

Clarion

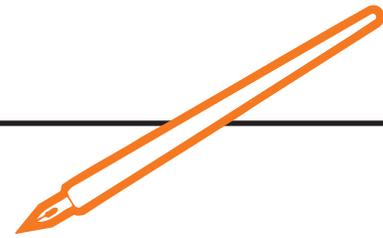
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
VOLUME 45, NO. 24 NOVEMBER 29, 1996



*Stop Sending Students to the
Theological College?*



By J. Geertsema



Should we Stop Sending Students to the Theological College?

A question

In the College issue of *Clarion* it was mentioned that there is again a record number of students at the College. Last year was a record of eighteen (18) students and this year there is a new record of nineteen (19). It is a joy to see that there are so many young people who love God and seek to serve Him and His church gathering and building work through the ministry of the Word, and who therefore want to study theology. To study theology is to learn more about God: how He has revealed Himself as to who He is and what He has done and will do for His people in their salvation and for those who oppose and reject Him in their judgment.

However, will we have a place for them?

Darkness?

This question has come up before and is being asked again. What do we do with all these students? In four years, D.V., all of them will have finished their studies and will seek a call. Soon we are going to have a number of students eligible for a call that is much larger than the number of vacant churches.

If one takes the *Yearbook* and compares the number of churches with and without ministers, this concern seems to be founded in reality. In the Classis Ontario-North region we have twelve churches of which two are vacant: the churches at Fergus and Orangeville, with a membership of 438 and 387, respectively. In Classis Ontario-South there are also twelve congregations, of which one is a house congregation, the church at Laurel, placed under the care of its neighbouring church at Blue Bell and not able to call its own minister. For our purpose, we count here eleven churches. Vacant are here the churches at Ancaster and Rockway with 355 and 277 members, respectively. There are ten churches in Classis Alberta-Manitoba. At this moment only one of them is vacant: the church at Coaldale, counting 456 members. Among the twelve churches in the Classis Pacific region we have no vacancies.

I consider the churches at Lincoln and Calgary as no longer vacant because they called the candidates Van Vliet and Eikelboom, respectively, and both accepted their call.

We should include the Australian sister churches. They have nine churches of which only one is vacant, the church at Bedforddale, in Western Australia, with a membership of 304.

I leave Rev. de Boer still with the church at Carman, even though he accepted a call to the church at Bedforddale. It will not make any difference. The extra vacancy in Canada will mean no vacancy in Australia. Adding these numbers brings us to a total of six vacant churches able to call a minister. Here is the easy over-view:

Classis	Churches	Ministers	Vacancies
ON-North:	12	10	2
ON-South:	11	9	2
AB/MB.:	10	9	1
Pacific:	12	12	0
Totals	45	40	5
Australia	9	8	1
Final total	54	48	6

Does this not mean that the future seems quite dark for the large number of students at the College?

Not really!

In the first place, not all the data have been calculated in yet. Not all the students study for the ministry and of those who do, not all aim at the ministry in one of our churches. Two students, one female and one male, are enrolled in the Diploma for Theological Studies program. One student is a member of the Free Reformed Churches of North America and hopes to become a minister of God's Word in one of their congregations. Two students plan to go back to their churches on Timor in Indonesia. This diminishes the number of future ministers for our Canadian and Australian churches to fourteen. Of these fourteen young men, some are thinking of continuing their studies in Kampen, the Netherlands, before they enter the ministry. Such a continuation can add at least two or three years to their time of studying.

Then there is the important task of the churches in mission work. We have sending churches and missionaries. In Australia, there is the sending church of Albany, working in Papua-New Guinea. In Canada we have the church at Toronto, so far working in Irian Jaya (but probably going to a different place in the future), the churches at Surrey and Hamilton, doing mission work in Brazil, and the church at Smithers, working among our Canadian natives.

I take here, perhaps ideal, but in fact needed situation of sending out a team of missionaries, not one by himself. For when we look at the picture that the New Testament teaches us, we see that our Lord did not send out one missionary by himself. In Luke 10:1 the seventy disciples are sent out two by two. With the two of them, Peter and John entered the temple (Acts 3). Paul was sent out together with Barnabas (Acts 13) and later with Silas (Acts 16). Often the apostle Paul had more than one companion. This is clear from Acts 18:5 and the beginning of his two letters to the Thessalonians.

Albany has no missionary minister. Toronto will need a new missionary, or two new ones. We do not forget that Rev. Versteeg will become available for a call. Hamilton has only

one missionary at this moment. When Rev. Boersema retires, Surrey will have only one missionary in the field. The Church at Smithers does not have a missionary minister at this time. This means an immediate need of at least three missionary ministers.

Further, there is the on-going growth of the local churches. Some time ago already, one of the churches made the decision to call a second minister, having a membership of more than seven hundred. In our modern age, with our many modern social problems, we should not have congregations with much more than five hundred members. A large congregation suffers because of its number. And so does its minister. I do not know how many vacant places a further splitting up of the larger churches will create in the near future. It is hard to say. But per January 1, 1996 (see again the 1996 Yearbook), we have sixteen (16) churches that have a membership above four hundred, four in both Ontario-North and Ontario-South, five in Alberta-Manitoba, and three in Classis Pacific. If we take as mark the number of five hundred, there are at the moment seven churches: one in Ontario-North, three in Ontario-South, two in Alberta-Manitoba, and one in British Columbia. At least three of them are close to the six hundred mark or above it. Here is definitely also a future need.

Here I have not even touched the need for home-missionaries, one in the east and one in the west. In the churches the awareness of a task and a need here is growing, and possibilities have been discussed. Financial needs of schools, especially in Ontario, are probably part of the cause why further progress on this point is not coming about at this moment. However, we should keep the awareness of this task and need alive. In order to lay a financial basis for calling home-missionaries a suggestion might be that part of the money spent for radio broadcasting be directed towards this goal.

Really, not at all!

Up to now, we have looked at the need for future ministers from the angle of our human reality and possibilities. In the second place we should remind ourselves that we are people of the living God, part of His army on earth – as Joshua 5 teaches us: the Commander of the army of the LORD gave instructions to Joshua. We are church of the Lord Jesus Christ, His soldiers in and for His kingdom. It is His task to gather, defend, and preserve a church for Himself and for His Father. And in the execution of

this task He wants to make use of people, sending them out as His messengers and labourers into God's harvest.

Christ told His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few." And He involved the disciples in the harvest in two ways. First He told them to pray to God, "the Lord of the harvest, and ask Him to send out labourers into His harvest." Christ said this in His compassion with all the lost people of Israel, "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Mat. 9:36-38). But Christ did not stop with teaching His disciples to pray for workers in the harvest. In the second place, the Lord made them into workers themselves by sending them into the harvest (Mat.10).

We live almost two thousand years later. Times have changed. But the conditions are basically the same. Increasing numbers of people around us and all over the world are lost, harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Sure, they owe this lost condition to their own unbelief and sin. However, just as in the days that Christ Jesus, our Lord, was on earth, this does not change the horrible condition of being lost in sin and guilt. As twenty centuries ago, today's harassed and helpless lost sheep need the compassion and help of Christ. They need the gospel of God's redeeming salvation through His Son. And this

compassionate help of Christ has to come to the world through the church of Christ. "You are the light of the world," Christ said to His disciples. "So let your light shine that people may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." Proclaiming the gospel is part of those good works. There still is a harvest to be gathered, a plentiful harvest. Labourers are still needed to be sent out into that plentiful harvest. And we, too, as churches, are called to be involved in the two ways of praying for and of sending out labourers into the harvest.

With all this, who can still maintain that there are (or soon will be) too many students at the College? We can only pray: Lord, continue to send out labourers into Thy still plentiful harvest, and, Lord, use us as churches too.

What do you say? Do we not have the money? Really? But, you know, for God money never has been a problem. And it never will be. The earth and its fullness is the Lord's. Therefore, for us money should also not be the problem. The big question is: do we see a calling? Do we see a task which God gives us? Do we take that task upon us in faith that He who calls will also provide the means?

Are there too many students at the College? Not really! No, really, not at all!

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By H.J.J. Feenstra

BE WISE WITH WISDOM! *The end of the beginning*

Originally published as
Wees wijs met de wijsheid,
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Translated by T.M.P. VanderVen

We are almost at the end of the beginning. Proverbs 1-9 is the beginning of education in wisdom, and chapter 9 is the conclusion of that beginning, the conclusion of the preparatory training. This can now be followed by the real digging, pencil in hand, ready to conquer each proverb. Once more Madam Wisdom approaches us, this time with an invitation for dinner. The proverbs of the next chapters are, as it were, the dishes she has prepared for us.

We consider her invitation and her dinner, and we discover the contrast with Miss Foolishness who has also sent an invitation. What a difference between these two ladies, differences in style, class, and quality.

Miss Foolishness tries to attract passers-by by making a lot of noise. She tries to lure them with the attractiveness of what is forbidden: stolen water, bread eaten in secret. This imagery describes a harsh reality; it is indeed true, the natural heart goes out to that which is strange, mysterious, and forbidden. But anyone who accept this invitation, orders his or her own final meal. Miss Foolishness has to make the things she has to offer a little nicer than they really are, after all, the meal she offers should look like a meal. Loudly, she advertises her wares. She offers water and bread, but of a particular quality and with a peculiar aroma.

Compare this with Madam Wisdom. She offers a menu without mysterious additions, a simple but healthy meal. Her invitation is straightforward, without any nonsense.

*Come, eat of my bread
and drink of the wine I have mixed.*
In the Middle Eastern countries wine is still mixed with water, a common practice. Yet, this scene is rather remarkable. The menu shows the daily staples of bread and wine, while she has apparently prepared a full course dinner. She has slaughtered her beasts, and prepared her table as for a feast. Notice her house which seems more like a palace with halls and pillars. What she offers is rather different from what others might expect. She does not join in snobbish discussion of dinners and restaurants, where the one speaker might make even greater boasts than another. Yet Madam Wisdom does not feel embarrassed to offer her simple menu of bread and wine. Her dinner is ready to be enjoyed by those who accept her invitation to a simple everyday meal.

Indeed, a telling scene. Wisdom is of concern to the elite, it concerns life of everyday. That everyday life needs to be nurtured, and in this she shows the way. This results in changing those everyday things into things of the highest quality. Ordinary, daily life becomes an art and a skill. When wisdom exerts her influence, such a life gains substance and importance. That is what Proverbs 9 speaks of: the substance and importance of wisdom.

Notice the manner in which she sends her invitations. She has sent her maidens to the important, the highest places in town to call the people. That

sounds like a royal invitation. Indeed, wisdom is uplifting. We find here the character of the kingdom of the Son of God's love. Listen, all you people, here come the proverbs, starting with the next chapter. Sit down and enjoy your meal; eat and drink.

Notice also, that these verses describe a meal. Eating together means belonging together, living together. Neglecting the widows of the Greeks during the daily meals was not a merely organizational blunder in the early Christian church of Jerusalem. This neglect damaged the communion of saints which the Holy Spirit had brought about. Wisdom wants to see people around the table; wisdom seeks the communion. Wisdom does not hand out food packages, but sets the table. Wisdom does not nurture individualism; she nurtures a community, the people of God, the congregation of Jesus Christ – the congregation of the new life.

Proverbs 9 tells us that those who want to hold on to the old life do not belong here. One must choose, either the one or the other – wisdom or foolishness.

There are two invitations.

There are two roads.

There are two destinations – life or death.

*" . . . For he who finds me finds life
and obtains favour from the LORD;*

BUT HE WHO MISSES ME

INJURES HIMSELF;

ALL WHO HATE ME LOVE

DEATH."

From Scripture

Proverbs 9

Acts 6:1-7

Proverbs 8:35-36

What's inside?

At present, the Theological College's lecture halls are full. What a blessing that so many young men want to train to be heralds of the kingdom of God! But will there be room for them? In the lead editorial, Prof. Geertsema asks and answers this question.

This issue continues the discussion on the point of local churches that belong to different federations giving expression to the unity they have. Dr. J. De Jong and the Rev. VanOene respond to Dr. H. Boersma's article published in # 23.

In our new column, "Nurture and Instruction," Mr. Vanderven describes "a truly educated person."

Together with a few news items, a Ray of Sunshine, and a letter, once again you have a few things to read and ponder.

GvP

Response to Dr. H. Boersma

By J. De Jong

There are several points which could be raised in the article of Dr. Boersma (*Clarion*, 45:23), since he covers a lot of ground in a rather cursory way. He gives the impression of trying, as the saying goes, to “kill two birds with one stone.” While I have my misgivings about his approach, and think that he fails to achieve his goal, I will restrict my comments to those parts in which he touches on my earlier articles. For a further elaboration on these points see my editorial entitled “A New Federation”, in the previous issue of this volume.

1. If I understand him well, Rev. Boersma argues that the federation may not stand in the way of any given local expression of unity between two churches of differing backgrounds. When two churches recognize each other as united in the Lord they must have the freedom to express that unity immediately. In his view the churches need not wait for the approbation of the other churches in the federation.

Now I admit it is possible for a major assembly to put a hindrance in the way of local efforts towards achieving unity with another local church. But this necessarily involves a *hierarchical* act in which the major assembly simply overrules the efforts and gains made by the local church. However, if in the decisions of major assemblies any semblance of hierarchy is absent, and if the concern is simply the approval of the rest of the churches in the federation, then we do not have an unwanted element in the process, but an essential prerequisite for the process, i.e. one that ensures that it follows the proper tracks. This is not hierarchy but a *safeguard* which ensures that the unity which the local churches claim to have found is one based on Scripture, the Reformed confession and the adopted order.

Why must the federation be included, and why must churches seek to establish the contacts together? This is part of the covenanted fellowship involved in being members of a federation. As in a marriage or other covenanted bond of friendship between equals, so in a federation: you do not engage in new relationships and covenants without the

consent and support of the other party. Your primary allegiance is to the member churches, and no new contact can take precedence over the obligations owing to the federation of churches.

This stands to reason since in a covenanted bond, the actions of one will always have an affect on the other party, whether for better or worse. Other churches will always be affected by the actions of a local church, and the greater the proximity, the greater the effect. A church only does well to be conscious of these concerns. Ultimately, as the union of 1892 shows, federative unity is a matter of all the churches in common, and cannot be determined (even with regard to its procedural track) by one church on its own.

2. Dr. Boersma suggests that the Union of 1892 was one “from the top down” and this is why the Free Reformed did not join in. This statement is ambiguous and presents a caricature of the true state of affairs leading to the union of 1892. It was in fact Kuyper and the *Dolerenden* who pushed a union “from the top down” – if one wants to use such misleading phrasing. Kuyper pushed for a union which did not integrally involve the local churches. The Seceders rejected this approach, and it was only with the more integrated proposals of the Seceders in Leeuwarden (1891) that the talks began to gain new momentum.¹

It seems to me that Rev. Boersma defends a position exactly opposite to that of Kuyper, yet equally one-sided. His approach is from the “bottom”, as he says, – which he also terms a “good Reformed principle.” In such an approach, the federation only enters in at a secondary stage. What makes this a “good Reformed principle”? – (see below).

3. As an additional argument Rev. Boersma refers to the views of Dr. F.L. Rutgers with respect to the admission of guests from other churches at the Lord’s table. I have a number of misgivings about Dr. Boersma approach here. First, I fail to see the connection between the admission of guests to the Lord’s table, and the recognition of attestations as a step towards achieving full federative

unity. The admission of guests at the Lord’s table concerns the admission of people who are visiting the location, and who belong to a faithful church with which the churches have no correspondence. It is a one-time decision only in a one-time situation. Admitting people in the context of a mutual relationship which is meant to serve as a stepping stone to federative unity is a different matter. It is then out of place to use Rutgers’ arguments regarding guests as a ground for these kind of preliminary cross-federative arrangements.

Second, Rev. Boersma makes several references to the admission of people from other Reformed *denominations*. Rutgers himself, however, did not work with a term like this; nor can it be found in the Church Order of Dort. Of course, Rutgers did confront the situation of people from other faithful churches coming as guests to the Reformed churches. He did so with his own view of the church; we do so with ours. I would think that not Rutgers or his view is normative here, but Scripture and confession. On that basis we must be more hesitant in speaking about other “Reformed denominations,” since that approach betrays a view of the church which neither accords with the confession (of Dort) nor its church order.

4. I am aware that Prof. te Velde – and the Dutch churches, for that matter – takes a somewhat different approach to the issue of local recognition of attestations and pulpit exchanges than I have. However, I do not find this approach helpful, for he fails to introduce a safeguard which would keep the process on track. Some of the suggestions of Prof. te Velde would be viable if a target date for federative unity was established. Any other approach will invariably lead to endless formalized wrangling, and will in the meantime result in a weakening of any sense of ecclesiastical identity among the younger generation.

5. Dr. Boersma makes a number of references to the article by Dr. S. Greijdanus in the collection of readings entitled *Bound Yet Free*, and even refers to this reading as a “must read.” While I

cannot but commend the reading of this article in that volume, I would suggest that readers keep the setting and the date of the particular reading in mind, and also balance it with the submission of Prof. J. Kamphuis. Dr. Greijdanus wrote in a situation in which the claw of hierarchy sought to destroy the spiritual unity of the church. He had every reason to stress the spiritual unity of the churches above all, and to see the federational and organizational aspects as secondary in relation to that unity. He wrote in opposition to a synod involved in unlawfully giving all kinds of authority to itself. However, Prof Kamphuis' article emphasizes the other side of the matter, namely, that the federation is a natural corollary to the spiritual unity of the churches and

automatically flows forth from it. Indeed, the moral obligation to help and support each other is founded on Scripture! One should read **both** of these contributions to the volume before forming any judgments re possible local expressions of unity.

6. Rev. Boersma intimates that working at the grassroots level is a good Reformed "principle" of church polity. To be sure, Reformed church polity defends the principle of the autonomy of the local church, and that local churches have distinct freedoms in themselves to regulate matters concerning their own government and welfare. But a second principle alongside this one is the rule that local churches are mutually obligated to help each other and to provide each other the assistance and the safeguards

that are necessary to maintain the purity of doctrine and the preservation of freedom in the Lord's service. Both principles must be maintained equally in opposition to hierarchy on the one hand, and independentism on the other. Rev. Boersma's position appears one-sided in that it is sensitive to hierarchy (which to my knowledge of the events in the existing situation has not at all been present) but says little about resisting the dangers of independentism. In order to convince myself and others of his position he must give more attention to this side of the matter.

¹I may refer here to what I said about the Union of 1892 in C. Van Dam, (ed.) *The Challenge of Church Union*, (Premier Printing, Winnipeg, 1993) 9ff.

Still A Federative Matter

By W.J.J. VanOene

It will be known to our regular readers that I seldom give quotations to support the stand I have taken in certain matters. I refrain from doing so for various reasons, but the main reason is that one can "prove" almost anything with the help of quotations. The danger is always there that one lets the person whose words one quotes become sort of a ventriloquist who says exactly what seems to support one's propagated ideas. This is something I noticed anew when reading what Dr. J. Boersma wrote in *Information*, appearing bi-weekly in the Fraser Valley (this article was also published in *Clarion*, 45:23 – Editor).

In an article entitled "Federative or Local? A Wrong Dilemma" he set out to refute what Dr. J. De Jong wrote in *Clarion* of September 6, 1996, and what I wrote in the same issue. Both these articles dealt with the question of pulpit exchange and admission to the Lord's Supper, to put it simply.

These articles have drawn attention also from without our own circles. I was told by a brother that even the Ref-Net came into action. The more attention is paid to these questions the better it is.

It will not be expected of me that I go into what Dr. Boersma wrote against Dr. De Jong's article, but I cannot but point out that here we have another example of ventriloquy.

Dr. S. Greijdanus was introduced as "the well-known New Testament the-

ologian and leader of the Liberation (1944)." Credentials, therefore, that are impeccable.

Having sat "at the feet of" Dr. Greijdanus, one of the first rules I learned from him was: One should never take words out of context and should always endeavour to understand what the author meant when writing down what he did write.

Dr. Boersma quoted from Dr. Greijdanus' brochure on the principles of Reformed church polity, which brochure has appeared in English translation in *Bound Yet Free*, edited by Dr. J. De Jong. It is a good thing that an English text is available: our readers can now judge for themselves.

Dr. Boersma quoted particularly from page 36. I fully agree with him that this "entire essay is a 'must read' and sheds important light on the present discussion." But if my colleague thinks that Dr. Greijdanus supports his views in this respect, I must disappoint him.

When Dr. Greijdanus wrote that spiritual unity "exists despite a lack of organized connections in district, province, country, or world," did he then speak of the same thing that Dr. Boersma has in mind?

He did not.

He spoke of the unity of the churches that form a federation together.

In his brochure Dr. Greijdanus refuted the ideas of H.G.Kleijn, opponent

of the church polity of the Doleantie and a fervent defender of a collegialistic system of church organization. Over against him, Dr. Greijdanus defended that the unity of the church "does not consist of an organization, nor does it require external, visible relations and organized coherence," and that "the unity of the church does not require necessary official relations and a mutual organization of local churches into a minor, major, and even greater visible whole in region, dominion, and world."

It was over against Kleijn that Dr. Greijdanus stressed that not the organization but the spiritual unity, the unity of faith is the main issue.

I fully agree with this. The unity of organization comes in the second place; it is the fruit of the unity of faith. If we did not have unity of faith, we would not have formed a federation of churches. Simple as that.

It is, however, improper and incorrect when what Dr. Greijdanus wrote is quoted to defend a pulpit exchange, such as Dr. Boersma pursues, and to present Dr. Greijdanus' words as advocating such an exchange indeed. Dr. Greijdanus was writing about the basis of the *church federation*, not about acknowledging others and following this acknowledgment up with actions that cause discord in the congregation and alienate those towards

whom ministers and consistories have their first obligation.

From the "top down"?

In his article Dr. Boersma claims that the "union of 1892 was implemented from the 'top down.'" which evidently means that it was a matter of general synods and that the churches just had to follow suit.

I contest the correctness of this statement.

Certainly, negotiations were conducted at the synodical level, but the congregations were consulted. There was, to my knowledge, only one church that rejected the terms of union, all the others apparently concurred with the synodical stand. There was ample time to study the proposals and to make oneself be heard about their acceptability or non-acceptability.

Dr. F.L. Rutgers

Dr. Boersma also gave us a quotation from Dr. F.L. Rutgers, "the well-known authority on church polity," but in this quotation Dr. Rutgers did not speak at all about what Dr. Boersma wants: mutual recognition and mutual admission of each other's members to the Lord's table.

When discussing the question whether guests "should be admitted to the Lord's table," Dr. Rutgers said, among other things: "It has never been made a rule in our churches for such cases that such requests would simply be denied, and that thus no one would be admitted except those who are within the circle of those who are known by the consistory as members of the local church." (Dr. Boersma's translation)

I am well aware of it that a consistory would have the right to admit someone not belonging to one of the churches or of the sister-churches to a celebration of the Lord's Supper.

Before admitting one, however, the consistory must make sure that this person has "made public profession of the Reformed faith," (Art. 61 C.O.) and if he or she is visiting here, let's say from another country, it is mandatory that a visit be arranged, or that the man or woman comes before the consistory to be examined and before the consistory to "profess the Reformed faith." Such cases did occur and will occur in the future as well. That one does not belong to one of the churches or of their sister-churches does not automatically mean that no permission may be given to partake of the sacrament.

But do these words of that "well-known authority on church polity" constitute a support for what Dr. Boersma

propagates: mutual admission without examination in each and every case as a more or less permanent arrangement?

Saying "Yes" to that question constitutes ventriloquy.

Approach?

Stating that the dilemma I posed: "Federative or Local Matter?" is a false dilemma. Dr. Boersma clouds the issue by speaking of *pursuing* both federative unity and local unity at the same time. But that is different from what I rejected as impermissible: effecting a, for all practical purposes, local merger (pulpit exchange and admission to the Lord's table).

Pursuing unity both federatively and locally? Of course! The more the better! Nowhere did I say a bad word about that. My objections are against going it alone locally with no apparent regard for the federation.

When, therefore, Dr. Boersma poses the question: "Do you favour the federative or do you favour the local approach?" I must say that this is bringing in a false element. I was not speaking of an *approach* but of specific actions that no longer belong to an approach but constitute a "having arrived."

"He that distinguishes well, teaches well," an old saying instructs us.

Standing alone?

Dr. Boersma claims that my "interpretation" of Art. 4 C.O. is new. In support of this claim he then quotes Dr. H. Bouwman, who "stated that the 'consistory decides about admission to the pulpit,' adding that 'a minister may not preach (Dutch: optreden) in a different church, for example, a Nederlands Reformed (Hervormd) Church or Lutheran church, without discussion with or permission of the consistory of the Reformed church.'"

What did Dr. Bouwman speak of? Did he speak of a "pulpit exchange" such as Dr. Boersma advocates, or of an admitting a minister from a different federation to a (Canadian) Reformed pulpit, and do his words prove that I propagated something new?

From the above quotation everyone can learn that this was not the case at all. What these words mean is that Dr. Boersma may not conduct a service in the Alliance Church here in Abbotsford without discussion with and permission from the Abbotsford Canadian Reformed Consistory. The same applies to Dr. Boersma wanting to conduct a service in the Abbotsford Free Reformed Church. He therefore better keep the words of Dr. Bouwman in mind, espe-

cially since he appears to agree with Dr. Bouwman's words.

The above-quoted words do not claim the right of a consistory of a Canadian Reformed Church to admit a non-Canadian Reformed minister at all.

The deputies' advice

Again we are treated to an appeal to what our deputies for ecclesiastical unity wrote in a so-called "Discussion Paper" that was published in *Clarion* a few years ago. They, Dr. Boersma writes, "explicitly state that after local churches have acknowledged of one another that they are true churches of the Lord, they may 'consider drawing up an accord which provides for pulpit exchange and admission of their members to one another's Holy Supper and recognizing one another's attestation (discipline).'"

In the first place: what those deputies published was a "discussion paper," which should not have been published in the form in which it was brought to our attention. Now it is being quoted from (and it is not the first time that this happens) as if it were an authoritative document.

Further: I have never seen a discussion of this "discussion paper" but now Dr. Boersma tells us that the same deputies were asked for advice by a committee from Classis Pacific and that they basically reiterated what was propagated in that "discussion paper," namely, that "it is possible to have ministers from other church federations with which we as yet have no ecclesiastical fellowship to preach on our pulpits and vice versa."

It is a riddle to me how deputies can make such a statement and what they would base this on.

They refer to F.L. Bos, *De Orde der Kerk*, p.71. Apparently they used the same printing I have. But nowhere can I find any indication that ministers from other federations can be invited. What I did find on pages 72/73 is reference to the same cases of which Dr. H. Bouwman spoke: that conducting a service outside the "communion of the church at times when the congregation gathers, is also bound by the permission of the consistory within whose territory this conducting takes place."

When the Rev. J.B. Netelenbos, minister of the Reformed Church at Middelburg, conducted an official worship service in the Netherlands Reformed Church in The Hague on June 10, 1917, he defended his conduct as follows: "There are believers also in the Netherlands Reformed Church, and when these believers come together, assemble together, then there is an 'assembly of believers,' and therefore a 'Christian

Church.” According to him, there were soundly Reformed ministers within the Netherlands Reformed institute whom the Reformed Churches could trust to conduct worship services in their midst.

The result was that the Middelburg consistory took the decision “to forbid all its ministers to preach in other than Reformed Churches in a place and at a time when a service is being held in a Reformed Church.”

When Dr. Boersma more or less triumphantly declares “Thus, on no less (fewer) than two occasions the federal deputies have stated that local churches do have the authority to allow non-Canadian Reformed ministers on the pulpit,” I would suggest that the deputies look for better grounds for their advice than they appear now to have been able to adduce, for those grounds were void.

And when Dr. Boersma quotes *Classis Pacific* of April 16, 1996, and gives the impression that this classis agreed with him, I find this a tendentious presentation. Fortunately some of the colleagues and the large majority of classis, although stating indeed, that “it is not specifically against the Church Order to have pulpit exchange, admission to each other’s Lord’s Supper or recognition of each other’s discipline, the federative commitment would require consideration and comment at a federative level,” yet achieved that in its Recommendations this classis requested the church at Vernon “to refrain from pulpit exchange and admission to each other’s Lord’s Supper until the churches as a whole, at Synod 1998, have had opportunity to consider local unity initiatives with the ORC, and have adopted a strategy for federative unity.”

After all, I do appear not to stand all that much alone when insisting on it that pulpit exchange, etc., is a federative matter and not a local one, do I? And of the “falseness” of this dilemma not much is left.

Not applicable?

Dr. Boersma wrote: “When we examine article 4 itself, we find that it does not at all deal with situations like the ones under discussion. It speaks only about the question who can be called to the office of minister of the Word. This is precisely what one would expect. The Church Order does not deal with every possible situation we could think of. It is simply a document for internal use, and does not deal with situations where you have two true churches living side by side without first expressing their unity in Christ. The Church Order gives regulations for proper church life and

by its very nature does not deal with situations such as this one.”

I consider this a very dangerous way of reasoning. In this manner one can throw various provisions of the Church Order aside, claiming: This particular situation is not dealt with in it, and (consequently) we can follow our own ideas in this specific case. Basically, this is the beginning of the dissolution of the federation when everyone feels free to do what is good in his own eyes.

Of course, the Church Order does not deal with “every possible situation we can think of” but it does speak about who may be admitted to the pulpit and this is a provision indeed that “gives regulations for proper church life.” We all are bound by these “regulations,” whether we like it or not and whether it fits in our plans or not.

In my article to which Dr. Boersma refers I did show what the churches have agreed upon regarding admission to the pulpit. Does one now really think that our forefathers who drew up the Church Order thought that it would ever be necessary to make provisions for admitting ministers from outside the federation to the pulpit by local arrangement?

I certainly do not doubt that ministers of the Free Reformed Churches and of the Orthodox Reformed Churches or whatever other name they may have adopted, were duly examined and admitted by their respective assemblies. But as churches we have agreed to admit only those who were examined and admitted by our own assemblies or the assemblies of our federatively recognized sister churches. It is putting up a smokescreen when it is asked whether “such an examination (of ministers not belonging to our federation) should mean nothing at all to a local church when contemplating pulpit exchange.” That is not the point at all.

Muddy the waters?

Our brother Gh. van Popta warned me already that my example of my friend, a Netherlands Reformed (Hervormd) minister, would be misunderstood.

On purpose I chose that example, for if it ever becomes clear that one cannot eliminate the federation, it is in that case. And that was my point. It is quite possible that of certain congregations within the Netherlands Reformed (Hervormd) Church one can say that there the Gospel is preached in all its purity, that the discipline is being maintained, and more nice things, yet they are a subdivision of the country-wide organization. I am happy that this point was understood. And until it can be said of the whole country-wide organization that they have re-

turned to the true service of the Lord, no exchange can be possible.

Did Dr. Boersma never hear of the *tertium comparationis*, the third of the comparison?

It is not decisive when one particular local church is recognized as a true church of the Lord. We do not have to do with congregationalist independent churches that are living on their own; we have to do with federations. It is well-known here in the Fraser Valley that there are also Free Reformed Churches that do not even want to talk about possible unity. And thus, singling out one particular local church for such cooperation as is being propagated by Dr. Boersma means separating that church from its sister-churches to whom they owe their allegiance in the first place.

Is it “absolutizing one denomination (this term is not mine! vO) and ignoring the work which our Lord does elsewhere,” when we remind ourselves and one another that our first responsibility is towards those with whom we are united and to whom we are bound by mutual promises?

Ignoring those promises and agreements muddies the waters.

Another authority

Dr. Boersma also introduces the thoughts of Prof. Dr. M. te Velde, “Professor of Church Polity at the Theological University in Kampen (of our Dutch sister churches).”

I beg to disagree with Dr. te Velde, and the reasons why will have become clear to our readers from what has been written thus far.

I would rather side with our own professor of Church Polity, Dr. J. De Jong, whose approach I consider far more to be in the line of Reformed Church Polity than that of Dr. te Velde.

There have been more things written in the Netherlands that give me cause for great concern (for example regarding liturgy and liturgical forms) and I would rather not have those controversies introduced here. I think that we have enough questions to deal with here, and that we can solve our own “problems” without international advice.

What is required first of all is that we loyally keep the commitments we have made and that we not, for the sake of others, alienate our own brothers and sisters. We must start locally, indeed, but to reach the finish we have to go the whole course. What that course is has, I hope and trust, been sufficiently indicated in what I presented the previous time and, in reply to criticism, also in this issue.

RAY OF SUNSHINE



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Several weeks ago we, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, remembered Reformation Day. That is something that happened almost 500 years ago. Yet it was something so important for the church, that we still thank the Lord for it.

Martin Luther was one of the reformers of the church. The Lord used Luther to open the eyes of many people to the false doctrines that had slowly penetrated the church. The church leaders, such as the pope, and the bishops, had taught the people that there was not much hope for their future. Everyone was sinful and wicked; but you could only be saved if you made up for every sin that you had committed. Who could ever do that? It might make it a bit better for you if you did a lot of good works, and/or pay a lot of money to the church. But it all depended on yourself, and most people knew that they were not very good! So many church members were worried about what would happen to them when they died. Most of them were sure they would have to go to "purgatory." If only they could have read in the Bible about salvation out of grace through the work of Jesus Christ. But there were no Bibles that everyone could read! The only Bibles that were there, were written in Latin, and that was a language that only the bishops and some priests and monks knew.

Martin Luther was such a monk. He was also very unhappy, and tried to do everything the church taught him to do in order to earn his salvation. Martin Luther knew the Latin language. When he was reading the Bible the Lord enlightened Luther by the Holy Spirit, so that slowly he started to understand what was written in the Bible by the apostle Paul. His eyes and heart were opened to the real meaning of the Bible. He finally started to understand the reason why Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem. He knew that the people themselves cannot earn their salvation. The Lord God sent His own Son to the earth to pay for the sins of all the believers. And that out of grace alone. God's children do not have to do good works, and they do not have to be rich to be saved. All they have to do is to believe what the Lord tells them in His holy Word. Luther knew that he was a sinner, and that he could not do anything himself. But the Holy Spirit helped him to understand that what the church was teaching was completely wrong. The church was telling lies to the people. Members of the church did not have to be depressed and unhappy, but they could be very happy, and thankful to the Lord. For the Lord was always near them, and had saved them from all their sins.

Once Luther fully understood that out of grace and through faith in Jesus Christ, every believer is saved from their sins, he started to write that all down. He showed to the people in the language that they could understand that they should not listen to the church leaders any longer. He wrote down all the things that the church had been doing wrong, and he also translated the Bible into the language of the people.

That was the beginning of the reformation of the church. It was God's work, for the Lord is the Keeper of the church. He did not want the church members to live in darkness, confused by the lies of the church. He wanted to let the Light of the birth of Christ shine in the church again. The Lord, through His Holy Spirit enlightened the mind of Martin Luther so that he could start the work of the Reformation. Later on more reformers, one of whom was John Calvin, followed. The church that split off from the Roman

Catholic Church was the Reformed Church. That is why the church today is still called the Reformed Church.

From then on the church was again able to celebrate Christmas. During all the years that the church had been teaching lies to its members, the real meaning of the birth of Christ had been lost. Christmas is only important for those who believe that Jesus Christ came down to earth to pay for the sins of God's people. All God's anger for the sins of us, His people, He poured out on His Son. He was the only Person who could carry God's wrath on His shoulders, and go through the anguish of hell for us, His people. He paid for all the sins that we committed. He delivered us from all our sins, so that we now are able to come to our Father at the day of judgment. All we have to do is ask the Lord for forgiveness of all our sins, every day again. Because the Lord loves His Son, He loves us, and He will forgive! Because of the work that our Saviour did for us, the Lord sees us again as His children. The Lord is the Keeper of the Church, the King of the Church. Even during the years that the true Light did not shine clearly in the church, He was still there and in control. The Lord brought the Light back into the church again, and He will stand on guard for us as long as the world exists.

Let us then pray for His guidance, so that the true meaning of Christmas may shine brightly from the church into the world. Then the wonderful Light of Christ's return will penetrate all the corners of the earth, and there will be no more darkness.

*Sing to the LORD with exultation.
O sing a new song, all creation.
Sing to the LORD and bless His Name;
Day after day with joy proclaim
The wondrous deeds of His salvation.*

*Sing to the LORD with exultation,
For He is King of all creation.
Behold, He comes! Your joy express!
He comes with truth and righteousness
To judge the earth and rule its nations.*

Psalms 96:1,8

Birthdays in January:

2: Liz Koning

Dicken's Field, Extended Care Centre, Room 210
14225-94th Street, Edmonton, AB T8E 6C6

7: Christine Breukelman

2225-19 Street, Coaldale, AB T1M 1G4

17: Henry Driegen

72 Ross Road, RR 1, Abbotsford, BC V2S 1M3

17: Grace Homan

"ANCHOR HOME," 361 30 Road, RR 2
Beamsville, ON L0R 1B0

17: Janine Smid

RR 1, Arkona, ON N0M 1B0

27: Hank Orsel

705 Surrey Lane, Apt. 1201, Burlington, ON L7T 3Z4

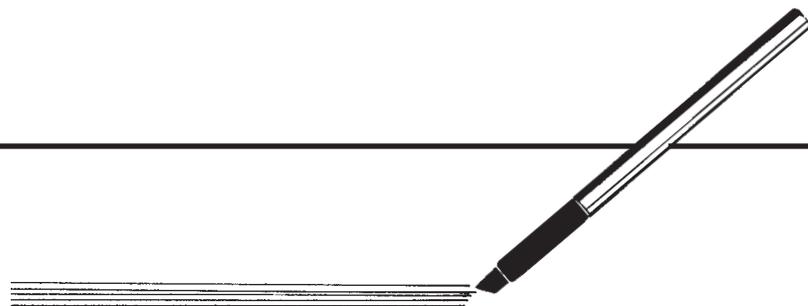
I wish you all a very happy birthday. Until next month.

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

THE HI-LITER

News from Here and There

By C. Van Spronsen



In Burlington West a final vote to institute a church in the Flamborough area went down to defeat. The consistory will have to look for alternate ways to deal with the large size of the congregation, some 730 members.

The Carman congregation is also thinking "expansion." "Looking at the number of people that flock into the building every Sunday it becomes more clear all the time that something must be done sooner or later."

The Fellowship church of Burlington-South has decided to use individual cups with both wine and juice at the Holy Supper, while still coming together at the table in front. The basis for change is to assist everyone to "celebrating Christ's supper unhindered." There are concerns about hygiene. "There is, at the very least, a perception that a common cup carries bacteria, and even if some doctors would disagree with this, the perception remains and interferes with the celebration." Additional reasons are given: "Besides, there are concerned members who may have a weakness for alcohol, and other who for health reasons cannot partake of a communal cup. The ground for change, therefore, would be that we do not want members to be prevented from fully participating, as community of believers, in the sacrament."

The Australian magazine *Una Sancta* has undergone a facelift and received a totally new look with full lettersize pages and an attractive front cover. The new format is a real improvement, indeed!

In several bulletins we can read urgent appeals for "Anchor Home" where handicapped brothers and sisters receive the care they need. Financially they are in the red and are in desperate need for more members to help carry the cost of running this home. Any help or donation is most welcome!

The church at Launceston, Tasmania, decided "to write to the sister churches in Australia asking them if they are interested in joining the ICRC on an individual basis, and to look at the possibility of sending a delegate-observer to the next meeting of the ICRC. (At the last synod in Kelmescott where it was decided to withdraw our membership from the ICRC as a bond of churches, it was expressly agreed upon that it would be in the freedom of the individual churches to become a member of the ICRC)."

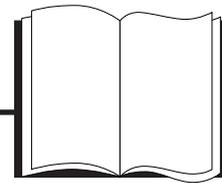
The church at Carman, MB decided to follow a slightly different procedure than usual for the calling of a minister. From the adopted procedure we quote: "At the congregational meeting the consistory will share all the relevant information they have received about the minister as well as entertain comments and questions from the congregation. If no serious concerns are brought to the attention of the consistory within one week the consistory will proceed with the call." The traditional "vote" is left out of this procedure.

In Burlington West they are organizing a "Fathers Night Out, an evening just for fathers" but they are asked to let Sarah know soon. Should that then not have been an "Abraham"?

Burlington South has hired Richard Bultje to help them in the practical fact-finding work in the Hamilton area with a view to Urban Mission. "His task will be to assess the viability of establishing an urban mission project in the city of Hamilton. As part of his framework he will be focusing on existing program, the availability of a proper venue, and the timing and duration of the project."

In Kelmescott, W.A. they are looking into the possibilities of conducting mission work among the "South-East Asian Chinese-speaking people" (I assume in Australia-CV) utilizing a Chinese brother, who is presently being sponsored by them for studies at the Theological College in Hamilton, upon completion of his studies.





The Validity of Denver's Acceptance Within our Federation Contested

The article in the *Clarion* Volume 45 #19 (Sept. 19/96) by the Reverend K. Jonker about the validity of Denver's place in our Federation has only resulted in the increased conviction, by myself and other readers with whom I have talked, how invalid the acceptance of Denver within our Federation is. Because this conviction is based on our confession, we not only have the right, but also the duty to appeal this matter as long as this is possible in accordance with Church order.

Reverend Jonker mentions in his article that our Synods 1992 and 1995 have qualified our relation with the OPC as being an "interim situation" or being "on two tracks." The one track is then the confessional track which started when Synod Coaldale 1977 decided to recognize the OPC as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as confessed in Article 29 of the Belgic Confession.

The other track is that of how our major assemblies have dealt with this decision in its contacts with the OPC, which can be called the ecclesiastical or maybe even the synodical track.

Reverend Jonker reasons that because we are on two tracks in our relationship with the OPC, and the confession has nothing to say about how we have to proceed ecclesiastically with a church which we recognize as a true Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can not simply refer to the confession as reason not to accept Denver in the federation.

I do not understand how anyone can make the statement that the confession has nothing to say about how we are to put recognition of the true Church in to effect when we have bound ourselves to what we confess in Belgic Confession Article 28 and Lord's Day 21, Heidelberg Catechism. I remember a sermon from a minister on Lord's Day 21 about "the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints," in which he said "let no man put asunder what God has joined together."

Our confessions speak so clearly about our duty towards Christ's Church

that confusion is impossible. Article 28 has as heading "Everyone's duty to join the Church" and goes on to say that this should be done even if doing so results in one's death.

It therefore makes no difference whether or not the people in Denver already belonged to the OPC. If the OPC is, as we have stated the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we do not say *I think they should or shouldn't go there, but I believe what we confess in Article 28 BC that God calls His people to join that church in obedience to His revealed will.*

When in that regard the excuse is used that we are on two tracks in our relation with the OPC, I think it needs no explanation that our ecclesiastical track is to be guided by our confessional track and not the other way around.

The question about being a *true church is not determined by a relationship which we as a federation have with a church; rather, our relationship should be a result of, and in accordance with, what the confession says about a Church.* Therefore I sincerely hope that we as a federation never again will recognize a church as a True Church of the Lord Jesus Christ on the basis of our confessions, when we are not willing to adhere to what the confession says about our duties toward that church.

When the track of our ecclesiastical contact no longer runs parallel with the track of our confessions, then I as a church member would rather be *dissenting* with the Decisions of the major assemblies than to be accused of dissenting with what we as churches confess to be God's will in His church gathering work.

I do not understand how the Reverend Jonker can say that the denying of Denver's place within the federation brings us further apart from the OPC. The reality is that accepting Denver into the federation, the way Classis AB/MB did, has led to very strained relations between Classis AB/MB and the POD (Presbytery of the Dakotas), whereas before this event the relations were very good.

The claim that the Reverend Jonker makes regarding the demand of Art. 31 CO for all churches to go along with the decisions of our synods in this matter is a misuse of Art. 31. Art. 31 CO has as heading "Appeals," and goes on to speak about the *right of appeal*. When this right to appeal against the decisions of our major assemblies is taken away, or is increasingly limited (as seems to be the trend in our federation as compared to older commentaries on the Church Order), then we better examine ourselves, if by putting emphasis on synodical decisions and limiting or postponing the demands of our confession, we are not becoming increasingly synodical and less and less confessional.

In response to the question of Reverend Jonker: "Is there not a difference between what we confess as truth and how we ecclesiastically practice this truth?" I would say that yes such a difference has now come about in our churches. Why therefore do we not go back and realign our ecclesiastical practices with our confession so that our two tracks do not head in different directions? This is the only way to prevent division and/or eventual derailment.

By appealing the decisions of major assemblies, which I believe are in conflict with our confession, I am not in conflict with Art. 31 CO, and the words and very nature of an appeal have nothing to do with, nor do they even suggest intimidation or aggressiveness. Intimidating and aggressive behaviour would be described as using Art. 31 CO to tell churches and church members to toe the line. The unity of the church can only be promoted if we maintain and uphold the basis of this unity which we all know.

I. Veuring
Coaldale, AB

The views expressed in Reader's Forum are not necessarily those of the editorial committee or the publisher. Submissions should not exceed 900 words. Those published may be edited for style or length.



Are you an educated person?

When asked the question: are you well educated?, we will most likely answer: yes, I have had a good education, but I certainly realize that there is yet so much to learn.

We called this answer evasive and yet correct. Perhaps we can formulate this somewhat better by considering the nature of the educational process. *Being an educated person* is not the same as being a finished product. Education is quite different from car manufacturing. Educated persons are not manufactured (although many an educational “mission” statement, as well as our school buildings which look often rather like 19th century factories, seem to suggest exactly that!); being educated means participating in a life-long process. In fact, borrowing from John Dewey, the famous American pragmatic educator, we can say that education is living and living is educational. Why is that so?

I describe an educated person as one who is willing and able to use his or her talents to the honour of God and to the well-being of his or her neighbour. Now, you will recognize this statement as the summary of the Law of God. We hear the Law every Sunday morning in church, often prefaced by the announcement that the Law of God is the rule for our whole life, and often followed by its summary as referred to by Christ Himself. As Christians we spend much time learning about that Law, and we are committed to live accordingly.

I use this insight as the framework for my understanding of the process of education: a truly educated person spends his or her life in service to God and the neighbour. In this description we note at least the following elements:

– *abilities*. An educated person must be able to act appropriately and responsibly, therefore much time needs to be spent developing the abilities of the person: basic ones, such as speech, reading and writing, understanding the

world around you in its various forms and shapes, etc.; more complex abilities, such as understanding relationships, developing a sense of value, developing an understanding of oneself and others. In short, the abilities we need to develop range from basic competence in life skills and school skills, to awareness and understanding of who and what we are ourselves. Learning about our God and His Word and work are an important part of this. It takes quite some time before all these abilities have been sufficiently developed, not so much because human beings are slow learners, but because there is much to learn – the breadth and length of God’s creation and the depth of his revelation are awesome. In the meantime, the very learning process itself is “life”; our young children live and learn now, today; not tomorrow!

– *independence*. Initially, the young learner depends very much on the caregiver, but soon enough a little baby lets us know that it is, indeed, an independent human being, with an own will, character, and personality. The main task of the educator could be described as forming that independent will, character, and personality; that is, to help the child not only acquire all sorts of necessary abilities, but also the willingness to use those abilities in the right way, to make his or her own decisions and to be held responsible for those decisions. Eventually, we are no longer told by someone else what to do and what to think; we have learned to think for ourselves and we are expected to act independently, but then, of course, always within the boundaries of what we have learned to be true and pure . . . the moment of profession of faith is such a moment of biblical independence. Therefore, we often formulate the goal of education as *independence*.

Independence is a major goal of the educational efforts of parents and teachers alike; it is also a most difficult goal to achieve. Give the

young people space, time, and opportunity to move towards their own independence!

– *commitment*. An educated person is not only able, but also willing to act appropriately. Such a person shows a clear commitment to an overall purpose for his or her actions. That purpose is not self-centred, but other-centred. An educated person is committed to serve others. This is acknowledged by secular and Christian educators alike; no one would defend the thesis that education has value when it serves oneself only. Even the ancient Greeks knew of education for the common good. So much the more should this be emphasized by the children of God! The Lord demands: give me your heart; be committed to my service.

– *reflection*. It will be quite clear that “being an educated person” is not the finished product of some manufacturing process – a new car does not change for the better over time; it has just one direction to go: to the inevitable scrap heap. Education, on the other hand, is a life-long process of change (not automatically for the better either!) which involves us in examination and re-examination of our actions and commitments. The lives we live must be in harmony with the norms and values which we adhere to. Recognizing the importance of and the need for such reflection is in itself a major characteristic of an educated person. Reflection is one of the major forces that causes us to continue learning. It drives us back to church every week to be further educated in the fear of the Lord; it urges us to seek better ways in which we may serve. It completes the learning cycle, pointing to new goals and renewed effort. Please understand this element in the right manner – the Form for the Lord’s Supper speaks much about such reflection, not to get us down (and perhaps out) but to encourage us in the race we are running. God’s comforting words stand big over His children: do not be anxious.



CHURCH NEWS

CALLED to Fergus, ON

Rev. J. De Gelder
of Smithville, ON

CALLED to Orangeville, ON

Rev. D.G.J. Agema
of Attercliffe, ON

I'd think that there are few among us who'd dare to claim to be fully educated. O, yes, we have acquired many a skill and much information and perhaps even some knowledge. And that is of great value. Yet, at the same time, we acknowledge that there is so much more to learn. Living a life in Christ – not in a monastery in spiritual bliss unaware of the world around us, but in the middle of every day life with all its joys and sorrows, tax forms

and quarreling siblings – puts us in the school of Christ, all the days of our lives. And even more: we are looking forward with longing to continuing our studies in eternity. Maranatha!

Please address questions directly to:
Mr. T.M.P. Vanderven
Covenant College
856 Upper James St., Box 20179
Hamilton, ON, L9C 7M5.
e-mail: tmpvdv@hookup.net



SOFTWARE REVIEW

The Molten Sea on Computer

By C. Van Dam

The Old Testament gives a detailed description of the molten sea made in the days of Solomon to stand in front of the temple (2 Kings 7:23-26). This large bronze structure, about 16 feet in diameter and about eight feet high was designed to hold an enormous amount of water (about 45,000 litres or 12,000 US gallons). It was made according to specific measurements and was thus quite an engineering feat. However, critics of Scripture have ridiculed the biblical account by suggesting that according to the measurements given the mathematics do not jive because the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of this large container for water seems to be off. This ratio is called pi and is usually represented by the Greek letter π . At first glance it seems that the value of pi (π) is 3 rather than something like 3.14. Is Scripture mistaken here? How are we to deal with this? The solution to this problem and much more besides has now been made available as freeware in a computer program by Mr. A. Zuidhof.

The program is called "King Solomon's Molten Sea and Pi (π)" and it is very user friendly. The opening menu gives an overview of what is offered. The material is divided into ten manageable parts. After an introduction, the main biblical data is given with the use of a literal translation of the Hebrew text along with several others (KJV, NKJV, RSV, NRSV). Also the ancient Greek translation (Septuagint) is given in English dress. Comments on the bibli-

cal text follow in another section followed by chapters dealing with detailed calculations and discussion of the biblical data and the math. There is even a section on the history of the molten sea and its measurements as recorded in Scripture and outside Scripture. A valuable bibliography and four appendices follow.

The marvel of the program is that with very little effort the user always has all the important information close at hand and can easily refer to relevant parts found outside the section he is busy with. It is always very easy to get back to where you were. Instructions and menus are fully given at every step and one is carefully guided through the different parts of the discussion underway. It is also important to note that at all times it is easy to refer to the relevant Scripture which speaks of the matter being discussed and other references are also easy to follow up (such as source material found in the bibliography). If one suddenly wants to search for something, that can be done at any time. The search function works well and the instructions are clear.

The whole work is done in a most careful and responsible manner. The average student of the Bible who takes the time to read the discussions will get much out of this. However, also the professional mathematician will be intrigued by the wealth of ancient Near Eastern technical and mathematical detail that is available in this program and be enriched. With scientific preci-

sion Zuidhof shows that also in specialized matters like math God's Word is completely reliable and can be trusted.

Mr. Zuidhof is eminently qualified for the work he has done. Before his retirement in Hamilton our brother was an Electronics Technical Officer at the National Research Council of Canada in Ottawa where he participated in High Accuracy Measurement Research. In 1982 he published his research on the molten sea in article form in a widely read scholarly journal called *Biblical Archaeologist* (Summer, 1982). His study has been referred to in commentaries, both scholarly (M. J. Mulder, *1 Koningen* [Commentaar op het Oude Testament 1987], 266) and popular (D. J. Wiseman, *1 & 2 Kings* [Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries 1993], 115). It is most laudable that after spending many years on this project he has made his research available on the InterNet as freeware in the hope that it will be widely used. We echo that wish. The program can be downloaded from the Hamilton-Wentworth FreeNet (HWFN) as follows. Enter exactly (including the single capital letter) as follows: <http://www.freenet.hamilton.on.ca/~ah444/Profile.html> and if a connection is made, Albert Zuidhof's Homepage will appear. The file MOLTEN-S.ZIP can then be downloaded from the Download Section. (If you do not have PKUNZIP, make sure to read the "unzip" instructions.)



VENI CREATOR SPIRITUS (Come, Holy Spirit)

Sometimes attributed to the Emperor Charlemagne. The better opinion, however, inclines to Pope Gregory I, called the Great, as the author, and fixes its origin somewhere in the sixth century.

Creator Spirit, by whose aid
The world 's foundations first were laid,
Come visit every pious mind,
Come pour thy joys on human kind;
From sin and sorrow set us free,
And make thy temples worthy thee.

O source of uncreated light,
The Father's promised Paraclete!
Thrice Holy! Fount, thrice holy fire,
Our hearts with heavenly love inspire;
Come, and thy sacred unction bring,
To sanctify us while we sing.

Plenteous of grace, descend from on high
Rich in thy seven-fold energy!
Thou strength of his almighty hand,
Whose power does heaven and earth command!
Proceeding Spirit, our defence,
Who dost the gifts of tongues dispense,
And crown'st thy gift with eloquence!

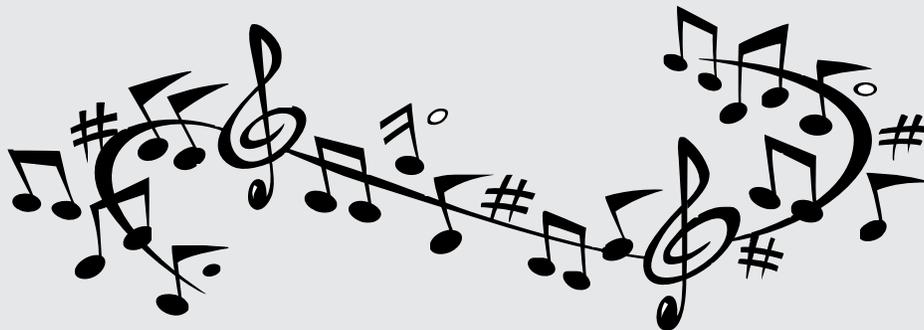
Refine and purge our earthly parts;
But, O, inflame and fire our hearts!
Our frailties help, our vice control,
Submit the senses to the soul;
And when rebellious they are grown,
Then lay thy hand and hold 'em down.

Chase from our minds the infernal foe,
And peace, the fruit of love, bestow;
And, lest our feet should step astray,
Protect and guide us on the way.

Make us eternal truths receive,
And practise all that we believe;
Give us thyself, that we may see
The Father and the Son by thee.
Immortal honor, endless fame,
Attend the Almighty Father's name;
The Saviour Son be glorified,

Who for lost men's redemption died;
And equal adoration be,
Eternal Paraclete, to thee.

*From the Latin of Gregory the Great.
Translation of John Dryden*



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Please mail, e-mail or fax letters for publication to the editorial address. They should be 300 words or less. Those published may be edited for style or length.

Dear Editor,

It was with deep appreciation that I read the article: Is it Reformed to speak about a "personal relationship with Jesus Christ?" July 26, 1996 by Rev. R. Schouten.

Rev. Schouten seems to have a clear understanding of Scripture as to the nature of our relationship to Jesus Christ, and he points out our responsibility in carrying out our walk with the Lord.

There are, however, some questions, and the first one is in regards to his remarks, as to how that the American Evangelical Christianity is dominated by

individualism and by an Arminian concept of salvation.

The term "individualism" seems to be quite a concern in the Reformed circles, and personally I do not believe that this term is a dominating factor in the Evangelical world.

Jeremiah, Ezekiel and some of the minor Prophets spoke of God's future dealings with individuals, as well as throughout the New Testament writings we find that although churches are being addressed, salvation is an individual matter.

My second question is with regards to those who are not of the Reformed

persuasion: "do they have a part in God's plan of salvation?" Although they claim to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

And thirdly: Since the *Clarion* although a Reformed Magazine, is also read by non-Reformed Christians, and therefore would it not be more appropriate to use less doctrinal terms and phrases from the forms of unity, and more Scripture verse relating to the subject?

Yours in Christ

Joe Dewind

Sherwood Park, AB

News from the Women's Savings Action

Contributions received

First of all, what everyone wants to know – how much did we collect this year. During this past fiscal year we collected a total of **\$27,087.48**. This amount is down considerably from last year. In fact, this amount was the lowest total which has come in since 1992. Nothing was received from 6 congregations. Well, we will do better next year, right?! We do not want to disappoint our College community! As often happens, contributions were received just after June 30. We were very happy to receive once again a donation from our sisters in Australia. From the congregations of Western Australia a total of \$2,653.75 was received. Many thanks to the Theological Library Fund Committee in Western Australia! We really appreciate that an amount from Australia is becoming a regular item on our list of contributions!

Annual Donation for the College

Even though the total collected was down, we are very grateful that we could still maintain the same level of

support for the library. On the College evening a pledge for **\$25,000** was presented to the principal. During this past year the \$25,000 was used to continue to buy books and periodicals in the many different subject areas; we had no other expenses besides this amount for books and periodicals. The cost of both these items continues to rise. Along with the unfavourable exchange rate the cost of paper has gone up. It therefore remains a challenge for the library to make the dollars go as far as possible.

Computers and the Library

In this day and age when so much information can be accessed via **computers**, it is sometimes thought that it is not necessary to keep adding to the library collection to the same degree or that it is not so urgent to expand the College library facilities. However, there are no indications that books will ever be replaced by computers. The printed page has advantages that a computer does not have. Certainly in an academic setting books will never become obsolete and electronic means will never re-

place books. Furthermore, although accessing certain information via the computer is free at the present time, that will probably not remain the case.

Expansion

As the College facilities become increasingly crowded, **expansion** is very much on everyone's mind. At the annual Library Committee meeting we learned that the Board of Governors has appointed a committee which has met a number of times. The librarian prepared a report outlining the needs of the library and an architect has been engaged to further develop the plans. The \$30,000 GIC plus the interest accumulated during the last two years was put into the Theological College Expansion Fund when the GIC matured in August 1995.

Tax receipts

During this past year many tax receipts could again be given out; we are very thankful that we do receive so many donations of \$10.00 and more. We have set a minimum limit of \$10.00

because of the costs involved in the printing and mailing of receipts.

Sincere appreciation

At the bottom of this newsletter Mrs. Mulder's name will appear for the last time. Just as a number of you, Mrs. Mulder, who was already involved in the early years in coordinating the collection in Cloverdale, has seen the work of the Women's Savings Action grow and prosper under the blessing of the Lord. We are very grateful for the contribution which she was able to make. Thank you very much! Mrs. Liz Hof-sink from Smithville was found willing to take over from Mrs. Mulder and we look forward to the same fine cooperation which we could enjoy with Mrs. Mulder. Not only Mrs. Mulder but also some of the representatives and co-workers have passed the reins on to some one else. Our heartfelt appreciation for the time and energy which you have volunteered for this worthwhile cause! And a hearty welcome to the new representatives and co-workers!

Every year again we are amazed how all those piles of change do add up! The change along with the cheques make it possible to make good our promise to provide funds for the library. Before the treasurer hands over the yearly pledge a lot of work has to be done. We are grateful for the willingness of the representatives and all those who assist them to collect and count the funds every year again. Also heartfelt thanks to all of you for your donations. And if perchance you did not make a donation . . . remember we do value every contribution, whether large or small. Every year at the Library Committee Meeting we are confirmed in our conviction that this labour of love is never taken for granted! Great thankfulness is always expressed by the principal for the work of the Women's Savings Action! Soli Deo Gloria!

chair Mrs. E. Mulder
2372 Cavendish Drive
Burlington, ON
L7P 3B8
(905) 332-3285

secretary Mrs. J. Van Dam
642 Ramsgate Road
Burlington, ON
L7N 2Y1
(905) 634-0593

treasurer Mrs. C. Zietsma
54 Como Place
Hamilton, ON
L9B 1Y4
(905) 389-8314

Theological College Women's Savings Action

Contributions July 1, 1995 to June 30, 1996

ABBOTSFORD	\$2,202.94
ALDERGROVE	30.00
ANCASTER	848.28
ATTERCLIFFE	1,012.00
BARRHEAD	610.00
BRAMPTON	136.50
BURLINGTON EAST	1,407.50
BURLINGTON SOUTH	595.56
BURLINGTON WEST	1,350.00
CALGARY	
CARMAN	498.50
CHATHAM	583.00
CHATSWORTH	150.00
CHILLIWACK	
CLOVERDALE	410.00
COALDALE	485.00
EDMONTON, IMM.	784.87
EDMONTON, PROV.	1,906.78
ELORA	104.70
FERGUS	460.19
GRAND RAPIDS	97.68
GRAND VALLEY	47.76
GUELPH	323.60
HAMILTON	1,147.80
HOUSTON	426.50
LANGLEY	1,950.00
LINCOLN	377.65
LONDON	110.00
LYNDEN, WASH.	463.82
NEERLANDIA	
ORANGEVILLE	146.50
OTTAWA	162.00
PORT KELLS	
ROCKWAY	51.50
SMITHERS	913.84
SMITHVILLE	1,057.50
SURREY	1,323.00
TABER	830.00
TORONTO	196.15
VERNON	471.50
WATFORD	
WINNIPEG	761.11
YARROW	
AUSTRALIA	2,653.75
Total collected:	\$27,087.48

Please note: Our fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30. Any contributions which came in after June 30 will appear on the financial statement next year.

Inheritance Preserved

By Ralph Winkel

A few days ago I saw Rev. Van-Oene's book *Inheritance Preserved* in my book case. It reminded me of an experience during my Snowbird trip to Arizona of a few years ago.

When you own a motorhome, a holiday trailer, or a cottage, you are always repairing something. Not a trip goes by without having to fix one thing or another.

My motorhome needed some new airbags as the old ones had been ruined by a rock getting in between and making holes in them. Without airbags to raise the body of the motorhome, the ride is poor and your wheels could touch the wheel wells – and that is a no-no. When you are parked in a “campground” that has three swimming pools and all kinds of other amenities to keep 1200 “spaces” happy, you can be sure to get all sorts of sidewalk supervisors if you start repairing something.

One strolled over and said: “Those are expensive parts. They must have cost you quite a bit.”

I replied: “When you own a recreational vehicle, you're always buying parts or getting things repaired. That's the way it goes. My cost for these airbags was US \$150.00 plus freight charges. But, you know, they really did not cost me anything at all.”

“That's impossible!” he replied. “How did you get those parts for nothing?”

I said: “It's so simple. You see, I have three sons who will inherit my estate. So now each of them will receive \$50.00 less.”

He walked away. About an hour later he wandered by again and said: “You've taught me something.”

I had taken pictures of the damaged airbags and explained to the factory the faulty installation that had caused the

problem. When we came home, there was a cheque for US \$150.00 waiting in the mail with a letter agreeing that my claim was legitimate. The inheritance to my three sons has been preserved. I am sure they will be relieved with this happy ending.

All kidding aside, I know that the Christian Heritage they will receive is of much more value than the earthly one. My late grandfather used to end his prayers with: “Dear Lord, let all my descendants stay members of the church.”

I now pray for the same.



Correction:

In Vol. 45, No. 21, p. 464, reference was made to Martin Luther's *Ninety-Nine* Theses. This should have been *Ninety-Five*.

American Reformed Fellowship

As in previous years, the organizing committee is preparing for another season in Palmetto, Florida. Letters have gone out to thirty (30) ministers soliciting their help in speaking an edifying word on the Sundays from November to April. Last season we had pulpit supply from January 7 to March and a

very good attendance. Really the efforts should be increased to plant a church. For that, we need steady preaching and home mission activities.

Following is our financial report and budget for 1996/97. Cheques should be made payable to "J.W. Oostdyk and A. Vandergaag."

Again this winter, we will be meeting in the Welcome Centre of the "Palmview" Baptist Church at U.S. 41 and 49th Street in Palmetto at 11:15 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

For the Committee
A.L. 'Tony' Vanderhout



The Treasurer's Report		Budget	
October 1, 1995 – September 30, 1996		October 1, 1996 – September 30, 1997	
Receipts		Receipts	
\$3,846.05	Collections	\$4,000	Collections
3,176.75	Voluntary Regular Contributions	3,500	Voluntary Regular Contributions
90.40	Interest	200	Miscellaneous
<u>\$7,113.20</u>	TOTAL	<u>\$7,700</u>	
Expenses		Expenses	
\$ 750.00	Rent church building	\$ 750	Church rent
3,600.00	Rent parsonage	3,600	Rent parsonage
960.00	Guest ministers remuneration	2,600	Guest ministers remunerations
71.07	Advertising	200	Advertising
76.60	Bulletins	200	Bulletins
55.00	Music papers	350	Miscellaneous
80.00	Video tapes		
46.00	Bank charges	<u>\$7,700</u>	TOTAL
1,007.00	VCR and mobile cabinet		
85.00	Miscellaneous		
<u>\$6,730.67</u>	TOTAL		
Balance		Notes:	
\$4,528.47	Balance, October 1, 1995	#1. As the number attending the worship services increases, we expect increased collections and voluntary regular contributions. The voluntary regular contributions are based on \$80 per season for one and \$160 for a couple residing in Florida in excess of five (5) weeks per season.	
382.53	Surplus September 30, 1996	#2. With more ministers coming to Florida, we are budgeting a considerably higher amount than last year for remuneration at the rate of \$80 per Sunday.	
<u>\$4,911.00</u>	Balance, October, 1996	#3. With increased activities other expenses will increase also.	
The Treasurer:			
Mr. A. Vandergaag 3301 Cortez Ave. W. WINDMILL VILLAGE L16, BRADENTON, FLORIDA 34207 USA or P.O. Box 2233, Smithers, BC V0J 2N0 CANADA			

DIALOGOS

To those readers of *Clarion* who are familiar with the Greek language, the meaning of the above word is quite clear – dialogos means dialogue or conversation. Others may have guessed it because they realize that many of our English words find their roots in other, older languages. To the members of the Carman congregation, however, it refers to a specific dialogue about a specific topic. You see, **DIALOGOS** is the name of the newsletter of the *Canadian Reformed Senior Housing Society Inc. Carman*. Via this newsletter, the promotion committee of the society has kept members up-to-date on business of the society and recruited new members to help support a new initiative in the province of Manitoba.

Before I tell you about this new venture, let me tell you a bit of history about the Canadian Reformed congregation at Carman. A little more than 46 years ago, by no choice of their own, the Kuik family, consisting of 9 members, were

the first *liberated* people to move into the Homewood (10 km. from Carman) area. They had planned to emigrate into the Lethbridge, Alberta area, but the Lord had other plans and the summer of 1950 saw them sweating in the sugar beet fields of southern Manitoba. By the early summer of 1951, the number of people meeting together twice on Sundays to listen to the reading of sermons had grown to 36. This led to the institution of the Canadian Reformed Church at Homewood on August 12, 1951. The late Rev. J.T. van Popta led the worship services that day, ordained office bearers and administered the sacrament of baptism. The congregation grew and met for worship in several places before they purchased their own building and built a parsonage in the nearby town of Carman. In the meantime, Homewood had actually become a prominent place on the Canadian Reformed map as the first General Synod of 1954 as well as the second of 1958

were hosted by the members of the church there. By the fall of 1958, thankful to be in their own church building, the congregation welcomed Rev. Mulder as their shepherd and teacher after Rev. Scholten moved to Orangeville. Rev. VanSpronsen came and went before Rev. Geertsema became their minister. In September of 1973, Dufferin Christian School opened its doors to 35 eager pupils. Indeed, the Lord had blessed the work of His people in Carman. To His name alone be the glory.

Between 1973 and 1996 many more changes have taken place. First Rev. van Rietschoten and then Rev. de Boer proclaimed God's Word from the pulpit and led the congregation in the ways of the Lord. A new church building was erected in 1981 and Dufferin Christian School has grown to be a kindergarten to Grade 12 school with 213 students and a staff of almost 20. Many church members have come and moved away again. Children have been



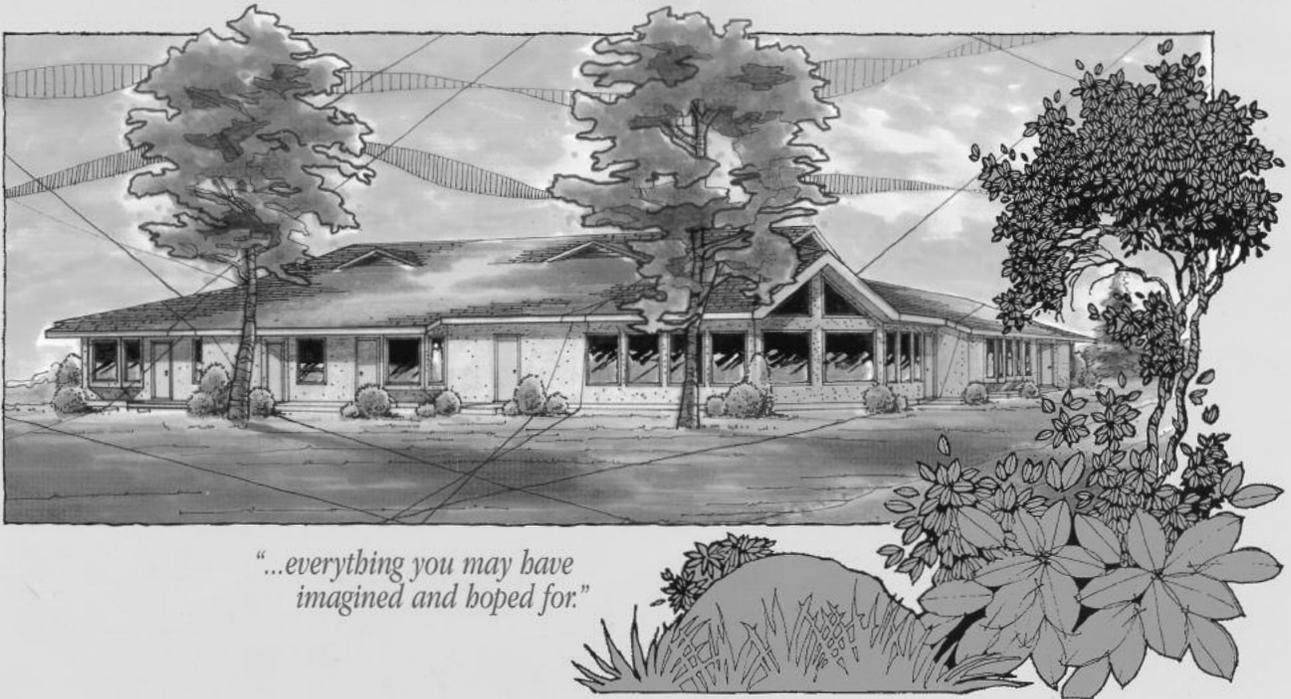
*View of Complex
from opposite side
Town of Carman
Residential Park*

*View of Complex
from church
parking lot*



CANADIAN REFORMED SENIOR'S HOUSING COMPLEX

C A R M A N • M A N I T O B A



*"...everything you may have
imagined and hoped for."*

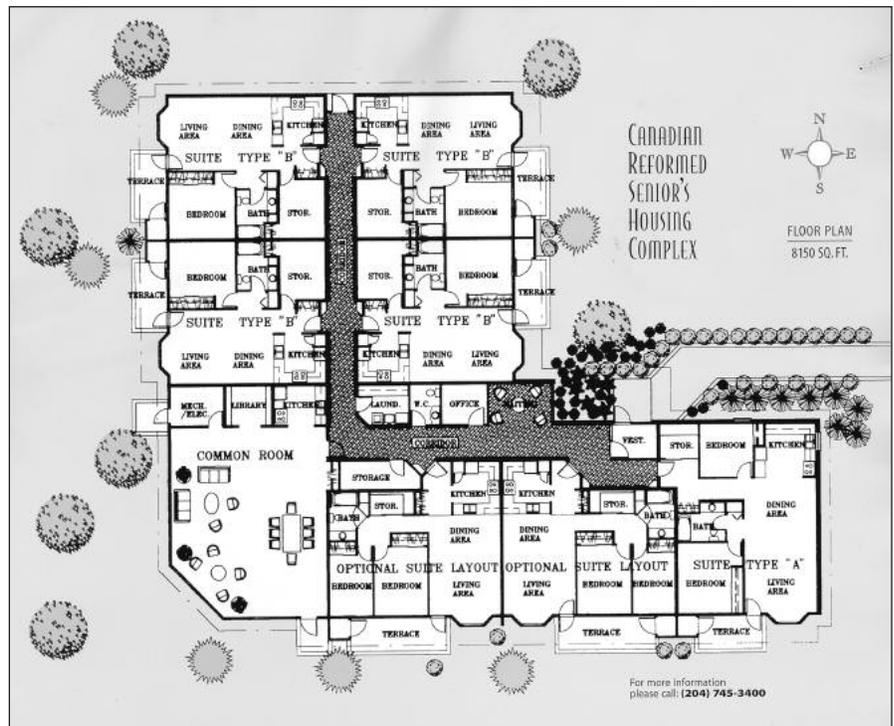
baptized and marriages have been solemnized. The Lord has taken many of the first immigrants to Himself. The congregation, at present, numbers over 550 and the new building is bursting at the seams.

Let's get back to the new venture mentioned earlier. Several years ago, a number of our more senior members asked whether it would be feasible to construct a seniors residence for Canadian Reformed people, in Carman. A committee was formed and property was purchased right next to the church. In the spring of 1996, the society decided to go ahead and hire contractors to build a seven unit residence. To date, 4 of these units have been spoken for and the building should be ready for occupancy by the end of the year. The society has decided that an effort will be made to recruit church members as renters first before opening it up to other people from the Carman community.

If you are interested in living in a quiet town of 3,000 in a brand new one-bedroom or a two-bedroom suite with size from 785-980 square feet, a common room of 1600 square feet which faces out over a community park, a central library in the common room, within walking distance of church and shop-

ping and eating at the historic Fireside Inn (formerly Shamrock Tea Gardens), where our first General Synods were held, ten minutes from Homewood, only one hour driving from Winnipeg, all for the price of \$70,000 to \$76,000, you

may be interested in calling Mr. John Schulenberg at 204-745-2185 or Mr. Pete van Dasselaar at 204-745-3400 to reserve your suite or at least ask to have a promotional brochure sent to your address.



For more information
please call: (204) 745-3400