



## *The foreign delegates with BBK members and faculty in Kampen*

### **Inside this Issue**

- Teaching the Truth that Brings Salvation
- Relieving Anxiety





Dr. Arjan de Visser is professor of Diaconology and Ecclesiology at the Canadian Reformed Theological Seminary in Hamilton, Ontario  
[arjan.devisser@canrc.org](mailto:arjan.devisser@canrc.org)

# Teaching the Truth that Brings Salvation

*We desire that our young people would realize how God has graciously given them a place in his covenant and how he calls them to respond to this extraordinary privilege*

As we enter the month of August we realize that very soon the holidays will be over, and it will be time to return to the work of teaching and edifying God's people. In this article we reflect on a specific aspect of this work: teaching our young people the good teaching (1 Tim 4:6), the truth that brings salvation.

Let us begin by considering an important goal of this teaching: It is that our young people would come to know their God and Saviour and that they would bring forth fruits of repentance and faith. We desire that our young people would realize how God has graciously given them a place in his covenant and how he calls them to respond to this extraordinary privilege.

*May there be much prayer in our churches and homes that the Lord would bless Catechism instruction and other forms of teaching*

As we reflect on this, we understand that there are important consequences. To begin with, faith instruction seeks to address the complete person: not just the mind, but also the heart and the will. Whoever teaches the youth of the church, in whatever context, should realize that good faith instruction is more than conveying a certain amount of Bible knowledge. In the Canons of Dort we confess that the Holy Spirit works true conversion in us not just by "powerfully enlightening the minds" but also by "penetrating into the innermost recesses of man" (CoD III,IV, Art. 11).

In addition to this, we realize that even the most excellent teaching cannot bring about faith and

repentance. We are totally dependent upon God. The Canons of Dort say that regeneration is "by no means brought about only by outward teaching or moral persuasion" (CoD III/IV, Art. 12), but that regeneration is a "delightful, marvellous, mysterious, and inexpressible" work of God. God's Word illustrates this truth on many occasions. Take for example the account of the Apostle Paul's defence before King Agrippa (Acts 26). After offering an impressive explanation of the Christian faith, Paul ends with a personal word to the king: "King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do" (Acts 26:27). King Agrippa is not ready to give in: "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?" he asks. Paul, acknowledging that it is not in his own power to convince the king, responds by saying: "Short time or long – I pray God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." Paul recognizes that the king's heart would only be changed if God intervened. Hence he prays for the king. In his commentary on this verse John Calvin writes that Paul prays to God "as it is He who draws us to his Son; because, unless He teach us by his Spirit, the outward doctrine shall always wax cold."

It is important for us to remember this as we teach the Christian faith to the younger generation in church. They are covenant children and as such their situation is different from King Agrippa's. They have received God's covenant promise that the Holy Spirit will dwell in them. At the same time the Lord has taught us that the general rule that no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again (John 3:3).

Perhaps this truth is not always recognized among us as strongly as it should. As Canadian Reformed



Published biweekly by Premier Printing Ltd., Winnipeg, MB

**EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:**

Editor: J. Visscher; Copy Manager: Laura Veenendaal  
Coeditors: P. Holtvliuwer, E. Kampen, K. Stam, C. Van Dam

**ADDRESS FOR COPY MANAGER:**

Clarion, 57 Oakridge Drive South, St. Albert, AB T8N 7H2  
E-Mail: veenendaal@shaw.ca

**ADDRESS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS:**

CLARION, Premier Printing Ltd.  
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5  
Phone: (204) 663-9000 Fax: (204) 663-9202



**Subscriptions:** clarionadmin@premierpublishing.ca

**Advertisements:** clarionads@premierpublishing.ca

**Website:** www.premierpublishing.ca

RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO:  
One Beghin Avenue, Winnipeg, MB, Canada R2J 3X5

**Subscription Rates for 2011**

|   | Regular Mail | Air Mail  |
|---|--------------|-----------|
| Canada*   | \$48.00*     | \$ 82.00* |
| U.S.A. U.S. Funds   | \$67.00      | \$ 90.00  |
| International   | \$95.00      | \$145.00  |

\*Applicable GST, HST, PRT taxes are extra. GST/HST – No. 890967359RT

Advertisements: \$17.00 per column inch

Full Colour Display Advertisements: \$21.00 per column inch

We reserve the right to refuse ads.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada, through the Canada Periodical Fund (CPF) for our publishing activities.

**Cancellation Agreement**

Unless a written subscription cancellation is received we assume you wish to continue to subscribe. You will be invoiced prior to the subscription renewal date.  
Agreement No. 40063293; ISSN 0383-0438

**Copyright © Premier Printing Ltd.**

All rights reserved. No part may be reproduced in any manner without permission in writing from the publisher, except brief quotations used in connection with a review in a magazine or newspaper.

Useful Link: www.canrc.org

people we reject the accusation that we would hold to a form of "covenantal automatism" (the idea that our children are saved automatically by virtue of being in the covenant). It is true: This is not what we believe. Yet, in practice it can easily happen that we become too easy-going.

Office-bearers should give leadership in this, both in teaching and preaching. Personally, I wish sometimes that our ministers would be more explicit and concrete in warning against worldliness and evil human desires. Perhaps there is a fear that such preaching would descend into moralism, but if the Scriptures are explicit in warning against drunkenness, debauchery, and lust, there is no reason why sermons should not be explicit as well.

May there be much prayer in our churches and homes that the Lord would bless Catechism instruction and other forms of teaching, so that outward doctrine shall not "wax cold" but that our children may indeed be drawn to Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

**What's Inside**

Dr. Arjan de Visser begins this issue with a guest editorial on teaching the youth of the church. Through the preaching of the Word, Catechism instruction, the guidance of parents, and the work of teachers in our schools the youth of the church receive faith instruction. There are important consequences to this work, and must be done with much prayer.

Issue 16 is a special issue devoting most of its space to the visit recently made by a temporary subcommittee of the Committee for Relations Churches Abroad (CRCA) to Synod Harderwijk 2011 of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (RCN). Last year Synod Burlington dealt with a number of concerns brought forward by the CRCA as well as a number of churches regarding the RCN. The subcommittee now presents two reports in this issue: a report on their visit to Synod Harderwijk and the interim report presented to that synod. The report focuses on concerns relating to the view of Scripture at Kampen University, the role of men/women in the church, and unity discussions between the RCN and NRC.

Continuing our series on the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, who is celebrating its seventy-fifth anniversary, this issue highlights Christian Education in the OPC. We also have a Treasures New and Old meditation and a Mission News insert.

Laura Veenendaal

**In This Issue**

Guest Editorial – Teaching the Truth that Brings Salvation  
— A. de Visser..... 378

Treasures, New and Old – Relieving Anxiety  
— K. Janssen ..... 381

Visit to General Synod Harderwijk of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands  
— G.J. Nordeman, J. DeGelder ..... 382

Report of Subcommittee The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations Churches Abroad Regarding the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands..... 387

The OPC at Seventy-Five: Christian Education  
— Committee for Contact with Churches in North America ..... 393

## Word of God

A second principle for teaching in the church is that it should be based on the Word of God. Even though we use books, courses, and confessions, the real basis of teaching should be the Word of God. The Apostle Paul may again serve as a good example: In Acts 17:2 we read that “as his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them *from the Scriptures*. . . .” Similarly, when Paul was in Rome, he had a large number of people visiting him regularly and it says that “from morning till evening he explained and declared to them the kingdom of God and tried to convince them about Jesus *from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets*” (Acts 28:23).

Likewise, in Catechism teaching the main source of teaching should be the Word of God. This is a fundamental principle that has methodological consequences. It implies that a Catechism lesson will never be just an exercise in filling in the blanks on a handout that the teacher has prepared. It also implies that a Catechism lesson should never be just a lesson “on the Catechism.” The Word of God should be used in every lesson that is taught in Catechism class. The words spoken by “our chief Prophet and Teacher,” the Lord Jesus Christ (Lord’s Day 12) should be part of the core material that is taught. Of course, the Heidelberg Catechism is an excellent teaching tool because it is a faithful summary of God’s Word. But as we use the Catechism, God’s Word should be used much!

## Human instruments

A third aspect of teaching the youth of the church is that the Lord is pleased to use human instruments to do this. God’s Word shows us that there are generally two categories of teachers: In the first place office-bearers in church, secondly parents in the homes. In the history of the church a third category was added: the teachers in the schools.

That teaching is an important mandate of the church is clear from both the Old Testament and the New. Restricting ourselves to the New Testament we find that the apostles considered teaching one of their core tasks in the church (see Acts 2:42, 6:4). They shared this calling with evangelists, teachers, prophets (Eph 4:11), and elders (1 Tim 2:2, 5:17). Paul exhorts Timothy to preach and teach “with careful instruction” (2 Tim 4:2). Clearly, office-bearers have an important role to play in the faith instruction of the youth of the church.

But parents have an important role as well. This is taught in well-known passages from the Old Testament

such as Deuteronomy 6 and Psalm 78. It is illustrated in the lives of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. If they were zealous to make their households serve the Lord, the Lord blessed this. If they were lax in leading their families in the ways of the Lord, they would reap the results as well.

In the New Testament the role of the family and the parents is no less important. It is interesting how in the book of Acts we read that Cornelius “*and all his family were devout and God-fearing*” (Acts 10:2) and that one of his attendants was “*a devout soldier*” (Acts 10:7). In his commentary on this passage John Calvin draws the conclusion that Cornelius obviously took care to instruct his family as well as his servants in the fear of God. It teaches us, Calvin says, that the godly must endeavour that “they do not have profane families but that they keep them under the fear of the Lord.”

---

*As parents, let us be vigilant that we set a good example in our homes and individual lives*

---

Apparently Calvin considers it possible that the atmosphere in the homes can deteriorate from devout to profane, from Christian to worldly. If this happens, there is not much that Catechism teaching can do to salvage the situation. The main threat to the spiritual well-being of the next generation is probably this: that our children would grow up in homes where Christianity has lost its inner strength. As parents, let us be vigilant that we set a good example in our homes and individual lives. The Apostle Peter warns that there should be no room for “evil human desires,” such as debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, etcetera. (1 Pet 4:2-3) As parents, let us examine ourselves and set it as our goal to keep our families under the fear of the Lord. May the Lord forgive our weaknesses. May he help us to set a good example to our children and to create a godly atmosphere in our homes. If we do this, we may expect his blessing on our efforts to pass on the truth to the next generation.

---

For these references I am indebted to Rev. Erik van Alten (Pretoria-Maranatha) who wrote a thesis on Calvin’s views of Catechetical instruction as reflected in his commentary on the book of Acts: “*Die belang van onderrig in die beginfase van die kerk: Calvin as kategeet in sy kommentaar op die boek Handeling*.” M-thesis, Universiteit van die Vrystaat, Bloemfontien, South Africa [2008].





Rev. Karlo Janssen is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church at Abbotsford, BC  
[rcjanssen@shaw.ca](mailto:rcjanssen@shaw.ca)



MATTHEW 13:52

# Relieving Anxiety

*"An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up."*  
Proverbs 12:25

There is a lot of talking that goes on in church circles. Many words are spoken, are written. What kind of words are they? What have you been saying? Why did you say it?

Proverbs 12:25 is typical of many of the sayings found in this Bible book. It is an everyday truth. It is the kind of text you might expect on a calendar, in an almanac, maybe on a wall tile. What is it doing here, in God's Word? Is this sufficiently "spiritual"? Is there a deeper meaning?

The fact that we find this text in Scripture tells us God considers it important. Life does not consist of spiritual things and material things. Life consists of things with both material and spiritual sides to them. God is concerned with hairs, with sparrows, with grass. He is involved with huge hurricanes and individual rain-drops, with raging bushfires and pilot flames in gas-heaters. All things fall under God's providence.

Anxieties do too. The fears we have, our sorrows and hurts – God knows about them. Indeed, the adversity we meet in this life of sorrow is actually *sent* to us by our Almighty Father (HC, LD 9). Anxiety is very much part of life, also for believers. But is a Christian allowed to be anxious? Does not Scripture say, "Do not be anxious about anything" (Phil 4:6)? However, that does not mean Christians never are. Christians are not supposed to sin

either. But they do; even our best works are all imperfect and defiled with sin. Anxiety is part of life.

Anxiety leads to feeling down, God tells us. An anxious person feels dejected, even depressed. And depression hurts. It affects not just yourself, but those about you. Instead of *being* a support, you *need* support. Out of the depths of sadness you call, to God, to those you love, to anyone. You feel bad for feeling the way you do. You long for something good.

God not only points out this reality in broken life, part of the sighing of Creation. He also points out the remedy. Observe God's wisdom! "A kind word cheers him up." The word translated "kind" is usually translated "good." It is the "good" of Genesis 1: "and God saw it was good." The Hebrew word for "good" has the flavour of "suited for a purpose."

A good word is not just an expression of sympathy. It goes a step further. It seeks to relieve the anxiety, to alleviate the fear. It may point to the goodness of the Lord. It may offer advice, if the anxious person can and will take it.

More is in view. It's not just a good word. "Something good" is the translation I'd prefer. For the Hebrew word translated "word" can also mean "deed" or "thing." "Something good" may also be a hug. It can be a meal for the family. It can be the loan of an RV or a hand with yard work.

We have been blessed with a book filled with good things. For example, "Nothing will be able separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39). The Psalms provide us with many comforting, admonishing, and encouraging words to speak. The Proverbs tell us what to do and what not to do. There is no excuse for not knowing something good.

There's more yet to the simple message of the text. Anxiety: think of Adam and Eve, hiding in the bushes, afraid of God. Things were no longer good. And think of the word which God spoke. It was a good word, the best word ever: "He will destroy its head."

In the midst of time God spoke a Word. The Word became flesh. When he dwelt among us, he saw anxiety. He saw the tears of a mother who had buried her husband and was about to bury her only son. He heard a blind man cry for help. He touched lepers. He saw it all. And he took it upon himself. Christ is the Word of God, the best word ever spoken. It relieved the anxiety of mankind and cheered us up forever.

Put your anxieties in the context of that good Word. And when you say or do something good to relieve someone's anxiety, follow the example set by the Christ. Thanks be to God for the good words that fill our lives, especially the Word he spoke.





# Visit to General Synod Harderwijk of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

## from March 28 – April 2, 2011

### Introduction

Synod Burlington 2010 appointed a temporary subcommittee under the Committee for Relations with Churches Abroad for the contacts with our Dutch sister churches (Acts, Art. 86). What follows is a summary of the report written by two members of this subcommittee, G.J. Nordeman and J. DeGelder, after their visit as Canadian Reformed delegates to the recent General Synod 2011 of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

### Synod

The Synod was held in Harderwijk and has been meeting between January and June. Usually Synod met in plenary sessions only on Fridays and Saturdays. The advisory committees are set up per region, so that they can meet in the areas where the members are located. For the first few weeks Synod did not meet in plenary sessions, as the advisory committees prepared their reports and recommendations. The week from March 28 – April 2 was the so-called “*Buitenlandweek*” when all the foreign delegates are invited to be present.

### Meeting with BBK

On the first day of that week we met with a section of Deputies BBK to share with them the concerns of the Canadian Reformed Churches about developments in our Dutch sister churches. Some of this was expressed by Synod Burlington 2010, while our committee had given a more detailed evaluation in an interim report (found elsewhere in this issue of *Clarion*) that had been sent to BBK.<sup>1</sup> This interim report gave a critical

evaluation of three topics (hermeneutics as in the writings of Dr. Paas and Dr. van Bekkum; the contacts between the GKV<sup>2</sup> and the NGK<sup>3</sup>; and Man/Woman in the church).

We had a frank, open, and brotherly discussion about a variety of topics. The deputies had passed on the above-mentioned interim report to Synod. Although it had arrived passed the deadline for incoming mail, Synod had accepted it and handed it to the advisory committee for churches abroad to comment on it. All members of Synod had received a copy as well.

### Serious concerns

We stressed the seriousness of the concerns from Canada, and how this might affect our relationship, urging them not to brush off or simply take note of the views expressed by the CanRC (and others!). These concerns need to be heard at Synod, but for foreign churches BBK is the address to voice these and to put these matters on the Synod agenda. And the way in which BBK does this should confront Synod with the seriousness of the objections coming from the sister churches abroad.

When we expressed the concern that the developments in the Dutch churches seem to move the churches away from the reliability and authority of God’s Word, by putting more and more man and his ideas and expectations in the centre rather than God’s revealed will, the brothers took issue with this and assured us that, with everything that is going on and shifting in the Dutch churches, the churches want to remain faithful to the Scriptures as the full Word of God. They insisted on the biblical and confessional

integrity of the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands as they seek to give relevant answers to the questions believers are confronted with in this secular, post-Christian society.

### Synod reports presented

The Tuesday was filled with a conference where the various committees, appointed by the previous synod, presented the reports that were on the agenda of this synod. This was meant to inform the foreign delegates in English about the various topics and proposals Synod will have to deal with.

The clerk of Synod gave an overview of the Synod Agenda and Rev. Oosterhuis, secretary of BBK, gave an overview of the proposals with regard to the relations with churches abroad. One noteworthy matter here is that the GKV has withdrawn its offer of ecclesiastical fellowship to the OPC. This offer was made by a number of synods, and so far the OPC has kept it under consideration. The 77<sup>th</sup> GA of the OPC concluded that "the Assembly finds itself unable to affirm, without reservation, that the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands are fully Reformed."

Then the Deputies for Church Unity introduced the section of their report about the contacts with the NGK. And the Deputies Man/Woman (M/W) in the church summarized their report as well. After every presentation there was an opportunity to ask questions, although the deputies did not want to go into a debate on different views.

### Conference on hermeneutics

The next day all foreign delegates attended a conference on Hermeneutics at the Theological University in Kampen. Obviously the Deputies BBK have sensed that a lot of the things many of the foreign sister-churches worry about in the Dutch churches circle around hermeneutical questions: what are the principles that determine how we read and interpret the Bible?

A number of staff members at the TUK<sup>4</sup> introduced various topics related to this theme, while after every presentation a lively, and at times critical, discussion took place.

### Synod meetings

Thursday and Friday were the only two days spent at actual synod meetings. On the first of these the report of Deputies BBK was on the agenda, together

with the report and recommendations from the advisory committee Utrecht. To our pleasant surprise this advisory committee report gave a lengthy and accurate summary of the interim report of our committee. Although the advisory committee of Synod suggested a course of action in response, we were disappointed that no one interacted with our report. Synod did not do anything with it either. This was kind of frustrating: "Thank you for your letter, but we are going to ignore it."

### *There is a drive to present God's Word in a manner that makes us culturally relevant as Reformed churches today*

On our second day at Synod a general discussion was scheduled on the report of the Committee for Church Unity, with the focus on the contacts with the NGK. Two items in the report received special attention: (1) the matter of doctrinal faithfulness and binding to the Reformed confession, and (2) the hermeneutical principles behind the VOP<sup>5</sup> report in the NGK, that led to the decision in the NGK to open all offices for women. The overall conclusion of the report was that there is great unanimity and harmony, and a much better understanding of one another as churches. At this time Synod was only having a preliminary discussion on this.



*Three members of the executive of Synod Harderwijk: l to r: Rev. Feenstra, Rev. Harmanny, and Rev. Niemeyer*



*L to r: Rev. Veldman (FRCA), Br. Nordeman (CanRC),  
Rev. Sikkema (URCNA).  
Behind them some Brazilian delegates.*

Spread throughout the agenda items of these days the fraternal delegates were invited to address Synod. Rev. DeGelder did so on behalf of the CanRC, with a response from K. Wezeman, chairman of BBK.

### **Culturally relevant in a secular society**

What began with the opening devotions on Tuesday proved to be a common thread throughout the week that connected many of the presentations and speeches. We felt that this meditation on Exodus 3:1-15 set the tone. Referring to God speaking to Moses from the burning bush, the application was made: God speaks, but not always where we expect him to speak, or the way wherein we expect him to speak. And: Trying to see the relevance of God's Word in our context can produce a certain tension. . . modern times ask for new ways of speaking, new ways of interpreting. And: It

is not always easy to recognize the voice of the living God in our world, or to interpret his words in our context. How does God relate to our culture? How does he speak to people of our times?

One is left to wonder: what about God speaking in the Bible? Is there tension between the Scriptures and the speaking of the living God?

The message provided an important key to understand the developments in our sister churches. There is a drive to present God's Word in a manner that makes us culturally relevant as Reformed churches today; to make the gospel accessible to people that live in an increasingly secular, as well as post-modern and post-Christian society.

### **Off the rails**

To be culturally relevant as Christian believers when we speak and write and relate to people in our post-modern and

post-Christian society sounds like a lofty goal. After all, as church members we live in this secular world and are affected by it. And we also want to reach out to unbelievers in a way that speaks to them and that is relevant in their context. But this should not mean that our post-modern culture and context is going to determine how to read Scripture and what in the Bible is relevant for today and what is not. This would put (modern) man with his ideas and expectations in the centre, rather than God, who reveals himself.

We are afraid that here things are going off the rails in the Dutch churches. The argument that Paul's writings reflect the culture of his days to the point that the clear teachings and instruction in his letters can no longer be valid for the time in which we live today undermines the confession that it is God's Word in which the Lord reveals his will. When we are encouraged to listen to the voice of the living God beyond what is written, we cross an important line.

In the eagerness to be culturally relevant it is easily forgotten that God's Word is often also counter-cultural. As a matter of fact, it has always been counter-cultural since the days of the New Testament, and it will always be counter-cultural.

### **Theology in Kampen**

It seems that at the TUK the focus of the research is more and more on the need to be academically relevant among the other theological faculties and institutions, not only in The Netherlands, but also internationally. Most of these other institutions are quite liberal in



their theology and very critical in their approach of Scripture.

This implies that the emphasis is changing. Although training for the ministry is officially still the main task of the TUK, the focus is shifting to academic theological research. The reality is that less and less graduates choose to become ministers and that more and more the TUK has to compete for students. For young men (and women!) from the GKV, who want to study theology, the TUK is no longer the first choice, but one out of many options.

This urge to be academically relevant and to be accepted in the modern, liberal theological academia is reason for serious concern, since it leads to research and publications as the ones produced by Dr. Paas and Dr. van Bekkum. To confront critical scholars on their own turf may be well intended, but if the result is a more modern critical way of reading and interpreting the Bible, things go wrong. If it undermines the clarity and authority of the Scriptures as God's Word, as we confess in Articles 3, 5, and 7 of the Belgic Confession

then the price is too high for the churches. After all – this is still the school that trains future preachers and teachers.

It was striking that also in several of the presentations in Kampen the dominating question was how the truth of God's Word can be presented today in such a way that it is relevant for the contemporary questions that people are facing in the very secular, post-modern and post-Christian culture of the twenty-first century.

### **Style-of-the-kingdom**

Another issue that has raised questions is what is called the "style-of-the-kingdom" approach in dealing with ethical issues. This has been developed as a well-meant effort to find a way as God's people in sometimes thorny ethical discussions. We all know that it is not always easy, simple, and straightforward in all situations and circumstances to apply God's commands for holy living. Not everything is always cut and dried.



*Speakers at the study conference on Hermeneutics in Kampen.  
L to r: VanBekkum, De Bruyne, Haak, Kwakkel, and Kamphuis*

One of the presentations during the hermeneutics conference in Kampen was meant to explain the intention and value of this approach. But it did not become clear how this relates to God's commandments and instructions in his Word. It gives at least the impression that under this cover consistories and church members can make their own personal ethical choices. The effect will be ethical confusion, instead of striving for unity in obeying God's Word.

We have not become convinced that this "style-of-the-kingdom" approach will turn out to be very helpful. The concern is that in practice it will cloud the distinction between what God wants and what he forbids. This will take away from what God does command in his Word. In the individualism of our day it will lead people with opposite views to say: "This is my choice and you cannot say it's wrong, because this is what living in God's kingdom means for me."

### A crucial shift

The development in theological thinking in Kampen shows what appears to be a crucial shift in hermeneutics: what are the principles that guide us when we read and interpret the Scriptures? This will unavoidably trickle through in the churches, and does so already. It provides the background of many things that are changing in our Dutch sister-churches. If there is no turn-around it will, humanly speaking, lead to more and more theological



*A view of Synod during break*

and liturgical confusion and fragmentation in and among the churches. The beginning of this can be observed now already.

### Liturgical fragmentation

It is well-known that local churches are experimenting when it comes to worship and liturgy. There are healing services, driven by charismatic thinking. Reformed authors speak about infant baptism as optional. A church organizes so-called "Taize-services," with no preaching, just personal meditation. Although the media give much attention to these things, we were told that this involves a very limited number out of the 270 local churches and that most of these things are not in any way sanctioned or approved by a classis or a synod. As a matter of fact, these activities are quite often frowned upon by many people. This may be so, but it is also important to note that nothing and no one seems to be able to stop these things. The result is that more and more the churches of the GKV federation show a fragmented picture.

### Shared concerns

We were not alone. Several foreign guests who participated in the discussions in Kampen expressed serious concerns about the use of Scripture at the TUK. And when they addressed Synod, many fraternal delegates made critical and warning comments and raised concerned questions about the developments in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands.

<sup>1</sup> Deputies BBK stands for *Betrekkingen Buitenlandse Kerken*, or: Relations with Churches Abroad

<sup>2</sup> GKV stands for *Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt*. These are our Dutch sister churches, also known as "Reformed Churches in The Netherlands" (RCN), sometimes with the addition "liberated."

<sup>3</sup> NGK stands for *Nederlands Gereformeerde Kerken*, also known as "Netherlands Reformed Churches" (NRC).

<sup>4</sup> TUK stands for *Theologische Universiteit Kampen*

<sup>5</sup> VOP stands for *Vrouwelijke Ouderlingen en Predikanten*, or: "Female Elders and Ministers."



# Report of Subcommittee The Netherlands of the Committee for Relations Churches Abroad

## Regarding the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

As you may already know from the Acts of Synod Burlington 2010, that synod dealt with a number of concerns brought forward by the Committee for Relations Churches Abroad (CRCA) as well as a number of churches regarding the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Kerken Vrijgemaakt* in The Netherlands, hereafter referred to as the RCN). Synod appointed Rev. J. DeGelder, Brother G.J. Nordeman, Rev. J. Moesker (convenor), and Dr. C. Van Dam, to this subcommittee. Synod Burlington 2010 gave this committee the mandate (Article 86):

- 4.4.1 To express our grave concerns that:
  - 4.4.1.1 Synod Zwolle of the RCN did not demand that Dr. Harinck, a professor associated with the Theological University in Kampen, retract his controversial remarks;
  - 4.4.1.2 The Theological University did not exercise greater care in the case of the appointment of Dr. Paas as lecturer; and to urge the RCN to deal with these matters as yet.
- 4.4.2 To express and discuss our grave concerns about a change in how biblical hermeneutics are functioning in the RCN.
- 4.4.3 To pay special attention to the upcoming report on the role of women in the church.

This subcommittee has conducted a fair bit of research and correspondence in fulfilling the mandate. As you may also know, a synod of the RCN is underway,

Synod Harderwijk 2011. This synod meets at appointed times throughout the year in order to complete its work. And at the end of March and beginning of April two members of this committee, Rev. J. DeGelder and Br. G. J. Nordeman, visited Synod Harderwijk 2011 during what is called "*Buitenlandweek*" (foreign delegates week, from March 28 to April 2, 2011). Foreign delegates from churches in fellowship or in the process of coming to fellowship with the RCN are invited to Synod over the period of one week in order to see how Synod is working and to deliver an address to Synod on behalf of their churches. There was also opportunity to attend a conference on hermeneutics and our delegates were able to meet with a section of the RNC Deputies for Relations with Churches Abroad (BBK). We submit for publication a summary of our letter to the BBK which was discussed at Synod Harderwijk, and a summary of the experiences of Rev. DeGelder and Br. Nordeman at the foreign delegates meeting.

In our subcommittee meetings since our appointment by Synod Burlington 2010, we decided to concentrate on three matters which were part of the mandate Synod Burlington 2010 gave this Subcommittee:

1. The view of Scripture at the Theological University in Kampen
2. The work of the deputies *Man/Vrouw in de Kerk*
3. Unity discussions taking place between the RCN and The Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC)



In a letter addressed to the RCN deputies in March 2011 before the foreign delegates week, we offered our concerns in an interim report. We did this in a spirit of brotherly concern. After all, Rule 1 of the Rules for Ecclesiastical Fellowship states: "The churches shall assist each other in the maintenance, defence and promotion of the Reformed faith in doctrine, church polity, discipline and liturgy and be watchful for deviations." So it was in keeping with this rule and to promote serious dialogue that we offered the interim report to the BBK. The contents represented our thoughts at the time. We will have to wait to see what Synod Harderwijk decides about these matters before we draw up our report for the next synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches at Carman West in 2013.

### 1. The view of Scripture in Kampen

We expressed that as deputies we are very worried that the RCN are deviating from the historically accepted Reformed approach to the interpretation of the Word of God. There is evidence of a venturing into a more Scripture-critical direction, in particular at the Theological University in Kampen (TUK) where men are trained to become ministers of the Word of God. We see evidence of this in three matters.

A. The TUK has retained Dr. S. Paas as lecturer ("universitair docent") in spite of concerns noted with his dissertation, *Creation and Judgement: Creation Texts in Some Eighth Century Prophets* (Oudtestamentische Studien 47, Leiden, Brill 2003). Over against current critical positions, Dr. Paas' main thesis in this dissertation is that a belief in creation was found in eighth century prophets. However, in the process of bringing this thesis to the fore, Dr. Paas identifies himself with a "religion-historical approach." This is an approach which sees Israel's religion in Old Testament times as being developed over time also through many influences from surrounding nations such as Egypt and the Canaanite nations. In his doctoral dissertation, for instance, Dr. Paas asserts that Israel's creation belief has a Canaanite background and was possibly influenced by Egyptian notions. Also in this dissertation, Dr. Paas considers creation to be a myth, along with much of Genesis 1-11. Others, among whom ministers in the RCN as well as a former professor at the TUK, have raised objections to his appointment as lecturer at the TUK on account of his critical views. Those objections, however, have been brushed aside. One argument

to retain his services is, for instance, that his teaching at the TUK does not involve the matters contained in his thesis, and that his instruction on evangelism and church planting is solid. We as committee believe that the TUK, by upholding this appointment in spite of serious objections and tolerating such a critical view of Holy Scripture in one of its lecturers, has forfeited its ability to call anyone to account concerning higher critical views of Scripture in the future.

B. In 2008 the TUK approved a dissertation of Dr. K. van Bekkum (*From Conquest to Coexistence*) in which he utilizes questionable methodology. In his dissertation, Dr. van Bekkum considers history writing in the Old Testament as a kind of representational art. In other words, the account of what happened as recorded in the Old Testament needs to be interpreted not as simply a factual description, but as a description which is also influenced by the community's expectations and beliefs. One consequence of this methodology is, for instance, that the account of the sun standing still in Joshua 10:12-14 is interpreted metaphorically rather than factually. When Dr. van Bekkum applies his method of interpretation to this passage, he posits that the sun and moon did not actually stand still but the expression should be understood as metaphorical idiom utilized to celebrate a single great victory of Israel over enemies. We as deputies are deeply concerned that, in spite of Dr. van Bekkum's affirmation of Article 5 Belgic Confession, the obvious meaning of the text as traditionally and historically understood is no longer being maintained, presumably because it does not seem believable in our day and age.

C. Synod Zwolle 2008 seemed to avoid or ignore a number of serious concerns which were brought forward and which involve the interpretation of Holy Scripture. Dr. A.L.Th. de Bruijne has expressed that there are inaccuracies in the Bible and that the Bible makes use of myth. In spite of the fact that these are views that have considerable impact on how Scripture is handled and interpreted, objections to Dr. de Bruijne's views were not dealt with on the grounds they were submitted too late for Synod. As well, Dr. J. Douma has written in favour of the framework hypothesis for the creation week, a view which essentially denies the historical account of creation in Genesis 1 and which leaves room for the theory of evolution. Objections to

Dr. Douma's views were also turned down on the grounds that these objections came too long after the publication of Dr. Douma's book on Genesis. Finally, Dr. G. Harinck, in an interview published in a newspaper, made controversial statements concerning subjects such as Christ's substitutionary atonement, homosexuality, the Romish mass, and women in church office. Although his comments brought a flurry of protests from many, Synod did not deal with those protests on technical grounds and because of explanations Dr. Harinck gave of his views. To our knowledge, however, there has never been a retraction or apology concerning the controversial statements Dr. Harinck made in the public press. Nevertheless he has been retained as associate at the TUK.

We as deputies are alarmed about the way the Word of God is being re-interpreted in the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands. We have seen this kind of new hermeneutic applied in other churches, which has resulted in a rapid watering down of the biblical testimony of those churches. The lack of real action in the above matters does not inspire confidence in the TUK's training for the ministry of the Word and gives the impression that the RCN tolerates views that are not in accordance with the Bible's own testimony and the Reformed Confessions.

## 2. The work of the Deputies *Man/Vrouw in de Kerk* (Men/Women in the Church)

The second matter we addressed is the work of the Deputies Men/Women in the Church. These deputies have busied themselves since Synod 2005 with the role of women in the churches, with a focus on the issue of whether women may be appointed to office in the church and which office or offices. The deputies presented Synod Zwolle 2008 with the results of an extensive survey among church members and ministers which indicated that there is quite a variety of opinions about the role of women in the churches.

In response to this, Synod Zwolle 2008 gave the deputies M/V the mandate to prepare practical answers to the following questions:

- a. Within which limitations may men and women be active in diaconal activities? What are the consequences thereof for the office of deacon as it functions at present? What does the response to these questions mean for the present practice of the office of deacon?

- b. What role may women have in the worship service (liturgy, prayer, Scripture reading)?
- c. Within which limitations may men and women be active in pastoral activities? What does this mean for the practice of the office of minister and elder?
- d. Is it possible in a practical sense to tackle the issue of allowing women to serve in the office of deacon independently of the issue of allowing women to serve in the office of elder and minister?

Deputies were instructed to follow a three-track approach to fulfill their mandate:

- Theological/Sociological research
- Reflection in the churches
- Preparation of practical, short term decisions

The deputies were unable to complete the third track of their work and will report to the next synod on the practical issues surrounding the role of women in the church. The first track was taken on by the TUK. One of the projects was a hermeneutical undertaking by Dr. Myriam Klinker, published in the TUK series of reflections. This booklet has been printed but we have not had opportunity to fully consider this work at this time.

For the second track, the deputies composed a manual to be used for reflection on the role of women in the church at the local level. After reviewing this manual, we are unsettled by the whole mandate of the deputies M/V. What follows is a short summary and assessment of this manual produced by the deputies for our sister churches in The Netherlands.

The manual reviews the Report M/V in de Kerk to Synod 2008. This report raised questions about biblical directives for the position of women in the church. There is assurance that the Bible has the authority in this matter. However, the question of various possible interpretations of Bible passages relevant to the role of women in the church is brought to the fore. It is also noted that the roles of men and women have not been explicitly established in the confessions of the RCN.

The main lines of argumentation were laid out in the report to Synod 2008.

- A. Some view the role of men as leaders and protectors and women as followers and helpers as a creation ordinance. Sanctified in Christ, men and women balance each other in their separate roles again.
- B. Others don't see a creation ordinance but see men and women created in equal roles with difference only as a result of the fall. We have been redeemed from that by Christ and so men and women are now equal in marriage and in church.

Two other possible lines of argumentation, both claiming to be faithful to Scripture, were also put forward. The difference here is in taking into account the cultural context at the time of the Bible writers and our present-day culture.

C. Even though the Spirit made use of the Bible writers along with their cultural background, he is able to make his intentions clear in spite of that cultural background. Though we need to carefully take into account the different situation, the application for today isn't much affected.

D. God's message for today is hidden under a cultural layer which we need to look through in order to understand it. The prescriptions are so intertwined with the concrete situation in which they were given that they cannot be applied to today and may even be in conflict with what God intended.

As deputies, we have concerns about the possible Scripture interpretations presented to Synod 2008 and put forward in the "Manual M/V." The reasoning in argument B above clearly asserts that the whole idea of male headship has been abolished after Christ. Genesis 3:16b, "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you," is then regarded as a curse on the relationship of men and women which was rendered void by Christ having borne the curse for us. This results in the principle of Galatians 3:28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Accepting this line of reasoning would mean that all the offices in the church should be opened to women.

---

### *There is evidence of a venturing into a more Scripture-critical direction*

---

Synod Zwolle's acceptance of this interpretation as a possibly acceptable interpretation, we believe, is a serious deviation from the historical interpretation of the relevant passages. There is no doubt that men and women were created equal in worth and dignity. Both were made in God's image. Both were given the task to replenish the earth and subdue it. Both came from one flesh and became one flesh. However, there is also no doubt that man was created before woman and this has lasting impact on their roles. This is seen in 1 Timothy 2:12-13, "For Adam was formed first, then Eve." In addition, woman was given a specific role

in Genesis 2:18 and 20 as "helper." Man was also the federal head as shown in the fact that he was given the command concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen 2:16 and 17) and it is in his disobedience specifically that all mankind sinned as evidenced by Romans 5:12, "Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, so death spread to all men because all sinned." As well, we do not see that Galatians 3:28 supports an egalitarian position as far as roles of men and women is concerned. Paul was not doing away with gender-specific roles. The point the Apostle was referring to was spiritual status before God through faith, not the removal of different roles. We therefore do not see how the reasoning in B could be entertained as a possible interpretation of Scripture from a Reformed perspective. The principle which we find clearly revealed throughout the New Testament is that of male headship in relation to women in marriage as well as church (1 Cor 11:3, Eph 5:23, 1 Tim 2:8-15).

It is true that the RCN have not actually adopted B above as their final approach to the role of women. However, by giving the deputies considering the roles of women in the church the "go-ahead" to research this as a possible approach, Synod Zwolle 2008 has opened a door which cannot easily be shut again. They have cast doubt on the validity of the historical view of male headship, and have suggested that the possibility exists that B is a valid interpretation. It will be difficult now to go back to the A only position which the Reformed churches have historically held.

In reasoning D above, the matter of hermeneutics clearly comes to the fore. Sadly, historical Reformed hermeneutics is questioned in this approach. The cultural context is brought into the picture as possibly determining what such a passage says about the role of women. This means that also here a door has been opened for the possibility of a "new hermeneutic" which gives more weight to the human element in the text of the Bible. In spite of numerous assurances that the Bible is still authoritative and trustworthy in the manual, these assurances certainly sound hollow if one considers how the human element can now be given so much weight in relevant passages about the role of women, such as 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 and 1 Timothy 2 and 3. These passages can be reinterpreted to teach the opposite of what they have historically been shown to teach in Reformed commentaries for hundreds of years. We regret that this new hermeneutic has even been posited as a possible



direction for the churches in the RCN. Again, a door opened which will not easily be closed again.

As deputies we empathize with the RCN as they wrestle with the pressures of an ever-more secular, humanistic society on the churches in Europe, especially also with regard to the place and role of the woman. Seeking better ways to serve and praise God is positive. However, the manual produced by the deputies places big question marks behind the approach to the role of the woman in the Reformed churches throughout history and the biblical interpretation which supported that approach. This questioning has, we would say, signified at least a toleration of new hermeneutics in the RCN.

### 3. Unity discussions between the RCN and the Netherlands Reformed Churches (NRC)

The Netherlands Reformed Churches came into existence in the late sixties of the twentieth century, as churches that had split off from the RCN. Matters of doctrine and church government played a decisive role in this split. Since 1993 there has been growing contact between the NRC and the RCN. This happens on the level of the local churches, as well as through committees of Synod.

In the area of church government the NRC has always shown a strong independentism. Their church order states that a refusal to accept it cannot be a reason to expel a local church from the federation. The pre-ambule of this document only requests local churches to respect the decisions of major assemblies as much as possible. In the area of doctrine the NRC practice significant tolerance when it comes to deviations from the Reformed confessions. The church order does have an article about signing the Three Forms of Unity by office bearers, but those who refuse only have to give account to their consistory. In practice there is freedom to criticize the confessions in articles and books.

General Synod Ommen 1993 was the first synod to instruct the *Deputaten Kerkelijke Eenheid* (Deputies Ecclesiastical Unity or DKE) to explore if there are possibilities to make contact with the NRC. Subsequent synods in 1996 and 1999 saw the matters of doctrine and church polity mentioned above as obstacles to moving ahead towards unity talks. However, the tone of the RCN concerning the NRC changed at Synod 2002. That synod stated that discussions had led to a better mutual understanding regarding the role and the place of subscribing to the confession to prevent and refute

deviations from Scripture and the Reformed doctrine. Not all questions were answered in a satisfactory manner, but Synod instructed DKE to continue the discussions on those matters.

The subsequent synod in 2005 expressed appreciation for the progress made in the discussions with the NRC committee about the ecclesiastical way of dealing with deviations from the Reformed confession. But that synod also expressed its disappointment with the decision of the NRC to open the offices of elder and minister for women, and called it a serious barrier for further contacts. The DKE were instructed to continue the discussion about the issue of the place and role of God's Word and the confession as basis for the church community. This discussion also had to include the decision of the NRC with regard to women in office.

*They have cast doubt on the validity of the historical view of male headship*

The next synod, Synod Zwolle Synod 2008 decided that though discussions had been warm, an interim statement of the deputies on both sides regarding binding to the confessions did not remove all questions concerning this matter. Synod also expressed sadness that discussions about the decision to admit women to the offices of elder and minister in the NRC had not resulted in the removal of the issues raised by Synod 2005. Synod 2008 gave the specific mandate to DKE to discuss with the NRC committee the three topics that keep coming back: (1) the differences in binding to the confession; (2) the differences in dealing with ongoing deviations from the confession; (3) the matter of women in office within the NRC.

The DKE report to Synod Harderwijk 2011 is kind of surprising and confusing. It indicates that the Deputies had discussions with the NRC committee on three topics: the doctrine of baptism, the Holy Spirit, and Church and Lord's Supper. They also had general discussions on the hermeneutical principles that are important when we want to apply biblical commands in our time. DKE concluded with thankfulness that on all these topics there is much harmony between the RCN and the NRC (at least between the two committees). They see this as a strong basis to continue with confidence the discussions about the confession and about women in office.

- We have questions about this report and note:
- i. The discussions of the deputies focused on topics Synod Zwolle 2008 had not asked for.
  - ii. The report does not speak about the issues Synod had mandated DKE to address and seek clarification about.
  - iii. The conclusion that there is so much harmony in the way in which the RCN and the NRC bind to the confessions is not supported by the facts in the NRC. Office bearers who don't sign a subscription form and reject infant-baptism are accepted.
  - iv. There also appears to be harmony between the committees of the RCN and the NRC when it comes to criticism of the confessions.

We note that the DKE of the RCN are evidently becoming warmer in their discussions and reports after 2002, even though the synods of 2005 and 2008 are less excited and more reluctant than deputies to move forward in the discussions with the NRC. But the discussions do continue, and it will be quite important to see if the direction of the past years to closer contact continues. This raises the question: is the NRC changing? Or are the RCN changing?

*We wonder whether Synod Harderwijk 2011 will be able to give direction to a process that seems to have taken on a life of its own*

To respond to the first question, it certainly doesn't appear that the NRC are moving at all. If there is any indication of change in the NRC, it is in a more modern, liberal direction. Evidence for this is the adoption of the report women elders and ministers which opened all offices for women in the NRC. And it is still acceptable in the NRC that not all the office bearers sign the subscription form and that some office bearers reject infant baptism. On paper they may regret this, but in practice the policy of doing nothing to protect the Reformed doctrine and confession is consistent and has not changed.

What about the RCN then? The fact that the RCN and the NRC are growing closer, that there is growing mutual agreement, harmony, and understanding in

many areas can only be because our sister churches are changing. They are moving towards the NRC because they have become more open for new hermeneutics and they have become more tolerant when it comes to doctrinal freedom. The concern is then that through these intensifying contacts the RCN will be more and more influenced by the situation and developments in the NRC. In theory it can also work the other way around, of course, but there is not much evidence that this is happening. For instance, we can expect that the ongoing discussion in the RCN about the role of women in the church will be influenced by the report and decisions in the NRC concerning women elders and ministers.

There is another aspect. A number of times the DKE mention with thankfulness in their report the growing local contacts between RCN and NRC congregations. The decisions of synods also refer to these local developments. We have the distinct impression that the excitement about what is happening locally overrides the reluctance and caution expressed by the synods of the RCN. There seems to be a great diversity in local ecumenical contacts which are moving forward, regardless of the hesitations on the level of the federation. For a growing number of people the questions that synods want to see addressed are simply irrelevant today.

Confronted with the report of the DKE to Synod 2011 and with the ongoing local developments, we wonder whether Synod Harderwijk 2011 will be able to give direction to a process that seems to have taken on a life of its own. And we are left with the crucial question: how will the unity talks and the local unity developments affect the Reformed and confessional identity of our sister churches?

Our concerns were expressed by Rev. DeGelder and Br. Nordeman at Synod, when fraternal delegates were given opportunity to participate in discussions and also in the official address to Synod on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

Rev. J. DeGelder  
Br. G. J. Nordeman  
Rev. J. Moesker  
Dr. C. Van Dam 

# The OPC at Seventy-Five: Christian Education

When the Orthodox Presbyterian Church commemorated the seventy-fifth anniversary of its founding, it reflected also upon God's gracious work through the activities of the long-standing Committee on Christian Education (or CCE). The mandate of this committee is to promote all edification in Christian doctrine throughout the OPC churches. Its many duties range from publishing Sunday-school tracts to providing materials to support ministers, missionaries, and other office-bearers.

The senior Rev. John P. Galbraith, who was instrumental in the early years, spoke about two convictions which have supported the committee's operations from the beginning: 1) the Bible is the Word of God, and 2) the church can be built only upon that Word. Early publications, such as the widely-read treatise, "Why the Orthodox Presbyterian Church?" served to solidify the young churches.

Other tasks of the committee that were foundational to the OPC were instructing the covenant children (and their parents), and supervising the training of ministers and missionaries. Regarding this latter mandate, Rev. Galbraith stated that in his view men who currently are being trained in more or less Reformed and Presbyterian seminaries throughout the U.S. are subjected to the teaching of "inclusivism," which means that while one religion or confession is absolutely true, others are true insofar as they agree with it. Seeing this falsehood as a serious challenge to the faithfulness of the OPC, Rev. Galbraith warned that care should be taken lest the churches fall for the tempting belief that "you don't have to hold to everything" that the Word and the Church teaches.

Following Rev. Galbraith's speech, members of the CCE reviewed the committee's activities throughout the years. Highlights included the completion of a catechism "curriculum" in the 1950s and the development of a complete Sunday school program in the 1960s.

Since the financial constraints upon the committee were so great by 1970 that it could no longer fulfill its

mandate effectively, the OPC entered upon a joint publishing venture with the Presbyterian Church of America, in 1975, under the banner "Great Commission Publications." This development allowed steady publication of edifying materials, while also granting the committee opportunities to fulfill other aspects of its mandate.

In 1980 the committee was made responsible for the publication of the church's official magazine, *New Horizons*. A decade later it created a second publication, *Ordained Servant*, to help office-bearers in fulfilling their calling. By 1998 the committee initiated the Ministerial Training Institute, which provides supplemental training in OPC distinctives, via the Internet and in-person meetings. During the summer months the committee organizes conferences designed for seminary students interested in learning more about the OPC. Another successful venture is the website ([www.opc.org](http://www.opc.org)), which receives some fifty thousand visits per month. The publication of devotional readings and commentaries on the Westminster Confession of Faith has attracted a readership well beyond the churches of the OPC. In sum, through the Committee on Christian Education, the Orthodox Presbyterian Churches have been richly edified. For the support in prayer, service, and giving, the churches praised the Lord, to whom is all the glory.



*Rev. John P. Galbraith*

*On behalf of the Committee for Contact with  
Churches in North America (CCNA)*

*Dr Riemer Faber, convener*

*Rev. Doug vandeBurgt, secretary* 