

Clarion

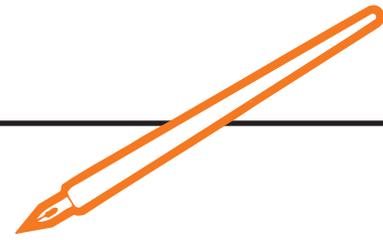
THE CANADIAN REFORMED MAGAZINE
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*A Visit to the
Free Church of Scotland*



By C. Van Dam



The Need for the Right Focus

When a picture is not properly focused, you get a blurred image. You are not really sure of much of the detail, but only have a general conception – something like impressionist art can be. A human heart and life can be like that. With the “busy season” starting again after the summer vacations, one’s life can become one big blur unless one is careful. There can be the constant rush to do this or that, to juggle competing responsibilities and to meet all kinds of unrealistic deadlines. People then say “You don’t know whether you’re coming or going.” Such undisciplined hectic activity can easily take place at the cost of an overall unity and focus in life and be quite discouraging.

There is also another (and possibly related) way in which our life can lack focus and unity. That is when we give in to the different competing desires of the heart. Scripture speaks of being double-minded. Such people are wavering, unstable and really do not know what they want and what they live for (cf. James 1:6-8; Ps. 12:2). As a result, there is no coherent centre to their life. Such a heart needs to be purified of double-mindedness (James 4:8) and get a clear focus to the God of life.

There is a prayer which we do well to remind ourselves of as we reflect on these matters. It is the supplication of David when he cried to God: “Give me an undivided heart” (Ps. 86:11). In this psalm David prays for God’s mercy and the joy of life, for he is poor and needy (vv. 1-7). The poet, however, does not continue to dwell on his specific difficulties to which he only returns near the end of the psalm. His real concern in his troubles is a larger, more comprehensive worry, namely, that he in his life not lose the true knowledge of God. He prays:

Teach me your way, O LORD,
and I will walk in your truth;
Give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear your name. (v. 11)

Note, that before David prays for an undivided heart, he beseeches God that he be taught in God’s way, that is in the LORD’s ordinances so that he can concretely obey God (“walk in your truth”). Instruction in God’s revelation is something that we cannot do without. It is the necessary condition before the next petition can be made for an undivided heart.

What exactly does it mean to ask God “give me an undivided heart”? One can also render: “unite my heart” or “make my heart one.” The heart can go into different directions and lead a divided existence. But then one cannot fear God! (Note the connection between the two in David’s prayer.) The reverence of the LORD demands a single-minded heart that is entirely concentrated on God and not distracted by other priorities or desires. And that is precisely David’s prayer. By beseeching God for a “united heart” he asks that his heart

not be divided by competing desires, but that his heart be one. Not double-minded, but single-minded.

Surely this is a prayer for us to remember as well as we leave the summer behind and embark on a new season of school and work. Over against the divided existence of modern man with all its competing goals and desires, our life must be characterized by simple-minded purpose aimed towards God and His glory. He is to be the focus of our lives. Over against the competing desires of our heart and the battle against sin and the fallen inclinations of the mind that can merely seek what is pleasurable and convenient, easy and fun, we as Christians ask God that He instruct us in His way and teach us His truth so that we can indeed have an undivided heart that is able to fear the LORD.

When this happens we obey that ancient injunction:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength (Deut. 6:4-5).

Notice how this exhortation is prefaced by the description of God who is ONE. The God who is one, must be worshipped and adored by a people of one mind and heart towards God. He is to be everything in our life for He is the only God! Life without Him *is* meaningless and for nothing!

And so over against the centrifugal forces that can divide the heart in the busyness of life or in the struggle against sin, we pray that God pull our hearts together in a holy unity. Hard choices may need to be made as we seek to prioritize our time, talents and other resources in a manner pleasing to God. But let us make these difficult choices. However, as we said earlier, we will only be equipped, if we seek God’s guidance in His Word. “Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth.” A Christian life is a life lived with an open Bible that is read, studied and made our own! Only then can we truly beg God for a focused life in His service.

The matter is so important that our Lord God promised salvation to His people in terms of giving them undivided hearts that fear Him. For example, through the prophet Jeremiah the Lord said of His people: “I will give them singleness of heart and action so that they will always fear me for their own good and the good of their children after them” (Jer. 32:39; cf. also Ezek. 11:19). Such promises should encourage us to focus clearly on God in all the struggles and hectic busyness of life. If we make God our everything then we have in focus what should be clear and front and centre in our life. Then God’s priorities become our priorities, His wishes our wishes. Under His blessing, life will then not just be one big multi-directional busy blur, but we will know we are going in the right direction – ultimately to God! – for our lives are focused on Him and He goes along with us by His Word and Spirit! 

By D. Moes

Being able to do the humanly speaking impossible

By faith Abraham, even though he was past age – and Sarah herself was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise.

Hebrews 11:11

I'm sure all of us have at one time or another faced difficulties and challenges that completely overwhelmed us. They unsettled us, robbed us of sleep and were constantly on our minds. Humanly speaking, the difficulties could not be dealt with and the challenges not be met.

Our text for this meditation also speaks about the humanly speaking impossible. For it tells us about Abraham being enabled to become a father even though he was past the age.¹

A humanly speaking impossible situation

One look at the biblical givens in the book of Genesis will tell us that God went a very difficult route with Abraham. Over a period of some twenty-five years, God repeated the promise of a child to him. And during all these years, Abraham continued to advance in years. By the time he finally did father the child of the promise he was no less than one hundred years old!

With regard to Sarah his wife things were not all that much different. Repeatedly we are told in the book of Genesis that Sarah was barren. Furthermore, we are told that she was past the age of being able to bear children. By the time she finally did conceive the child of the promise, she was about ninety years old!

In the light of these biblical givens, you will agree that the humanly speaking impossible did indeed happen with Abraham and Sarah. Abraham was as good as dead – sexually dead, that is – and Sarah was barren and past the age of being able to bear children.

And yet, the impossible did happen! And you ask yourself: "How? How in the world was it possible for Abraham to father a child when humanly speaking this was no longer possible?"

The key of faith

The answer to this question lies in the little word *faith*. By faith Abraham even though he was past age – and Sarah her-

self was barren – was enabled to become a father because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise.

What a beautiful little phrase that is: "because he considered Him faithful who had made the promise." The faithfulness of God is such a heartwarming expression. It simply means that the LORD our God is an *unchanging God*. He is a God whose life does not change. For He is a God who is from everlasting to everlasting God. He is a God whose character does not change. For He is a God who cannot deny Himself. He is a God whose truth does not change. For everything He promises is an abiding valid expression of His mind and thought. He is a God whose purposes do not change. For His plans stand firm

forever and the purposes of His heart through all generations.²

This is what Abraham believed. He believed the God who had made the promise of a child to him to be a faithful, unchanging God. And because he did, he knew for sure that God's purpose of a great nation through him would surely come to pass. He knew for sure that the truth of God's promise was and remained an abiding valid expression of God's mind and thought. Because Abraham considered his God to be a faithful God, he knew for sure that his God would never deny Himself, but always remain true to Himself. Abraham knew for sure that the God who had promised a son to him was a God whose power did not grow stronger or weaker, but would continue to be strong for all eternity.



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As a matter of fact, Abraham believed that by faith he could *release* that power. For faith is the *instrument* in releasing the power of the promises of God. Abraham knew that God's promise was charged with power, but that this power had to be released through the exercise of faith. Much like a car battery is charged with power, but this power can only be released by turning on the ignition. So, too, faith is the *key* to releasing the power of the promises of God.

The struggle of faith

That is not to say that Abraham had no difficulties. We all know about how Sarah advised him to father the child of the promise through Hagar their slave (Gen. 16). Abraham could have refused. But he didn't. That was a serious lapse in his faith. Later when God repeated His promise to him, Abraham fell facedown to the ground and laughed (Gen. 17). That was another tragic lapse in his faith. Obviously, it is not always easy to live the life of faith as God wants us to live it. The devil is out to infiltrate our hearts and make us doubt the power of God's promises.

Yet, these are the only two instances recorded in the Scriptures of Abraham's lapse in faith. Two incidents in a twenty-five year waiting period for the fulfilment of God's promise. That means that *as a whole* Abraham continued to live the life of faith. As a whole Abraham continued to celebrate the reality of the blessings of his hope and the proof of events as yet unseen (Heb. 11:1).

Romans four gives us a beautiful description of this life of faith. There we read that against all hope Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations. We are further told that without weakening in his faith, Abraham faced the fact that his body was as good as dead – since he was about one hundred years old – and Sarah's womb was dead. Yet, he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what He had promised (Rom. 4:18-21).

The Hebrew Christians

This is what the author wants the Hebrew Christians to do as well. To be sure, their life was not an easy life. Their difficulties were great. Their problems humanly speaking sometimes insurmountable. Yet, by faith they are not. By faith they can release the power of God's promises. Those promises that are charged with power and whose power can be released by the key of faith. God had promised them that He would never leave or forsake them. God had promised them that they could do all things through Him who strengthens them. God had promised them that nothing would separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Neither trouble or hardship or persecution. Nor nakedness or danger or sword.

If only they would believe these promises! If only they would release the power of these promises through the key of faith. If only they would celebrate the reality of the blessings of these promises and the proof of these events as yet unseen! What a difference that would make in their lives! How they would be changed from timid and compromising Christians into courageous and faithful children of God! How they would give glory to their God and be a hand and a foot to their brothers and sisters!

You and I

What applies to the Hebrew Christians applies to us as well. To be sure, our difficulties are not the same as those of Abraham and Sarah. Nor are they the same as those of the Hebrew Christians. Yet, everyone of us faces difficulties and challenges. If not now, then most certainly in the future. Sometimes these difficulties and challenges can be so awfully overpowering. Sometimes they can even paralyze you so much that you have absolutely no power to deal with them.

At times like these we need faith – faith in the promises of God. I realize this is not always easy. That was not always easy for Abraham. Nor was this always easy for the Hebrew Christians. It is much easier to live by sight and let your challenges and difficulties paralyze you. Then you simply do not have to deal with them. And supposedly your life will be much easier.

Yet, that is simply not so. Just look at all the problems Abraham ran into when he lapsed from the faith and agreed to father a child by Hagar. Just look at all the disharmony this one lapse of faith caused both him and his family!

Similar things can happen to us when we fail to deal with our problems in faith. So let us not do this, but let us believe. Let us follow the example of our forefather Abraham and live the life of faith he lived. For only that type of a life will bring glory to our God and enable us to deal with our problems and challenges – even those which humanly speaking are impossible to solve.

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¹I have followed the NIV translation of Hebrews 11:11. According to the best linguistic sources I have been able to consult, this text does not speak about the female function in procreation, but the male function. Accordingly, we could translate, "Abraham was enabled to become a father" or "Abraham received strength for procreation." For an illuminating overview of the various suggested translations, see William L. Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary, Volume 47B, Hebrews 9-13*, (Dallas, Texas: Word Books, 1991), pp. 344ff.

²For a beautiful treatment on the faithfulness of God, see J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1973), pp. 67-72.



What's inside?

Summer is waning. Many of us have had opportunity to get away for awhile and do a little travelling, sightseeing, and relaxing. Soon the children and young people will be back at school, college or university. The time for holidays is over and we're back to work. Most will carry on with present work or employment. Some begin new work. Students face new challenges as they enter a new year of school. Labour Day in many ways signals a new start to our work. Labour Day ought to be especially important to Christians. Of all people, Christians have a good perspective on labour. They know that God created them to work. When we, as people redeemed by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ, work hard in our daily calling – whatever it might be – then we please God. In the editorial, Dr. Van Dam reminds us that we ought to have things properly in focus as we embark on a new season of work.

In the meditation, Rev. Dick Moes encourages us to live by faith in God's promises.

Rev. John Van Popta continues his articles on evangelism.

Rev. Klaas Jonker tells us about his last year's trip to Scotland.

We've also included a number of reports and releases.

Happy Labour Day, and enjoy your work!

GvP

Evangelism: The church's missionary work in the world₃

By J.L. Van Popta

1. An integrated vision

It is time that the Canadian Reformed Churches begin seriously thinking of calling evangelist – missionaries for our cities. We no longer need to go to the jungle to find pagans; we need not go to the mid east to find Muslims; nor need we go to third world countries to find the heathen. Next door is close enough. We do not need to go to the urban poor or downtrodden. We need to evangelize our middle class neighbours. In a previous article we identified three aspects of evangelistic effort: Church, committee, and the individual Christian's efforts. These are not either/or distinctions but complementary sources from which to mount a Christian witness in our communities. I believe we must find ways to integrate evangelism programs based on these three sources.

2. What are we missing?

It seems, though, that this is not happening. What are we missing? I believe that we are missing three things in our evangelistic vision. This is likely the greatest cause of our failure in both participation and in numbers brought to faith. We will briefly examine these three areas and then come back to them as we evaluate our current evangelistic efforts.

2.1. Confessional basis

We are missing a confessional basis for our outreach. It seems that the confessions of the church are a bit of an embarrassment for any outreach efforts mounted by Reformed churches, committees or individuals. We might introduce ourselves in a brochure or tract as a church that finds its roots in the great Reformation of the 16th century and that we hold to the *Three Forms of Unity*. Yet, when someone comes to learn more about the Bible and the Lord Jesus, we say little about the confessions

for quite a while. In Lord's Day 21, in the confession about the church, we say that Jesus Christ gathers, defends and preserves a church. The confessions can be used for exactly those purposes. We use them primarily to *preserve* the church. We teach the doctrine of Scripture as outlined in the confessions to the young people and so preserve the truth. We often will use the confessions to *defend* the truth against heresy and false teaching. We will use them to test the spirits to see if they are from God. However, we shy away from using them in the *gathering* work. We should make the Three Forms of Unity part of our evangelistic tool box. Of course we want to bring the Bible first of all. That is where the Gospel is found, first. However, we should not create false dilemmas between Scripture and confessions, as if the use of the confessions undermines the Scripture.

2.1.1. Belgic Confession

The Belgic Confession is one of the most beautiful concise booklets of the gospel that has ever been produced. It was written as a testimony to others. It was an explanation of what the Reformed church believed. It lays out the basic doctrine of God, Scripture, sin, redemption, and church. We need not be afraid of using this booklet to explain to others what the gospel is about and what the Scripture teaches and what the church confesses.

2.1.2. Heidelberg Catechism

The Heidelberg Catechism, on the other hand, was written first of all to teach those coming into the church the riches of God's grace in Christ. It was used to teach the comfort and the joy of the gospel of salvation. It was used to teach not just young people but also new members of the comfort and the joy of belonging to Christ. Why do we not do the same now? It seems as if the Heidelberg Catechism is only used for

evangelistic purposes when someone swiftly needs to be admitted into the church via public profession of faith.

2.1.3. Canons of Dort

The Canons of Dort of course are somewhat more difficult to use in evangelistic endeavors. They do, however, as we have already seen in an earlier article, provide a Reformed basis and argument for evangelism and mission work. If one were to confront someone with an Arminian understanding of the gospel, however, then the Canons of Dort clearly lay out the truth of Scripture about the way of salvation. (Though the doctrine of election and reprobation likely is not the first doctrine with which to confront the unbeliever.)

2.2. Church directed

A second thing that we are missing, besides a confessional background is the lack of a church direction. I believe that our evangelistic efforts are not church directed enough. We do not speak to our neighbours, evangelize our co-workers and acquaintances, with the intent of them joining the church, the Reformed Church. We do not direct our evangelistic efforts with the intent of directing new believers and honest seekers to the church. We take the attitude (I have heard it so often), "Well, we need to spread the seed! Who knows what God will do with it in the future? Perhaps someday the hearer will think on it and it will have some effect in his life. Who knows?" Yes, who knows!?

Those who know, however, and have heard the gospel and yet do not accept it, those who do not believe it, are then accountable. We should not be simply casting some seed upon the ground and then say, "Who knows what will happen?" No, we should evangelize with the intent of being an instrument in God's hand in changing the hearts and lives of those who hear the gospel! It is the Holy Spirit working with the

Word first of all that changes the hearts of men and women. A preacher does not carelessly cast out some seeds on Sunday morning thinking, "Well, who knows what God will do with it? Perhaps someday the congregation will remember what I said and the Word proclaimed will have some effect." No, not at all! The preacher preaches urgently and with authority: "Repent and believe!" The good news comes to all men. "Believe and be baptized and be joined in faith to the body of Christ!" All evangelism must have as its goal, not just the potential conversion of the hearer, but the actual obedient response of being joined by faith to the body of Christ, the church!

2.3. Covenantal theology

Not only are we missing that confessional basis and a church direction for our evangelism, I think we are missing a covenantal theology of missions or evangelism. Perhaps not in some professor's text-book but in the church members' lives the covenantal vision is missing. We will expand on this below, when we deal with some practical applications.

3. What are we doing and are we doing it correctly?

So what are we doing? What are we doing right and what could we do better? The following is not the product of a scientific study or survey. It is rather the result of personal observation and conversation. I hope that what I say is useful. If my judgment is wrong for your church I still hope my observations will be helpful.

We can identify quite a few different types of work that we do through committees. These programs often need the efforts of many individuals. I do not want in any way to take away from the work done by these people. Many church members are deeply dedicated to the work they do for the Lord in this respect. They should be held in honour by all in the church. They are striving to live as lights in the world, as bright stars in the dark universe. And yet, I still have some serious criticisms about our standard evangelistic efforts.

3.1. Tracts

Many churches print tracts and brochures identifying and introducing the church. But where are these brochures found? In the back of the church, to be handed to those who already have come through the door!

Why not find a better place to distribute them? The young people of Edmonton have launched what they call "The Areopagus Project." I like that name. The Areopagus was the place where the Apostle Paul preached his sermon to the University professors in Athens. The Areopagus Project is an outreach program on the University of Alberta campus. They hand out Christian literature, information about the church, information about the creeds, organize Bible Studies on campus. It is a great idea.

This too has its limitations. You cannot just button-hole people and tell them to become Christians. You cannot just stuff reading material in their faces and think that their lives will be changed. Handing out tracts and distributing reading material has a place but it should be a very limited place in the church's missionary work and evangelistic work. It is then the follow up, the Bible studies, the continued contact, that works the best. Just handing out tracts at the local fair is good, but it should not be the primary way of evangelizing your neighbour.

3.2. VBS

I have a difficulty with Vacation Bible Schools as they are now organized. Well intentioned mothers and teachers, volunteers everyone of them, exert an amazing amount of effort and hold VBS for one or two weeks in the summer. Church budgets reflect the growing trend. Ads are run in local papers. Signs and billboards adorn the front of churches. And the kids do come. But I have heard that for many of the kids, this is just one of many VBSs that they attend during the summer. Often the children are members of church going families and the mothers enroll them first in the Baptist VBS, then in the CRC VBS, then in the Mennonite VBS, then in the CndR VBS. The children receive 4 - 6 weeks of free summer activities. Now as a social service this is a great contribution. I do not deny that the church community can do good things in the neighbourhood.

Here I want to get back to my critique about a lack of covenantal theology. If VBS is the cornerstone of our evangelistic outreach how does that square with covenant teaching? We believe that God made His covenant with believers and their children, not with children and their parents. Making VBS as the mainstay effort of church evangelism means that we put the

teaching of the covenant aside. No longer do we come with the promise and demand of the gospel: "Repent and believe!" Those are commands, not optional alternatives. How can you tell a 4 year old, "Repent and believe?" No, you are left with either telling Bible stories, and saying, "Who knows, maybe it will affect him in his later years." Or you change the gospel and say to the child of unbelieving parents, "Jesus loves you and died for you." It does not add up in a Reformed Church.

3.3. Coffee Break

The other mainstay of evangelistic outreach is often what is known as "Coffee Break." Here women of the church bring their friends and neighbours. The children often come and one of the women of the church teaches them a Bible story or does some arts and crafts. The other women engage in a Bible Study. Though here the covenantal aspect is stronger (often the mother is a single mother, head of her household), the *confessional* aspect and the *church directed* aspect is often missing. I understand that often the women who come have little or no understanding of Scripture and so an inductive Bible study is used. A Bible book is chosen and discussed. The participants use a question and answer format and search the Scriptures for answers. It is hard to lay a charge against that. Yet, what is often lacking is *systematic* instruction about the gospel. There is a need for instruction, not just exploration. Again the church and the women contribute to society by helping and befriending and listening to these women, but too often I think the command and demand of the covenant gospel is lacking. We need to develop truly Reformed confessional, covenantal material for Coffee Break. We need study material that has as its goal to bring sinners to repentance and faith and so lead them to obedient thankful response within the church of Christ.

3.4. Evangel/Outreach magazines

I wonder how many people read *Evangel and Outreach* magazines. Some months ago I spoke to a prominent leader in the churches, a man with a zeal for the Lord and for evangelism, who had never even heard of *Outreach* magazine. It is a magazine written to equip the saints for ministry. If it is not read, however, those articles will benefit absolutely nothing.

I believe that *Evangel* magazine has a role. But if all you do is stuff it in the mail slots or mail boxes in your community and you think you have done your job, you are mistaken. Here again is one of the great failures of our evangelistic efforts. We think that we are done when we take a brochure and stuff it in a mail box. That is what I call, "No strings attached evangelism." Just a broad-sheet paper in the mailbox. "The choice is yours." But since when has it been a choice? The gospel must come with the *command* to repent and believe.

3.5. Gift From Heaven Bible Course

This Bible course has been developed in Holland and translated by the Reformed Evangelism Task Force, the same committee that is behind *Evangel* and *Outreach* magazines. The course is a good one, but once again it is as sort of "no-strings-attached" evangelistic effort. The course is advertised with the disclaimer that no personal contact need to be made. The only follow up is the marking of the course. If follow up is desired then that can be arranged. Is our intent to simply cast seeds about?

3.6. Radio broadcast

The Voice of the Church radio broadcasts have been on the air for decades. There is a place for this kind of witness and testimony but again it is evangelism with no strings attached. The invitation is to listen but there is no real direction to church. It seems that, here too, as Reformed churches we do not consider it very important or necessary or even possible to get the listener to church. Though some are brought to the church through this work, its work is too unfocused.

3.7. Prison Ministry [M2/W2 – Open Circle]

Over the years, more and more men are visiting as Christian volunteers in prisons. Here effective evangelism can occur. Often long term relationships are built up. The Bible can be opened and read. The confessions can be taught. In prisons we find many men who are in desperate need of the gospel and who are ready and willing to hear the good news of salvation. Various Christian organizations have been set up to make

access to the prison population possible. Much more work could be done in this field.¹

4. Conclusion

There is a need for Reformed people to develop scriptural, confessional and church directed material for evangelistic outreach programs. The programs that we use are a good ground work but should be molded and adapted to a more confessionally based and church directed format which is rooted in a clear understanding of God's covenant of grace. There is however, one more missing piece. We will deal with that in the next article.

Rev. J.L. Van Popta is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in the Nation's Capital.

¹The 1996-1997 Annual Report of M2/W2 Christian Volunteers in Correction, based in Clearbrook BC, notes that there are 331 men in federal and provincial prisons who would welcome a Christian friend but for whom M2/W2 is unable to find a volunteer. Think of it! 331 male prisoners seeking a Christian friend in BC prisons alone. Where are the volunteers? 

Report of the visit to the Free Church of Scotland from May 17-28, 1996, including the visit to the General Assembly 1996 (Part 1)

By K. Jonker

1. Introductory remarks

At the end of 1995, I made plans to visit the Netherlands for my annual leave of 1996. At this occasion I liked to make a stopover in Scotland. For several years it has been my wish to see the country of the Presbyterian Churches. When I served the church at Launceston, Tasmania (Australia) I met members of the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) on several occasions. From them I heard much about Scotland and its history. Of course, I was especially interested in the history of our sister church in Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland (FCS). From May 17-28, 1996 I made this visit as the official delegate of the Canadian Reformed Churches. The convener of our Committee on Relations with Churches Abroad, Rev. J. Visscher, and the Clerk of the General Assembly (GA)

of the FCS, Prof. J. Mackay, greatly facilitated my visit.

2. Arrival in Edinburgh

On May 17, with great anticipation, I boarded the plane to the country and city of John Knox. The flight was pleasant. At the Airport Mr. Alistar Macdonald, a Retired Civil Servant and elder in Edinburgh (Buccleuch), met me at the Airport. Before he brought me to my hotel, he took me to his home for a cup of coffee. He told me about Edinburgh and, of course, about the FCS. I could always approach him if I needed help during my stay. I received the reports for the GA and correspondence from the Clerk of the GA.

From the newly received correspondence I was able to make up the agenda for my visit. On Friday evening May 17,

I would attend the closing service of the FCS College; on Saturday May 18, I would do some sightseeing and prepare myself for the Sunday; on Sunday May 19, I would go to Leith; from Monday to Friday May 20-24, I would attend the General Assembly; on Saturday May 25, I would visit the John Knox house and probably some other interesting places in Edinburgh; I would spend Sunday May 26 in Dundee, while I would arrange on Monday May 27 some visits to Professors of the college. Tuesday morning early I would have to catch my flight to Holland. I will now report on all these activities.

3. Closing service of the college session, Friday May 17

At 6:00 p.m. Mr. Donald Jack, a Retired Civil Servant and elder of the



John Knox House

church at Leith, picked me up for the closing ceremony of the lessons of the Free Church College. This meeting can be compared with the Convocation meeting of our College in Hamilton. The meeting was held in the beautiful Chalmers Hall of the College. About 75 people were in attendance.

Principal Prof. A.C. Boyd led the meeting. His address was on Romans 16:1-20. He pointed out that in this passage we read about men and women in the service of the Lord. Apparently people in Paul's time often worked in pairs. Their service in the victory of the Lord made them main targets for the enemy. However, they were assured that the God of peace will crush Satan under their feet. However, the victory already won by Christ does not mean that His people won't meet opposition. Prof. Boyd urged



Principal Prof. A.C. Boyd

his listeners to be faithful, in particular to be watchful for false teaching.

After the address, diplomas and awards were handed out to students who had finished their studies. Then a representative of the student body spoke some words of farewell to the leaving students. A reply to these words was given by a graduate on behalf of the others. The latter also made some light-hearted comments about the professors. Unfortunately for me, that part was difficult to follow. Although their Scottish accent was not like Friesian is to Gronings, one has to get used to some pronunciations. Afterwards, I was assured that the words spoken had remained within the limits of proper respect. They must have been funny at times because the hall was filled with laughter. He concluded on a serious note which everyone could clearly understand. His final words, especially addressed to the students, were: "Get to know each other; understand each other; care for each other; pray together; stay together and evangelize together."

The college community also presented some gifts to Mr. W. Anderson. He had served the college as College Officer and Curator for many years. He was retiring, and therefore special tribute to his work was given by the college community.

After the official closing, people went to the College Dining Hall for refreshments and fellowship. At about 10:30 p.m. Mr. Jack brought me back to my hotel. With him I went through the liturgy of their congregation at Leith

for the coming Sunday. Their liturgy is very similar to ours, with the exception of the reading of the Law and the Apostles' Creed; and of course they don't have the accompaniment of an organ. It was arranged that Mr. Jack would come at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday morning to bring me to church.

4. Preaching in Leith, Sunday May 19

On Sunday morning, Mr. Jack came at the time arranged. On the way to the church at Leith, a drive of about 20 minutes, he gave me some information about the congregation of Leith. When we arrived at the church I saw a beautiful old church building. In the consistory room, we discussed the length of the Psalms to be sung. Some adjustments were necessary. The FCS sing the Psalms in the metrical version under the leadership of a precentor. The Psalms can be sung on different tunes. The precentor announces the tune, starts the singing, and makes sure that the congregation holds the proper pitch. The precentor of the morning was Mr. Bain. I would meet him frequently during the Assembly week. When we had agreed on the proper length of the Psalms it was time for the worship service to start. During the a.m. worship service, Elder Jack was engaged in the sabbath-school. He had one student. About forty people attended the services.

My hosts between the two services were Mr. and Mrs. Kenneth Macleod. Mr. Macleod has a function in the finance world. That Sunday, they also had another guest, Mrs. Martin, the wife of a candidate. Her husband was preaching elsewhere. We discussed all kinds of subjects, like Bible Translations, Theonomy, different Preaching styles, church life within the FCS, the strengths and the weaknesses of the Presbyterian Church Government, the contacts with others. Of course, I had to answer their questions about our church life in Canada and in particular the education of our covenant children. During this visit I experienced that, although we met each other for the first time, yet we were not strangers to each other. God's true Church is one, over the whole world. The enjoyment of this unity was a tremendous encouragement.

5. The meeting of the General Assembly, Monday-Friday, May 20-24

a. General

So far my trip to Scotland had been a marvellous experience. Yet, the highlight had still to come: the General As-



FCS college and offices

Inset – Door to the FCS college and offices

sembly. I had heard and read much about this solemn meeting of the FCS. On Monday evening this important Assembly would begin with a prayer-service at 6:00 p.m. The meeting of the GA was held in the church building called the Free St. Columba's. Through the many struggles in the FCS the church had kept this building and uses it as the venue for its GA. The Assembly Hall is situated close to the Free Church College. A five minute walk through a narrow alley takes you there. I would make that walk several times that week to have lunch in the College Dining Room. There I enjoyed delicious meals from the College kitchen, where Prof. Cartwright's wife is the head cook.

I learned that during the term of lectures, morning coffee and lunch are served daily in the Dining Room. In the College Prospectus I read that all students are expected to attend. "The thinking behind this requirement is that fellowship, discussion and the strengthening of relationships is an indispensable part of a Christian curriculum." The costs of these arrangements are absorbed by the Training of the Ministry Committee.

For the 1996 Assembly 42 ministers and 42 elders had come together to deal with the spiritual and material business of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ in Scotland. Prof. John L. Mackay was the Principal Clerk. He surely kept the proceedings going. Prof. Cartwright was his right hand, being the Assistant Clerk. Another man who looks after a smooth running of the meetings is Mr. William Bain. I had already met him on Sunday in the congregation at Leith. Mr. Bain is the Assembly Officer. Five minutes before each "sederunt" (session) he rings a bell so that delegates should go to their seats. He also gave me an excellent seat: close to the pulpit, the moderator's seat and the table of the clerks. On that table were all the previous Acts of the Church available for quick reference. I could observe everything closely. Mr. Bain would also announce the coming of the

FREE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

The Free Church of Scotland is a Presbyterian Church adhering in its worship and doctrine to the position adopted by the Church of Scotland at the Reformation. Its divergence from the Church of Scotland dates from the Disruption of 1843 when, under the leadership of Dr Thomas Chalmers, the Evangelical Party in the Church of Scotland as by Law Established, withdrew from the Establishment to form the Church of Scotland, Free.

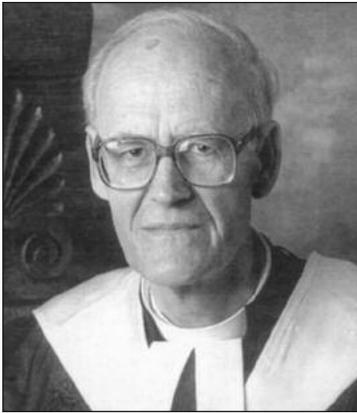
The immediate cause of the Disruption was the insistence by the civil courts that the Established Church had to ordain men to the parish ministry irrespective of their acceptability to the parishioners. The Evangelical Party regarded this as an intolerable interference in the spiritual liberties of the church and so they withdrew from the Established Church to form the Free Church. The Disruption was not intended to be a disruption, or division, of the Church. Rather it was to be a severing of the link that bound the Church to the State. However, since the Church was not of one mind regarding the proposed action, the Church itself was split. The Established Church remained; and the Free Church, claiming to be the same church as that which it had left, a church adhering to the same Confession of Faith, loyal to the same principles and differing only inasmuch as in the discharge of its spiritual functions it was to be subservient to no other authority than the will of God as understood by the collective mind of the Church, came into being.

The Established Church and the Free Church were not the only Presbyterian Churches in nineteenth century Scotland. In the eighteenth century there had been more than one secession from the Church of Scotland giving rise to the formation of several groupings with distinctive confessional standpoints. In the late nineteenth century a movement to unite the splintered Presbyterian Churches in Scotland was begun. Not surprisingly, given the different, not to say opposing, nature of the confessional formularies of the various churches, union was found to be possible only on the basis of compromise – an agreement to adopt a confession of faith sufficiently vague and elastic as to allow those holding different views to subscribe it with good conscience. When the Free Church was confronted with this dilemma, a minority took the view that the doctrines which were being treated as open questions were so vital to the faith that the duty of Christian unity had to yield to the higher duty of fidelity to the truth.

The consequence was that when the great majority of the Free Church entered the union of 1900 to form the United Free Church of Scotland (and, in 1929, to reunite with the Church of Scotland) a small minority elected to continue the Free Church of Scotland. The adherents of this 'constitutionalist' party, as it was termed, were to be found mainly, although not exclusively, in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.

Today the Free Church of Scotland although much reduced in size maintains in continuity with the Church of 1843 the system of doctrine and the form of worship adopted by the Church of Scotland at the Reformation. The singing of the Scottish Metrical Psalms unaccompanied by instrumental music is, perhaps, the most distinctive feature of its liturgy, but the chief emphasis of its worship is still to be found in the centrality of the pulpit and the proclamation of a free and sovereign salvation.

*Taken from the Free Church of Scotland Web site,
<http://www.freechurch.org>.*



Moderator Rev. Neil Macdonald

Moderator. When the Moderator was in his chair a new sederunt started. This year's Moderator was Rev. Neil Macdonald from Fearn, Ross-shire. In the FCS he is known as a "mediator," a person of peace and compassion.

b. The opening of the Assembly

A Custom in the FCS is that the previous Moderator preaches the sermon in the opening worship of the Assembly.

This year's acting moderator was Rev. Alex Murdo Macleod, minister of Kinloch. He preached on Psalm 133 about True Unity. The clear message was that the true unity is a God-worked blessing with Him, and with one another, unto eternal glory. God commands life. The singing of the Psalms was led by Rev. A.G. Ross, retired Minister of Buccleuch and Greyfriars. This acapella praise sounded like a huge men's choir. Singing without an organ certainly has its own spiritual charm.

Every day the opening devotions consisted of Psalm singing, Bible reading and prayer; on Wednesday morning the devotions took one hour in which several men took part. The days were closed with prayer. After this prayer service, the Moderator and Mrs. Macdonald, held a reception for the members of the GA and their wives, and for other guests. I was privileged to be one of them. Friends of the Moderator spoke in honour of him, sharing past experiences of school, and of student days, and of working together in the same presbytery. This social gathering was meant as an encouragement to the Moderator for his heavy task.

At about 11:00 I was back in the hotel. I was enriched by all the new impressions. I had experienced what I would experience throughout my stay in Scotland: the Presbyterians do things differently than we do, but not less biblical or godly. On the contrary, I highly appreciated the solemn and warm interaction with one another in a spirit of true Christian love to God and His Church.

c. The Moderator's address

One would think that by Tuesday morning everything would be in place for the Assembly to get down to the business of the various reports and overtures. However, that was not the case. On Tuesday morning all the concentration and patience of the commissioners (we call them delegates in our church system) was required for a long but very instructive Moderator's address. He spoke on "A Christian Perspective on the Family." In the introduction he said: "In the absence of moral absolutes, public opinion takes its cue from the latest philosophic theories. It is therefore vital that the moral vacuum is countered by a positive Christian approach based on the divine revelation, which lays down clear guidelines for both individual and family life."

Further in his address he contrasted contemporary thought with the biblical teaching on family and marriage. In the modern world the alternative families cause the trauma of an empty youth culture. Young people are spiritually bankrupted. In the Christian family however, children and young people are nurtured in an atmosphere of self-denying love and conscientious responsibility. "The family unit that the New Testament envisages is not a closed, self-centred institution, but one

that the Lord has placed in society to act as light and salt. The light reflected through the everyday life of His people is there to show His standards, the salt to act as a preservative against the corrupting tendencies in individual and community character and conduct. Christian families serve as a link between their church or congregation and the community. . . . We must not minimise the significance of the Christian family and the access it can provide for gospel witness in a virtually pagan society. . . . One conclusion which must be drawn is that present day standards do not produce happiness or stability in the experience of the adults and children whose family life has disintegrated. . . . The ultimate solution to the present crisis is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose compassion embraces every variety of human failure and need."

This clearly spoken address was well received. I am sure a Canadian Reformed man would have much more stressed the covenant, but much less the importance of the Christian family for the world.

After this address the Assembly was ready to proceed to its actual business. In another instalment I will report on the proceedings of the GA, and on the final days of my visit.

Rev. K. Jonker is minister of the Canadian Reformed Church in Winnipeg, MB.



Comfort in sorrow

In the hours of pain and sorrow,
When the world brings no relief,
When the eye is dim and heavy,
And the heart oppressed with grief,
While blessings flee,
Saviour, Lord, we trust in thee!

When the snares of earth surround us, –
Pride, ambition, love of ease,
Mammon with her false allurements,
Words that flatter, smiles that please –
Then, e're we yield,
Saviour, Lord, be thou our shield!

When forsaken, in distress,
Poor, despised, and tempest tost,
With no anchor here to stay us,
Drifting, sail and rudder lost,
Then save us, thou
Who trod this earth with weary brow!

Thou, the hated and forsaken!
Thou, the bearer of the cross!
Crowned of thorns and mocked and smitten
Counting earthly gain but loss;
When scorned are we,
We joy to be the more like thee!

Thou, the Father's best beloved!
Thou, the throned and sceptred King!
Who but thee should we, adoring,
All our prayers and praises bring?
Thrice blest are we,
Saviour, Lord, in loving Thee!

Helen R. Parmelee

I want to live for You for the rest of my life

Credo Christian High: Grad '97

By S. Vandergugten

Credo's Band conductor, Brad Davis, lifted his baton and the familiar strains of *Pomp and Circumstance* filled the air of the Abbotsford Pentecostal Assembly sanctuary. It was the evening of June 26. Two files of blue-gowned grads strode energetically but decorously up the aisles and took their places on stage, front and center. Without further ado, one of the grads, Neil Dehaas, welcomed parents and grandparents, friends and relatives, and special guests who would later in the evening offer scholarships and bursaries on behalf of local colleges, universities, and businesses.

Mr. E. Vanderboom, principal, was the first of several speakers to address the audience and the Grade 12 students. He based his message on Colossians 3:12-17 and 23. He encouraged



The Graduating Class of 1997

the grads to live as God's chosen people, clothed with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, putting on love and letting the peace of Christ rule in their hearts. He further urged them to do everything above all as working for the Lord. Then blessings would follow.

O taste and see . . .

Mr. John Siebenga, father of one of the grads, was keynote speaker for the evening. He had titled his speech *Hors d'oeuvres*. It was not long before he had everyone's mouths watering with his talk of "succulent morsels of . . . exquisite cuisine," "delectable tidbits of smoked salmon," and perhaps a bit more questionably, "the moldy goodness of Danish blue cheese." But of course there was more to this speech than simply whetting our appetite for food. Mr. Siebenga invited the grads to a taste test – a taste test that can only have a beginning today with hors d'oeuvres, but which will end with the greatest feast of all time.

The grads will have already tasted something of the goodness of God before this milestone in their lives – times when a teacher took an extra moment to compliment them on their work, times when a friend provided a safe haven to express sadness and even fear. The Lord will continue to provide pos-

sibilities to live life to the fullest – times of pleasure but also times of pain.

We are allowed to love these hors d'oeuvres, perhaps especially because we don't have to pay. The bill has been prepaid. "So we can skip and dance around the table of life, tasting here, sampling there . . ." Mr. Siebenga continued, "Your adult life lies before you. Take hold of it with both hands," he urged, "and live it to the full, tasting here, sampling there because your God wants you to enjoy it. . . . Taste and see that the Lord is good." He offers life, but the hors d'oeuvres of this life are but a foretaste of what is coming. "Like any good hors d'oeuvres, the tasting and sampling that the Lord gives us here today only can entice us on to that day where we can eat the full course meal . . . that awesome day when we can sit around the Celebration Feast with Him forever."

The big moment

The time had finally come for the grads to receive their hard earned diplomas. In turn, Mr. Peter Blom and Mr. Nick Mans read the Bible text each grad had chosen. Mr. Harry Moes informed the audience of the student's post-secondary plans. Many of the students will be attending local universities and colleges, but an equal number are planning to join the work force.



Mr. John Siebenga invites the Grads to a taste test

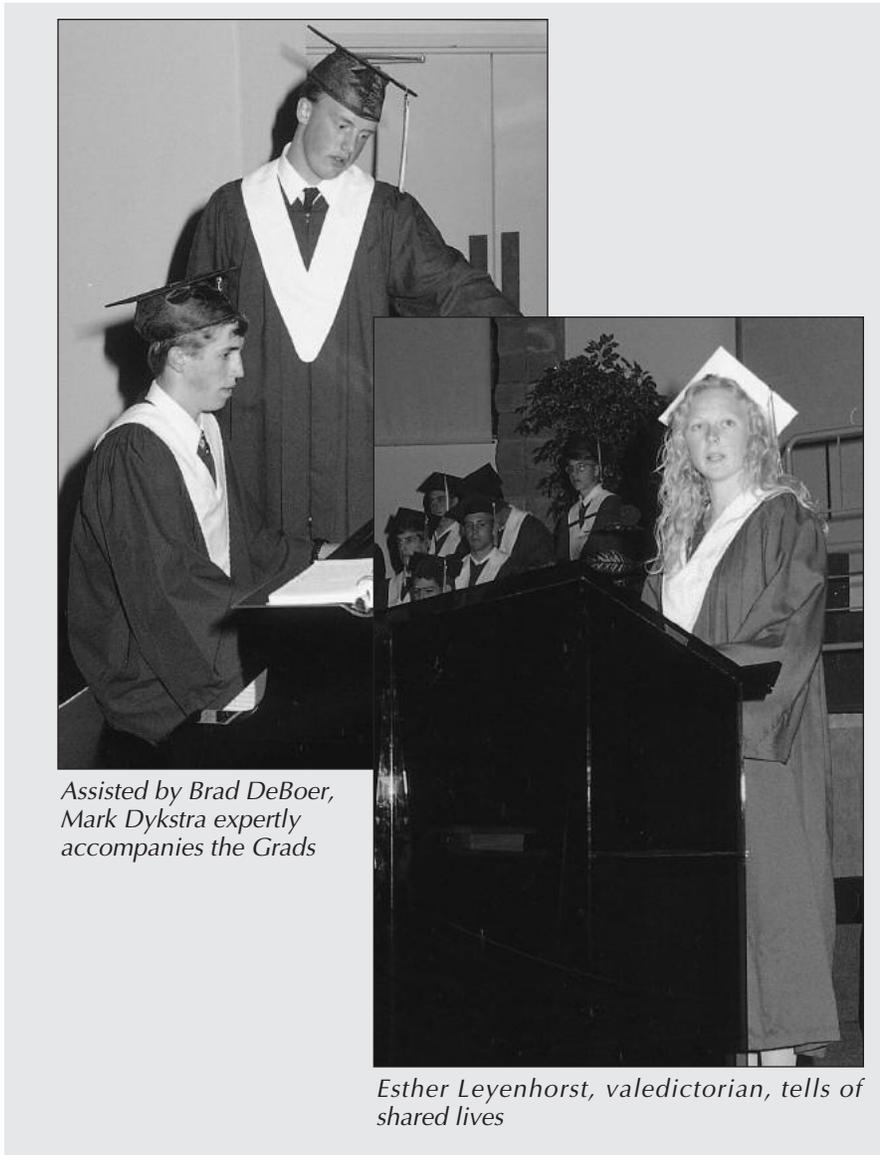
Once all the grads had received their diplomas and graduation gift books, they treated the audience to a moving rendition of David Meece's *The Rest of My Life*. The refrain spoke of the grads' commitment, "And I want to live for You for the rest of my life, For the Rest of my life. I want to give to You all the rest of my life, all the rest of my life." The exuberant voices were expertly accompanied on the piano by Mark Dykstra. His fingers literally flew.

Shared lives

Esther Leyenhorst, the class valedictorian, took the podium next. Esther began with a story about the early settlers in the West. At first these pioneers preferred the privacy that isolation in this vast land offered, but soon they realized that "their chances of survival would be greater if they gave up some



Mr. Ed. Vanderboom congratulates Trevor DeVries, winner of the Governor General's Bronze Medal



Assisted by Brad DeBoer, Mark Dykstra expertly accompanies the Grads

Esther Leyenhorst, valedictorian, tells of shared lives

of their privacy and shared their lives with those around them." They learned that, "Shared joy is double joy, shared sorrow is half a sorrow." The grads have also learned those lessons when things became difficult and challenging during their high school tenure. Esther asserted, "... we encouraged and supported each other under the guiding hand of our heavenly Father." Esther concluded by thanking all those involved in bring the graduating class to this special moment in their lives.

It was time for the presentation of scholarships, bursaries and other special awards. This year sixteen of Credo's sixty grads earned special recognition of one kind or another. They earned more than \$25,000 in scholarships and bursaries. Two students were awarded the president's entrance scholarship to the University of British Columbia. Trevor DeVries earned the most prestigious award, the Governor General's Bronze Medal for the highest academic stand in his graduating class. He followed in his cousin Anna DeVries's footsteps, who earned that same honor last year.

The evening drew to a close with "Now thank we all our God": and the Doxology, once again accompanied by the school band. The grads exited with greater speed and somewhat less decorum than when they had entered. They formed a receiving line at the far end of the parking lot. Parents, grandparents, family and friends made their way to their special grads. Camera flashes punctuated the gathering dark, reflecting off the brass musical instruments as they were loaded into the bus. Graduation '97 was over. 

Rev. and Mrs. G. Wieske come to Rockway

On June 15, 1997, after a nineteen month vacancy, the church at Rockway, Ontario, once again received a pastor and teacher in the person of the Rev. G. Wieske, formerly minister of the church at Chatham.

The installation service was lead by our counsellor, Rev. D.G.J. Agema, minister of the church at Attercliffe. He preached on Proverbs 13:17b, which reads, "a faithful envoy brings healing." He translated this phrase as "a trustworthy messenger is healing." A messenger is someone who is sent by someone else – in this case a minister is sent by the risen Lord who gives officebearers as part of His blessings. The message is Christ Himself which is given to His bride. The messenger must be trustworthy in that he serves His Sender, and is also faithful toward the congregation, in that he brings the most joyful message



Rev. and Mrs. G. Wieske



Rev. and Mrs. Wieske participating in a skit put on by catechism students

of the gospel, in all its riches and promises, close to the hearts of the hearers. This world is broken by sin, and this congregation has experienced that. A faithful envoy is healing through the miracle of grace. Restored relationships come about by Christ's work through the faithful service of officebearers.

Following the sermon, the chairman of the consistory, br. T. Alkema, read the Form of Subscription which Rev. Wieske signed. Brother Alkema then welcomed our new minister to our congregation. After this a number of congratulatory letters were read and delegates from neighbouring churches received an opportunity to offer their best wishes to the congregation and its new minister.

The chairman also especially thanked Rev. Agema for all the work he did as our counsellor.

In his inaugural sermon in the afternoon, Rev. Wieske preached on Mark 10:41-45. After James and John asked Jesus if they could sit at the places of honour in His kingdom, the other disciples grumbled. Jesus then took the twelve and taught them a basic lesson of the gospel – that in the household of God we must not live for ourselves as the world does, but in service to each other. We are called to be least – servants and slaves of our brothers and sisters. This can only be done through

the grace of God. Our Lord surrendered Himself completely and did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, in order to make us heirs. He gave His life as a ransom for those who belong to Him. This demands one response from us, and that is that we follow in His footsteps and imitate Him. In times of troubles and disagreements the congregation can only expect healing when it humbles itself before the Lord and everyone applies God's Word for him or her self. We must not follow private or personal issues at any cost for this could leave the brotherhood unedified, just as the disciples who were one in the Lord, grumbled at James and John. At a certain point of time each of us must say, "I will leave this with the Lord, lest the communion for which Christ died suffers."

On Wednesday, June 18, many from the congregation again came together to welcome Rev. and Mrs. Wieske. Brother R. Ouwersloot, past chairman of the consistory, was MC for the evening. Many of the Bible study groups and organizations in the church provided songs and games, which were enjoyed by all.

A new era has begun in the church at Rockway; may our God bless the work that is done in faithfulness to His Name.

C. Oosterhoff 

Fraternal Delegates' Report

of the Sixty-Fourth General Assembly of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church held its 64th General Assembly at Geneva College in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania June 4-11, 1997.

The undersigned, having been delegated to attend this Assembly as Fraternal Delegates representing the Canadian Reformed Churches, arrived on Saturday June 7. The Rev. Jack Peterson, Chairman of the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations, introduced us to the Assembly, and on a motion we were enrolled as corresponding members. This means having the privilege of the floor to speak, but not to vote. Rev. J. DeGelder was given the opportunity to address the Assembly. He did so by providing a brief history of the relationship between our federations which in fact goes back to 1965 when Synod Edmonton appointed deputies for contact with the OPC. He referred to the fact that one of our ministers summarized the progress of our relationship over the years as "One step forward, one step backward." However, in the last year we took a big step forward when we could reach an understanding on the two issues on which Synod Abbotsford 1995 instructed the Committee ". . . to arrive at an agreement with the OPC on the matters of the fencing of the Lord's Table and confessional membership." This, and developments in the relationship between the OPC and the CRC, should move us closer to formalizing a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship. Did it take too long? Yes! Was it worth the effort? Again, yes! The many meetings allowed us to gain a better understanding and appreciation of each other.

Representing the Reformed Churches (liberated) in the Netherlands was the Rev. Dean Anderson, minister of the churches of Katwijk and Valkenburg.

Dr. Anderson, upon graduating from the Theological College in Hamilton and ministering in New Zealand for a year, obtained his doctorate in Kampen and accepted a call from the above churches.

This General Assembly had to deal with a number of Overtures, Communications and Appeals, as well as Reports from several Standing Committees.

Of particular interest was the report from the Committee on Ecumenicity and Interchurch Relations (CEIR). It included a section noting that the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches has taken an important step forward. It reported in full detail the "Proposed Agreement for opening the way to Ecclesiastical Fellowship between the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Orthodox Presbyterian Church." (See Report of the Committee for Contact with the OPC as published in *Clarion* Volume 46, No. 6, March 21, 1997.) The CEIR report further stated: "We look forward to the next General Synod of the Canadian Reformed Churches (in 1998), with the expectation that, in view of this agreement, it will act to establish a bond of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC, in which we can continue to discuss our differences, as churches, and so, if God grants, arrive at a more perfect unity in doctrine, polity and life." This report was adopted by the General Assembly. Many of the delegates expressed their joy and thankfulness with these developments.

With respect to the relations with the Christian Reformed Church in North America, last year's General Assembly had made the decision: "That, unless the 1997 regular general assembly determines that intervening actions of the Christian Reformed Church in North

America warrant a reversal of this action or a continuation of the period of suspension, the relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the Christian Reformed Church in North America shall be terminated with the close of that assembly."

The CEIR concluded in its report that the intervening actions of the Christian Reformed Church do not warrant a reversal of the action of the 1996 General Assembly and recommended to terminate the relationship with an effective date of July 1, 1997. The advisory committee dealing with this report struggled with the finality of the proposed action. In view of a CRC report re-evaluating the issue of women in office, due by the year 2000, the advisory committee proposed to maintain the suspended relationship till the year 2001 at which time the General Assembly could respond responsibly. After a lengthy discussion which again clearly showed the pain and sorrow felt by many of the delegates at the assembly because of the close ties with, and considerable support received from, the CRC over the past sixty years, the advisory committee recommendations were rejected and the Assembly voted almost unanimously in favour of terminating the relationship with the CRC. Although we share in the sorrow of the OPC because of the unscriptural positions the CRC is maintaining, the decision has addressed concerns the CanRC voiced in its discussions with the OPC. We are grateful for the clear stand taken by the OPC in this matter, refusing to send mixed messages with regard to the truth and authority of God's Word.

Until now the OPC has recognized a single category of interchurch relations, namely Ecclesiastical Fellowship. The CEIR presented a proposal to expand this into three categories: Ecclesi-

astical Fellowship, Corresponding Relations and Restricted Relations. The second is somewhat the relationship our churches have had with the OPC. It is "a relationship in which mutual contact with another church is undertaken to become better acquainted with one another with a view towards entering into Ecclesiastical Fellowship at some time in the not-to-distant future." The third relationship would be with churches where because of considerable differences true union would be impossible, yet contact would be beneficial. The General Assembly adopted the recommendation to submit this proposal to the churches now in Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the OPC for their suggestions, advice and response.

Other actions by the General Assembly included decisions to:

- recommend membership of the United Reformed Churches in North America into the ICRC.
- invite the following churches to enter into Corresponding Relations:
 - The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (liberated)
 - Africa Evangelical Presbyterian Church
 - Presbyterian Church in Uganda
 - United Reformed Churches in North America

The OPC has experienced continued growth. They have 192 local churches with a total membership of 22,186. Last year 12 new mission works were

started. Mission works are church planting activities in North America. This brings their total mission works to 42. There were 366 ordained ministers in the OPC at the end of 1996. More than a dozen missionaries labour in various mission fields including China, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Japan, Kenya, Korea, Middle East, Suriname and Uganda.

Throughout our attendance at the General Assembly we were struck by the commitment shown to serve the Lord in obedience to His Word and the desire to remain true to the Reformed faith.

Respectfully submitted,
J. DeGelder

G.J. Nordeman 

CHURCH NEWS



ACCEPTED the call to Orangeville, ON and
DECLINED the call to Taber, AB

Candidate Richard Pot
of Hamilton, ON

DECLINED the call from Smithers, BC for a
full-time ministry among the native people in
the
Bulkley Valley, BC

Rev. H. Versteeg
of Toronto, ON

CALLED by Toronto, ON, for mission-work in
Papua New Guinea

Candidate Stephen 't Hart

You can now also send email to

Dr. J. Faber
jfaber@hwcn.org

ADDRESS CHANGE:

Rev. G.Ph. van Popta
46 Sulphur Springs Road
Ancaster, ON L9G 1K6
Phone: (905) 304-4952
Fax: (905) 304-4951

An extra synod of the Free Reformed Churches
of South Africa will be held on July 4 and 5,
1997 in Pretoria. The following issues will be
dealt with:

1. Colloquium doctum of dr. H. Breytenbach
with a view to be declared eligible for call.
Dr. Breytenbach seceded from the Uniting
Reformed Church in South Africa due to
problems with the current theological mod-
ernism of this church.
2. Discussion on starting a theological seminary
for the Free Reformed Churches.

In addition the church of Pretoria has decided
to split the congregation in two. This will be in
effect from July 6th, 1997. The new congrega-
tion in Pretoria East will take responsibility for
the mission.

Successfully sustained a colloquium doctum
on July 4th, 1997 by Synod of the Free Re-
formed Churches of South Africa and declared
eligible for call:

Dr. H. Breytenbach



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

What prompted me to write this letter was the result of three consecutive issues of *Clarion* that I have recently received. The June 13 issue showed a picture of a new Canadian Reformed Church in B.C., the June 27 issue showed a picture of a simple Christian Pilgrim Church in Timor, Indonesia and the July 11 issue showed a modest Protestant Church in Mexico.

Over the last few months several of our congregations have moved into a new church building. These are joyous occasions for the church members. What bothers me however is, that there is often an awful lot of money needed to build these churches. Is it really necessary to build them as fancy as we do? Do we need elaborate council rooms for a biweekly meeting of three hours? Most of the week the church building is empty while the school buildings are used five or six days a week and empty on Sundays. I am sure we can worship just as well in a \$500,000 building as in a mil-

lion dollar building. Perhaps we do not exactly have to follow the Mennonites who worship in a "meeting place" which is a large room with chairs.

Have we ever considered combining school and church in the same building on the same property so that the school classrooms can be used for catechism classes? The congregation in Owen Sound has done this recently and another congregation is presently building a combined church and school (Calgary, Alta).

Have we ever considered buying a used church building? I know in Hamilton there are many empty church buildings. Recently a beautiful church in Hamilton was sold for less than \$300,000 and it probably included the organ, the pews, etc. We do not need to build large churches. Let us aim for a congregation with a maximum church membership of 400. We would then need approximately a seating capacity of 320. This will prevent a lot of trouble and arguments that some of our larger congregations presently have to

deal with. Some large congregations are still able to fit in their church building but have become too large for proper pastoral care and communion of saints. We are also commanded to go out into the world and proclaim the gospel. Would it not help to have several smaller buildings in a large city rather than one large building?

There is such a phenomenal task for us as Christians in this world and there is so much money needed. I am thinking of the Middle East Reformed Fellowship and the Reformed Church in Quebec. Some of our city congregations are also busy planning urban mission work. All of these organizations are busy with Christ's church gathering work and all are pleading for financial support. Let us be good stewards and let us spend less time with the planning of a new expansive church building and more time with continuing Christ's work of making disciples in all nations.

A. De Jong
Hamilton, ON 

PRESS RELEASES



RE: "Press Release from the Committee for Contact with the ERQ" published in *Clarion* 46.2, Jan. 24, 1997

In a press release issued in January of this year it was stated that the "mother churches" of the ERQ were withdrawing financial support because of the "confessionally Reformed stand taken by the ERQ."

This could be understood to mean that the support given to the ERQ congregation in Charny and to the Institut Farel by Christian Reformed Home Missions Committee is being withdrawn because of theological reasons. This is not the case. The committee apologizes to the CRC Home Missions Committee for any misunderstandings caused by our press release.

For the committee
J.L. Van Popta,
Secretary

Press Release of Classis Contracta Alberta/Manitoba, July 24, 1997 in the building of the Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg

Article 1: Opening

At 8:00 p.m., on behalf of the convening church, the Canadian Reformed Church at Winnipeg, Rev. K. Jonker calls the meeting to order. From God's Word he reads Isaiah 12, then he leads in prayer.

He welcomes the brothers present and mentions that this Classis *Contracta* is convened for the sole purpose of the release of Rev. G. Ph VanPopta, who accepted the call of the church at Ancaster, ON.

He informs the meeting that all churches of the classical resort have been notified of this Classis *Contracta* in accordance with Art. 3 of the Classical Regulations.

Article 2: Credentials

The credentials are examined and found to be in order.

From the churches at Carman and Winnipeg the following delegates are present:

Carman – Elder T. Termeer
Elder J. Vandermeulen
Winnipeg – Rev. K. Jonker
Elder H. Slaa

Article 3: Constitution

The following officers are appointed:
Chairman: Elder T. Termeer
Clerk: Rev. K. Jonker
Classis *Contracta* is declared constituted. The officers take their place. The chairman thanks the church at Winnipeg for the convening of this ecclesiastical meeting.

Article 4: The adoption of the agenda

The agenda is adopted as proposed.

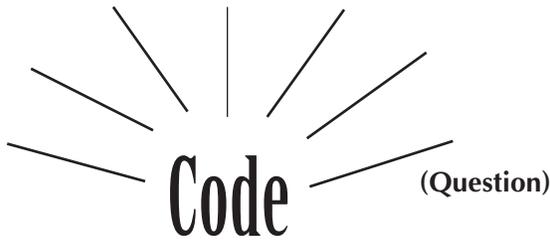
THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

By Busy Beaver Cassandra Vandebos

P U S T F X Z C S B U S I M T Y X T H
 U E S F Z X Y M C H S B E M H A H W S
 W E T F T Z X A Y H C O H T O T K L M
 X Y Z E E F X T A B C D E F M L K J K
 L K J L R M N T O P O Q R S T A U W X
 Z A B C E K L H H C O K E S S C K L E
 C D E F G H I E X Y Z J N I N M A B C
 N T W H Y S W M L M N A L M N O P Q Y
 R S T U V W Q Q U L M N M O P Q P S D
 L O H A N H L O P P K K F E E T L G K
 J O H N A T O T H A D D A E U S E L K
 U Q Q B B A L F P K L O P A U S L E P
 D O P C D D K O L P R T O Q K E K K O
 U L K N C A O K Q K L Q U W L K E L P
 S I M O N E P Q L R F W E T P C P O Q
 K T N T K U O O L M Z M K L H R C P R
 K X O W C S N M K X O M R P Q H H Q P
 E Z X H K T K L Y L L P P T R R U S O
 N Y Y Y E K O W O P K T L L P U P P N
 S L Z S K L N H O P K O R K O P H R M
 E F N W X L T K L R Q P O L L I U Q J
 M R T M Z R O T K O M N L O L Q R I U
 A A N A A N D R E W K L L I P K P L O
 J C M B Y C B C K L O P P K O P W Z L

Words in word search:

Peter	John	Philip	Matthew
James	Judas	Thomas	Simon
James	Andrew	Bartholomew	Thaddaeus



A =	H =	O =	V =
B =	I =	P =	W =
C =	J =	Q =	X =
D =	K =	R =	Y =
E =	L =	S =	Z =
F =	M =	T =	
G =	N =	U =	

_____ ?

WORD SEARCH

By Busy Beaver Johan Van Zanten

P F R I C E N G P W Q S A M E
 E V O H N Q X J S K D I L M B
 R G T R A I N T R A G K O Y E
 S E I G O U H R B L P Q R E N
 P T L K J Q M E F P M S L A E
 E C H U R C H E S J P K A R Z
 C N L F Z M G Y G L E T X B E
 T E D O F D J L R K N N U O R
 I D F E T I L M M C O V D O V
 V C W P X H W Z Q Z Y A W K I
 E F H S Y Y E Z H N B H C A L
 D C E B G O D S E G O J H F L
 T L U V U S Y T K L P M X I A
 B A R N T N X P U O H N K R B
 C R X Q W V A S C H O O L V W
 B I G T A N H B E G U O C K H
 B O R Y B K M O J R S U V L A
 S N Z F O Z I P S T E W P Q I
 A X A Q A U S V W I J D N Z V

Words in word search:

Clothes	Barn	Clarion
Traintrack	School	Perspective
Tree	Churches	Yearbook
House	Ebenezer Villa	



FROM THE MAILBOX

Only two letters came into my mailbox this time. Wow, you had a very busy day on the day you wrote your letter to me, *Luanne Feenstra*. And you must be having a wonderful holiday doing all kinds of fun things. And did you have a nice birthday? Thank you very much for your letter and puzzles, Luanne.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Cassandra Vandebos*. Did you have a fun time camping at six Mile Lake Provincial Park? Thank you also for your puzzle. Bye for now.

Answers to A few Trick-word boxes:

1. Red	2. Bad	3. Hot
Ear	Ace	Den
Try	Car	

Answers to Code:

Love,
Aunt Betty

AUNT BETTY

c/o Premier Printing Ltd.
 One Beghin Avenue,
 Winnipeg, MB R2J 3X5

