

faith in **focus**

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Editorial

Welcome to Issue Number One of the thirty-sixth volume of *Faith in Focus*. Yes, *Faith in Focus* is 36 years old. What a history this magazine has enjoyed. It has gone through a lot of changes in its 36 short years. For a start, there have been many editors. Maybe someone can inform us as to how many editors *Faith in Focus* has actually had. There have also been a variety of formats, all of which were produced with the technology of the day.

This issue is no exception. There is a new editor (Walter Walraven), a slightly new format, and a font which hopefully our more senior members will find very readable.

I hope to continue providing (as did the previous editor) edifying articles for all readers in the RCNZ and beyond.

Faith in Focus is dependent upon your contributions. It would be so good for the content to be as "kiwi" as possible. I would dearly like to receive from our readers articles of general interest, letters to the editor, poetry, pictures for the front cover, and photos of an event in your church. For all those digital camera buffs, all images that you send by email should be high quality, at least 4 megapixels.

In this issue, we begin with some very thought-provoking articles from Brian T Wingard, Bishop JC Ryle, Pastor Andre Holtslag, Dr Sally Davey and Janice Reid. We continue with "World in focus", "Focus on home by Andrew Reinders" and letters to the editor. I hope you enjoy this issue.

I would like to acknowledge, with thanks, Dr Sally Davey for her support as sub-editor and without whom this magazine would not be possible.

Erratum: In the September 2008 issue of *Faith in Focus* Sally Davey's article on John Calvin's hymn, "I Greet Thee", wrongly stated that we generally sing this hymn to the tune "Toulon". This should instead be the tune "Resolution".

Photo Credits:

Cover – botanical gardens Wellington, by Elise Walraven.



Members of the National Publications Committee met on Friday 14 November to discuss the business of the past year. The members of the committee are (from left to right) Mark van der Zwaag, Andrew Reinders, Nicola Wharekawa, John Holtslag (chairman), Rev Leo de Vos (absent) and newly appointed editor of Faith in Focus, Walter Walraven.

The opinions expressed in this magazine are not to be considered the official position of the Reformed Churches of NZ unless they expound the Biblical system of doctrine contained in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, or the Westminster Confession of Faith, or reflect the successive Acts of Synod of the Reformed Churches of NZ. On the other hand, care is taken to ensure that articles and opinions do not directly contradict the official position of the Reformed Churches as contained in the above sources without attention being called to that fact.

A Person – not a cause

Brian T. Wingard

Someone once said that inertia is the greatest force in the universe. While we would not wish to subscribe to this overstatement, since it dishonours God and his power, it is nevertheless true that inertia poses a very real danger to the church of Jesus Christ.

Far too many churches (I speak of no particular denominations or congregations) are content with “being there” as its own justification. They believe that they do not need to do anything beyond what is necessary for mere continued existence. This is the road that leads to the error of the church of Ephesus, in its beginning stage (Rev. 2:1-7), and the Laodicean error, in its ultimate expression (Rev. 3:14-22). Therefore, Orthodox Presbyterians may be grateful to God for the wake-up call that the larger evangelical community has received from such things as the “purpose driven” series of books. We can be sincerely grateful that a blow has been struck against the stagnation of the church. Along with our gratitude, however, there ought to be some hesitancy before we “jump on the band wagon.”

What follows does not purport to be a review of that series of books or a detailed response to their content. It consists, rather, of some thoughts that arise from the ethos in the evangelical community that has made the “purpose driven” series so popular. In the rush to adopt “mission statements” for ourselves or for our congregations, could we be in danger of behaving as if our commitment as Christians is to a cause rather than to a person? I have myself upon occasion spoken of “the cause of Christ,” but there is a danger when the emphasis is placed upon the first noun of the phrase and not the second. Our Lord did not come into the world to found a movement; he came to be the Saviour of his people. It is also when the person of Christ is de-emphasised that we are in danger of following the Ephesians into the error of forgetting our “first love.”

There is a difference between being a Christian and being a Democrat or Republican. There is a difference between

being a Christian and being a “culture warrior” or a “social progressive.” There is a difference between being a Christian and being merely a “pro-lifer” or an advocate of the woman’s right to choose. With regard to some of these things, there may be stances that are more consistent with the Christian faith than others, but Christianity must never be identified with any of these mere causes. It was the hallmark of old-line liberalism and its “social gospel” to say, “Christianity is a life and not a faith.” Among many things that lay behind liberalism was the view



of Jesus as the founder of a movement rather than the Redeemer of his people. When our commitment focuses on a cause rather than a person, we have started down the same path.

Embracing causes may subtly lead one to embrace the principle that “the end justifies the means.” When a cause becomes the central focus of a person or institution, everything else will be measured by the degree to which it promotes that cause. Many mid-nineteenth-century (and professedly Christian) abolitionists found the Bible wanting by this measure, because it did not promote the cause of abolition strongly enough. A movement that began as a sincere attempt to further the will of Christ by ending that form of human suffering known as slavery finally

divorced itself from the expressed will of Christ in Scripture, because Scripture was not perceived to advance the cause sufficiently. The pursuit of abolition may have helped to remove a great evil from America, but it also helped to create a climate in this country favourable to a low view of God’s Word.

Finding our purpose

This is in no way meant to imply that the Christian church or individual Christians have no purpose! The Shorter Catechism tells us, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever.” Our purpose, however, is not found in self-made mission statements. It is found in the Word of the One to whom we are committed. Because our commitment is to his person, we ought to follow carefully the instructions found in his Word. Jesus said, “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

We must understand that the purpose of the church does not change from one congregation to another, or from one Christian to another. The church has many purposes subsumed under the ultimate purpose of furthering the glory of God. She has a devotional purpose; therefore, worship is commanded of her (John 4:22; Phil. 3:3, etc.). She has an evangelistic purpose; therefore, we are to proclaim the gospel to the whole creation (Mark 16:15). She has an intercessory purpose; therefore, she and her members are to pray for one another and for all men (James 5:16; 1 Tim. 2:1, 2, 8). The church has a diaconal purpose; therefore, she is to “do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).” This list of purposes could be extended to considerable length.

The Lord’s purposes for his church, however, differ from individual mission statements in that these purposes and commands are addressed to the whole church and to each and every believer as the Christian’s gifts and Providence equip him to undertake them. They are not a smorgasbord of “interests” from which Christians and congregations may pick and choose whatever suits their fancy.

Of even more importance is the question of motive. Why does the church take

up the mandate that she finds in Scripture? Is it because pursuing these matters is the way of success, as the world views success? No, she gives herself to the purposes that have been laid down in the Word because she is committed to the bridegroom whose bride she is. The church is united to Christ in the bonds of love! She follows where he leads because Christ has won her heart. She is willing to share his reproach because he is her Lord. Such motivation should

Jesus, our model

Jesus is himself the model of the contrast we are trying to make. The three years of his earthly ministry were three years of great activity. What was it, however, that motivated that activity? It was his commitment to his Father. His words are permeated with such a commitment. "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. I knew that you always hear me" (John 11:41-42). "I have food to eat that you do not know about.... My food is to

his love for his people. When the church becomes committed to a cause, rather than to the person of her Saviour, then the church does not find her center in love for Christ. In that case, Christ becomes merely a fellow labourer in that cause. Joshua queried the Lord, "Are you for us, or for our adversaries?" What was the Lord's reply? "No; but I am the commander of the army of the Lord. Now I have come" (Josh. 5:13-14). Christ will not enlist in any army; he will only command his own.

One *can* be passionately committed to a cause or a program. In the truest sense, however, one cannot love a cause or a program; one can only love a person. Those who say they love a cause really identify themselves or others with that cause. Their love is still a personal love, and we need to consider another matter. When Christ is identified with *any* cause, then that cause becomes idolatrous, for the person of the true Christ surpasses the bounds of any cause.

Commitment to a mere cause points us down the road where we are in danger of being like those the Lord condemns, who will ask of him, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?" To that he will reply, "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness" (Matt. 7:22-23). When we are committed to the person of Christ, we will receive his commendation: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matt. 25:21).

The author is an OPC missionary to Uganda. He quotes the ESV. Reprinted from New Horizons, with whom we have a reciprocal agreement.

“Of even more importance is the question of motive. Why does the church take up the mandate that she finds in Scripture?”

make us wary of the adoption of the corporate model or the model of any other worldly pursuit.

The church is not involved in the "religious business," and we have no product to sell! The church is not involved in a kind of sacred politics, and we have no constituency to court! The church is the bride of her Redeemer, and her only task is to please the Husband who laid down his life for her. If one should think that this view of the church leads to quietism and irrelevance, let him remember the "excellent wife" of Proverbs 31. Is she the picture of quietism? Is she the picture of irrelevance?

do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work" (John 4:32, 34). "I glorified you on earth" (John 17:4).

Jesus had a personal commitment to his people, as well as to his Father. He did not give his life for a cause. He gave his life for people. He gave his life for sinners. He gave his life for you and me.

Our Lord was no follower of an impersonal cause or ideal. He was the dutiful Son of his heavenly Father. He is abused when people do not follow his example. Any attempt to deprive his ministry of his personal commitments amounts to an attempt to deprive him of the fullness of his love – his love for the Father and

Remember Lot's wife

J. C. Ryle

There are few warnings in Scripture more solemn than this. Our Lord Jesus Christ says to us, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32).

Lot's wife professed the true religion. Her husband was a "righteous man" (2 Peter 2:8). She left Sodom with him on

the day when Sodom was destroyed. She looked back towards the city from behind her husband, against God's clear command. She was struck dead at once and turned into a pillar of salt. And our Lord Jesus Christ holds her up as a warning to his church. He says, "Remember Lot's wife."

It is a solemn warning, when we think

of *the person Jesus names*. He does not bid us to remember Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob, or Sarah, or Hannah, or Ruth. No. He singles out one whose soul was lost forever. He cries out to us, "Remember Lot's wife."

It is a solemn warning, when we consider *the subject Jesus is addressing*. He is speaking of his own second coming

to judge the world: he is describing the awful state of unpreparedness in which many will be found. Judgment is on his mind when he says, "Remember Lot's wife."

It is a solemn warning, when we think of *the person who gives it*. Our Lord Jesus is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He is one who will never break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He could weep over unbelieving Jerusalem. He could pray for the men who crucified him. Yet even he thinks it good to give this solemn warning and remind us of lost souls. Even he says, "Remember Lot's wife."

It is a solemn warning, when we think of *the persons to whom it was first given*. Our Lord Jesus was speaking to his disciples. He was not addressing the scribes and Pharisees who hated him, but Peter, James, and John, and many others who loved him. Yet even to them he thinks it good to address a caution. Even to them he says, "Remember Lot's wife."

It is a solemn warning, when we consider *the manner in which it was given*. He does not merely say, "Beware of following ... take heed of imitating ... do not be like ... Lot's wife." He uses a different word: he says, "Remember." He speaks as if we are each in danger of forgetting the subject. He stirs up our lazy memories. He bids us keep the case before our minds. He cries, "Remember Lot's wife."

Consider the religious privileges which Lot's wife enjoyed. In the days of Abraham and Lot, true saving religion

was scarce on the earth. There were no Bibles, no ministers, no churches, no tracts, no missionaries. The knowledge of God was confined to a few favoured families. The greater part of the inhabitants of the world were living in darkness, ignorance, superstition, and sin. Not one in a thousand perhaps had such good example, such spiritual society, such clear knowledge, such plain warnings as Lot's wife. Compared with millions of her fellow creatures in her time, Lot's wife was a favoured woman.

She had a believer for her husband. She had Abraham, the father of the faithful, for her uncle by marriage. The faith, the knowledge, and the prayers of these two righteous men could have been no secret to her. It is impossible that she could have dwelt in tents with them for any length of time, without knowing whose they were and whom they served. Religion with them was no formality. It was the ruling principle of their lives. It was the mainspring of their actions. Lot's wife must have seen and known all this. This was no small privilege!

When Abraham first received the promises, Lot's wife was probably there. When he built his tent between Ai and Bethel, she was probably there. When the angels came to Sodom and warned her husband to flee, she saw them. When they took them by the hand and led them out of the city, she was one of those whom they helped to escape. Once more, I say, these were no small privileges!

Her heart was in the world

Yet what good effect did all these privileges have on the heart of Lot's wife?

None at all. Despite all her opportunities and means of grace – despite all her special warnings and messages from heaven – she lived and died graceless, godless, impenitent, and unbelieving. The eyes of her understanding were never opened. Her conscience was never really aroused and quickened. Her will was never really brought into a state of obedience to God. Her affections were never really set on things above. The form of religion which she had was kept up for the sake of fashion, not from sincerity. It was a coat worn to please her family, but not from any sense of its value. She did as others around her in Lot's house. She conformed to her husband's ways. She did not oppose his religion. She let herself be passively towed along in his wake. But all this time her heart was wrong in the sight of God. *The world*



Bishop J. C. Ryle

was in her heart, and her heart was in the world! In this state she lived, and in this state she died.

Lessons to be learned

There is much to be learned in all this. I see a lesson here which is of the utmost importance in the present day. We live in times when there are many people just like Lot's wife. Come and hear the lesson which her case is meant to teach.

Learn, then, that the mere possession of religious privileges will save no one's soul. You may have spiritual advantages of every description. You may live in the full sunshine of the richest opportunities and means of grace. You may enjoy the best of preaching and the choicest instruction. You may dwell in the midst of light, knowledge, holiness, and good company. All this may be, and yet you yourself may remain unconverted, and in the end be lost for ever.

I dare say this doctrine sounds hard to some readers. I know that many fancy that they need nothing but religious privileges in order to become decided Christians. They grant that they are not what they ought to be at present. But their position is so hard, they plead, and their difficulties are so many. If only they had a godly husband, or a godly wife... If only they had godly companions, or a godly master... If only they had better preaching of the gospel... Give them *privileges*, and then they will walk with God.

It is all a lie. It is an entire delusion. *It requires something more than privileges to save souls.* Joab was David's captain. Gehazi was Elisha's servant. Demas was Paul's companion. Judas Iscariot was



A pillar of salt on Jebel Usdum (Hill of Sodom), the mountain of salt on the western shore of the Dead Sea. This pillar of salt is known as "Lot's Wife".

Christ's disciple. And Lot had a worldly, unbelieving wife. These all died in their sins. They went down to the pit in spite of knowledge, warnings, and opportunities. And they all teach us that we need more than privileges alone. *We need the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus.*

Let us value our religious privileges, but let us never pin our hopes entirely upon them. Let us desire to benefit from them in all our movements in life, but let

alone which make people Christians; it is *the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus*. Without that, no one can ever be saved.

You who attend a sound ministry – mark well what I am saying. You go to Mr. A's or Mr. B's church. You think him an excellent preacher. You delight in his sermons. You cannot hear anyone else with the same comfort. You have learned many things since you attended

infancy, and to hear of sin, and Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, and holiness, and heaven, from the first moment we can remember anything. But, oh, take heed that you do not remain barren and unfruitful in the sunshine of all these privileges. Beware lest your hearts remain hard, impenitent, and worldly, in spite of the many advantages you enjoy. You cannot enter the kingdom of God on the credit of your parents' faith. You must eat the Bread of Life for yourself. You must have the witness of the Spirit in your own heart. You must have repentance of your own, faith of your own, and sanctification of your own. *If not, you are no better than Lot's wife!*

I pray God that all professing Christians in these days may lay these things to heart. May we never forget that privileges alone cannot save us. Light and knowledge, faithful preaching, abundant means of grace, and the company of holy people are all great blessings and advantages. Happy are they that have them! But after all, there is one thing without which privileges are useless. That one thing is *the sovereign grace of God in Christ Jesus*. Lot's wife had many privileges. But Lot's wife did not have God's grace.

The author (1816-1900) was the evangelical Anglican bishop of Liverpool, 1880-1900. He quotes the KJV. Reprinted from New Horizons, with whom we have a reciprocal agreement.

“It is the highest privilege to be the child of a godly father and mother.”

us never put them in the place of Christ. Let us use them thankfully, if God gives them to us, but let us take care that they produce the fruit of faith and repentance in our hearts and lives. If they do not do good, they do positive harm. They sear our consciences. They increase our responsibility. They aggravate our condemnation. The same fire which melts the wax hardens the clay. The same sun which makes the living tree grow, dries up the dead tree and gets it ready for burning. Nothing so hardens the heart of man as a sterile familiarity with sacred things. Again I say, it is not privileges

his ministry. You consider it a privilege to be one of his hearers. All this is very good. It *is* a privilege! I would be very thankful if ministers like yours were multiplied a thousandfold. But, after all, what have you got in your heart? Have you yet received the Holy Spirit? *If not, you are no better than Lot's wife!*

You children of Christian parents – mark well what I am saying. It is the highest privilege to be the child of a godly father and mother. It is the greatest advantage to be brought up in the midst of many prayers. It is a blessed thing indeed to be taught the gospel from our earliest

Showing hospitality to strangers

Rev A Holtslag

It was not that long ago that I spent three years in the United States with my family while I studied for the gospel ministry. For us, this meant travelling with whatever we could pack into our suitcases, and relying in a large part on the generosity of the church and seminary communities into which we arrived. When we left, we did so confident in the gracious provision of our God, but also with minds full of questions about the many unknowns that awaited us; questions about a new church

home, our living arrangements, all of the many aspects of 'regular' life, and so on. As you can probably imagine, one of the more difficult aspects of our move was leaving family and friends behind.

One of the characteristics or requirements of Christians that is found in various places of the New Testament is that they are to be given to the practice of hospitality. Romans 12:13 and 1 Peter 4:9 both command God's people to offer hospitality. Indeed, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 require that those men considered for office in the church must be hospitable.

Interestingly, the Greek word that is translated as 'hospitable' in these passages is literally translated as 'lover of strangers.' 'Philo-xenos' is the rough transliteration, and you can see how 'lover of strangers' is derived from its constituent parts.

Having lived in a foreign land for some time, I think I am qualified to say that I and my family truly experienced this 'love of strangers.' As we had occasion to travel around the country and worship in different churches, we met many wonderful Christians who opened their homes and their hearts to us. Indeed, we look back

on our time in America with genuine feelings of love and affection for the many friendly folk who showed hospitality to those 'funny talkin' Kiwis!'

In one respect, I guess I can say that this came as no surprise. Back in New Zealand, our congregation was privileged to host an American family who had moved to New Zealand from Australia because of work associated with the diplomatic corps. They themselves bore witness to the fact that of all their colleagues who were forced to make such moves, workmates often commented on how quickly they settled into a new country. Their frank and honest response (and witness to the grace of Christ!) was that because they always moved into a new Christian community, the support and network systems were already in place for them to make a smooth transition into their new 'life.' There was an immediate source of information about Christian schools, shops, and healthcare providers that was delivered in the context of shared biblical principles.

Near the end of our first year in the States, as I and my family considered a short holiday to the East Coast, it was from these very same folk that we inquired as to the possibility of staying at someone's house during our time there. We weren't even sure about whether it was appropriate to ask for this type of hospitality (as there are seven of us!) but they assured us that friends of theirs would be only too happy to host us. And so I called these unknown people – just friends of friends.

"Sure thing," they said. "We would love to have you stay with us!" And as we spoke again to finalise the address details a little closer to travelling time, they informed us that they were likely to be away on a church camp for the first couple of days, so they would leave us a house key under the mat and we were to treat the place as our own! Now bear in mind, again, that these people were really strangers to us and we to them – just friends of friends, and yet they were willing to let us into their house in their absence and give us the run of the place for a couple of days. As it turned out, their church camp was postponed. So they were there to greet us when we arrived and we had a truly wonderful and mutually blessed time together with dear Christian friends who we will likely not see again this side of glory. We truly benefited from Christian hospitality.

Now, it may be that some of you are thinking that what these people offered us was really quite naïve, perhaps even foolhardy. After all, you could easily get 'ripped off' by strangers. Well, in the Lord's providence, during the time leading up to this holiday, I was leading a mens' group Bible study. And in the preparation for these meetings, we had occasion to meditate on the meaning of the word philo-xenos – love of strangers, as we considered the qualifications for church office. And if you consider the context of New Testament Christianity, there can be little doubt that this kind

of open-house hospitality is something that should be familiar to all of us as Christians. You see, New Testament Christianity knew nothing of "Quality Inns" and "Comfort Suite Hotels." As Christians moved about the known world they depended on hospitality in a very real sense. When a stranger professing to be a Brother in Christ appeared on your doorstep announcing that he had come from Jerusalem and was heading to Ephesus and had been given your name by Cousin Joseph, hospitality was mandatory. You couldn't email Cousin Joseph just to be sure. Thus, practising hospitality was risky. And the fact was that given the intense climate of persecution, your willingness to offer hospitality could very well be what got you arrested as a follower of Christ!

So as a gentle conclusion, from one 'stranger' to another, maybe we can all learn to stretch the boundaries of our hospitality. It may well cost us at times, and it may demand more of us than you-invite-me-for-coffee-and-I-will-invite-you-for-coffee-hospitality. And yet, it is certain that in practising 'love of strangers' we will discover new friends and a deeper appreciation for the shared union in Christ that we all have as those who were once strangers to the love of God!

Pastor Andre Holtslag, was recently ordained and installed to the ministry of the word and sacraments in the Reformed Church of Dovedale.

Facebook frenzy

Facebook: It's Canada's most popular website and our churches' youth love it too. But does their love of God come out on their Facebook pages?

by Jon Dykstra

Things sure are different. Back in my day you'd have to pull on your shoes, grab a good jacket and warm gloves, find your keys, head out the door and, if your friend lived close by, walk through the deep snow, or, if he lived further away, drive on the treacherous icy roads, and then knock on his front door and just wait for him to open it. Then and only

then could you give him a good jab. That's what it took to poke a friend in the old days.

Nowadays these young'uns have it so easy – they just log onto Facebook and poke away.

I don't know though. The Facebook "poke" – a quick "thinking of you" greeting – may be easy to do, and this website may make other things easier to do too, but I'm just not sure that easier

is always better. Not sure at all.

What is Facebook?

If you haven't heard of Facebook don't feel bad. It's new, created back in 2004 as a "social networking" website. That means it's a place where people can go online to leave updates about themselves, and read updates written by and about their friends.

That's the bare bones of it, and if you

want to find out more you can ask anyone in their twenties. In the US 75% of youth 18-24 have Facebook accounts. Up north it's even bigger – 6 million Canadians (1 in 5 of us) have accounts.

Why is it so popular?

So why are so many people Facebooking?

Well, the website does have hundreds of applications – add-ons that allow users to adopt “fluff pets,” give their friends virtual fish, dedicate songs to each other, see who's best at Scrabble, Pac man or even geography, and do countless other fun and goofy things.

But the real reason for the site's popularity is pretty simple: it's a great way to keep in touch with friends far and near. Whenever a friend posts new photos on their Facebook page, or types in a new “status update,” all their friends receive notice of it on their own pages. So it makes it easy to keep track of what

is about privacy. Any website that asks people to post personal information about themselves should be evaluated carefully, especially when children are involved. This site does offer a level of privacy that isn't available on similar sites like MySpace and Orkut – on Facebook only people you designate as your friends can see the information you post on your page. That's how it works in theory but, of course, information posted online is never truly private. So parents and children need to talk about what sort of information kids should and shouldn't post online.

Other concerns are more specific to Facebook:

1. Addictive

A common complaint is that the site is just too addictive. It's not unusual for users (especially new users) to check their Facebook page a dozen or more

friends shouldn't cut into our time with real friends in the real world.

3. Vulgar ads

This is a very practical concern. A month back Facebook ran advertisements that included pictures of near-naked women. A flurry of complaints to flyers@facebook.com seemed to fix this problem... for now. But if our favourite website takes a permanent vulgar turn will we have the resolve to quit? What would make us quit?

4. Pagan profiles

Finally, the biggest cause for concern is how some Christian young people's pages show no evidence of their faith. Quite the contrary even: they include drunken self-portraits, they post dirty jokes, insert vulgar videos, pass on vicious gossip, add troubling applications and join even more troubling groups. Sometimes the only Christian part of their page is where they list their religion: Reformed. We take the Lord's name in vain when we claim to be his followers but present ourselves to the world looking worse than pagans.

Conclusion

This last concern is the most troubling but it shouldn't be overblown. If parents sign up for their own Facebook accounts they can become Facebook friends with their children and see what their offspring are up to. Reformed parents should know that our children, born and conceived in sin, will often do sinful things when they are left on their own. So they need our supervision, on Facebook just as much as in the real world.

But used properly, Facebook can be an awesome resource. It can be a means to witness to our non-Christian friends and can be a way for far-flung friends and family to keep in touch. This is an amazing tool. It even makes keeping track of birthdays much easier.

Sometimes though, easier isn't better. That's why I'm planning on spending a little less time on Facebook and a little more time visiting friends in the real world. And I think I'm still going to stick to the tried and true, old-fashioned way the next time I want to “poke” a friend.

Jon Dykstra is a frequent Facebook user, and loves to use the site to dedicate mushy songs to his lady love. This article originally appeared in Reformed Perspective (www.Reformed-Perspective.ca).

“Real friendships are so much harder – they take effort, vulnerability, and a huge investment of time.”

your friends are up to. It even alerts users to when any of their Facebook friends' birthdays are coming up!

Another positive aspect involves the way the website forces people to decide how they want to present themselves to the world. I've sometimes found myself acting one way around my Christian friends and quite another way around my non-Christian friends. On Facebook all of my friends see the exact same profile. They all get to read the notes I write, see the pictures I post, the books I add to my favourite's list, the groups I join and the applications I add. On Facebook I can't get away with being two-faced – I have to decide, am I going to be godly or worldly?

Concerns

Facebook is popular for good reason but this phenomenon has a darker side.

One of the more obvious concerns

times a day. It's easy to blow 10 or 15 minutes at a time, and those numbers can really add up. Some people are so addicted they're even stealing time from their employer, logging in while they're at work. It's a great website but how much time does it deserve?

2. A friendship farce

Everyone likes to be popular and on Facebook friends can be collected by the dozens and even the hundreds, with little or no effort. That's disturbing because it's so different from the way real friendships function. Friendships on Facebook are a matter of quantity over quality, or as Relevant magazine writer Brett McCracken put it, “cheap abundance over invaluable scarcity.” Real friendships are so much harder – they take effort, vulnerability, and a huge investment of time. So we need to keep things balanced – clearly our time on Facebook with Facebook

Historic Hymns: James Montgomery

Literature and Christianity

The turn of the nineteenth century – the period of the Napoleonic wars, and of Jane Austen, was a great time for English poetry as well. Almost certainly you read some of this poetry at high school. Known as the “Romantic Period”, this phase in the history of English literature produced some of England’s most famous poets – Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Byron are a handful of the best-known. But they were men who lived unconventional lives, and they certainly conveyed ideas that ran counter to the received wisdom of the Scriptures. They were not Christians.

Yet the turn of the nineteenth century was also a period of strong Christian witness in England. The Methodist revival had seen the conversion of thousands of men and women, and its stimulating influence had brought evangelical awakening within the Anglican church too. John Newton and other clergy had had a powerful effect on many parishioners. William Wilberforce and his friends in Clapham, near London, were a strong force for change at the highest political and social levels in the land. These were exciting times for both poets and Christians, yet true faith and literary excellence were seldom found together.

However, there was one poet belonging to this period – less celebrated than the ones I’ve just mentioned, but most decidedly Christian. In fact, he put his poetic gifts very much to the service of the wider church of his day. We sing his words still. James Montgomery, the hymn writer, is regarded by historians of hymns as belonging in the top three among writers of English hymns, together with Isaac Watts and Charles Wesley. Montgomery was a hymn-writer who understood very clearly that hymns are poetry, and that to be reckoned as good a hymn should count as good poetry. He himself made certain of every word he

used: they were chosen with the greatest care, and there was not a word too many in any of the more than 400 hymns he wrote. In fact, he is regarded as a master of carefully-crafted simplicity and conciseness. It was not just the Christian church of his time that valued his work. Both Byron and Shelley, major poets of the Romantic period, spoke highly of Montgomery’s poetry.

Montgomery’s early years

Montgomery’s parents were Scottish Christians who had been led to faith in Christ by Moravian preacher John Cennick (a friend of George Whitefield). Deeply committed to serving the Saviour, they gave the rest of their lives to the work of the gospel. Moving to the north of Ireland they took charge of a small Moravian community there, and later, on departing to the West Indies as



James Montgomery

missionaries, they left their little six-year-old son, James, at a Moravian school in Yorkshire. James was never to see his parents again in this life – they died at their post in Barbados.

From a very early age young James loved writing poetry. He was a sensitive, imaginative child – he had a true artistic temperament. His Moravian teachers, practical and community-spirited, distrusted such individual expressions of

thought and discouraged his early poetry-writing efforts. James was unhappy at the school, though he did take on the Moravian values of honesty, integrity and willingness to work hard. At the age of fourteen he was apprenticed to a baker, but after 18 months of boredom, and still longing to be a poet, he took to the road. His dream was to reach London and offer his poems to a publisher in the hopes of becoming established as a writer.

However, he soon found the world a lonely and difficult place. Hunger and friendlessness led him to turn back, and he found employment again, this time as an assistant in a small general store. The owner was a good man, and quite sympathetic to the young James, who repaid him by working hard. When he was 18 he sought the permission of his master to leave for London and again seek his fortune as a poet. This time he reached London, but though a number of publishers commended his work, none was prepared to publish them. Somewhat dejected, he returned the general store and his old master kindly took him back.

About a year later, his big turning-point came when he saw an advertisement for a job as clerk and bookkeeper in a Sheffield newspaper. James applied, and was given the job. This was 1792, and the times were very volatile. The Revolution in France was three years old, and its extreme phase had been reached. Desperate aristocratic émigrés were arriving in England. War with France was imminent, and the government was looking suspiciously around for signs of rebellion at home.

James’s employer, Joseph Gales, ran into trouble for the contentious opinions he published in the pages of the paper, *The Sheffield Register*, and found himself forced to flee the country. This turned out to be Montgomery’s big opportunity. He had saved enough money after two years of working with the newspaper to buy the presses and the business from Gales, and thus became its new owner. Renamed the *Sheffield Iris*, the paper became his occupation and livelihood for the next thirty-odd years. Through his work as a journalist he honed his writing skills and won a national readership.

Trouble loomed in the short term, however. Montgomery was a more care-

ful editor than Gales had been, and was certainly far more gifted as a writer. Nevertheless, the paper was quickly becoming a mouthpiece for progressive writers with a wide range of opinions. When the *Iris* printed a ballad commemorating the Fall of the Bastille – the event that had set the French Revolution in motion – the authorities pounced again. Montgomery had printed the poem out of pity for its struggling young writer, but as editor he was responsible. Tried and found guilty of seditious libel, he was sentenced to three months' imprisonment in York castle, and fined 20 pounds. Unruffled, James accepted it well and set about spending his prison term writing more poetry.

Upon his release he resolved to be more careful. However, two years later a riot in Sheffield was rather brutally put down, and he could not resist some pointed comments in the *Iris*. Again he was tried and found guilty of seditious libel. This time the sentence was six months' imprisonment and a 60 pound fine. And this time the imprisonment burned deeper into his soul. He became depressed, and lost a great deal of weight. What he wrote in this imprisonment he destroyed.

But the imprisonment was only the outer cause of his angst. Spiritually, he was at a loss. Since the time of his schooling, he had turned his back on Christ. He had seldom been inside a church, and he had been ambitious for reputation as a writer. The company he had kept had not helped either: men whose agnosticism and free-thinking attitudes to life that had become his friends had undermined the respect for the gospel he had learned from his parents and the Moravian school teachers. Looking honestly at himself, he knew he was an apostate falling "headlong in all my pride of soul... to hell."

Conversion and new service to Christ

On his release from prison he slipped into a local Methodist church. (By this time, you might remember, the Methodists had become a separate denomination.) The minister, William Bramwell, had been in Sheffield some two years, and God had been using his preaching powerfully. Over two thousand men and women had believed in that period. Slowly, over time, James was brought to believe in the Saviour he had turned his back on for so long. He re-read a sermon of John Cennick, the man who had led his father to Christ, and God used it to move his

heart. The Moravian Christians who had looked after him in his younger days were very gracious. Rather than rebuking him, they received him back joyfully, and with open arms.

Though he had found Christ and never looked back, the years ahead were not plain sailing, spiritually speaking, for Montgomery. He had spiritual struggles, at times afraid he would ultimately fail God. Like many artistic and sensitive people he had ups and downs, and discouragement was a common companion to him. However, over time he began to produce true spiritual fruit, and both his gifts and his position as newspaper editor helped him provide very useful Christian service. For nearly 30 years he continued to write himself, as well as publishing news and comment on local and national affairs, and from a Christian point of view. Wilberforce and his friends would have found him an invaluable ally in the campaign against the slave trade, as the *Iris* frequently carried articles denouncing slavery.

His reputation as a poet steadily increased. In all, his poems fill four volumes – a considerable output for a busy man. As I mentioned earlier, some of the leading English poets in this period of great poetry esteemed his work highly. Percy Bysshe Shelley became a personal friend before his early death at the age of 32. However, it is his hymns that lived on long after Montgomery's own death; and it is for his hymns that the Christian church respects and honours him still.

He often wrote in short, spare lines, and in words of single syllables. With almost a musician's sensitivity to rhythm, and so sure-footed in his choice of rhyme that singers are left with the conviction that no other word in the English language would fit its place, Montgomery's hymns have a succinct, almost terse quality that defies efforts to tamper with them. (In fact, he was severe in his aversion to any attempt to alter the words of his hymns). Read the words of what is probably the most-loved of all Montgomery's hymns – at least, he said he had received more appreciation from the singing public for this hymn than for any of his others. Each word is so carefully chosen – and it is simple, uncluttered, and sincere. There are not many good hymns written on prayer; and Professor J.R. Watson, at least, regards Montgomery's hymn as the greatest on this "difficult subject"¹

*Prayer is the soul's sincere desire,
Unuttered or unexpressed;
The motion of a hidden fire,
That trembles in the breast.*

*Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye,
When none but God is near.*

*Prayer is the simplest form of speech
That infant lips can try,
Prayer the sublimest strains that reach
The majesty on high.*

*Prayer is the contrite sinner's voice,
Returning from his ways;
While angels in their songs rejoice,
And cry, 'Behold, he prays!'*

*Prayer is the Christian's vital breath,
The Christian's native air,
His watchword at the gates of death:
He enters heaven with prayer.*

*In prayer on earth the saints are one,
In word, and deed, and mind,
When with the Father and his Son
Sweet fellowship they find.*

*Nor prayer is made on earth alone;
The Holy Spirit pleads,
And Jesus, on the eternal throne,
For sinner intercedes.*

*O Thou, by whom we come to God,
The Life, the Truth, the Way,
The path of prayer Thyself hast trod:
Lord, teach us how to pray!*

You will have noticed that each verse teaches us something important about prayer, and that the entire hymn, when all verses are sung, adds up to a clear and instructive whole. The final verse is a neat ending, culminating in the disciples' request in Luke 11:1. That request, if you remember, resulted in Jesus' summary of what prayer should contain: the Lord's Prayer as we know it.

One of Montgomery's most glorious hymns is "Hail to the Lord's Anointed, Great David's greater Son!" – a free paraphrase of Psalm 72. He wrote it in 1821 for a leaflet for use at Christmas. In its successive verses it deals with Christ's incarnation; his ministry to the poor and needy; his provision for all the works of his hands (the creation); the homage that all his people, from every nation in the world, shall bring him; and in the final verse, his glorious, eternal reign in heaven. It is a great hymn to sing if you are ever discouraged about the weakness of the Christian witness in the world today.

Another very well-known and loved Christmas hymn is "Angels, from the realms of glory". It first appeared in the *Sheffield Iris* on Christmas Eve, 1816. Like many of Montgomery's other hymns, it has a careful structure. The first verse introduces the ministry of the angels as messengers. These wonderful creatures, who had the privilege of witnessing the glory of creation, now have the mission of announcing Christ's birth. In successive verses they bring the news to the shepherds, the wise men, saints and sinners. The appeal to sinners to repent, to respond to the call of mercy and "break your chains" is particularly strong.

Hymns in the Church of England

It was during Montgomery's middle years that a great change was made in the role of singing in Anglican worship. In 1817 a man named Thomas Cotterill became Perpetual Curate at one of the Church of England congregations in Sheffield. A controversy quickly arose when he tried to introduce the use of a hymnal he had compiled seven years earlier. Containing the hymns of Wesley, Watts, Newton and others, it was a compilation of some of the songs that were used frequently among the Methodists and on informal occasions among the Anglicans. They were not, however, used in official Anglican worship, because as yet only metrical psalms were approved by the church authorities. Indignant with Cotterill, his congregation took the matter

to the consistory court at York (which meant, in effect, to the Archbishop of York). When Archbishop Harcourt took a look at the hymnal he suggested (instead of banning it) that Cotterill work on improving it. James Montgomery agreed to help Cotterill do this, and offered some of his own hymns for inclusion. So, with the weaker material removed, Cotterill returned it to the Archbishop.

Harcourt had seen what was happening in the English evangelical world. The Methodists and others had made hymn singing an integral part of their worship to God; and he decided to approve hymns for use in worship in the Church of England services in his archdiocese. Cotterill dedicated the hymnal to Harcourt, and the book was approved. So from 1820 on, hymns were a part of Anglican worship. As a consequence, the nineteenth century saw a flowering of English hymn-writing, and a developing love for hymns on the part of people in all walks of life and levels of society. Hymns became an integral part of the culture. As Ian Bradley has noted, hymns became a fixture of family evening entertainment, of school ceremonies, public meetings, evangelistic rallies and private devotional reflections. So many loved hymns became so well known that people would quote fragments in conversations, letters and public speeches. Phrases from hymns became apt ways of putting important thoughts. Until recently, they have been deeply embedded in British culture the world over.²

Montgomery's advice to hymn-writers

Montgomery thought long and hard about the subject of hymnody, and about the task of hymn-writing. In 1825 he brought out a hymnal of his own, *The Christian Psalmist or Hymns Selected and Original*. The preface he wrote for it has been described as "the finest essay that has ever been written on hymns"³ It is a clear call to hymn-writers to apply all their skill and all their Christian gifts and graces to writing hymns that are also good poetry, for the edification of those who sing them.

The preface begins with a review of the importance of poetry. Montgomery regrets that many of England's great poets were not true believers, otherwise they surely would have written great hymns. Hymns, on the other hand, were written often by unlettered men who had no reputation as poets. What was needed, he contended, were hymns written by

those who were poets as well. He moved on and gave some specific directives to those who wanted to write really good hymns.

He was specific and practical: "A hymn ought to be as regular in its structure as any other poem; it should have a distinct subject, and that subject should be simple, not complicated, so that whatever skill or labour might be required in the author to develop his plan, there should be little or none required on the part of the reader to understand it. Consequently, a hymn should have a beginning, middle, and end. There should be a manifest gradation in the thoughts, and their mutual dependence should be so perceptible, that they could not be transposed without injuring the unity of the piece; every line carrying forward the connection and every verse adding a well-proportioned limb to a symmetrical body. The reader should know when the strain is complete, and be satisfied, as at the close of an air in music; while defects and superfluities should be felt by him as annoyances, in whatsoever part they might occur.

The practice of many good men, in framing hymns, has been quite the contrary. They have begun apparently with the only idea in their mind at the time; another, with little relationship to the former, has been forced upon them by a refractory rhyme; a third became necessary to eke out a verse, a fourth to begin one; and so on, till, having compiled a sufficient number of stanzas of so many lines, and lines of so many syllables, the operation has been suspended; whereas it might, with equal consistency, have been continued to any imaginable length, and the tenth or ten thousandth link might have been struck out, without the slightest infraction of the chain; the whole being a series of independent verses, collocated as they came, and the burden a cento of phrases, figures, and ideas, the common property of every writer who had none of his own, and therefore found in the works of each, unimproved, if not unimpaired, from generation to generation."

Many of Montgomery's best hymns follow these principles. They have one main idea, with sub-points made in successive verses; each one marking a progression to the next. They have a beginning, a middle and an end. Each verse is integral to the whole. We can see this at work in both "Prayer is the soul's sincere desire" and "Angels, from the realms of glory". For this reason, it

does not seem a good practice to omit verses here and there when singing Montgomery's (or many other) hymns. The flow of thought may be lost; and the care that the hymn writer has taken in developing the connections between verses is thereby wasted.

Montgomery worked away at his newspaper and printing business until he was in his mid-50s. He then sold both in order to concentrate on his writing, which he continued until the end of his long life. He never married, but though single and childless, he lived a fruitful life of service to Christ. We who sing

his hymns still are some of those who bear witness to that, and we can thank God for him. James Montgomery died in his sleep at the age of 83, having just written his last hymn. The people of Sheffield erected a statue in his honour, depicting him with a poet's script by his side and a bible under his arm. He was loved and respected.

(Endnotes)

Note: I am indebted to Faith Cook's chapter on James Montgomery in her book *Our Hymn Writers and Their Hymns* (Evangelical Press, Darlington, 2005) for much of the detail in this article.

- 1 J.R. Watson, *The English Hymn* (Clarendon Press, Oxford), p. 305
- 2 See Ian Bradley, *Abide with Me: The World of Victorian Hymns* (GIA Publications, 1997) for an excellent analysis of the important role hymns played in English culture. Bradley also examines the role played by specific hymn writers, the improvements made in music in Anglican worship during the nineteenth century, the themes explored by hymns during the century, and the effects of American revival songs, among other topics. I highly recommend this book. It gives many clues to the hymnody that was brought to New Zealand along with the settlers who arrived here in the nineteenth century.
- 3 J.R. Watson, *The English Hymn*, (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1995), p. 305

World in focus

John Knox Presbytery votes to enroll practicing homosexual as candidate for the ministry of the word and sacrament

The John Knox Presbytery on 18 November 2008 voted to enroll practising homosexual Scott Anderson as a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacrament in the PCUSA.

Anderson presented an "affirmation of conscience" to the presbytery containing biblical and theological arguments for his belief that ordination should be open to homosexual people in faithful, lifelong partnerships.

Anderson's statement formally declared his disagreement with section G-60106b of the PCUSA's Book of Order that limits ordination to those who "live either in fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness."

The presbytery acted in accordance with the General Assembly's 2006 authoritative interpretation of The Book of Order section G-60108, reaffirmed in 2008, that allows candidates to raise principled objections and reaffirms the presbytery's responsibility to determine fitness of candidates on an individual basis.

John Knox Presbytery is a regional governing body of the PCUSA that includes 61 congregations and more than 110 ministers in northeast Iowa, southeast Minnesota, and southwest and south central Wisconsin.

+ *Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202, 888-728-7228, Fax: 502-569-8005*

Reformed Faith comforts soldiers

In a recent interview with Chris Meehan of Christian Reformed Church Communications, US Army Chaplain Captain Peter Hofman spoke about his experiences while he was stationed at a fire base near Kirkuk, Iraq.

Chaplain Hofman related that even in the midst of the danger he and the soldiers of his battalion continually faced, he was able to preach from his heart about God's sovereignty over them and their experiences.

Chaplain Hofman described his three main missions as being to nurture the living, to care for the dying, and to honour the dead.

+ *National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 880, New York, New York 10115*

+ *Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue Southeast, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560, 616-241-1691, Fax: 616-224-0803 crcna@crcna.org*

First Presbyterian Church of Gulfport, Mississippi breaks ground

On 26 October 2008, the First Presbyterian Church (PCA) of Gulfport, Mississippi broke ground for the construction of a new church to replace their former church that was destroyed by Hurricane Katrina.

The new 25,000 square foot church building will have an education wing, a worship wing, office space and a gymnasium.

Approximately one-third of the church members lost everything during Hurricane Katrina.

+ *WLOX, 208 DeBuys Road, Biloxi, Mississippi 39531, 228-896-1313, Fax: 228-896-0749, wlox@wlox.com*

+ *Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 North Brown Road, Suite 105, Lawrenceville, Georgia 30043, 678-825-1000, Fax: 678-825-1001, ac@pcanet.org*

Christian Reformed Church internet ministry helps those dying for their faith

Worldwide Faith News reports that the Christian Reformed Church's (CRC) Back to God Ministries International (BTGMI), by strategic use of media, is able to provide encouragement to Christians facing perse-

cution, imprisonment, and even death for their faith in countries including Yemen and Indonesia.

BTGMI broadcasts to at least 190 countries including 32 of the 35 countries where oppression of Christians is the most severe.

+ *National Council of Churches, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 880, New York, New York 10115*

+ *Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2850 Kalamazoo Avenue Southeast, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49560, 616-241-1691, Fax: 616-224-0803 crcna@crcna.org*

New Interfaith Coalition fighting U.S. Treasury Department's promotion of Shariah-compliant finance

The Coalition to Stop Shariah (CSS), a new coalition of public policy organizations, human rights activists, and religious groups, held a press conference 6 November 2008 to challenge the U.S. Treasury Department's sponsorship of a training seminar for government employees on managing U.S. financial assets in compliance with Shariah Law. Shariah-Compliant Finance has been described by its leading practitioners as "financial jihad" against the United States.

The CSS called upon the U.S. Treasury to cancel the seminar it is co-sponsoring the afternoon of 6 November with the country's most prominent academic boosters of Shariah-Compliant Finance: Harvard University Law School's Islamic Finance Project.

In addition to calling on the U.S. Treasury to cancel the indoctrination session, the CSS called upon the agency to cease its efforts to promote Shariah-Compliant Finance and to recognize Shariah Law for what it is – sedition – and treat it accordingly by, among other things, banning its application to U.S. financial institutions and products.

Members of the Coalition include Concerned Women for America, ACT for America, Institute for the Study of Islam and Christianity, the Zionist Organization

of America, Traditional Values Coalition, Center for Security Policy, Endowment for Middle East Truth, Unity Coalition for Israel, Let Freedom Ring, Christian Solidarity International, Tradition Family & Property Inc., Women United, Jewish Action Alliance, Florida Security Council, Society of Americans for National Existence and the Center for Security Policy.

+ *Canada Free Press, 49 Elm Street, Toronto, Ontario M5G 1H1, 416-977-0183*

Episcopal Diocese of Quincy, Illinois votes to leave for the province of the Southern Cone

On 8 November 2008, the annual Synod of the Diocese of Quincy, Illinois voted overwhelmingly to leave The Episcopal Church (TEC) and to join the Anglican Church of the Southern Cone.

The vote to leave TEC was carried by 41 votes to 14 by the clergy and by 54 votes to 12 by the laity. The decision to join the Province of the Southern Cone on a temporary basis was approved by 46 votes to 4 by the clergy and by 55 votes to 8 by the laity.

The resolution to leave stated that the General Convention and leaders of TEC "have failed to uphold the teaching and authority of Holy Scripture, have challenged or belittled core doctrines of the Christian faith, have refused to conform to the agreed teaching and discipline of the Anglican faith, have refused to conform to the agreed teaching and discipline of the Anglican Communion, and have rejected the godly counsel of the leaders of the Communion."

The Province of the Southern Cone includes the countries of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay. It also includes former members of the San Joaquin and Pittsburgh dioceses of TEC.

+ *VirtueOnline, 1236 Waterford Road, West Chester, Pennsylvania 19380*

+ *Episcopal Church Center 815 Second Avenue New York, New York 10017, 800-334-7626, cdawkins@episcopalchurch.org*

Marriage wins in three more states

Citizens voting in California, Florida, and Arizona passed constitutional amendments to protect marriage, raising to 30 the number of states that define marriage as between one man and one woman.

Homosexual activists in California responded by protesting in the streets and filing three lawsuits.

Wendy Wright, President of Concerned Women for America commented, "California judges provoked the voters to pass this marriage amendment by ignoring the referendum that was passed in 2000 to define marriage as between one man and one woman. If a judge ignores California's citizens a second time, the damage would go beyond imposing same-sex 'marriage.' It would destroy trust in the judicial system. In demanding that they get their way, homosexual activists are threatening public safety and the integrity of our system of government."

+ *Concerned Women for America, 1015 Fifteenth Street Northwest, Suite 1100, Washington DC 20005, 202-488-7000, Fax: 202-488-0806*



HUTT VALLEY CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

**PO Box 43-127. 106 Mohaka St, Wainuiomata
5014, Lower Hutt**

STAFF VACANCY

Teaching Principal

(Starting in 2009, date negotiable)

Hutt Valley Christian School is independently owned and operated by an Association of Reformed/Calvinistic Christian parents through an elected Board of Directors. The school is co-educational catering for students from Years 1-12 and has a current roll of 67 drawn from a range of local Christian churches with the majority being from the Reformed Churches of Silverstream and Wainuiomata.

Our current Principal has been appointed to lead another Christian school. We therefore warmly invite suitably qualified and experienced Reformed or Calvinistic Christian educators to apply for this combination teaching and leadership role.

The school focusses on developing a biblical Christian world view in students and to that end has adopted a classical Christian approach.

The school has adopted the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as interpreted by the confessional standards of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. The foundation is the infallible Word of God believing that the Scriptures are fundamental to a right understanding of the whole of life including education.

The Board is strongly committed to ensuring that the principles and precepts upon which this school was founded are both maintained and actively nurtured. Applicants must demonstrate a willing commitment and ability to uphold these principles and precepts.

Applications will be considered until the position is filled.

*For further information and/or an application pack, please contact Mr John Holtslag, Board Member.
Phone: 64 4 564 8552, Facsimile: 64 4 564 9305
Email: admin@wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz
Website: www.wellingtonchristianschools.org.nz*

Death threat issued to Operation Rescue in wake of Obama election victory

Operation Rescue received a death threat on 5 November 2008 through its web site from a pro-abortion supporter emboldened by Senator Barack Obama's election victory. The threat has been reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The threat indicated that any act of "anti-abortion terror" would be "ANSWERED IN KIND BY PRO-CHOICE COUNTERTERRORISTS, who will mount violent attacks against right-to-lifers." [Emphasis theirs.]

Operation Rescue President Troy Newman said, "We are not new to these kinds of threats, and will not succumb to any attempts at intimidation, because the lives of innocent babies hang in the balance every day. We encourage pro-lifers around the nation to stand firm for the cause of life, especially in the face of impending adversity in a potentially hostile political environment. God is our Protector and we must trust in Him."

+ *Operation Rescue, Post Office Box 782888, Wichita, Kansas 67278, 800-705-1175, Fax: 916-244-2636. info@operationrescue.org*

Church has home prayers answered

Thornwood Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) had gathered for services in a school in Patrick, Glasgow, Scotland since forming in 2000 until an Assembly of Christian Brethren congregation gave them a church building in nearby Knightswood worth an estimated UK£500,000.

The Brethren congregation's numbers had dwindled and their pastor became ill, so they decided that they should give the church building to another evangelical congregation rather than have it remain vacant or possibly become a night club.

Thornwood's pastor the Rev. William Macleod commented, "We could never have afforded such a suitable building. I have never heard of any other example like this."

+ *BBC, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TS, England, Fax: 020-8008-2398*

+ *Free Church of Scotland (Continuing), Rev. John MacLeod, Free Church Manse, Portmahomack, Ross-shire, Scotland, principalclerk@fccontinuing.org*

Covenant network of Presbyterians meeting buoys efforts to remove the PCUSA's constitutional ban on ordaining practising homosexuals

At their 6-8 November 2008 meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Covenant Network of Presbyterians (CNP) attendees, buoyed by actions of the 218th General Assembly to relax the constitutional prohibition of ordaining practising homosexuals, worked toward furthering that goal.

CNP national organizer Tricia Dykers-Koenig stated, "Every single announced goal of the Covenant Network was realized at the Assembly."

The CNP since 1997 has worked to overturn the PCUSA constitutional provision adopted in 1996 which requires of those being ordained, "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and

a woman or chastity in singleness."

+ *Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202, 888-728-7228, Fax: 502-569-8005*

Two California PCUSA churches vote to leave and join EPC

Members of First Presbyterian Church in Fresno, California, and Trinity Presbyterian Church in Clovis, California, voted 2 November 2008 to leave the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA) and affiliate with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church due to the PCUSA's denial of scriptural authority and its efforts to allow the ordination of homosexuals. Unidentified PCUSA officials said that they expect other PCUSA churches to follow suit.

More than 100 churches have left the PCUSA since the July 2008 218th General Assembly vote to drop the requirement that those to be ordained maintain "fidelity within the covenant of marriage between a man and a woman or chastity in singleness."

+ *San Jose Mercury News, 750 Ridder Park Drive, San Jose, California 95190, 408-920-5000, Fax: 408-288-8060, webfeedback@mercurynews.com*

+ *Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202, 888-728-7228, Fax: 502-569-8005*

+ *Evangelical Presbyterian Church, 17197 North Laurel Park Drive Suite 567, Livonia, Michigan 48152, 734-742-2020, Fax: 734-742-2033, webmaster@epc.org*

Evangelical church service in Lansing, Michigan disrupted by homosexual activists

Members of the homosexual activist group Bash Back Lansing disrupted the 9 November 2008 morning service at the Bible-believing, evangelical Mount Hope Church in Lansing, Michigan, "with banners, chants, blasphemy, by storming the pulpit, by vandalizing the church facility, by potentially defiling the building with lewd, public, sex acts and by intentionally forcing physical confrontations with worshipers" according to Right Michigan blogger Nick De Leeuw.

Organizers of the disruption characterized Mount Hope Church as "a well-known anti-queer, anti-choice radical right wing establishment," and used their blogs to call "on 'queers and trannies' from across the state and the region to converge on Lansing for what they refer to as an 'action.' "

De Leeuw responded, "for the record, [Mount Hope Church] is an evangelical, bible believing church whose members provide free 24 hour counselling, prayer lines, catastrophic care for families dealing with medical emergencies, support groups for men, women and children dealing with a wide variety of life's troubles, crisis intervention, marriage ministries, regular, organized volunteer work in and around the city, missions in dozens of countries across the globe, a construction ministry that has built over 100 churches, schools, orphanages and other projects all over the world and an in-depth prison ministry that reaches out, touches and helps the men and women the rest of society fears the

most. They also teach respect for all human life and the Biblical sanctity of marriage as an institution between one man and one woman."

+ *Right Michigan*

Russia planning to shut down 56 major religious organizations

On 12 November 2008, Forum 18 News Service announced that Russia, in mid-October 2008, published a list of 56 centralized religious organizations scheduled to be shut down, apparently for not submitting correct accounting information to the Justice Ministry.

The list of church organizations to be liquidated include Old Believer, Armenian Apostolic, Catholic, Protestant, Nestorian, Muslim and Buddhist organizations.

More than half of all centralized religious organizations in Russia belong to the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate), but no Russian Orthodox organizations are included on the liquidation list.

Religious rights lawyer Vladimir Ryakhovsky of the Moscow-based Slavic Centre for Law and Justice told Forum 18 News Service that the Russian Orthodox organizations were forewarned by the Justice Ministry about their accounting report problems.

Russia's constitution since 1993 guarantees equality before the law for all religious associations.

+ *Forum 18 News Service, Postboks 6603, Rodelokka, N-0502 Oslo, Norway, f18news@editor.forum18.org*

+ *Russian Orthodox Church, 75 East 93rd Street, New York, New York 10128, 212-534-1601, englishinfo@russianorthodoxchurch.ws*

New Belgic Confession blog

As a way of promoting the theology and history of the Belgic Confession (Confessio Belgica), the Rev. Daniel R. Hyde, pastor of the Oceanside United Reformed Church of Carlsbad, California, has begun a blog using his book *With Heart and Mouth: An Exposition of the Belgic Confession* to provide resources on the Belgic Confession and provide a forum to discuss its teaching.

+ *Confessio Belgica, 760-803-0981, pastor@oceansideurc.org*

Church of Christ in Thailand requests prayers

Due to the worsening political crisis in Thailand, the leader of the Church of Christ in Thailand, the Presbyterian Church (PCUSA)'s partner church there, has urged Christians around the world to pray for his country.

The PCUSA has 10 mission workers serving in Thailand.

+ *Presbyterian Church (PCUSA), 100 Witherspoon Street, Louisville, Kentucky 40202, 888-728-7228, Fax: 502-569-8005*

Jihadists have captured most of south Somalia

Somalia, where al-Qaeda-linked Shabaab jihadists have captured most of the south. They recently publicly executed Aisha Duhulow, a 13-year-old rape victim, and

Mansuur Mohammed (25), a Somali convert to Christianity. They regularly assassinate aid workers, making Somalia too great a risk for most aid agencies. Jihadist and clan conflicts risk spilling into Somali-populated north-east Kenya. The whereabouts are still unknown of Maria Teresa Olivero (60) and Caterina Girauda (67), two nuns kidnapped out of north-east Kenya on 9 November and taken into Somalia. The Transitional Federal Government is powerless.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*, No 506, Nov 2008

Egypt: another attack against Copts in upper Egypt

When a 14-year-old Coptic boy recently failed to dismount from his donkey as a Muslim funeral procession passed by, the mourners grabbed and beat him. After the burial they returned to the boy's village, Tayyiba in Upper (southern) Egypt, and rioted, destroying property and looting. After using tear gas to quell the riot, the police arrested 10 Muslims and 50 local Copts. The arrests will doubtless persuade the Copts to accept a 'reconciliation session' where they will be asked to drop all charges in exchange for 'peace' with the Muslims. The local priest, Father Augustinus, reports that this was the third sectarian incident in the village in little less than five months.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*, No 506, Nov 2008

India: Rewards offered to kill Christians

Several Christian ministries in Orissa, north-east India, have reported that Hindu nationalist groups are offering rewards of money, weapons, kerosene, food and alcohol to Hindus who will kill Christians and/or destroy their homes, churches and properties. The Hindu nationalist paramilitary, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), denies the claims. However, according to Faiz Rahman, the chairman of Good News India, 'The going price to kill a pastor is \$250.' Rahman is desperate to get some 250 pastors out of the relief camps to safe locations. A report by India's Communist Party estimates the number of Christians killed during the Orissa pogrom is closer to 500 than the dozens quoted in official statements. Christians report that Hindu mobs are using horrific threats against children to force parents into 'converting' to Hinduism so their already homeless children won't be pack-raped or burnt alive.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*, No 506, Nov 2008

Iraq: Terror and genocide

On 12 November in Mosul, the capital of northern Iraq's Nineveh province, Islamic terrorists attacked yet another Christian family, shooting the two daughters as they waited outside their home for a bus and then wounding their mother before destroying the family's home with bombs. Shortly after this attack, a Christian bishop in Iraq received a threatening letter from the al-Qaeda-linked Ansar al-Islam saying Christians must leave the country 'immediately and permanently'. 'There'll be no

room in Iraq for the Christian infidels from now on,' the letter said, adding that those who remain will have their throats slit as 'is happening to the Christians of Mosul'. Iraq's Christians are facing a 'final solution' -- this is genocide. Only God can change this situation, meaning the humble prayer is more influential than any politician, diplomat or warrior on earth.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*, No 506, Nov 2008

Pakistan on a precipice – church at risk

The security situation in Pakistan is deteriorating. Al-Qaeda- Taliban jihadists, having already captured most of the north-western tribal regions, are escalating their terror right in the heart of Peshawar, the capital city of North West Frontier Province. They are also ramping up their terror attacks in Pakistan's major cities, including Islamabad. Pakistan's Christians have seen their rights and security decline over nearly three

decades of advancing Islamisation and escalating radicalisation. Pakistan's blasphemy law is one of the most insidious tools of religious persecution in the world today. An al-Qaeda-Taliban victory in Pakistan would be disastrous for global security and totally devastating for Pakistan's three million Christians (two percent of the population), some of whom are already suffering under Taliban rule in the north-west. Please pray for the Church in Pakistan.

+ *Religious Liberty Prayer Bulletin*, No 506, Nov 2008

Please pray for the Christians in troubled parts of the world who are suffering for Christ. Pray that the Lord would bring to naught the efforts of the enemies of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

You are invited to the

15th Hamilton Easter Convention

10th-11th April 2009

Theme:

How Well Do You Know Jesus?
Insights from His Emotions in the Gospels

Speaker: Dr. Steve Voorwinde

New Testament lecturer at the RTC in Geelong, Victoria

Convention Venue:

Hamilton Reformed Church

9 Aberdeen Drive
Dinsdale, Hamilton

Inquiries

Pieter van der Wel

Ph. 07-853 3144

E-mail ecap2009@gmail.com

Meeting Times:

Fri 3.00 & 7.00 pm

Sat 10.30 am, 1.00 & 3.00 pm

A bookstall will operate on Friday and Saturday

A crèche will be available for the afternoon sessions

Convention addresses are:

Friday

3.00 pm Does God Have Real Feelings? (Divine Emotions in the Old Testament)

7.00 pm The Compassionate King (Jesus' Emotions in Matthew)

Saturday

10.30 am The Man of Sorrows (Jesus' Emotions in Mark)

1.00 pm The Sympathetic Saviour (Jesus' Emotions in Luke)

3.00 pm The Loving Lord (Jesus' Emotions in John)



Dr. Stephen

Voorwinde (b.

1947) is Lecturer in Greek and New Testament at the Reformed Theological College in Geelong, Victoria.

Dr. Voorwinde

pastored churches in the U.S.A. and Australia before joining the faculty at the RTC in 1985. His areas of expertise include the New Testament, Koine Greek and Hermeneutics.

Dr. Voorwinde's doctoral dissertation on the emotions of Jesus in John's Gospel was published in 2005 under the title, *Jesus' Emotions in the Fourth Gospel: Human or Divine? He also has written Wisdom for Today's Issues: A Topical Arrangement of the Proverbs* (1996). He also writes articles for Christian magazines and theological journals

Dr. Voorwinde is a regular speaker in academic and church settings around Australia.

Conference attendance is free, but could you please register if you are coming so we know how many people to expect, esp. for catering purposes.

You can register by e-mail at <http://hamilton.rcnz.org.nz> or <http://www.trbc.org.nz>

If your church has received Easter Convention pamphlets, you can use the attached registration form

Afternoon tea and supper will be provided as well as a light evening meal on Friday and lunch on Saturday for those who register for this.

Focus on home

ANDREW REINDERS

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

Credit crunch/financial troubles/sub-prime mortgages...Recently, there has been a lot of focus on finances and world economies. As Christians we know we can honour or dishonour God, by how we manage our financial resources. Come along this Sat (1st of Nov) to MEN'S BREAKFAST as we study together what God says in His word about budgeting, borrowing, spending and saving. Breakfast starts at 8am in the hall and we usually finish up by 9:30am. Study material will be given out on the Sat morning. Please remember the \$5 to cover food costs. Lord willing see you there!

Visit by Rev. Leo de Vos next weekend
Rev. de Vos and his wife Carol will arrive on Friday to spend a weekend with us in Avondale. Their itinerary will include a look through the Kindy and Immanuel Christian School on Friday, the men's breakfast and a meeting with Session on Saturday, and on Sunday, Rev de Vos will lead both worship services and attend the Niuean service. There will also be opportunity to meet with Rev and Mrs de Vos during a shared lunch after the morning service on Sunday for which we ask everyone to bring a plate.

Congregational Meeting - Session is planning a meeting for the Sunday following the visit of Rev Leo de Vos. The meeting will take place after the morning service on 14 December, with the express purpose of voting whether to extend a call for him to serve as minister in Avondale. As usual, when only one candidate is available, the percentage in favour must exceed 75% of the valid votes cast. Please begin considering this decision prayerfully.

Bishopdale

Pastoral: It is our privilege and joy to witness the baptism of Alisha Klaassen tonight. Next Sunday, we will have two professions of faith; Simon Verkerk in the morning, and Jeremy Watson in the evening. God is good!

Pastoral: Congratulations to Renee and Hetty Klaassen on the birth of Alisha Brenda last Sunday morning. We rejoice with you and it is our prayer that the Lord would continue to bless you and your family.

Report from session meeting. Profession Of Faith: It is with thankfulness that we can report that Simon Verkerk & Jeremy

Watson will make their public POF some time soon.

Pastoral: We rejoice with Jenny and Hadleigh de Reus on the birth of Adam Hans last Sunday. Adam is healthy, and Jenny is doing well (and Hadleigh is too!).

Bucklands Beach

Wedding Banns. Congregation, Jacobus Stofberg (Koos) Vorster and Sonja Tempelhoff have indicated their desire to be united in marriage. They want to begin their lives together in the name of the Lord and in the presence of His people, and continue it to His glory. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach on Saturday, November 22 during a service commencing at 2.00pm. Everyone is invited and encouraged to come along.

From Session. It is with a real sense of praise and thanksgiving that session is able to announce that nine young people have been examined and are now ready to be admitted into the full fellowship of the life of Christ's body, the Church here at Bucklands Beach. Their public profession of faith and (for three of them) baptism will take place, the Lord willing, during a special thanksgiving service on December 14th, 2008 (morning). The young people who will profess their faith are: Sarah Brooks, Isaac Cho, Rigardt de Vries, Jamie Fietje, Lauren Mulder and Andrew Yang. Three young people who will profess their faith and receive the sign and seal of holy baptism are: Jardena Ropiha, Jason Scheepers and Michael Weatherall. As session and congregation we give thanks to God for his grace and mercy extended to each of these young people. Their desire to live for Jesus is genuine and will, we believe, bless His name and also His Church.

From the elders. Youth worker for 2009. The elders have unanimously agreed to appoint br Marcus Mulder as a part time youth worker (a .0.25 position or, 10 hours per week). His work begins after the holidays (mid-January 2009) and is expected to be for a 12 month period. The focus of this work is two-fold: 1) To strengthen and encourage the young people in their walk with the Lord and in their service in his name. 2) To be able to assess Marcus' calling for future ministry the Lord has in store for him. Marcus will be accountable to the senior pastor and also work closely with our vicar. It is expected that there will be weekly meeting of the pastoral team (our pastor van Garderen, the vicar, Daniel Wilson, our LABS worker, Jabez Cho and youth worker, Marcus Mulder) to guide, strengthen and assess the work. The position that br Marcus undertakes will be remunerated and \$10,000 needs to be set aside to fund it. May we encourage you all to consider if and how you can make a contribution to support this ministry.

Christchurch

Welcome to McSabbath. If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the Lord's holy day honourable, and if you honour it by not going your own way and not going as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the Lord, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob. The mouth of the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 58 verses 13-14. Many people see the Sabbath, or Lord's day, as an infringement of their personal liberty - a day that God has taken from them instead of a gift that He has given to them for rest, worship and celebration. The modern world, they argue, is too complex to set apart a whole day for rest and worship. There is too much that we need to do and too much that we want to do to give up one day in seven for God. We are just too busy. As someone has described modern society: We worship our work, we work at our play and we play at our worship. People simply do not take Sunday seriously any more as a day dedicated to holy uses. Some churches are responding by offering abbreviated worship services on other days of the week. One man told me that his church was adding brief, informal Saturday night worship services to their schedule. The reason for the additional meeting is that they are located in an area that offers many recreational opportunities that compete with the traditional Sunday morning services. By having church services on Saturday night, people can have the whole day on Sunday to go hiking, sailing, shopping, or whatever else they want to do, without being inconvenienced by having to attend services. We can just fit God into our schedule the way we do piano lessons and dental appointments. Then, if something more interesting comes along we can always reschedule. Some churches have changed to Friday night services and one congregation in our area has services only on Thursday nights, so that those craving even more recreation can have the whole weekend for their enjoyment without any spiritual interruption. McSabbath is here... worship services that are quick, easy, convenient and user friendly. No muss, no fuss. Little or no sacrifice required. Consumers can be in and out under the hour. McSermons may not be as nutritional as the real thing, but, like Big Macs, they have a predictable quality that fills a void at least for a while. The question is, however, do they fulfil the purpose of worship, which is to please God. Conflicts occur when what we want to do on the Sabbath clashes with what pleases God. When our will contradicts His. Am I the Lord of the Sabbath and therefore free to do whatever I please, or is the Son of Man? Is it my day or His??

Notes from full Session meeting. The deacons have asked a number of men from

our congregation to give encouragement to some of our older members by way of more frequent visiting than the deacons are able to do. Session fully endorses this as another way we can care for each other and build each other up, and also as a means to equip ourselves in service of the Lord's people.

Dovedale

Pastoral notes. We have further reason to rejoice today as we welcome Brother Erik Loots into full communicant membership in our church. Erik comes to us from the Nederduitse Hervormde Kerk (NHK) of South Africa. Erik will re-affirm his faith in the morning service today.

Pastoral notes. This week we received the news that the United Reformed Churches of North America will seek to enter into a Sister church relationship with us at their next Synod in 2010. Again we give thanks to God for the precious gift of unity amongst His people.

Session meeting report. We decided to approach a local newspaper to see if they were interested in a story about the arrival of our new pastor and some accompanying Christmas service advertising.

Following on from the recent presbytery, it was good also to reflect on some of the needs of the churches within our Presbytery and to pray for them.

Before our coffee break and the close of our meeting, we were also able to spend some more time in prayer regarding the needs of the church, our denomination, and the wider church. We have much, indeed, to be thankful for, before the Lord.

Foxton

Thoughts from Luther. (A "Do-It-Yourself" Devotion)

"So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter." 2 Thessalonians 2:15

Friday was Reformation Day, so this Devotion has been turned over to Martin Luther. Everybody has their favourite Luther quotes and some of mine follow. Poignant and powerful, his words, almost 500-years-old, are still, by God's grace, most pertinent. Please read, meditate, and enjoy:

Every man must do two things alone; he must do his own believing and his own dying.

If we are correct and right in our Christian life at every point, but refuse to stand for the truth at a particular point where the battle rages - then we are traitors to Christ.

Some of us... think to ourselves, "If I had only been there! How quick I would have been to help the baby. I would have washed his linen. How happy I would have been to go with the shepherds to see the Lord lying in the manger!" Yes, we would! We say that because we know how great Christ is. But if we had been there at that time, we would have done no better than the people of Bethlehem. Why don't we do it now? We have Christ in our neighbour.

The Christian is supposed to love his neighbour, and since his wife is his nearest neighbour, she should be his deepest love.

When I preach, I regard neither doctors nor magistrates, of whom I have above forty in the congregation. I have all my eyes on the servant maids and on the children. And if the learned men are not well pleased with what they hear, well, the door is open.

When I consider my crosses, tribulations, and temptations, I shame myself almost to death, thinking what are they in comparison to the sufferings of my blessed Savior, Christ Jesus.

Next to faith this is the highest art - to be content with the calling in which God has placed you. I have not learned it yet.

No man should be alone when he opposes Satan. The church and the ministry of the Word were instituted for this purpose that hands may be joined together and one may help another. If the prayer of one doesn't help, the prayer of another will.

"Listen to the angel's song, all you who have a troubled heart! 'I bring you good tidings of great joy!'" Jesus did not come to condemn you. If you want to define Christ rightly, then pay heed to how the angel defines Him, namely, 'a great joy!'"

And lest we think the only wise one in Luther's house was the Reformer....

I will stick to Christ as a burr to a topcoat!" (Those were the last words of Katherine Von Bora, Luther's wife.)

Reformed Church of Foxton 25th anniversary: As you are aware our church will be celebrating 25 years of existence next 1st April (DV). Two activities are being planned for the weekend prior to that date, which you need to be aware of. On Saturday 28th March 2009, there will be a social evening at the Masonic Hall from 7:30pm onwards. All past and present members of the church only are invited to this evening. Invitation is by word of mouth, so if you are in contact with former members, please invite them along. If anyone would like to do an item, or say a few words, at this evening, please get in contact with Allan Thomson. On Sunday 29th March, there will be a Thanksgiving Service held, followed by a Shared Lunch and official photos. This is of course open to anyone to attend, and will be more widely advertised than the Saturday evening event. Mark these dates on your calendars/diaries.

Hamilton

Wedding Invitation. Jeremy Posthuma and Louise ten Hove and their families warmly invite the congregation to help celebrate their wedding at the Reformed Church of Hamilton, Aberdeen Drive on the 8th November at 2.00pm, followed by an afternoon tea in the hall.

Pakistan mission trip. Sarah Gibson, Murray Williams and Ralph van Dalen will be travelling to Pakistan on the 15th of November for 2 weeks. They will be working in a Mission Hospital which has a wide outreach to the local population. This is mainly a Moslem

area, well away from the troubled areas of Pakistan. They hope to provide medical care but in particular to encourage and train the staff working there. Sarah as a Physiotherapist will train those involved with such work while Murray will be again teaching anaesthetic techniques and helping to maintain the equipment there, Ralph will be attending clinics, training the Doctors and talking with the local Surgeons who are mainly Moslem. This is a wonderful opportunity to reach out to the Moslems and support the Christians in the area. We value your prayers for opportunities to reach out and for a safe journey. Ralph van Dalen

Wedding bans - Wedding bans Jordan Green and Talia van der Wel have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on Saturday 29 November 2008, DV. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date.

Pastoral: A warm welcome to Craig van Echten who will be with us for most of the next 10 weeks. Craig is about to enter his final year of studies for pastoral ministry. Welcome Craig!! We pray that the Lord will make us a blessing to you and you to us while you are here.

Murray Cliff & Debbie Singleton will marry (DV) this coming Saturday. Please pray for them also.

Chapel Library We have received some more sermon booklets from e.g. Charles Spurgeon, George Whitefield, Jay Adams and various others. Some deal with the sovereignty of God in salvation; other titles True Godliness, The Terrors of HELL, The Method of Grace. We find all these things regularly spoken off in Scripture and do well to take note of everything God's Word teaches us. In this way we learn to adore God all the more for his marvellous grace and as we consider the seriousness of these matters may God incline our hearts to turn to Him more and more. You can find these and other booklets on the table in the foyer. If you want to find out more or give feedback please see Pieter van der Wel.

Hastings

From Pastor Hoyt. This morning we rejoice with Adrian and Marilee Smith as they bring their daughter Amelie Zara for baptism. How richly the Lord has blessed us not only in giving children but in making His covenant promise to them also. He has promised to be our God and has called us to be His children. This promise of course is something we take hold of by faith. Let us always seek to live by faith in humble trust and obedience that we may not cause our children to stumble or hinder them in any way.

From Pastor Hoyt. The drop in the NZ Dollar has suddenly made a serious impact on the set up costs for Rev. and Odette Douma's work in PNG. The estimated cost of a vehicle and a house was put at \$140,000. But the plunge of the dollar's value has suddenly raised that estimate to \$186,000 for the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. However we should not worry about this

matter. After all, the Lord, who has directed us to become the sending church and who has guided the OMB to recommend Rev. Douma for this mission work, is still our Sovereign God. He is in control of all things! including the value of the NZ Dollar. Therefore we can look to Him to provide for this need – a matter not at all difficult for Him, for the “cattle on a thousand hills” are His. If we take that statement literally, that would amount to 1000 hills x approximately 50 cows per hill x \$1000 per cow = \$50,000,000. So \$186,000 is chicken feed, as they say. Of course the statement in Psalm 50:10 is not meant literally. It is meant to convey the truth that God is not in need of anything. So we can be confident that, whatever may be needed to accomplish the work He calls us to do, He will supply all that is needed.

Professions of Faith. The session has given approval for Nathan Donk, Michael Kaijser, Christopher Rawlings, Sonja Van Noordt and Rebekah Van’t Sant to profess their faith. When these covenant youth were baptised, God made clear His claim on them as His own and they were received into the church. Now they wish to share fully in the life of this congregation and the whole church of God. If there are no lawful objections these public professions will take place, God willing, during the morning service on 23rd November. A shared morning tea is planned after the service, please bring a plate.

From Pastor Waldron. This morning we rejoice with Ant and Petra Lagas as they present their son Jack Rodney for baptism. This sacrament is a sign and seal of God’s covenant grace in blessing Jack in that he has been born to believing parents. He is therefore part of the covenant community. He is a member of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Commissioning service for our new missionary. Next Sunday will be a very special day for the Reformed Church of Hastings and also for the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. In the morning service we will be commissioning Rev. Alan Douma as an ordained missionary to Papua New Guinea. This is the first time since 1985 that we have been able to place an ordained minister to a foreign mission field. Rev. Oppelaar served as a missionary in Taiwan for two periods: 1963-1968 and 1977-1985. Since then our Overseas Mission Board has had as its first priority to place ordained men on foreign mission field but we as churches have not been able to find anyone to send. Truly for us the harvest

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Reformed Church of Silverstream has started a building project which necessitates it vacating the premises for some time. During the construction we will be worshipping in the Hapai Club, 879 Fergusson Drive, Upper Hutt (next to the Police station). The worship times will remain the same 10.00am and 4.00 pm.

is white but the labourers have been few. While we are thankful for the work that Janice Reid does in training nationals for Christian radio broadcasting and also the work Wally and Janette Hagoort do in assisting the PNG churches and supervising the Mapang mission house, it has been our desire and prayer that the Lord would enable us to be directly involved in planting churches. As Alan and Odette take up their work we, through them, will be involved in planting churches in PNG and training leaders in those churches. What a great privilege it is that, through the resources (both financial and personnel) which the Lord has given us, we are able to be part of His church-gathering work in another part of the world.

From Pastor Hoyt. Just think! Today is the second time in four weeks that a minister is installed in the Reformed Church of Hastings! Just four ago David Waldron was ordained and installed. Now this morning we have the privilege of installing Alan Douma. There is a difference however. David was installed to stay. Alan is being installed to go. Both staying and going are important biblically speaking. Those who stay are to build up and strengthen the church which is already established through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. This is essential because the church is a living body. Unless it grows, it will die. Then the future generations will be lost. Those who go are to establish the church and enable its growth through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God. This is essential because our Lord is committed to losing none of those whom the Father gave Him and for whom He gave His life. Many of these are far away and so Jesus commanded church to “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to all creation.” In this way, through the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, He builds His church in every place so that when He returns glory will be given to God by men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

Hukanui

Calling progress Session met Last Monday. The main thing on the agenda was progress with the calling process. Since we had Leo de Vos here a couple of Sunday’s ago we have had positive feedback and we also interviewed one of the elders in Wainuiomata. If you would like to know more details, please talk to one of the elders. Because it is almost Christmas we decided to wait until early in the New Year to have a congregational vote. This will give all of us a bit more time to listen to some more of Leo’s sermons (on www.sermonaudio.com) and for any further questions to be answered. Leo has also been contacted and he is aware that we are progressing along the way of a possible call coming his way early in the New Year.

Anthony & Petra Lagas have been blessed with another baby boy. His name is Jack Rodney Lagas, and he was born on 1 Nov. 2008

Mangere

A Farewell Note. Today is the last Sunday I

lead the services here as your minister. It is a strange feeling going through everything for the last time. But as we’ve been tidying and packing up there are also many memories which come out of the last ten years. It has been a truly blessed time with you. It has been a great joy to have preached and taught God’s Word and to have been with you in difficult and joyful times. A rough estimate, allowing for holiday and preaching swaps, indicates I have lead the services in Mangere on some 400 Sundays. That’s 800 services, together with the weddings and funerals and Christmas and Good Friday services. Something I am thankful to the Lord for having been able to do. As I wrote when I finished the Belgic Confession of Faith series, part of this involved preaching through the Heidelberg Catechism (three times), and through the Canons of Dordt, the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Belgic. So the Reformed Confessions have been very much at the heart of this. You as a congregation have been very gracious so that I could edit Faith in Focus for 8 years and chair the Calvin Christian School Board for 9 years. I came here aged 40 and I leave aged 50! As a family, too, we have felt very much at home here and part of the life and heart of the congregation. Especially we have appreciated your love through your prayers and practical help because of Betty-Ann’s MS, and with Andrew’s ill-health also. We pray that the Lord will very much be with you for the future. We pray that the blessed fellowship Mangere has will continue through the Lord’s blessing on the relocation process. It’s interesting that the congregation I will be going to in Melbourne, which is roughly the same sized congregation as Mangere, is an averaged sized church for the denomination. There are a number quite smaller. And yet they are very much committed to a witness to the reformed faith where they are. May the Lord continue to bless Mangere so that she tells of and lives out the doctrines of grace (even if she is no longer called Mangere!).

Masterton

Editorial: “It is in secret, not in public, that what we really are as Christians becomes clear. It is not my visible service so much as my hidden life of devotion that is the index of my spirituality. That is not to despise my public life, but to anchor its reality to the ocean bed of personal fellowship with God. I may speak or pray with zeal and eloquence in public. I may appear to others to be master of myself when in company. But what happens when I close the door behind myself and only the Father sees me? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned His disciples against hypocrisy before men and encouraged them to be transparent before God. How easily in our culture we are deceived into thinking that it is what is seen in public that really matters. ...Life has a way of ripping of the mask to reveal what is really there. Just as abuse of or inattention to the body reveals itself in older age, so does the abuse of the spirit. Inevitably it manifests itself in stunted, ill-disciplined, or twisted character. The Father has a way of

rewarding us openly—one way or the other (Mt. 6:5-6). Therefore, live well in secret; be molded by Scripture; learn to pray; and control your thought life by God's grace." (from Sinclair Ferguson In Christ Alone: Living the Gospel Centered Life).

Pastoral Notes. We thank the Lord for His grace and mercy shown in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the demonstration of His compassion. May our meditation on God's love for us cause us to bow in humble adoration of Him. This morning we have the privilege of witnessing the Sacrament of Baptism administered to Meagan Christine Kloosterman.

Nelson

Rev Barry James has finally got the all clear from his doctors and has indicated that he is still keen to come and fill our vacant pulpit for a short while in the new year, a definite answer will be given in the coming week as to when he will be available, so please uphold him and his wife Anne in your prayers.

On Sunday the 14 of December we will, Lord willing, witness the baptism of Emma Reitsma and also witness the profession of faith of Louret Bezuidenhout, Louret will be meeting with session on Tuesday, so please uphold her in your prayers.

North Shore

News & Announcements. This morning, we have the privilege to baptise Teun van Roekel, Erik & Henriette's new-born son and little brother for Suus. Erik & Henriette, may the Lord give you much wisdom as you seek to bring up your children for Him; may He remember His covenant promises and at an early age cause them to be born again and so make both Suus and Teun a joy and blessing to you your whole lives through; even more, that God may use them in the service of His Church and kingdom.

Palmerston North

Prayer Request. Could I ask for prayer for one family at church? Just Tuesday this week one of the children of the family was diagnosed with a brain tumour. He is four years old, and has a younger brother. His name is Rafe (really English!), and his little brother is Henry. His parents are Derrick and Cheryl Louis. The only symptoms he had of the tumour was that he was being sick on and off in the mornings for about 3 months previously. I have been to Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) this afternoon to see them, and they are requesting prayer - they are strong Christians. Rafe has a scan tomorrow am local time to get a better look than the local hospital in Chelmsford could. He will need a general anaesthetic for that, just so that he will be still enough for the scan images. He is a very likeable little boy, and everyone in the congregation here is shaken. We are having a special time of prayer tonight. John Scott, the full time minister, is away in America on church business. He went on Monday, before the diagnosis, so I am now dealing with things. It's different having to go to GOSH in central London than just being

able to call into Palmerston North hospital. CJ & JM Kavanagh

From the Pastor. This morning during the service, we have the privilege of witnessing the baptism of Mikade Monk. We rejoice with Peter and Debra and the entire family at this wonderful event. A special welcome to visitors who have come to share this with us.

Wedding Celebration! Daniel Dykstra and Amanda Haakma would like to invite the congregation to join them in witnessing their marriage before God. The wedding will be held on Saturday 17th January 2009 1:30pm at the All Saint's Church in Palmerston North.

Pukekohe

This morning Jodie Jochem will profess her faith in the Lord Jesus and join this church as a professing member. We are very glad to see you come to this point Jodie, and pray the Lord will make you a blessing to others and cause you to be a useful member of His Church and Kingdom. A warm welcome to family members and friends who are here for this happy occasion.

This afternoon we continue in the series of sermons on the life of Abraham. Again we see the grace of God at work in the life of a sinner. There are many practical lessons for us in the passage and also much encouragement.

We are organising a game of Ten-Pin Bowling for all the men of the church for Monday 10 November at the Pukekohe Cosmopolitan Club on Nelson Street. We will meet there at 7:30pm to begin bowling at 7:45pm and will play one game. Cost will be \$10. After that we will meet at McDonalds for food and drink. We need to know how many lanes to book, so if you want to join in please inform John, Michael or Peter Haverland by Wednesday 6 November.

Next Sunday morning Alida Roberts will profess her faith and join the church as a communicant member. We look forward to this joyful occasion.

This Wednesday, at 10:30am, our church will be leading the service at the Pukekohe Geriatric Hospital on Kitchener Road. We will be doing this each Wednesday of this month, at the same time. Please come along to support the singing. This is an opportunity to minister to the elderly in the hospital, especially in this advent season.

Silverstream

Session Notes. Profession of Faith: Session is pleased to announce that Michelle Leenders and Jason Den Harder have indicated their desire to profess their faith. The elders have met with Michelle and Jason, and after examining them as to their doctrine and life, concluded that they were ready to take this step. Three other young people are hoping to profess their faith early next year. Let us be thankful to the Lord that He continues to work in our young people in this way. If anyone has any lawful objections to Michelle or Jason professing their faith at this time, please let one of the elders know as soon as possible.

Service Relocation: This is to be our last Sunday in this hall, for the time being. From next week, Lord willing, we will be worshipping in the Hapai Club, until our new auditorium is finished. Session plans to trial coffee after the morning service in the Hapai Club, to see if it is practicable. Parents are reminded to take extra care to look after their children, as there can be no running around in or out of the building there.

Wainuiomata

Wedding Banns. Seth de Reus and Esther Zorn have signified their desire to be united in marriage in this church on November 15,



John and Sue Huizinga and their children (l-r) Nicholas, Shannon, Justin and Cohen, worshipped for the last time at the Reformed Church in Palmerston North, on Sunday 16 November, before moving to Carson, North Dakota, USA.

2008. If there are no lawful objections, the ceremony will take place on that date.

Church family news. This week we congratulate our Pastor and his wife, Leo and Carol on their 20th Wedding Anniversary on Wednesday. May God continue to bless you as a couple and also as you minister amongst us.

Sacrament of Baptism. This afternoon, we plan to witness the baptism of Azariah Vlaanderen's son, Zane Jonathon. Let us not forget the sign and seal of baptism. Baptism is a picture that Christ promises to wash our sins away just as warm water and soap clean our dirty hands. Baptism is a seal that God claims us to be his very own children and to live like his children. May the Lord grant Azariah much wisdom, patience,

strength and love as she strives to nurture Zane in these wonderful promises.

80th Birthday Celebration. Everyone is warmly invited to an Open Home on Saturday, 13 December to celebrate Dad's 80th birthday with us. It will "probably" be held at their new address: 24 Kawatiri Grove, Wainui from 2--5pm. We give thanks to God for His care and protection over our Dad and Opa for these last 80 years and we would like you to share this happy occasion with us all. The Verbokkem Family.

Profession of Faith. Session met with Morris and Anthony Kleinjan and Tanya Keast, who indicated their desire to profess their faith. Session concluded that they are ready to take this step. Barring any lawful objections they will profess their faith next Sunday morning, 14 December.

Wellington

Session Notes. Approval was given to the Board of Management to proceed with the initial plans they have presented for the stage in the church auditorium, and a letter to members will be distributed outlining these changes.

Please join us. With thankfulness to the Lord for His care, grace and love, the Heeringa family likes to remember Dad's (Pakee's) 80th birthday today. To share our joy and his birthday cake, you are hereby kindly invited to the Hall at the back of the church after the service. The extended Heeringa family.

From the Pastor. Congratulations to Richard & Jasmyn Schmidt on the birth of a baby daughter, Caitlin Rose, last Tuesday. Caitlin will be baptised in two weeks time.

Session Report. The Elders met with Daniel & Eddie van Kessel and Elisa Vorster on Tuesday after expressing a desire to profess their faith and become members of our congregation. The elders were very happy to agree to this request, and their profession of faith will take place on November 30th in the morning service.

Wedding Invitation. Seth Zorn and Emma Snoek are getting married, DV, on Saturday 20th December. You are warmly invited to witness the ceremony at St Johns in the City, corner Willis and Dixon Streets, at 11am. There will also be a morning tea after the service. There is very limited parking at the church, so you are encouraged to use a neighbouring parking building.

Short report of the Auckland Presbytery meeting

Held on Friday 14 November 2008 in Pukekohe, commencing at 7.30pm.

The meeting was convened by Elder Pieter van der Wel (Hamilton) on behalf of the convening church, the Reformed Church of Hukanui, by reading Psalm 1, giving a brief meditation and opening in

prayer. The delegates then sang Psalter Hymnal 454.

The delegates' credentials were checked by the Hukanui delegates and the meeting constituted with the Rev. S. Bajema as Moderator, the Rev. J. Haverland as Vice Moderator, and Elder P. van der Wel as Clerk. Vicar Daniel Wilson was present as an observer. The delegates stood to signify their agreement with the doctrinal standards of the RCNZ.

The delegates expressed their appreciation for the men's study day held in Hamilton, and Avondale was asked to organise the next training day, probably around mid-2009.

Given that the Presbytery had received recent church visitation reports for Hukanui and Pukekohe, it was decided not to ask these churches the Art. 47 questions. The Reformed Churches of Avondale and Hamilton answered the Art. 47 questions, with both churches citing a number of reasons for thanks and Avondale requesting prayer for the Lord's provision of a pastor. These questions also gave rise to a helpful discussion with regard to the discipline of communicant members who have not attended church for some time. RC Hamilton also reported that they will be hosting Craig van Echten (about to enter his final year at the RTC) for a 9 week summer vicariate. This was followed by prayer for both churches.

On behalf of the vicariate committee, the Rev. J. Haverland reported that Mr André Scheepers will be placed as a vicar in the North Shore, beginning in January 2009. Details of this are currently being finalised.

Church visitation reports for the North Shore, Mangere, Bucklands Beach, Pukekohe and Hukanui were received for information.

There were no reports for the National Diaconate, Youth Liaison or OMB due to the absence of the Revs van Garderen and Noppers. The Rev. J. Rogers reported on his visits as Synodical Examiner to the examinations of Vicar David Waldron, noting with thanks that David's ordination took place on 9 November.

There was some discussion about preaching arrangements given the three vacant pulpits in the Presbytery (Avondale, Mangere & Hukanui). It was agreed that, for the moment, the Presbytery would supply the vacant churches for four services per month through a mix of ministers and vicars.

The letter of release for the Rev. R. Noppers to the CRCA Perth was signed by the Moderator and the accompanying

documentation found to be in order.

The Rev. D van Garderen was provisionally appointed to report on the CRCA minutes. Br Pieter van der Wel was reappointed as Stated Clerk and Treasurer for Auckland Presbytery.

The Rev. M Willemse was appointed counsellor for the Reformed Church of Hukanui and the Rev R Rogers appointed counsellor for the Reformed Church of Mangere.

The Moderator, the Rev. S. Bajema, led in closing prayer.

The Presbytery then expressed their appreciation for the Rev. Bajema's ten years of faithful service in Mangere, and also for his excellent work as editor of *Faith in Focus* for most of that time.

Rev. M Willemse, Reporter

Wellington Presbytery short report, November 2008

The Wellington Presbytery met in Palmerston North on November 1, 2008. The meeting was chaired by the Rev. Leo De Vos. The main item on the agenda was the re-examination of Vicar David Waldron on sermon preparation and delivery. The examination was sustained unanimously, with concurrence from the synodical examiners. Hastings informed the Presbytery of their intention to hold the ordination service on Sunday, November 8.

The Presbytery heard the youth liaison report from the Rev. Nugteren, which including a reminder of the need for sessions to recommend new members for the Wellington Regional Youth Committee.

The Rev. Kloosterman, now the chairman of the OMB, delivered a report in his capacity as OMB liaison..

Two hymns were approved by the Presbytery on request from the Reformed Church of Wellington, in accordance with the synodical decision on approval of additional songs for worship.

The Presbytery received the necessary documents regarding the Rev. Douma, in connection with his call to serve as a missionary in PNG.

A motion from Silverstream was carried "that Presbytery indicate that the advice allowing Rev. Rademaker to preach regularly in Palmerston North and Wanganui, without a Presbytery licence, pertains only to this particular situation involving a former minister of our

churches." The concern was to prevent the Presbytery's advice functioning as a precedent for unlicensed preaching in general.

Presbytery spent some time in closed session on the request of one of the churches.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 7, 2009, in Foxton, with Wellington as the convening church and the Rev. Nugteren to moderate.

Short report of the meeting of Christchurch Presbytery held on 22 November 2008

The chairman, the Rev. Robert van Wichen, welcomed the delegates and read from Ephesians 6:12-20, pointing out that we fight – and ought to stand united – against the evil one, equipping ourselves with the armour of God in order to further the cause of the Gospel.

The Presbytery decided to form a regional youth work committee that would be made up of representatives from all or most of the churches in the

Presbytery. Having such a committee would help in organising events and would result in more experienced leadership developing.

The Presbytery went into committee to consider a proposal from the Reformed Church of Dunedin to support financially a second minister to work in Oamaru, and to establish a church planting work in Timaru. After a full discussion giving attention to finances, to structure of the work and to personnel, the proposal was tabled to allow Dunedin to consult more widely, and to present a revised proposal at a later date.

The finalised set of supplementary questions to Article 47 of the Church Order was approved.

Reports from vacant churches (Christchurch, Dunedin and Nelson) were heard. Church visitation reports from Nelson and Dovedale were received.

A report from the organising committee for the 2009 ICRC conference was received. It was pleasing to note that arrangements for accommodation and for the conference venue were well advanced and within budget.

A revised travel policy allowing reimbursement for air as well as road travel was adopted.

Letters to the Editor

To the Editor

Hi, I would like to respond to volume 35/10 November 2008 and in particular the article "Infertility – the Silent Grief". First of all, I too am a woman with an empty cradle and can therefore totally relate to what was written by Lydia van der Wel. I have read this article before (as it appeared in *Trowel & Sword*), and I find it a pity that you only published half of the original article in *FnF*, because the other part about "How to Help" brings balance and a real life perspective to this sensitive subject – it is an honest letter to a fictional friend about the dos and don'ts in sensitively talking with couples who suffer from infertility. I wonder how we can "bear one another's burdens" if we don't even understand them properly? I mean that in a general sense. I miss articles about real life issues in the *FnF*. The general trends I read in *FnF* are only about history and doctrine. It would be

Letters to the editor are [most] welcome. They should refer to an issue the magazine has recently published. Their language should be temperate, and they may not charge anyone with an offence. They should be brief, and they may be condensed by the editor. The opinions expressed are those of the writer, and not necessarily of the editorial team of *Faith in Focus*.

good to find a balance between that and real life issues, how to deal with them as Christians, and how church members can be more compassionate with each other in sharing burdens. Are there not counsellors in the Reformed Churches who could write articles for the *FnF* to bring that balance? Furthermore, I hope that you are still planning to put the

other half in the next issue, but otherwise couples who are interested can contact me for a copy.

Maria-Tine Biersteker,
Palmerston North
Email: Biersteker@xnet.co.nz

Editor's note:

We will certainly look into the possibility of publishing the second half of Lydia van der Wel's article on this subject. This is a sensitive topic, requiring careful biblical treatment. Sadly, it affects many couples. However, as those who have persevered in this and similar trials will say, God works in such trials and produces good things in us through his grace. We would be loathe, however, to make too sharp a distinction between what is doctrinal or historical, and what is real or practical. Biblical truth encourages in time of trouble; and the lives of Christians in earlier times provide examples to follow and stimulate hope (see Hebrews 11). The key is to make good applications of both doctrine and history to our own lives. Ed.

Sir,

I was highly chuffed by your November 2008 editorial mention of Guy Fawkes Day, and by your very good article about the Gunpowder Plot discovered on November 5, 1605.

Yes, I'd like to see a ban on selling fireworks to the public; but controlled displays are still okay. However, we need to revert to the old British custom of big bonfires on the night of that anniversary, for the purpose of burning the "Guy" in effigy: we need a regular reminder that you can never trust a Papist. Still less can you trust one in a position of power; so your readers need to be reminded that November 5 is also the anniversary of the 1688 landing of the Prince of Orange (hereditary Stadtholder of the Dutch Republic) to begin the Glorious Revolution which eventually chased the Popish King James II out of his three kingdoms, and established the Protestant Succession which has lasted since then – so far!

It is Britain which was used by God to take the vernacular Bible, the Protestant faith, and in time, free and democratic

government, to a great deal of the globe: it is no thanks to Rome that any of those things have ever been, or still exist anywhere. It is a known fact that, about 130 years ago, Cardinal Manning (an apostate from Anglicanism) told a large gathering of Popish priests that their goal was to end Britain's Protestantism; because, defeated in England, it would soon end everywhere else.

As most of your readers are of Dutch birth or descent, I'm sure they'll take a dim view of Guy Fawkes, after they've read that he had assisted the Spaniards against the Dutch during the first half of their War of Independence! As a Kiwi of British descent, I can also tell my Dutch Kiwi friends that informed British Protestants are extremely grateful to our Dutch King William III for delivering us from Popery, and so this is another good reason to remember the fifth of November every year. It irks me that, in our Reformed Churches, there have been some people, mostly younger ones, ignorantly soft on Popery, alas!

H. Westfold, Wellington.

Missions in focus

JANICE REID

Today's "guest" in Missions in Focus is a Reformed minister who lives in an Asian country. He is a native of that country, but went to seminary in Canada then entered the pastorate in that country. Now he is back in his home country, doing church planting and other forms of outreach. Rev D spoke recently with Janice Reid about his call, his ministry.

Q: Why did you go to Canada to seminary?

A: I got a scholarship from the Reformed churches in Canada after I graduated in the seminary near my place. The college here was okay, but most of the churches were quite liberal.

Q: How many years did you stay in Canada?

A: Seven.

Q: Why so long?

A: Because I had to do more language study. The first year was more like introduction, culture, becoming more confident with English. After that I was working, as a pastoral intern. Then I was called by a church in Ontario and served there as a pastor for two years.

Q: What decided you to come back to your own country?

A: From the economic perspective, it's more logical to stay in Canada and get a good salary. But we decided to come back here because the Reformed church in this country is quite small. I wanted to share the knowledge that I have, so the people here can grow in their faith. I know the culture and the language here, so it's easier to relate to local people and to do evangelism.

Q: When you came back, how did you get established?

A: At first, we did a lot of organized events, like Christmas parties, funerals, weddings and so on. I would preach at meetings like that, but I didn't have a

congregation of my own.

Q: How did you get a church?

A: We started a Bible study with five or six people, then in 2004 we started formal mission work supported by the Reformed church of Canada. So my wife and I are regarded as missionaries sent by the Reformed church I served with in Canada.

Q: How did it get to that point? First you were pastoring and then you became missionaries from the same church?

A: Yes. That congregation really wanted to do a mission work, so they approached me and asked if I was interested to return to my own country as a missionary. After they investigated the situation and found everything acceptable, we went ahead with that.

Q: How did you move from a Bible study of 6 people up to the point of having a church?

A: We had the Bible study twice every week, and more and more people were

coming, so the house got too full to hold them all. Then the Bible study group members saved money themselves and bought land, and they built the church that we have there now (see photo).

Q: When I first met you, you were preaching in about 5 different house-churches every week. How do you move from starting one church to preaching in so many new locations where you are planting churches?

A: A lot of it, here, is through family events like funerals and weddings. If I preach at a wedding or when somebody dies, their family members and friends come along. Then when they hear the preaching they ask if I can come and do a Bible study or preach at their place. And that's how it grows.

Q: Does that mean that the preaching in your area is really so bad, in the main-stream churches?

A: Yes. Most of the pastors in the main churches here really don't preach well. The majority of people here identify themselves as Christians, but they don't have a real faith at all...it's only tradition. And in the churches there's often no difference between preaching and a political speech, and many of the pastors only care about numbers of people in the pews, not the spiritual condition of those people. Pluralism is very prevalent here [the belief that all religions are the same]. One example: if an elder has committed a sin, say stealing, the church discipline doesn't require the elder to repent but to pay something to the church (usually in the form of paying for something in the church building) to show they have the right to go to the Lord's Supper again.

Q: So are the people in your area hungry for the Gospel?

A: Definitely. Even in a strong Muslim city north of ours, we have two mission posts and many people are hungry for good, biblical teaching.

Q: How do the Muslims show themselves in that city?

A: They are very active in getting converts. One way they do it is to say to liberal Christians, "Hey, we also believe in one God. If you follow Islam you will have a better life." And many people in that city are very uneducated, so they don't realize the difference between Christianity and Islam. Religion for them is a cultural identity, not a belief.

The second way is to exercise power over them. Some of the Muslims have money, and local people go to them for loans. Then the Muslims call in the loan too soon, when the local people cannot pay it back. The people will lose their land – unless they take the escape clause the loan-sharks offer, which is to convert to Islam.

A third way is to offer to sponsor people's children by taking them to another part of the country where there are good schools...but in fact the kids are taken away and raised as Muslims. Their parents lose all influence over them. In fact, seeing the damage that did to children was part of what influenced us to start the orphanage.

Planning a mission trip? Let us pray for you! If you or somebody you know is planning a mission trip – short or long – please let us know. We want to pray for those on mission trips overseas, but we cannot pray if we don't know that you're going! Deadline for submission of articles to Faith in Focus is 6 weeks before the month the magazine comes to your church. If you would like our congregations to pray for you on your mission trip, send details to Janice at reid4radio@gmail.com

Q: That was going to be my next question: how *did* you get into looking after orphans?

A: Many children from the rural areas come into our city to try and make a little money working on the street – their parents can't feed them anymore once they're teenagers, so they send them to the city to take their chances. We met Jethro that way – he was selling apples on the street so he could afford to go to school. We offered to sponsor him, and through him we got to know many children in his home-town. As we built relationships with more kids, and heard how the Muslims were working, we felt it would be a great idea to give them the chance of an education.

Q: How do you find kids who come to your orphanage?

A: Mostly through our mission posts. The elders see somebody who has special needs, and then come and talk to me about it. Now and then we meet them

in the street...we talk to them, find out what they're doing hanging around on the street. Maybe we buy stuff from them and gain their trust. Some of the kids we meet don't need any help, but some do.

Q: And these kids really are orphans, with their parents dead?

A: Two of the 21 children who live with us have both parents dead. Almost all the rest have one parent who has died. If they come to stay with us, we send back to their village and get a letter from the local government to confirm that they are really in need, and not just runaways.

Q: How do you support all these children at the orphanage?

A: All of it comes through family and friends. We don't have any help from overseas to pay for their clothes, meals and so on.

Q: You take mostly high-school age?

A: Yep. We thought that if we start with older children, we can teach them to become big brothers and sisters for the younger children who come later. Right now our youngest one, Deky, is 13.

Q: All of these kids are going through high-school, they will have to go out and get jobs, move into their lives. What are your plans for helping them to become independent?

A: One example is the radio station we started earlier this year. We hope the radio will give them experience that will help them to get jobs in the future. If they don't go to college, we hope they can have practical training, whether it's in wood-craft, or whatever.

Q: But at the moment you have one girl who *is* in college, doing nursing training?

A: Yes. We're paying for Angel's nursing course, and after she graduates we want her to work with us as part of our outreach and church planting project to do health education, a sort of mobile clinic. But she's two years away from graduating, and we need to find the money for the rest of her course-fees. And if any of the other kids are specially gifted in particular areas, we hope to find sponsors to provide them with training so they can contribute to the life and outreach of our growing churches.

Q: Would you say that you're fulfilling the things that brought you back to your country as a missionary?

A: Oh yes. I'm quite surprised by it, really. In five years the Lord has really blessed us, with six churches and the radio station, so we believe it will grow a lot more in the future. We have a training centre with 60 students who are learning to be either pastors or teachers, so there's a good group of people learning to be leaders for the future.

Q: I'd love to hear more about this training centre, but I think we're going to have to leave that for another interview! It's been good talking with you, Pastor, and hearing about what the Lord is doing in Timor.

A: You're welcome. Can I just mention one thing here at the end? A lot of people don't really see how the Holy Spirit works in this, but the fact is He works through the preaching of the Gospel, so the growth of the church is clearly God's work in this place. People wonder how the church can grow so fast here – and from a human perspective it's impossible. But with God, all things are possible. Glory to Him.



One of the churches and its people established by the Lord's work through Rev D.