



Clarion

THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE

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Kiss the Son

*Betrayed by a
Kiss*

*Reflections on
ICRC 2005*

You care for the land
and water it;
You enrich it abundantly,
the streams of God are filled with
water to provide the people with
grain, for so You have ordained it.

Psalm 65:9



R. Aasman

Rev. R. Aasman is minister of the Providence Canadian Reformed Church at Edmonton, Alberta. raasman@canrc.org

Kiss the Son

Is there no hope for us as we struggle with our daily sins and experience devastating consequences of enslavement to sin?

Someone once suggested that when Jesus Christ bowed his head in death, that gave us the opportunity to kiss his face. This would be a tender and loving gesture that expresses both sorrow for his agony and thanksgiving that He died for us. It is something of a whimsical idea to kiss our Saviour at such a moment. The fact is, of course, that Jesus Christ bowed his head because He was dead – He could not hold up his head anymore. He did not bow down his head so that we could kiss Him; He bowed down because when one dies pinned by hands and feet to an upright cross, the head naturally slumps down. However, the notion of kissing Jesus Christ at that moment is not foreign to us; at least it should not be. We may think of Psalm 2 where the rulers of the earth are exhorted to “Kiss the Son.” The very fact that Jesus Christ was covered in sweat, tears, blood, and grime, and that He was naked, does not deter us in the least. The fact that He was now dead does not deter us either. That should have been our sweat, our tears, our blood, our grime, our nakedness, and our death. We sinned, not He. But He took our sins on Himself and He paid the price.

Yes, if we could, we would step forward on tipped toes, to kiss the Son.

Jesus Christ died a hero. He died a Saviour. As such He becomes the object of our undying love and thankfulness. Think of a young mother who stands outside her burning house becoming hysterical because her baby is inside. She watches a brave fireman rush in and come out moments later with the baby safe in his arms. After taking hold of her baby, she hugs the fireman as well – even though he may be covered with smoke and grime. Thankfulness is not turned off by such things but sees them as badges on a hero. So the blood and sweat and grime of Jesus Christ do not turn us off. On the contrary, when we understand full well what is going on, it makes us love Him more. Yes, if we could, we would step forward on tipped toes, to kiss the Son.

Depth of sin

To underestimate the suffering of Jesus Christ is to minimize the seriousness of our own sins. A good question to ask ourselves and to reflect upon is whether we have a real sense of how deeply we have offended God by our sins. Think of Jesus Christ’s Sermon on the Mount where He stated in the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” I understand these words in the light of a passage such as Isaiah 57 where the Lord says, “I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.” In other words, the poor in spirit are those who recognize and confess how impoverished they are as they stand before God with their sins. Now the word used by the Lord Jesus for “poor” is a word that underlines a real, deep impoverishment. This is the kind of word that would be used of a beggar seated at the side of the road with his arms stretched out to any passer-by, crying piteously for mercy. Such a poor man is the most destitute even among the destitute. But does God see that in us when we come to Him in prayer, confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness? Does He see hearts that agonize over sins and hands stretching out to God, pleading for mercy? Does He see people who have at least some sense of how deeply their sins have hurt Him? Does He see in us something of the tax collector in one of Jesus’ parables, who could not even look up to heaven – so acutely did he feel the weight of his sin and unworthiness – but he beat his breast, and cried out, “God, have mercy on me, a sinner”?

Full satisfaction

When we contemplate Jesus Christ hanging, suffering, and dying on the cross, we do that with a full sense of the seriousness of our sins. At least that is what we should do. But how certain are we that Jesus Christ paid for our sins in full by his suffering and death? Clearly there was nothing halfway or inadequate about it. As an example, we think of the



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three hours of darkness on the cross and his piteous cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" Since God made Jesus Christ to be sin on our behalf, the full burden of God's justice and wrath against our sins was poured out by God on Jesus Christ. He experienced the agony of hell and the fullness of eternal death. He experienced what it was to be entirely forsaken by God. He even had to experience physical death – the tearing apart of his spirit from his body. And for three days, his body lay in the grave.

Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5, "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." We may be sure that Jesus Christ suffered to the maximum the full burden of God's wrath against our sins, to the point that we would never have to suffer in this way. In fact, in Jesus Christ's suffering and death, we are healed. Through faith in Jesus Christ, we are declared righteous and heirs of life everlasting.

Tangible implications

This has real, tangible implications. Perhaps a marriage has grown cold and unfaithful because there is no love and respect; a family is in disarray because parents have not set a good example for their children; time spent on TV or the Internet has led to pornography or just a colossal waste of time; business practices become unethical; gossip is a way of life. And so we could go on and on. Is there no hope for us as we struggle with our daily sins and experience devastating consequences of enslavement to sin? Is there no way to have those sins removed and to be made free from sin? To know what our Saviour has done for us on the cross – how deeply He loved us and how deeply He suffered for us – is to be assured that his precious blood is more than sufficient to pay for all our sins. We are encouraged in the closing line of Hebrews 4, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

A kiss

There were many people standing around the cross the day Jesus died. Some were there because of curiosity; some were jeering; some wanted to be entertained; some went home disturbed; some stayed around for a while. But after almost everyone left, and the body of Jesus Christ still hung for a few more minutes before they took Him away, would it be unimaginable to move a little closer, to lean back your face as you stood on tipped toes, and kiss the face of this awesome Saviour? In his suffering and death He has delivered us from our sins and secured our adoption as sons of God! He has saved us!



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P.H. Holtvlüwer



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Betrayed by a Kiss



MATTHEW 13:52

*“Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them:
‘The one I kiss is the man; arrest him’.”*

Matthew 26:48

It’s a remarkable choice Judas makes. He knows exactly what he’s doing and he does it with cool calculation. “The one I kiss is the man: arrest him.” Judas is giving the orders. He is leading the temple guards into the garden and he chooses the method of betrayal: wait for my signal, he says.

The arrest could have gone down in different ways. Judas could have simply stepped close to Jesus and pointed to Him. Or he could have approached Him and lifted up Jesus’ hand, “This is the man.” There were different ways to go about it, but Judas chooses the most intimate, the most personal method he can think of – the kiss.

Judas strides forward in brazen boldness, greets Jesus and *kisses* Him – as if everything were normal! A kiss showed a person’s deep devotion – think of Aaron kissing Moses, Moses his father-in-law, Naomi her daughters-in-law, David his friend Jonathan. Such kisses were displays of affection and emotion. It was not a hasty peck on the cheek but a close and warm embrace with a heartfelt kiss of love.

Do you see what Judas does here? He chooses the quintessential mark of *love* to betray his Master, and in doing so he showed his deep-seated *hatred* for Christ! The mockery of his kiss demonstrated how much he despised Jesus, who had only showed him love. Judas fulfills for

Christ the words of Psalm 55, “My friend appears now as a traitor / A sleek-tongued covenant violator. / His speech was smoother still than butter, / Yet war was in his heart and mind” (*Book of Praise*, v. 11).

This is the night of Satan’s greatest delight. This is the hour when darkness reigns, when Satan champions over his foe. The love of Christ is spurned and He is humiliated by a friend, by one who received more love from God’s Son than most. And now Christ is being captured, soon to face the chief priests. Satan couldn’t be happier! Everything is going as planned. Christ is under his thumb. He has scattered Jesus’ disciples, ruined his ministry, and soon he’ll put an end to Jesus’ life. The crushing of Jesus is all but complete.

Except for one thing. It’s not much at first, but there’s something out of place in Satan’s victory. As Judas leans in to kiss Jesus, as the soldiers flash their swords to arrest Him, the Lord says to Judas, “Friend, do what you came for.”

It’s a strange, even disturbing thing to say, seeing that He is surrounded by soldiers. Jesus doesn’t beg for his life. Christ doesn’t question Judas about his motives – He’s known all along. Anyone else would have been filled with fear but Christ is filled with determination – *do what you came for*. Instead of resisting arrest, He urges it on! Get on with it! I’ve got work to do! Call your

soldiers over to arrest me. Turn me over so that I can finish the work my Father called me to do! Friend, do what you came for!

It’s in these words we find out who is *really* in charge in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ had earlier handed the bread dipped into the dish to Judas Iscariot – Christ knew that He must travel this road, that He must be betrayed by one of the Twelve in order to suffer the consequences of our sin. Christ had to suffer the wrath of God in the severe testing of his faith, in the abandonment of friend and companion, in the forsakenness of his Father in heaven. And He *wanted* to do it! Satan entered the Garden triumphantly, so sure that he was landing the crushing blow over Christ, only to hear Jesus whisper in his ear, “Friend, do what you came for.” I’m ready for it. I’ll suffer your rage. I’ll endure your hatred. I’ll bear up under something even worse – my own Father’s poured-out wrath upon me for the sins of the whole world. The devil would bruise his heel that night, but Christ would crush his head and win the victory!

And that’s the gospel of Good Friday, for Christ has done it. He was pierced because of our transgression, bruised for our sin. Judas did what he came for. Satan did what he came for. And through it all, Christ did what He came for – to bring salvation for you and for me.



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High Notes in the History of the Hymns: “Rejoice the Lord is King”

Charles Wesley is the author of “Rejoice, the Lord is King,” which appears in altered form as Hymn 35 in the *Book of Praise*. Charles was born in 1707, when Christianity in England was suffering from benign neglect. The faith had fallen into a state of dormancy from which it needed to be awakened. As a student attending university, Charles helped form the “Oxford Holy Club,” which gained a reputation for its strict routine of Bible study, prayer, visitation, and frequent celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The regular observance of these practices led people to call the club’s members “Methodists.”

Converted to the faith following a deep personal experience in May 1738, Charles, together with his brother John, contributed greatly to the religious revival in England. Though he remained priest in the Church of England until his death in 1788, Charles was associated with the rise of Methodism. From its origins as a society of like-minded individuals determined to “flee from the wrath that is to come” by regulating their lives according to God’s Word, Methodism was formed into a denomination, both in England and in the American colonies. While doctrinal matters were not of primary concern initially, Methodists stressed the following teachings: God’s grace is free, justification is by faith alone, the assurance of the Holy Spirit is paramount, and scriptural holiness is a requirement of every believer.

When their evangelical boldness met with opposition in the parishes of the established Church of England, the Wesleys became travelling evangelists who advocated a “vital, practical religion” to all who attended their open-air preaching. Hymn-singing was an integral part of the outdoor services and by means of them the Wesleys taught and encouraged piety in the private and public lives of the

common citizens. The Church of England would not sanction the singing of hymns until the beginning of the nineteenth century and those who conformed to the norms of the established church derided Charles’ hymns as mere human compositions marked by excessive “enthusiasm” and worldly language.

Rejoice, the Lord is King!
Your Lord and King adore;
Mortals, give thanks, and sing,
And triumph evermore;
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice;
Rejoice! Again I say: Rejoice!

C. Wesley

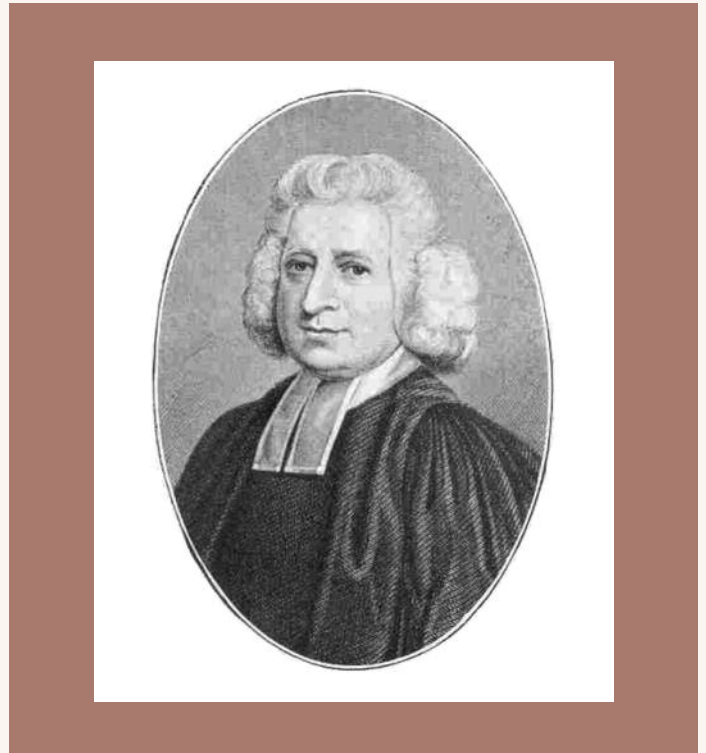
Despite the official opposition, however, Charles and John Wesley became the foremost hymnists of the English Revival period. Charles composed more than six thousand hymns, including the well-known “Come, thou long-expected Jesus” and “Hark! The Herald Angles Sing!” In 1780 John published the *Collection of Hymns for the Use of the People Called Methodists*. Orthodox members of the Church of England perceived the hymnal as a threat to church and state, but John Wesley lauded it as “a little body of experimental and practical divinity.”

Like continental Europe, England during the eighteenth century changed from rationalism to spiritualism. The emotional response of the believer to God’s unfathomable grace is a common theme in the hymns composed by Wesley. The hymns also reveal a shift in focus from the community to the individual, from the church to the believer. Often appearing

autobiographical, Wesley gives free rein to his feelings of doubt, fear, hope, and expectation. The inability of the human heart to grasp fully the mercy of God and the wonderment at God's grace for the mortal are themes common to Wesley's poetry. He conveys the sense of urgency in the call to repentance by means of vivid language and colourful expressions. Metaphors abound. Rich in references to the text of the Bible, Wesley's hymns make full use of the language of the King James Version.

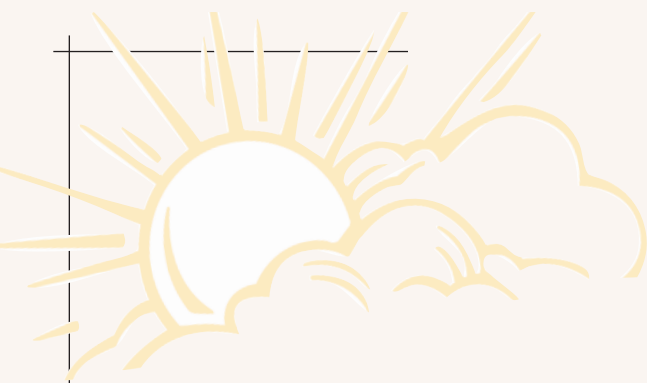
The original text of Hymn 35 was published first in *Hymns for Our Lord's Resurrection* in 1746. It consisted of six stanzas of six lines. The hymn takes for its starting point the first and last verses of Psalm 97: "The Lord reigns, let the earth be glad. . . . Rejoice in the Lord, you righteous, and praise his holy name." As is typical of Wesley's work, however, references in this hymn are not limited to one passage of Scripture, but include several texts. For example, Hebrews 1:3-4 (" . . . He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven") is reflected in the first line of stanza 4: "He sits at God's right hand. . . ." Thus the hymn treats not only the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, but also his ascension into heaven and his enthronement. Included in its scope is the glorious return of the Lord. The original refrain in the last stanza reads: "We soon shall hear the archangel's voice; / The trump of God shall sound: Rejoice!"

Wesley likes to begin his poems with a command to the reader, but the repeated imperatives in "Rejoice, the Lord is King" are worthy of note. By means of commands such as "rejoice, give thanks, and sing" the poet establishes a relationship with the individual singer. The imperative first word "rejoice" is repeated ("again I say") at the close of the first stanza ("rejoice, rejoice") effecting a sense of urgency and completion. The artistry of the simple, early-church confession in the first line "the Lord is King" is repeated in the second line with the addition of "your," so that the confession is applied to the fellow believer personally.



Charles Wesley, 1707-1788

The refrain, "Lift up your heart, lift up your voice" comes from Philippians 4:4, as well as from the "Exhortation" section in the form for Holy Communion that was dear to Methodists. The relevant words in the *Book of Praise* are: ". . . lift our hearts on high in heaven, where Christ, our advocate is, seated at the right hand of his heavenly Father." Thus the key theme of this hymn is the strengthening of the believer's faith by encouraging him to lift his heart to heaven in communion with Christ. Initially sung to a different tune, the hymn now is commonly performed to a tune (called "Gopsal") composed by G. F. Handel.



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

"You care for the land and water it; You enrich it abundantly, the streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so You have ordained it."
Psalm 65:9

God's chosen people had many reasons to thank the Lord. David expresses his thankfulness by writing this psalm. He praises God for his awesome deeds of salvation, as well as caring for their bodily needs. He acknowledges that everything comes from God and that God hears our prayers (Ps 65:2).

The Lord has shown his goodness and love to his chosen ones long ago and still cares for us today. When we pray "give us this day our daily bread," the Lord will hear and answer us. We know He answers us because we receive so much every day again. We are asking God to provide us with all our bodily needs, acknowledging that God is the only fountain of all good. As God's people we need God not only for spiritual matters but also for our bodily needs. The Lord knows our needs more than we know ourselves. By going on our knees before God and asking this petition we show how truly dependant we are on Him.

In a world so full of materialism and selfishness, we as Christians still need to pray for our daily bread. People sometimes think that they earn their own daily bread by working hard for their business and saying "all this hard earned money is mine." They go about working day after day, never once acknowledging who the Giver is. They feel that they are fine on their own.

What a blessing it is to read Psalm 65. The Lord is the only fountain of all good. God in his love gave his only begotten Son to die for us so we could be saved. Will He not also provide for our bodily needs? When we pray "give us this day our daily bread" we ask the Lord to provide us with everything that we need to give Him all honour and glory. We do not pray for materialistic items, for they have no value. Our wants should not become our needs. God knows our needs. We must simply ask God in faith to provide for us in his grace everything we need to serve Him whole-heartedly.

With praying this petition we have to also ask God for his blessing. Without his blessing we labour in vain. The blessing of the Lord is the basic element in our life which gives meaning to all things we do or have. What is God's blessing? It is to be accepted by God and loved by Him and so shine in his promises for this life and the new life to come. Without God's blessing life is meaningless. We have no rest and no peace in our work without the blessing of God. When we pray the Lord's Prayer we pray for a life that is good because it is redeemed by God's Son and guided by the Holy Spirit.

To whom do we look every day for our daily bread? Do we still feel in our hearts as blessed as David felt when he wrote Psalm 65? In verse 9 David states that God is the one who blessed the promised land with all good things in answer to Israel's prayers. He gave to them in abundance; they never lacked anything. He brought them from Egypt and allowed them to live with so many blessings.

We learn from this Psalm to place our trust only in God. He continues to provide for us and is faithful in all He does. He does not only provide for our daily bread but also has given us at his table the bread which is eternal and lasts forever. By Christ's death on the cross we know that He will always give us all things for body and soul. Praise be to God who continually upholds us in his power!

*Give us our needful bread this day,
And show Thy faithful care, we pray.
Our earthly needs Thou, Lord, dost know;
Then let on us Thy blessings flow.
Save us from want and poverty,
And make our spirits rich in Thee.*

Hymn 47:5

Birthdays in April:

- 2 **DEREK KOK** will be 36
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8
- 23 **ARLENE DEWIT** will be 45
31126 Kingfisher Drive, Abbotsford, BC V2T 5K4
- 23 **STEPHANIE LANGENDOEN** will be 44
361 Thirty Road, Beamsville, ON LOR 1B2
- 29 **BRYCE BERENDS** will be 31
653 Broad Street West, Dunnville, ON N1A 1T8

Congratulations to all of you who are celebrating a birthday this month. May our heavenly Father grant you his blessings in this new year. We hope you all have an enjoyable day together with your family and friends.

Till next month,

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Reflections on ICRC 2005

My intention is to share some things about the International Conference of Reformed Churches (ICRC), held last October in Pretoria, South Africa, which you can not glean from a press release or the minutes¹ but which contribute so much to the value and blessings of such a conference. It is always a pity that so few members are able to have this exciting experience of meeting with representatives from Presbyterian and Reformed churches from places throughout the world, giving you a taste of the catholicity of the church that the Lord Jesus Christ is gathering from all over the world.



*A partial view of the Conference
in session*

Establishing relationships

Now and then one hears negative comments about such conferences: they are time-consuming and costly and who really benefits from them? Is it only for the few privileged ones who are

allowed to attend? Such questions are legitimate since we are to show good stewardship also in our inter-church relationships. First of all, are we aware of the actual financial cost of being a member of the ICRC? Do we realize that according to my latest figures the cost for the Canadian/American Reformed Churches is less than fifteen cents per communicant member per year? However, even if the financial cost would be much, much higher it would still be a most worthwhile effort to use this wonderful opportunity to enjoy the contact and fellowship with Reformed believers from around the world!



Rev. Francisco Gómez of Spain

We should be careful that we do not look at such a conference only from our own perspective. As churches in North America we live very comfortably. We are well established, live in relative freedom, and are enjoying great prosperity in comparison to most everyone else in the world. We have our beautiful church buildings, Christian schools, Theological College, Teachers' College, capable and qualified teachers, professors, lecturers, and we have funds to spare for all kinds of missions and ministries of mercy. Yes, we even have our own homes for the elderly and handicapped and retreat centres. We hardly need contacts abroad; or do we?

But is this not a very selfish and self-centred approach? Is this the mind of Christ revealed to us in his sending out of his servants to proclaim the good news to all people? Does this reflect the Spirit of Christ when He, in his high-priestly prayer, expressed the sincere desire that all who belong to Him will be one even as He and the Father are one? We cannot and may not ignore one another, no matter where they live in the world, even less now that the Lord has given us the means of communication and transportation

so we are able to meet and help each other in so many ways.

Many others are far from the "comfortable" situation we enjoy. We heard of reports from brothers of churches who are suffering persecution every day: countries and regions where there is no freedom at all. Some desired to attend the conference but could not. Others failed to receive the required visa. A number of delegates were begging the more established churches for instruction: "Please send men over to instruct us in the Reformed doctrine." I distinctly remember a pastor pleading with us to understand the difficult situation of the young Reformed churches in Ghana who feel threatened from two sides. On the one hand they felt the pressures from the Muslim sector of the population which receives strong support from other Arab nations and on the other hand the pressures of the large, charismatic movement being fuelled by North American supporters. They felt isolated as Reformed churches. No, they did not ask for money but for instructors in the Reformed faith so that their members would stand strong. They were eager to learn what being Reformed is all about!

There were others who came from virtual war zones in Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some delegates from India came a day late because they did not know till the very last moment if they could leave or not. Can you imagine how encouraging it is for such brothers, living in very isolated places, to be able to spend a full week in freedom and fellowship, meeting and talking with brothers from all over the world, of whom they had only heard by name?

Our churches have indeed seen it as their calling to establish relationships with all those whom the Lord has placed on our ways to share the Reformed faith. Anyone who has served on a Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad will know how difficult communications can be, in spite of modern technology. What a great opportunity the ICRC provides to meet face to face with numerous of our contacts to be informed about each other's well-being and to further discuss remaining issues! A meeting over lunch with representatives of Korea, having coffee with delegates from Indonesia, and another meeting over supper with brothers from Scotland: these are all things that are not mentioned in a press release or minutes and yet they may be some of the most valuable and beneficial moments.

Workshops

What will be recorded in the press release and appended to the minutes are the excellent speeches delivered by Dr. A.J. de Visser (Canada), Dr. H. Maris (The Netherlands), Rev. Y. Dethan (Indonesia), and Rev. David A. Robertson (Scotland). These speeches were followed by workshops, facilitated by the speakers. In these smaller groups practical issues could be discussed



The OPC delegates in a huddle



Getting acquainted during a break

more thoroughly. What became clear was that different parts of the world may have some unique problems to deal with, but many more difficulties are common to all Christians no matter where they live and what the cultural setting may be.

It was also a real treat to be able to taste some of the environment, life, and worship of our brothers and sisters in South Africa, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, in particular the Church of Pretoria. They did a great job of organizing the conference and showed wonderful hospitality. It even allowed many of the delegates to attend the worship services in the newly instituted mission churches in Mamelodi (in English) and Soshanguve-North (in Sotho). The fact that this conference was held in South Africa also facilitated more delegates and visitors from other African countries to attend.

Growth

We were able to welcome three more church federations as new members of the ICRC. The Confessing Reformed Churches of

Congo are the fruit of mission activity by the Reformed Churches of the USA (RCUS) together with the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (GKNv). These young churches in the Congo appear to be a fast-growing, active federation of churches. The second to be received as a new member was the large federation of the Reformed Churches of South Africa (also known as the "Dopperkerk"). They have a long history in South Africa and have a number of contacts



Scotland meets Africa

with other ICRC churches. The third new member was the Reformed Churches of Spain. It is a group of seven churches and a mission point in a predominantly Roman Catholic country, but they are increasing in size and witness. They have had close contacts with our sister churches in The Netherlands.

Judging from the number of Reformed Churches who sent observers and from the regular inquiries I receive as secretary, we may expect that the ICRC will continue to grow in number as well as service to its members. Mission

is definitely one of the main areas where we can cooperate and assist one another. The Regional Mission Conferences, being held on a number of continents, are evidence of a growing need to work together and learn from each other. The need to serve one another in the area of theological training of young men also deserves increasing attention.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we recommend that you obtain a copy of the "Proceedings 2005" which will be coming off the press hopefully early this year. This will give you the minutes as well as all the reports, speeches, and additional information about the ICRC and its members.

May the Lord continue to bless his faithful churches throughout the world, grant them strength and courage when circumstances are difficult, and allow them to proclaim the glory of his Name!

¹The press release and minutes are available on the ICRC website, www.icrconline.com.



The Canadian and New Zealander delegates meeting over lunch

Following in the Footsteps ...Building for the Future

Mr. F.C. Ludwig is Principal of John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario.

The recent past at John Calvin School in Smithville, Ontario has been a very busy one. Bridging the last school year and this one, there has been much activity and much reason for joy. In October of 2004 we were able to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the school's opening. One of the special and exciting elements of that celebration was the fact that a long-awaited and desired expansion of the school building was newly underway.

After the usual fits and starts related to the various approvals of building permits and other official documents, the site was finally prepared and the shovel – a very large, powered one – was put into the ground in July 2004. The teaching staff and student body could now look forward to an interesting year, working side by side with a construction crew – not the most obvious or desired conjunction of activities. As it turned out, both parties could carry on their work without much interruption of the other, although some teachers were a little hoarse at the conclusion of certain days when they had to compete in decibels with the sound of power equipment. Further, many mothers no doubt noticed an increase in their detergent bills. What little paved play space had been available was largely broken up to accommodate the construction and

much of the grassed areas had been despoiled by heavy machinery. To their credit, I heard few mothers complain, being the long-suffering people they are and anticipating improvement in the following year!

These activities were supported by much quieter ones behind the scenes. The Board and its committees were very busy in the background, not least of all the fund-raising committee. The Board and membership had established early on that the project would only start when two-thirds of the funds were available, for an original budget of 1.75 million dollars. To that end, a committee was established which in turn created the Foundations for Generations Building Campaign. The Committee organized for its challenging task and before very long the target goal was achieved, allowing the work to start. There are bound to be some delays along the way and the original cost estimate is bound to be exceeded (especially when the project starts two years after the original costing was done); the expansion at JCS was no exception to the rule, but fortunately the delays were minimal and the increased costs manageable.

While not yet fully complete, furniture, books, and equipment could be moved into the six new classrooms in June 2005. Over the



summer a lot of finishing touches were added so that by September the new facility could be *almost* fully occupied. A few weeks later the new gymnasium was also finished and the students experienced the thrill of their first indoor physical education classes in a *real* gymnasium!

Projects such as these always occur in the context of the people by, for, and through whom they are done – and therein we can see the work of the Spirit among his people. This project gave rise to a tremendous degree of enthusiasm in the supporting community, which could be seen especially in the fund-raising and volunteer elements of the work. Literally hundreds of hands reached out to



help get the work done in various aspects that "amateurs" could help. Enthusiastic photographers took many pictures of these volunteer activities, including the laying of thousands of rolls of sod, involving even some of the youngest students! On the donations side, besides the two million dollars, there were many donations of materials, equipment, and the manpower to operate it. It was gratifying to both watch and participate in, feeling very clearly the love of the community for the

cause of Christian education and the gracious Father whom we seek to serve thereby.

Official opening occurred on November 12, 2005. The hundreds of thankful participants were joined by the local mayor and area MPP and together we were able to dedicate this addition to the education of future generations, so that what was begun here in 1964 may continue for many more years under the Lord's blessing. The official program included a ribbon cutting by Mrs. Bos, widow of one of the original board members, and the flag-raising was shared by Mrs. Ouwersloot, widow of the first and long-time treasurer of the school society, and one of her great-grandchildren, a student at the school.

Due to his frail health the original principal of John Calvin School, Mr. Martin VanderVelde, was not able to join us on this festive day, but he has seen and walked in the building with his wife and they both marvelled at the changes from the humble beginnings of a four classroom school. Now we are privileged to occupy a fourteen classroom building which also includes a large gymnasium and a

state-of-the-art kitchen facility, as well as modern offices and staff room. More than that, the grounds surrounding the school now boast an official track, soccer field, two baseball diamonds, and several smaller fields. Further, in cooperation with the Smithville church, all driveway and parking areas around both church and school are now fully paved, providing lots of clean play space even in fall and spring. . . a reward for your patient endurance, mothers!

In summary, permit me a quote from the most recent update issued by the Foundations for Generations fund-raising committee. This was written by brother E. Ludwig, and in thanking brothers and sisters for their gifts and help he rightly concludes: "God has worked in us a spirit of overflowing generosity, which we can only attribute to the power of his Spirit, as He seeks to provide for us and our children, instilling in us the desire to do his will. We humbly thank Him for all of his gifts, and pray that this expansion may help us in laying a lasting foundation for our children, none other than Jesus Christ our Lord. (1 Cor. 3)"



A. Kingma and K. Sikkema

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CRTA Convention, October 28-29, 2005



On October 28 and 29 over 150 teachers converged on Hamilton for the CRTA Convention 2005. Most of them were from the Canadian Reformed schools in Ontario, but guests included teachers from Providence Reformed Collegiate and Heritage Christian School. Jerry Tillema, of Bethel Books, also displayed good Christian literature. At the opening in Cornerstone Canadian Reformed Church, colleague Richard Tomlin characterized the convention as a time to learn, meet, share, relax, reflect, and praise God. The convention's theme and theme song also pointed to our reliance on our only Saviour: In Christ Alone. He placed this in the context of Ephesians 4, which calls us to keep the unity of the Spirit in love by using our gifts for building up the body of Christ.

The keynote speaker for this convention was Dr. John Van Dyk, professor of education and director of the Center for Educational

Services at Dordt College, Iowa. He spoke about teaching as a reflective practice. He had previously addressed various Canadian Reformed school teachers and principals and is also active in helping people in some poorly-equipped third world contexts to become Christian teachers. He knew of no fundamental incompatibility between his understanding of Christian education and ours and suggested that whatever differences there might be would not distract from our common goal of Christian education.

Reflection

Dr. Van Dyk offered a three-point agenda for his main address: Obstacles that prevent reflection, what reflection is, and how we reflect and about what. He indicated that in Christian classrooms there often is a gap between our view and our actions, or between our educational

philosophy and our practice. For instance, he suggested, we may see our school as the body of Christ, while it often does not show that very well. While we would easily agree that reflection is important for our practice, it may in fact be inadequate. Indeed, there are many obstacles and derailers to our reflection. These include, among others, the time crunch (feeling too busy to reflect), vague mission statements (if our task is not focused in a clearly defined mission, anything goes), a stereotyped *theory vs. practice* dichotomy (just tell me what to do, rather than elaborating on philosophy), a lingering *spiritual vs. secular* dualism (giving a Christian coating on an otherwise secular program), textbooks (which easily dictate our curriculum), and a quantifiable assessment obsession (neglecting factors of love, compassion, and understanding that cannot be captured in numbers).

Addressing the nature of reflection, Dr. Van Dyk noted that it should be deliberate as well as informal and constant – much like prayer can be formal, or quiet, throughout the day. It can be a deliberate activity, in which one seeks to “cultivate the walk of God’s Spirit with us.” Reflection implies an awareness of what is happening and increases the ability to respond in a thoughtful way, rather than intuitively or





mechanically. He introduced the word "conscientization" (to make explicit our tacit or implicit knowledge and assumptions rooted in our experience) and identified three of its key facets: foundational reflection, reflective action, and reflective review. The first one is about our beliefs about God, the world, life, and our purpose in life. It reflects on how these beliefs are applied in our educational practice: there is something significantly amiss if they are not central to our teaching! In addition to reflection on the nature and purpose of schooling, our view of children, the curriculum, and teaching and learning, Dr. Van Dyk suggested that we also become aware of distorting spirits which operate in our philosophy and practice of learning and teaching. He suggested that we ask more "why" questions in our unit and lesson planning, that we surround ourselves with reminders that we are *called* to teach, and that we become thoughtful practitioners, cultivating a practice of walking-with-the-Spirit.

Finally, Dr. Van Dyk touched briefly on various levels of reflection. He included reflection about practical, immediate problems and practices, larger context and background issues, and about fundamental beliefs. He suggested that we identify what is normative, what are distortions, and

what are "redemptive action" steps. He challenged us to foster reflection in the school culture through prayer, discussion, commitment, and seeking wisdom in the Biblical sense. This seeking of wisdom he understood as walking with God, trusting and believing, knowing and understanding, discerning and becoming aware of, evaluating and testing, and finally judging and acting rightly. He concluded that to teach is to be on a journey, preparing for works of service as part of our sanctification, and to increasingly manifest the image of God.

Friday's devotional

On Friday we all took our places at the round tables in Guido's gym to join in singing praise to God and to read from his Word. Rev. D. Vandeburgt, minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Glanbrook, used the first part of Romans 6 as the basis for his devotional. He reminded us that we are first of all Christians with the beautiful task of building the next generation. Admittedly, teachers may lack time for reflection, but we must yet be busy continuously with re-evaluating our lives in the light of God's Word. We so easily get caught up in our feelings and circumstances, or in the quagmire of pragmatism; however, we need to reflect and respond intentionally and wisely. And what do we reflect on? Romans 6 states that we are

bound in Christ: we have died and are buried in Him; in Him we also live! Rev. Vandeburgt also reminded us of Lord's Day One where we confess, "But I belong to my faithful Saviour." This faithful Saviour, he stated, covers "my guilty past, my insecure future, and my glorious resurrection." We have everything in Christ.

Rev. Vandeburgt admitted that reflection is more than awareness; it also involves action or doing. We must act out of that awareness. Romans 6 continues with "Do not let sin. . ." and "offer yourself to God." In the classroom, we must be God's instrument of righteousness. We must guide the students so that they firstly know who they are, and then, that they act upon that awareness in the classroom and in the school.

Workshops

After our devotional the teachers could begin their second round of workshops. Teachers could choose from ten workshops that covered topics from decreasing bullying, poetry, making art fun, and primary physical education, to topics like effective discipline, learning disabilities and constructivism. To give our readers a sampling of the workshop, we will include reviews of two that we attended.

1. I chose to go to a workshop on Christianity and Islam in the twenty-first century, where Dr. Goheen explained that Islam is not a religion that can fit simply into private lives as we westerners may think, but one that desires to have a social-political community of peace in a geographical sense, where all society in a region submits to the shariah law. Muslims seek to establish that peace through *jihad* in the region of *dar al-*

Church News

Declined the call to Taber, Alberta:

Rev. P.Aasman

of Grand Valley, Ontario.

Examined by Classis Ontario West on March 8th, 2006 and received consent to speak an edifying word in the churches, effective May 2006, upon successful completion of the current academic year (C.O.Art 21):

Student Dimitry Kiselev

Declined the call to the church of Darling Downs, WA, Australia:

Rev. A. van Delden

of Rockingham, WA, Australia.

Declined the call to work as a home missionary for Streetlight Ministries by the church of Ancaster, Ontario:

Rev. J.L. van Popta

Accepted the call to the church of Burlington (Fellowship), Ontario:

Rev. J.L. van Popta

harb, the region of war, which in this twenty-first century is the humanistic, liberal West.

Although not all Muslims may condone acts of terrorism, the element of converting the *dar al-harb* through different means is an essential part of their religion. Essentially, Muslims see the West as a civilization opposed to their own Muslim civilization. The Taliban belongs to the group that rejects the West and modernity, while others, usually more educated ones, either accept the West and modernity, or accept modernity, but not Westernization. The latter group claims that Muslims can cultivate science, work in factories, or utilize advanced weapons, but do not need to change their political ideology or institutions. I sure learned a lot in this hour-and-a-half workshop! (AK)

2. Ron Morrish, a Niagara-based educational consultant with an international reputation, presented a workshop on "Effective Discipline and Classroom Management." He explained that various theories about controlling student misbehaviour in public school systems had failed because

they were based on flawed research. All too often people provide excuses for misbehaviour without addressing what Mr. Morrish believed to be the root of the problem: failure to teach and train children to show plain old-fashioned respect. As the curriculum is taught in a sequence of simple concepts to more difficult ones, one should expect the most respectful behaviour from older students. Often the contrary is the case.

Mr. Morrish suggested that good discipline begins with teaching what is expected, both at home and at school, and then insisting that children do as expected. Inadequate performance should not be an option: they must do it right or do it over. Teenagers tend to act on impulse, as the part of their brain that makes them think twice is simply taking a back seat for a couple of years, until its development catches up with the rest. Hence, he suggested, it is important to ensure that proper behaviour is an automatic or near automatic response before they get to that stage (much like we will stop on red in the middle of the night

when there is no traffic). With good discipline students will need a tutorial (not a detention) in which time is spent re-teaching what they should have learned previously.

Practically, Mr. Morrish asserted that frantic, reactionary, and high-pitched power responses to misbehaviour are counter-effective; it is far better to lower the voice, to speak with authority, and to remind the child of what is expected. He did not mention it, but the Lord has indeed placed parents and teachers in a position of authority; the problem is that we need to learn again what



that means for our practice. Mr. Morrish implied that lesson preparations which engage all students in the learning are the best techniques for discipline and preventing misbehaviour. (KS)

Conclusion

The workshop presenters were teachers from among us, from Redeemer University College, or other experts in their fields. Over 150 teachers could enjoy twenty-eight different workshops

throughout the two days. The CRTA Convention 2005 was a thought-provoking, uplifting, successful convention. Not only were we taught the importance of constant reflection, but we were also given more in-depth knowledge in various curricular areas. We were given practical tools to assist us in our unit or lesson planning, in our teaching techniques, and in our understanding of assisting the variety of covenant children entrusted into our care. May God

continue to bless the professional development done in our Christian schools, so that the teaching of God's covenant children may be improved, strengthened, and furthered.

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

Letters to the Editor

Letter to the Editor

Re: How are we Doing? The Canadian Reformed Churches Today

In *Clarion* Issue 2, January 20, 2006, Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff writes about the Canadian Reformed Churches. The intention of the article must have been to enlighten the readers of *Clarion* about the situation in our churches.

After reading the article I had the feeling that there was something missing and after talking to other members of the church I was confirmed in this.

Under "Membership: losses and gains" we are informed that the growth over the past fifty-five years of 2.9% per year (= 159.5% total) that the federation enjoys is the result of natural increase, however over the last four years it is less than 1%.

I do not doubt the statistics, but what I'm missing here is a comparison to how other churches are doing. Are they growing, remaining the same, or declining?

Via the Internet I gleaned the following information from Statistics Canada:

Selected Religions, for Canada and Territories

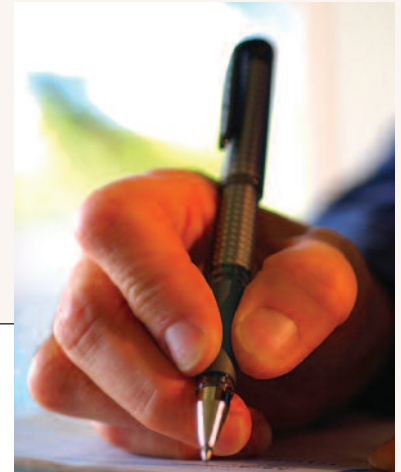
Percentage changes
1991 – 2001:

United Church	-8.2%
Anglican	-7.0%
Lutheran	-4.7%
Presbyterian	-35.6%
Pentecostal	-15.3%
Mennonite	-7.9%
Christian Reformed Protestant	-9.5%
(not included in any of the above)	-12.7%

The Canadian Reformed Churches are not listed because they have less than 20,000 members. Information gleaned from our yearbooks shows that our churches had an increase of 19% over that same period.

The article as a whole raises legitimate concerns but the opening figures do perhaps give a wrong impression for the readers of *Clarion*.

Ebbel Kampen,
Vernon, BC



Letters to the Editor should be written in a brotherly fashion in order to be considered for publication. Submissions need to be less than one page in length.