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*When we
enter church,
we enter into
the presence
of God*



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C. Van Dam

“Sunday Best”?

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The current growing trend of dressing down for church is not a good one

How should one dress for church? A fair question is it not? Yet, it's not a topic many like to talk about, for today's trend is to dress in what's most comfortable and casual, regardless of the occasion. Indeed, even in worship services one can detect a slow erosion of "Sunday best." Because of the culture we live in, merely hinting at the topic of dress and worship can raise some hackles. A typical response is that God doesn't care what clothes you wear. He looks into the heart and what's in the heart is important. The latter point is of course true (Ps 24:4), but the statement that God does not care about dress for official worship can be challenged. The current growing trend of dressing down for church is not a good one.

He expects us, who by nature are but miserable sinners, to approach Him with awe, reverence, and in our best attire

Bear with me for I would like to address this issue from Scripture. First let's note the fact that it is a tremendous privilege of divine grace that we may begin each week by going to church to worship our God and King. What an awesome prerogative to be able to come into his presence as his people and sing our praises, articulate our thanks, and listen to Him speaking to us through the Word read and proclaimed.

In order to appreciate our worship properly, however, it helps to know a little of its background and history. So let's take a very brief look at some relevant aspects of Old and New Testament worship so we can better appreciate some of what we do and where we are heading with our worship.

From Old to New

After God had set his people free from their Egyptian bondage, Israel had the excitement of meeting God at Mount Sinai. However, before they could come into his presence and hear Him, God ordered that they consecrate themselves, wash their clothes, and stay away from the mountain. To touch it would mean death (Exod 19:10-12). God was indicating that He was holy and therefore to be respected and feared. He also indicated that it mattered to Him how his people appeared before Him. He demanded consecration, that is setting themselves apart to the Lord. This consecration broke their pattern of daily living, for it was to take place over two days. We do not read much detail as to precisely how this consecration was to be done; but, the clothes are mentioned. They must be washed. You are appearing before the Holy One! God demanded holiness and respect and that had to be evident also in the clothing.

This divine concern for how one appeared before God was also evident with the worship at the tabernacle and temple. There were graded levels of holiness surrounding these sanctuaries. The people were not allowed inside. The priests could enter the Holy Place and only the High Priest could go once a year into the Holy of Holies or the Most Holy Place. In



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order to approach God, they had to dress according to his dress code. This was very elaborate for the high priest (Exod 28:1-39). The ordinary priests had to have linen clothes that were, just as the high priest's, designed for "dignity and honour" (Exod 28:2, 40). The original can also be translated as "for glory and splendour." The words used also convey the ideas of finery, luxury, and splendid beauty. The point is that the clothes were to reflect something of the fact that the priests were in God's presence, for this apparel was to be worn when the priests worked at the tabernacle or temple (cf. Deut 12:7, 18). The importance of proper dress is underlined by the fact that even if a priest was doing something as menial as cleaning out the ashes of the whole burnt offering, he had to wear the clothes which the Lord had specified for this task (Lev 6:10-11).

All this has relevance for today when we realize the new context we are in. God has now set his people free from the Egypt of sin and satanic domination through "Christ, our Passover Lamb" (1 Cor 5:7). This means that instead of approaching Mount Sinai, we may now come near in worship to Mount Zion! As we read in Hebrews 12, "But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Heb 12:22-24). We may worship in the face of heaven, so to speak. But, it gets even better. Because of the sprinkled blood of Christ, we may "have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus. . . let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water"

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(Heb 10:19-22). As priests to God (cf. 1 Pet 2:5), we are allowed to do what only the high priest in the Old Testament could do once a year. As we worship and call on the name of the Lord, we may enter into the Most Holy Place! Who can fully fathom and appreciate what this means?

This momentous truth has implications for the clothes we choose to wear when going to church to worship in God's very presence. If God was concerned how the priests approached Him in the Old Testament, would He be any less concerned today when the priestly privileges of drawing near to God in the Most Holy Place are open to all believers? Our God is still the same. He is holy and majestic. He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords who comes to judge this world. He expects us, who by nature are but miserable sinners, to approach Him with awe, reverence, and in our best attire, reflecting the principle of the priestly dress that our clothes are for "dignity and beauty" in God's presence (Exod 28:2, 40; Heb 12:28-29).

In keeping with the age in which we live, the age of the Holy Spirit, God leaves the details of our dress to us. We should not need to draft rules for how to dress for worship. The Lord our God has enabled us to make such decisions since we have both the relevant principles spelled out in his Word, as well as the gift of his Spirit who is able to guide us by means of the Word. But, we in turn need to make sure that the Spirit has the necessary room to work in our lives so that he can mould us and our thinking in accord with God's will. We need to consciously continue to work on developing a counter-culture that challenges the norms of a neo-pagan world around us, also in the area of dress, and certainly when it pertains to worship.

The way ahead

It is very easy to become unwittingly influenced by the culture around us. People dress down and turn their noses at authority, including God's. The lack of respect is widespread in our current society. In that kind of a culture, we need to prepare very deliberately for the Sunday and heed the admonition of Ecclesiastes which can be paraphrased: "Guard your steps when you go to church!" (Eccl 5:1).

When we enter church, we are entering space specifically reserved for worship where as congregation we officially enter into the presence of God and where our worship and prayers take us into the Most Holy Place. The clothes we wear must reflect this awesome reality.

It is one thing for an unchurched person coming to church out of curiosity or because of hunger for spiritual food. He may not have had a chance to prepare himself properly or may not know what worship involves. That cannot be said of those raised in the church. When one considers that even our current worldly culture honours dress codes to ensure proper apparel for all kinds of occasions, even for playing golf at upscale courses, is it not dishonouring to the most high God when people approach Him in official worship in clothes that are less than Sunday best?

It is very easy to become unwittingly influenced by the culture around us

There is also something else to note. Not only is the congregation a holy priestly people, but it is also bride of Christ. As bride of the Saviour, living in the expectation of the great marriage feast, believers prepare for Christ's coming and for the day on which He will clothe them in the white robes of redemption (Rev 19:7-8). In anticipation of that day, should we not honour our Lord and Master by now already dressing in our best when we appear before him in grateful worship?

A well-known Old Testament scholar noted that "the way in which one appears physically before God frequently betrays one's attitude of mind (cf. Matt 22:11-14)" (R.K. Harrison, *Leviticus*, p. 75). Let us not lose our sense of awe and wonder at being in God's presence. It is a privilege we cannot take for granted. As Scripture exhorts us: "Let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb 12:28-29).



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Our World: A Home or Prison?



MATTHEW 13:52

And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.
Genesis 2:3

A home is a place where we want to be. A prison is a place you want to escape but cannot. God created the world to be our home. Yet the way in which we work can turn this home into a prison. That should never happen!

To God, this is a very serious matter. He even made provisions on the very first pages of the Bible to prevent this from happening. God ordered the world so that our labour would contribute something significant to creation. Adam and Eve were to have dominion over the earth. They and all their children would never be done with it. For "the whole earth is full of his glory," we read in Isaiah. The human race has the delightful task of discovering and developing God's world through their labour.

So Adam and Eve got to work right away. But what a job! To dig a hole, they had to devise a shovel. To make a rope, they had braid strands of grass together. The challenges that they faced were daunting.

And danger loomed immediately: Adam and Eve might simply live to labour because they had projects to accomplish and chores to finish. How easily they could slip into the pattern of rising early in the morning and labouring late into the night, only to throw themselves into bed, dog-tired, plagued by dreams about the countless tasks that still faced them. It is not hard to imagine

them feeling trapped by their work, becoming weary and feeling somewhat hopeless.

Of course, Adam and Eve did not become slaves to their labour in the Garden of Eden. Paradise was their home, not their prison. They laboured for God, rested in the power of his love, and lived deliberately for his glory.

But when sin came, things changed. For then they didn't just need a shovel to dig the soil, but a hoe to chop the weeds. And because creation had become less cooperative, they needed a sweat band too. When sin came, people would not just live to work, they would work themselves to death! In connection with man's heavy labour, God said, "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return" (Gen 3:19).

That is not how we should work: God did not create us only to labour. That is, work should not be our master. We were created in God's image and through our labour we are still called to bring glory to God.

To prevent us from living only to labour and to encourage us instead to live for God's glory, God set a pattern in the very first week of creation. God spent six days creating the universe and on the seventh day He rested. God could

work hard. But He could stop working too! He didn't work because He had to. He wasn't driven by some compelling force to work. Moses says in Exodus 31:17 that God abstained from work on the seventh day "and was refreshed" (RSV). He was refreshed by enjoying the fruit of his labour.

This is not just an idle fact, but a pattern that God set for us, for He sanctified the seventh day and made it holy. He set apart one day in seven so that like God we might be refreshed. Above all, God wants us to be refreshed by resting for worship, by setting our work aside so that we might discover again that we live not to labour, but we live to worship God. We regain our bearings in the presence of God. When we worship God in church, we rediscover each week that we are precious to God. We are not his slaves, but his children! God's love for us should be even more powerfully pressed on our hearts when we call upon Him through his Son Jesus Christ, who delivered us from slavery. We may rest in the providential care of a loving Father and in the eternal salvation of a loving Saviour.

Examine your life to be sure that your work is not your master. Do your work diligently, but know that your Father in heaven will take care of you. Go to church to be refreshed in his mighty love and to discover the blessing of resting in God.





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Family Worship (Part 1 of 3)

The year was 1997 and a small group of people prepared a report on "The Role of Faith in the Lives of Young People in the Canadian Reformed Churches in the Fraser Valley." From what I understand, this was an enlightening project for the community. 312 young people were surveyed about their faith in connection with home, school, and church. One of the interesting points had to do with the home front. Over ninety percent of the students claimed that their families read the Bible together daily. Many of them, when asked what they would do similar to their own parents, replied that they would definitely do devotions, family Bible reading, and prayer.

Quite likely some of the students who answered those questions now have their own families and children. So, where are we today, ten years later? If we were to do a survey today, would we find that ninety percent of families still read the Bible together? Have the students followed through who claimed that they would do the same as their parents?

Whatever the case may be, this is a good time for us to review where we're at with our family worship. In these articles I want to encourage those whose family worship is minimal or non-existent to begin this practice and make it a regular feature of their home life. Where it is regularly practiced, I want to encourage you to continue

and, where possible, to improve. For those who are newly married or are planning to get married in the near future, I want to encourage you to commit yourself as a couple to this practice.

Biblical basis

Let's begin with the biblical basis for family worship. It's true that there is no direct and explicit command in the Bible for the members of a family to gather together regularly for worship. However, in the best of times, God's people have always practiced this and we can see that in the Bible too. It could be argued that the Bible actually takes it for granted that no direct command about this subject should be necessary. Having said that, the Bible does have a lot to say about families and their worship.

If we begin at the beginning, the first worship in the Bible was family worship. Adam and Eve would have worshipped God together with their children. As time went on, corporate worship was not always neatly distinguished from family worship. After all, the people of God in the Old Testament were not only spiritually a family, they were also physically a family.

However, by the time of Moses, the people of Israel had grown into a nation. Still, God had his eye on individual families, especially when it came to worship. We can see that in what we read from

Exodus 12 about the Passover. The Passover, or "The Feast of Unleavened Bread," was a family institution, an example of family religion. At the Passover, the children were to ask about the meaning of the ceremony and then the explanation would come.

The Passover only took place once per year, but there are other passages in the Old Testament which show that family instruction in the faith was to be a regular item in the life of Israel. In Deuteronomy 6:4-7, we read:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.

Notice here that family instruction was commanded by God. Israelites were to impress God's Word on their children. They were to do this regularly: "When you lie down and when you get up." That has been understood by both Jews and Christians to refer to morning and evening family worship. Moreover, it doesn't matter where the family is, "When you sit in your house and when you walk by the way." We would say, "At home and when you're on holidays." Every day and

Church News

Called by the church of London, Ontario:

Rev. R. Bredenhof
of St. Albert, Alberta.

Declined the call by the church of Denver, CO, USA;
the call by the church of Armadale, Australia; and
the call to Spring Creek, Ontario:

Candidate R. DeJonge

Accepted the call to Langley, British Columbia as co-pastor:

Candidate Ryan DeJonge

Declined the call to Surrey, British Columbia:

Candidate R. Vermeulen

Accepted the call to Glanbrook, Ontario:

Candidate R. Vermeulen

everywhere, God wanted his people to be teaching their children. Now somebody might say, but that was the Old Testament. Then I would ask, is there any indication that things have changed on this score in the New Testament? In fact, as we'll see in a moment, the New Testament reinforces this Old Testament teaching.

Turning to Psalm 78:1-8, we find a compelling poetic lesson on generational responsibility. In verse 3, we discover that the previous generations have faithfully passed on the faith. Their fathers have told them about what God has done, about his power and might. Then in verse 4, Asaph and the people of God declare their commitment to do likewise. They're not going to hide what God has done, but rather declare it and teach it. Moreover, this teaching is going to lead to prayer and praise. Our translation says, "We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord." Literally it says, "The deeds of the praises of Yahweh." When we consider what God has done, the natural outcome is going to be rejoicing and singing! Praises for God in prayer and song! Verse 5 reminds us that God commanded fathers in the Old Testament to do this sort of thing. Why? So that the next generation would know them and pass the faith on to generations not even born yet. Family worship was to be a key component of the transmission of the faith through the generations. Verse 7 says, "Then they would put their trust in God." Family worship is a key part of leading our children to faith in God and his promises, especially as they've been fulfilled for us in Christ. Then also, that they "would not forget his deeds, but would keep his commands." Family worship is a key element in shaping godliness

in the lives of our children, passing on the inheritance that we've received. The end result would be that God's people would be faithful to Him and not stray.

In Proverbs 4:1-4, we read the following:

Hear, my children, the
instruction of a father,
And give attention to know
understanding;

For I give you good doctrine:
Do not forsake my law.

When I was my father's son,
Tender and the only one in the
sight of my mother,
He also taught me, and said to
me:

"Let your heart retain my words;
Keep my commands, and live.

Here we have the picture of an Israelite father instructing his sons.

*Family worship was to be
a key component of the
transmission of the faith
through the generations*

Throughout the book of Proverbs we find that the father is to have the central role in family religion and we see it here too. The picture here is of a father patiently giving sound teaching or doctrine to his sons. But elsewhere in Proverbs we see the mother as well: "Listen, my son, to your father's instruction, and do not forsake the law of your mother" (Prov 1:8). Both parents are indeed involved in nurturing their children in godliness. However, it is true that the Bible, in the Old and New Testament, places the emphasis on the role of the father. Sometimes the instruction that a father gives to his children will have an element of admonition or discipline. We see that in passages like Proverbs 13:1,

"A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke." Or Proverbs 15:5, "A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds corrections shows prudence."

Now it's true that these passages are very broad and don't necessarily speak directly about some kind of formal family worship, but they do give us some general principles regarding the roles of the members of the family and we can apply those principles to family worship. The children are to receive instruction. The father is to be the main figure in giving that instruction and the mother is in a supporting role; at appropriate moments she also gives instruction and supports and reinforces what her husband teaches.

In the next instalment, we'll consider the teaching of the New Testament on this subject.

Farewell to Rev. John Ludwig

Farewell sermon

After nearly seven years of devoted service to the American Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Rev. John Ludwig accepted the call extended to him from our sister church in Ancaster, Ontario. While feeling sadness with the departure of the Ludwig family, we also rejoice with our brothers and sisters in Ancaster, for the Lord has provided them with a servant who will preach to them the whole gospel concerning their salvation. It is with great joy that we recount the blessings that we have received from the hand of our Lord in these past years.

On September 1, 2002, Rev. Ludwig preached his inaugural sermon here in Grand Rapids on Psalm 122, where David prays for the peace of God in Jerusalem; this is what we have enjoyed here in this place – peace between us and God and also among us as brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ. That Rev. Ludwig delivered this sermon in 2002 is very fitting, since he chose Hebrews 13:20-21 as the text for his farewell sermon on June 21, 2009. Here we read, "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the

everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do his will, working in you what is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Rev. Ludwig emphasized that "the peace which we enjoy as church of Jesus Christ is based on the glorious reality that we serve the God of peace." The text is also a benediction, whereby with the uplifted hands of the minister, we receive the blessing of our covenant God and are assured by this sign that He is ever-present among his people. We have our great Shepherd in heaven, and though we may be without an

earthly shepherd for a time, He will watch over us and protect us, and He will guard our going out and our coming in. Rev. Ludwig also drew our focus to his renewing work in us. He comforted and encouraged us in the knowledge that the power that brought up Christ from the dead is the very same power that begins and completes every good work in us, to purify our hearts and to make us more and more after God's image.

At the close of the service, Rev. Ludwig used the words of Hebrews 13 to bestow the blessing of God unto the congregation for the last time as our under shepherd.





special gifts based on their individual quirks. The congregation offered the Ludwigs a few parting gifts: a personal scrapbook album containing pictures and letters from all of the families, a new Weber grill, and a framed picture. It was a truly blessed evening.

The congregation in Grand Rapids, Michigan is thankful to our Great Shepherd who has blessed us with peace within our walls. We are ever grateful for the providential care He has shown to us and stand firm in the knowledge that He will continue to spread his hands over us.

May God bless you, Ludwig family, as you begin your tasks in a new place.

Following the service, letters were read to the congregation from our sister churches in Chatham and Hamilton Providence. We thank these congregations for their words of comfort. Afterwards, the congregation enjoyed a time of fellowship with coffee and refreshments.

Farewell evening

On Monday, June 22, the church hosted a farewell evening for the Ludwigs where everyone enjoyed a potluck supper with a program afterwards. The program included choirs, skits, poems, songs, and speeches performed by various members of the congregation. The consistory also gave a presentation recounting the past seven years of Rev. Ludwig's service. Rev. Ludwig

delivered a speech, in which he personally and humorously addressed a number of the members and presented them with



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Peregrine Survey, September 2009



It is a new school year and new things are popping up. Some of these are new only to the ones who implement them, but it is good to see the blessing of vibrancy in our schools across the country – even as they operate in world that is far from perfect. We see new programs, new policies, new vigilance, new principals, even some new challenges, and renewed awareness of old values. As we embark on this new school year, may we not expect success from our own efforts, sweat, tears, dollars, horses, or systems, but from the Lord our faithful covenant God only. “His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of a man; the Lord delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love” (Ps 147:10-11).

Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College is taking some bold steps in 2009. Work towards accreditation continues, it is working on making its library accessible on-line, it is seeking a fourth full-time lecturer, and it is preparing for expanding the program – among others by adding distance-education courses and another lecturer. One representative at the Annual General Meeting noted that the CCRTC needs prayer, promotion, and pecuniary support to get “this diamond in the rough to sparkle

with all the brilliance that is intrinsic to it because of its dyed-in-the-wool Reformed foundation.” May the training of teachers for our schools be blessed, as well as all who work for it.

During the summer, for two weeks, CCRTC also was the workplace of between twenty and thirty teachers who were writing “Bible Templates” for use with the new Bible Study curriculum for elementary schools in Ontario. A “template” provides the teacher with all the necessary background and support information to prepare a Bible lesson, including such items as a lesson theme, context and background information, exegetical help, links to the confessions, suitable psalms or hymns, and suggestions for follow-up. Key motivators for having this many teachers involved include involvement (and hence commitment) of as many schools as possible and more rapid progress towards completion than has been seen with church history projects in the east and the west. Working together also provides many opportunities for sharing insights and motivation – something less likely to happen if each works on his or her own at home. Devotions were an integral part of the project’s synergizing effects. The ongoing project is sponsored by the League’s Curriculum Assistance for

Reformed Education committee (CARE) and is a logical continuation of its 2007 Framework for Bible Study.

Towards the end of August, as in previous years, CARE is also sponsoring a one-day professional development event in Hamilton, this time with a focus on teaching physical education. Ontario schools have benefited from a phys. ed. project spearheaded by Stephen Posthuma in the past year; this conference will address related philosophical and practical challenges. Meanwhile, and completely independently, a western society president reflected on a successful sporting year, and was “reminded of many discussions with members while watching games how the real competition is not with the other team but with yourself – that through the sporting events we can demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit; win or lose.”

Another National Principals Conference (NPC) is being organized in Ontario this September 28-30. Aside from several workshops, main addresses will focus on being Light and Salt, Discernment and Apologetics, and Developments in our Schools. The Ontario Principal’s Association (OPA) will be looking at professional development issues this year as its

focal study. OPA meets four times in the course of the school year, also has a coordinating role between schools, and serves as a support group for colleagues. Meanwhile, a fledgling principal found himself reflecting on how to write a Principal's Report. He decided to try and accomplish two things: "Grapple with an educational issue that pertains to our student body, and attempt to keep parents informed on the happenings at the school." The first issue addressed some food for thought about sleep. It pointed up that the brain functions better when rested than in a sleep deprived state. Sleep deprivation leads to negative effects like an inability to concentrate, impaired memory, and mood swings. Aside from suggesting that learners plan sufficient time to sleep, studies also suggest to allow the brain to unwind from stimulating interactive involvement such as watching TV, playing computer games, and texting. Principals are both teachers and learners and may take this to heart.

How much time does a principal need for administrative duties? Many schools have a fairly detailed description of principal responsibilities, but the amount of time provided for these varies from one school to another. The amount of time needed is only partially correlated to the size of the school and the number of teachers. Some principals of smaller schools may receive one day a week for administrative duties, while others, in larger schools, may only spend one day a week (or even less) in the classroom. Some can delegate certain tasks to a vice-principal or two; others do without. Some receive little or no secretarial help; others have full-time access to one

or more secretaries. With all this variety, it stands to reason that principals with more adequate time and assistance may be better able to focus on their core task – with a potentially positive effect on the quality of education in your school. What would you say is the core task of the principal in your school? Is there a good match between what is expected of your principal and his or her qualifications and between the amount of time and support needed and provided for the task? If the match is not very good, what can be done to help remedy the situation?

The teachers' task is not one of leading students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, but in helping them to live obediently in the context of the subject that we are teaching, and to see that subject's connection to other subjects

Safety is one recurring agenda item in our schools and it is often expressed in terms of rules, sometimes – but not always – directly related to legal expectations. Rules include such as the following. On the bus, students must remain seated and may talk to their neighbour. Bats must stay at school until the season is over. In baseball, students at bat must wear a helmet and the catcher must wear a mask. Proper indoor shoes must be worn

at all times and laces may not be too long. Children who don't wear bicycle helmets to school must walk home or get picked up. We have regular fire drills, earthquake drills, and tornado drills. No running in the hall. All students must wear school colours on school trips. Students are expected to follow the teachers' instructions and home, school, and church should work together for the single purpose of raising children in the fear of the Lord. It is well to go over rules at the beginning of a new school year – and if a rule makes little sense, to check its point with the school rather than undermine its value.

William of Orange Christian School is the oldest Canadian Reformed School on the continent. Towards the end of this past school year it was unexpectedly faced with a decline in enrolment for the 2009-2010 school year, which puts a strain on its viability. Enrolment will still be well above that of several others schools in our system, however, with an enrolment of about fifty students. John Calvin Christian School in Burlington is shrinking, but continues to be vibrant with life and developments after forty-seven years of operation and an enrolment of more than 100 students. Amalgamation with Covenant Christian School in Flamborough remains a matter of discussion. We wish all those involved with downsizing much wisdom and resolve to maintain the school for the purpose for which it was established.

Guido de Brès Christian High School has spent much effort developing its special-needs program. For years, even while its formal policy stated that all its students must have "a reasonable

possibility of assimilating the curriculum," it provided in-class educational assistance to students who were struggling to meet that expectation. Recently this policy was rephrased to formally provide for students who could not meet the former expectation. It now includes that they "may be required to have an additional special education teacher or educational assistant assigned to them with their own education plan." To allow for thorough preparation by all involved, the new policy will become effective in the 2010-2011 school year.

Guido de Brès' wants to develop the students' Christian mind, also for the defence of their faith, and has developed a list of enduring understandings of Reformed education. Among these, the following one was highlighted:

The teachers' task is not one of leading students to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, but in helping them to live obediently in the context of the subject that we are teaching, and to see that subject's connection to other subjects. Students need to understand

the unity of creation, knowledge, and action.

It is a new year, and may the Lord bless our families and our communities, as we continue to help each other in the education of covenant children. Let us put our hope in Him.

The Education Matters column is sponsored by the Canadian Reformed Teachers' Association East. Anyone wishing to respond to an article written or willing to write an article is kindly asked to send materials to Clarion or to Otto Bouwman obouwman@cornerstoneschool.us



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roadside assistance

the magazine for Reformed young people

How can a young man keep his way pure?
By living according to your word. Ps 119:9

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Roadquest Response: Sports

Cynthia DeBoersap

Sports. They are all around us. In fact, they are almost inescapable. At the breakfast table, you hear all about last night's "Hockey Night in Canada" from your dad and brothers. At school you hear about track meets and see the soccer team practising on the field. The newspaper has a special section strictly for sports

news. When you come home, you may even have your own game to attend. With sports all around you, you may begin to wonder how living a Christian life fits in with it all. Can faith really be part of playing sports? For sure!

Our faith should influence all aspects of our lives, including sports. Playing sports gives a great

opportunity to witness to both team mates and spectators. For example, I've been in situations where a soccer tournament was being held Saturday to Sunday. My sister and I would explain that we would play on Saturday but on Sunday we would be in church. More often than not, someone would ask us why we couldn't just play after

church, which opened up discussion on how Sunday is not just about making an appearance at church, but that the whole day is to be set aside for rest and worship of God. I am not implying that it is bad to play sports with family or friends on Sunday; I think it's a great way to spend time with the family in the backyard or at the park in a relaxing setting. But the fact that organized sports involves so much time and effort can really take away focus from God and onto all the work put into a planned game or tournament.

In similar ways we can witness to others, but also in the sense of good sportsmanship and proper team conduct. I often wonder if a referee would be able to notice a difference between reffing church league and town league games. Playing sports gives us a chance to practice patience and understanding with our own team, the other team, and also the ref. It is bound to happen that a team will experience refs that make bad calls, yet we as Christians must learn to tolerate this and maintain good behaviour, even though it can be extremely exasperating. Ephesians 4 gives some good advice on this matter: "In your anger, do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. . . Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up. . . ." This passage is not commanding us never to be angry, for anger is a natural human emotion. Frustration and anger can be understood and almost expected in a tough game, especially with the adrenaline pumping. What this



passage is saying is that we should learn to control this anger or frustration before it controls us. Our attitude should be "the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Phil 2), even while playing sports.

Sports players that are part of a non-Christian league provide themselves with a chance to show that they are different from the world. We Christians are in the world, but not of it. Philippians 2:14-16 calls Christians to be different from the world and not conform to it: "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life." However, playing in a Christian league, such as Reach Forth, is also great because you can have fellowship with other believers in a non-church setting. This comes with an extra responsibility because in Christian leagues, you

play bearing God's Name. Here too, athletes may be witnesses to refs and spectators by their actions. This may be done by actions such as good sportsmanship, not being sore losers, or praying before games.

In addition, sports are great to play because they provide means by which we can physically take care of our bodies by exercising. We are temples of the Holy Spirit, and we can show some respect to that not only by keeping our bodies healthy, but also by glorifying God in the game. How does one do this in sports? Well, for one, you can be thankful to God for Him giving you a functioning body that allows you to play. The fact that one can simply walk or run should be seen as a blessing from Him. We can use our God-given bodies and talents to his glory by showing good sportsmanship, proper team conduct, building others up with positive comments, keeping Sunday as his special day, and showing our gratitude to Him.



Press Release of Synod Legana 2009

On Monday evening, June 15, 2009, the chairman of the consistory of the convening church, Rev. J. Kroeze, opened the twenty-fourth synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia with a meditation on Psalm 101, addressing in particular two terms mentioned in this psalm: God's mercy and God's justice. Rev. Kroeze mentioned that these two terms used together summarize how God's people ought to be governed. God wants righteousness to prevail among his people. A ruler is meant to exercise his authority in the name of the Lord. He is to govern and to maintain the right of all under God's rule and he should do with mercy and compassion. Rev. J. Kroeze called the delegates to Synod to do their work in that same spirit. Let us judge the matters that are set before us with loving kindness and justice in obedience to our Lord.

The following brothers were delegated to Synod Legana 2009:

Classis North

Rev. P. K. A. de Boer
Rev. R. Eikelboom
Rev. J. G. R. Kroeze
Rev. A. Veldman
Elder P. Posthuma
Elder W. Spyker
Elder H. Swarts
Elder D. Veltkamp

Classis South

Rev. E. Rupke
Rev. J. Smith
Rev. A. van Delden
Rev. C. Vermeulen
Elder W. Geurts
Elder R. Heerema
Elder W. Pleiter
Elder B. Veenendaal

From the foreign churches the following delegates were present: Rev. P. Archbald from the Reformed Church New Zealand Br. J. Bronsema and Br. K. Wezeman from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands Br. P. Drijfhout and Br. J. Houweling from the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (restored)

Prof. H. Yoo from the Presbyterian Church in Korea

Synod elected the following officers to serve on the moderamen:

Chairman: Rev. A. van Delden,
Vice chairman: Rev. A. Veldman,
First Clerk: Rev. J. Smith, and
Second Clerk: Rev. R. Eikelboom.

During seven full working days the following items of interest were dealt with.

Training for the ministry

In addition to the report of deputies, two churches had come with an overture to Synod. In an overture of the FRC Southern River a proposal was put forward to increase the contribution amount to \$65 per communicant member per annum. Synod adopted this proposal. The same church asked Synod to discontinue the collection of funds for our own theological library. A previous synod had denied the same request. Yet some new grounds had been brought forward. First, the fund of \$70,000 (collected thus far) is an adequate resource from which any necessary materials can be purchased over the next three years, should this occur. Moreover, if additional funds for a theological library are required at some time in the future, further money can be collected at that time. On the basis of these new grounds this time the proposal was adopted.

In accordance with a recommendation of deputies,

Synod decided to investigate the feasibility of offering a basis year of theology to the churches in Australia, for the purpose of establishing a theological university in the future. Finally, Synod mandated deputies to continue to investigate the possibilities of theological training by extension (IT).

Book of Praise

In addition to the Report of Deputies, five churches had come with an overture. Having considered all the material, Synod decided that although there is a desire for an Australian *Book of Praise*, at present the Canadian *Book of Praise* sufficiently meets our needs. Deputies to be appointed received amongst others the following mandate:

1. To monitor developments regarding the Canadian *Book of Praise*.
2. To resume investigations with respect to copyright, printing costs, and feasibility of producing an Australian *Book of Praise* only if the Canadian *Book of Praise* is substantially altered such that it is no longer suitable for use by the Australian churches.

Synod also decided to permit the 2008 interim *Book of Praise* with NIV prose section for use in the churches.

Canadian Reformed Churches

Due to the fact that the Canadian Reformed Churches are sending delegates to the International Conference of the Reformed Churches (ICRC), (which will meet, D.V, in September 2009 at Christchurch, New Zealand), they had decided not to send delegates to Synod Legana 2009. Synod received a letter with greetings

instead. Having dealt with the report of deputies, Synod decided to continue sister-church relations with the CanRC according to the established rules. Deputies to be appointed (amongst others) received as mandate

1. To stay informed on developments concerning the pending merger between the CanRC and the URCNA, including the proposed revisions to the Church Order
2. In the unity discussion between the CanRC and the URCNA, to encourage the CanRC to maintain the principle that the churches maintain a theological college on the basis that we use their college for our Australian churches
3. To encourage the CanRC to continue supporting the FRCA as much as possible in our discussions with the RCNZ
4. To invite the CanRC delegates to combine a visit to Australia with their planned visit to New Zealand in September.

Appeals re Art. 94 Acts Synod West Kelmscott 2006

Two churches had appealed the decision, which Synod West Kelmscott made with respect to the sister church relationship with our sister churches in The Netherlands. The material appealed was mainly the matter of the observance of the Sunday as a day of rest and the matter of the seventh commandment re: divorce and remarriage. With respect to the first matter Synod decided to grant the appeal, yet only to the extent that Synod West Kelmscott 2006 based its decision "to accept that Synod Amersfoort 2005 largely allayed our concerns" on incorrect grounds.

With respect to the matter of the seventh commandment Synod Legana decided that the

application regarding approval for divorce for reasons that go beyond Scripture, were not endorsed by Synod Amersfoort. The regrettable point is that Synod Amersfoort did not give explicit guidance on this matter, which was also stated by Synod West Kelmscott, even though phrases such as "following Christ," "a lifestyle justifying the coming kingdom" might give implicit evidence that Synod Amersfoort gives room for the new hermeneutics and Christian ethic. However, this does not prove that Synod West Kelmscott was incorrect, especially since it expressed its regret about lack of explicit guidance by Synod Amersfoort 2005 to prevent divorce for other reasons.

Presbyterian Church in Korea

Prof. Yoo passed on greetings of the PCK. Having dealt with the report of deputies, Synod decided amongst others,

1. To continue sister relations with the PCK in accordance with the established rules
2. To express thanks that visits to the PCK have resulted in continued improved lines of communications
3. To ask the deputies to stay informed about the IRCK (Independent Reformed Church) and RCK (Reformed Church) and to offer any help that is possible and practical through the sister relations with the PCK.

Overture re: twenty-eight additional hymns to the Book of Praise

Having dealt with the overture of Classis South on this subject Synod decided:

1. To invite the churches to scrutinize and test that portion

of the twenty-eight additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010 outside the church services so that a following synod can determine whether to adopt them.

2. To extend the mandate of the Deputies for the *Book of Praise* to include the following:
 - a. To scrutinise the revised sections of the *Book of Praise*, especially the completely revised Psalter, and that portion of the twenty-eight additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010.
 - b. To invite comments from the churches on these revisions.
 - c. To receive and assess comments from the churches about that portion of the twenty-eight additional hymns to be adopted at the CanRC Synod 2010.
 - d. To pass on the findings to the Standard Committee of the *Book of Praise*.

Relations with Sister Churches in Indonesia

Synod decided to continue sister relations with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia (GGRI) in accordance with the adopted rules. Within the contact of this relationship, the FRCA will support the GGRI in a well-considered and responsible way with the intention of building up the Reformed character of these churches. We will also support the plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba and make funds available for this cause. In addition, funds will be made available to financially support two students/ministers to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period to study English and to familiarize themselves with the Australian churches for three months.

With respect to the Calvin Churches (GGRC) Synod decided to continue contact with the GGRC and assess whether the GGRC still desires and values continued contact with the FRCA and whether there is still value for the FRCA to have contact with the GGRC. Synod also gave deputies the mandate to encourage the GGRC to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, especially in view of the anticipated unification of the three federations of the GGRI.

Reformed Churches of New Zealand

In addition to the deputies report, there were a number of overtures and appeals with respect to this item. The main objection was against Art. 102, Decision 3 of the Acts of Synod West Kelmscott 2006, in which the previous synod "encouraged consistories to take note, and act on, Synod's positive view towards the RCNZ in regard to practical support and interaction where these are not restricted to those between sister churches only, e.g. application of membership from former members of the RCNZ, matters pertaining to the mission field and theological and Christian education." The appeals regarding this decision were not upheld by Synod.

In its final decision Synod confirmed what was said by Synod 2003, namely to recognize that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ. No substantial progress has been made in the understanding between the FRCA and RCNZ on the matter of the importance of the impediment, which prevents the FRCA from entering into a sister relationship with the RCNZ. This impediment is that at present the RCNZ still have a sister relationship with the

Christian Reformed Churches of Australia.

Nevertheless, Synod reaffirmed that the positive view of the FRCA towards the RCNZ has consequences in practical support and interaction, e.g. working together on the PNG mission field and supporting the theological training at the Bible College in PNG. Deputies to be appointed received the following mandate:

- a. To monitor the relationship between the RCNZ and the CRCA.
- b. To encourage the RCNZ to continue to admonish the CRCA and be consequential in this relationship.
- c. To discuss with the RCNZ their decision made at Synod Hasting 2008, which says that the RCNZ "cannot accept that their sister-church relationship with the CRCA should be an impediment to the FRCA accepting their offer of sister-church relations."
- d. To reassure the RCNZ that it is our sincere desire to enter into a sister relationship with them but the matter of their sister relationship with the CRCA remains an impediment.

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands

Synod decided, instead of dealing separately and in detail with every agenda item relating to this sister church relationship, to take a more comprehensive approach with regards to its decision about the sister church relationship with the RCN. The reason to take this approach was:

1. Most of the submissions express concern about the same synod decisions taken by the RCN.
2. Many of the decisions mentioned in ground 1 have come to a conclusion within the

RCN. It is therefore difficult to discuss them again in detail with the deputies of our sister churches.

3. A comprehensive approach is further justified by the fact that most of these decisions appear to have a common denominator, namely a particular way of interpreting Scripture. This way of interpretation takes its starting point in man, rather than in God's Word, and it may be the result of the influence of a post-modern "spirit of the age" in the church.
4. Furthermore, deputies in their report identify a concern that decisions made by synod are not always upheld by the local churches. There is a measure of independentism growing within RCN.
5. Even though the various submissions mention a number of specific points of concern, the major concerns are the changes in interpretation of the Bible mentioned in point 3, and the signs of independentism mentioned in point 4.

After various rounds of discussion Synod decided amongst others:

1. To continue the sister church relations with the RCN under the adopted rules.
2. To exhort the RCN with love and care to be faithful in their approach to hermeneutics and combating the influence of a post-modern, "spirit of the age" (point 3).

Some specific examples mentioned were:

- a. The ongoing concerns about the position of our Dutch sister churches on connecting the fourth commandment to the Lord's Day as a day of rest, as we confess in Q/A 103 of the HC.

- b. The concerns that the public comments of Dr. Harinck have not been retracted, even though he remains a professor in Kampen.
- c. The ongoing concerns regarding the administration of both sacraments for military personnel (refer art. 94, Acts of Synod West Kelmscott).

Deputies to be appointed were mandated to also discuss with their Dutch counterparts:

- a. The concerns expressed in the Report of Rev. M. Nap of which Synod Zwolle Zuid 2008 has pronounced to agree with the desire of further hermeneutic study.
- b. The way deputies male/female in the church formulate and discuss within the RCN the framework in which men and women serve in pastoral and diaconal tasks.
- c. Our ongoing concerns regarding the RCN decisions on divorce and remarriage.
- d. The continuing proliferation and the contents of new hymns.
- e. The view of the RCN towards recent developments in the NGK for justifying women as elders and ministers, since this is a barrier to unity.
- f. The need for the RCN to uphold the plain meaning of Scripture regarding Genesis 1-11, 8.

In addition deputies were mandated:

- 1. To share with the RCN the observation that their current direction is placing tension on our sister church relationship.
- 2. To call on the FRCA to frequently remember the RCN in their prayers in view of the continuing tensions within the RCN and between the RCN and the FRCA.

Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (res)

Synod decided not to accept the RCN_r request to acknowledge them as sister churches. At the same time Synod decided to continue contact with the RCN_r and to encourage them to discuss the issues and struggles of concern with the RCN in humility and love.

Some of the grounds for this decision were: Earlier on Synod had already decided to continue the FRCA's sister church relationship with the RCN(lib). Synod 2009 maintains the position of Synod 2006: "We hear in the voice of the brothers of the RCN_r a strong desire to remain Reformed."

Finally, Synod also stated in its grounds, it is a serious matter to separate and this may never be done hastily nor without exhausting every effort to maintain the unity of the faith. The injunction to remain one in the Lord (e.g. John 17 and Eph 4), sometimes even when serious

problems arose as in Corinth, can be read repetitively in the Bible. The encouragements to discuss the issues and struggles need to continue because it is very difficult for the FRCA to determine whether all efforts to maintain the unity have been exhausted.

Closing of Synod

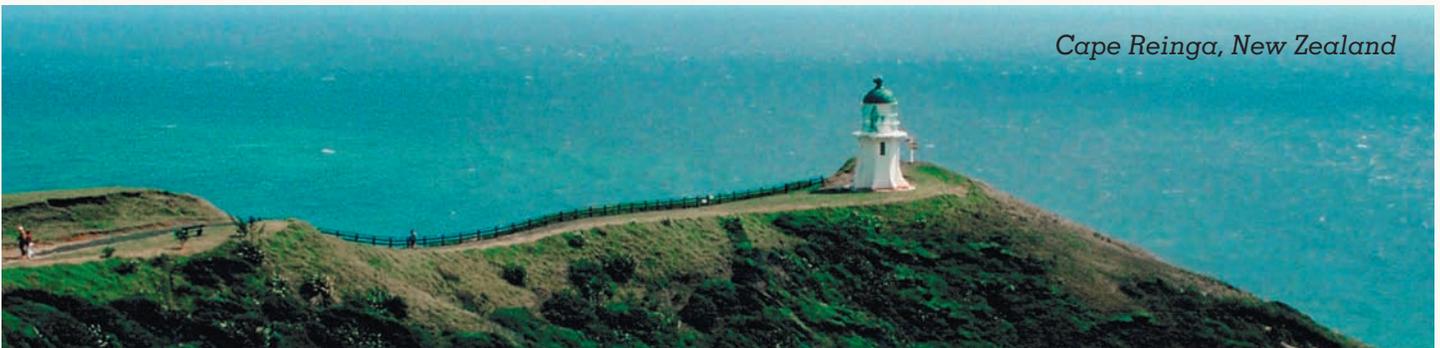
On Wednesday evening, June 24 Synod came to a close. In his closing address, Rev. A. van Delden, mentioned the fact that our work is done with weakness might incline us to think that our work is futile. However, our comfort lies in the knowledge that God is able to work his power through our weakness. Now that our work here at Synod is complete, we must commend our work to the Lord with the prayer that He will bless our labour and make good come from it. For without the blessing of the Lord, all our work is futile. As we sing in our rhymed version of Psalm 127.

Unless the Lord will build the House,

It's builders toil in useless pain;
The city's keepers watch in vain
Unless the Lord its cause espouse.

No enterprise can have success
Unless the Lord decides to bless.

*On behalf of Synod,
Rev. A. Veldman,
vice chairman (e.t.)*



Cape Reinga, New Zealand