

A review of the articles thus far adopted resulted in a few modifications. The last paragraph in the article regarding the weekly worship services was modified to read as follows: "At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the

Word of God as summarized in the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence, and may give such attention also to the Belgic Confession and the Canons of Dort."

Some thought was given to professional language editing of the proposed church order for consistency of language and style. A qualified volunteer for this work will be sought in the church community. A start will be made to sequence and number the articles completed thus far.

A number of items of old business were handled. The articles on who can preach in the churches and admission to the Lord's Supper were briefly discussed but more study is required. It was decided to leave these matters for now and deal with them at the next meeting.

Under new business, a start was made with the section dealing with ecclesiastical discipline. The first article in this section was formulated as follows: "Ecclesiastical discipline, one of the keys of the kingdom of heaven, is spiritual in nature and exempts no one from trial or punishment by the civil authorities. The purpose of ecclesiastical discipline is that God may be glorified, that the sinner may be reconciled with God, the church, and one's neighbor, and that offense may be removed from the church of Christ."

In the same section consensus was also reached on articles dealing with consistory involvement, the reconciliation of a member, the discipline of a communicant and non-communicant member, and the readmission of an excommunicated person. The following will be proposed:

When a member's sin in doctrine or life is of a private character and does not give public offense, the rule prescribed by Christ in Matthew 18 shall be followed. A private

sin from which the sinner repents after having been admonished by one person alone, or subsequently in the presence of two or three witnesses, shall not be brought to the consistory.

When a member does not repent after having been admonished in the presence of two or three witnesses concerning a private sin, or when it is alleged that a member has committed a public sin, the matter shall be brought to the consistory. Only then shall the consistory deal with any alleged sin in doctrine or life.

The reconciliation of a member, whose sin is public or has become public because the admonition of the church was despised, shall take place only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and in a manner which best promotes the edification of the church. For the welfare of the congregation and the sinner, the consistory shall determine if the member shall be required to confess the sin publicly.

A communicant or a mature non-communicant member whose sin is properly made known to the consistory, and who then obstinately rejects the repeated and loving admonitions of the consistory, shall, in agreement with the Word of God, be subject to church discipline according to the following stages:

A. Silent Discipline: a member who persists in sin shall be suspended by the consistory from all the privileges of church membership, including using the sacraments and voting at congregational meetings. Such suspension shall not be made public by the consistory.



- B. Public Discipline: if the silent discipline and subsequent admonitions do not bring about repentance, and before proceeding to excommunication, the sinner's impenitence shall be made known to the congregation by indicating both the member's offense and failure to heed repeated admonitions, so that the congregation may speak with and pray for this member. Public discipline shall be done with the use of the synodically approved liturgical form, in three steps, the interval between which shall be left to the discretion of the consistory.
1. In the first step, the name of the sinner shall ordinarily not be mentioned so that he may be somewhat spared.
  2. In the second step, the consistory shall seek the concurring advice of classis before proceeding, whereupon the member's name shall be mentioned to the congregation.
  3. In the third step, the congregation shall be informed that unless there is repentance, the member will be excommunicated from the church on a specified date.
- C. Excommunication: if these steps of public discipline do not bring about repentance, the consistory shall excommunicate the impenitent sinner, using the synodically approved liturgical form.

When someone who has been excommunicated repents and desires to be readmitted into the communion with Christ and His church, the congregation shall be so informed. If no lawful objections are presented

to the consistory within one month after the public announcement, readmission into the church with all its privileges shall take place, using the synodically approved liturgical form. One who has been excommunicated as a non-communicant member shall be readmitted only upon public profession of faith.

An article dealing with the suspension and deposition of office bearers was agreed on:

When a minister, elder, or deacon has committed a public or grievous sin, or when he refuses to heed the admonitions of the consistory, he shall be temporarily suspended from the duties of his office by his own consistory with the concurring advice of the consistories of the two neighboring churches.

Included in the sins requiring suspension from office are these: false doctrine or heresy, schism, open blasphemy, simony, desertion of office or intrusion upon that of another, perjury, adultery, fornication, theft, acts of violence, habitual drunkenness, brawling, unjustly enriching oneself; in short, all sins which would warrant the discipline of any other member.

Should he harden himself in his sin, or when the sin committed is of such a nature that he cannot effectively continue in office, he shall be deposed from his office by his consistory. In each case the concurring advice of classis is required, and in the case of a minister the concurring advice of the deputies of regional synod is also required.

Suspension or deposition in itself does not necessarily require further ecclesiastical discipline.

A man once deposed may be reconsidered for office only after a sufficient period of time,

only upon evidence of genuine repentance, and only through the regular procedure for entering office.

Regarding the article on mutual censure it was agreed that: "The minister(s), elders, and deacons shall conduct mutual censure regularly, whereby they exhort one another in a loving and edifying manner regarding the discharge of their offices."

The article dealing with Psalms and Hymns received considerable attention. After extensive discussion of the principle of singing only synodically approved songs in the worship services, it was decided to leave this article for a future meeting and reflect on it some more.

It was also decided not to include an article on indigent members (Dort Art 83) since such an article is not currently in either the CanRC or URCNA church orders and the concept is already covered in the article regarding the task of the deacons.

Two brothers were assigned the task to formulate articles on the definition, accountability, and duties of the missionary and the respective tasks of missions and evangelism.

The next meeting will take place D.V. March 14-16, 2006, in the Grand Rapids area.

The press release was read and approved for publication.

In his closing remarks Dr. Kloosterman stated his thankfulness to the Lord for the brotherly manner in which the committee again could proceed with its work. Appreciation was also expressed to the host church for its hospitality and service. A considerable amount of work could be accomplished. After Scripture reading and closing prayer by Dr. Kloosterman, the meeting was adjourned.

*For the Committee,  
Gerard J. Nordeman*

## **Press Release of the Combined Meeting of the Board and Committee of Administration for the Inter-League Publication Board, November 28, 2005**

The chairman, Don Bos, opened the meeting with Scripture reading and prayer. He welcomed all present, especially Betsy Kingma, who is the new liaison from the League of Women's Societies in Ontario.

### **Roll call**

For the Board: representing the League of Men's Societies in Ontario, Don Bos and Mike Vandeburgt. Representing the League of Women's Societies in Ontario, Mary DeBoer, Betsy Kingma, and Joni Vis. For the Committee of Administration (C of A): Paul DeBoer, Cathy Jonker, Bernie Kottelenberg, Annette Nobel, and Theresa Westrik. Debbie Swaving was absent with notification.

The agenda was established.

### **Marketing report**

Theresa Westrik gave an update on marketing efforts made since our last combined meeting in May, 2005. The "ILPB Direct" book club, which is offered through the local representatives, is up and running. The C of A will continue to publicize its existence among the churches.

Theresa presented a draft information newsletter for publication in *Clarion*. Some changes were suggested and the revised newsletter will be published when ready. There is now an alternate printer in order to keep costs in line and a new address for the ILPB.

### **Sales report**

Sales were slow earlier in the year but have improved in the fall, so overall sales are even with last year and steady. Several books have sold out and need to be reprinted.

Sales figures from the Men's and Women's League Days were received.

### **Progress report**

Cathy Jonker reported on the progress of the twelve books being worked on. Discussion was held about means that could possibly be utilized to scan text cost effectively for reprints of older books. Sold out books will be reprinted as funds become available.

### **Financial report**

Bernie Kottelenberg presented the year-to-date Balance Sheet and Income Statement. The finances are in good order and income is steady. The last fiscal year's books were reviewed and found to be in good order. A copy of the review was passed on to the Board.

### **General**

Discussion was held as to the keeping of the archives; how accessible they are, how much should be kept, and whether backup of electronic media is required. It was determined that the archives are easily accessible and that there is sufficient backup.

The C of A requested the Board to review the possibility of reprinting books that Pro Ecclesia in Australia no longer publishes.

It was noted that presently the ILPB has no translators and would like to line some up. Anyone interested in helping out by translating from Dutch is asked to contact Cathy Jonker

(cathy.jonker@sympatico.ca, 519-928-2258).

Discussion was held about the format of the books, and the C of A will make a recommendation to the Board for possible changes.

The Board informed the C of A about considerations being made for books to publish.

Question Period was held. Bernie Kottelenberg, Joni Vis, and Don Bos were thanked for their work for the ILPB. The press release was approved. Paul DeBoer closed the meeting with prayer.

## **Press Release of the Joint Meetings of the Standing Committee for the Publication of the Book of Praise and the Song Book Committee of the URCNA**

Our committees met together November 10-11 in Jenison, Michigan, at the Bethel United Reformed Church. Rev. Douwe Agema, Mr. Chris Nobels, Dr. Christine van Halen-Faber, and Rev. George van Popta were present from the *Book of Praise* Committee, while Mrs. Daphne Jasperse, Rev. Ed Knott, Rev. Rand Lankheet, Rev. Dennis Royall, Rev. Derrick VanderMeulen, Rev. Allen VanderPol and Rev. Dick Wynia were present from the URCNA Song Book Committee. Dr. Niek Gootjes of the *Book of Praise* Committee was not able to attend.

Since the URCNA Song Book Committee was acting as host for these meetings, Rev. Knott served as chairman and Rev. Wynia served as secretary. Rev. Knott opened our meetings with a brief meditation on Psalm 147:7f. We sang from this psalm as found in



#302 of the *Psalter Hymnal* and Rev. Knott led us in prayer.

After reviewing the minutes of our last joint meeting in Ancaster in April 2005, we had a brief discussion of the reasons why there is some reluctance among the URCNA to include all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms in the proposed song book. We also discussed the question of including psalms in their entirety. The discussion eventually turned to the issues we expect to face in promoting the new song book in our respective federations. We agreed to set aside some time later in the agenda to address these issues.

We recognized that while each of our committees has its own mandate and responsibilities, as we move into the evaluations of hymns we have begun to function increasingly as a joint committee. From time to time the individual committees may be asked to develop position papers to help in the discussion of issues that we will need to deal with. We have decided to produce a common report to our respective synods. There will also be additional matters in our reports to our respective synods reflecting our particular mandates.

As we look ahead we note that we will eventually be facing practical issues in connection with publishing a new song book, e.g. investigating copyrights. Rev. Knott and Rev. VanderMeulen will look for people who can give us advice in these matters. We hope to receive a presentation at our Spring 2006 meeting. Another practical matter that we have to grapple with is whether we ought to update language that may be

considered archaic and making other changes to the hymns, such as dropping stanzas. We adopted a statement that will govern our considerations of these matters: "When changes to texts or music are being contemplated, for reasons such as to improve clarity, to facilitate congregational singing, or to bring them into line with the previously adopted principles and guidelines, we will take care, as much as possible, to preserve the artistic properties of the text or music."

In preparation for the work we will be doing with the Psalm section of the song book, and in particular, for dealing with the question, Will we recommend that all 150 Anglo-Genevan Psalms from the *Book of Praise* be included in the proposed song book?, the *Book of Praise* Committee presented the Song Book Committee of the URCNA with a position paper explaining the rationale for maintaining the complete Anglo-Genevan Psalter. The Song Book Committee of the URCNA will prepare a response. This matter will also appear on the agenda of our Spring 2006 meeting.

In a previous meeting we had agreed that the basic structure of the hymn section of the song book will be Trinitarian, following the topics of the Apostles' Creed.

Rev. Lankheet, Mr. Nobels, and Rev. Royall collaborated in the compilation of the hymns approved by both committees for inclusion in our "gross list" (called, the "Common Song Book Compilation"). These hymns have been gleaned from the CRC "blue" *Psalter Hymnal*, the CRC "gray" *Psalter Hymnal*, the *New Trinity Hymnal*, the hymn section of the

*Book of Praise*, the hymn section augment to the *Book of Praise*, as well as a few other hymn collections. The URCNA committee is still completing its evaluation of the *New Trinity Hymnal*, the hymns in *Cantus Christi* (published by the "Reformed Evangelicals"), as well as hymns suggested by the churches and submitted by individuals.

The bulk of our time was spent beginning to work our way through the "Common Song Book Compilation" together. We strive to apply the Principles and Guidelines for the Selection of Music in the Church, adopted in 2004 by our respective synods, to each hymn. We started with a discussion of the hymns in the "Augment to the *Book of Praise*." These hymns have been tentatively identified for recommendation to the 2007 Synod of the American and Canadian Reformed Churches by the *Book of Praise* Committee. Following that, we turned to the hymn section of the CRC "blue" *Psalter Hymnal*. We were able to make substantial progress, making our way well into the 400's. These discussions will yield another gross list of hymns, from which the final collection will be chosen.

There were two additional matters that we discussed together. First of all, again looking ahead to the work we will be doing on the Psalm section of the song book, the URCNA Song Book Committee presented a statement on the inclusion of complete and partial renditions of the psalms in the Psalm section of the song book. We decided "that at least one complete, accurate rendition of the text of each psalm be

## Church News

Called by the church of Taber,  
Alberta:

**Rev. P. Aasman**  
of Grand Valley, Ontario.

Effective January 29, 2006,  
Fellowship Canadian Reformed  
Church of Burlington South will  
begin worshipping at the  
Woodview Learning Centre, 69  
Flatt Road, Burlington, ON.

The new worship times will be  
10 a.m. and 3 p.m. The mailing  
address will remain the same as  
posted in the *Yearbook*.

included, and that accurate renditions of parts of psalms may also be included, in the Psalm section." We agreed to look for psalm collections which might provide us with complete and accurate renditions of psalms.

Secondly, we also spoke about the need to make the churches familiar with our work. We decided that it would be helpful to the churches if we would publish articles about our work in *Clarion*, *Christian Renewal*, and *The Outlook*, introducing the Principles and Guidelines adopted by our synods and describing the struggles, disappointments, and the joy that are involved in trying to faithfully apply these principles and guidelines to the hymns we are reviewing. Revs. Lankheet and van Popta were asked to write the first in a series of articles which introduce and explain the principles and guidelines, together with their rationale and their implications.

We agreed to schedule our Spring 2006 meeting for April 20-21, 2006, D.V., to be held at the Ancaster Canadian Reformed Church. Rev. VanderMeulen closed our meetings with reading from 1 Corinthians 15:50-58 and prayer and we adjourned.

### **Press Release of Regional Synod West held in Calgary, AB, November 22, 2005**

On behalf of the convening church, Br. H. Ostermeier called the meeting to order. He read Ephesians 1:1-14 and led in prayer. The delegates sang Psalm 121:1, 4.

The credentials were checked and all the classes were lawfully

represented. Regional Synod was declared constituted. Elected to serve as officers for the meeting were Rev. J. Moesker as chairman, Rev. E. Kampen as vice-chairman, and Rev. W.B. Slomp as clerk.

Synod dealt with an appeal against a decision of Classis Pacific West of December 2, 2004. The appeal was denied.

A report was received from the Deputies Regional Synod (according to Article 48 of the Church Order) regarding the peremptory examination of Br. R. Bredenhof, now minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at St. Albert, AB. A report was received from the church for the inspection of the archives, informing Synod that all had been found in good order. A report was also received from the treasurer as well as the church appointed to audit the books of the treasurer. Also here, all was found to be in good order.

Regional Synod appointed the following ministers as Deputies according to Article 48 of the Church Order:

For Classis Alberta: R. Aasman.  
Alternates: E.J. Tigelaar;  
W.B. Slomp.

For Classis Manitoba: A.J. Pol.  
Alternates: D.M. Boersma;  
P.H. Holtvlüwer.

For Classis Pacific East: R.A. Schouten. Alternates:  
M.H. VanLuik; C. Bouwman.

For Classis Pacific West:  
J. Visscher. Alternates: E. Kampen;  
J.P. VanVliet.

In addition to these appointments, Regional Synod re-appointed the Edmonton-Providence Church to take care of the archives and the Edmonton-Immanuel Church to inspect the archives. Br. J. Moedt was appointed as the new treasurer for

Regional Synod West and the Church at Taber was appointed to audit the books of the Treasurer. It was decided to send a note of thanks to Br. Harry Lubbers for the many years of faithful service as treasurer for Regional Synod West.

The next Regional Synod West was scheduled for November 14, 2006, at 9:00 AM, to be convened by the Maranatha Church in Surrey, BC.

Question period was held. It was noted with thankfulness that Christian censure (Article 34 of the Church Order) was not necessary as the meeting had been conducted in a brotherly manner. The Acts were read and adopted. The press release was read and approved. The chairman thanked the ladies who looked after meals and refreshments as well as the Church at Calgary for organizing and hosting Regional Synod. After those present sang Psalm 107:2, 12, the chairman led in thanksgiving prayer. Regional Synod was closed.

On behalf of Regional Synod  
West November 22, 2005,  
Rev. E. Kampen