

Clarion

Numbers 10:1-10

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*Miracles
in the Bible
play a
secondary role*



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- *Miracles*
- *Having a Good Eye*





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Miracles

Do we see miracles here, there, and everywhere?

Do the names Katherine Kuhlman, Oral Roberts, Benny Hinn, and Todd Bentley ring a bell with you? Perhaps some do, or at least one of them does. They are the names of well-known faith healers, past and present.

When I was growing up in Ontario Katherine Kuhlman was a household name and busloads of people, Christian and otherwise, used to travel across the border to Buffalo in order to get healed. At the same time we had Oral Roberts on the radio and television promoting his healing ministry and urging us to put our hands on the radio or buy his special prayer cloth and so get healed.

Nowadays we have a somewhat different scene. We have Benny Hinn, a Canadian living in California, jetting around the world in his private jet, staying in all the best hotels, and holding his healing crusades. In places like India and China, he is all the rage.

A few years back, we also had a local Abbotsford man by the name of Todd Bentley go down to Lakeland, Florida, where he ignited what became known as the Lakeland Revival. From all over the USA, as well as from around the world, people traveled to Florida looking for a miracle. Later, however, it all went sour as Bentley's marriage hit the rocks and his connections with Lakeland were severed.

In any case, all of these people and their ministries have one thing in common, and that is that they all stress that Christianity is a miracle religion or a healing faith. In so many places around the world it is being said that if you believe in Jesus and in his almighty power, your diseases, handicaps, brokenness will be taken away. Jesus can and will make you whole again!

How are we to evaluate these things? Should our churches be holding special miracles services? Should

we be inviting all of the sick and broken to come forward and get healed? Is this what God expects of us? Is this something that we have neglected to do and that we now need to introduce?

One of the best things that we can do in dealing with the controversial matter of miracles is to step back and take a broad look at both Bible and church history. What does Bible history teach us about miracles? What does church history say about them?

The testimony of the Old Testament

Turning first to the Bible, specifically to the OT, what do we see? Do we see miracles here, there, and everywhere? Do we come across healing after healing?

For an answer we have to say that, by and large, the OT was not a miracle testament. Indeed, there are only two OT periods that stand out in this regard. There is the time of the Exodus when the Lord sent all of those calamities to Egypt. Some see them as miraculous interventions, while others see them as divine judgments. No matter how you describe them, there is no doubt that they do represent special interventions in history and nature on the part of our God.

The other period that stands out is connected to the ministry of the prophet Elisha. His ministry is noted for at least ten miracles: dividing the waters of the Jordan, healing poisoned water, multiplying the widow's oil, raising the Shunammite's son, and so forth. Indeed, in the case of Elisha there is no doubt that many healings and miracles accompanied his ministry.

But for the rest, this is it. When it comes to most of the OT we do not hear much about miracles at all. During the days of the patriarchs, the judges, the prophets, and the kings miracles were the exception and not the norm. So by and large the OT church was not a miracle-filled church.



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The testimony of the New Testament

But that brings us to the NT, and what do we see there? We see Jesus our Saviour and Lord. And we see that his ministry is filled with miracle after miracle. He does them constantly, everywhere and for almost everyone. He does them with great power and ability.

Indeed, look at his miracles closely, and what else do you see? You see at least eight characteristics:

- Many of his miracles have to do with incurable diseases, and quite a few of them remain incurable to this day;
- Our Lord rarely used means, except when he once made clay and used it;
- Whenever he did them, restoration was complete and people were made entirely whole;
- His cures were instantaneous and without delay;
- We never hear about any of the recipients of his miracles suffering relapses;
- Sometimes his physical healings were used to confirm forgiveness;
- Often our Lord did not even wait to be asked to do a miracle;
- Finally, he never hired an advertising company and made publicity for himself.

Hence, it can be said that in a remarkably sovereign and singular manner, our Saviour healed the sick and cured the ailing. His power was on display almost every day.

Much of the same can be said of the apostles. Theirs was also a healing ministry. Think of Peter and John and the lame man in the temple court. Think

What's Inside

Issue 18 begins with Dr. James Visscher's editorial on miracles. "Faith healing" is something we read about, past and present. How should we view miracles? What does Bible and church history teach us about them?

This issue concludes Dr. Cornelis Van Dam's three-part series on Prayer as an Incense Offering. In the final part, we read about God's rules for the incense offering, and how that is connected to his expectations of our prayers today.

In federational news, there is an article reporting on Rev. Carl Van Dam's farewell from Grassie church. From a bit beyond our federation, we have also dedicated a number of our pages to the Press Release from the recent Synod Armadale 2012 (FRCA).

Regular columns Treasures New and Old and Education Matters are included in this issue.

Laura Veenendaal

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of Paul who also heals a lame man, as well as a bedridden man (Acts 9), a feverish man (Acts 18), a dead lady (Acts 9), and a dead man (Acts 20), who casts out demons (Acts 16). Hence the apostolic age was also a miraculous age.

Still, we do need to be careful here. There were situations in which the sick were not healed by the apostles. Paul did not cure Timothy's stomach problems but advised him to try some wine. Paul also left the sick Trophimus behind in Miletus. As well, he mentions that Epaphroditus almost died. And then too there is the fact that Paul could not heal himself and get rid of the thorn in his flesh.

Miracles in the Bible play a secondary role

Needless to say, all of this leads to certain conclusions. While Jesus could heal everyone of everything all of the time, the same cannot be said of the apostles. Their healing ability is sporadic and limited.

What this shows you is that the NT church did not receive power to automatically heal everyone, not even everyone who had faith. While miracles happened, not everyone had a right to expect them, to claim them, nor to insist on them.

The testimony of church history

Moving next from Bible history to church history, what do we see there? Do we see a constantly and continuously miracle-working church? The answer is "No!"

Rather, after the time of the apostles there is little mention of miracles. Also, any claims to miracles after the apostles rest on very shaky and questionable grounds. With the possible exception of one church father called Origen, none of the other church leaders ever claimed to have seen one or done one – not Augustine, not Athanasius, not Ambrose. Indeed, during the first four centuries of the church little is said about miracles.

The same goes for the church later on. Go to the time of the Reformation and after, and study the biographies of Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, Voetius, Brakel, Owens, Edwards, Hodge, Spurgeon, Chalmers, Bavinck, and other so-called "greats." What do you see? None of them possessed miracle working powers.

Hence what do Bible history and church history teach us? They teach us that not every age is a miracle age. They teach us that healing is not a daily feature of the church of Jesus Christ or a constant work of the Spirit.

The role that miracles play

Why not? Why do miracles come and go? Why are they characteristic of certain times and not others?

The answer is that, by and large, miracles in the Bible play a secondary role. What role is that? It is the role of authenticating, of legitimizing, of proving, of testifying.

Take Moses. Why did the Lord grant him miraculous powers? It was to prove that he really was a spokesman for Yahweh.

Take Elisha. Why was he allowed to do so many miracles? It had everything to do with the fact that in his day the Word of the Lord was no longer respected and heeded.

Take the Lord Jesus. Why did he do so many wonders on the earth? It was to prove that he really and truly was and is the Son of God, the Messiah, the Redeemer. On Pentecost Day Peter says, "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22).

So what did miracles do for Jesus? They told the people that the kingdom of God had come and was coming. They were a preview of the fact that one day he would come and restore all things. Above all, they proved that Jesus was who he said he was – the Son of God and the Son of Man.

It is so easy for a man to stand up in a certain group of people and make all sorts of extravagant claims for himself. It happens all the time. As a matter of fact, it happens so often that people become cynical and skeptical. And then the remark can be heard – "Prove it!" As they say, "the proof is in the pudding."

Well, in the case of Moses, Elisha, our Lord, and the apostles, the proof was there. The miracles that they did proved that they were for real. They really were sent by God. They really were clothed with power from on high. The Holy Spirit was really upon them.

What about today?

But having said all of this, where does this leave us today? Where does this leave us in three particular areas:

- with respect to certain NT passages dealing with spiritual gifts;
- with respect to the claims of modern faith healers and miracle workers;
- with respect to miracles and us today.

Earlier 1 Corinthians 12:1-11 was cited and there you meet a list of spiritual gifts. It says in verse 8 and following: "To one there is given through the Spirit

the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines."

At the end of the chapter Paul comes back to these gifts and asks, "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts" (vv. 29-31).

So what is going on here? Is Paul saying that the Spirit who gives these gifts gives them all to the church all of the time? You can read the scholars and commentators and most of them will tell you that Paul is speaking about both ordinary and extraordinary gifts here, gifts that remain and gifts that fall away, gifts for the church yesterday and gifts for the church today, gifts that are lasting and gifts that are temporary.

Paul writes that the Spirit "gives them to each one, just as he determines" which means that the Spirit ultimately determines what is needed in the church, and when. What is especially needed in the early church in that time when the Bible has not yet been completed? The Spirit determines that miraculous powers, prophecy, and tongues were needed. What is especially needed once the Scriptures are complete? The Spirit determined that wisdom, knowledge, and faith were needed.

As for those who think that prophecy, tongues, and miracles are the end all and be all of everything, Paul has a word for them too – "eagerly desire the greater gifts." Yes, there are greater and higher gifts even. What are they? Read on into chapter 13. They are faith, hope, and love. "But the greatest of these is love" (v. 13).

Thus the point that Paul is making in 1 Corinthians 12 is that the Spirit is the great gift giver. He supplies what the church needs always. He supplied the church in Paul's day with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts. He supplies the church today with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts, and the extraordinary gifts are no longer tongues, prophecies, and miracles, but the Word, the Word of God which is the Word of the Spirit.

Miracle workers today?

But then, what about the faith healers of today and what about their extravagant claims? What are we to think of them?

I would urge you to handle them with care, even skepticism. Indeed, is our Lord glorified by a Todd Bentley who kicks a man in the stomach and claims that his colon cancer is now gone? Is the Lord glorified by a Benny Hinn who makes hundreds of millions of dollars every year as a so-called faith healer? Is he glorified by faith healers who have their assistants picking and choosing who may go up on stage and get healed? Is he glorified when unhealed believers are told that the reason why they are not healed is because they are lacking in faith? Is he glorified by these men who make claims that are never proven, who specialize in ailments that are impossible to verify? In other words, where is the man whose withered hand has been healed, where is the leper without sores, where are the disfigured without scars, where are the dead now raised?

So, what does all of this mean? Does it mean that miracles no longer happen? Does it mean that we live in a closed universe and that God is not omnipotent but impotent and powerless?

He supplies the church today with both ordinary and extraordinary gifts

That is not what is being said. Miracles ministries, healing crusades may be out. Equating gospel days and apostolic times with today may be out. Faith healers and miracle workers as such may be out.

Yet there is something that is not "out." And what is it? It is the fact that the Lord still hears the prayers of his people and still does miraculous things through the Spirit in his church.

We are reminded of that especially when we turn to the letter of James, chapter 5. What is James 5 about? Some think that it is primarily about miraculous healing. Others assume that more than anything else it is about instant wellness. Both are wrong, for it is first and foremost about prayer, the prayer of faith.

It is telling you that if you are ill, or if a family member is ill, or if a fellow church member is ill, or if a neighbour is ill, the best thing that you can do for them is – what? Put them on a plane to Lakeland, Florida? No, the best thing you can do for them is pray. Why? Because, as James tells us, "the prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective" (v. 16). Be an Elijah to him or her! Pray! Pray to the Lord, through his Son and in the power of the Spirit. The wonders of God never cease.





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MATTHEW 13:52

Having a Good Eye

"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness."

(Matthew 6:22-23)

Ever been in pitch darkness? Maybe you've gone spelunking in a deep cave. Our family once was far into an old lava tube in Oregon. The darkness was quite thick. As sinners, we can live life like that: in utter darkness. Or we can live in the light. And in the light, of course, all of life opens up again.

It all depends on our eyes, says our Lord in this little verse: "The eye is the lamp of the body." What you focus on, what you see, makes the difference between your whole body—your whole life—being filled with darkness or light. What's a good eye, then? There's an unusual Greek word here, which good translations catch. It's a word that speaks of sincerity, devotion, and also generosity. The opposite – a bad or evil eye – that's a biblical way of talking about being greedy or covetous.

Do we have good eyes? A person with good eyes sees where people are hurting. He sees where there is need. He wants to bless others, help them in their struggles and difficulties. A person with good eyes gives: gives from his wallet, his time, gives of himself. He considers *others*, how he can encourage them (Heb 10:25). But those with bad eyes, evil eyes, are always considering *things*, what they can get. Their eyes are on riches and wealth.

And this eyesight affects your whole life. Your perspective

is much more serious than you think: "The eye is the lamp of the body." In Proverbs 11:25 we read, "A generous man will prosper. And he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." The way to find life for yourself is to live for others. The way to find blessing is to be a blessing. But with bad eyes, when you are focused on your own wants and desires, your whole life is plunged into darkness. Where there is selfish ambition, everything in life is tainted and distorted. You will not see correctly your wife, your children, yourself – anyone, in fact.

How do we work on good eyesight? How can we begin to see life the way it ought to be lived? It begins by first seeing the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to have our eyes focused on him, in commitment, in loyalty. That's an aspect of this Greek word too: being single minded. Christ shows the way for us to live. He gave himself for us. He saw the needs of those around him and he lived, he died, to meet them. If we do not fix our eyes on him, we live in darkness. But if we genuinely give ourselves to him in love and loyalty, our whole body will be full of light.

We also need to see his kingdom: the place where Easter is a reality, where life is restored again, in righteousness, joy, and peace. That is what Christ has come to bring. And seeing that means seeing life again.

When we look at life, what do we see? Do we simply see places to have fun? Places to make a buck? Places to stoke our own pride, our ego? Or do we see the kingdom of God that claims our work and free time, our marriages and our ministries? Do we see that the time has come for all of life to be taken up in service of Christ, to the glory of God?

"Kingdom work" is broader than just giving money to various noble causes. Marriages are to be kingdom marriages, where the glory of Christ and his church is displayed. Our work is to be kingdom work, done to God's glory, reflecting who he is, in his truth, his faithfulness, and his grace. As Christians, we must also have a different way of doing business. Here, too, we are to love our enemies, to think of others more highly than ourselves, to practice servanthood and self-denial, to show grace – as Christ has shown to us.

If we do not see the kingdom of God, if we only see the things of earth, then we live in darkness. We are ignorant of that immense reality of the kingdom that Christ brings, and that is already here around us. But if we seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, instead of darkness there will be light for all we do.





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Prayer as an Incense Offering (Part 3 of 3)

In the preceding article, we saw that as God demanded the incense offering so he expects prayer from us. But the one who gave precise rules for the incense offering also has certain expectations with respect to our prayers.

Precise rules for the incense offering

The precise nature of God's rules for the incense offering is obvious from the legislation in Exodus 30. God was very particular and exact. We can think, for example, of the ingredients of the incense. Everything was very precisely spelled out. Similarly, exact instructions were given for the structure of the altar. In Exodus 30 and elsewhere in the Books of Moses, it is very clear what the Lord desired with respect to the incense sacrifice.

However, sinful man easily underestimated God's strict demands and so underestimated the fact that God was serious when he laid down certain rules. The Lord is holy. He is God! He is awesome in majesty and splendour and he will be approached properly. Otherwise even the incense, and the prayers of Israel, are not sweet smelling and good.

There are several examples of how the Lord struck with death or other punishment when the holiness of the incense offering was not reckoned with (Lev 10:13; Num 16:35; 2 Chron 26:16-21). Take, for example, the incident in Leviticus 10. We read that "Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord" (Lev 10:1-2).

The unauthorized fire they offered was that they apparently did not use holy fire, namely, fire from the great altar of burnt offering in the court outside the tabernacle, as God had required. Instead they apparently had simply taken fire from elsewhere—

unholy fire, and apparently walked right into the Most Holy Place (cf. Lev 16:1, 2).

It is so easy to underestimate the holiness of God, who wants everything dedicated to him in love with perfection. In sinful human hearts the question can easily arise: did the Lord not overreact by killing these men for this oversight? But in neglecting to use the fire from the great sacrifice of atonement, they despised God's grace and underestimated their sinful condition. Fire from atonement sacrifice was needed. Therefore God struck them down.

By nature we too are sinful and we too can very easily be careless when it comes to appreciating God's holiness. The Lord continually reminded Israel of how holy the sacrifice of incense had to be kept. Think, also, for example, how King Uzziah was struck with leprosy for offering incense (2 Chron 26:66). Not he but the priest had to do that. So the Lord constantly reminded Israel that if the sacrifice of incense was to be pleasing to me, it must be kept holy!

We can very easily be careless when it comes to appreciating God's holiness

All this is very relevant for us because God is just as insistent with the reality that the incense sacrifice represented, namely our prayers. Also with our prayer, God is very strict as to what he wants from us. He wants our prayers to be just so. That is, he wants them offered up in the realization that we speak to God who is holy. He wants our prayers to be holy! Otherwise our prayer is not acceptable to him, and it is not a sweet savour of fellowship but breathes the spirit of sin and unholiness.

Living in the twenty-first century, we face some challenges here. Our culture is egalitarian and we can therefore use this reminder of the holiness of God.



Church News

Accepted the call to the Chilliwack Canadian Reformed Church:

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Respect and awe for God, as God, is sorely lacking in the world of sin around us. Let us beware that none of this attitude rubs off on us. For, the incense offering and its regulations remind us of the seriousness of that which it represents, prayer. The earnestness of what prayer and praying is cannot be overestimated. We are not talking with our neighbour or to ourselves when we pray, but we are addressing the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, the one whom the angels and seraphim addressed as "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of hosts." And as they said this, they covered their faces, for great and awesome is his glory (Isa 6:3)! It is to this God of holiness that the incense offering was given before the most Holy Place and whom we address in prayer.

We are addressing the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords

The strict regulations governing the incense offering therefore tell us that when we offer our sacrifice of incense of prayer, we need to be aware that it meets the Lord's demands for holiness and that it is truly pleasing to him. To put it differently, there is to be no unauthorized fire on the altar – no strange ingredients – lest our sacrifice of incense in prayer be not pleasing to him.

Perhaps one of the biggest dangers threatening our own prayers, our own incense offering to God, is that we can grow so accustomed to praying that the danger is real that we forget God's awesome holiness and our unworthiness and sin. Scripture teaches that there is nothing that turns the Lord off as much as seeing his people approach him with the wrong attitude. Our prayers may be technically flawless. We may even be praying the Lord's Prayer, the perfect prayer; but if such a prayer is not accompanied with a humble and contrite heart that knows: I approach God, the holy one, who of grace has redeemed me, then the Lord despises it.

In the time of Isaiah, the sacrifices were done in a technically correct way. But Isaiah said Israel no longer knew their God (1:3) and therefore no longer knew their true position over against God. O, they sacrificed and prayed, but not in the awareness of holiness of God or in the knowledge of their natural unworthiness. Therefore God said: "Stop bringing meaningless offerings! Your incense is detestable to me. . . . When you spread out your hands in prayer, I will hide my eyes from you; even if you offer many prayers, I will not listen" (Isa 1:13a, 15a).

So praying is a serious activity no matter where it is held. It is offering a sacrifice of gratitude to God. And as Psalm 51:17 says, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise."

So through the incense offering which speaks of the prayers of God's people, we are taught that our prayers need to be a sweet smelling savour and a fragrance pleasing to God. This can only be accomplished if we approach God, knowing our sin and appreciating his grace and salvation. For then there is a real covenant relationship and an awareness of God's redemption and peace.

But one may ask, how can we ever bring an incense sacrifice of prayer that is truly pleasing to God? After all, the inclination of our heart is evil. This issue brings us to a final aspect of the incense offering, namely, how this offering was made acceptable to God.

The incense offering acceptable to God

How was the incense sacrifice made acceptable to God? To answer that question properly we need to remember that there was a close relationship between the incense sacrifice and the burnt offering presented on the great altar outside the tabernacle and temple. The incense sacrifice did not function on its own as an isolated gift to God. No, it functioned along with the whole burnt offering and there was a close relationship between these sacrifices and their altars.

This close relationship is seen in the fact that both altars were similar in design. The golden altar of incense was, as it were, a miniature version of the altar of the burnt offering.

Also, both sacrifices were offered at the same time (cf. Exod 29:39; 30:7-8; Num 28:2, 8). So the smoke from both sacrifices ascended to the Lord simultaneously. On top of that, the fire for the incense offering had to come from the fire used in the burnt offering and this offering had to burn continually (Lev 6:13; 10:1; cf. 16:12; Num 16:46). So there was a unity between the two sacrifices. They used the same fire and their effect was felt continually. There was the constant fragrance of the incense offering inside the tabernacle or temple and there was the constant burning and smoke and therefore smell arising from the altar outside.

Furthermore, the blood of the sin offering sacrificed on the large altar outside had to be smeared not only on the horns of the altar outside (Lev 16:18-19), but also had to go on the smaller golden incense altar

inside. This had to be done once a year on the great Day of Atonement when the horns of the incense altar had to be smeared with blood (Exod 30:10; Lev 16:16, 18-19; Heb 9:22-23). Thus atonement was made for both the altar for sacrifice outside and for the incense altar inside. Both were therefore pure before God and the offerings, including the incense, were acceptable to him.

The importance of all of this for that which the incense offering symbolized and stood for is clear. The incense sacrifice of our prayers has a close relationship to *the* great atonement sacrifice of all time. Our prayers are acceptable to God only because of the cleansing blood of the great sacrifice of atonement, the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled the incense offering. Does it not say in Ephesians 5:2 that "Christ gave himself for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God"? He is the fulfilment of the incense sacrifice. And therefore, he sanctifies our prayers and makes them holy and acceptable to God. He makes it possible for holy God in heaven to receive our incense offering of prayers into his glorious presence (cf. 2 Cor 2:14-16). Without Christ and his atoning blood and sacrifice our prayers would not be acceptable to God. Christ sanctifies our prayers and makes them acceptable. He cleanses and washes away all sin remaining in them against our will.

So our prayers reach the throne of God and are found pleasing to him for Christ's sake. But there is more. Not only are our prayers made holy by Christ, but they are accompanied by Christ's prayer of intercession for forgiveness and for covenant peace. We can think of the promise in 1 John 2:1, ". . . if anyone does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." He pleads and prays for us as our advocate and high priest (also cf. Rom 8:26-27).

In Revelation 8 we start a new overview of the last age (Rev 8-11). In Revelation 8:3, the Apostle John sees a vision of the prayers of the saints that rise as incense to God. But added to those prayers is more incense, much heavenly incense. We read:

Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel's hand. (Rev 8:3-4)

Notice that the angel does not bring his own incense offering. It was *given* to him. *Much* of it was given to him. And when the incense rose to heaven, it carried the prayers of the saints with it to the throne of God.

May we then not assume that this heavenly incense was the incense of Christ's intercessory work? Does Christ not enable the incense and the prayers of the saints to rise to God? Of themselves the prayers of the saints lack so much and therefore so much incense from Another is necessary to make them acceptable. Is Christ's intercession, based on the atonement, not what purifies or sanctifies our prayers?

Our prayers reach the very presence of God because they are accompanied by our heavenly high priest, Jesus Christ

And so John saw the mixture of the heavenly and the earthly incense reaching the throne of God. So our prayers also reach the throne of grace. What a beautiful reminder that also today our prayers reach the very presence of God because they are accompanied by our heavenly high priest, Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 8:26-27). And God hears and responds. In Revelation 8 we see God's response by the angel taking the censer, now emptied of prayer, and filling it with fire from the altar and emptying it upon the earth. Thunder, lightning, and earthquakes follow. The seven trumpets of God's judgments are blown (Rev 8:9) in response to the prayers of the saints (cf. Rev 6:9-10).

When one considers this scene in Revelation 8, one is comforted. In Christ, our incense offering, our prayers, are always a pleasing incense aroma – a pleasing fragrance giving our heavenly Father rest and joy in his work of salvation as seen in his children. So, the Father delights in our prayers, in our thanksgivings, in our pleas, in our joys, in our requests made in sorrow. He receives our sacrifice of incense and he will accept them and listen to them. He will provide, for in Christ and because of his atonement, our prayers are acceptable! That is our comfort every time we offer our prayers to him in the awareness of Christ's atoning work. He will surely hear and in his own divine way, he will answer them. For Christ's sake and for the sake of the covenant peace in which he delights. He will work all things for the good of those who love him (Rom 8:28), hurrying to the great day of Jesus Christ when the heavenly Most Holy Place will come on earth to be his dwelling place with man (Rev 21:15-22). There the incense offering will be replaced by the sanctified praises of his people at rest in the joy of their Lord (cf. Rev 5:6-14).



Covenant Canadian Reformed Church at Grassie says Farewell to Rev. S.C. Van Dam and Family

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7)

This passage was read on January 4, 2004 as Rev. Carl Van Dam was ordained and installed as the minister in Grassie; eight and a half years later we reflected on these words again as we said farewell to him and his family.

On June 14, 2012, the congregation gathered first for a barbeque and then for a farewell program as Rev. Van Dam and his family would soon be moving to take up their call in Houston, B.C. Rev. Van Dam opened the meal with reading Philippians 1:3-11, which was also the text of his inaugural sermon many years earlier. We enjoyed a wonderful meal and fellowship.

We then moved in to the auditorium to present a program and various departing gifts to our minister and his family. Br. Peter Feenstra opened the evening and recalled the many blessings that we have received as a congregation over the years of Rev. Van Dam's service. We have shared joy and laughter as well as tears and sadness. Now, in the spirit of love that Paul refers to in Philippians 1, we had gathered to remember the last eight and a half years and to say good bye.

The Van Dam children – Rachel, Martin, Carrie and Heather – have made many good friends among the children of the congregation and were asked to take their "seats of honour" to watch their friends say good bye. The pre-school aged children did so with a "See you later, Alligator" poem and set the bar high with their cute enthusiasm. The school aged children were next with a few songs, both liturgical and fun in nature.



The Van Dam children just might have the "Skiing in the Snow" song come to mind once the snow starts to fly in Houston!

The Ladies' Wednesday Morning Bible Study presented Mrs. Van Dam with a photo book of memorable events and locations from their time in Grassie.

Next up were the Young Peoples' who started with a few words of thanks for Rev. Van Dam and then asked us all to help them serenade the Van Dams with "So long, Farewell" and "This land is your land." However, we would not be singing (since singing can often be difficult to get started at Young Peoples' meetings); instead, we'd be playing the songs on the kazoo. . . 300 of them! If you have never heard 300 kazoos played all at once, it sounds something like being in a beehive!



Next the Men's Society presented Rev. Van Dam with a few gifts. Since Houston has long winters and short summers, they thought an automatic putting returner would come in handy and would help him put the golf clubs that he received when he was ordained in Grassie to good use year-round. They also presented him with the second of two essential items for home visits in Houston (the first being the Bible). The second essential thing for home visits in Houston is snow shoes to get to and from the visits! A beautiful pair of (very Reformed) Faber snow shoes was presented to Rev. Van Dam. We hope they make traveling to and from home visits much easier!

The Grace Women's Society recognized that Rev. Van Dam was going to be driving the van across the country without his family and prepared a "Survival Kit" for him that included essentials like sticks to scare away the bears in Northern Ontario, bug spray for while he was in Manitoba, various hats including a bright orange one to wear whenever out in the woods (so hunters wouldn't mistake him for prey), an energy drink and chocolate to help keep him awake, a map, duct tape, and something soft to cuddle when he was missing his family!

The Girl's Club told the story of the Van Dam Family during their time in Grassie. They recalled how Rev. Van Dam arrived to us as a single man and how he was married shortly thereafter. They remembered how the Van Dams were blessed with four children during their time in Grassie and how we, as a congregation, were blessed with moving into our own church building and with much growth in the congregation. It was a beautiful "walk down memory lane" that gave us all a chance to recall the rich blessings we have received during the past eight and a half years!

Finally, it was Br. Stel's turn to say a few words of thanks to the Van Dam family on behalf of Council and to present Rev. Van Dam with a parting gift. Br. Stel recalled with thankfulness Rev. Van Dam's faithful service to our congregation including his wisdom on Council, his faithful pastoral work in the congregation, and the pure preaching of the Word that could be delivered each Sunday again. He then told Rev. Van Dam that the chair that he received as a gift when he was installed and that has served as his pulpit chair all these years would have to stay in Grassie. However, we were replacing it with something that is much more comfortable – a reclining chair and ottoman. Br. Stel expressed the hope that Rev. Van Dam may have more time to sit back and put his feet up in Houston than he has had in Grassie.

Next Rev. Van Dam spoke some words of thankfulness – for the evening, for the support from the congregation over the years, to the office bearers that he has worked with, for having shared with us many times of joy and for having been allowed to minister during times of sorrow, etc. He also expressed thankfulness that, even though we will be far apart, we remain part of the same family of God and that together we look forward to Jesus' return!

It was indeed a beautiful evening that also included musical performances, some comical advice from a senior member of the congregation and many memories! As a congregation, we have indeed been blessed by Rev. Van Dam and his family! We wish them abundant blessings in Houston and trust that the Lord will provide us with a new shepherd in his time.

C





Mr. Heres Snijder is the principal of Credo Christian Elementary School in Langley, British Columbia

Credo Christian Elementary School: Twenty-fifth Anniversary

Tell it!

And tell it they did – these 193 students at Credo Christian Elementary School in Langley. On February 29, they, along with parents and supporters, descended on Langley's Canadian Reformed Church building to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of their school. The intermediate students started off the celebration program by telling the audience that all we do, think, say, and experience is to be connected to our Creator God. They sang the prayer *Lord reign in me, reign in Your power, over all my dreams, in my darkest hour, You are the Lord of all I am, so won't You reign in me always!* The rest of the anniversary celebration served to highlight the true focus of the celebration: God's faithfulness. In the words of the (Grade 7) speaker:

[God] has guided and blessed the work of all the students, parents, and staff who have been part of Credo Christian Elementary. What words best describe our God? He is almighty, powerful, majestic, holy, righteous, patient, compassionate, all-knowing, and awesome. He loves, protects, cares, creates, communicates, sustains, and saves. If we tried to describe every quality of the Lord, we would be here a very long time! Instead, we chose to focus on four qualities of our God: he is compassionate, he is creative, he is awesome, and he communicates.

Each of these qualities were connected with a school subject for the purpose of giving the audience a small glimpse of what is being investigated and studied at Credo and to show what and how much the students learn about God's greatness in the process.

God is compassionate

The themes of *poverty* and *persecution* were used to explain God's compassionate character. The Grade

4 students presented a reader's theatre about a family who experienced Christian compassion and love as a bridge out of the clutches of poverty and prejudice. God's compassion and care towards his persecuted children was demonstrated by Grade 6 students. The Social Studies curriculum presents numerous opportunities to explore the beauty and variety of countries and cultures of the world as well as how God's kingdom is being established by means of the blood of the martyred and the suffering of the oppressed.

God is creative

The evening was marked by a fresh variety in modes of presentations. Speaking, demonstrating, dramatizing, as well as singing gave the whole evening a sense of forward motion and momentum.

God's creativity was demonstrated by Kindergarten and Grade 2 students: "Everywhere we look around us, we see evidence of the Lord's amazing creativity. From microscopic bacteria to monstrous elephants, from fragile snowflakes to immovable mountains, everything we see in creation shows us this truth: our God is an Artist!" and "One of the elements of art design that we study in art class is colour. In art class we have the opportunity to reflect God's creativity. He blessed us with the ability to create and be creative. We too can be artists." The song, poem, and artwork bore out this reality!

God is awesome

The spirited singing of the audience, ably accompanied by a strings group – the Jansen 5, a trumpet player, a pianist, and an organist, echoed in psalm and hymn what the children – the next generation – had just illustrated. In response to the presentations of the Grade 3 and 7 students, the words of Psalm 19 were used to echo that "not only does God's creation give

evidence of his creativity, it also displays his power and majesty. In Science class, we have the opportunity to investigate all the wonders of creation. As we do so, we are often overwhelmed with awe at the unsurpassing greatness of our Creator." The audience was quite engaged by the way the Grade 3 students dramatized the rotation and revolution of the planets around the sun: Grade 7 students shared some tidbits of scientific insights: lengths of arteries and veins in one human body, the total weight of air, and other "wow" facts in the realm of Science.

God communicates

Grade 5 students illustrated through the medium of poetry what God communicates with us through his word ("prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets. . . spoke from God," 2 Pet 1). In poetry, we communicate with God – and we communicate with each other. As to the latter, the students conveyed a growing awareness of the beauty as well the challenge of modern means of communication: "Skype, Blog, and Twitter are all God's technology, but you have to know how to use them, or people will get hurt, you see?" and "Video games, e-mail, YouTube, and Skype: face-to-face is more my type!" Grade 1 students highlighted with an upbeat song that "not everyone speaks the same language. At school we are taught French. We also support the work of missionaries and translators who spread the gospel in other countries." The greeting song "Hello to all the people of the World" was a hit!



How great thou art!

Audience and students concluded the first part of the evening by singing "How Great Thou Art," and "Creation Sings the Father's Song." Both hymns beautifully underscored the reality of creation responding to its Creator from the beginning of time to the very end: "Creation longs for his return – when Christ shall reign upon the earth. The bitter wars that rage are birth pains of a coming age – when he renews the land and sky, all heaven will sing and earth reply with one resplendent theme, the glory of our God and King!" It was inspiring to hear all 193 students testify to this in song! You can hear and see the students at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hq_xYFyjsBc.

The footprints that we leave

Twenty-five years ago, under the capable leadership of Mr. Henk Hoogstra and Mr. Apko Nap, Credo Christian Elementary separated from William of Orange Christian Elementary School, due to prohibitive space restrictions. The presentation of these two gentlemen helped us reminisce about the history and development of the two schools. Three Credo alumni (Greg van Popta, Shelly Sikma, and Hilary Vandergugten), now father and mothers with children at Credo, shared some delightful memories of those days.

The final contribution to the evening was made by Mr. Stan Pol, board member and chairman of the Development Committee. After a few introductory words of encouragement to young and old alike to continue to support the very important work at Credo, he shared a promotional video about the vision for Credo (see <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dgTKTPC0fT0>).

Today this video illustrates succinctly why the endeavour of Reformed education in a day school is eminently worth every effort and deserves our sustained attention. While we are in this world, we need to remain aware of significant challenges, changes, and societal shifts. With a view to the next generation, we are called to remain vision-driven by faithfully raising our children so that they in turn can interact in a way that Christ's light will radiate into their society (Deut 6, Matt 5).

Oh may all who come behind us find us faithful
May the fire of our devotion light their way
May the footprints that we leave
Lead them to believe
And the lives we live inspire them to obey!



Press Release of Synod Armadale 2012 of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia

Opening of Synod

By God's good providence and care, the Twenty-fifth Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia could be convened by the Free Reformed Church of Armadale, also the convening church of the very first synod in 1954. As part of the opening of Synod, the chairman of the Armadale consistory, Elder A.M.C. Bruning, invited a full auditorium to join in singing psalms and hymns of praise to God, in this way acknowledging the sovereign power of our Triune God, and praising him for his grace and care over his church. In prayer of intercession, thanksgiving was expressed to the Lord for the many blessings he had provided the churches, and supplication for God's blessing over the work of Synod in particular. In his opening remarks of welcome, Br. Bruning expressed gratitude to the Lord for the continued growth in the churches, and in particular for the provision of ministers of the gospel during the inter-synodical period. He also exhorted and encouraged all present with a meditation based on Romans 15:5-6.

Delegates and officers

The examination of credentials confirmed that eighteen delegates were lawfully present, delegated from three classes as follows:

Classis North: Rev P.K.A. de Boer, Rev. J.G.R. Kroeze, Rev E. Rupke, Elder M. Hoogerdijk, Elder G. Spyker, and Elder J. Wielstra.

Classis Central: Rev. A. VanDelden, Rev. W. VanderJagt, Rev. C. Vermeulen, Elder W. Amoraal, Elder E. Heerema, Elder A. Wagenaar.

Classis South-West: Rev S. 't Hart, Rev. R.E. Pot, Rev. T. VanSpronsen, Elder G. 't Hart, Elder J. Plug, Elder W. VanderVen.

The election of officers to serve Synod resulted in Rev. A. VanDelden serving as chairman, Rev. R.E. Pot as vice-chairman, Elder W. VanderVen as first clerk, and Rev P.K.A. deBoer as second clerk. Sr. K. VanDuyn was appointed as an administrative assistant, and capably served Synod in this capacity to assist the first clerk. After the constitution of Synod, the delegates rose to express their agreement with the Three Forms of Unity, after which Synod adjourned for delegates and visitors to enjoy fellowship over coffee.

Foreign delegates

Relations with foreign churches featured prominently on Synod's agenda, and in that connection various representatives from sister churches of the FRCA could also be welcomed at Synod. These included delegates from the Canadian Reformed



Officers of Synod: Rev. R.E. Pot (vice-chairman), Rev. A. VanDelden (chairman), Elder W. VanderVen (first clerk), Rev. P.K.A. deBoer (second clerk)

Churches (Rev. A. Souman, Rev. W. Wielenga), the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa (Rev. J. A. Breytenbach), the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands (Br. J.H. deJonge, Rev P.K. Meijer, Prof. K. Wezeman), and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia [GGRI] (Rev. M. Biha). A letter of greeting was received from another sister church, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin). Also welcomed were several representatives on behalf of churches in ecclesiastical contact, including the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (Rev. P. Archbald), the Reformed Churches in The Netherlands Restored (Br. J. Houweling, Br. A. VanderNet), and the Calvinist Reformed Churches in NTT Indonesia [GGRC] (Rev. Y.G. Dethan, Evangelist R.Y. Rehyard). These visitors also received opportunity to address Synod as fraternal delegates in the course of Synod. As part of this, Synod was even treated to the rare opportunity of hearing a moving vocal rendition of Psalm 23 sung in Indonesian!

Advisory committees

For the most part Synod was able to work in open session, although after several initial rounds of discussion, advisory committees developed proposals on the *Book of Praise*, the Reformed Churches in New Zealand, and the Reformed Churches of The Netherlands. Amongst other things Synod dealt with the following items:

Canadian Reformed Churches

A sister church relationship with Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC) was continued. In the report presented by deputies, special mention was made of the ongoing sister church relationship that the CanRC enjoy with the United Reformed Churches of

North America (URCNA), a federation which primarily came into existence as a result of churches leaving the Christian Reformed Churches of North America. The CanRC are still committed to the goal of federative unity with the URCNA, although numerous obstacles to this goal remain. Deputies were appointed with the mandate to continue to stay informed on these developments.

Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford

Synod decided not to agree to the request of several churches to investigate the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA), which had seceded from the CanRC, and concerning which the deputies for relations with churches abroad had also submitted a report. Grounds for this decision included the fact that the LRCA requested deputies to make a judgment as to whether the CanRC are faithful or not, particularly in connection with the CanRC's decisions to enter sister-church relations with the OPC and other churches, while the FRCA continues to recognise the CanRC as true and faithful churches and has not objected to these sister-church relationships.

Free Reformed Churches of South Africa

Since our last synod, our churches have responded positively and in various ways to requests for financial support from the Deputies for Needy Churches in South Africa. Deputies were appointed to continue sister church relations and coordinate ongoing financial support.

Reformed Churches of The Netherlands

With sadness it was noted that over time the FRCA synods and deputies have had the need to express various weighty concerns concerning the faithfulness of our sister churches in the Netherlands (RCN), and that deputies have presented evidence that the RCN does not reject all errors contrary to the Word of God. In line with the rules for sister church relations, which require mutual assistance, encouragement, exhortation, and care, Synod decided that the seriousness of these concerns requires an official admonition to the RCN in the form of a statement of weighty objections with respect to the doctrine and practice of the RCN, also taking into account that the RCN have requested us to direct our concerns directly to their synod. This admonition is to pay special attention to items that have had the attention of our deputies over recent years, relating especially to hermeneutics, ethics, sacraments, ecclesiology, church government, and liturgy. It is to take into account the responses already received from the RCN, and to be done in consultation with deputies from our sister churches in Canada and South Africa. An advisory committee was appointed to formulate this admonition, to be completed by March

2013 so that Synod can reconvene on 22 April 2013 DV in order to adopt it and decide how to proceed with our relationship with the RCN.

Reformed Churches of The Netherlands (Restored)

Deputies reported that the offer of sister church relations from the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands Restored (RCNr) has been retracted, and that the RCNr has made it clear that further meaningful contact will only be possible once the FRCA break their sister church relationship with the RCN. Synod also acknowledged that the RCNr's relationship with the Liberated Reformed Church of Abbotsford (LRCA) may be an impediment to a future sister church relationship with the RCNr. Noting that there have been other groups, ministers, and churches that have left the RCN but have not joined the RCNr, Synod decided to pray for true ecclesiastical unity based on God's Word and as maintained in the confessions, and to appoint deputies with a mandate to keep contact with the RCNr and be receptive to contact from other churches (like the Voorlopig Kerkverband) who have split off from the RCN and the RCNr, and to report on further developments in this regard.

Presbyterian Church of Korea

It was decided to continue sister-church relations with the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Kosin). Synod also decided to make our churches aware of what the deputies reported, namely that in the context of visiting our sister churches in Korea, they were made aware of the Korean Presbyterian Church (Kosin) in Australia, including Perth. This church consists of more recent immigrants from the Kosin Presbyterian Church in Korea, but are a separate bond from our sister church with their own presbyteries and general assembly.



*Foreign delegates, CanRC:
Rev. W. Wielenga, Rev. A. Souman*

Reformed Churches in Indonesia

Regarding our sister churches in Indonesia, the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Di Indonesia (GGRI), deputies reported that this is now a larger federation as a result of the union in February 2012 of what were previously three federations, namely the federation of GGRI-NTT (our original sister church), the federation of churches in Papua, and the federation of churches in Kalimantan Barat. Synod acknowledged this development with gratitude to the Lord. Deputies were mandated to report to the churches with a clearer picture of this larger federation with its three regional synods, along with the implications of this union. Deputies were also given the task to continue focusing on providing support to the GGRI with the intention of building up their Reformed character, and to support plans to establish a Theological Seminary in Sumba. In this connection they were mandated to encourage the GGRI to seek the expertise and help of those involved in the establishing of the Indonesian Reformed Theological Seminary of the GGRC (supported by Mission Smithville of the CanRC) in Kupang. Financial support will also be provided to facilitate two students/ministers of the GGRI to come to Australia during the inter-synodical period in order to study English and familiarize themselves with the Australian churches. An additional part of deputies' mandate concerns reporting developments on the GGRI's efforts to seek federal unity with the GGRC.

With respect to the Gereja Gereja Reformasi Calvin (GGRC), Synod decided to continue contact, helping wherever possible to strengthen the Reformed character of these churches also, and to encourage the GGRC strongly to work towards federal unity with the GGRI, and thus a sister-church relationship with the FRCA. The FRCA churches and their members will be encouraged to provide the means of support as it pertains to carrying out the various aspects of the above-mentioned work in connection with the Reformed Churches in Indonesia.

Reformed Churches of New Zealand

Synod West Albany 2000 recognized that the Reformed Churches of New Zealand (RCNZ) are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ, a positive recognition confirmed by Synod Armadale 2012, which also expressed a continued resolve to work towards the goal of a sister church relationship, and thereby bring our unity in faith to practical and visible expression. The RCNZ's relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia (CRCA) has previously been identified as an impediment to realizing this goal of a sister church relationship, but Synod acknowledged that Synod 2011 of the RCNZ has decided to discontinue the sister church relationship with the CRCA and

establish instead a relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCA. However the rules for this new relationship have not yet been finalized, and so deputies were mandated amongst other things "to determine how the nature and practical implications of the RCNZ's new relationship of Ecclesiastical Fellowship with the CRCA differs from their previous sister church relationship and evaluate how this impacts on the impediment identified by previous Synods." The recommendation of the deputies to offer the RCNZ a "fraternal relationship" was not accepted, but it was decided to continue to encourage our local churches to exercise practical support and interaction wherever possible in areas that are not reserved for relationships between sister churches.

First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore

From Classis South-West came a proposal that originated from the church of Busselton, with a detailed report concerning the First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (FERCS). Busselton's submission gave sufficient reason to conclude that the FERCS wants to be a faithful Reformed church, that ecclesiastical ties between the FERCS and FRCA would be of mutual benefit, and that the FERCS is interested in developing such ties. Synod subsequently accepted a recommendation to appoint deputies with a mandate to take up contact with the FERCS, "and to make a careful investigation of this church according to BCF Art. 29, exploring the feasibility of a sister church relationship, and presenting a detailed report and accompanying recommendations to Synod 2015."

Reformed Churches of Brazil

Deputies were appointed to approach the Reformed Churches of Brazil, in order to ascertain if a meaningful sister church relationship can be established. The churches want to abide by a previous synod decision to concentrate on relations and contacts with churches that are in geographical proximity. But because this young federation is the result of mission work of our sister churches in Canada and The Netherlands, we want to determine whether or not a meaningful ecclesiastical relationship is possible at this stage.

Book of Praise

In recent years our sister churches in Canada have been making revisions to the *Book of Praise*, and deputies had the task to report on the revised wording of the psalms, revisions to the hymns (including nineteen additions), taking into account comments from the churches. Synod decided not to adopt the nineteen additional hymns that had been presented to the churches for evaluation, since it was considered that a desire to have more hymns was not alive in the churches. However, Synod did make an important

decision that will have significant implications for our church services, namely to adopt provisionally the 150 psalms and sixty-five hymns as revised and published in the provisional *Book of Praise* (2010 edition) of the Canadian Reformed Churches, on the grounds that these revisions are an improvement on the present version of the *Book of Praise* (2008 edition). We are thankful for the excellent work done in this regard, and may it serve as a blessing to the church in bringing her praises in song to God!

Several churches had also presented submissions expressing a desire to see an Australian version of the Canadian *Book of Praise*. Synod considered that it is prudent to invite input from the churches regarding this, and deputies were given the mandate to recommence investigations regarding producing such an Australian version of the *Book of Praise* in the event that a future synod decides to produce such an edition. This would include the revised version of the 150 psalms and sixty-five hymns, along with a prose section that incorporates the small changes authorized by FRCA synods over the years, and the FRCA church order. Amongst other things, deputies also received the mandate to submit the relevant material already received from the churches concerning the 2010 edition of the *Book of Praise* to the Canadian SCBP for consideration, and to study the use of capitalization for personal pronouns referring to God.

Training for the ministry

Synod received a report from the deputies for Training for the Ministry. Deputies were appointed and mandated amongst other things to continue to collect and forward funds to the Canadian Reformed Seminary in Hamilton, and to arrange the support of theological students as per our adopted rules. In future cases where theological students work in Australia as part of the Pastoral Training Program, the churches will share the cost of this by way of assessment, according to the rules adopted by Synod 2009. The feasibility of offering

the first year of study in Australia or by extension will continue to be investigated by the deputies. The deputies' recommendation to invite a guest lecturer to Australia from the seminary every two years rather than every three years was also adopted.

Bible translation

The church of Legana drew the attention to the fact that the 2011 edition of the NIV contains substantial revisions from the 1984 edition of the NIV that was previously approved for use in our churches, and that it demonstrates concessions to feminism in its translational choices. Deputies were appointed to evaluate the NIV 2011 edition so that Synod 2015 can come to a definitive decision concerning this, and in the interim Synod decided to disallow the NIV 2011 for use in the church services. Since the ESV has received a positive evaluation from many in Reformed churches, Synod considered that it would be worthwhile to properly evaluate its strengths and weaknesses, and thus decided to give deputies a further mandate to evaluate the ESV with a view to allowing it to be used in the church services.

Miscellaneous decisions

Other decisions of synod included:

- adopting regulations for cases when classes extend permission to speak an edifying word.
- not acceding to a request from one of the churches to grant permission for a brother to be examined by Classis under the provisions of Art. 8 of the church order with a view to admission to the ministry of the Word.
- continuing the work of the late Rev. G. Van Rongen in collating the decisions of Synod as they relate to articles of the Church Order, and publishing this on the FRCA website.

Synod adjourned on Thursday evening, 19 July 2012, and will reconvene the Lord willing on 22 April 2013.

For Synod Armadale 2012,
R.E. Pot, (vice-chairman) 



All members of Synod, as well as foreign delegates