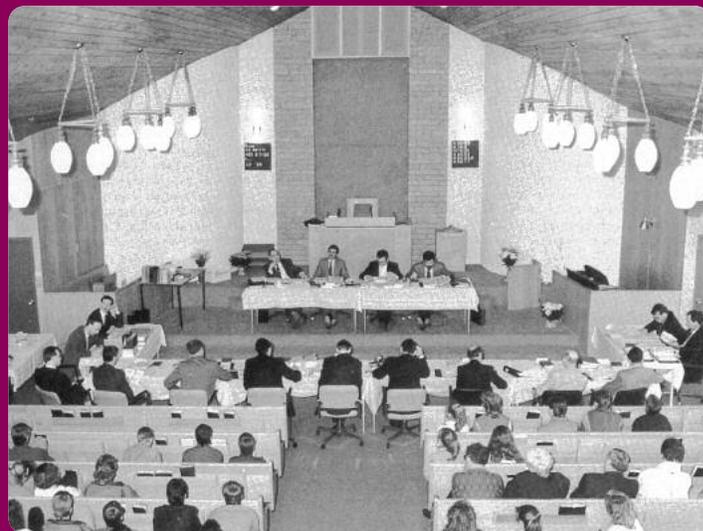


# Clarion

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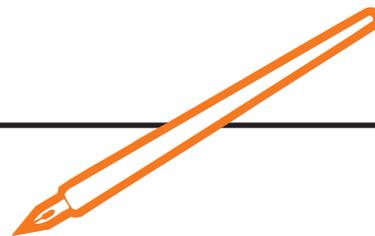


*The Right to Address  
the Broader Assembly*

Numbers

10:1-10

By G.Ph. van Popta



## The Votum versus Atheism and Pantheism

Each Sunday, everywhere throughout the world and in many languages, Reformed churches begin worshipping God with the words of Psalm 124:8, *“Our help is in the Name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.”* We call this “the votum.” The word “votum” is a Latin word which refers to a solemn vow made to God. For us it has come to mean something like “confession” or “a profession of faith.”

The custom of beginning the service with these words predates the Reformation. The liturgies of the medieval church commonly included this confession very near the beginning of the service.<sup>1</sup> The Reformed churches continued this custom. The liturgy of the Reformed Church in Zurich used Psalm 124:8 to open the service. In 1574, the Provincial Synod of Dort said that a fixed formula ought to be used to open the service, such as “Our help is in the Name of the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

These words are very familiar to us. We hear them every Sunday, twice. Their familiarity can make us dull to their rich meaning. Because they are so familiar, we run the risk that we no longer truly hear them. They become part of the opening formalities, something akin to a chairman’s rap of the gavel to begin a meeting. Some worshippers seem to think that it’s the point at which you are to look up the opening psalm. Have we forgotten how solemn and important these words are?

Some “Reformed” churches no longer begin their worship services with these words. Instead, the minister strolls up to the pulpit and greets the congregation (as if they had bothered to come out to meet with him rather than God). He may lead off with a witty comment or two after which he *might* greet the people in the name of God and then announce the opening song. In many of these churches the solemn confession of God’s people that their help is in the Name of the Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, has disappeared. It has not disappeared in our churches. Let us hold on to it. We must hold on to this solemn confession because it is a powerful antidote to both atheism and pantheism.

### The votum versus atheism

The atheist says there is no God. At bottom, there are two kinds of atheism: dogmatic and practical.

The dogmatic atheist absolutely denies God’s existence. Although this brand of atheism found its proponents already in the (eighteenth century) French Revolution, it has come of age in our century. Communism as it developed in the early part of this century is devoted to atheism. In 1925 the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism was established. Its object was to attack all religions through the distribution of atheistic literature. Four years later the League of Militant Atheists was formed with the goal to undermine the religious foundations of Western Society. It would do this by promoting atheistic lectures and placing atheistic professors in universities.<sup>3</sup> Dogmatic atheism says that man no longer needs a god. The advances in modern science have made God redundant as an explanation for happenings in nature. “We can predict the weather; who needs God!”

The practical atheist does not so much deny the existence of God as ignore Him. Life is lived as if there is no God. The practical atheist pays no heed to God’s claims. He may be a very nice neighbour who does friendly things, or he may lead a defiantly wicked life. The Psalms call the practical atheist a fool. “*The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God’*” (Ps. 14:1). “*In the pride of his countenance the wicked does not seek him; all his thoughts are, ‘There is no God’*” (Ps. 10:4).<sup>4</sup>

We can each name scores of people whom we could legitimately classify as practical atheists. Sadly, confessing Christians often live as practical atheists. They may sing the Credo in the worship service and yet, during the week, live as if there were no God. Whenever we do not heed the exclusive and universal claim of God upon our lives, we have placed a foot in the camp of practical atheism.

As a weapon against atheism, dogmatic and practical, the church, when it gathers together on the Lord’s day, confesses, *“Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made*

*“Our help is  
in the Name  
of the  
LORD,  
who made  
heaven and  
earth.”*

*Psalm 124:8*

heaven and earth." We believe in the Lord God. We know He exists. There is no doubt. Further, we will reckon with Him in everything we do, say and think.

### The votum versus pantheism

"Pantheism" means "everything is God." It is a religiously philosophical position which identifies God with the world. Creator and creature are one and the same. It is an ancient belief. Typically, eastern religions are to some degree pantheistic. The contemporary New Age Movement (NAM), which is nothing but old eastern religions and philosophies dressed up a bit to appeal to western people, is thoroughly pantheistic. You can buy New Age music at record stores. There are 10,000 people in Canada who are proud to call themselves pagan and subscribe to the pantheistic confession that God is all and all is God.

Much of the ecology movement is pantheistic. Pantheists like to speak about Mother Earth (Gaia, they call it, from the Greek word for "earth"). Recently Canada's three astronauts were interviewed on CBC-Radio. One of them spoke of how impressive it was to be in space and to see Mother Earth, and to think that humanity was clinging to her like a single living organism. Another explained that there is more oxygen in the atmosphere on the sun side of the earth than on the night side. The difference is measurable as the shuttle orbits the earth. With a voice thickened by emotion, the astronaut said that he had witnessed the earth breathing. Pure pantheism.

As a weapon against pantheism, the church, when it gathers together on the Lord's day, confesses, "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth." By this confession, we proclaim the eternal qualitative difference between the Lord God the Creator, and creation. God was there in eternity before heaven and earth were made. How could the Creator and the creation, then, be one and the same? "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1).

Let us continue to begin our worship services with these words.<sup>5,6</sup> Some churches have dropped the votum from their liturgy, most likely because of the influence of the NAM on their theology. We, however, will continue to confess our faith in God who has revealed himself in His Word and with whom we all must reckon. We will continue to confess our faith in the eternal God who has created all things and is sovereign over all things. We will continue to confess our faith in this God who has revealed himself to us as the Lord, the covenant God, who has come near to us in Jesus Christ and who promises to be our Helper in all circumstances of life.

<sup>1</sup>William D. Maxwell, *A History of Christian Worship: An outline of its development and forms* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1936) 69.

<sup>2</sup>K. Deddens, *Where Everything Points to Him*, translated by Theodore Plantinga (Neerlandia, AB: Inheritance Publications, 1993), 48.

<sup>3</sup>P.D. Feinberg, *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 1984 ed., s.v. "Atheism," 96-97.

<sup>4</sup>See also Is. 31:1; Jer. 2:13, 17-18; 5:12; 18:13-15.

<sup>5</sup>It is liturgically more correct for the congregation to profess the votum vocally in unison.

<sup>6</sup>I do not mean that it would be improper to begin with a call to worship which would be followed by the votum. It may be very proper.



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#### EDITORIAL COMMITTEE:

Editor: J. Geertsema  
Coeditors: J. De Jong, R.A. Schouten,  
C. Van Dam, G.Ph. van Popta

#### ADDRESS FOR EDITORIAL MATTERS:

CLARION  
5621 - 51 Street  
Taber, AB T1G 1K6  
Fax: (403) 223-0149  
E-Mail: 74124.1377@CompuServe.COM

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By H.J.J. Feenstra

## BE WISE WITH WISDOM

### The Beginning of Wisdom – Antithetical Wisdom

Originally published as  
*Wees wijs met de wijsheid*,  
Woord en Wereld # 11  
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Ermelo 1989  
Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

#### The Beginning of Wisdom

All wisdom starts somewhere; it has a root. Proverbs does not leave us guessing what that root is. No, we will not be able to reach out to God and fully understand the depths of His wisdom; much remains hidden for us. But let us be bound and led by what God Himself gives us: His revelation. That is our source of wisdom. It begins with the fear of the Lord – that can become such a familiar phrase that we no longer experience its force and urgency. The word *fear* can also refer to feelings of fright, for instance being afraid of animals and being scared of things. That's not what we must think of in this context. The Lord does not want to terrify us.

Fear which develops in a negative manner results in fright and dread, perhaps even terror. But when it develops in a positive manner it may result in respect and dependence.

Fearing the Lord means being filled with deep respect for Him. It means being so full of His great majesty that you know yourself to be fully depen-

dent on Him in all things. The fear of the Lord gives meaning to your life; it shapes you because you recognize and acknowledge that your whole life and the world around you are directly and intimately related to the Lord. This does not leave any room for superficially and occasionally observing that, indeed, God does exist and the Bible has some value. No, the fear of the Lord demands appropriate respect, deep awe for Him who made Himself known to us by that rich and revealing name: the Lord.

All wisdom and knowledge starts with the fear of the Lord. It is not up to us to determine what that phrase means. Its meaning has been determined: be fully bound by God's commandments; have pleasure in His precepts; walk in His ways.

From Scripture Proverbs 1:7  
Job 28  
Psalm 112:1; 119:63; 128:1  
(notice the parallels)  
Romans 11:33-34  
1 Corinthians 2:6-16  
2 Corinthians 5:11

#### Antithetical Wisdom

Antithesis means contrast. We usually mean with this term the fundamental contrast which God Himself has placed over this world, the contrast caused by the battle between the

woman and the serpent, between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, between the church and the world, between belief and unbelief.

It will be clear that this antithesis will be noticed also when we speak about wisdom. After all, we are concerned with the wisdom that saves, with the christian art of living in the way of the fear of the Lord.

Wisdom is contrasted with foolishness. There are only two roads: the road of the righteous and the road of the unrighteous, the narrow road and the broad road. That is the antithesis.

Young people, for whom these proverbs have been written in the first place, must become familiar with this antithesis. They must learn to distinguish well between these two roads. The wisdom teacher who, with the help of Proverbs, takes the youth by the hand to teach them wisdom, points out quite emphatically that there are other teachers who want to teach them about the art of living. But those teachers do this with the wrong objectives and with the wrong methods: seek your own pleasures, and do not take things so seriously. The presentation may be most convincing and tempting, but it leads to destruction, your destruction.

From Scripture Proverbs 1:10-19  
Psalm 1  
Matthew 7:13-14

## What's inside?

In this issue, Dr. J. Boersma continues to analyze the charismatic movement by looking a little closer at the question of "speaking in tongues."

We've all ploughed through the Acts of the last General Synod, right? Since the matters of the churches lie close to our hearts, we can expect some discussion about the Acts and related issues in the next while. Rev. E. Kampen writes on who may address the broader assemblies of the churches and under which conditions. He ends by making some concrete suggestions.

The church at Barrhead recently took possession of a new building. Mr. Doug Wielenga tells us the story.

Mrs. Ravensbergen smiles at us from her regular column.

Wes Bredenhof writes about the usefulness of a pocket Bible.

A good variety of topics in this issue. We hope you enjoy it.

GvP

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# Uttering Mysteries

## Theological reflections on the charismatic movements

By J. Boersma

Spirit baptism first functioned to transfer people from the Old Testament to the New Testament dispensation, to the dispensation of the Spirit of the ascended Lord and King. Initially this took place on the day of Pentecost, and subsequently this Spirit baptism was repeated to mark further transfers to the ever widening circles of the kingdom of God. Once this process of dual transfers – from Old to New Testament dispensation; and from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth – had been completed, Spirit baptism once for all lost its character of being an additional or second blessing. The constant connection between faith and the gift of the Spirit in the Pauline writings, as well as Paul's comment about Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 illustrate this. Spirit baptism is identical to the initial gift of the Holy Spirit which every Christian receives through faith.

This understanding of Spirit baptism means that it becomes impossible to connect tongues-speaking and prophecy to a second baptism reserved for a certain segment of the congregation. In fact, it could be argued that the only letter which clearly speaks about tongues-speaking, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, is one extended argument for the unity of the church. Paul argues for the unity of the church in connection with the danger of attaching oneself to certain philosophical leaders (1:10; 3:1-9), in connection with the unity of the church through the one gift of the Spirit it remains possible to speak of a great diversity of gifts, so that only some members receive the gifts of tongues and of prophecy. Such is, in fact, the situation in Corinth. This means that a further analysis of the nature and the function of tongues and of prophecy is necessary. Such an understanding may also give insight into the

question regarding the continuation of these particular gifts.

### Tongues or languages?

I will take my starting point in a comparison between Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians in order to consider the nature of speaking in tongues. There are at least six indications that both writings refer to the same phenomenon. First, of course, the similarity in vocabulary itself between Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians already prods one into the direction of an identical phenomenon.<sup>1</sup> Second, it must be noted that in Acts 2 Jews from several different countries each heard the disciples speaking in his own language. It is remarkable that Paul applies the prophecy of Isaiah 28:11 about a foreign language – "Very well then, with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people" – to the tongues-speaking phenomenon in Corinth. These references to other languages, both in Acts 2 and in 1 Corinthians 14, further highlight the similarity between the two descriptions.<sup>2</sup> In the third place, in both cases the tongues are of such a nature that bystanders who do not know what is going on think of it as something outrageous: In Acts 2 some of the bystanders suspect the disciples of being drunk (2:13,15). An outsider who would walk into a church service in Corinth would think that the worshippers are out of their mind (1 Corinthians 14:23).<sup>3</sup> This means that in both cases the tongues come across as gobbledygook to the listeners. Fourth, Paul's reference to tongues "of men and of angels" lends further credence to the identity between the tongues in Acts and in Corinth (1 Corinthians 13:1).<sup>4</sup> In the fifth place, the element of praise is pronounced in both situations (Acts 2:11; 1 Corinthians 14:13-17). Lastly, just as on the day of Pentecost, so also in Corinth, tongues occur in conjunction with Spirit baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13). It may reasonably be concluded, therefore, that the tongues to which Acts refers are the same as those about which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians.

Of course, this does not yet settle the question regarding the nature of these tongues. One may, in fact, wonder whether a precise answer to this question is attainable.<sup>5</sup> There are only certain indications in Scripture. I am not convinced that together these indications provide us with a complete picture of the nature of tongues. A first question which must be settled in this regard is whether the gift of tongues is simply the ability to speak a foreign language – for example Latin, Greek, Chinese or Gaelic – or whether they are unidentifiable, perhaps ecstatic, utterances. In other words: Are they "languages" (xenoglossia) or are they really "tongues" (glossolalia)? It is highly unlikely that the tongues are a language known by the tongues-speaker himself, such as Latin or Greek. If that were the case the speaker himself would be able not only to speak but also to translate the language. This is, in fact, not the case. Paul writes that the tongues-speaker should pray that he may interpret what he says (1 Corinthians 14:13) and that he should keep quiet in the church if there is no interpreter (1 Corinthians 14:28). Clearly, the tongue or language is not a language which the speaker himself knows.<sup>6</sup>

Are we then perhaps to think that tongues are existing human languages which are not known to the speaker himself? John MacArthur, in his book *Charismatic Chaos*, is of the opinion that this is what tongues are. He gives the following arguments: (1) the Jews heard the 120 believers each in his own language (Acts 2:6); (2) Scripture uses the Greek word *dialektos* in this connection (Acts 2:6,8); (3) interpretation or translation of tongues does not make sense in connection with ecstatic babbling: "You cannot translate ecstatic speech or gibberish;" and (4) Paul's reference to the foreign language of Isaiah 28:11 is only meaningful if tongues are Gentile foreign languages (1 Corinthians 14:21-22).<sup>7</sup> Paul indeed does give a number of indications that tongues are not uncontrollable ecstatic utterances.<sup>8</sup> The strange look on the

faces of outsiders and the reference to too much wine in Acts 2 are not the result of ecstatic behaviour but of the unknown character of the sounds that are produced, whether that be unidentifiable sounds (glossolalia) or existing foreign languages (xenoglossia). In 1 Corinthians the distinct impression given is that no one was able to benefit from tongues unless there would be someone who could interpret or translate the language (1 Corinthians 12:10, 30; 14:2, 5, 13, 23, 27-28).

Such a translation does not necessarily have to refer to an existing human language, however. It may just as well refer to some form of revelation that did not come in a particular human language. The Lord may equally well have used sounds that in and of themselves do not have a meaning, but that He used for His purposes. Through interpreters, the Lord would then indicate what the meaning was. The interpretation of tongues is a new element in 1 Corinthians, which is not found in Acts 2. There it appears that people immediately understood the tongues. MacArthur rightly observes that the Jews heard the 120 believers each in his own language. However, the point is not just that they hear the 120 believers *in their own language*, but also that they *hear* the believers in their own language (2:8). This may indicate that Pentecost came not only with a miracle of tongues, but also with a miracle of hearing. Thus, when the Lord first sent His Spirit he may not only have given the ability of speaking in tongues, but may also liberally have given the gift of interpretation of tongues. This would explain why we read nothing about the Jews frantically searching for some of the 120 who spoke their particular language. It would also explain the mocking charge of drunkenness at Pentecost better: If the tongues were existing languages, all of the bystanders would soon have found out that different people of the 120 believers spoke different existing languages, understood only by those who had grouped themselves around the right speaker. Most likely, therefore, Pentecost came with a miracle of speaking in tongues as well as of interpretation of tongues (a miracle of hearing). It is more likely that this uttering of mysteries was really in "tongues" (glossolalia) than that it was in foreign languages (xenoglossia).

### Tongues, prophecy, and revelation

Whatever the exact character of tongues, they do have a certain cognitive content; what is more, this content may be defined as various aspects of our salvation in Christ. Paul states that

someone who speaks in a tongue utters mysteries by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 14:2). This means that tongues-speaking is a way in which God reveals his redemption in Christ. Paul mostly speaks of "mysteries" in connection with terms for revelation.<sup>9</sup> Mysteries speak of the various aspects of the salvation which has been revealed in Christ.<sup>10</sup> The word "mystery" may have a secretive connotation for us. Paul, however, does not speak of mysteries as if they are secrets. Almost invariably, when he speaks of "mysteries," he speaks of something which *used* to be hidden but has *now* been revealed. O. Palmer Robertson, in his book *The Final Word*, goes through all 28 occurrences of the term "mystery" in the New Testament. From this study he concludes: "If we set aside for a moment the occurrence in 1 Corinthians 14 presently under consideration, twenty-seven cases explicitly talk about a "mystery" as something once hidden *but now revealed*. Christianity emphatically is not a mystery religion."<sup>11</sup> This finding is of crucial importance, for it means that both tongues and prophecies are not something mysterious or secretive, but that they give revelation. Just as tongues are ways of uttering mysteries, so also prophecy is connected to mystery (1 Corinthians 13:2). With regard to prophecy, Paul is even more explicit than in connection with tongues. Not only is prophecy the uttering of mysteries, but it is, in fact, a form of revelation (1 Corinthians 14:6,30). The conclusion must be that also tongues are a form of revelation. Ultimately tongues are not of human origin. They can only be directed upward to God after they have come downward from God.<sup>12</sup>

The revelatory nature of tongues is already an indication that tongues were part and parcel of the apostolic period only. If tongues would still function today this would have obvious repercussions, both for the doctrine of revelation and for the doctrine of Scripture. It would imply an open canon. This is why it is one of the strong points of MacArthur's book that already the second chapter is entitled, "Does God Still Give Revelation?" Indeed, this reveals a key problem in the charismatic position. If tongues were to continue today, it would become impossible to maintain the closed canon of Scripture.

Ultimately, therefore, one of the decisive arguments in favour of the position that tongues are no longer around (the cessationist position) is that the revelatory character of tongues and prophecy demands it. The charismatic movement places the closed canon of Scripture in danger. It must be admit-

ted that this argument is not taken directly from Scripture. It is only an argument, as the Westminster Confession states, that "by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture" (I.vi). Nevertheless, the secondary character of the argument does not make it less compelling. One cannot maintain the revelatory function of tongues and prophecy and the closed character of the canon at the same time.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. John R.W. Stott, *Baptism and Fullness: The Work of the Holy Spirit Today*, 2nd ed. (London: Inter-Varsity, 1975), p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. O. Palmer Robertson, "Tongues: Sign of Covenantal Curse and Blessing," *Westminster Theological Journal* 38 (1975) 48, n. 5.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Robertson, "Tongues," 51.

<sup>4</sup>While there can be no absolute certainty, the evidence would tend to support that Paul does refer here to tongues-speaking. See C. Trimp, "De charismatische gemeente," in *De gemeente en haar liturgie: Een leesboek voor kerkangangers* (Kampen: Van den Berg, 1983), pp. 39-40; Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), pp. 630-31. J.W. Maris is of the opinion that Paul only speaks hypothetically. He states that the angelic languages are just as unreal as having "all knowledge" (v. 2) and as "surrendering my body to the flames" (v. 3) (*Geloof en ervaring: Van Wesley tot de pinksterbeweging* [Leiden: Groen, 1992], p. 238). Apart from the fact that there is a difficult textual problem in verse 3, however, it is clear from chapter 8 that the Corinthians were in fact boasting of their knowledge. Fee refers to the Corinthians' rejection of proper sexual roles; their denial of the resurrection of the body; their interest in "wisdom" and "knowledge"; and their general sense of having arrived; all in support of his contention that Paul does refer to glossolalia.

<sup>5</sup>The Greek word for "tongue" is the same as that for "language" (*glossa*).

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Vern S. Poythress, "The Nature of Corinthian Glossolalia: Possible Options," *Westminster Theological Journal* 40 (1977) 132.

<sup>7</sup>John F. MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), pp. 277-78.

<sup>8</sup>Paul's injunction that only two or three are allowed to speak in tongues; only one at a time; and only if an interpreter is available is sufficient proof that tongues are not the kind of ecstatic behaviour manifested in many Pentecostalist churches today.

<sup>9</sup>Cf. G. Bornkamm, in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Friedrich, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968) IV.821.

<sup>10</sup>Richard B. Gaffin, *Perspectives on Pentecost: Studies in New Testament Teaching on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit* (Phillipsburg: Presbyterian and Reformed), p. 61

<sup>11</sup>O. Palmer Robertson, *The Final Word: A Biblical Response to the Case for Tongues and Prophecy Today* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1993), p. 26.

<sup>12</sup>Gaffin carefully establishes the revelatory character of tongues and rightly concludes that the word "mystery" "emphasizes that what is revealed is inaccessible to human effort and disclosed by God unilaterally. Consequently, "mysteries" specifies the inspired, revelatory nature of tongues as well as prophecy" (*Perspectives on Pentecost*, pp. 79-80).



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

“. . . and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”  
Ephesians 4:32

## Dear Brothers and Sisters,

At a gas station in our town I read the following sign: “When You See Someone Without A Smile Give Him One of Yours.” This little phrase kept popping up in my mind, and made me ask, what is so important about a smile, why is something missing when there is none, and why should you share it with someone when you do smile?

When you look around you in the world, you can distinguish two kinds of people: those who are kind and those who seem not so kind. Often kindness can easily be seen, for a friendly person smiles and pays attention to others, and the unfriendly kind usually does not see anybody, and does not smile either. When you do not know the person, you go by what you see. We rather deal with people who seem friendly, than with those who keep a distance. So a smile, also your smile, can help to make someone feel better.

When a mother has a new baby, she waits anxiously for his/her first smile, and everyone who looks at a baby is very proud when he/she smiles at her/him. When we go on a picture we have to smile to look our very best. We also like it when other people smile at us: the saleslady in the store, the nurse at the doctor’s office, people at work. And especially when we are a little nervous it helps a lot when there is someone who makes us feel better with a smile or a handshake. When you need help from somebody it is much easier to ask someone who smiles, than someone with a very stern face. We make friends quicker with a smiling person than with a stern-looking “sour puss,” as we might call him/her,

Now look at yourself. Are you a kind person with a smile for everyone? Or would people call you a “sour puss?” Then you will also know that there might be another reason for not being so smiley: maybe you *want* to be kind and smile at other people, but something holds you back. You are shy, or you are afraid that other people do not like you to come and talk to them. So you crawl in your (unfriendly) shell, and do not dare to peek out. Other people may *think* that you are a stern, unapproachable person, but you would love to go up and make friends with them. So it is not necessarily the smile (although it helps a lot!), but it really depends on what live *inside* a person whether he/she is kind or not.

Is it important to be kind to others, or can we just do what we want and not care about anybody else? To that question we can find answers in the Bible. For from the Bible we learn that we are not all individuals, but that we belong together as members of the Church of Christ. We are to help each other, to list to each other, and to share each other’s sorrow and happiness.

We also have to be kind to each other. That does not only mean that we smile and look friendly, but that kindness has to live inside of us. When that kindness lives inside of us we do not only get along with the people who smile at us, but we reach out to those people who do not smile. We will find out what lives deep inside such an unsmiling person. Is he/she shy? angry? lonely? scared? When we show kindness to such a person, we will find out what the problem is even when it has to take a very long time. And when we find out, can we make such a person smile?

A real smile comes when our heart is happy. The only real happiness comes when we believe with our heart that Jesus Christ is our Saviour. When we know that He has forgiven all our sins and that we belong to Him in life and death, then all other reasons for being unhappy will disappear. For all the worries and difficulties that we have to endure now are only temporary. Everlasting happiness is for all those who find that happiness in the Lord.

So let us smile and show the real kindness that is based on Christ’s love for us to the people around us. And when, due to handicaps, illnesses, or aging we cannot really be very productive, we can still smile and be kind to those who are in need of such kindness. Because that kindness is a gift from the Lord and can bring a sinner to repentance!

*The Lord I will extol,  
At all times bless His holy Name.  
I will not cease to sing His praise;  
His goodness I proclaim.  
I glory in the Lord;  
Let the afflicted hear my voice.  
O magnify the Lord with me!  
With me in Him rejoice.* Psalm 34:1

## Birthdays in April:

### 2: Derek Kok

Spruce Dale, 160 Fraser Street  
Strathroy, ON N7G 2C4

### 19: Marinus Foekens

27 O’Neil Street, Chatham, ON N7M 3A4

### 23: Arlene DeWit

c/o P. DeWit, Barnston Island  
Surrey, BC V3T 4W2

I wish all three of you a very happy birthday and until next month,

Mrs. R. Ravensbergen  
7462 Hwy. 20, RR 1  
Smithville, ON L0R 2A0

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# A Question of Admissibility: Who has the right to address the broader assemblies?

By E. Kampen

## Taking up a Challenge

The Acts of Synod Abbotsford 1995 have been out for a while and everyone will have had a chance to become familiar with the contents. This gives the opportunity to begin discussion on various matters as found in the Acts. At times it seems that Acts are ignored till the last few months before the next Synod when, suddenly, there is a flurry of activity in terms of appeals and letters. As the Acts of Synod 1995 indicate, quite a number of submissions came in very late. By the lateness of the submissions one almost gets the impression that the Acts of the previous Synod (Lincoln 1992) had only been received three months before Synod 1995 was set to convene, requiring this last minute effort to prepare submissions. Months leading up to Synods tend to carry a certain tension which is not always conducive to discussion. It is good to have discussion in the calm after a Synod.

You may notice that the present author was a delegate at Synod 1995. My purpose in writing is not to offer an analysis of all sorts of Synod decisions. Rather, during Synod all sorts of interesting questions come up, also questions of procedure. In discussing these questions of procedure, members of a Synod challenge each other's thought processes. Even more, members of Synod may challenge one another to put one's thoughts on paper in the press for the purpose of the edification of the membership at large. The purpose of this contribution, in the calm between Synods, is thus to stimulate some discussion.

## The question: Who has the right to address a General Synod?

The question that needs to be discussed is stated in Art. 22 of the Acts:

### Point of Order.

As a matter of procedure the question is asked whether individual

church members have the right to bring matters directly to Synod without involving their local consistories. The chair rules that this question should not be discussed at this point.

This question did not come up in isolation, but in connection with submissions from individual members about both the report on Bible translation and the report from the Committee Contact OPC. Art. 72 reads:

### II Admissibility

Several letters are from individuals and not from churches. This raises the question whether individual members have the right to address their concerns and views about a report directly to a General Synod, without first addressing them to their local consistory/council for consideration. However, it would be unfair to declare the personal submissions mentioned above invalid for this Synod because past Synods have been inconsistent on this.

Synod 1995 took the safe route with respect to submissions from individual members, admitting them due to precedents. The Acts of previous Synods indicate that numerous submissions from individuals, even submissions which had nothing to do with the individuals as such, were accepted and dealt with. These submissions dealt with everything from the *Book of Praise*, revision of the Creeds, Bible translation, to the O.P.C. Judging from Agendas of previous Synods, 1995 was not even the worst for individual submissions.

As a member of Synod 1995 I was a partner in taking the safe route of including those appeals. That does not take away from the need to reconsider the issue in a neutral setting. The floor of Synod was not the time to deal with this issue. Nevertheless, in the calm after the Synod we have to ask if Synods should accept submissions from indi-

vidual members, or whether future Synods have Church Order grounds not to accept them.

### Position

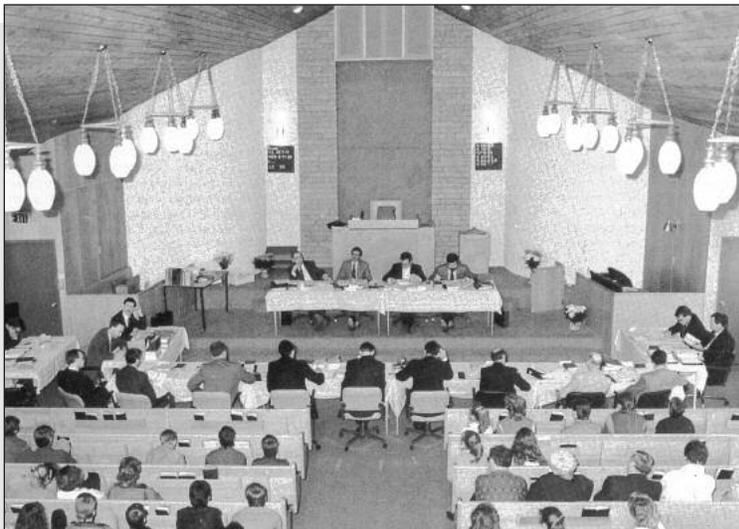
My position is that broader assemblies are assemblies of the churches and not individuals, and that the agenda should be set by the consistories of those churches. Individual members have access to the broader assemblies only in case of appeal. This is in accordance with our commonly adopted Church Order. Only by following this procedure do we keep a proper perspective as to where the real authority lies in the churches. Finally, only by following this procedure do we avoid chaos at the broader assemblies.

### The Church Order

The section of the Church Order that applies in this matter is the section on the Assemblies, in particular articles 29-31. In article 29 it speaks about the Ecclesiastical Assemblies which are "the consistory, the classis, the regional synod and the general synod." As Reformed believers we know that the consistory has the calling to rule over the local congregations. Elders have been appointed by Christ himself through the congregation. The Church federation, where local churches have bonded together, is primarily an arrangement between the governing bodies of the local churches. It is the consistory which has dealings with a classis, regional and general synods.

This principle of the consistories having dealings with the other assemblies is reinforced in article 30. Of significance is what we read in the second and third paragraph:

A major assembly shall deal with those matters only which could not be finished in the minor assembly or which belong to the its churches in common.



A new matter which has not previously been presented to that major assembly may be put on the agenda only when the minor assembly has dealt with it.

Notice that a major assembly may only deal with matters that could not be finished in the minor assembly. There is a clear principle here: Nothing comes to the table of a Classis or Synod except via the consistories. Also matters that pertain to the churches in common must come via a consistory. In articles 29 and 30 there is no mention of individual members putting anything on the table of the major assemblies.

Does this mean that individual members are totally shut out from the major assemblies? No, for there is also article 31 where it says:

If anyone complains that he has been wronged by the decision of a minor assembly, he shall have the right to appeal to the major assembly. . . .

From this it is clear that for individual church members the major assemblies are only accessible as a court of appeal, when they feel that they have been personally wronged by the decision of a consistory. After all, the only ecclesiastical assembly a member really has to deal with is the local consistory. The churches in the Church Order have agreed on a process that can be used to address alleged injustices. This would suggest that while an individual might address a broader assembly (eg. Classis) because of a conflict with the local consistory, it cannot address a broader assembly about any issue on his or her mind having bypassed the local consistory.

This of course has implications. Since the broader assemblies are the assemblies of the churches, it is not just the case that only the churches make up the agenda together, but also that only the churches (consistories) are allowed to involve themselves in the matters before a major assembly. We think here of the matter of reports written by various committees. These reports are sent to the consistories for input, not to the membership at large.

### Only a General Synod problem

When it comes to individual members addressing broader assemblies about matters on their agenda, then it becomes apparent that this is practically a problem especially at the General Synod level. I don't think it happens that members feel compelled to address matters dealt with at regional synod, or even at the classis level. Individual members put things on the table of classis and regional synod only in case of appeals. An attempt by individual members to have input in classical or regional synod issue would quickly be pushed aside as inadmissible.

Yet, somehow when it comes to a general synod, many think they have right to participate directly, even to make all sorts of comments about various reports sent to the consistories. The Acts of Synods in general even show how individual members at times appeal decisions of Regional Synods that do not pertain to them personally at all. At times members from *eastern* Canada appeal decisions made by regional synods in *western* Canada! But, we never read of anyone in western Canada appealing a decision of Classis ON North or South to Regional Synod

East. The mentality appears to be that General Synod is fair game for anyone who wishes to address any issue, even if the person is in no way wronged or involved.

### General Synod Super-Consistory?

It appears to me that the idea that anyone is allowed to address General Synod on any issue that might be before it, or any issue that might come to someone's mind, reflects a view of Synod as the super-consistory of the national church, which has to deal with all the problems and concerns of every individual member. This view, whether understood by those who feel they can address any broader assembly, especially General Synod, goes completely contrary to the basic reformed position on the autonomy of the local congregation and the authority given to the consistory. We are not members in a denomination, but in local churches of Jesus Christ. If someone has a question or concern, he should address his local consistory. A broader assembly is not an address for every church member to write to, but an address for the local churches (consistories) to send their items for the agenda. If a local member is concerned with decisions of broader assemblies, then the proper address is the local consistory, to ask it to take over that concern and work with it.

### The local church's task to uphold decisions of broader assemblies

It is necessary to stress the place of the local consistory. It might not seem fair at first to saddle them with the responsibility of hearing the comments and even complaints of the members of various decisions of broader assemblies. But then again, who else can members turn to? The only assembly that carries some degree of continuity is the consistory. Only in a consistory do we see the same brothers meet on a regular basis. The broader assemblies enter into and pass out of existence. Whereas a consistory can be asked to clarify a decision made, because the same members remain, this cannot be done by broader assemblies. There is no address to which one can send a request for clarification, as to what was really meant. All one has is the official written Acts. Oral impressions and recollections do not carry any weight, only the final decision. One cannot ask one General Synod to explain the actions of a previous General Synod. All one

can do is ask a Synod to weigh the reasons and judgment of a previous Synod.

Even more to be considered, however, is the promise of the churches to abide by the decisions of major assemblies. This is true in case of an appeal (art. 31 C.O.). It is also true with respect to decisions that apply to the churches in general. At every classis, the president of that classis has to ask the delegates from each church, among other things, “whether the decisions of the major assemblies are being honoured. . .” (C.O. 44). Consistories have the task to scrutinize the Acts of the broader assembly, and work with them. They might not like everything. The only criteria for rejecting a decision, however, is if it conflicts with God’s Word, or with the Church Order (C.O. 31). In that case they are obligated to appeal to see a wrong corrected.

We see here thus the responsibility of the local church with respect to the decisions of major assemblies, namely, to uphold and to defend them. After the Acts have been received and scrutinized, a local church either acquiesces and accepts the decision or pursues the way of appeal. If a particular member is not happy with the way a local consistory acquiesces, he can address the consistory and ask it either to defend itself, or to make efforts to address the broader assemblies. Part of living in a federation is that you accept the decisions of broader assemblies and work with them. The decisions of a General Synod should not be treated like pronouncements of a conference which one can take or leave. We can

only live together in federation if we keep our promise to accept decisions as settled and binding.

### Good order in the churches

The way the churches have organized themselves truly serves the good order. It is unhealthy to abandon this structure. For, if the position is maintained that everyone may address the broader assemblies, then the potential arises that a Synod has as many submissions on the table as there are members in the churches old enough to read and write. In this way broader assemblies will become unmanageable. In this respect I think the Australian Synod held in Byford in 1994 made a good ruling when it declared submissions by individual members inadmissible giving as ground:

The submission is an attempt to participate in Synod discussions. That is not the prerogative of individual church members but only of the delegates to Synod. Submissions from individual church members should come via their consistories (Acts Synod Byford, 1994, art. 36).

It is very important to keep in mind that broader assemblies are assemblies of the churches, not of the individual members of the churches.

### Recommendation

Based on the above consideration that the broader assemblies are assemblies of the churches and not individuals, and that the broader assemblies are only open to members in case of appeals, where one complains that one

has been wronged, and for the progress of good order in the churches I would thus recommend the following:

1. Consistories should be diligent in keeping up to date with developments in the life of the churches, listening to concerns expressed by the members. Decisions are either accepted and defended, or effort should be made to have decisions changed.
2. Every member who feels compelled to say something about decisions of broader assemblies should address his or her consistory. If the member convinces the consistory, then the consistory can put the matter on the table of the broader assemblies.
3. If a consistory refuses to take up one’s cause, there is the route of appeal, although it must be proven that one has been wronged by the consistory’s decision not to take up the cause.
4. Broader assemblies should only accept submissions from individual members who complain and can prove that they have been wronged. They should declare inadmissible any submission from individuals about issues with which they personally have nothing to do, and which in effect are nothing but an attempt to participate in Synod discussions.

*Rev. E. Kampen is minister of the church at Port Kells, BC.*



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# The Value of a Pocket Bible

*By Wes Bredenhof*

You may have found yourself on many an occasion wishing you had a Bible. Perhaps you were having a discussion with a brother or a sister and you wanted to show something from Scripture. Perhaps you were speaking with an unbeliever. Whatever the case may be, don’t you wish you’d had a Bible with you?

Regrettably, most of the Bibles we use are of the full size variety. Oftentimes this is simply because they’re the most common. Other times we buy them because they contain study notes or have room to write plenty of our own comments. These can be good things to look for in a Bible and having such a Bible can be a great blessing in your

life. However, such a Bible can be very difficult to take with you everywhere.

That is why having a pocket Bible can also be a great blessing. Moreover, if we examine Scripture it appears to be very wise to carry a pocket Bible. Deuteronomy 6:8 says, “You shall bind them (God’s words) as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets be-

tween your eyes." The Pharisees of Jesus' time took this command very legalistically (cf. Mt. 23:5). Regardless of this hypocritical legalism, Christians would do well to consider what the general equity of this law is in the era of the New Covenant. The most important application is to have God's Word penetrating the entirety of our lives, but could it not also imply that it is wise to have God's Word physically near us at all times, either in our memories or in our hands?

The second passage which I want to bring to your attention is the familiar description of the Christian soldier found in Ephesians 6. In verse 17 the apostle tells us to take up the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. The Christian soldier's weapon is his Bible. As Christian soldiers we are on duty all of the time, not just when we attend the worship services on the Lord's Day. We are always taking part in the battle

against Satan. Soldiers on active battle duty must always have their weapons ready. Therefore, having a Bible always on hand makes good Scriptural sense.

As Christians we must live by God's standard, the Bible. Moreover, when we are faced with the opposition we must be ready at all times to stand up and defend the truth (1 Peter 3:15). How can we wield the sword of the Spirit unless we have it with us at all times? Moreover, this also shows us the tremendous importance of Scripture memorization. We often expect our children to do this – but do we as adults also store up these valuable treasures? In order to find our way through Scripture we must know it inside out and backwards. In order to wield the sword of the Spirit properly we must exercise with it constantly. It doesn't help to have a weapon with you if you don't know how to use it.

The Bible should be vitally important to you. It ought to be the standard for your life. As such, does it not seem wise to purchase a pocket Bible for your own personal use? Perhaps you already own one. However, do you make use of it daily? If not, it's time to dust it off.

Just one small note in conclusion: I've been speaking of pocket Bibles – and I mean pocket "Bibles." Not just the New Testament. The New Testament is important of course, but it is only 1/3 of the Bible. Make sure the pocket Bible you have and use is the whole thing – for that's what God gave us! Let's use it to His honour and glory.

*Oh how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day. You, through Your commandments, make me wiser than my enemies; For they are ever with me. Psalm 119:97, 98*

*Mr. Bredenhof is a student of history at the University of Alberta.* 

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# Official Opening of the New Barrhead Church Building

October 20, 1995

On a cold, wet, Sunday morning some thirty-five years ago, three rather mud-spattered cars toiled laboriously through thick pothole-strewn ruts toward the hamlet of Neerlandia, carrying the bulk of the Canadian Reformed Church population of Barrhead (approx. 26 members) to its worship service. As one car would get hopelessly stuck its occupants would unload and, in their Sunday best, proceed to push the car out, its wheels spinning clods in all directions, and not least upon the unfortunates positioned behind the drive wheel. The occupants of the other cars would assist and so, after much toil, they ploughed on.

It was difficult to make the journey on such days, and it became increasingly so as the Barrhead faction of the Neerlandia church population grew. In good weather there was no problem,

but in bad it became impossible. Kitchen services were established for such occasions, but still the membership grew. And so the idea was born to institute a church in Barrhead.

At first, the Barrhead members rented the Anglican church and conducted church services there. For seven years they were supplied with guest ministers, and during this time, on January 1, 1961, the Canadian Reformed Church at Barrhead was instituted.

The Barrhead congregation immediately began to build its own church building. Completed that same year, it has served the congregation well for 35 years. When Reverend Tiggelaar was installed in 1981, the membership had swelled to 100. Expansion to the facility was considered, but costs were prohibitive. It became increasingly difficult, however, to seat the member-

ship adequately. Especially during the summer months, when many campers taking advantage of the facilities at nearby Thunder Lake would attend, fire regulations were being transgressed every Sunday. In the summer of 1995 several families actually had to return home due to lack of space.

Fortunately, a vacated Lutheran church building had come to our attention by this time. It needed work, but would be far better suited to our needs than expanding the present facility, and besides, it could be purchased for a song. Thus, we bought the place and started to work. It is obvious to all that the Lord's hand guided us to this facility.

In recognition of that fact, the congregation, upon completion of the renovations, held a special evening to celebrate this gift, and following a brief account of the proceedings.



*Leonard Hoogerdijk in opening address*



*Rev. Tiggelaar in his address*



*Church historian Brother Louis Dykstra Sr. shows us how it now all has come about.*

Brother Leonard Hoogerdijk open the evening with the reading of Psalm 100, which was followed by the singing of Hymn 40:1,2 and 5. He welcomed the congregation and guests.

Reverend Tiggelaar also addressed the assembly and thanked the various people and companies responsible for the renovations, the Lutheran people for their generous offer regarding the building purchase, and the Lord above all, who had chosen to gather us there, in Barrhead, providing both spiritual and physical growth, wherefore this evening's purpose, after all.

It was made very clear that the building was just that, a building, and that it, although thankfully accepted, could not be dedicated to the service of the Lord. Rather, we were to dedicate ourselves to God's service – we would use the building to that end, but we are the Church. The further hope was expressed that the consistory at Barrhead would grant the congregation in this building that which would be required to fill our spiritual needs. The building itself, located where it is, would act as a beacon, gathering more into the fold.

Following this address, the Barrhead choir sang "Surely Goodness and Mercy" and "Great is Thy Faithfulness," which was enjoyed by all.

Brother Louis Dykstra provided a very detailed, often humorous account of the early years leading up to the present evening; it was enjoyed by all. His address was followed by the congregational singing of Hymn 41:1-4 and the selection "Trust and Obey" was sung by the children's choir.

The general contractor, brother Bill Vogelzang, then thanked the people who set the whole thing in motion, especially brother Bert Bultena, without whose persistence in recommending the structure we might not have been sitting there that night. Brother Vogelzang provided some history of the building and outlined some of the difficulties encountered in its renovation – needless to say, his speech was often interjected by uproarious laughter.

Barrhead Ladies Aid provided the consistory with a table – its first in thirty-five years! It was thankfully accepted. The Neerlandia Ladies Aid presented to the Barrhead Ladies Aid several very nice, very large cooking pots for social occasions – also these were thankfully accepted. Furthermore, a beautiful painting was given to the congregation by the Neerlandia consistory. It now

hangs in a prominent location in the basement.

There were several dignitaries present. Barrhead's new mayor elect, Sid Gurevich, spoke a few words on behalf of the town; this was much appreciated. Also our MP had sent a letter, which was read, stating his congratulations. Reverend Aasman, on behalf of classis noted that a building is important to the building and gathering of God's church, wherein the focus lies, in both good times and bad, on God's Word.

Mrs. Penno, of the former Lutheran congregation from whom the church building was purchased, expressed pleasure at the continued use of the building as a gathering place for God's people. Her sentiments were well received. She left us with a quote from Colossians 3:14-17, which emphasizes once again the duties of the body of Christ, the Church, out of thankfulness for Christ, its Head. The exhortation will be heeded.

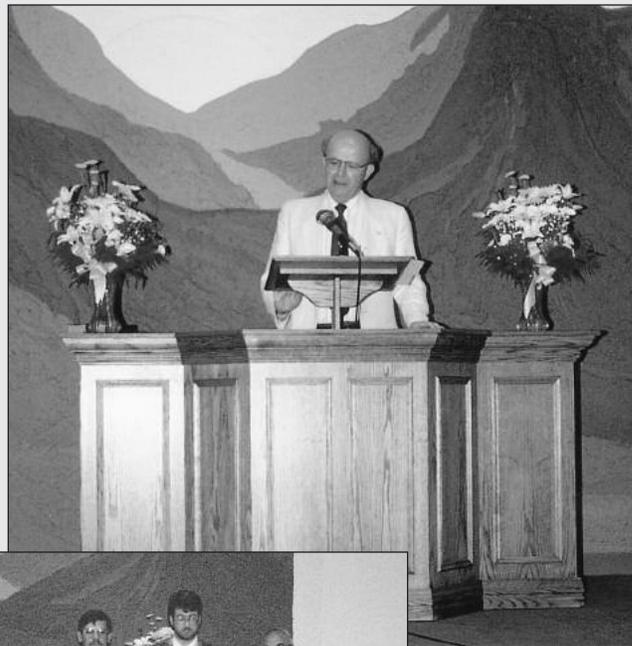
Following Mrs. Penno's address, Reverend DeBoer spoke a few words on behalf of the Carman/Winnipeg congregations. He recognized the sense of loss one feels on leaving the old, but also the joy in celebrating the new. Once again it was stressed that we, and not the building constitute the Church of Christ, and also the fervent wish was expressed that the Gospel might continue to be preached here in Barrhead.

Reverend Slomp, on behalf of the Neerlandia congregation, also congratulated the Barrhead congregation on its growth and new meeting place. He reminded the gathering of the rebuilding of the Temple in Haggai's time, after the Exile, when the Israelites were sent into the hills to cut down trees for the job. Luckily he enjoined, he and Reverend Tiggelaar did not have to go to those extremes.

Another selection by the choir, "Psalm 138: 1,2 and 3," in which the congregation joined in singing verse 3, followed, and the National Anthem was then sung by all. Reverend Tiggelaar closed in prayer, and the choir ended the formal part of the evening with its rendition of "Go Now in Peace." There followed a coffee period in the basement. With thankfulness to our heavenly Father, the church building had received its official opening.

For the Church Opening  
Committee  
D.K. Wielenga

*Bill Vogelzang  
in Contractor's  
address*



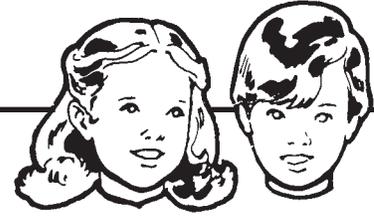
*"Jubilate" Choir  
presents some  
selections*



*Children's Choir presenting selection*

# OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



## Dear Busy Beavers,

Soon it will be spring again. Most of us have had a long cold winter. Now we can't wait for spring.

We eagerly look for the first bold robin who's come north.

Every day we watch for the crocuses to open their colourful blooms.

And we can't wait 'til we can put our winter boots and coats in the closet for good!

Every year again, spring follows winter. We know this for sure, because God has promised it. After the flood, He told Noah, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease." (Gen. 8:22)

Every season will come at the proper time. God has promised that. As long as this earth is, there will always be winter, spring, summer, fall.

Here's an activity for those of you who want to have a bit of spring right in your house.

### What you need:

- pressed paper egg carton
- shredded paper, straw or excelsior (you can get this at the craft store)
- empty egg shells
- potting soil
- seeds

### How to do it:

1. Trim the egg carton. Cut off the small front flap, and the top. You are going to use the bottom.
2. Carefully empty the egg shells so that there's only a small hole in the top. (Big enough for you to put soil in)
3. Put Straw or paper in the carton.
4. Put the soil in the shells, make it moist, not wet, then plant the seeds as the package tells you to.
5. Put the full shells in your carton, and water a little bit every day.
6. Wait patiently for the seeds to sprout.

## MARCH BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday to you Busy Beavers who celebrate your birthdays in March. May our LORD grant you a good year.

Virginia Jager	March 1	Janina Veldman	10
Jessica Bos	3	Melanie Muis	10
Candace Schuurman	3	Julie Bratcher	11
Rieneke Huijgen	3	John Boerema	13
Emily Boot	4	Katie VanSpronsen	14
Nicholas Koolsbergen	7	Diana Nobel	19
Daniel Vis	7	David Smeding	23
Lisa VanRaalte	8	Carolyn Vanleeuwen	28
Andrew Bos	8	Erin Buitenwerf	29
Meghan Ludwig	9	Jacqueline Post	30

# Quiz Time!

## BIBLE QUIZ – WHAT DID WHO RECEIVE?

Match the person with what he received.

- |                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| 1. Jesus, Luke 2:25-32           | a. Received Temple plans from David                          |
| 2. Elisha, 2 Kings 2:13          | b. Received a coat from his father                           |
| 3. Timothy, 2 Timothy 1:5        | c. Received sight from Jesus                                 |
| 4. Solomon, 1 Chron. 28:11ff.    | d. Received silver from the priests                          |
| 5. Hezekiah, 2 Kings 19:14-16    | e. Received a letter from Sennacherib                        |
| 6. Bartimaeus, Mark 10:46-52     | f. Received goat meat disguised as venison from Jacob        |
| 7. Judas Iscariot, Mark 14:10-11 | g. Received a blessing from Simeon                           |
| 8. Isaac, Genesis 27:9,25        | h. Received spices from the queen of Sheba                   |
| 9. The prodigal son, Luke 15:22  | i. Received a mantle from Elijah                             |
| 10. Joseph, Genesis 37:3         | j. Received a robe from his father                           |
| 11. Solomon, 2 Chronicles 9:9    | k. Received a spiritual heritage from mother and grandmother |

## BIBLE CODE

by Busy Beaver *Deanna Wierenga*

A ↗	F I	K 3	P ⊕	U ↗
B ◇	G +	L ∴	Q ☺	V 9
C ✱	H □	M △	R ☺	W ∞
D ⊗	I -	N *	S ∴	X ∟
E ○	J ♥	O ##	T □	Y ∇
				Z M

⊗ ## ↗ \* □ ## ## □ □ ∴ ∴ ↗ ∴

∇ ## ↗ ∞ ## ↗ ∴ ⊗ □ ↗ ∟ ∞ ⊗ ## \* ∞

↗ \* □ ## ∇ ## ↗

