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37th
Anniversary
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*How should
the Pulpit
Address the
Pew?*



*Fathers are just as important to healthy
child development as mothers*



W.B. Slomp

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Abusive Fathers?

Domestic abuse is a human problem, not just a male or a female one. It is because of sin.

A recent report of the Church of England entitled, "Responding to Domestic Abuse, Guidelines for Pastoral Responsibility," recommends that the male pronoun for God no longer be used because doing so encourages and justifies domestic abuse. The report states that "uncritical use of masculine imagery" encourages male violence against women. A spokesman further elaborates on this by adding that the church's teaching that "suffering has redemptive quality to it justifies [violence] in some way." The report is also negative about the nature of Christian marriage which tends to enforce a sense among husbands that wives are property.

It is clear that these views reflect extreme anti-Christian feminist academic thought. They are a distortion of what masculinity is all about, of what marriage is all about, and of what fatherhood is all about. They are certainly a distortion of Scripture and of how God reveals Himself. God reveals Himself in the Scriptures as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Throughout Scripture the masculine pronoun of God is used. The Son of God became flesh especially to reveal the compassion and greatness of his Father in heaven.

Fatherhood and marriage

In our society today the concept of fatherhood and of marriage between a man and a woman is in decline. Marriage is no longer deemed necessary to set up a household or to have children. It is becoming more and more common for people just to live together or to bear children out of wedlock. Divorce is currently skyrocketing and so the ideal of marital permanence is becoming less and less a reality. This has disastrous consequences.

At the time of creation one of the first things that the Lord God did was to perform a wedding ceremony. God was not only the one who officiated; He was also the one who gave the bride away. He gave Adam and Eve his blessing. And so, marriage is a sacred institution. The one important thing that Adam and

Eve could take with them when they were forced, because of their sin, to leave Paradise, was a marriage certificate from God.

Marriage is one of the great gifts of God to mankind. Marriage is more than the union of two hearts. It is more than a legal contract. It is also more than an economic arrangement. Marriage is first of all an act of God. God has created marriage so that people of the opposite sex can make a home together. And so, when we think of a home we usually think of a father and a mother with their children. God has given the strong union between a husband and a wife to be the stabilizing factor in that home. Fathers are an essential component of a well functioning home.

The necessity of fathers

The connection between marriage and fatherhood is vital. Fathers are just as important to healthy child development as mothers. Although fathers and mothers share the same qualities, they both stress different aspects in their relationship with their children. A mother has been created to nurture a child. Consequently it is especially important for her to cultivate relationships. Mothers teach their children to be gentle and sympathetic to others. They teach them to help and care for others.

Fathers on the other hand have been created to bring order out of chaos. As a result they stress the need to obey authority and to show fairness and justice. In this way they teach their children right from wrong. Fathers will stress the fact that their children will need to function in a hostile world. They are more strict and systematic in the way that they apply the rules. Mothers respond differently to the harshness of the world. They are more interested in protecting their children from it. Fathers tend to see their children in relation to the rest of the world. Mothers tend to see the rest of the world in relation to their child. And so, it is important for children to learn both from a father and mother.

Abuse

Sadly enough, in our society, and also in the church, there are fathers who are abusive. They can be emotionally, physically, or sexually abusive. Such fathers do an enormous amount of damage and make it difficult for their children to establish a relationship with their heavenly Father.

However, women can also be abusive to their children and their husbands. Statistics Canada recently released a study showing that violence in the home by women is much more prevalent than the gender biased media is willing to admit. Domestic abuse is a human problem, not just a male or a female one. It is because of sin. Therefore it is no surprise that the recent Statistics Canada report shows many other risk factors for domestic violence. If you are living common-law, you are as much as five times more likely to suffer abuse than someone who is married. You are also more vulnerable if you are young, aboriginal, or have an alcoholic or drug-addicted partner. Likewise, violence is more common if you are gay or lesbian. "Spousal violence was twice as common among homosexual couples compared with heterosexual couples." Fifteen percent of gay and lesbian partnerships experience violence.

If you want to root out spousal abuse, you do not blame it on the fathers, or on any other group in society, but on the general sinful condition of all men and their rebellion against God and his commandments. And you certainly do not change your view of God.

God as our Father

God reveals Himself as a loving Father of his children. Through his Son Jesus Christ He also reveals Himself as the bridegroom of his church, his people. In revealing Himself He also portrays male and female qualities. As our Father He shows Himself as the one who brought forth the whole universe. He gave birth to it. Through Him we are given birth and rebirth. The Scriptures also show his tenderness and care and help. As our heavenly Father He is also enormously powerful. But one thing He is not, and that is abusive. On the contrary, He is gentle, patient, kind, and long-suffering.

Fathers and mothers in Christian homes should reflect those qualities. God has given a wonderful task to fathers and mothers. It is our task to be image bearers of God. As God is devoted to us, so we must be devoted to one another in love. It is only in truly Christian homes that children are safe; and so are husbands and wives.



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Walking on Water



MATTHEW 13:52

“Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus.”

Matthew 14:29

Have you ever been disappointed in someone? You got your hopes up, but then you found out they weren't quite what you thought they were?

It happens all the time – and at this point the disciples must have thought this was happening to them. We read in Scripture that after the feeding of the 5,000 the crowds wanted to make Jesus king. Imagine the hype! Thousands of people wanted to make the Jesus we're following king – and with good reason, too! Jesus has just fed them all with five fish and two loaves.

But *immediately*, we read in Scripture, Christ sends the crowds away, tells his disciples to go out to sea, and goes up on a mountainside alone to pray. It seems like a wet blanket. Was the crowd wrong? Were we wrong, the disciples ask?

The answer is both yes and no. Christ is not a king like the crowds and the disciples think. He's not a saviour crafted after our imagination, a political leader or superman. That's never going to do the job. And so Christ has to diffuse this tragic misperception.

But that doesn't mean He isn't a king. He's actually a king in a far greater way that we dare to imagine! That's what the next event in the gospels, when Christ walks on water, is all about. It's not something meant to wow us, but to

teach us the critical truth of who Christ is in all of his hidden glory.

As the disciples strain at the oars on the Sea of Galilee, the Lord Jesus walks out on top of the choppy waves towards them. When He reaches the disciples, they are terrified. Just like we would be, I think. But He says to them, "Take courage, do not be afraid. It is I."

The background to this miraculous sign is first of all the great Exodus from Egypt. The water of the Sea of Galilee is not split in two, but in both instances a path is made where no human could make a way. In Psalm 77 we read that God Himself led the way through the water. And so when the disciples see Christ coming to them, and hear Him say, "It is I," or "I AM," they cannot escape the fact that in Jesus God Himself has come to bring another exodus, a greater exodus, this time from sin and Satan.

But this is a little different – walking on the water, not *through* it. This also has an Old Testament background. In Scripture we read about how God treads the waves of the sea (e.g. Job 9:8). The sea represents evil in all of its chaos and disruptiveness. Pagan myths talked about how creation began when certain gods slew sea creatures. Some of the psalms (e.g. Ps. 74, 89) proclaim that this can only be said of Yahweh, the LORD. Only He makes life possible.

So when Christ walks on water, it symbolizes his authority not only over waves and wind, but also over sin and evil in all of its unruly rebellion. It is a sign of what He will merit on the cross – how He will be that King that fights in a far greater way to bring peace and order and new life in a world filled with unbridled sin and hatred and death.

That is wondrous enough! But in Matthew's gospel, we have another addition. Peter steps out of the boat, makes a few steps on the water as well, but falters and is rebuked by Christ for his little faith.

Some have said Peter's request to walk on water is childish. But our Lord doesn't rebuke him. His little faith is rebuked, but not his walking on water.

Disciples are meant to follow their Master. We are also meant to walk on water, as we trust firmly in Christ, and we are rebuked for not being able to do this.

What does this mean? Should we head out to the nearest lake?

We have been given the privilege and the authority to begin to live as our Saviour lived and even to die as He died. We are to tread the waves of the sea underfoot and bring peace and life, to absorb evil by turning the other cheek rather than stirring it up. We are to love with God's love, be patient with God's patience, be holy as God as holy; to be

faithful to others as God is faithful to us. We are also called to be kings who rule with the Word and Spirit of Christ over sin and Satan and who boldly go where no sinner has gone before. Are those

impossible things to ask? They are like walking on water.

What do you expect of the Lord Jesus? He has come to do something far greater than we could imagine – to tread the waves

of evil underfoot and bring a salvation far greater than any earthly power dares to offer.

And what is more – He calls us to come, to follow Him, and to walk on water as we look to Him!



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Towards a Common Songbook (Part 11)

Church Music and Culture

The last several guidelines speak to the music of the church's songs rather than to the words. The previous guideline, number 9, says that "...the music of the church should be expressive of the Reformed tradition." Guideline 10 articulates the other side of this when it says:

The music of the church should not be borrowed from music that suggests places and occasions other than the church and the worship of God.

As we said in the last article, this is more an art than a science. On the one hand, if the music reminds the worshippers of either one of Wagner's operas or of a Rolling Stones concert, something is amiss. No one wants to be reminded of either *Die Walküre* or *Jumpin' Jack Flash* during worship!

Once, during the 1970s, a church organist played a lovely prelude he had written. The trouble was,

and unbeknownst to him, it sounded a lot like *El Condor Pasa* by Paul Simon. Many of the youth in the church thought the middle aged organist was rather hip. When someone told him, he said that he would never play the piece in church again because he did not want the music he played in the service to suggest places and occasions other than the church and the worship of God.

Recently, around Christmas time, a young church organist played the traditional Gaelic melody *Bunessan*. Several old hymns have lyrics to this melody; among them is the Christmas hymn *Child in the Manger*. In 1931, Eleanor Farjeon wrote *Morning Has Broken* using this melody. Cat Stevens, a pop singer of the 1960s and 1970s, popularized this song. Many of the middle aged people in the church were wondering why the young organist had gone to

Cat Stevens's 1971 album, *Teaser and the Firecat*, for his musical inspiration! Of course he had not, but the old melody he was playing suggested, to many, places and occasions other than the church and the worship of God. Likely, a good argument can be made for not playing *Bunessan* during a worship service.

Most will agree that the church's music should not be borrowed from either the opera theatre or the rock concert. This guideline has a text of Scripture attached to it, Ephesians 5:18-20:

Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul contrasts singing praises to the Triune God with drunkenness and debauchery. Quite a contrast! The reason this text is a footnote to the guideline should be clear. The music of the church should not be borrowed from places steeped in worldliness and sin.

Having said that, it cannot be denied that all music has a cultural background. If you worship with African Christians, you will be singing different music than when you worship with Euro-North Americans. There is no special "Holy Ghost" music. We need to be culturally honest when we sing in church. Many think that the Reformers were trying to invent a particular church style of music but, in fact, much of the music of the Reformation reflected the popular styles of the sixteenth century. Queen Elizabeth I, accustomed to the solemn chants and Latin hymns of the medieval church, dismissed the lively songs of the Reformation as "Geneva Jigs." The Reformers reintroduced congregational singing. To do so, you need to give the congregation music to which it can relate. Music cannot be written in a cultural vacuum. Before the church hierarchy took singing away from the congregation, men like Ambrose, the fourth century bishop of Milan, wrote Latin hymns that sounded familiar to the ears of the worshippers.

We also need to realize that the church is bigger than just our federations of North American churches. Because we confess a universal church that includes people other than "me" and "people like me," we are all going to need to learn some songs that

we may not appreciate at first. Hopefully the new songbook will stretch us a bit out of our comfort zones and bring us to new heights in singing glory to God. The Book of Revelation shows that the

church is made up of every race, tribe, and tongue, all singing praise to God. We hope that this new songbook will give us a foretaste of the music of the future, glorified church.





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Convocation Report of the 37th Anniversary Meeting and 32nd Convocation of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches

It was one of those warm Ontario September evenings when people assembled at Redeemer College in Hamilton for the thirty-seventh anniversary meeting and thirty-second convocation of the Theological College of the Canadian Reformed Churches. There was a good turnout. Good to see that the College has a place in the hearts of so many!

After the governors and graduates filed into the hall, the assembly sang Psalm 84:1, 2. The chairman of the board opened the meeting in the usual Christian manner, with Scripture reading and prayer. In the opening prayer, among other things, the circumstances of our former professor of Diaconiology and Ecclesiology, Dr. J. De Jong and his family were brought before the Lord. After some words of welcome, it was mentioned that letters of greeting had been received from the Canadian Reformed Church of Dunnville/Wainfleet (home church of graduate Mr. Horlings), from the Free Reformed Churches of Albany, Byford, and Darling Downs, as well as from the Deputies for Training for the Ministry of the Free

Reformed Churches of Australia. The letter from the church of Darling Downs was read as representative of the letters received.

The present principal of the College, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, presented his Principal's Report. In this report he mentioned that while last year's report had characterized the previous year as a "year of change and transition," it may be said with gratitude that this time the Lord has granted a "regular year." The work at the college could continue unhindered and five students successfully completed their studies, as could be witnessed that evening. Dr. Gootjes also remembered the passing away of Prof. and Mrs. H.M. Ohmann earlier this year. You'll be able to read the full report of the principal in *Clarion*.

Prof. G.H. Visscher delivered the address entitled "How Should the Pulpit Address the Pew? Some Lessons from Paul." In this address Prof. Visscher showed us how his study of the letters of the Apostle Paul led him to assert that preachers should view the church as a whole as the assembly of

believers, the family of God. This speech will also be published in *Clarion*.

After the address and song, the degrees and diplomas were solemnly conferred on the respective graduates. Mr. Hendrik Alkema and Mr. Richard Horlings were conferred with the degree of Master of Divinity. Brother Alkema has accepted a call to the church of Houston, B.C. and Brother Horlings is doing an internship in Edmonton. Miss Maple Zeng of B.C. and Mr. Andrew VanderHeide of Australia (in absentia) received the Diploma of Theological Studies. Rev. Ian Wildeboer, who is missionary in Papua New Guinea for the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, was awarded the Diploma of Missiology Studies. It's always a moment of humble pride when graduates receive their degrees and diplomas. There is pride because of the achievement, but at the same time humility because it is the Lord who gave the time and the gifts to achieve. God grant the graduates the will and way to use the knowledge of his living Word to the glory of his name and the benefit of his church.



*Front row: Rev. J. Degelder, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam, Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes,
Prof. G.H. Visscher, Dr. A.J. de Visser
Back row: Ms. M. Zeng, Mr. H. Alkema, Mr. R. Horlings, Rev. I. Wildeboer*

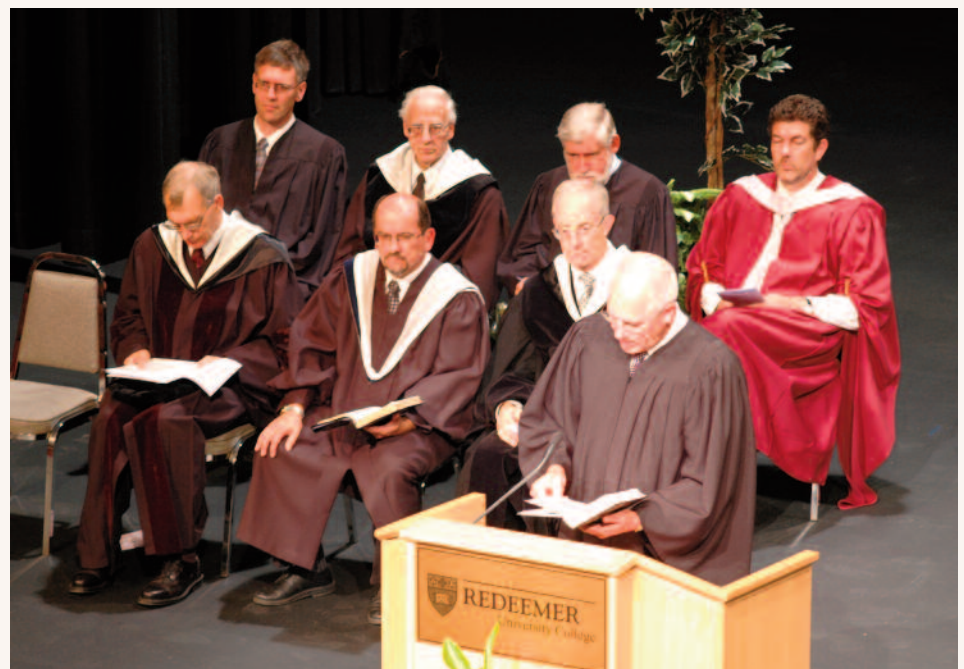
Brother Richard Horlings spoke some words of gratitude on behalf of the graduates.

The Women's Savings Action, which has truly been active again, made the customary presentation of monies collected from the churches for books for the college library. Sisters D. Gootjes, J. VanDam, and C. Nienhuis handed the principal a cheque for \$30,000. It is truly amazing how this amount is collected and handed over from year to year by this women's organization. What a blessing for the College and especially for the library, which is such a valuable resource!

While the organist, Mr. B. Vanderhout played an interlude on the organ, a collection was held for the College Organ Fund. The present electronic organ in the meeting hall at the college is on its "last legs" and the staff and students would be delighted to be able to have a good organ to accompany the singing which takes place there at assemblies. The College always willingly

accepts gifts for the organ. Just mark your gifts as for the organ fund.

After a closing hymn, Rev. J. VanWoudenberg led in closing prayer. As is customary, the assembly concluded with the singing of "O Canada." There was opportunity to congratulate the graduates afterwards and to enjoy refreshments and fellowship with people from various places. The evening went smoothly and wasn't too lengthy at all. It was good to be able to rejoice not only in the successful completion of studies on the part of the graduates, but also in how our College has been a blessing for the church of the Lord here and abroad. God grant the professors and students his favour this new academic year 2006/2007!



*Front row: Prof. Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Prof. G.H. Visscher, Prof. Dr. C. Van Dam
Back row: Rev. J. van Woudenberg, Prof. J. Geertsema, Rev. J. Degelder,
Dr. A.J. de Visser
At podium: Rev. J. Moesker*





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How should the Pulpit address the Pew?

Some Lessons from Paul

Address delivered at the College Evening, September 8, 2006

Just how should the person on the pulpit view those who are in the pew?

This question appears to be very much of concern today. I am thinking about a remark in a very recent issue of *Clarion* in which we were told that there is this longstanding belief among the Free Reformed that Canadian Reformed ministers really do not understand what an experiential, discriminating ministry should be (Vol. 55, No. 17, p. 403).

What does it look like to belong to this family?

I am thinking also of the accusation often directed at our federation to the effect that we, who have rejected Kuyper's presumptive regeneration, seem to have let it back in through the backdoor because of the way in which we view our children.

I am thinking of the fact, of course, that we have several young people before us who will face this challenge in their future ministries: how should they view those who assemble week after week under the preaching of the Word?

There are many approaches to preaching, but I would like to suggest this evening that it is possible to build an approach out of an understanding of who the audience is. It's quite straightforward. If we view them all as condemned and hardened in sin, that will bring about a certain kind of preaching. Conversely, if we view them all as saved and safe, that will determine the content and the tenor of preaching as well.

Some of you will realize that, for some time now, I have been working on Romans 4 as a test of modern approaches to New Testament studies. My family in fact would tell you that I have been working on this *too long*. But that's just the nature of dissertation work. In any case, while working on the last part of Romans 4, I became deeply impressed how, in this chapter which is really all about justification by faith for Jew and Gentile, Abraham is utterly convinced that whereas he is unable, God is able. Faith for Abraham is entirely a matter of believing in the promises of God, believing in the power of the God who is able to do what he is not able to do. Abraham, Paul says, knew that both his body and Sarah's womb were "as good as dead;" "Yet," says Paul, "he did not waver through unbelief regarding

the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. This is why it was credited to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:20-22). Clearly faith is embracing the promises and the power of God. This is a very

Wisdom is the work of God in Christ

significant point, since Abraham is the father of all believers, Jews and Gentiles, according to Paul. The one answer for all the people of God is to "walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had..." (Rom 4:12). Living in the disposition of faith, embracing God throughout our lives is what the Christian life is all about. What strikes us about Abraham is that it is not Abraham, but it is God who does everything. And that seems to me to be what we need to lay hold of.

As others have touched on this,¹ I do not pretend to be telling you something entirely new; but few seem to have worked it out the way I think it should be. There is little about this in textbooks on preaching.²

My point is that in the writings of Paul, we have a model as to how

a minister ought to view his congregation. Every service is like a letter of Paul, or any of the other apostles for that matter.

We begin most of our services with what? Words from the beginning of 1 Corinthians: "Grace and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 1:2). We end our worship services with what? Words from the end of Paul's second letter to the Corinthians: "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:14).

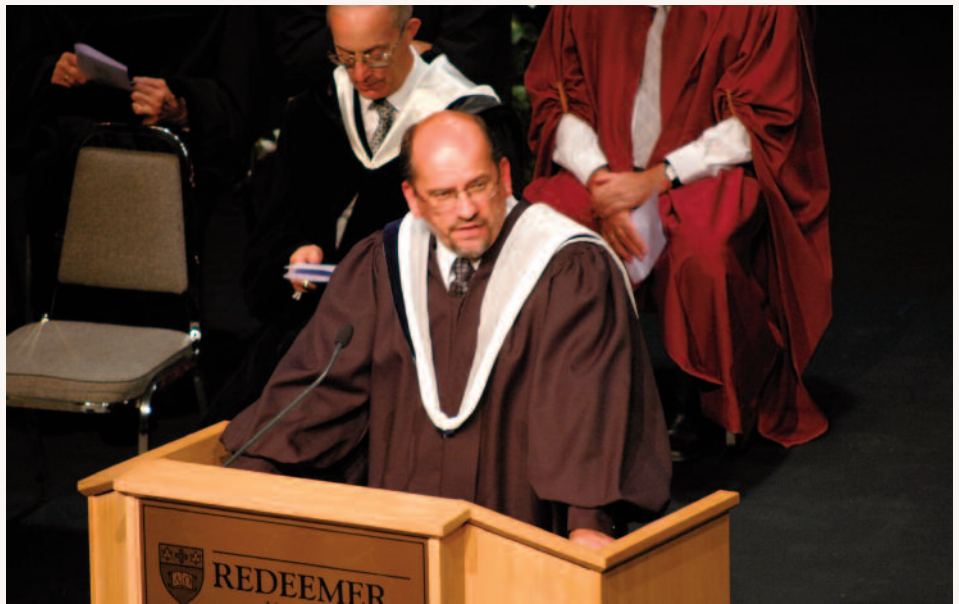
How do we begin our sermons? With the address: "Beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ." But are we sufficiently aware as we preach that this is whom we are addressing?

Sermons are not an address to *potential* members of the congregation. Sermons are not an address to the *part* of the congregation that we think believes. They are an address, a proclamation to the congregation that has professed and does profess God as God, Jesus as Saviour and Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now, consider: how does Paul speak to that congregation?

I suspect that if one of us would be pastoring a church that had all the problems the Corinthians had, we would be addressing that question: do you believe or do you not? Are you part of the Christian community or are you not? We would be issuing our calls for faith and repentance.

But strikingly, that is not Paul's approach. He begins this letter, "I always thank God for you because of. . ." (1 Cor 1:4). And he, very pastorally, urges them to depart from their divisiveness (ch. 1), to expel the hardened sinner (ch. 5), to



Prof. G.H. Visscher

settle their differences internally (ch. 6), and so forth. That, by the way, is a pattern throughout all of his letters. Embracing the positive, appreciating how they are a new body in Jesus Christ, and acknowledging the presence of the work of the Spirit who continues to renew the churches and all those who believe.

You see, there is an approach to preaching that focuses again and again on the manner in which we enter the family of God. It is busy, you could say, with the *doorway* into that family. Questions of election, and faith, and experience, and whether you belong, receive ample attention. And I do not deny that those questions need to be dealt with now and then, especially when the text calls for it. Paul does that too: Romans 4, Galatians 3. But, for Paul, it is not always about that. He's not busy so much with what it takes to get into this family, but he is busy again and again with the question: what does it look like to belong to this family? What do its family members look like? He's busy with the question: are we living out of

Christ Jesus? By the power of the Holy Spirit?

And why does Paul follow this approach? Because he truly does see them *in Christ* and as a congregation *of Christ*.

One can think in this regard of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 1:30, where he speaks about our Lord Jesus Christ "who has become for us wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption." Rather than upbraiding them for their lack of faith, he attempts to persuade them that despite their lowly calling, they already possess true wisdom in Christ Jesus, and he defines that wisdom in terms of "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." It is not the age or creativity of human beings that constitutes wisdom. It is not Paul's own eloquence that will make them wise. Wisdom is the work of God in Christ. Paul uses these three metaphors to try to explain the depth and the breadth of what the people of God are in Christ. Their *righteousness* is by faith in Jesus Christ. Their *redemption* is through the one Redeemer, Jesus Christ. But similarly, their *holiness*, by which

he appears to mean first of all their positional holiness, their new status as sanctified believers, as holy congregation. Not unlike Israel, the new people of God are set aside in Christ and called to manifest their new lives daily until it is perfected on the day of the Lord. This is strikingly evident in 1 Corinthians 6, where Paul reminds the Corinthians of their former lives as sexual immoral, idolaters, adulterers, and the like. "That is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor 6:11). Precisely because it is all from God in Christ by the Holy Spirit, therefore Paul is slow to suggest that their faith is not good enough, or their status is questionable, but he is constantly urging them by the power of the Holy Spirit to be what they are in Christ. It is again and again the imperative based on the indicative. Precisely because they are in Christ, they must live the life in Christ. Precisely because they are holy, they are to be holy. Precisely because they *have* been set free from sin, they are not to let sin *reign* over them. If Paul tells the people of God so emphatically in Romans 6 that they must consider themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus, should the preacher not help them to live out of that wonderful reality?

The point is that everything is not said and done once we have come to the faith or once it has been verified in some way or the other that our faith is true. While we need of course this imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ, He who is our wisdom, our righteousness, and our sanctification also continues to work in us by His Spirit so that we

are transformed persons, renewed beings who also fulfill the requirements of the law (cf. LD 32). It is striking that throughout Corinthians, the solutions to each problem, each challenge that the congregation faces, is answered by exploring for them what it means to be in Christ and to continue to be renewed by the work of the Spirit of Christ. Chapter 2 sets forth that methodology: his preaching is not just some eloquent and persuasive words; rather, it comes with "a demonstration of the Spirit's power." And chapter after chapter thereafter puts it into practice; the divisions of the church at Corinth are reprehensible because they divide Christ (1:13)

There is a tremendous dynamic about the life in Christ through the Spirit that we are often slow to consider

and destroy the temple of the Holy Spirit (3:16, 17). The immoral man of chapter 5 is to be expelled because they really are congregation of Christ (5:7, 12). Lawsuits should not be happening among them because in Christ after all they are the saints who are to judge the world one day (6:2). Sexual immorality is off limits precisely because their bodies are "members of Christ" (6:15) and "temples of the Holy Spirit" (6:19). Questions about marriage and singleness are all dealt with on the basis of the fact that these persons all belong to the Lord (7:17, 32, 33, and 39). And that is how it goes throughout Paul's letters.

Every preacher would do well to read through Paul (or other New Testament writers) and consider whether he so addresses his people. It is true that these are letters, not sermons, but one who reads them carefully can have no doubt that Paul would so address God's people in preaching as well. The principles are the same. They are not just in Adam; they are in Christ. They have everything in Christ. And so, blessings and growth and strength will come to them, not through human eloquence, not through force, the cunning of men, or whatever else; but in Christ, through the presence and the power of the Spirit. There is a tremendous dynamic about the life in Christ through the Spirit that we are often slow to consider. Precisely because the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are persons who live within us (1 Cor 3, Rom. 8:23), who grieve (Eph 4:30), and can be sorrowful and quenched (1 Thess 5:19), the person who is in Christ needs to be reminded of the challenges of this dynamic relationship.

One can compare in this regard how Paul writes in his letters with how Paul preaches in the book of Acts. He is always what you could call, "audience sensitive." At Lystra (14:8-18) and in Athens (17: 22-31) he has a completely different message than he does in Thessalonica (17:1-4) and Berea (17:10-15). Among the Jews, he will argue from out of the Old Testament Scriptures (18:4); among the Gentiles, he will argue from out of creation and providence (14:15-18; 17: 22-31), declaring to them the content of Scripture; but among the Christians, he will remind them of the greatness of God's work in Christ through his Spirit (20:18-35).

And all of Paul's letters are proof of the latter.

So too, it seems to me, a preacher should be "audience-sensitive." The congregation of Jesus Christ cannot be addressed in the same way as one would address a gathering of persons who are interested but do not (yet) believe. Even in a gathering where both groups are present, one cannot use the same "brush," so to speak and address them in the same terms.

To come back to that image of the doorway for a moment, it goes here somewhat in the same manner as it goes in the family. Parents are not always standing at the doorway, discussing with the children whether they are in or out, whether they belong or not. The children belong and they live in the security of their parents' love. So too with the family of God. There are times when the call for faith and repentance will be heard clearly and forcefully also in this family. But at the same time, there is not this unending preoccupation with the question whether they are in or out. They have been embraced with the love of God. And they need to be shown time after time, Lord's Day after Lord's Day, what it means to be in Christ and to be renewed again and again by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. To be sure, if that does not resonate within them, they will move towards the door and office bearers will, so to speak, have a discussion again about those questions of faith and repentance and those discussions and appeals will have a passion about them. But that is not a weekly preoccupation in the family of God anymore than it is a weekly preoccupation in the family home.

To put it frankly, to be sent out of church repeatedly on the Lord's

Day wondering whether I live on the brink of faith and unbelief because of what I see in myself is a discouraging way to live. But to leave the building with the conviction that God loves us in Christ and to be challenged to live then as we are in Christ by the power of the Spirit of God. . . that is uplifting and delightful. That is what we need. And that, I have no doubt, is Paul's way.

They need to be shown time after time, Lord's Day after Lord's Day, what it means to be in Christ and to be renewed again and again by the Spirit

To put it somewhat more technically, one of our learned brothers has pointed to how the Canons of Dort, Chapter 2, Article 5, does not say that it is the *call* for faith and repentance that must be the focus of the preaching, but it is the *promise* of the gospel that ought to be proclaimed. "The promise of the gospel is that whoever believes in Christ crucified shall not perish but have eternal life. This promise ought to be announced and proclaimed universally and without discrimination to all peoples and to all men, to whom God in his good pleasure sends the gospel, together with the command to repent and believe." And this is so precisely because the promise itself includes the powerful work of the Spirit, everything we need to believe and walk in faith. Dr. Hendriks goes on to point out that in the churches that see it

differently, the preaching of the necessity of rebirth is wrongly placed between the preaching of the gospel promise and the congregation, and that leads to man-centeredness again.³ It is instead the promise of the gospel that must be preached and embraced; and that reminds me of that theme in Romans 4, about Abraham who embraces the promise that comes from the God who can do and will do what he cannot do ((4:13, 14, 16, and 20)!

To be sure, all of this does not exclude our children and our young people. While they surely need to be reminded of the need to walk in faith, embracing the promises of God, Paul recognizes that they possess this sanctification, this positional holiness in Christ (1 Cor 7), and in Ephesians 6 (v.1, 4; cf. 1:1), he addresses them too as members of the church. Covenant children are not in the community because they believe, but precisely because they are in, they need to believe and grow up into maturity into Christ by the power of his Spirit. There is nothing automatic here. For children, for teens, for adults, faith and repentance are needed daily. But throughout all this we should continue to stand behind the classic words of the Form for Baptism: Just as our children "share without their knowledge in the condemnation of Adam, so are they, without their knowledge, received into grace in Christ." To be sure, as they mature, there will be "doorway discussions" about faith and belonging; not however because they are outside, but precisely because they are inside the family and Christ and his Spirit "are promised to them no less than to adults" (LD 27). It has to do with the promise again! And that promise is not just about future

realities⁴; it cuts into the present and offers them too strength and blessing as they walk in the ways of faith.

This, it seems, is one significant solution to the redemptive-historical question. It is often difficult to know what a real redemptive-historical approach is in a sermon. This says it, does it not? Whatever the passage being dealt with, the minister is not speaking to the Israelites of David's day (nor to the Philistines of David's day!) or the Jews of Jesus' day; he is speaking to a congregation that has been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ and struggles today to give glory to God.

It is a solid antidote to moralism. Moralistic preaching, no doubt, will make people behave somewhat better. All ethical teaching, all promotion of religious values, whether they be Christian or Buddhist or whatever, will probably render some positive benefit. But it is the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God alone that softens hardened hearts and changes stubborn sinners into new creatures who are directed to God and his glory. Moralistic preaching will make bad people better; but real preaching in the strength of Christ and his Spirit makes dead people alive, old people new!

When I, as a preacher, am not cognizant of these points, but just busy with admonitions of my own cunning and fine exegetical points that I might find, then I am relying on eloquence – what Paul warns against in 1 Corinthians. This is inadequate administration of the Word of God to the people of God, bought with his blood, filled with his Spirit.

This seems to me to be an answer to the charge that our preaching is much too objective, that we are addressing the brain

and not the heart. The criticism is not entirely unjustified. Surely when we learn from Paul, we are not just delivering academic lectures to be judged by how many interesting insights they contain. "Powerful preaching occurs only when a Spirit-illuminated man of God expounds clearly and compellingly God's Spirit-inspired revelation in Scripture to a Spirit-illuminated congregation."⁵ And that is going to be "experiential" in the good sense of the word as it probes into our hearts and the wonderful reality of God and his Spirit dwells in us and challenges us to be what are in Christ, of grace. Dr. C. Trimp refers at one point to Dr. H. Bavinck to make the point that it is a precarious thing to found our faith on our own experience, for our inner life will always remain imperfect on this side of the grave; "Not even in a single one of the Twelve Articles of Faith am I able to replace 'I believe' with 'I experience.'" Trimp writes, "Experiences have a right to exist and are inseparable from godliness. We find many examples of this all through Scripture, especially in the Psalms where feelings are expressed as they should be. But, added Bavinck, it is always the Word of God that brings about these experiences of faith. Further, they do not precede faith but accompany and follow it. Thus they can never be the foundation of faith."⁶

That seems to be the sense of what Paul means by the call to "examine yourselves" in 2 Corinthians 13. It is not a call to look for surety of faith in experience in and of itself. But it is a call to examine our hearts and lives as to whether we know of any evidence of this Christ and his Spirit dwelling in us. Does the gospel resonate in us? Is it making any difference? Imagine having a guest in your house and you pay no

attention to him. Eventually, I think he will find the door and leave. So too, we have honoured guests living in us. Does that not come with tremendous challenges? But if we ignore them, what will the consequences be?

You see, my struggle as a Christian – and I suspect yours – is not so much that I do not believe. It is: what does this faith look like? How do I live with these honoured guests in me? What are the daily challenges and consequences of our wonderful status in Christ?

That is where the pulpit must come to the aid of the pew every time again. May the Lord bless all those who are called by Him to this tremendous task.

¹ See e.g., Hendriks, "Experiential Preaching," *Diakonia* (Volume II, Number 4; June 1989) 76.

² Clarence Stam, though from a different angle, that of the covenant, makes some similar points in a chapter on "The Covenant and Preaching" in *The Covenant of Love: Exploring our Relationship with God* (Premier, 1999), 141-147.

³ Hendriks, "Experiential Preaching," 76.

⁴ On this, see C. Trimp, "The Promise of the Covenant: Some Observations," *Unity in Diversity: Studies Presented to Dr. Jelle Faber*, (Premier, 1989) 71-77. Trimp also comments: "Should man refuse to accept God's promise in faith, the validity of the promise yet remains; but the saving power of the promise is lost. The promise is aimed at faith and faith is closely connected to the promise" (77).

⁵ John MacArthur, "The Spirit of God and Expositor Preaching," *Rediscovering Expository Preaching* (Word, 1992) 103.

⁶ C. Trimp, "A Resounding Gospel: Preaching and our Experience of Faith," *Diakonia* Vol. 11, no 3, p. 82. See the whole chapter for a fine exposition of what experiential preaching is in the right sense of the word.

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nhgootjes@canrc.org*

Principal's Report, 2006

In the previous principal's report, Dr. C. Van Dam characterized the year that had gone by as a year of change and transition. When we consider the bygone year today, we can say with gratitude that the Lord has granted a return to regularity. It started off with the convocation, where Dr. A.J. de Visser was installed as Professor at the College. In his inaugural speech he dealt with "The Missional Church Movement." Moreover, the teaching staff has been expanded by the addition of Rev. De Gelder, appointed as temporary instructor to teach the Church Polity course. We are thankful to the Lord that these qualified theologians were able to take up their teaching, filling the vacancy resulting from the illness of Dr. J. De Jong. At the same time, we continue to pray that the Lord will be near to Dr. De Jong and his family and grant them strength in their situation.

We also remember the first generation of professors at the College. It is our prayer that Mrs. Faber and Mrs. Deddens may continue to be in good health. However, both Prof. and Mrs. Ohmann passed away during this school year. In the early years of our college, Prof. Ohmann, then minister in The Netherlands, was called to teach the Old Testament courses. Appointed in 1971, he



Rev. I. Wildeboer, Ms. M. Zeng, Mr. R. Horlings, Mr. H. Alkema

taught here for twelve years. When our sister institution in Kampen needed him to teach the Old Testament subjects, they returned to The Netherlands. We praise the Lord for all the work they did in his service, in particularly for what they contributed to our Theological College.

At this point it should be noted that his successor, Dr. C. Van Dam, has been teaching at the Theological College for twenty-five years. We congratulate him and his family for having reached this milestone and we thank the Lord for his contribution to the College, not only for teaching the Old Testament but also for his work in several other functions. It should

be added that in all this he was continually supported by his wife. May the Lord grant him all he needs to introduce the students in the riches of salvation, as shown in the Old Testament.

Students

During the previous convocation, the degree of Master of Divinity was conferred on Mr. Dong-Woo Oh. Following his graduation, he went to Smithers, B.C., where he worked among the native people in Fort Babine. Having completed his work there, he is now pursuing further study.

Tonight, two students will receive the Master of Divinity degree, Mr. Hendrik Alkema and

Mr. Richard Horlings, who is going to do an internship in Edmonton, Alberta. Mr. Alkema has accepted the call extended to him by the church in Houston, B.C. May the Lord bless them so that they will be enabled to work faithfully in the vineyard of the Lord. Further, Mr. Andrew VanderHeide and Ms. Maple Zeng have fulfilled the requirements of the Diploma of Theological Studies program. Andrew is ready to take up the mission work supported by the Free Reformed Churches in Australia and Maple will be working side by side with Rev. Dong in the Urban Mission project in Langley, B.C. Further, Rev. Ian Wildeboer, having completed his study of missiology under the guidance of Dr. de Visser, will receive the Diploma of Missiology tonight before returning to Papua New Guinea to preach the gospel of salvation there.

While we officially say farewell to five students, we gained seven. Admitted to the Master of Divinity program are: Mr. Ryan J. Kampen, from Burlington, Ontario; Mr. Tony Roukema, from Langley, B.C.; Mr. J. Tim Sikkema from Smithville, Ontario; Mr. Jason Van de Burgt, from Chilliwack, B.C.; Mr. Sean Wagenaar, from Armadale, Australia, and Mr. Arend Witten, from Albany, Australia. Further, Mr. Patrick Jok from Khartoum, Sudan will resume his studies for the Master of Divinity degree and Ms. Francine Van Woudenberg will take up again the study for the Diploma of Theological Studies.

We are thankful that we can welcome so many new students who are preparing for the ministry and that Patrick and Francine are able to continue their respective

studies. May the Lord bless the effort of all our students, so that his name will be glorified in the work they intend to do.

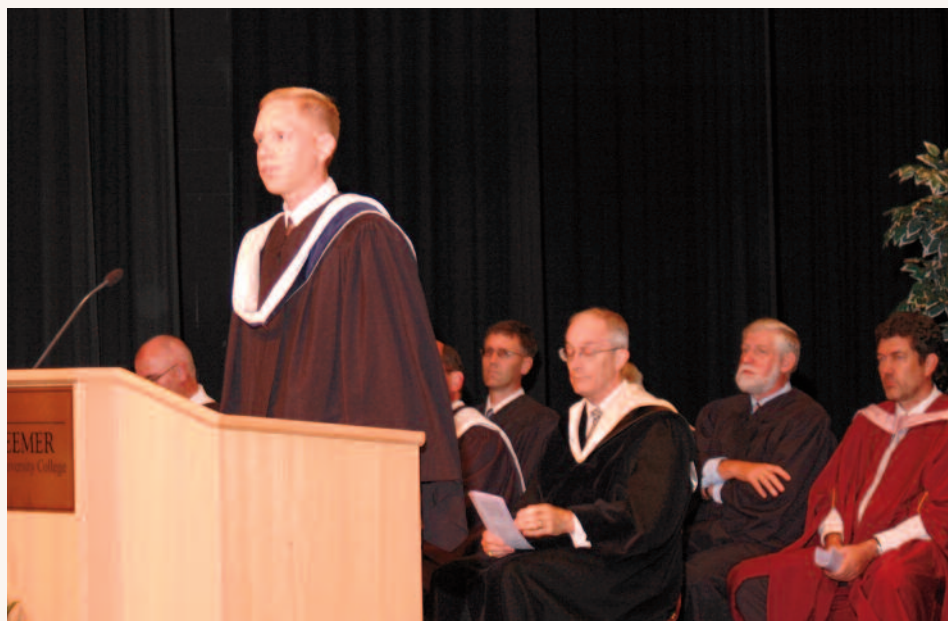
Academic year

With gratitude to the Lord it can be reported that during the previous year the work at the College could continue unhindered. This sounds so obvious that we could take it for granted that lectures were given according to schedule and that there was an opportunity to grow in the knowledge of God's Word and its implications. It is therefore good to review the work done in the previous school year, so that we again gratefully thank our faithful God that the teaching and study could proceed without interruption. He also granted health to both teachers and students. We look back at the completed year with gratitude for the opportunity to grow in

understanding in the riches of the gospel of salvation.

In addition, there was also what my predecessor Dr. J. Faber used to call the "icing on the cake." In the past year, we were privileged to listen to several special lecturers who were able to tell us more about specific issues. Dr. W. Helder provided insight in the work behind the rhyming of the Psalms we find in the *Book of Praise*. He is the right person to deal with the issue, for over twenty-five years he provided many new and updated rhyming for the psalms. He gave a historical survey of the origin of the present *Book of Praise* and how the work on it still continues.

Dr. N.D. Kloosterman, professor of Ethics and New Testament at Mid America Reformed Seminary, addressed students and guests on Reformation Day, October 31. It was fitting that he decided to deal with the issue of Law and Gospel in the Reformed Confessions. He showed

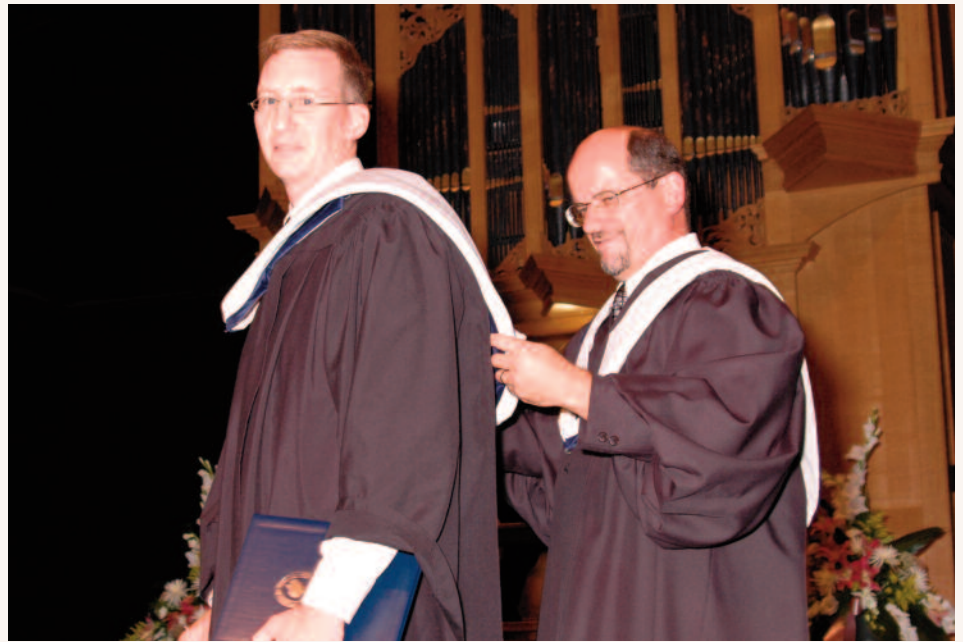


Mr. Richard Horlings

from the confessions that law and gospel are not in opposition, for each has its origin in God and in Jesus Christ. We should keep both faith and obedience together, as is done in the confessions.

Br. Malcolm Wildeboer argued in his presentation that the Reformation of the sixteenth century influenced the way churches were built. He illustrated this with examples such as prominence of the pulpit and the placing of the baptismal font in the main hall itself, rather than in a chapel. We should consciously continue in this direction.

Close to the end of the school year, Rev. L.W. De Graaf, minister in one of our sister churches in Hattem, The Netherlands, addressed the students on the situation of our sister churches. As he had attended the recent General Synod, he was the right person to bring us up to date on the situation. He acknowledged that locally situations were resolved



differently, but focusing on the decisions of the General Synod, he explained the official direction of the churches.

At the College, we appreciate such speeches which keep us up to date of developments both in our own environment and far away and we are thankful for those who are willing to share their special knowledge.

We also welcome the opportunity to visit the churches. This year, Dr. de Visser visited the

churches in Alberta, speaking about the work at the College. And at the invitation of the churches in the Fraser Valley, he gave a speech on evangelism.

Foreign Student Bursary Fund

Part of the College is the Foreign Student Bursary, which is actively supporting students from other countries. We are grateful for the support for this fund and we welcome any donation, large or small. With the blessing of the Lord, these donations will help improve the proclamation of the gospel of salvation in often faraway places.

Library

Just as any library, the library of the College needs to be kept up to date in order to function properly. This requires that our library continually acquire books contributing to the ongoing theological discussion. We are in the fortunate position of having two sources for the funding: the contribution made available by the governors and the contribution of the Women's Savings Action. This allows us to buy the necessary





resources and to stay up to date with the current state of the theological discussion, in books and journals.

We appreciate all the work done by our librarian, Ms. Margaret Van der Velde, to manage the library. She was able to attend the annual conference of the Association of Christian Librarians (ACL) from June 12-15, 2006. Both the speeches of the keynote speakers and the presentations of the workshop she attended were helpful and the opportunity to discuss issues with other librarians was rewarding. At this point it should also be mentioned that we value highly the work done by volunteers, who come in regularly to work for the library.

Administration

Catharine Mechelse takes care of the general office, making sure that all the things that are needed for the smooth running of the College actually are provided,

including the preparation of the College Evening. She also enthusiastically shows classes of school children around in the building. In addition, she is responsible for the actual ordering of the books. One change has been implemented which has made her

work easier: callers are now able to directly reach the person they want to talk to. If the first months are indicative of the future, then we can say that this system is an improvement.

In conclusion

We are grateful to the Lord that He has allowed the Theological College to do what it was established for: the training for the ministry of the Word. Paul once clearly defined this purpose, when he pointed out to Titus that "our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order that they may provide for daily necessities and not live unproductive lives" (Titus 3:14). God grant that those who have graduated from the Theological College and those graduating today may teach God's people to devote themselves to living productive lives in his service.





Presentation of the Women's Savings Action at the College Evening

Mr. President, Members of the Board and Faculty, Graduates, Brothers and Sisters:

The Women's Savings Action has now been collecting funds for the Library of the Theological College for many years. The representatives in the congregations organize a collection, count the money, and send it on to the treasurer. Every year there is enough money so that the library grows and is kept up to date. The method of collection we use now is basically the same as thirty-seven years ago.

Now we have been thinking: should we not become more creative and update our methods in this electronic age? Should we not, for example, have our own super up-to-date web space? We are already mentioned on the College website, but we could have something much more interesting. We could even add the possibility of buying a special Women's Savings Action screen saver for your computers, with whirling coins and cheques changing into book cases being filled with more and more books.

What about selling spray bottles of authentic library air? Regular, extra musty, or with dust particles? Of course, with ozone-friendly propellant.

Maybe we could have our own auction of collectibles on eBay. Imagine packs of collectible cards of all the professors and students, with one or two authenticated signatures guaranteed in every pack. Of course

such collectibles would include lots of statistics about the professors, such as lectures given, exams and assignments corrected, average marks given, etc. And for the students they could include lectures attended, number of times they fell asleep during class, and marks received. It could actually become quite a useful resource for consistories.

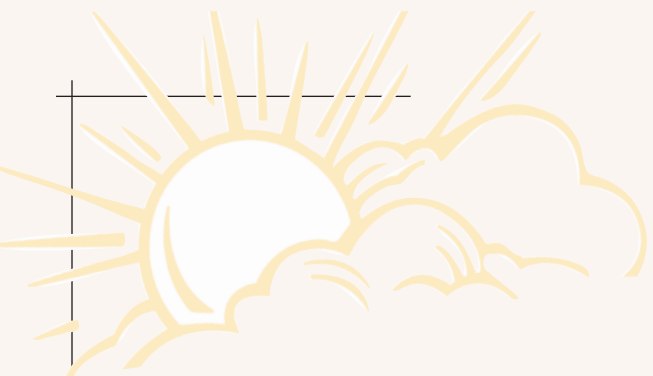
Possibilities kept coming up! Of course, this was all said tongue in cheek. But there were some neat ideas, weren't there? And maybe we should consider making more use of the computer with the computer finding its way into more and more homes. But, you know, an important element in the present way of collecting would disappear and that is the personal involvement of a representative in each of our congregations, as well as the personal involvement of those who assist her in contacting members of the congregation and

in the counting of funds. It is this personal involvement of so many people that helps keep the cause of the library alive in so many hearts. Every year the funds are there again so that the Women's Savings Action can make a presentation at the College evening for the library. And there is no need for all kinds of gimmicks to entice people to give. The donations come in faithfully from members of the church who care. The Lord has worked a love for the work of the training for the ministry in the hearts of his people. That is what we are thankful for and that is what we see as our main strength. With that strength we would like to continue under God's blessing.

It is with great gratitude to the Lord that we may announce that during this past year a total of \$31,136.72 was collected, making it possible to hand over a pledge of \$30,000 for this coming year. A heartfelt thank you to all of you.



Mrs. Dinie Gootjes, Mrs. Joanne Van Dam, Mrs. Chris Nienhuis



Ray of Sunshine

By Mrs. Corinne Gelms and Mrs. Erna Nordeman

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and discipline."
Proverbs 1:7

The book of Proverbs is filled with much wisdom. It gives guidance in the knowledge of the way we should go. The book of Proverbs is very practical for us today, in how we should live our life of gratitude before the Lord.

This book also reminds us of Psalm 1, which illustrates the only two ways which one can go in life, namely the way of obedience and the way of disobedience. This knowledge and wisdom of which way to go cannot be obtained by just ordinary studying. It must be built on a proper foundation. This foundation is founded in Proverbs 1:7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge." This verse also gives us the theme of the book of Proverbs. It truly shows us that knowledge and wisdom are tied to the fear of the Lord. The fear of the Lord refers to a worshipping of his Name. Our faith in Him. Faith lies at the basis of doing what is right. Faith in the Lord is the foundation on which we have to build our knowledge. If this foundation is not there, we will never choose the right way to go, no matter how smart we may be.

In this age of information, knowledge is plentiful, but wisdom is scarce. Wisdom means far more than just knowing a lot. It is a basic attitude that affects every aspect of life. To grow in wisdom we must grow to honour and respect God, to live in awe of his power, and to obey his Word. When our eyes are opened to do all this in a subservient way, it will lead to humility. Then we can truly see how little we are before God's throne of grace. We cannot fathom his care and love for us. He loves us so much that He was willing to die on the cross for us.

Wisdom is a God-given gift. Wisdom's starting point is God and his revealed Word. "For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding" (Prov 2:6).

This is his gift to us. We must use this gift through a constant process of growing. It will help us discern our right from wrong ways. Yet when we fall, we must learn from our mistakes, even if discipline must come on our way. Discipline sounds so negative to many people, yet its meaning is to teach and to train. God does not discipline us because He enjoys inflicting pain on us but because He is deeply concerned about

our development. He does this to guide us on to the path of righteousness.

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov 3:5).

Strive to gain wisdom. For if we are going to learn how to live a life of gratitude for the salvation we have received in Christ, than it is of utmost importance that we fear the Lord. It is He who makes the simple wise. By faith in Him we will gain the knowledge of the way unto everlasting life. This must be our goal in life. Live a life of faithfulness, giving God all glory in all things.

To Him be the praise, thanks, and adoration!

*Praise be the Lord! I shall impart
My thanks to Him with all my heart
Among the righteous congregation.
Great are the doings of the LORD,
And all to whom they joy afford
Will study them with dedication.*

*To Israel He redemption sent;
Eternal is God's covenant.
His holy Name is all-surpassing!
The fear of God is wisdom's source,
A light to all who walk its course.
O LORD, Thy praise is everlasting!*

Psalm 111:1, 5

Birthdays in December:

10 JAMES KAMMINGA will be 22
Box 1125, Carman, MB R0G 0J0

16 JULIE KAMMINGA will be 18
Box 1125, Carman, MB R0G 0J0

Congratulations to you both, James and Julie, on your birthdays. May our Heavenly Father grant you an enjoyable day together with your family and friends. May you be richly blessed in this new year. Till next month,

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

Taking Care Since 1956

Cloverdale is not the first Canadian Reformed Church to celebrate a fiftieth anniversary (March, 2004), but it must surely be the first that has had the same caretaker for almost the same length of time. In the November 4, 1956 church bulletin the consistory press release of September 27, 1956 records that W. Jongs along with K. (Clarence) Sikma had been appointed caretakers. Bill Jongs has been on the job ever since.

Unusual duties

The duties of a caretaker were different than they are today. Aldergrove church (as it was known at that time) met in Murrayville Hall, a place that often hosted festive gatherings on Saturday evenings. Sunday morning duties included not simply unlocking doors, but also cleaning up beer bottles and other party leftovers. The caretaker arrived early enough to stoke up the wood stoves, one at the front of hall, the other at the back. During the service, as collection bags were making the rounds, more wood had to be added.

Whenever our place of worship moved location, our caretaker moved along. Janitorial duties expanded along with the size of the building. Since 1969, our present church building has undergone many renovations, culminating in our current beautiful and functional facility. Over those years of successive renovations, Bill and his wife, Ann, put in long hours. They'd vacuum and dust and have everything ship shape by

Friday afternoon and then Saturday morning a group of volunteers would come to do some more work. Sawdust and gyproc dust would fly all over and Saturday afternoon Bill would have to dust and vacuum all over again. It was enough to try the patience of a saint.

Pleasing the neatniks

Everyone will understand that keeping church facilities neat enough to please everyone is an almost impossible task. We of Dutch extraction have the reputation of being neatniks. One Sunday morning, a member pointed to a number of spider webs hanging from the light fixtures. Bill commented, "Well, spiders have to have a place to live, too." "The sparrow finds a home to rest; The swallow deftly builds her nest, and has her young beside Thy altar. . ." (Ps 84). Yes, and spiders, too.

In addition to cleaning, the regular duties of the caretaker include opening and closing up the church building almost every night of the week and setting up the church for weddings, funerals, and various meetings. Some special duties have been acquired over the years. In the 1970s, when Rev. J. Mulder was our pastor, Bill began preparing a thermos of coffee for him on catechism night. He sympathized with the minister, who had to spend the entire evening away from home. He learned just how Rev. Mulder liked his coffee. It was much appreciated. When Rev. Visscher became Cloverdale's pastor, Bill thought he might let

that extra bit of service slide, but he didn't get the chance. Pastor Visscher had already heard of Cloverdale's exemplary caretaker from his colleague, so Bill faithfully continued his practice of making coffee on Tuesday nights for many more years.

Enough is enough

Our Brother Jongs doesn't mind doing some extra little jobs. He lays out yearbooks, *Clarions*, and Mission Calendars. He hangs up lost and found items in the foyer and cleans up after kids who have "accidents." He prepares coffee for council and consistory meetings and does dishes afterward if they don't. However, he draws the line at doing dishes for other groups. Years ago, the men's society learned this the hard way. After having scrubbed their dishes several times in a row, Bill had enough. Next time the men came,



*Bon voyage!
Bill and Ann Jongs at Vancouver
Airport.*

they found the kitchen door locked. They managed without coffee, but the chairman phoned the caretaker the next day to point out his mistake. "It was not a mistake," Bill replied. "I'm just tired of doing your dishes. If you do your dishes, I'll unlock the kitchen door" It was a lesson quickly learned!

Have you ever wondered who makes the decision to cancel church when we have one of our infrequent winter blizzards?

Sometimes it's our caretaker. Early one snowy Sunday morning he realized that he could not get his car to church. Instead, he tried walking. After trudging through knee-deep snow for a block, he turned back. He phoned the vice-chairman of the consistory and said, "Church is cancelled. You better let everybody know. If I can't get to church no one can."

Our brother has a wealth of other stories that cover Cloverdale's history from his

unique perspective. He could probably write a book. Cloverdale church is thankful for his remarkably long stint of faithful service. This past summer Bill and Ann enjoyed a trip to The Netherlands as a thank you gift from the congregation – a heart-felt and well-deserved "thank you" for fifty years of exemplary service.

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Education Matters

Keith Sikkema

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Peregrine Survey



A new year has started. The quiet days of summer experienced by the chairman of Parkland Immanuel Christian School as he walked the halls of the school are long gone. Gone also are the cleaning and maintenance crews who made the school a pleasant and well-equipped place to come back to. It is hard to fathom the amount of work that goes on behind the scenes to make schools well-oiled and smooth-running operations. This is also true for teachers, as many of Ontario's elementary teachers spent a day considering devotions and social studies. Some of these teachers had been involved in working on a Bible history curriculum blueprint earlier in the summer and in the Fraser Valley work on the social studies curriculum continued under the leadership of John Roukema.

CARE curriculum day

One of the standing committees of the League of Canadian Reformed School Societies in Ontario (LCRSS) is CARE. CARE stands for Curriculum Assistance for Reformed Education. It has become a tradition that on the second Thursday before school starts again in September, it organizes a curriculum day at

which aspects of curriculum that are of interest to the elementary schools are discussed. On August 24, 2006, the day was held in the new facilities of Timothy school in Hamilton. The day was opened with some reflections on the kingship of the Lord expressed in Psalm 47, under which teachers can and may do their work. The singing throughout the day



concentrated on learning a counter melody to some Genevan tunes.

The morning topics included practical examples of opening devotions in the classroom, the nature and purpose of classroom devotions, and a report on the two-week Bible History curriculum framework development project in July. Schools and teachers differ in the way devotions are conducted, but Bible reading, singing from the *Book of Praise*, prayer, and reflection, explanation, and discussion are common elements. Some tie it in with the Bible lesson, which often follows immediately after the devotions. Some teachers also use a devotional book, such as developed by James Schaap, but the morning's presentations also brought out limitations and drawbacks of such devotionals. The Bible History group made good progress during this summer and prepared a thirty-page report that will be disseminated to the schools for discussion and feedback. The hope was expressed that it might lead to a measure of completion



allowing for implementation in the schools in another three years.

Guido de Brès Christian High School uses devotionals that are being developed by Rev. D.G.J. Agema. The word "devote" means to apply oneself with strength and zeal; consecration; and implies an act of worship or praise. Rev. Agema took his audience on an excursion through Scripture with the word "meditate," referring to texts like Joshua 1:8, Psalm 1:2, 63:6, 77:12, 119:15, 23, 48, 78, and others, to show how devotionals should focus on the Word of God, bringing out "treasures old and new." These devotionals are intended to be a tool that helps focus on what Scripture says – rather than on an application. Rev. Agema also advised to connect to the confessions and liturgical forms in classroom devotionals. He gave the example of how Lord's Days 12 and 45 connect to each other in this regard: prophets, priests, and kings need to pray to fulfill their offices.

After lunch, teachers met in smaller groups by grade and/or interest level to discuss issues around developing and teaching the 1998 Ministry of Education and Training program for social studies, geography, and history. Several years ago, John Calvin School in Smithville had committed itself to taking the lead in developing the social studies curriculum and on this day its teachers led the discussions. Groups considered questions such as: What issues arose from your topics? What perspectives/methods could be used to deal with these issues? What issues need further study?

News

Owen Sound Canadian Reformed School has grown from



the smallest school in Ontario, with one teacher and several volunteer helpers in 1994, to a four-teacher school. The building is still the same size, but the space is certainly used differently! For the entire time the school has been in existence, Mrs. Diane Jonker has been at the helm. She started teaching when one-room school houses were virtually phased out across Ontario. Congratulations, Veteran, and may the Lord continue to provide you with strength and courage to press on! Meanwhile, Parkland Immanuel Christian School in Edmonton is in its thirtieth academic year and Dufferin Area Christian School in Laurel, Ontario, in its thirty-ninth.

ACRES in Attercliffe has a new principal, Ed Slaa. DACS in Laurel also has a new principal, Keith Sikkema. Guido de Brès in Hamilton has its old but rejuvenated principal back, Hans VanDooren, after a one term leave of absence. For all three of them there is a new vista and a new enthusiasm for the task at hand.

Credo Christian Elementary School "has at its heart a desire to teach your children faithfully about God our Father and his creation and how He upholds and governs that creation," writes the chairman

of CCES. It is God's grace that another school year has started. He reminds all to thank God for the school and to ask for his blessings over the school year:

That the teachers may be equipped to faithfully, patiently, and joyfully instruct our children; that they may be given wisdom and insight to carry out their task well and in his service; that the students may be strengthened to learn well and that they may grow in grace and knowledge of our Creator; that as parents,

teachers, and students, we may live in love for each other, so bringing honour and glory to God our king; and pray also for those who assist in the operations of the school and for the safety of our children as they are bussed to and from school. . . .

There is much going on behind the scenes of our schools, but everywhere the heart-throb of Reformed education is expressed in words of gratitude, expressions of vision, sweat and blisters of summer maintenance, thorough preparation,

thoughtful reflection, and, especially, prayer. Under the Lord's blessing, may it be a year in which our schools may be hubs of learning and cooperation between parents, teachers, and the community.

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



Press Release

Press Release of Classis Manitoba of the Canadian Reformed Churches held on September 18, 2006 in Winnipeg, MB

On behalf of the convening church at Winnipeg Redeemer, Br. E. Gritter opened the meeting by requesting the delegates to sing Psalm 1, reading Psalm 1, and leading in prayer.

The credentials were examined and all *primi* delegates were present with proper credentials. It was noted that Rev. Jonker of Winnipeg Grace was not delegated due to the fact that he has been temporarily released from his duties as minister of the Word under Article 14 of the Church Order. This is due to the present stress in the congregation. Classis was then declared constituted.

The following brothers assumed their positions as agreed to by the body: Chairman: Rev. A.J. Pol; Vice-

chairman: Rev. P.H. Holtvlüwer; Clerk: Rev. D.M. Boersma.

Rev. Pol thanked the hosting church for all their preparations and made mention of the following *memorabilia*: Rev. Jonker and the Grace consistory and congregation are remembered in their present difficulties. It was remembered with thankfulness that Rev. Jonker could recently celebrate his twenty-fifth year as minister of the Word and that Rev. and Mrs. Pol could celebrate their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. Thanks was given to the Lord also for the recent engagement of Rev. Boersma to Miss Rinnette Werkman of Zwolle, The Netherlands. A spring wedding is planned. Congratulations were expressed to the church at Carman West and thanks given to the Lord for providing her with a new church building.

The agenda was adopted after several modifications.

Correspondence received: letter of greeting from Classis Central

US of the United Reformed Churches. This letter was read and received with gratitude. A discussion followed about the changing of classis meeting times in order to accommodate fraternal delegates from other churches who presently find it difficult to be present at classis Monday morning. Bearing in mind the concerns of Denver to reduce days off work for the delegated elder, it was agreed to hold classis on a Friday during the week preceding the normal preaching exchange Sunday (whenever possible) and begin the meeting at 3:00 pm to allow delegates time to fly in. Reports received:

a) *Committee for Aid to Needy Churches*

The report from the Committee recommended the same level of support as last year at \$66.00 per communicant member for the church at Denver. Classis granted this request and thanked the Committee for its work.

b) *Church for Auditing the Books of the Committee for Aid to Needy Churches*

No report was available at this time. The church at Winnipeg Redeemer pledged to have it present at the next classis.

c) *Church for Financial Aid to Students for the Ministry as per Art. 20 CO*

A recommendation was received from the Committee to increase the fund for the Committee in anticipation of a request from a needy student next year. The suggested assessment of \$2.00 per communicant member was agreed to. This is an increase of \$0.75 from the previous \$1.25 assessment.

d) *Church Visitation reports*

The church visitors reported on a special visit to the church at Winnipeg (Grace). The church visitors reported on a regular visitation to the church at Denver. Classis received these reports with thanksgiving.

The Redeemer church at Winnipeg requested Classis to appoint Rev. Holtvlüwer as counsellor for her as per Art. 45 C.O. This was granted.

The Redeemer church also requested monthly pulpit supply as did the consistory of Winnipeg Grace. Some discussion ensued whether Rev. Boersma could be brought into the loop to help out due to the limited number of ministers available in Manitoba. This will be pursued beyond Classis with the consistory of Denver. Meanwhile, Classis decided to provide pulpit supply one Sunday per month for both churches.

All churches answered yes, yes, and no to the questions of Article 44 posed by the chairman with the exception of the church at Carman East. Classis dealt with a request for advice in a matter of church discipline as per Art. 68, C.O. Advice was given.

The next classis was scheduled for December 15, 2006 at 3:00 pm to be convened by the church at Carman East in Carman. The alternate date for Classis is March 23, 2006, 3:00 pm. Suggested officers for the next classis: Chairman: Rev. Boersma; Vice-chairman: Rev. Pol; Clerk: Rev. Holtvlüwer.

The various committees of classis were appointed for the next

year. The church visitors were appointed as follows: Rev. Pol (convener), Rev. Holtvlüwer, and Rev. Boersma. Rev. Boersma was appointed fraternal delegate to the Presbytery of the Dakotas of the OPC, Rev. Pol to the Northern Plains Classis of the RCUS, and Rev. Holtvlüwer to the Classis Central US of the URCNA.

For Regional Synod West (November 14) Classis delegated the following ministers: Rev. Holtvlüwer and Rev. Pol with Rev. Boersma as alternate. Classis delegated the following elders: Brs. A. Poppe and Jacob Kuik with first alternate Br. B. Van Assen and W. Nobel as second alternate.

Several questions were raised and comments given. It was noted with thankfulness that censure was not needed. The Acts were read and approved. The press release was read and approved. The chairman asked Classis to sing Psalm 133, led the meeting in prayer and adjourned the assembly.

For Classis Manitoba
September 18, 2006
P.H. Holtvlüwer (vice-chair
at that time)

