

Clarion

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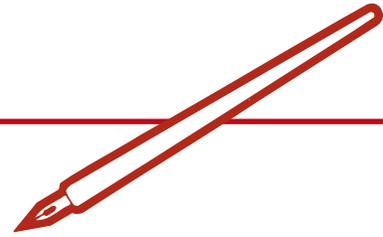


Numbers

10:1-10

*Remembrance
Day*

INSIDE!



By Cl. Stam



The Evaluation of Divergences

In my last editorial I concluded from the factual history of our churches that the divergences in confession and church polity between the Three Forms of Unity (Canadian Reformed Churches) and the Westminster Standards (Orthodox Presbyterian Church) were consistently not considered to be impediments towards a sister church relationship.

In my previous editorial I also identified the (original) divergences. The divergences should certainly be discussed on an ongoing basis to grow mutually towards a better, common understanding, but not treated as impediments which need to be resolved for the relationship to continue.

This means also that we accept the Westminster Standards and Catechisms as a completely Reformed confession.

This means that we can discuss these divergences in an atmosphere of peace and trust, together digging ever deeper in the riches of the Reformed faith without feeling any pressure or constraint with respect to our relationship as sister churches in the Lord.

“A Completely Reformed Confession”

This means also that we accept the Westminster Standards and Catechisms as a completely Reformed confession.¹ The expression “completely Reformed” is not one that I have invented or coined. It is a description that came from the Regional Synod of Groningen, The Netherlands, to the Dutch General Synod of Amersfoort (1967), and found its way into our assemblies via the Report of the Deputies submitted to Synod Burlington, 1986.

There has been some discussion about the meaning and even the propriety of this expression: a fully Reformed confession(al document). What exactly is meant by this qualification? We could, of course, quote from all kinds of sources regarding the exact exegesis of this statement. One person may read more or less into it than another. But at the end of the day, we’d all agree that the expression “a fully Reformed confession” means what it says: in the Westminster Standards we are dealing with a confessional document that deserves to be called *Reformed*.

What other general name could be given to these Standards? Is this an Anabaptist, an Arminian, or a papal confession? What the Dutch General Synod stated and our churches have quoted with agreement is this: the Westminster Standards and catechisms belong in the *family* of Reformed Confessions, and are part of the rich Reformed tradition through the ages. Many brothers and sisters gave their lives for the very truth of this confession, and we have to honour their dedication to the Lord. These Standards do not fit into any other category and thus we have to place them where they historically and currently belong.

No problem areas?

Does the above mean that there are no problem areas in these confessional documents? I do not think this to be the case. The very fact that we do speak of “divergences” indicates that there are some areas of greater or lesser concern.

I have gone on record in various publications that I disagree with certain formulations found in the Westminster Standards. In my book *Everything in Christ* (Premier Publishing, Winnipeg 1979, page 84) I wrote concerning article 25 of the Westminster Confession that it contains a distinction between the invisible and visible church that is problematic. The Scriptures do not speak of an invisible church over against a visible church. A dogmatical distinction should not become a confessional statement.

The heritage of the Reformation is properly safeguarded and truly confessed in these standards.

I also expressed disagreement with the Westminster Confession’s use of the notion of *covenant of works* versus a covenant of grace, as is done in the Westminster Confession Chapter VII (*The Covenant of Love*, Premier Publishing, Winnipeg, 1999, page 48). My position has been challenged in Presbyterian circles, but I am still convinced that again a dogmatical distinction has crept into the creed, where it does not belong and can cause harm.

Still a Reformed Confession

It will be clear that I do have my concerns with parts of the Westminster tradition. I have made these known more than others in our Reformed churches. Yet this does not mean that I cannot accept the Westminster Standards as a fully Reformed confession. The heritage of the Reformation is properly safeguarded and truly confessed in these standards.

Hence a divergence is not an impediment. Acceptan

of these standards is an overall general recognition. We stand side by side to defend the same Reformed faith, even

if we do not always agree o

The Dutch expression is "een voluit Gereformeerd belijdenisgeschrift."

What's inside?

Rev. Cl. Stam resumes his editorial comments on the comparison between the Three Forms of Unity and the Westminster Standards. He points out that while there may be differences and even concerns, nevertheless the latter are fully Reformed, and they defend the same Reformed faith. Obviously we have a lot for which to be thankful.

Rev. P.G. Feenstra takes a careful look from the point of Scripture at the homosexual debate which is currently being held in our country. He combines a balanced view without minimizing what the Lord has to say about this.

Remembrance Day is commemorated by Christians and unbelievers alike. However, it is commemorated in a different fashion. Rev. D. Poppe's meditation points out how God's children remember this day in a way that gives glory to God.

We have a report on the RCUS 256th Synod, along with our column *Education Matters*, two letters to the editor, and two press releases.

The Canadian Reformed Church at Smithville recently celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The article and pictures clearly depict much joy and thankfulness to the Lord.

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By D.Ph. Poppe

Remembrance Day

No king is saved by the size of his army; no warrior escapes by his great strength.

A horse is a vain hope for deliverance; despite all its great strength, it cannot save. But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in his unfailing love, to deliver them from death and keep them alive in famine.

Psalm 33:16-19

Remembrance Day is a day commemorated by everyone in our nation, believer and unbeliever alike. At 11:00 a.m. Canadians stop what they are doing and observe a two minute silence to remember the wars of the last century. We remember the men and women who were shot out of the sky, killed as espionage agents, gunned down at Dieppe and starved to death at Dachau, all to secure the freedom which we may enjoy today.

Yet even as we stand together at the cenotaph, each of us wearing a red poppy, there is a difference in the remembering. For many Canadians, their thoughts go only as far as the heroic deeds and decisive battles. They honour the people who gave their lives so that Canada can be a free country. But as those who fear the LORD and hope in his unfailing love, we are different in our remembering. We look beyond the victors and see the God who gave the victory. We remember that the sovereign LORD controls all of history, and our thanks go first and foremost to Him for He “delivers [us] from death.” We also recognize that the LORD directs all world events for the good of his church. We have not received freedom from oppression so that we may live as we please but so that we may serve the LORD unhindered.

On Remembrance Day, our thoughts also turn to the future. More than fifty years have passed since the Second World War; we have not seen

major global conflict since 1945. But recently global war has become more of a possibility, especially after the terrorist attacks on the United States last September. The USA and Britain have gone on a campaign to secure international support for an attack, first against Afghanistan and now against Iraq. Many people are uneasy and are looking for personal safety, economic stability and political peace.

To whom then are people looking for this continuation of freedom and peace? Sadly, many Canadians are not looking to the LORD. Just as at the cenotaph they could not see beyond the brave armies of the past, so now they look to the combined military might of the United Nations to secure peace on earth.

But we confess “no king is saved by his great army.” The safety and security of our world is not based on stealth bombers, cruise missiles or tactical teams. Even if the United Nations is able to force Saddam Hussein to disarm, it will not be able to establish lasting world peace. What the Canadians around the cenotaph have forgotten is that there can be no peace without God. The nation that rejects God and the kingship of his Son can only look forward to warfare, destruction and death. As it says in Romans 1:18, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness

of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

But our hope is in the LORD’s unfailing love. He has freed us from our greatest enemy through the work of our Lord Jesus Christ and He has secured our eternal peace. On Remembrance Day let us remember that physical and eternal peace are blessings from the LORD. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD, the people he chose as his inheritance.” The gifts of peace and prosperity, economic and political stability come to us as blessings of our Father.

In order to receive that peace and continue in it, we need to live in repentance and faith before our heavenly Father. Personally, each one of us must confess our sins and flee from them. We need to seek the hallowing of his Name, the coming of his kingdom, and the exercise of his will. And we must also call our fellow countrymen to do the same, so that together we can escape the coming wrath of God. Let us pray that we may always remember that true peace comes from the LORD. May we also use every opportunity to tell this to our fellow countrymen so that together we may celebrate the great deeds of the LORD on Remembrance Day!



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The Homosexuality Debate in View of Holy Scripture

By P.G. Feenstra

Introduction

Recently the issue of homosexuality and same-sex marriages has received considerable attention in the secular Canadian media. Among other things the Ontario Divisional Court ordered a redefinition of marriage to include same-sex couples. Since then the federal Justice Minister announced that Ottawa would appeal the Ontario Court decision. Martin Cauchon, Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, explained the decision saying: "there are important reasons why we as a society must consider carefully the issues around changing the fundamental nature of marriage and what the implications of such a change might be. At present, there is no consensus, either from the courts or among Canadians, on whether or how the laws require change."

We certainly can be thankful that the Canadian federal government has made this decision. However, this does not mean the ruling of the Ontario Court is dead in the water. The federal government has said that even though they are going to appeal, they will consider all the options to the redefinition of marriage. Moreover, the pressure to accept homosexuality as an alternative lifestyle is ever increasing and efforts are made to silence those who oppose it. Religious groups that monitor government policy continue to express the fear that if the present trend continues, those who preach, teach or speak against homosexuality (for example in a newspaper article or in a public forum) could be charged with a hate crime and be imprisoned.

The government of Canada has asked for public input as to what the citizens of our country think on the issue of same-sex marriages. Those readers who are Canadian citizens should take

the opportunity (if they have not already done so) to write or phone the office of their local member of parliament, the minister of Justice and the Prime Minister of Canada and state what the Bible teaches and why we must continue to oppose this lifestyle. In the meantime let us continue to pray that the citizens of our country repent of their sins (in thinking and actions) and turn to the Lord.

How we speak about homosexuals should demonstrate that the love of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit fills our hearts.

This article is written to encourage us, both as adults and young people, to take a Scriptural approach to a current issue. We should not be afraid to state what the Bible teaches. At the same time, how we speak about homosexuals should demonstrate that the love of Christ and the fruit of the Spirit fills our hearts.

Where we have been heading

Homosexuality and lesbianism refer to sexual encounters between people of the same sex: males with males and females with females. A lesbian is actually a female homosexual. The word "gay," which not all that long ago simply meant to be joyful or to have a good time, has been redefined to refer to male homosexuals.

Homosexuality is an ethical question which demands and receives more and more attention today both outside and within the church. Before the 1960s, Western Christianity was pretty well unified in their evaluation and judgment of homosexuality. Most

agreed with the evaluation of Thomas Aquinas that homosexuality was a "lifestyle contrary to human nature."

Today, however, new approaches in biblical studies and newly discovered data in psychology and sociology suggest that we abandon the old way of thinking. Part of the curriculum of public schools is to teach homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Many churches believe it is necessary to reinterpret the Bible and change the meaning of various passages in order to approve of homosexuality. It is no longer enough for homosexuality to be legal; it must be given moral approval. Regularly, homosexual demonstrations and parades are given the wholesale endorsement of the news media. Any public figure who opposes such activities as Gay Pride Day is quickly ostracized and made the butt of scorn.

Does the Lord consider the love of two homosexuals, whether in orientation or in act, as sin? Do such relationships mirror the love of God and a love for God? Would we be discriminating if a practicing homosexual was excluded from the Lord's Supper celebration? Several texts of Scripture are crucial in discussing what the Lord says regarding homosexuality and same sex-marriages.

Genesis 1:26, 27

The Lord created two people, male and female, to be his image. He created them with a definite purpose so that they might live together in the bond of marriage. He did not design same-sex marriages. A man and a woman complement each other sexually, something two females or males do not. There is no possibility of sexual communion man to man or woman to woman because the LORD did not create them for one another as He created

woman to be with man. Gay and lesbian relationships are a perversion of God's created order. We must maintain this principle. A woman is made for a man as a fitting helper, sexually too. They are one flesh (Gen 2:18-25). In their love for one another, husband and wife mirror the love of God for his people. This is never possible in a homosexual relationship. The love and affection which pleases God gives answer to his Word. When a husband and wife love each other and give full expression to that love via the intimacy of sexual intercourse, then they do not do this in the first place for their own pleasure or self-fulfillment but in obedience to God's commandments. This too must be done to the glory of God.

The Old Testament is clear in its message: same-sex relationships and marriages are strictly forbidden as an abomination before the face of the living God.

Since we accept the authority of Scripture and the validity of its truths, also for today, we recognize the normative character of Genesis 1 and 2 and what it says about the relationship between the sexes. It is undeniable that certain things have changed as a result of the fall into sin. Not every man or woman is married. There are men and women who struggle daily against wrong sexual desires. Outside of marriage, God's law forbids men and women to seek an outlet for their desires in pre-marital or extra-marital relationships.

Genesis 19

A second text which needs our attention is Genesis 19. The men of Sodom demanded that the two guests who came to Lot's house be brought out in order that the Sodomites might "know" them. They wanted to have perverted relations with them. The final outcome was that the men of Sodom were smitten with blindness and the city was destroyed by fire and brimstone. Some exegetes believe we should stop interpreting this passage as demonstrating God's abhorrence of homosexuality. They argue the men of Sodom could not have been exclu-

sively homosexual in orientation in the same sense the term is used today. Quite likely, they were primarily heterosexual and merely looking for a novelty. Such people tell us not to concentrate on homosexuality when discussing this passage, but to see the sin of Sodom as violent gang rape and a lack of hospitality to strangers.

Of course, the sin of Sodom involved more than homosexuality. The texts of Isaiah 1:9,17 and Ezekiel 16:49 give a more general picture of what was going on. But it is a contortion of the Scriptures to downplay or even dismiss homosexuality as a factor in the downfall of Sodom. It was the culminating factor that led to the overthrow of Sodom. Every attempt to make the Bible fit our contemporary situation should be rejected.

The key word in the passage is "know," which in the context has a sexual meaning. The NIV correctly translates, "bring them out so that we can have sex with them." Lot's "offer" to give his daughters to these base men is rejected. They are not interested in any heterosexual relationships, but they want a homosexual relation with Lot's guests. The sin of Sodom has reached its climax. If there was any question, God shows how ripe the city was for judgment.

The Lord created two people, male and female, to be his image.

Judges 19

A similar event to that of Genesis 19 is found in Judges 19. The men of Gibeah, members of God's covenant people, want to have a homosexual relation with the old man's guest. They wish to involve themselves in a "vile thing." These are the sad results of what takes place when people no longer take the Word of God seriously. Natural relations are exchanged for unnatural. The ordinances of creation are mocked and ignored.

Leviticus 18:22; 20:13

The next passages we should take into consideration are two references to homosexuality in the book of Leviticus. These references are found in chapters that have been labelled as Israel's holiness code. In these texts the Lord commands that a male shall not lie

with a male as with a woman. Newer exegesis attributes this prohibition by God to Israel's emphasis on procreation. Thus homosexuality was forbidden because it did not enhance the propagation of the chosen race. By implication, this principle no longer holds true because we live in an overpopulated world.

We are mistaken, however, if we should suggest that procreation was the goal of sexual life for the Israelites. Children were indeed considered a blessing, since thereby believing parents were instrumental in God's church gathering work, but this principle is valid for the New Testament believer as well. There is no indication that this was the reason why God forbade a male to lie with a male as with a woman.

Some have argued that what the Lord prescribed is irrelevant and should not be invoked against homosexuals living in the twenty-first century. It is argued that this law disappeared with all other ceremonial laws. It is true, of course, that certain Old Testament laws no longer apply to us. For instance, we wear clothes of mixed fabrics. Yet it is going way too far to suggest that everything mentioned in the ceremonial laws is irrelevant. The law in the Old Testament strictly prohibited a man to have intercourse with or to marry one's mother, sister, sister-in-law, daughter, or aunt, and for a woman to have intercourse with her father, father-in-law, brother, son, or uncle. The Lord hates those sins in the New Dispensation as much as He did in the Old Testament. Thankfully, this is still reflected in marriage licences (banns) and in the intolerance society has for sexual abuse.

There are those who must struggle against homosexual desires all their life but who by the grace of God do not give in to these temptations.

The Old Testament is clear in its message: same-sex relationships and marriages are strictly forbidden as an abomination before the face of the living God. Homosexuality is so vile in God's sight that it carried the sanction of capital punishment (Lev 20:13). Under no circumstances was it considered to be morally acceptable. Homosexuality is

“perverted (contrary to God’s created order), immoral (contrary to God’s commandments) and worthy of death (temporal, societal, eternal)” (G.L. Bahnsen, *Homosexuality: a Biblical View*, p. 47).

Romans 1:24-27

This passage cannot escape our notice. The apostle Paul speaks very clearly against all perverted relationships that are a consequence of the fall into sin and a result of the rebellion of humanity. The LORD punishes those who harden themselves in sin by giving them up to their own devices:

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Paul calls lesbianism and homosexuality an exchange of “*natural relations for unnatural ones*” and directs our attention to God’s creation ordinances. When the Lord created Adam and Eve He also ordained the natural purpose for sexual relations. He established the normal and normative pattern of female and male. Homosexuality is a departure of God’s creation ordinances.

There are other texts that address the issue of homosexuality (e.g., 1 Tim 1:10, 1 Cor 6:10) but the passages dis-

cussed have already shown sufficiently that same-sex marriages is a practice that is forbidden by God’s Word.

Drawing together whatever loose threads there may yet be, we come to the following conclusions:

- How we view homosexuality is largely shaped by our view of Scripture. We need not enter into a dialogue with the “spirit” of the Scriptures to form new answers to the shifting views concerning the manner in which we experience truth and reality. We must receive God’s Word as normative and decisive in answering the ethical questions of our time. In the obedience of faith we accept the eternal validity of biblical truth (J. Faber, “Triumph of Relativism” *Clarion*, Volume 30, No. 1, 1981).
- Holy Scripture without question forbids homosexuality as contrary to nature and against God’s created design for male and female.
- Homosexuality violates the Ten Words of God’s covenant, especially the seventh and tenth commandment. Like lust, greediness, haughtiness, hypocrisy and anger, a homosexual tendency is not a sickness that has been learned due to a number of factors but it is a sinful condition that needs to be covered by the sin-forgiving grace of Christ. The same principle applies to the tendency toward homosexuality as other sins; not only is the act itself sin but also the desire leading to the act. Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount that anyone who looks upon a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart (Matt 5:28). All unchastity outside the marriage of husband and wife is forbidden and is cursed by God (Eph 5:3-5 see also Lord’s Day 41).



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- There are those who must struggle against homosexual desires all their life but who by the grace of God do not give in to these temptations. One who has the tendency toward homosexuality should not be condemned in the same breath as one who practices and condones it. However, we should be careful not to overemphasize the distinction in order to downplay the seriousness of homosexual tendencies.
- Those who struggle against homosexual desires and lusts must be treated by fellow Christians with compassion and love. We should not rise up in condemnation, as if we are free from all wrong sexual desires and lusts. We are all commanded to live pure and chaste lives and we all need the mercy and grace. Our bodies are not to be used as vehicles of self-gratification but for the purpose of God’s glory. They are redeemed by Christ so that we, in our bodies, are no longer prisons of Satan but temples of the Holy Spirit.



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Canadian Reformed Church at Smithville: Fiftieth Anniversary

1952 – September 14 – 2002

By K. Sikkema

What does a *peerde-stal*¹ have to do with church? How do Smithville people get into a pew? Which major clans make up the bulk of its membership? What is a suitable replacement for a gavel? What would our Prime Minister do at this anniversary?

On Friday, September 13, 2002, Smithville commemorated its fiftieth anniversary in Grimsby's Mountainview CRC, a popular building for its ample seating, presentation, and fellowship space. Under the lighthearted direction of John Werkman, occasionally underlined by his suggested application of a *matte-klopper*² when speakers went over certain limits, and accompanied by Alex Ravensbergen or John Van Iperen, the evening was filled with gratitude for God's faithfulness, reminiscence on things past and present, congratulatory contributions, and song and prayer to express the happiness for this milestone.

The anniversary theme was, "O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come." In the opening prayer, as well as in Reverend D.G.J. Agema's closing remarks, this theme received elaboration in how the Lord had not only gathered and preserved this initially poor immigrant church, but also gave growth from a membership of 151 in 1952, to 2033 in the five Niagara Peninsula churches today. The program-booklet included a historical summary, and depicted the theme as well as the growth of the churches in a full colour cover designed by Harold Sikkema.

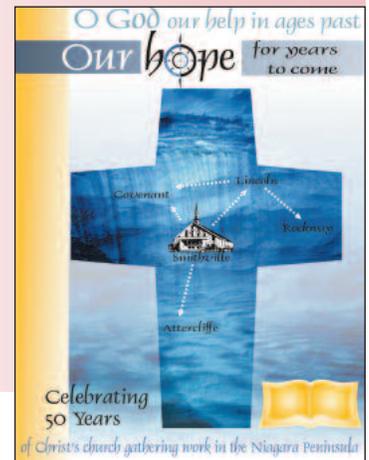
Several speakers addressed aspects of the theme, and the Church of Rockway sent a letter. Reverend C. Bosch (Burlington South) counted some sev-



enty-five children in the Smithville contingent of the John Calvin School choir, who were not yet born when he left in 1989! For that same growth, Jack Schutten (Covenant, Grassie) rightfully claimed to speak on behalf of a "daughter, grand-daughter, and sister church," and Bill VanWoudenberg (Lincoln) alluded pertly to the "somewhat unwanted pregnancy" at the beginning of Lincoln's institution in 1970. Ken Linde (Attercliffe) reminisced that, after the liberation of 1944, people were charged for the battle for the truth when the church was instituted, and urged the members to "follow the Lamb wherever he leads you." This initially also helped meld people of markedly different characters, dialects, and customs into one congregation. Reverend J. DeGelder (Flamborough) depicted the congregation as "giving him and his family a warm welcome, eagerness to

hear the proclamation, and standing together for the cause of the Lord." Despite occasionally heated discussions, he observed, the unity of faith was always underlined with a very firm handshake at the end of consistory meetings. With reference to Psalm 87, Reverend Dijkstra (Wellandport URC) wished for God's faithfulness to remain with the congregation, and for the unity between our federations to grow. In closing, Reverend Agema pointed out that it is because of God's covenant faithfulness, and in spite of human sin, that Psalm 90 encourages us to live and to go on toward the New Jerusalem with the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

Among the presentations were also those that focused on a lighter note, or triggered mirth in other ways. Of the societies, the Dutch "*Gezellig bijeen*"



group of older folks sent a letter about their typical activities under the capable leadership of Lammert Hopman (Attercliffe). On their reserved pews near the front of the building they certainly were among those who most identified with and enjoyed the presentations! Nick VanderHeiden (Attercliffe) presented the Dutch men's society "Trouw aan het Woord" with a typical set of minutes, including the particular quirks of its members. The other Bible study societies introduced themselves as a family: mothers, fathers, and children, by mouth of Jason Heemskerck (Smithville), and proceeded with a presentation from deputies of the three largest Smithville "clans:" Bos, VanEgmond, and Ravensbergen. With two pews from the Smithville church on the stage, several members showed how the first one to enter a pew broadly claims and stiffly maintains his stake by the aisle, causing others to clamber

over him and through the cramped gap between the pews, and a last person to plop down in a space too narrow for comfort. In the especially appreciated high-tech historical slide presentation by Cornell Feenstra (Attercliffe), we learned about the army-barracks used for worship until the current structure could be erected. The barracks remained in use for meeting facilities as the "Parish Hall" for some time, but affectionately soon became the "peerdestal." In this presentation the serious note was not lacking, and the Niagara Regional Choir "Voice of Praise" added its own worthy and serious contribution to the evening with a number of songs of praise to God.

In honouring those in authority, dignitaries had been invited as well. MPP Tim Hudak (PC) was represented by a staff member and sent tokens of congratulation in both his and Premier Ernie Eeves' behalf. MP John Maloney

(Liberal) likewise spoke on behalf of himself and our Prime Minister, bringing along tokens of their good wishes. It was fitting to end the program with the singing of two stanzas of *O Canada*, after which there was ample time and space to enjoy the Anniversary Cake, coffee, refreshments, and an extensive display of the *Historical Information and Documentation Centre of the Niagara Canadian Reformed Churches*.

On Saturday, September 14, the broader community was invited to join church members for a well-attended breakfast organized by the home mission committee, and the next day Reverend DeGelder led the worship services in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary.

¹Horse-stable.

²Officially, "an object used to beat the dust out of mats," but in "ancient" times also applied in corporal discipline. 

Report on the RCUS 256th Synod

Sutton, Nebraska, May 20-23, 2002

By W. Gortemaker

Travelling straight down the United States Interstate 29 from the Manitoba border we see the landscape slowly changing. First in colour, for the bare trees are just budding in Manitoba, but gradually we see the green sheen of leaves appearing. After a four-hour trip we find young leaves freshen the landscape. It is not until we have driven seven to eight hours that we fully enjoy lush green foliage around us. Secondly, the flat prairie landscape changes, after five hours, to a rolling, agricultural setting.

Sutton, Nebraska, our destination, is twelve hours south of Winnipeg. In this agricultural village we find two RCUS congregations: Emmanuel Reformed Church and Hope Reformed Church. The congregation of Emmanuel Reformed Church is hosting the 256th Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States. On Monday afternoon the delegates, as well as many spouses, and sometimes children roll into Sutton and greet each other with familial joy in seeing one another again. After the supper meal everyone prepares to attend the prayer service at 7:30 pm. On this evening Rev. R. Potter presides over the service, and Rev. Paul Treick preaches the Word of God from 2 Corinthians 10:12,17,18 under the theme "The Measure of Your Ministry."

The well attended prayer service over, the president, Rev. Vernon Pollema, calls the assembly to order. Roll call is held, and the host congregation ensures that all visitors are taken care of. The assembly recesses till the next morning.

On Tuesday morning at 8:00 am, after prayer, all delegates are called to order, and roll call shows that forty-two ministers and thirty-two elders

are present. The president defines the bar of the house as the first ten pews on either side of the aisle. All those within the bar of the house may participate in the discussions and vote on the matters before them. The election of officers for Synod resulted in Rev. Vernon Pollema being chosen as President, Rev. Paul Treick as Vice-President, Rev. Frank Walker as Stated Clerk, and Mr. Greiman as Treasurer. These officers have served together at many Synods, an indication of the trust placed in them. The Standing Rules are read, the agenda is adopted, the order of the day is presented and special orders are announced.

At this point the fraternal delegates are welcomed and seated within the bar of the house (they may participate in the discussions); visitors are also welcomed. Present at Synod are the following delegates: representing the Canadian Reformed Churches, elder Bill Gortemaker, from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, Rev. Mark Harrington, and from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, Rev. Anthony Cowley. Observers introduced at Synod are: Rev. Al Vermeer from the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church, and later, Rev. Todd Joling from the United Reformed Churches of North America. Other visitors and representatives of seminaries, college, and institutions are acknowledged as well.

Five new ministers are received at this Synod, among them Rev. K. Hamilton, who is the pastor of the Deaf Reformed Church of Danville, Kentucky. Interesting to observe is the presence of two interpreters for the deaf brothers at Synod. These expressive interpreters served during the entire Synod as well as during two wor-

ship services and all meal functions. In this way the deaf fully participate in all matters before Synod. The RCUS has two churches for the deaf. The one not yet mentioned is the Deaf Reformed Church in Columbia, Maryland. There is a great desire to minister to deaf people in other cities as well.

As delegate I was able to provide information to Synod itself as well as at the committee level about contacts the Canadian Reformed Churches have developed. Needing to return to Canada on Thursday I was unable to attend the discussions on that day. The following information I have gleaned from Rev. Jim West's report in the *Reformed Herald*, June 2002. Of interest is the referral to Special Committees of the matter of the viability of a synodical seminary, congregational sovereignty to nominate elders directly from the floor without the consistory's approval, and covenant education. The RCUS presently sends theological students to various approved seminaries, none of which are solely directed by the RCUS. City Seminary of Sacramento, California provides Reformed theological training to students of various ecclesiastical backgrounds. The fledgling Heidelberg Seminary in Vermillion, South Dakota aims to be a RCUS directed seminary.

The matter of the congregation's right to nominate elders from the floor without seeking approval of the consistory zeroed in on an apparent contradiction between Article 48 of the Constitution and Article 21 of the Model Constitution of Synod. The former allows it; the latter does not.

Regarding covenant education Synod considered the scope of such

education. "The Majority Report endorsed Covenant Education, but it also allowed for instruction in Government Schools, but with some strong qualifications. The Minority Report did not specify any qualifications and some of the delegates even thought that it mandated Covenant Education for all grade levels, including all post high school education. With concur-

rence of the authors of both reports, the Synod voted to recommit these reports for one more year."

Your delegate received abundant good care and hospitality in Sutton, Nebraska. Our gracious hosts, the Lyle Griess family and the Rev. George Syms family, provided an historical perspective on the establishment and development of the Ger-

man Reformed Churches in the area. Just prior to the Synod meeting, Emmanuel Reformed Church celebrated its 125th anniversary. The struggle to remain Reformed in an increasingly secularized world is also part of their history. May the Lord grant the Reformed Church in the United States his indispensable blessings as they go forward in faith. 

Address to the RCUS Synod

By W. Gortemaker

Esteemed brothers, officers of Synod:

For the second time I have the privilege of attending your Synod meetings. The first time was in Hamburg, and I still have pleasant memories of meeting many of you on that occasion. The delegation of the contact committee with your church on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches is very singular this time. My fellow brothers on the committee, Rev. Klaas Jonker, Rev. Jack Moesker, and elder Art Poppe, are, presently, attending our Regional Synod West in Winnipeg, Manitoba. To me then is the honour of addressing you on behalf of the Canadian Reformed Churches.

One year ago, in May 2001, at our Synod in Neerlandia, Alberta, the decision to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Reformed Church in the United States marked an important step in the history of our contacts. That decision was the culmination of our discussions with your Interchurch Relations Committee. Its chairman, Rev. Ron Potter, has been and continues to be an important link in furthering the contacts and discussions. Your affable representatives to our last Synod, the Rev. George Syms and elder Dave Stelpstra, have given us a good insight into your activities on the national as

well as the international church scene. We appreciate their willingness to share their knowledge; in this way we may learn from one another.

The decision of our Synod is at the same time a launching pad for further developments in our relations. This Synod mandated our Committee for Contact with Churches in the Americas, the CCCA, of which we are a sub-committee, "to continue the discussion on the issues noted in Considerations 4.2; 4.4; 4.5."

Consideration 4.2 regards the different practices in the observance of the Lord's Day. The Synod states: "ongoing discussion about different practices will be mutually beneficial."

The struggle to dedicate the entire day as the day of the Lord, and how best to practise it for both older and younger members is an issue where we need one another's encouragement.

Consideration 4.4 is about the administration of the Lord's Supper to shut-ins. The Belgic Confession in Article 35 states: "Finally, we receive this holy sacrament in the congregation of the people of God with humility and reverence as we together commemorate the death of Christ our Saviour with thanksgiving and we confess our faith and Christian religion." The discussion point centres on the question whether the Lord's Supper should be

celebrated outside of the gathering of the congregation.

Consideration 4.5 concerns the language used in the "Five Principles" regarding your position paper "Biblical Principles of Church Unity." Synod considered that "the RCUS would do well to bring its speaking about the church more in harmony with the language of the Three Forms of Unity."

We are thankful that none of these items are a hindrance to exercising our ecclesiastical fellowship. Our committee considers these points not issues of division but rather unity enhancers. It is therefore our great desire to speak with you and your committee about the Lord's work as revealed in the Scriptures and summarized in the Three Forms of Unity. We look forward to meeting with the Interchurch Relations Committee sometime this Fall in Garner, Iowa, the Lord willing.

As mentioned before, the decision of the Canadian Reformed Churches to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the RCUS is a launching pad for further developments. Our committee has actively promoted closer relations with the RCUS by inviting Canadian Reformed Churches via the Classes to take up contact with their counterparts in the RCUS for exchanges as observers to take place. Some exchanges have occurred and more are contemplated.

Such fruitful interchanges pave the way for more frequent contacts.

Some of our ministers have attended an RCUS ministerial conference at which they enjoyed the speeches and fellowship. Time permitting, more such interchanges are being considered. From brothers and sisters in our federation we hear of personal visits made to your congregations, and your members. We, who live north of the border, look for opportunities to travel in the United States, and then to spend the Lord's Day where we might find brothers and sisters in the faith. As I expressed at our Synod in my address to your Rev. George Syms and elder Dave Stelpstra: the bond we have in our Lord Jesus Christ should not be a distant one, but one that endeavours to further the work of the Lord on this continent and is exercised by the members of his church.

The Canadian Reformed Synod in 2001 also decided to enter into ecclesiastical fellowship with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. You already have such a relationship.

Our church federations separately and together may point one another to the Scriptures and the Confessions and encourage everyone to walk by the living Word of God.

A somewhat more involved relationship is the one with the United Re-

*Rev. George Syms, of
Emmanuel Reformed
Church*



formed Churches in North America. Our Synod 2001 recognized these churches as true churches of the Lord and the ongoing discussions toward federative unity took another step forward. It was agreed unanimously to move on to Phase 2 in our relationship. Phase 2 involves close cooperation in order to come to organic unity. Local unity efforts by many congregations are in varying stages of cooperation. When the URC's Synod Escondido decided to commit itself to working towards federative unity upon ratification by their churches in January

2002, the efforts towards union took a leap forward. In the meantime the United Reformed Churches have ratified Synod Escondido's decision, and committees from both sides are now dealing with issues such as Theological Education, the Church Order, and the matter of the Songbook. The actual time frame for organic unity is dependent on the progress made in the next few years. We ask the Lord's blessing on all who seek true unity of faith.

Your IRC committee has urged us to become participants in the NAPARC organization. We have received information about the Council as well as its constitution. Our plan is to send observers to the next NAPARC meeting. It is the task of the CCCA to investigate our possible membership in the Council. The CCCA is to bring its evaluation to our Synod in 2004.

Esteemed brothers, I have given you a brief overview of what has been happening in regards with our contacts with you. Our committee realizes that we both have time constraints; we are all busy carrying out our God-given task at home, and that is good, but we urge both committees to ensure that our ecclesiastical fellowship is actualized. In this way we hope that our service in the larger Jerusalem may be acceptable to the brothers and sisters on both sides of the border, and above all, pleasing in the sight of our sovereign Lord and King, Jesus Christ.

Thank you for receiving me, and on behalf of our committee, as well as on behalf of the Canadian and American Reformed Churches, I wish you the Lord's blessing on your Synod's deliberations and on the churches you are shepherding.



Emmanuel Reformed Church, Sutton, Nebraska



Reformed Secondary Education

By K. Sikkema

In the history of Canadian Reformed schools we can observe a trend to first establish an elementary school, and to proceed to other levels later. During the 1970s, there was a drive to add high schools, and another drive to add a Teacher's College. During the 1990s we saw a flurry of new kindergartens that now dot the Reformed educational map. In all cases, the schools could draw on patterns established, for good reason, in the days of the Reformation. At that time, our fathers worked hard to establish schools to help prepare their children for a life of serving God and their neighbour. One principle they found was that these schools should

To lead their children to a God-fearing rather than a man-fearing or mammon-fearing maturity.

maintain and enforce what was taught in church and at home. Our fathers thus aimed for the establishment of a cord of three educational strands – church, home, and school – that is not quickly torn apart (Eccl 4:12). Another principle they found was that bringing up the next generation, while primarily the task of parents, is jointly also the responsibility of the whole covenant community. Finally, mindful of Proverbs 22:6, the old man in Psalm 71, and Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Tim 3:14ff, they saw their efforts as a way to express their gratitude to God for delivering them from burdens He had not laid on their shoulders, and to lead their children to a God-fearing rather than a man-fearing or mammon-fearing maturity.

There have been efforts to establish secondary schools for the children of the covenant as early as the 1970s.

Guido de Brès Christian High School in Hamilton, for instance, started operating on a full-time basis in 1975, Emmanuel Christian High School of Fergus started in Guelph in 1977, and Credo Christian High School in Langley started in 1978. Other schools across the country added high school grades to their elementary programs during the 1970s and 1980s. Some schools had to discontinue high school grades due hurdles like lack of commitment, funds, or qualified staffing. Currently, Covenant in Neerlandia has re-established high school grades, Ebenezer in Smithers is attempting to re-establish its high school grades, and Emmanuel in Fergus is once again contemplating the addition of grades 11 and 12.

Hurdles

Several hurdles must be overcome to establish a high school. One only needs to think of the financial implications! Apart from capital expenditures, Guido de Brès Christian High School's annual operating budget, for instance, amounts to \$2,439,192 for educating 420 students, or some \$5800 per student. Such expenses would be beyond the budget of many, and the principle of joint community responsibility helps significantly (although not usually optimally) to reduce the burden on individual families. Indeed, despite the well-intended community-supported character of these schools, not all people can or will contribute fully. As a result, others will have to pull a larger load. The shortage of teachers is also a general concern, as it may be difficult to attract staff that are properly qualified and dedicated. In some cases, the constitution needs to be changed to allow for a high school expansion. Furthermore, not all people are immediately convinced in their minds that such expansion is the right thing to do at this time, while some may even have the gut-feeling that the effort currently actually goes beyond what the Lord is asking.

There are good arguments to establish Reformed secondary education, but that is not to pontificate that all school societies should immediately establish a

Reformed high school. The arguments will also need to be considered in their local context and possibilities, which could, in fact, make the establishment or continued operation of a high school a highly debatable choice. The school in Smithers, for instance, had to close its high school for some years for lack of qualified Reformed teachers. Good stewards must not only look at finances, and at availability of able and dedicated reformed staff, but also at the development and delivery of a curriculum that will effectively assist the parents and the community in training and equipping the children of the next generation for the task the Lord gives them in this life.

The question of whether or not one should have a local Reformed high school could easily become a fence that splits a flock or divides a community.

Communities must do so without just lulling parents into thinking that such goals are being met: in the end it will be rightly exposed as hypocrisy.

When, for whatever reason, the obstacles are large, alternative solutions could be considered and discussed. In some cases, a community could consider cooperation with a broader range of Reformed churches – such as Providence Reformed Collegiate in London, Ontario. In rare cases it may be possible to draw extensively from available real talent in a community to run a good high school with several volunteers or without fully qualified staff. Even then, there is a need for thorough educational leadership to develop and maintain a well-considered Reformed curriculum. In striving for the ideal, it may indeed be necessary to be patient for some time, whether that be with each other (as everyone reflects on the need, opportunity, and requirements at his or her own pace) or for the Lord to let "things to fall into place." Sometimes it makes sense to

work with a decision “in principle,” because there is a conviction that it is the right way to go, but people or circumstances are not quite ready to meet the requirements of implementation. It is obvious that extensive discussions about the principles need to be held to come to such conclusions. In any case, in the heat of discussions about major issues such as this one, it may occasionally indeed be difficult to keep minds, feelings, and convictions balanced. It is a blessing when the discussions are held in an edifying manner reminiscent of the principles of the communion of saints at work in Acts 4, and Paul’s directives for unity in Christ as elaborated on in 1 Corinthians.

Divisions

It would appear that divisions in the Church at Corinth came about when people were not with one heart and mind devoted to “Christ crucified: the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor 1:23, 24). However, Christ gave his life for the congregation, and it is only in Him that the life of the believer and of the congregation has a foundation and makes sense (2 Cor 5:14, 15). He is the Good Shepherd, and it is only by staying on his side of the fence that we get the full benefit of the very green pastures to which He leads us. In Paul’s days, the people of Corinth got excited about different things and different prominent figures in the church. Today, likewise, the question of whether or not one should have a local Reformed high school could easily become a fence that splits a flock or divides a community, and that tarnishes rather than honours the name of the Lord.

Such division could make it appear that the issue at hand is more important than the honour of Christ, that the potential outcome drives more strongly than the love which Paul indicates in 1 Corinthians 13 as the more excellent way to be the body of Christ, and that the power and wisdom of God are no longer present. Some may become so zealous for a particular outcome, that principles of love, unity, and responsibility get overridden or neglected. When we consider arguments for or against a major proposal in our educational efforts, let us still be of one devoted heart and humble mind, and first of all seek the honour of Christ. Being for Christ cannot, and therefore may not, tear the community apart in anger and frustration when some are for, and

others are against a proposal. For ecclesiastical matters (which schools are not as such), the practical application of this principle is laid down in Article 31 of the Church Order: after appeal, what is agreed upon by majority vote shall be considered settled and binding, unless it is proved to be in conflict with the Word of God or with the Church Order.

There is love and wisdom in seeking ample majorities for major decisions. There is love, because it shows patience with the weaker brother or sister who needs more time to become convinced, without condemning him or her. There is wisdom also, because it leaves a smaller minority that might be expected to comply, and mere compliance with the will of a small majority does not make for whole-hearted commitment to the cause. Coercion does not breed heartfelt commitment, but resentment, and resentment will destroy the positive atmosphere required for effective Reformed education (cf. 1 Cor 4:21; 2 Cor 1:23-2:1; 13:10). A rule of thumb could be that the majority has to be large enough to carry the load without having to rely on contributions from those who are not ready. Then the support can be genuinely from the heart, and the joy complete when others join in the effort.



Peregrine Survey

By K. Sikkema

When summer comes in sight, schools are involved in a frenzy of activities that are hard to report on in a timely fashion through this column. Yet, there are things worth remembering, and here is a smorgasbord of musings, reflections, and ruminations from the end of last school year. Try them for discussion starters over coffee one day, or let them trigger your curiosity and become the beginning of an exciting journey of exploration!

- “The one thing that we have to keep in focus is that our goal should not be a high enrollment figure or lack of financial worries. Instead, we must aim to be faithful and obedient in our task of training our children, covenant children that our Lord has entrusted to us, to the best of our ability,” ruminates Smithers’ board president.

- At William of Orange, the Principal has been “musing while fading away,” and considers that the 50th anniversary of the school is only three years in the future. Just wonder what stories that will evoke! The new principal seeks the blessing “of our great covenant God as He moulds and shapes us to be everything He has created us to be.”
- Credo Christian High ranked 21st (up from last year’s 37th) in the Fraser Institute’s report on 278 schools. Rev. Steve Schlissel’s Messiah Congregation in New York was overwhelmed with contributions toward a post-9/11 relief fund, and has a \$200,000 US surplus. If the donors agree, which include Credo Christian High, this will be dedicated to an outreach project to start a Reformed church near Ground Zero and to evangelize to New York’s Muslims.
- Credo Elementary’s Ladies Aid contributes \$30,000 from past fundraisers to update the playground, including new fencing, playground equipment, and leveling off the area behind the gym. The board discussed how to keep members after their last child has graduated.
- “Generally, the school provides everything the students need. You send a well-rested, well-dressed and well-fed child to school, and the staff will give the child everything else he needs to learn.” (That’s an honest quote from a principal!)
- “Only a school which is in harmony with home and church, where parents can take their children with the confidence that God’s commands in Deuteronomy 6, Psalm 78, and Ephesians 6 are being maintained, is a school that will thoroughly train a child to be equipped for life in this world so that God’s kingdom may be established,” said Rev. R. Aasman in Edmonton.
- “Membership meetings offer parents an opportunity that is unique to private schools, in that they can directly influence the operation of the school through members’ motions and comments. This is truly a blessing,” muses Coaldale’s board chairman.
- “The greatest weakness of the whole Character Education movement is its unwillingness to root moral behaviour in Christian morality. They want all the benefits of a moral Christian lifestyle, without the doctrine. They

want the students to consistently demonstrate the fruits of the Holy Spirit, yet without the Holy Spirit!" observes colleague Penninga from Carman in his reflections on a workshop about Character Education at the Coaldale Teachers' convention.

- Owen Sound has a new way of locking in on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills: "When the tests were finished, time was up, and the students could leave (the library), but . . . the door was locked and couldn't be opened. Even Mr. Hutten came to rescue them, but

to no avail. It was lunch time so lunches were served through the window, and later everyone escaped the locked room. . . also through the window. Finally a locksmith came to remove the lock and open the door."

- "Br. ___ informed the Board that he had been elected to the church council, and therefore he requested relief from his position on the Board. The chairman thanked him for his work on the Board and wished him the blessing of the Lord in his work on council." Read on. . .

- ACRES board chairman reports that the St. Catharines CRC "will never nominate a school board member for church council. On the contrary, it has happened in the past that members have left the church council in order to accept an appointment to the Christian school board."

May our educational efforts be guided by wisdom from our faithful God. 

Mr. Keith Sikkema is a grade 8 teacher and vice-principal at John Calvin School in Smithville.
ksikkema@juno.com

Zion; God's New Jerusalem Promised

Isaiah 62

My diadem, My Hephzibah,
My crown of pure delight,
Let righteousness shine like the dawn;
Salvation's blazing light.

You, in My place, called Beulah,
Nations will know your name,
Earth's glorious kings regard your wealth;
My Glory grants you fame.

No longer you'll "Deserted" be
Nor be named, "Desolate"
My glorious bride, come dwell with Me;
Guards watch My walled estate.

No enemy shall eat your grain,
(I swear by MY RIGHT HAND,)
Nor foreigners drink your new wine
Nor till in vain your land.

My Bride will eat and praise her Love;
Am I not God your Lord?
Then gather grapes, bring in the grain,
Come, enter in My court.

Pass through the gates, enter with joy,
Build up, cast stones away,
My banner raised for all to see,
Proclaim all this, today!

To Zion's virgin daughter speak,
Your Saviour comes, the LORD,
His recompense He brings with Him
To you as your reward.

MY HOLY PEOPLE you'll be called,
Redeemed, "Deserted" bride,
"Sought after," will be your new name
His Zion found inside.

A. Blokhuis
4 Aug. 2001



Press Release of Classis Alberta of October 8, 2002 held in Calgary, Alberta

On behalf of the convening church, Rev. R. Eikelboom called the meeting to order. He requested that Psalm 122:1, 2 be sung, and read from Psalm 125. In prayer he asked a blessing over this meeting. Rev. Eikelboom mentioned that since the last Classis, Rev. T. Lodder declined the three calls that he received, that Rev. G.A. Snip has accepted the call to Zevenbergen, The Netherlands, and that in the meantime Rev. W.B. Slomp has accepted the call to Immanuel. Since then, Neerlandia called Rev. R. Eikelboom who has declined the call.

The Church at Calgary reported that the credentials are in good order. The classis was declared constituted. The officers were as follows:

Rev. E.J. Tiggeelaar, chairman;
Rev. W.B. Slomp, vice-chairman;
Rev. T. Lodder, clerk.

After the adoption of the Agenda the chairman welcomed the delegates, giving a special welcome to Rev. E. Marcusse and br. J. De Bruyn from the Bethel URCNA who are present as observers.

The report for needy churches was tabled and adopted. The churches were assessed \$14.80 per communicant member for the year 2003. Rev. Snip's report on his visit to the URCNA Classis meeting was read and received with thankfulness. A letter was read from Rev. R. Aasman stating that he was not able to attend this Classis meeting because he was required to attend Classis Pacific West as deputy regional Synod for the peremptory examination of Julius VanSpronsen. Rev. Aasman also reported that invitations were extended to the POD of the OPC and the RCUS to attend our Classis. The RCUS sent regrets.

The Church at Neerlandia requested pulpit supply during their vacancy, every third week. This request was granted. After a coffee break Rev. Marcusse from the URCNA was given the opportunity to speak a few words. He expressed thanks for the relationship with the Canadian Reformed Churches. Rev. Slomp responded and

thanked him and his fellow delegate for being in our midst.

The church visit report to the church at Coaldale was presented and dealt with in closed session. Question period and article 44 CO was held. An observers' report of the POD of the OPC from Classis Manitoba was received for information.

The next Classis was scheduled to be convened by the Church at Coaldale on December 10, 2002, with alternate date March 11, 2003. The proposed officers are: chairman, Rev. J. Van Popta, vice-chairman, Rev. E.J. Tiggeelaar, clerk, Rev. W.B. Slomp. Rev. R. Eikelboom was appointed to replace Rev. G.A. Snip as church visitor, and as examiner New Testament. Rev. R. Aasman was appointed as contact person of the POD of the OPC. Rev. T. Lodder was appointed as observer to the RCUS, South Central Classis, and Rev. John Van Popta observer to the URCNA. Rev. VanPopta will also make up a schedule of preaching for the church at Neerlandia.

Several members made use of the question period. The chairman judged that no censure (ad article 34 CO) was necessary. The Acts and the Press release were read and approved. Classis joined in singing Psalm 89:1. The chairman led in thanksgiving prayer and closed this classis meeting.

*For Classis Alberta
Rev. W. B. Slomp,
vice-chairman at that time*

Press Release of Classis Pacific West held in the Maranatha Church at Surrey on Tuesday, October 8, 2002

The chairman of the convening Church of Surrey (Maranatha), the Rev. C. VanSpronsen, asked those present to sing Psalm 2: 1, 4. He read from 2 Timothy 2 and led in prayer.

He then welcomed all of the visitors and extended a special welcome to minister-elect J.M. VanSpronsen and his wife, Karen. He also acknowledged the presence of the Deputies of Regional Synod West, the Revs. R. Aasman and R.A. Schouten.

Several highlights that took place in the classical region were mentioned, namely that the Church at Smithers received a positive answer to its call to candidate J.M. Van Spronsen, that the Chinese Christian Fellowship was blessed with its first baptisms and that the Rev. K.A. Wieske recently ended his furlough and returned to work in Brazil.

After this a report was received on the credentials. They were found to be in good order. Classis was constituted and the officers were appointed:

Rev. D. Poppe - chairman
Rev. J. Visscher - vice-chairman
Rev. E. Kampen - clerk.

The agenda was then revised and adopted.

Classis proceeded to the peremptory examination of Mr. J.M. Van Spronsen. First, the documents were examined and found to be in order. He was given an opportunity to present his sermon proposal on Matthew 27:62-66; 28:11-15. In closed session Classis evaluated the sermon and decided to proceed.

Thereafter, he was examined in the areas of Old Testament, New Testament, knowledge of the Holy Scriptures, doctrine and creeds, ethics, church history, church government and practical theology (aka diaconiology).

Classis went into closed session again to evaluate the examination as a whole. After the advice of the Regional Synod deputies was received, Classis approbated the call and admitted candidate J.M. VanSpronsen to the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the Canadian Reformed Churches. The chairman informed him of the decision and read the Form of Subscription, which was then signed. Psalm 134 was sung, prayer was said and congratulations were extended.

Under correspondence, there was a letter from the Church at Houston in which Classis was informed about progress made locally with the United Reformed Churches of North America.

The Maranatha Church at Surrey presented a proposal on inviting and receiving observers from sister churches.

It was decided to do so immediately with the URCNA, and possibly with the OPC, PCK and RCUS in the future, should there be churches of the last three federations living in close proximity to the churches of Classis Pacific West.

Various reports were received. Church visits to the Churches at Houston and Smithers were read and received with thankfulness.

The Question Period according to Article 44 of the Church Order was held and several churches asked for advice.

A number of appointments were made. The Church at Willoughby Heights at Langley was appointed the Convening Church of the next Classis on December 3, 2002 (alternate: April 1, 2003) in Langley. The following executive was proposed: chairman - Rev.

J. Visscher, vice-chairman - Rev. E. Kampen, clerk - Rev. J. Huijgen.

Personal question period was held. Censure according to Article 34 C.O. was not needed. The Acts were adopted and the Press Release was approved. The chairman requested that Psalm 16: 4 be sung, led in prayer and closed classis.

*For Classis Pacific West,
J. Visscher*

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

Dear Editor:

In *Clarion* #14, July 5, 2002, Rev. J. Visscher writes an editorial all about celebrating the Lord's Supper. I will not go in discussion about the issue. I will only say a few words about his way of writing. He might end his article with the remark, "Objections also must be received with charity and respectfully." But that is just what is lacking in his editorial. I will quote: "The Lord's Supper has become a meal of discord and contention." I ask the question: Who is causing the discord? Those who will maintain the communal cup? Or those who want individual cups? The same about sitting at table or in the pew.

Rev. Visscher writes, "Not one Canadian Reformed church has ever used one cup." "Those who see everything as prescriptive, need to insist that the Lord's Supper be celebrated in reclining position." "They also might want to insist that there be no more than thirteen people reclining at one time." "They demand that one communal cup be used and that wine be used, but they say not a word about reclining at table."

Rev. Visscher asks the question, "Where have these members, who insist today on a single communal cup been for the past fifty years? Why did they never protest in the past against the use of more than one cup?" I will ask: where have the members who insist today on individual cups been for the past fifty

years? I know the argument about the danger of contagious disease. Has that all of a sudden become a danger? By the way, wine is good for decontamination. But first of all, are the words of the doxology after celebrating not for today anymore? To wit, "Who heals all your diseases?" Rev. Visscher makes the objections of some brothers and sisters a mockery.

*W. DeHaan
Dunnville, Ontario*

Re: Office Bearers in Christ's Church by Rev W. den Hollander

Having served as deacon and now as an elder, I appreciated reading the above mentioned article in issue 18. It most certainly would form a good basis for reconsidering the decision taken by our 1983 Synod, "Decisions re Revision Church Order," article 91, in particular under "Considerations" art 38, 39, and 40. The minority report of article 91 would be more reflective of the basic principles that W. den Hollander has beautifully touched on in his speech.

I am looking forward to Part 2.

*Sincerely yours,
Aubrey VanderGaag
Aldergrove, B.C.*