



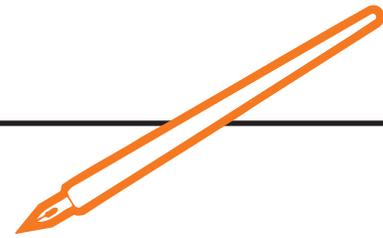
Clarion

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*Theological College
of the
Canadian Reformed Churches*

By P.G. Feenstra



On Calling Ministers

From time to time consistories and congregations are faced with the task of calling a minister to serve and lead them. How should they go about this work? Consistories are often left scrambling, looking for the best way. Although the procedure followed in most of our churches has many merits and benefits, there are “bugs” and “viruses” that should be weeded out. When they become vacant, many churches form a calling committee which, after some investigation, comes with a recommendation to call a particular minister. If the Council agrees, the minister’s name will be proposed to the congregation. An opportunity is given for discussion, and a vote follows. Some Councils look for a simple majority; others want a two-thirds majority; yet others shoot for seventy-five percent. But is this procedure really the best? Recent examples have shown that it is not. Congregational meetings often deteriorate into slander sessions. The minister’s name is dragged through the mud. Things that have been said or done in the past, which have no bearing on the call, are brought up. The person chairing the meeting may do his utmost to stop it, but the damage is already done.

What follows are some suggestions and thoughts a calling church may want to take into consideration:

Develop a plan that covers all the aspects of the call. This is a good opportunity to involve the counsellor and ask him for his advice. At this point it is very beneficial to review the task of a minister of the Word. His first task is to “declare the whole counsel of God to his congregation, proclaiming the Word of God according to the command of the apostle Paul: *‘I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and teaching’*” (Form for Ordination). The minister is first and foremost a preacher of the gospel. Nothing may distract or take away from this work. However important it may be for him to counsel, give advice and visit members of the congregation in their homes, the pulpit is still the primary place from which members should be instructed. Remember also that to say a minister decides by weighing needs isn’t always accurate. If this were true, a minister could never decline a call extended to him by a church with greater problems. Accepting a call when “greater needs” are presented results in a “band aid” ministry – the minister is kept busy trying to fix and heal problems. The spiritual growth of a congregation becomes a secondary concern. It is difficult to determine the exact reason why a minister leaves a particular congregation. He may feel challenged by the call or he may simply be ready for a change.

Once a plan is in place the consistory requests the congregation to submit names of ministers they deem suitable to fill the vacancy. If possible, they should provide reasons why they consider the minister (candidate) suitable.

Rather than immediately giving the information to a “calling committee,” and allowing them to come with a recommendation, the consistory members should decide which ministers they deem suitable candidates to fill the vacancy. Take into consideration that receiving a call is very disruptive for the congregation and for the family of the minister. Besides, it isn’t good for a minister’s “ego” if he gets one call after the other. Most consistories in our churches feel free to propose the name of a minister once he has been in a congregation for three years. Although there may be situations where a minister should “move on” after three years, as a general rule it is not healthy when it happens. It would seem more reasonable that a minister should not be called until he has been in a congregation for a least five years. This would serve the well-being of the local congregation and the federation of churches in general.

Several members of consistory are selected to gather more information on the minister(s) deemed suitable to serve the congregation. These men interview members of the consistory and congregation where the minister is presently serving, and they speak to the minister himself whether he feels there is anything at the present moment that would prevent him from considering a call. If the information comes back positive, the consistory makes a decision, in principle, to extend a call to the minister.

At a congregational meeting the consistory informs the congregation of its decision and allows for questions or concerns. The consistory makes available tapes of sermons and other material that are of benefit to the congregation. The congregation is given one week to raise objections. If the consistory feels the objections are valid, a call is not extended; otherwise the call is finalized and the minister is informed.

The call is certified by the sending of an official letter. The letter stipulates that both minister and consistory are expected to work on the basis of the Word of God, in faithful adherence to the Confessions and observing the Church Order. The letter should also be personal, stating the congregation’s situation and why the consistory came to the conclusion that the minister could serve the congregation fruitfully. Avoid taking an easy route and simply copying a letter of call from a book on the Church Order.

A letter of call includes an appendix specifying how the congregation will provide for the minister so that he can live without undue worries. The financial arrangements should not leave him in rags but neither is it meant

to make him rich. A minister's salary (stipend) should not be out of line with the rest of the congregation. It makes it very difficult to preach against materialism if a minister does not set an example but is living extravagantly. However, a consistory should take into consideration that a minister does have extra costs for books, transportation, telephone, etc.

Congregations that are in the position to do so should consider offering the minister they have called the opportunity to buy his own home. Just as a minister buys his own vehicle, he should have the option to purchase his own home. It makes him (and his wife) more aware of the costs of owning one's own home (heating, hydro, mortgage).

The minister who is called is invited to come and meet with the consistory and congregation. He has, however, the freedom to decline this invitation. It should not be taken as an indication that he is not taking the call seriously. In our age of fax machines, video and teleconferencing it is possible to deal with calls without the expense of having a minister (and his wife) fly out. Perhaps a member of the congregation could put together a video of the surroundings and of the congregation.

In the meeting with the minister it should be made clear that he has been called for the right purpose – not to take over the work of the elders and deacons.

When a call is declined, do not demand that a minister mention specific reasons why he declined. This is a decision he has made before the Lord and he will have to give account to Him.

These comments are based on personal reflection and experience. They are passed on to you in the hope that the work of calling ministers is re-evaluated but serves the edification of Christ's church. 

What's inside?

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others* (2 Tim. 2:2). In obedience to that word of Paul, and by the pure grace of God, we maintain the Theological College in Hamilton. Many men have passed through the lecture halls – first on Queen's Street, now on the Mountain – to take their place preaching the good news of salvation on mission fields and in the midst of the congregations. In your hands you are holding the annual "College Issue."

You will find the Principal's report as he delivered it at the recent convocation, a "College Corner," largely a report of the evening by Dr. Gootjes, the speech Dr. C. Van Dam held, and the presentation of the Women's Savings Action – the Action without which we would not have much of a library at the College.

On a related issue, the Rev. P. Feenstra of Owen Sound, ON, wrote a guest editorial on calling ministers.

In light of the upcoming Thanksgiving Day, we publish a contribution by the Rev. J. Huijgen of Smithers, BC.

We hope you enjoy the "College Issue."

GvP



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By J. Huijgen

Thanksgiving 1997

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.

(Romans 12:1-2)

Consumerism or thanksgiving?

During the last summer holidays it happened – an interview with a missionary. An interview with someone who had been away for a long time and now was confronted with a changed mentality. The interview reflected the difference. The difference between the mentality on the mission field and the mentality at the home front.

On the mission field a very basic, elemental way of living.

On the home front a very elaborate, complicated way of living.

This observation caused the missionary to utter a warning. With the advantage an observer has, he extended a Christian warning about the difference in mentality. The missionary warned his brothers at home for consumerism. He warned that his brothers at home were too busy with collecting goods, too busy with themselves. And that not only in a material sense but also in a spiritual sense.

When you hear that, it makes you think. This interview was with the Rev. K. Jonkman and published in the *Nederlands Dagblad*. But to think now that he made a unique observation is not supported by experience. Everywhere, when missionaries are sent out and return for furloughs, those missionaries find major differences, compared to the time they left. So to think that this is a typical Dutch problem, would witness of ignorance. And to take this as a reason to analyze what happened in our sister-churches would be arrogant.

The problem as was observed is a known problem, also among us. It is the problem of how one must deal with blessings. It is the problem of how to be thankful.

For as we consider Thanksgiving 1997 we must realize what it means to

be thankful. It is easy to have a feeling of thankfulness. A momentary appreciation for what you have received. But are then your thoughts directed the right way? It could be that you focus on what you have received. And before you know it, it could be that thankfulness concentrates itself on you and your receiving of material and spiritual goods.

But then thankfulness is man-directed, it is self-centred. And how far are you then yet removed from the worldly way of thankfulness? In sinful thinking, thankfulness is expressed for what you receive. But when nothing has been received, there is no reason for thankfulness. And so thankfulness can become self-centred.

And this is exactly where the apostle turns our thoughts away from ourselves. *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.”* This thankfulness is not man-directed or self-centred; it is God-directed and God-centred.

The apostle compares the schemes of the world to the order of God. And he does not say much about the schemes of the world. The schemes of the world are based on the power of sin. A lot more is being said about the order of God which is based on the redemption in Jesus Christ.

For that reason the apostle does not say: this is my request, or friendly invitation, but he appeals. It is a commandment. A commandment based on the mercies of God. In that Paul summarizes what has been said up to this point. He puts it in that one word: the *mercies of God*.

And that speaks of the fact of sin; it speaks of undeserved grace; it speaks of the reality of sin, and the necessity of

grace. *Mercies of God*, refer to sins and shortcomings. It points to the justification of the sinner for Jesus Christ's sake. But then also to the ongoing influence thereof in the life of the justified one.

To put it differently, the apostle tells the congregation: You were lost sinners. You are redeemed, but the reality of sins is not done and over with. You must be active in thankfulness.

As we consider Thanksgiving 1997, we must realize what this means. It is easy to have a feeling of thankfulness, a momentary appreciation for what you have received. But the apostle turns our thoughts away from ourselves. . . . [O]ffer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. This thankfulness is not man-directed, or self-centred, but it is God-directed, and God-centred.

Because of the mercies of God, all of a person has to be presented to God. You have to sacrifice yourself, not in order to reconcile nor to pave the road towards God; but, when the commandment is there to sacrifice your life, then the original meaning of a sacrifice comes in view. For when a priest offered something, then he moved the sacrifice in a certain way. He lifted it up from the giver to the receiver. That is the meaning here. That you lift your life up to God. That you dedicate your entire life to Him.

As a **living** sacrifice. That speaks of completeness and wholeness. It speaks of action and involvement. And it must be **holy**. That's simply means that when you bring your sacrifice, it has to be fitting to God. Holy means that it has to match with God's idea about good. And the sacrifice of your life should be **acceptable to God** as well. God must be able to take pleasure in what you do.

The smile of God's approval has to be over your life.

With that apostolic command, based on the reality of redemption, it is clear that we have to watch out that our thankfulness is not reduced to a feeling of appreciation for what we have received. Thankfulness is that God receives us, our lives, the living sacrifice of our bodies, our spiritual worship.

When that is your thanksgiving, then you will not count in terms of how much or how little you received in ma-

terial goods or in spiritual goods. It is man-directed to think in terms like: What did I receive, or, what did I get out of the redemption? It is consumerism to count blessings for reason of being able to decide how much or how little one must be thankful. True thanksgiving speaks in terms of quality. Is my spiritual worship, the sacrifice of my body, holy, acceptable and perfect? True thanksgiving consists not in measuring of what one did or did not receive. It consists in giving God *all*. The apostle

shows this clearly in the following verses of Romans 12.

As difficult as it may be for human beings, God commanded us to offer ourselves up as a living sacrifice. And as God commands, He will also work in a person the ability to commit his whole life to the Lord's service. When it is based on and powered by the mercies of God, Thanksgiving 1997 will not be centred around man but directed to the God from Whom all blessings flow. 

God with us: The Gospel of the Holy of Holies¹

By C. Van Dam



At the Theological College our goal is to prepare preachers of the gospel of Jesus Christ. All the disciplines and departments ultimately work towards that end, also the Old Testament department. The way God reveals Himself and His salvation in the Old Testament is very instructive for us who live in the last age.

In the Old Testament the Lord our God prepared His people for His coming to them in the promised Messiah. This gospel message of the coming of God to be with His people also rings loud and clear in the institution of the tabernacle and temple, shadows of better things to come (Gal. 3:24; Col. 2:17;

Heb. 10:1). This evening I would like to consider especially the Holy of Holies in God's revelation of Himself and so see some of the perspectives that this opens up for a deepened appreciation and understanding of the salvation we may have in Jesus Christ.

God's desire to be with Israel

At the beginning of God's good creation, there was perfect communion between God and His son and daughter, Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 5:1-3; Luke 3:38). "God saw all that He had made and it was very good!" (Gen. 1:31). The sin of our first parents destroyed that beautiful fellowship, but immediately God began His work of restoration by putting hostility between Satan and our first parents and by giving His sure promise of salvation (Gen. 3:15).

Now it was ultimately because of this ongoing desire to restore the fellowship once experienced in Paradise that God also wanted to be with His people Israel. He wanted to live in their midst (Exod. 25:8; 29:44-46). Therefore, He called His son Israel out of Egypt (Exod. 4:22-23; Hos. 11:1) and renewed the covenant with His people at the Sinai. How the people trembled when they heard the very voice of God thunder the Ten Commandments to them! They were in awe of God! And they needed to be! Of mere grace alone, God had delivered them out of Egypt. In

Egypt they had served other gods (cf. Josh. 24:14; Ezek. 20:7), but God had remembered His covenant with Abraham and brought His son out! They had muttered and grumbled and sinned against God as they journeyed to the Sinai, but God had pulled them on to Himself with bands of love. Israel formally agreed to the covenant demands of God. Twice at the foot of the Sinai they promised to do all that the LORD had said (Exod. 24:3, 7). On this basis God could go ahead with the tabernacle plans to come and live with them!

But, at the very time that God was informing Moses how He planned to live in the very midst of Israel (Exod. 25:9; cf. Exod. 25-30), God's people below the mountain had their own ideas of how they wanted God in their midst. They made a golden calf and said "This is your God O Israel who brought you up out of Egypt!" (Exod. 32:4, 8; cf. v. 5) God with us – as Israel wanted it! This sin prompted God to declare in His anger that He would no longer go with Israel, but the pleading of Moses on the basis of God's own promises brought a change of heart (Exod. 33).

One could sum up the chain of events this way. In spite of all the sin of Israel – the idolatry in Egypt and the sinful grumbling during the wilderness trek to the Sinai – God persisted in His grace to achieve His saving purpose with them. For He who dwells on high

did come down to His people, but His own people received him not! Although He came in holy glory and covenant truth at the Sinai, yet His people had no true regard for His glory. Indeed they pictured His glory and presence by way of a golden calf! They wanted God with them, but on their own terms. God comes to His people, but actually, there is no room for Him in the camp of Israel! Israel had their own ideas of what they wanted and the presence of sin made the saving presence of holy God extremely difficult.

When we ponder the reality of the rebellion and sin of Israel and the holiness of God, we begin to appreciate the tremendous grace of God in still going through with the tabernacle. We also get a sense of the great importance of the tabernacle. There may not be any place for God on sinful earth, not even among His own people. But God is not stopped by that! He will make a place for Himself!! – a place where He can dwell in glory and holiness in the midst of Israel! That place is the Holy of Holies!! Here is where God established His earthly throne.

The plan of the tabernacle

When you look at the insert in your program, you will see that the floor plan of the tabernacle was very simple. Around the tabernacle itself was a fence and within the fence, before the entrance of the tabernacle was the great bronze altar for the whole burnt offerings, as well as the laver. If a priest walked toward the tabernacle from the east, he would enter the tabernacle compound and so pass the great altar and the laver and come to the entrance of the tabernacle itself. On entering it, he would go into the holy place. On his right would be the table of bread of the presence and on his left the golden lampstand. At the end of the holy place and immediately in front of the Most Holy Place was the golden altar of incense. Behind the curtain which formed the end of the Holy Place, was the Most Holy Place or Holy of Holies. Here, in the innermost part of the tabernacle was where God Himself dwelt in the midst of Israel! Here was the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat (AV) or atonement cover (NIV).

The Holy of Holies

Let us take a more careful look at the Holy of Holies. First there is the curtain which separates the holy from the most

holy. This curtain was hung by means of gold hooks on four posts of acacia wood overlaid with gold. The posts had silver bases (Exod. 26:31-33; 36:35-36). The curtain itself was made of “blue, purple and scarlet yarn and finely twisted linen, with cherubim worked into it by a skilled craftsman.” The colours worked into the curtain connote different things. Blue and purple are expensive colours and are associated with royalty and power, while scarlet is often associated in Scripture with blood and ritual cleansing. It is also of interest to observe that blue is a colour associated with God and His heavenly throne (Exod. 24:10; Ezek. 1:26).

A notable feature of all the curtains of the tabernacle, also the curtain separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, is the cherubim that were embroidered on the curtains (Exod. 26:1, 31; 36:8, 35-38; cf. 2 Chron. 3:14). Cherubim fill the tabernacle. Here is God’s dwelling place! Those on the curtain giving entrance to the Most Holy Place stand guard as it were before the very throne of God. Were not the cherubim the ones who guarded the way to the tree of life in Paradise, lest Adam and Eve reenter (Gen. 3:24)? Here embroidered on the curtain, they stood guard before the small piece of ground that God had claimed as His special dwelling place with men. This was the place of the presence of God who seeks fellowship, as at paradise. This paradise motif may very well be in view and emphasized in Solomon’s temple where extensive use was not only made of cherubim, but also of palm tree, pomegranate and floral motifs (1 Kgs. 6:18, 29, 35; 2 Chron. 3:5-17; 4:21; cf. Ezek. 41:15-26). One needs to remember that God also designed Solomon’s temple (1 Chron. 28:12, 19), a design that would have been consistent with His wishes regarding the tabernacle.

The cherubim between the Holy Place and Holy of Holies, and for that matter the cherubim embroidered on all the curtains that make up the tabernacle, remind us that God is holy, holy, holy. Cherubim are associated with God’s appearing and His greatness (cf. Ps. 18:10; Ezek. 1, 10; Deut. 33:2). But, how can the holy one really live in the midst of His sinful people? This is an important question and the LORD our God provided the answer by, as it were, insulating His people from the full glory of His majesty and holiness. He enclosed and surrounded, as it were, His dwelling place with the service of reconciliation through the mediation of the



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priests and the Levites. God would live in the midst of His people, but only if the tribe of Levi camped next to the tabernacle and so formed a buffer as it were between God and Israel “so that wrath will not fall on the Israelite community” (Num. 1:53) but God’s blessing (cf. Deut. 10:8; Ps. 118:26). Closest to the entrance the LORD placed the camp of the priests. Anyone else who approached the sanctuary was to be put to death (Num. 1:51; 3:38). God is holy and a devouring fire in the presence of sin (cf. Lev. 10:1-3; Num. 11:1-3; 16:35; Heb. 12:28-29)!

The only way to God is the way of blood. Blood had to be shed (cf. Lev. 17:11). So God instituted the priesthood whose responsibility it was to offer sacrifices (cf. Exod. 28:1; Lev. 1-7; Num. 3:2-10; Deut. 33:10). Only by the shedding of blood was reconciliation possible and could God’s dwelling with men be a reality. Indeed, so important was the sacrificial blood for the atonement of sins that only for this purpose was entrance to the very presence of God inside the Most Holy Place permitted.

On only one day in the year, the Day of Atonement, could a representative of the people, the high priest, go past the cherubim into God's very presence. But it had to be with the sacrificial blood accompanied with the prayers for peace and reconciliation – prayers that were symbolized with the cloud of incense that filled the Most Holy Place (Lev. 16:12-16; cf. Ps. 141:2).

Once inside the Holy of Holies, the high priest had to sprinkle sacrificial blood on the lid of the ark and in front of it. This lid or cover was made of gold and called "the mercy seat" (AV) or as it can better be translated, "the atonement cover" (NIV). Of one part with this cover two cherubim had to be made out of hammered gold so that these cherubim faced each other, looking downward, with their wings spread upward overshadowing the cover. There, above the cover the LORD would meet Israel through their representative (Exod. 25:20-22). Here the blood of atonement was to be brought close to God (Lev. 16:14-15; Heb. 9:23) - God who dwelt or was enthroned between the cherubim (Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89; 1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Kgs. 19:15; Ps. 80:1; 99:1)! In a sense the atonement cover was the heart of the tabernacle and temple. It is noteworthy that Scripture once even speaks of the temple as the house of the atonement cover (1 Chron. 28:11).

Here before the LORD reconciliation was to be made by the atoning blood. What a miracle, God with man! Especially considering that no actual restitution had as yet been made. After all the blood of animals cannot atone for the sins of humans (Heb. 10:4)! But God in His mercy passed over sins, in anticipation of the Christ who was coming (Rom. 3:25). In this connection it is important to remember that inside the ark with its atonement cover was the Testimony (Exod. 25:16). This testimony was the two tables of stone containing the Ten Words of the Covenant (Exod. 31:18; 32:15, 16; Exod. 34:28; Deut. 4:13; 1 Kgs. 8:9; Heb. 9:4). It is the law that makes the ark, the "ark of the covenant" (Num. 10:33) or "of the Testimony" (Exod. 25:22). The presence of the law in the ark also emphasizes that the relationship God had with His people was a legal and binding one as revealed in the covenant: "I am the LORD your God." The atonement cover also reminds us that the forgiveness granted was a real one, be it in anticipation of Christ's redemptive work. It was mercy consistent with God's justice and right-

eousness. In the promised redemption, His throne of justice is also the atonement cover.

Now, if forgiveness was real and sin could be atoned for, then God the Holy One could come to dwell with His redeemed people. And so after the priesthood and the tabernacle and its contents had been consecrated there came God (Exod. 40:34)!

God's coming to His people

We read in Exod. 40:34 that "Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle!" It is difficult to grasp the full significance of this passage from Scripture. The Almighty God came down in person. He was fulfilling His promise to be with His people. In the cloud of presence (in which fire was visible at night) God came in a form that was tangible and perceivable by the Israelites. Here was God! Here now was a piece of truly holy ground, guarded symbolically by cherubim, a piece of paradise that spoke of the fellowship between God and His people. God with Israel, a miracle of His grace.

Yes, for God is the sovereign one who had come of grace alone in His electing love (Deut. 7:7-9). He would guide them on to the promised land (Exod. 40:36-38). There in the land of Canaan He would continue to inhabit the tabernacle, although we do not read anymore of the cloud of presence as appearing before all Israel. Yet God was there and quite possibly was always there in the days of Moses in the form of the cloud of glory within the Holy of Holies (cf. Lev. 16:2; Exod. 25:22; Num. 7:89). When Solomon dedicated the temple, God again came in view of all the people in a visible form, in the cloud of presence, to inhabit the temple (1 Kgs. 8:10-11). What an awesome reality. As Solomon put it: "But will God really dwell on earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven cannot contain you. How much less the temple I have built!" (1 Kgs. 8:27).

This greatness of God reminds us that His saving presence could not be taken for granted. God is holy and when the people did not honour His covenant and holiness then God became a consuming fire (Lev. 10:1-3; Num. 11:1-3; also cf. Lev. 22:32). This holy God is also sovereign. Therefore, because of the sin of His people He allowed the ark to be taken at the battle of Aphek when the ark fell into the hands of the Philistines and He saw to it that it came

back (1 Sam. 4-6). Because God is sovereign, He therefore also punished the haughty Israel of Jeremiah's time who thought they had a monopoly on God, by promising to leave (Jer. 7; 26:4-6)! And He did leave. This departure is described in a vision of Ezekiel as the glory of the LORD going up from the city and moving eastward (Ezek. 9:3; 10:18-19; 11:23). But, in a subsequent apocalyptic vision, the LORD's glory mercifully returns from the east and occupies the new temple (Ezek. 43:1-5). It is noteworthy that there is no record of the glory of the Lord coming to occupy the temple that was built after the return from exile. But, in a promise alluding to the coming Messiah, God declared that the glory of this post-exilic temple would be greater than that of Solomon's temple (Hag. 2:9). Indeed, for this temple would see the glory of God revealed in Jesus Christ who would bring the promised peace (Hag. 2:9; cf. Matt. 12:6)!

God with us

In the fullness of time, God came in Jesus Christ. Again there was really no room in the inn, but the God created room for Himself in a manager in Bethlehem. There was really no room for Him in Israel. He came to His own, but His own people received Him not (John 1:11). "The Word became flesh and tabernacled, ["camped" as it were] among us. We have seen His glory" (John 1:14). Immanuel, God in human form with His people. Why? To fulfil the covenant testimony, the law so that God's desire to be with His people, a desire as old as paradise, could rest on a true juridical foundation. Our Saviour came to do what no other high priest could do. He would go through the heavenly holy of holies to present His own blood which the sacrifices had pointed to. He did what no quantity of animal blood could do. He secured the redemption of His people and made it possible for God live with His people on the basis of the full atonement having been made for all their sins (Heb. 7:27; 9:11-10:25)! With His death, the temple curtain ripped from the top to the bottom (Matt. 27:31)! It was no longer necessary!

The full payment of the sins of His people had been made. Now the very presence of God no longer needed to be confined to that small piece of new creation in the holy of holies, but God went forth on the day of Pentecost to claim as His temple and dwelling place

the congregation of Jesus Christ. This was his New Creation. On the Day of Pentecost, there were again powerful signs of God's presence – the sound of a mighty wind and what appeared to be tongues of fire (Acts 2:2-3). There was no room, but He created room for Himself by inclining and turning hearts in true repentance to Him (Acts 2:41, 47)! God's coming at Pentecost in the Spirit means that the congregation has now replaced the temple as God's dwelling place and temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:19; Eph. 2:22)! In God's people is now the new creation, holy ground – God with us, Immanuel (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17)!

Yes, being church is occupying holy ground, a piece of this creation which God has claimed completely for Himself by His Spirit. A piece of new creation which shows the glory of God (2 Cor. 3:18). This fact also speaks of better things to come. For, God is lord of all creation and His glory is not to be confined to just where His people happen to be. The whole earth must be filled with His glorious presence (cf. Ps. 72:19). Indeed, the whole earth must be as a tabernacle and as the Holy

of Holies and all the nations must be able to worship the LORD in the splendour of His holiness (cf. Ps. 96)!

This is precisely the reality of the new world that is coming! When the apostle John saw the new heaven and earth, he heard a loud voice from the heavenly throne announce the absolute fulfilment of the tabernacle presence of God. The voice said: "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will live with them. They will be His people, and God Himself will be with them and be their God . . . Behold, I make everything new." (Rev. 21:3, 5) Remarkably, the measurements of the city of God are proportionally identical to the Old Testament Holy of Holies – its length, width and height are the same (Rev. 21:16). Then all the earth will be full of the glory of the LORD and the new creation will be a fulfilled reality. And therefore, no more tears, death, mourning or pain. No more struggle against sin. The leaves of the tree of life in the paradise of God will be for the healing of the nations (Rev. 21:3-5; 22:1-2).

God with us! We have more than God's covenant people of old. But we too have but a beginning of what awaits us. What has been foreshadowed in the Old Testament Holy of Holies will find its complete fulfilment when renewed creation will be like the Holy of Holies due to the presence of the glory of God which makes the need for the sun superfluous (Rev. 21:23-24). And "we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2; cf. Rev. 11:19)! That's the gospel!

Studying at the Theological College and preparing for the ministry is never just an academic exercise. In studying the Scriptures, we also increase in the knowledge of the God of the Scriptures – this God whose promises, faithfulness and holiness fills us with awe. His wrath is real, but so is His mercy. He has come to dwell with His people and to bring us and all creation to the perfect paradisaic rest. What a gospel and what a perspective to study in order to be able to preach it to God's people, also on the mission fields!

¹Speech delivered at the College Evening on September 5, 1997. An annotated version of this speech will be published in *Koinonia*. 



Principal's Report 1997



A Principal's Report provides an occasion to look back and to look forward. We may look back on a year during which our Lord and Saviour has granted the continuation of the work at the Theological College. This is particularly evident in the graduation of six students. At the same time, we look forward to another year of study, with newly admitted students, and to a General Synod to be convened in May 1998, the Lord willing. We are thankful for all we may do under the control of our Lord who from heaven governs the earth and gathers His church.

Students

What would the Theological College be without students? Some profes-

sors are said to have remarked that work at the College would be fine, if only there were no students. The reality is, however, that the students are the reason for our existence. At the previous College Evening, the M.Div. degree was conferred on Mr. Richard Eikelboom, Mr. Theo Lodder and Mr. Jason Van Vliet. Mr. Eikelboom is now a minister at the Canadian Reformed church at Calgary, AB and Mr. Van Vliet serves the Canadian Reformed church at Lincoln, ON.

In September, 1996, three students were admitted to the M. Div. program. Moreover, one female student was admitted to follow a number of selected courses. Her presence was a high note in our predominantly deep voiced

community. We began the year, therefore, with 19 students; one, however, discontinued his studies. Included in our student body are two students from Timor, Indonesia, and one from China. Two receive support from Australia, the third from the Netherlands. We are thankful for this support.

One of them, Mr. Yonson Dethan, will graduate today with a M.Div. degree. We are grateful that our brother Dethan can return to his country, and we pray that he, equipped with what he learned here, may be useful to the churches in Indonesia. Two graduating students have made themselves available for call, Mr. Richard Pot has accepted a call to the Canadian Reformed church at Orangeville, ON, and Mr. Stephen 't Hart has accepted a call from the Canadian Reformed church at Toronto for mission work in Papua New Guinea. Two other graduates, Mr. Karlo Janssen and Mr. Carl Van Dam hope to continue their theological studies at the theological seminary of our sister churches in the Netherlands, in Kampen. The sixth, Mr. Dirk Poppe, is still considering his plans. We pray that the Lord may bless all of them in their future endeavour. May their work benefit His church.

For the new academic year, three students were admitted to the M.Div. program, Mr. Carl Vermeulen, member of our sister church in Albany, Australia, Mr. Peter John Sikkema, of the church in Fergus, ON, and Mr. Eric Morderdyk, member of the Free Reformed church at Grand Rapids. And thus the work may continue. We look forward to a fruitful year of study, under the blessing of the Lord.

Professors

Coming to the teaching staff of the College, we can begin with thanking Prof. J. Geertsema for the work he did as principal during three years. He has done this with great devotion and much personal interest. He may now enjoy the freedom of not having a specific function in the Senate. Let me assure you, though that this does not mean Professor Geertsema finds nothing to do.

Dr. C. Van Dam and his wife commemorated 25 years in the Ministry of the Word. This was celebrated with a reception and a festive evening on October 12, 1996. A new feature was that Dr. Van Dam received a sabbatical during the first semester, to devote himself



Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. N.H. Gootjes, Dr. J. De Jong, Mr. Yonson Dethan

to study. During this period, he could finish several projects, and start up others. As a result, an extensive revision of his doctoral dissertation on the Urim and Thummim was published as well as a study on divorce and remarriage.¹ During his sabbatical, the Old Testament courses were taught by Drs. G. Hagens, of De Bilt/Bilthoven, The Netherlands. This first experiment in sabbatical has worked well and has given us a taste for more. Dr. Van Dam resumed his teaching during the second semester. In May, he went to Mexico to visit the Juan Calvino Seminary and to give guest lectures. Dr. Van Dam's enthusiastic report² encourages us to continue the contact with this seminary in a country caught between hollow Roman Catholicism and failed experiments with socialism.

Prof. Geertsema was invited to teach a part of the New Testament courses for Dr. J. Van Bruggen, in Kampen, in May 1997. This is not only a personal recognition; it may also be taken as a sign of the positive relationship that exists between our two institutions. He also spoke at the Ministers' Workshop on Jan. 6, 1997, about the role of the women in Ephesus, as described in 1 Tim. 2:10ff.

Dr. J. De Jong represented the churches at the meeting of the United Reformed Churches, and the meeting of the Alliance of Reformed Churches. He published his speech on missions, given at the previous convocation³, and several other articles. Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff

was again found willing to teach a number of lectures in the Church History course, and Mrs. Van Halen-Faber spoke to the students about pedagogical aspects of catechism teaching.

It was my privilege to visit the churches in cold Alberta and Manitoba, at the end of January, 1997. The meetings with the supporting churches, however, were heartwarming. I gave speeches on the Athanasian Creed, and about the history of the Presbyterian Church (Kosin) in Korea. At the Ministers' Workshop of June, I spoke on the second topic.

Our two emeriti professors celebrated anniversaries. Dr. and Mrs. K. Deddens celebrated 45 years in the ministry of the Word on October 28, 1996. We thank the Lord for all Dr. Deddens did for the churches, in particular as professor at our Theological College. They could visit the College in April, 1997. On that occasion, they presented his professorial gown and baret to the College, which was accepted and is used in gratitude.

Dr. and Mrs. J. Faber as well, celebrated 45 years in the ministry, on January 20, 1997. We thank the Lord for what He gave through them to the College community and the Canadian Reformed Churches. Dr. Faber remains active. During the past winter he again taught seminars on Calvin's theology in Ontario and British Columbia, which were much appreciated.

In addition, Dr. N. Kloosterman, professor New Testament and Ethics at

Mid America Reformed Seminary, gave a special lecture at the College, entitled "Towards a Definition of Reformed Spirituality," on October 25, 1996. We appreciate maintaining a good relationship with this seminary.

Governors and staff

In the Board of Governors we see clearly the connection that exists between our College and the Churches. In the past year, the Lord took to Himself our governor, br. Adri Van Egmond, member of the Finance and Property Committee and of the Publication Committee. We are grateful for all he did for the College. May the God of peace comfort his wife and their children in the belief that we belong to Jesus Christ, our Lord, who bought us with His precious blood.

We are thankful to the Governors for their involvement in the College, for their supervision over the program, and their care for the building. Both the program and the building required special attention in the past year. The question whether theological students and the churches would benefit from the addition of a practical component to the theological studies at the College was studied. This led to the proposal to add a "Pastoral Proficiency Program." In this Program, students will be exposed to practical aspects of

the ministry. The plans will be presented for approval to the upcoming General Synod.

Moreover, the library is expanding to the extent that we need to think about adding a library building to the existing facilities. This will have the advantage that the books can be stored in a building that is intended as library, not as a meeting hall. At the same time, this will provide the opportunity for a more functional use of the existing building. This plan, too, will be presented to the upcoming Synod. May the Synod receive wisdom and insight in dealing with these plans and proposals.

We cannot end before we have mentioned our devoted co-workers. Mr. and Mrs. Post keep the building clean, and from time to time test the alarm system to see whether it is as loud as it is supposed to be. Catharine Mechelse has so many duties within the College community that I do not dare mention them for fear of forgetting ten. We would call her the spider in the web, if that did not carry a sinister connotation. Margaret VanderVelde takes care of our growing book collection. We are all the more thankful for her expertise now that we are considering a new library building. She was involved in a serious car accident during the summer. We are thankful her

life was spared and we hope and pray that she may fully recover.

We want to thank the Ladies who organize the Women's Savings Action, in particular Mrs. Mulder, who after having served ten years on this committee, announced last year that she was stepping down. We are thankful that her place could be filled by Mrs. Liz Hofsink and that Mrs. Joanne Van Dam and Mrs. Carla Zietsma just went on with the good work. In and through them we thank all the local committees who provide us with the means to keep the library up to date.

We are at the beginning of a new school year. The core of the work is teaching the riches of God's revelation to the students, but so many things are connected with that. May the Lord of the church grant all of us to work together. And let us never lose sight of our goal, the progress of His church, worldwide.

¹C. Van Dam, *The Urim and Thummim: a Means of Revelation in Ancient Israel* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1997); C. Van Dam, *Divorce and Remarriage in the light of Old Testament Principles and the Application in the New Testament* (Winnipeg: Premier, 1996).

²See *Clarion* 46, nrs. 4 and 5, pp. 316ff. and 339ff.

³J. De Jong, "Even So I Send You: Some Reflections on the Current Missionary Task of the Church," in *Clarion* 45, nrs. 20, 21.

N.H. Gootjes 



L to R: Back Row: Rev. R. Aasman, Mr. H. Sloots, Mr. M. Kampen, Rev. D.G.J. Agema, Mr. J. Vanderwoude, Mr. K. Veldkamp, Rev. W. den Hollander, Rev. C. Van Spronsen, Rev. W.W.J. VanOene, Dr. J. Visscher.

L to R: Front Row: Prof. J. Geertsema, Dr. J. Faber, Dr. N. Gootjes, Dr. C. Van Dam, Dr. J. De Jong.



College Corner

College evening

The College community celebrated another festive anniversary meeting on September 5, 1997. No less than six students received the Master of Divinity degree. This is exceptional, but not unique. To the best of my knowledge it has happened once before, that six students graduated. But two things made this College evening unique: the fact that three of the graduates came to us from Australia and one from Indonesia.

The fact that there were so many graduates may account for the good attendance. The great auditorium of Redeemer College was well filled up. Many letters had come in, particularly from Australia, and even one from Indonesia. Karlo Janssen, one of the three Australian students, could not attend the Convocation since he had already started studying at the theological seminary of our sister churches in Kampen, the Netherlands. Around the time of the College evening, he actually had to take an exam in Church History. Another Australian graduate, Richard Pot, had accepted a call to the church at Orangeville, ON. He was awarded with the Selles Book Prize. This prize will be awarded from time to time to a student who has outstanding results in New Testament studies. Stephen 't Hart was the third graduate from Australia. He has a long standing interest in mission and had accepted a call from the church of Toronto for mission work in Papua New Guinea.

Two more graduates plan to continue their studies. Carl Van Dam by now has left for Kampen for further study. This is the first time that a son of one of the professors at the College has graduated at our College. Another graduate, Dirk Poppe, hopes to follow courses at a university. And then there is Yonson Dethan, another first for the College. Yonson grew up on the island of Timor, in Indonesia, and was supported by the churches in Australia for



Mr. Dirk Poppe, Mr. Carl Van Dam, Mr. Yonson Dethan, Mr. Stephen 't Hart, Mr. Richard Pot.

his study in Hamilton. We are grateful that he, as the first student from that part of the world, could graduate. It is surely not an easy thing to study theology in a language that is not your own. But Yonson has persevered, and now could receive the reward of his hard work, in the midst of an enthusiastic group of supporters and friends.

It was good to see so many students graduate. They go now in different directions. May the Lord be with them all, and make them useful in His work.

Library

As is customary, the Women's Savings Action was represented at the College Evening. The work organized by a central committee and done by many local committees is of the utmost importance for the College. Thanks to their generous donations we can keep the library of the Theological College up to date by buying important theo-

logical books and by subscribing to theological journals.

During the presentation (which will be printed separately), I received an envelope with the following content:

We are very happy to pledge to you once more \$25,000 for the library of the College. May it be used to the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom.

We at the College are very thankful to all who have contributed to make this gift possible. We will spend the money carefully. In my response, I told the following story (in response to a question I received, it is a true story).

Some years ago, I received a phone call from a former student of mine in Korea. He is now teaching at Kosin College, and is preparing a doctoral dissertation on an Old Testament topic. He phoned from somewhere in the USA, where he had been researching in two libraries to collect material for his study. He wanted to visit us since he was now

not too far away. I answered that he was, of course, welcome, and that I would show him around in the library. Perhaps he could still find some additional literature. He had already collected much, he told me, but I said I would be showing him the library anyway. When he arrived, we had a good time together, and he looked around in the library. In fact, he found more material relevant to his topic there, than he had earlier on his trip! We can thank the Women's Savings Action for this, for it is due to their work that we have such a good library.

We hope that the women of the church will be able to keep up this very important work for the College.

Further...

More could be said about the College evening: the speech by Dr. Van Dam on the significance of the Holy of Holies. This speech will soon be published in *Clarion*. The musical interlude, when Julia Dokter treated us to piano pieces by Edward Grieg. And there are more who contributed to the success of this College evening. But we now look forward to yet another year of study together, as professors and students. Three students have been admitted to the theological studies, one from Canada, one from our sister churches in Australia, and the third from the Free Reformed church in Grand Rapids, MI. May the Lord grant them and all of us that we may grow in the understanding of His Word.

N.H. Gootjes 



Dr. C. Van Dam,
Mr. Carl Van Dam



Presentation of the Women's Savings Action at the College Evening September 5, 1997

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

Watching the pictures of the surface of Mars this summer just took my breath away! The numbers measuring the path of the spacecraft through God's vast universe boggle the mind, as they say. The exploration of distant Mars changes, updates the way we look at the universe and the future. This is the world, the times in which God has placed us. Our covenant God, unchanging in His steadfast love, brings about all kinds of change, keeps revealing new possibilities, new opportunities, new gifts, new knowledge.

At our Theological College, among its student body, in this Women's Savings Action Committee things are changing too. Our Anchor in all this change is faith in our Saviour who though Creator of all, was once a boy standing among teachers in the library of the temple.

I'm honoured to speak to you on behalf of the women of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches and the Theological Library Fund of Western Australia. We wholeheartedly support the growth of the library of our College and want to encourage the students in their studies to prepare themselves as pastors equally in touch with our changing circumstances and with God's unchanging Word of life.

Mrs. E. Hofsink

Mrs. Hofsink talked about change and permanence in the world around us and also in our College community. Well, I would like to carry that same theme through to the work of the Women's Savings Action.

First of all, as you could all see and hear, we have a change in our Board. And hereby we would like to officially welcome our new president, Mrs. Liz Hofsink. We are very grateful, Liz, that you were found willing to take on this



Mrs. Carla Zietsma, Mrs. Joanne Van Dam, Mrs. Liz Hofsink.

responsibility and give of your time and energy for this very worthwhile cause.

Not only do we have a change in the Board, but as happens every year we also have a number of new representatives and new volunteers who collect and count the donations in every congregation. Our heartfelt appreciation to those of you who have retired and a warm welcome to the new representatives and volunteers.

But although we have a changing of the guard here and there, some very fundamental things stay the same.

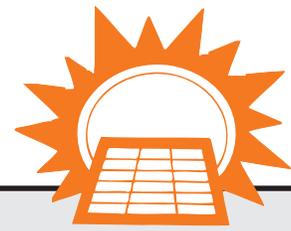
First of all, ever since the Theological College was established, the Women's Savings Action has provided the necessary funds for the library. The amount given has changed every number of years; in fact it has under the blessing of the Lord grown very steadily since \$500 was given in 1970. And once again on this College Evening we come with a gift from the Women's Savings Action. But this gift is not a luxury. It is counted on, for it continues to be the only source of funds for the regular purchase of books and periodicals.

Which leads me to the second point I would like to stress. From the very beginning the great appreciation shown by the College community has never wavered. Our labour of love as Women's Savings Action has never been taken for granted.

Lastly, the amount of money collected and given may change from year to year, but the blessing of the Lord upon our endeavours remains the same. He gives us willing hearts to give of our time and money every year again. As it is put so well in 1 Chron. 29:14b "Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand." In the midst of an ever changing world around us, the faithfulness of the Lord is always steadfast and sure.

With great gratitude to the Lord we may tell you that the total amount collected during this past year was \$33,739.92 including \$2,845.64 from Australia. Thank you all very much! Mr. Principal, it is with great pleasure that we may present you with a pledge for \$25,000 for the coming year.

Mrs. J. Van Dam 



By Mrs. R. Ravensbergen

*“My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.”
Psalm 121:2*

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Psalm 121 is a beautiful psalm. It is about someone who is travelling in the mountains. And while he is wandering on the mountain paths, he is afraid. He looks around him and thinks, What if something happens to me? A wild animal could come and attack him, or a gang of robbers, or he might get lost. But then he knows. He does not have to be afraid, for the Lord is with him, and the Lord will help him, whatever will happen to him. That psalm is written in our Bible, so we can find comfort in it. That comfort is not there only for those who are wandering about on dangerous roads, it is there for all God's children all through their lives.

What does that mean exactly? It could not mean that we will never have any difficulties. For when we look around us, we see much trouble and sadness, maybe we are even confronted with some difficulties ourselves. Yet it says in the psalm,

*“The sun shall not smite you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The Lord will keep you from all evil;
He will keep your life.” vs. 6,7.*

But it also says in the same psalm that the Lord is the maker of heaven and earth. He controls everything that happens on earth, nothing goes beyond His knowledge and approval. Whatever comes our way, the pleasant but also the unpleasant experiences, it comes from our Father Who is in heaven.

The Lord had created heaven and earth in a way that was pleasing to Him. That means everything was perfect. But man spoiled it all. As a result of the fall into sin the beautiful world was destroyed and also the relationship between man and God. And man, instead of praising God as he was supposed to do, started to ignore Him and live a life of selfishness. But God loved the world. He made a covenant with His people. With the covenant came the promise of eternal life for all those who fear Him. That was made possible because the Lord sent us His Son, Who died for our sins.

So today there is still sin, there is still much misery, but there is also hope. We do not have to stare at our problems without seeing our way out. We do not have to ask why our life seems to be so much more difficult than that of someone else. We are for-

unate because we confess that we belong to our faithful Saviour Jesus Christ. The Lord is our Keeper. He upholds the world, and He does not give it over to complete destruction. For He keeps His Church, and He will make it possible for the Church to exist until the Day of His return. And He will keep us.

The Lord did not promise that everything would go smoothly and easy for us. But He has promised that He will keep our souls, even when we have to go through dark valleys. We may have difficulties, for the Lord does not remove the effects of sin in this life. But our comfort is that we are temples of the Holy Spirit, He dwells in us. Even when our temple has to suffer we must accept that our Father knows best, and that He works all things for our salvation. We may grieve, or be depressed, or childless, or deeply hurt, or lonely, or sick, or handicapped. Whatever road the Father wants us to travel, He does not let us travel it alone. He holds our hand, and He comforts us.

So we can walk in faith, and commit ourselves to the Lord with all our heart. He will preserve our lives!

*The Lord will guard and keep you when
You meet with harm or strife:
He will preserve your life.
When going out or coming in,
The Lord will you deliver
From this time forth, forever.*

Psalm 121:4

Birthdays in November:

3: Wilma Van Drongelen
306-33375 Mayfair Avenue
Abbotsford, BC V2S 1P4

27: Adrian DeJong
RR #1 Site 6 Box 9
Barrhead, AB T0G 0E0

Wilma will be 40 this year, and Adrian 13. It would be nice to hear how Adrian is doing!

Happy Birthday to both of you, and until next month,

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



For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will

Read: Ephesians 1 : 1 - 14
Sing: Psalm 25 : 2, 3

What better preparation for the day's activities is there than a study of a portion of God's Word, His revealed will. The quotation in the heading of this article precisely refers to that:

For He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will . . . (Ephesians 1:9).

The word *mystery* in this text does not refer to the rites and knowledge of a secret society of which there were many in Paul's days. The apostle does not equate the Christian religion with the mystery religions of his days. Paul uses the word *mystery* always in relation to *disclosure*, or *revelation*: God reveals His will in Christ to all who will receive it. This verse speaks of the truth of God in Christ which the church may know and confess, and which it is commanded to preach to the whole world. That is the opposite of keeping a secret! The gospel must be proclaimed openly and publicly. And what is this gospel which must be proclaimed openly and publicly to all who will receive it?

This passage does not suggest some personal, individualistic experience. We do not read here about a way in which we can escape from this dreadful existence and be catapulted to a higher realm of wisdom and understanding. In one long sentence, with the words as it were tumbling one over the other, the verses 3 through 14 speak of the mighty works of God the Father in Christ His Beloved; of God the Son in whom we have been made the people of His inheritance; and of God the Holy Spirit in whom we have been sealed and in whom the promise of the gospel has

been guaranteed. And all that *unto the praise of His glory*.

God's glory – that is the focus of this mighty sentence. These words show the glorious works of our God. They speak of election from the beginning, of sonship by adoption, of redemption and forgiveness of sins, of insight into God's all-embracing purpose, of the privilege of becoming His people, of the Holy Spirit as seal – a continuous flow of blessings with which we are blessed in Christ; these spiritual blessings are more than, but certainly do include material blessings.

Verse 9 speaks of *wisdom and insight*. These words are repeated in Paul's letter to the Colossians (2:2,3) where Paul speaks of the riches which the believers may have,

. . . all the riches of assured understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, in Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Indeed, there is no wisdom or understanding outside of Christ. Let me remind you of the Book of Proverbs which speaks of the wisdom of the Lord, putting a sharp and revealing spotlight on our every-day life, teaching us about the way we should live as Christians. And I certainly may add here, the way we should educate our children, the way we should work and study, the way we should spend our leisure time . . . as Christians!

We live in a world of confusion and uncertainty; there is no one who can explain all things, not even the natural phenomena. Surely, there are what we call laws of nature; but scientists tell us that much of what is taught as scientific certainty turns out to be no

certainty at all. The one theory attempts to remedy the faults of an earlier one, only to be replaced by newer views. Who can explain in full detail the reasons for the Soviet revolution? Today's world is faced with horrendous problems (political and economic, social and ecological, personal and relational) with few if any suggestions for reliable solutions. Indeed, we live in a world where things rarely add up – so many questions; so few reliable answers.

And yet, Paul wrote his song of praise also for our comfort in a confused 20th century. The mystery that has been revealed to us tells us that we may look forward to a time when everything will be brought again into a meaningful relationship under the headship of Christ. In Him all things hold together (Colossians 1:17). It has also been revealed to us that we have a beginning of this eternal joy already in this life (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 22). We may know and believe that,

. . . He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight the mystery of His will, according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fulness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and things on earth (Ephesians 1:9,10).

Surely, knowing this mystery, in all wisdom and insight is a key element in the renewal of our mind (Romans 12:2). Thus we can begin to understand that indeed the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom (Proverbs 1:7).

Parents and teachers may, through God's grace, be instrumental in helping each other understand a little more of that mystery of God's will which affects everything in heaven and on earth, including all things related to our lives

within the family, the school, our work situation. All our activities, all the subjects and courses we study or teach, are part of the reality which, literally, is held together in Christ.

What a lesson for old and young (Proverbs 1:4,5) alike: we find here the basis of all reformed (that is, scriptural) education: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom. You are a fool if you despise it; even more than a fool: you are heading towards eternal disaster and death. Therefore, young people, listen to the instruction of your father

and the teachings of your mother. These are more valuable than the most precious man-made ornaments (Proverbs 1:7-8). And pray constantly.

*Show Thou unto me, Thy servant,
All Thy ways and teach Thou me,
So that, by Thy Spirit guided,
Clearly I Thy paths may see.*

*Sins of youth remember not,
Nor recall my hid transgressions;
For Thy goodness' sake, O God,
Think of me in Thy compassion.*

References:

NIV Study Bible
Ephesians (Tyndale New Testament Commentary).
A Mirror of the Manifold Wisdom of God: Outlines on the Letter to the Ephesians (J. C. Smelik).

Please address comments and questions directly to:

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Covenant College
856 Upper James St, Box 20179
Hamilton, ON, L9C 7M5
E-mail: tmpdvd@hookup.net



PRESS RELEASE



Press Release of Classis Ontario-South of September 10, 1997 in Hamilton.

1. At 9 a.m. Rev. G.Ph. VanPopta, on behalf of the convening church at Ancaster, called the meeting to order. He invites us to sing Ps 8:1-5, reads Genesis 1:24-2:3 and leads in prayer.

2. He welcomes all present, especially br. J. Smith and two of his fellow students. He mentions that the credentials were found to be in order. Br. Fluck from Blue Bell is present as a deacon. There are two instructions which are added to the agenda. The church at Chatham has a written submission for classis. Classis is constituted. The officers as appointed by the previous classis are:

Rev. J. DeGelder – chairman; Rev. G. Wieske – vice-chairman and Rev. D.G.J. Agema – clerk.

3. Rev. DeGelder thanks the convening church for preparing this meeting and Rev. VanPopta (fresh from the West) for opening this meeting. He congratulates the church at Ancaster with the installation of Rev. VanPopta and the church at Rockway with the installation of Rev. Wieske. The church at Chatham is congratulated with the acceptance of the call by Rev. H. Versteeg. He wishes Rev. Agema the wisdom of the Holy Spirit with regards to his call from the church at Carman. Finally, Rev. Kok is congratulated with the birth of his daughter.

4. The agenda is adopted after some changes.

5. The chairman then reads the Subscription Form for ministers of the Word which is signed by Rev. VanPopta. The chairman wishes him the blessing of the Lord, not only for his work in Ancaster but also within this classical region.

6. Classis proceeds to the examination of student J. Smith in order to grant him his request to speak an edifying word within the churches. The documents are found to be in order. The delegates move to the auditorium to hear the sermon proposal of br. Smith on Psalm 8. In closed session this proposal is discussed and there are no objections to continue the examination. Closed session is lifted and Rev. Kok examines him in the doctrines of the church since Rev. Stam is not present because of holidays. Some of the other delegates also make use of their allotted time to ask questions.

7. Classis once again goes into closed session to evaluate the examination. The result is that classis grants br. Smith the privilege to speak an edifying work within the churches for the period of one year. Br. Smith is informed of this decision and is asked to promise not to teach anything that runs counter to God's Word as summarized in the Reformed Confessions. Br. Smith makes this promise and is then congratulated by the chairman. We sing Hymn 58:1,2 after which Rev. Agema gives thanks

and praise to God for this successful examination. The delegates receive the opportunity to congratulate br. Smith.

8. After a short break, classis continues with question period ad Art. 44 of the Church Order. The church at Blue Bell requests classis that Rev. Kok be exempted from pulpit supply arrangements because of his monthly commitment to the home congregation at Laurel. This is granted.

9. In closed session the church at Watford asks for advice to proceed to the second step in a discipline case. Advice is given.

10. A proposal from the church at Attercliffe to change Art. 7 of the C.O. is now given in discussion. The proposal reads as follows: **"No one who has joined one of the Churches and does not come from a church with which ecclesiastical fellowship is maintained shall be declared eligible for call within the Churches unless he has been a member for at least two years, has been well tested by Classis for a reasonable period of time, and has been carefully examined by classis with the cooperation of the deputies of the regional synod."** (changes are underlined).

Attercliffe petitions classis to submit this proposal to Regional Synod East 1997 in order to request Synod 1998 to implement this change.

11. After a lunch break, classis is reconvened at 1:15 p.m. We sing Ps. 48:1. Roll call is held. All the delegates

are present. The discussion on the above proposal is continued. Classis decides not to accede to Attercliffe's request for the following reasons:

a. Classis is not convinced that the proposal is a matter of Art. 7 which deals with recent converts; rather it is a matter of Art. 4,B,2.

b. Classis is not convinced that a two year membership period should be specified in an art. that deals with eligibility for call.

12. Classis goes into closed session to deal with a request for a revision of a previous classis' decision. Classis decides that since this revision is in fact an appeal of a previous decision, it cannot deal with it. (cf. Art. 31 C.O.) The delegates from Rockway abstain from voting.

13. The church at Chatham informs classis that Rev. H. Versteeg has accepted the call from this church. In order to proceed to Rev. Versteeg's installation, a classis contracta will be held on Oct. 2, D.V. to approbate this call. Chatham also asks classis to exempt Rev. Versteeg from any classical duties for a period of one year so that he can update his studies after serving 18 years as a missionary in Irian Jaya and also complete a special assignment to Irian Jaya for 3 weeks in 1998. This request is granted.

14. In closed session two reports are read by the church visitors of their meetings with the churches in Watford and Blue Bell.

15. The church at Ancaster, which looks after the Fund for needy churches, recommends to classis that the churches increase their assessment over 1997 by \$9.67 per communicant member because of a special need. The church at Rockway has requested financial support for the remainder of 1996, since the arrival of Rev. Wieske increases their budget by a considerable amount. For 1998 Ancaster requests the churches to pay \$22.50 per communicant member for the support of the needy churches. Ancaster's recommendation was adopted with the delegates from Blue Bell and Rockway abstaining from voting.

16. The church at Hamilton conveys to classis that Rev. Cl. Stam will be given a sabbatical leave from Jan. 1 to Aug. 10, 1998. For this reason, Hamilton informs the meeting that Rev. Stam will not be able to execute any classical appointments during that time.

17. Appointments:

Convening church for next classis: Attercliffe.

Place: Lincoln

Date: Dec. 10, 1997.

Suggested officers: Rev. B. Hofford – chairman.

Rev. D.G.J. Agema – vice chairman.

Rev. J. DeGelder – clerk.

As delegates to regional synod East of Nov. 1997 are chosen:

Primi ministers: J. DeGelder, B. Hofford, J. Ludwig and J. VanWoudenberg.

Secundi: D.G.J. Agema, G.Ph. VanPopta, G. Wieske and J. VanVliet (in this order).

Primi elders: A. DeJong, J. Koster, W. Smouter and A. Witten.

Secundi: H. VanderVelde, J. Schouten, D. Lof and B. Meerstra (in this order).

Rev. B. Hofford is appointed as church visitor during the absence of Rev. Stam.

18. Personal question period did not produce anything that needs to be reported.

19. The chairman judges that no discipline ad. art. 34 is necessary. He thanks the delegates for the brotherly atmosphere in which the work could be done.

20. The Acts are read and adopted.

21. The Press Release is read and approved.

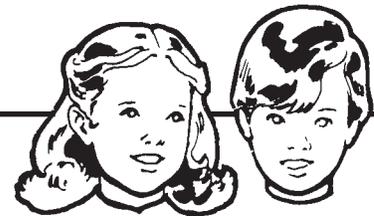
22. We sang Hymn 46:1,2 and the chairman ends the meeting with thanksgiving prayer.

For classis:

G. Wieske, vice-chairman e.t. 

OUR LITTLE MAGAZINE

By Aunt Betty



Dear Busy Beavers

School has started again, so I hope you are enjoying it again. It is always nice to have holidays, but school is fun, too. At school, there are so many different things to learn and do, although not each of you will enjoy every subject as much as another. However, remember that God has given you all your special talents, so make sure you always work as hard as possible in all the subjects you have, whether you like it or not.

BIRTHDAYS – SEPTEMBER

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Jordan Lodder | 9 Adena Feenstra |
| 1 Jennifer Houweling | 11 Nicole Alderliesten |
| 2 Jessica Verhelst | 20 Chelsea Kampen |
| 4 Anthony Nyenhuis | 22 Sarah Schulenberg |
| 4 Kyle Lodder | 23 Christa Raap |
| 4 Brandon vanAmerongen | 26 Danielle deJong |

Quiz Time!

JOKES

By Busy Beaver Tamara VanLeeuwen

1. How do you spell cat backwards?
2. How many hamburgers can you eat on an empty stomach?
3. Which dog is as warm as a blanket?
4. Which dogs speak?
5. What does a 300 pound bird say?
6. What did the necktie say to the hat?

FARM ANIMALS

By Busy Beaver *Shawna Bethlehem*

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

Find: Geese Lambs Piglets
 Horse Cow Rabbit Goat
 Pig Sheep Chickens Dogs
 Puppies Cats Kittens Ducks Ducklings

CODE BREAKER

By Busy Beaver *Rebecca Bethlehem*

A	☺	F	□	K	*	P	☼	U	☹
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C	☺	H	◇	M	☼	R	☼	W	☹
D	☺	I	♥	N	☼	S	☼	X	☹
E	△	J	★	O	☼	T	☼	Y	☼
								Z	◇

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PICTURE CODE

By Busy Beaver *Stacey Termeer*

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FROM THE MAILBOX

Thanks very much for your letter, puzzle and jokes, *Stacey Termeer*. I laughed very loud at your funny jokes. I'll put your jokes in another edition of the *Clarion*, okay. Bye for now.

Welcome to the Busy Beaver Club, *Rebecca VanDijk*. It's very nice to have a Busy Beaver in USA. You have a nice size family, with five children. Do you always play nicely together? It must have been quite exciting when baby Hannah was born. Please do write again. Bye, Rebecca.

Hi, *Rebecca Bethlehem*. Thanks for your letter and puzzle. Did you have a nice birthday in August? And the Work Party you had for your dad's work sounded like lots of fun. Have a nice stay at your grandparents' place, won't you. Bye.

Welcome to the Club, *Shawna Bethlehem*. Thank you for your letter and puzzles. I'll put one into the *Clarion* another time, okay. Write to me and tell me when your birthday is, please. Bye, Shawna.

Thanks for your letter and riddles, *Tamara VanLeeuwen*. It's good that you had a good summer. I hope you also have a good year at school. Enjoy it in Grade 7. Yes, it is sad that your classmate, David, was killed by a car. But as you wrote, we know that he is in heaven with the Lord. That is also why we shouldn't grieve for too long, because he is in a better place now than he was before.

Answers to Jokes:

1. C-A-T B-A-C-K-W-A-R-D-S
2. I because after that it isn't empty anymore.
3. An Afghan.
4. "Herd" dogs.
5. Here Kitty, Kitty.
6. You go a-head, I'll hang around.

Aunt Betty

