

faith in focus

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“The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to the place where it sets.”

Psalm 50:1



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Editorial

This year June is the month when we remember Pentecost, the work of Christ is sending out His Spirit upon His Church. All those present with the apostles on Pentecost Day heard the gospel in the languages of the areas they came from. And as we read further through the book of Acts we see how the gentiles also became part of that first Pentecost Day as they were made part of Pentecost in Acts 8 and 11. In this issue of Faith in Focus we see examples of the extent to which that gospel has continued to go out into the world, with an article by Anton Meister on Christian development work in the Philippines and a report from the Rev. Hans Vaatstra on their recent visit to Papua New Guinea.

The other aspect of Pentecost which draws a strand in this issue is the Spirit's gifting now being upon all of God's people. And so we see with the articles on the priesthood of all believers, the encouragement to spiritual disciplines, and the ministry of prayer, how the Spirit work so mightily in this New Testament dispensation.

May you be so stirred up by God's Spirit that you will draw and live more deeply in Him, through the guidance of His Word.

"The significance of Pentecost morning was twofold: it marked the opening of the final era of world history before Christ's return, and, as compared with the Old Testament era, it marked a tremendous enhancing of the Spirit's ministry and of the experience of being alive to God.

Jesus' disciples were evidently Spirit-born believers prior to Pentecost, so their Spirit-baptism, which brought power to their life and ministry (Acts 1:8), was not the start of their spiritual experience. For all who have come to faith since Pentecost morning, however, beginning with the Pentecost converts themselves, the receiving of the Spirit in full new-covenant blessing has been one aspect of their conversion and new birth (Acts 2:37; Rom.8:9; 1 Cor.12:13). All capacities for service that subsequently appear in a Christian's life should be seen as flowing from this initial Spirit-baptism, which vitally unites the sinner to the risen Christ."

J.I. Packer

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If you are missing news from your church in Gleanings it could be because your church bulletin is not being received by Andrew Reinders. Let your bulletin editor know that his email address is reinders@paradise.net.nz

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 Dordt, 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.

The Priesthood of all Believers

The understanding of the concept of the Priesthood of All Believers and its impact on evangelism during the sixteenth century Reformation

Hans Vaatstra

Introduction

It has often been said that the leaders of the sixteenth century Reformation were so preoccupied with theology that evangelism was overlooked and missions stifled, except for the Anabaptists. This essay seeks to determine how Luther, Calvin and the Anabaptists understood and applied the doctrine of "Priesthood of all Believers" and how that affected their evangelistic strategies.

The Greek word euangelizesthai means "announce the good news.", Evangelism in the New Testament meant sharing or announcing the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. (Acts 4:10-12, Romans 10:9). The methods by which the good news was pronounced varied as widely as the context within which the gospel was preached, from preaching in the synagogues, debate in secular forums (Acts 17), training of associates (1 & 2 Timothy & Titus), one to one evangelism (Acts 16), and persecution resulting in scattering, which in turn aided the spread of the Gospel (1 Thess. 1:8). Similarly, evangelism by the leaders of the Reformation reflected a diversity of methods also. However in seeking to understand the different approaches taken by the early reformers two important questions are: how did they understand and interpret the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and how did that effect their evangelism strategy? Biblical evidence for the doctrine is clear. Israel was represented as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). In the New Testament all believers are regarded as a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) and "a kingdom and priests to serve his God." (Revelation 1:6) The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers enjoins the task of evangelism, as established in 1 Peter 2:9. As priests, Christians are to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God in worship "declaring the praises of Him who brought us out of darkness into light." Thus, Christians bear witness of the grace of God to the world.

However, while the priesthood of all believers was acknowledged by the

reformers, they applied it in various ways. Interpretation and application of the doctrine was used intentionally or otherwise for evangelistic purposes as follows:

The priesthood of all believers as access to God

Luther fought for biblical truth in an age when error had so undermined the church that indulgences were sold by priests to the laity in order to obtain forgiveness of sins. The 27th of Luther's 95 theses states, "they preach man, who say that the soul flies out of purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles." Forgiveness could be obtained through "letters of indulgence" supplied by representatives of an institutional hierarchy of priests in exchange for financial consideration. Such sacerdotalism became a barrier to ordinary Christians under the sixteenth century Roman Catholic regime, preventing

another." (G Henderson, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 1954:5) This understanding of the concept of the priesthood of all believers went hand in hand with Luther's teaching on justification by faith.

Even so, while Luther acknowledged the practical application of the priesthood of all believers and taught individual responsibility, the doctrine was not dealt with at length. So Luther's primary contribution to the doctrine consisted in the teaching that implied access to God through faith in Christ without the need for earthly mediators.

How did Luther's emphasis on all believers having direct access to God through Christ contribute to the spread of the true Christian faith throughout Europe? What impact did it have on evangelism? Direct access to God without the need of human mediation meant the Word of God belonged in the hands of the laity and in their language. Luther spoke, preached and argued in the



immediate and direct access to God through Christ. Martin Luther fought to overturn such clerical abuse by emphasising justification by faith and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. Luther taught that "as fellow priests with Christ we have access to God and may do all things which we see done and figured in the visible and corporeal office of priesthood. We are worthy to appear before God, to pray for others, and to teach one

language of the day. Although he was a learned man, capable of winning debates with his peers, Luther's language was simple. His 95 theses, plus many of his sermons and tracts, were written in the German vernacular and had a wide circulation. The sermon was of prime importance to Luther. He regarded it as the proclamation of God's Word, and preached regularly and with great power. Luther also

translated the New Testament and later the Old Testament into German. His translation was unequalled in dignity and felicity of expressions, and soon became popular amongst the laity.

Luther's proclamation of justification by faith alone (a corollary of the priesthood of all believers) clearly refuted the doctrine that every sin had its temporal punishments which required payment either in this life or in purgatory. The doctrine of purgatory evoked fear in the hearts of adherents to the Roman Catholic Church, hence the fiscal success of the Roman Catholic Church in the selling of indulgences. Thankfully, within four years of posting his theses, the system of paying indulgences for the forgiveness of sins had collapsed. A sermon which addressed the matter was published and "*penetrated places a thousand academic disputations would never have reached*" (J. Atkinson,

Luther, MMS 1968, page 54). While Luther neither planned for the Reformation of the church or the spread of Lutheranism, his deep conviction, empathy with the laity, clear teaching and powerful preaching addressed a deep spiritual need. This need was met by Luther's understanding and teaching of the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers—those having direct access to God through faith in Christ. Luther's strategy had a positive impact on evangelism in that it helped thousands of people realise that they had access to the Father through faith in Christ, without the need of any earthly mediators.

The priesthood of all believers applied in a representative way

Like Martin Luther, John Calvin understood the description of all Christian believers as priests to involve their personal access to the Father through Jesus Christ. The implication for believers according to Calvin was that they are to live their lives as "living sacrifices" to God dedicating their personalities, talents and property in those areas of life in which they can best serve God. Calvin believed that the ministerial order was taught in the Word of God, and sought to safe guard and use that order in the promotion of the gospel. Thus we find that Calvin's contribution to evangelism was chiefly through such ministerial representatives of the church.

Calvin taught that all Christians are permitted to share in a priestly status and service before God (J Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion, Westminster, 1960, 2-15-6*). However, they do so according to their gifts. "*Each member is assigned a certain measure, a finite and limited function.*" (*Institutes, 4-6-9*) Thus Calvin regarded the role of pastor and minister in highest regard, and primarily responsible for the task of teaching. In Calvin's day that included the function of evangelist, which he regarded as a special office that God raised up to restore pure doctrine to its lost position. According to George Henderson's understanding of Calvin's interpretation of Ephesians 4:1 1 "*the minister was held to be representative of the people*" according to gifting and function. (*Scottish Journal of Theology, 1954: 12*)

His regard for the office and concern for sound teaching prompted Calvin and his colleagues at Geneva to train and send pastors to establish Protestant churches throughout Europe and England. Between 1555 and 1563, over eighty men were sent by French congregations alone to study with

Calvin and Beza. Once they were trained they were sent back to France as missionary pastors. (*R. Kingdon, Geneva and the Recording of the Wars of Religion in France: 1555-1563, Geneva, Librairie E Droz, 1956, p.3 9ff.*) Hundreds of young men from almost all the nations of Europe were matriculated in the first year of the Genevan Academy as regular scholars, and almost as many, mostly refugees from France and England, prepared themselves by the theological lectures of Calvin for the work of evangelists and teachers in their native land. They felt called to study the Scriptures in Geneva under Calvin. Some were already pastors in Reformed churches, and were sent to Geneva for further training. Others were well-educated middle-class men, often students of the law. There were men from France, Switzerland, Germany, England, Holland, Italy and Scotland. A table of missionaries sent to France from Geneva (*Registres de la Compagnie des Pasteurs de Geneve in the Genevan State Archives. Reprinted in Kingdon, 1956:54-55*) lists 88 men sent to 64 churches in France alone. They were schooled in the usual linguistic and theological disciplines, including public speaking, and then examined before being sent out with a letter of accreditation to a selected church. Thus the gospel continued to spread through these Reformed churches, and by 1561 Protestant churches in France alone were said to number 2,150. (*J.M. Gray, The French Huguenots, Baker, Grand Rapids, 1981, page 77*) Many of those were established by trained missionary pastors from the Genevan Academy.

Calvin's understanding of the priesthood of all believers involving corporate representation according to gifting, resulted in a most effective evangelistic strategy in the training and sending of pastors to plant Reformed Churches in many parts of Europe. However, its limitation was that beyond the minister, the only form of involvement in ministry by unordained laity was through elders and deacons. To overcome natural apathy and trepidation by the laity would, perhaps, have required a more pro-active recruitment of church workers.

The priesthood of all believers as a lay movement

Early leaders of the Anabaptist movement felt that the early Protestant church (1520s) was not sufficiently removed from the sacramentalism, institutionalism and clericalism of its predecessor. They emphasised the primacy of personal faith with respect to the sacraments (especially

*With joy and thankfulness to the Lord
we announce the*

50th Wedding Anniversary

of our parents, Opa and Oma,

Henk & Martha GEERLOFS



Married in Dunedin
on the 8th of May 1953

Louise,

Arie & Janice, Angela, Brendan,
Selena, Rogan

Rick & Faye, Lisa, Malachi, Joshua,
Tessa

76 Hocken Street, Dunedin
(away in Netherlands until mid-July)

John 15:10

*"If you obey my commands, you will
remain in my love, just as I have
obeyed my Father's commands and
remain in His love."*

baptism), and repudiated ordination while stressing that conversion produced a priesthood of all believers beyond having access to God by faith. Moreover they opted for a simplified liturgy and Spirit-led worship. G.H. Williams in *The Radical Reformation*, Westminster Press, 1962, page 857 – 61, makes the point that the "Radicals" (as he designated the Anabaptists) had three main distinctives: Baptism, Spiritualism and Evangelical Rationalism. These respectively promoted believers' baptism, a greater dependence of the leading of the Spirit rather than the "letter", and a lay apostolate. This idea of a wider application of the priesthood of all believers spurred a liberated laity on to missions. According to Kenneth Latourette, the missionaries of the movement were numerous, recruited mainly from the lower classes, and traveled extensively throughout Europe. (*A History of Christianity*, Harper & Row, 1975:781-782)

Their earliest efforts were spontaneous. Missionaries wandered as pilgrims, attempting to avoid their persecutors while establishing small churches, mostly in country villages.

Anabaptists systematically sent out missionaries from local churches in teams of three people, designated "apostles" for the purpose of church planting. These were not necessarily trained preachers. Committed lay folk were relied upon to do most of the mission work. (G.H. Williams, 1962:860-861) Established churches would hold commissioning services for their new missionaries in order to commit other members to prayerfully support those sent onto the mission field.

Anabaptists were also generally committed to a high view of discipleship, insisting that their converts live exemplary lives. "No one can truly know Christ," they said "unless he follow Him in life." (Balthasar Hubmaier, *The Summa of the Entire Christian's life*, Pipkin & Yoder, 1989: 81) No doubt such personal piety strengthened them as witnesses for Christ. Hence, their missionaries had a reputation of being fearless evangelists who often persevered in the face of persecution. According to George Williams (1962:863), "they were overwhelming in their sense of earnestness, their lonely courage and their conviction.... to be a Christian is to be commissioned."

The results of Anabaptist lay missionary efforts are impressive. A list compiled by Kasdorf reveals that the estimated total of converts led to Christ by 15 of the leading missionaries in the short space of three years exceeded thirty thousand converts.

(1984:66). The cost of obedience to the Great Commission was also high. According to Kasdorf, "over 2,000 Anabaptist martyrs are known by name." (1984:67) Nevertheless the example set by these "Radical Reformers" has greatly influenced and encouraged the Protestant lay missionary movements of the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Analysis

The sixteenth century reformation of the Church released the laity from the oppression of Sacerdotalism and Sacramentalism. Believers now had access to God and were able to realise their responsibility before God to live as a holy priesthood, offering the sacrifices of lives devoted in service to Christ and humanity. Luther re-affirmed this biblical doctrine with enthusiasm and vigour. While he did not go much further in implementing it other than preach it, his preaching drew many to faith in a gracious God through Jesus Christ. The Anabaptists were eager to apply the priesthood of all believers as they believed it was meant to be applied according to Scripture. However, due to a lack of rigorous training among some of the lay missionaries; doctrines which diverged from those of the mainstream Reformation; and certain excesses such as the uprising at Munster, there arose a strong reaction against the Anabaptist lay movement by mainstream Protestants. As a later reformer, Calvin was representative of this reaction. He effectively minimised lay involvement in ministry to that of elders and deacons. The pastoral and preaching function rested in the ordained minister as the one who possessed the God-given gifts for that function, and who represented the whole congregation in that task. Hence Calvin's strategy of training and sending pastors to plant Reformed churches. Negatively, the effect of subduing the laity resulted in complacency and a dearth of lay involvement in Protestant missions until the period of the "Great Awakening." K.S. Latourette, recording that later period of history wrote, "the lay element became prominent. This was to be expected from the Protestant principle of the priesthood of all believers, but what had been held in theory now became more of a reality." (*A History of Christianity*, Harper & Row, 1975: 1020). The Anabaptists were very effective in implementing the concept of the Priesthood of all Believers because of their "radical obedience" to the Great Commission; their stress on discipleship and the use of the laity. However, because of the oppressive ecclesiastical climate of late medieval

Christendom, with its misunderstandings, excesses and inexperience, their lay missionary movement was suppressed to rise again another day. G.H. Williams has described the early Anabaptist movement as an 'Abortive Counter Revolt within the Reformation' (1962:862).

Nevertheless, the history of the church has, since the Reformation, shown that there will always be an important place for plain and faithful preaching of the Gospel which proclaims free access to God through Jesus Christ. There will always be a place for the rigorous training of pastors to lead and plant churches. There will always be a place for discipling the laity for evangelism and works of service. All three are faithful implementations of the Priesthood of all Believers, and all three can effectively contribute to the Church's task of evangelism.

*With joy and thankfulness to the Lord
we announce the*

50th Wedding Anniversary

of our parents and Oma & Opa

Arie & Jeanette DE VRIES



Married in Wellington on 26 June 1953

John and Glenda
David, Jonathan, Rochelle
Walter and Janny
Nicola, Rachel, James, Joshua, Luke,
Reuben, Michael
Paul and Caroline
Jason, Anna, Sarah, Benjamin, Joel
Anthony and Geraldine
David, Daniel, Aimee, Matthew

*"casting all your anxiety upon Him,
because he cares for you"*
1 Peter 5:7

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A feminine focus

The need of the hour

Sally Davey

There's something wrong with us, isn't there? We're so often let down with ourselves, with others, with our church, or the Christian church today in general. Dr Joey Pipa commented to us last year, "*Reformed Christians the world over are discouraged.*" When we look at ourselves; when we see how little impact our witness has on the world around us; when we see how few we are, it would seem there is every reason to be discouraged. Why are we so unlike what we ought to be? Part of it is our fault—all too often, we are too like the world: we have conformed too much to it. Contemporary writer David Wells has said this of the churches in his own country:

"The vast growth in evangelically minded people in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s should by now have revolutionised American culture. With a third of American adults now claiming to have experienced spiritual rebirth, a powerful counter-current of morality growing out of a powerful and alternative worldview should have been unleashed in factories, offices, and boardrooms, in the media, universities, and professions, from one end of the country to the other. The results should

by now be unmistakable. Secular values should be reeling, and those who are their proponents should be very troubled. But as it turns out, all of this swelling of the evangelical ranks has passed unnoticed in the culture. It has simply been absorbed and tamed..."

And much of this is true locally, isn't it? Fewer New Zealanders claim to be born again, and fewer attend church than do in the U.S, but there was certainly an increased interest in the Gospel here between the 1960s and 80s. Many of us came to faith in those decades; yet where is the effect of our faith—where are the fruits of our witness?

David Wells puts this weakness down to a lack of love for the truth in evangelical churches. I agree with him. Our witness is only as strong as the clarity with which we confront our culture with its lack of truth. And we can't do that unless we love the truth, live it out with conviction and compassion, and handle it with a thorough wisdom. But before we congratulate ourselves on being, by contrast, a church that loves the truth, we should take stock of just how much we individually know it and love it and articulate it to others. Do we?

A different kind of walk

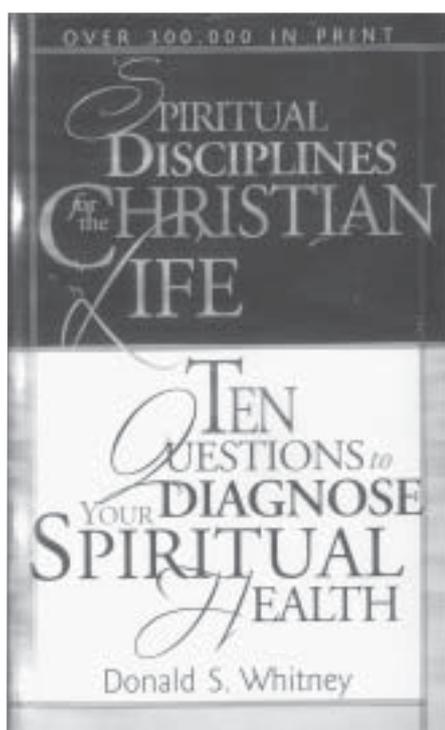
However, there is another reason we are weak and get discouraged; and that is what I want to write about this month. We don't seem to have the kind of walk with God that characterised the believers God used, and uses, to make a big difference to their world. I speak for myself when I say that my own spiritual record seems poor and weak when set beside someone who could write this in her journal:

"While Mr Reynolds was praying, these words, in Rom. 8:34, came into my mind, 'Who is he that condemneth; it is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us...' which occasioned great sweetness and delight in my soul. But when I was alone, the words came to my mind with far greater power and sweetness... I cannot find language to express how certain this appeared—the everlasting mountains and hills were but

shadows to it. My safety and happiness, and eternal enjoyment of God's immutable love, seemed as durable and unchangeable as God himself. Melted and overcome by the sweetness of this assurance, I fell into a great flow of tears... The whole world, with all its enjoyments, and all its troubles, seemed to be nothing. My God was my all, my only portion..." Who wrote this? Sarah, the wife of Jonathan Edwards.

Do Sarah's words leave us cold? Would we be embarrassed to write something like this? Perhaps our style of writing today might be different; perhaps one or two of us are less inclined to tearful emotion—but could it also be that we are not moved by the truths of Scripture as much as we should be? Our hearts are not so captivated by Gospel truths, our prayer is more shallow, our Bible study does not stir our hearts or affect our everyday lives as it did with saints like Sarah Edwards. I am frequently ashamed at my own devotional practices. My conclusion is that our lives will not glow with the glory of God (as they are meant to) until we learn the ways of such Christians. It is the need of the hour.

Lately, I've been reading some fine, thoughtful writers on this subject. One of them noticed that "many who profess faith seem to think that Christianity is something to add to their already busy lives, not something that controls, constrains, and shapes their vision and all of their goals." This man, Don Carson, is a theologian whose own love for God is captivating. He is also a man of prayer; and has expressed his concern about the devotional habits of Christians today. Carson tells that in 1990 at a major North American seminary, 50 students who were offering themselves for overseas ministry during the summer holidays were carefully interviewed so their suitability could be assessed. Only 3 of these 50 (6%!) could testify to regular quiet times, times of reading the Scripture, of devoting themselves to prayer. "*It would be painful and embarrassing to uncover the prayer life of many thousands of evangelical pastors,*" he writes. I'm sure Dr Carson, who trains pastors, is well qualified to raise this—but my worry is not about pastors; it's about women like me, here in everyday humdrum Kiwi culture. What we need, as Don Carson



observes in the title of his book on prayer, is a "spiritual reformation."

Let me run on a little further with his diagnosis: "When it comes to knowing God, we are a culture of the spiritually stunted. So much of our religion is packaged to address our felt needs—and these are almost uniformly anchored in our pursuit of our own happiness and fulfilment. God simply becomes the Great Being who, potentially at least, meets our needs and fulfils our aspirations. We think rather little of what he is like, what he expects of us, what he seeks in us. We are not captured by his holiness and his love; his thoughts and words capture too little of our imagination, too little of our discourse, too few of our priorities."

A book to help

Don Carson deals movingly, and in practical ways, with one of the ways to know God better, but the book I'd especially like to recommend to you now deals with the whole spectrum. This book (which could also be called a guide to living out the Christian life) is Donald Whitney's *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Here is hope for discouraged souls! Here is a practical manual for doing the kinds of things that lead to better knowledge of God, and a to a life that will be more truly Christ-like in everyday attitudes and behaviour.

What are the spiritual disciplines? Sometimes they are called the "means of grace". Donald Whitney calls them "those personal and corporate disciplines that promote spiritual growth. They are the habits of devotion and experiential Christianity that have been practised by the people of God since biblical times." They include—as Whitney has listed them—Bible intake, prayer, worship, evangelism, serving, stewardship, fasting, silence and solitude, journaling and learning. This book makes encouraging reading. It shows you, helpfully and persuasively, how you can successfully master these disciplines and make them personal habits of life.

J.I. Packer wrote this of *Spiritual Disciplines*: "I was asked to write a foreword for this book before I saw it. Having now gone through it, I would in any case have volunteered for the job, so that I can go on record as urging all Christians to read what Don Whitney has written; indeed, to read it three times over, with a month's interval (certainly not less, and ideally, I think, not more) between each reading. This will not only make the book sink in, but will also give you a realistic picture of your seriousness, or lack of it, as Jesus' disciple. Your first

reading will show you several particular things that you should start doing. In your second and third readings (for each of which you should choose a date on the date you complete the previous reading) you shall find yourself reviewing what you have done and how you have fared in doing it. That will be very good for you, even if the discovery comes as a bit of a shock at first."

I have only done my first reading, but I do plan to do the second and third, and to practise what Whitney recommends. I decided, as I went along, that I'd put together some thoughts on each of four or five disciplines to share with you what I've learned about their usefulness; and to encourage you to try them.

A distracting time

We do live in a "busy" age, when we spend our days rushing here and there to the accompaniment of a constant barrage of sound. It is difficult to find a time and a place totally free of sound, conversation or any other kind of distraction. Sometimes I think the pride some women take in being able to "multi-task"—to do four or five things at once—is putting a kind interpretation on a habit we've developed of living in a constant muddle of "buzz." I'm no exception—a Monday morning with four machines running in the background, the radio providing me with news analysis, while I half-participate in a conversation in the next room and simultaneously write emails to friends overseas—seems "productive." But is it? Aren't we just accustoming ourselves to a

state of perpetual distraction, rendering us incapable of steady concentration on one thing for an extended period? And it's a habit of concentration that we need if we're to practise the spiritual disciplines. I have the strong idea that it was frequent periods of quiet; less immediate (and demanding!) forms of communication; and a smaller, less "peopled" social setting, that gave our spiritual forebears the habit of steady focus on God in Scripture reading and prayer. Now, of course, we can—and must—spend time alone with God despite our world of distractions. But we need to discipline ourselves to overcome the temptations our frenetic world throws at us every day.

Of course, the plentiful rewards of making this effort are obvious: we get to know God better; we are strengthened in our struggle with sin; and we develop maturity of Christian character that will enable us to stand firm when the time of trial comes. Not only this, we will also find ourselves better ambassadors for the gospel. When the Word is more in our hearts, it comes more quickly to our lips. I have no doubt—the testimony of God's faithful ones in times past proves this—that practising the spiritual disciplines will put an end to spiritual discouragement.

[Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life, by Donald Whitney, is available from NavPress, P.O. Box 6280, Christchurch, Phone +64 3 343 1990, Fax +64 3 343 1330, navpressnz@maxnet.co.nz]

David Wells, *No Place for Truth* (Eerdmans, 1993), p. 293
Sarah Edwards, 20 January, 1740, (quoted by Iain Murray, Jonathan Edwards, pp. 194-5)

Don Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul's Prayers* (Baker, 1992), pp. 15-16; 16-17

Thoughts from a senior citizen

The ministry of the elderly

Patricia van Laar

A photo in a recent missionary paper showed a group of women, aged from late eighties to mid nineties. This was a prayer circle, people who had met regularly for years to pray together for the mission of their interest. My first thought was, "Yes, but where are the young people?" It then occurred to me that while participating in prayer is vital for young people too, they are also busy with families, work, organisations, the day-to-day

running and support of church activities, and a multitude of other concerns. The point of this particular photo was that here was a group of old people who had continued in a special way, a ministry that all must share the ministry of prayer. This group met specifically to 'minister' to the ones whom God had called into His service overseas, especially in the third world. Here was an aged group of individuals who were past teaching the children, past running committees and leading organisations, past

singing in the choir or playing the organ, past visiting the sick and needy, most were past giving hospitality. But here was a service that was not past, a ministry which had continued through middle age right into and through their last years, through the increasing frailty of old age, and maybe it was their greatest service of all!

A special ministry

Yes, surely God has given us this as a special ministry in our 'failing years', one we can still offer, despite fragility, despite loss of agility, sight, hearing. We can pray. He has also given us older ones a commodity which eluded us in our younger days: TIME. Somehow, we cannot always believe this. One of my friends always says, "Now that I am retired, I wonder how I ever had time to go to work!" At least she now does not have to make the complaint of younger folk "By the time I do all the things I have to do, and some of the things I ought to do, how do I find time to do any of the things I want to do?" Now 74, she fills her retirement with activity; hiking, music, letter writing, church. Great, especially as in her younger days she suffered quite a measure of ill health. Relaxation in whatever form it takes, invigorating, healthy, refreshing, is necessary to our wellbeing. There is nothing wrong with it, and much that is right.

Yet, while we may happily and justifiably use some of our leisure time for these or other hobbies that appeal to us: craft, golf, bowls, visiting, reading, writing. (I even heard of, but do not recommend imitating, one eighty-year-old who for her birthday treat fulfilled a long-held ambition by parachute jumping!) Should we not also see that we use some of the extra time retirement has given us for this all-important Christian service extra time for prayer?

How important is this?

Does prayer really make a difference? We may not always see the results of our prayer, but anyone who has been on the 'receiving' end knows that it does. In Palmerston North, an old couple who were once missionaries in Papua New Guinea attend our evening service frequently. Margaret, the wife, told me that as missionaries they were very conscious of prayer for them. She knew of three older persons in particular who were praying for her regularly. She never met them, not even after returning home, for at least one had died already, but she had always been conscious of their interest and prayer, in fact, she declared, this kept her going!

I heard another missionary comment that

the day of the month set aside for prayer for them in intercessory notes produced by their sending churches, was often the day that her husband and she noticed a time of extra blessing. It might be an added consciousness of the presence of the Lord, a breakthrough in some problem they were facing, a conversion, or some other noteworthy event. They were conscious on this particular day of the month of the intercession of large numbers on their behalf.

Another missionary, captured by guerrillas, was reported as dead after some months. (This happened about the time of the capture and death of Margaret Morgan and Minke Hanskamp, in similar circumstances although not the same country.) The missionary was not dead, however. It was a false report. In captivity he began to feel despondent, and was aware of a decreasing sense of spiritual strength. He became conscious of the lack of prayer support. Guessing the reason, he prayed earnestly to God that He would please convince someone that he was not dead, and to use this person to set in motion again the circle of prayer support. This is exactly what happened one friend began to have the strong impression that the missionary was still alive, and that he should resume prayer for him. The impression persisted, becoming stronger and stronger. That could mean only one thing, so this friend made contact with other intercessors and told them that he was convinced that soandso was still alive. So prayer was resumed. The missionary felt his spirits lift, and when later he was released by the guerrillas, the whole story came out, a cause of joy to all, and an encouragement in praying earnestly to the God Who hears.

Although He does not always answer in the way we desire (as the story of Minke and Margaret shows), as one wise minister once said, "Whenever we pray for a person in such a situation, or for the sick, God does not always release, or always heal, but He always blesses." Did you pray for Minke and Margaret? They may not have been rescued, but only God knows what strength and blessing your prayers gave them in facing their ordeal.

A difficult ministry

Prayer is not easy, of that I am fully aware: in my own life and in my own failure. Anything seems easier, reading a book or the newspaper, chatting on the phone, visiting a friend, doing the daily crossword. Again, nothing wrong with these for information or relaxation, but the temptation seems to be that anything will distract us from prayer, and

this fact indicates that the arch-enemy is aware of its power and effectiveness: that 'more things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of.' (Remember, 'the effective fervent prayer of a righteous man is of much avail.')

Sometimes it seems difficult to bring orderly prayer before the Lord. Warren W. Wiersbe, in his fine book, "Preaching and Teaching with Imagination", makes the following observation: "The Hebrew word 'arak' translated in Ps 5:3 as 'lay my requests' (NIV) means 'to arrange in order,' as the priest arranged the wood and the pieces of the sacrifices on the altar. When we pray we are like the priests who bring acceptable sacrifices to God, (Ps. 141:2), and there had better be some 'fire' in our hearts to help 'consume our offering'. There is also the suggestion here that our praying ought to be orderly and not ihelter skelter."

He continues, "The second meaning of 'arak' is 'to draw up for battle, to take up positions'. Our time with God each morning is indeed a morning watch, when as His soldiers we present ourselves for duty and hear the orders of the day. The priestly image speaks of worship while the military image speaks of warfare."

These two statements struck me as wise and full of insight. Orderly, sacrificial prayer, and prayer for the battle.

Putting it into practice

How, though, do we put it into practice? I find a prayer acrostic to be helpful. This is based on the word ACTS, and connected to the saying, 'if our prayer is right, so will our acts be.' If we find it hard to get order into our prayer, perhaps this will help. The order of the letters in this acrostic also seem the correct order for prayer. So our prayer should begin with Adoration, followed by Confession, then Thanksgiving and finally Supplication.

Adoration

Pause, think of the Mighty God, worship and adore Him. Exquisite examples of this are in the short 'collects' (collective prayers for congregational use) found in the Book of Common Prayer. Each of these begins with a phrase focusing on an attribute of God. 'O God, the strength of all who put their trust in Thee...'

'O God, the King of glory, who hast exalted thine only Son Jesus Christ with great triumph unto Thy kingdom in heaven...'

'Almighty and everlasting God, who hast nothing that thou hast made, and dost forgive the sins of all them that are penitent...'

One for each Sunday of the year, with

additional collects for special occasions. Old-fashioned language today, but beautiful, giving for all a reminder of some aspect of God's glory or His glorious work on our behalf.

The Psalms are most helpful in this respect. They are full of little phrases of worship which prevent sameness and dullness in your adoration of the Lord. Look them up and use them to open your time with God.

Confession

This is the most personal part of prayer, and in private prayer means heart searching. This is for me a point of failure - who likes to do this? But if we harbour sin in our hearts the Lord will not hear. This cannot refer to just the 'gross' kind of sins, but must surely include our pride, selfishness, unkindness to or criticism of others.

Is this a cause of failure?

Thanksgiving

How blessed we are in this land and in the Lord's family. Are we really grateful, or are our thanks just lip service? The cure is

concentration on what we are saying.

Supplication

In this, we must seek ways to make our intercession more meaningful.

Amy Carmichael, a missionary in South India at the beginning of the nineteenth century, established under God the Dohnavur Fellowship for rescuing children being sold to vile Hindu temples, providing homes and safety for them. The fellowship learned much about prayer of supplication. She wrote, We learned that before asking for anything we should find out if it were according to the mind of the Lord. The kind of prayer that is pouring out of the heart is different. This, (the prayer) that was definite petition, intercession, needed preparation of a special kind it needed time, time to listen, to understand, to 'wait' (the word so often in the Psalms). And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us: and if we know He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we desired of Him. This is the clue to supplication. Ask in His

Name, that is, according to His will.

The challenge

Here then, is a challenge, especially to our older folk. [It is a significant change in the nature of the Reformed Churches in New Zealand that we now have a considerable body of older folk!] Take time to consider carefully what your response will be. We seem to have plenty of time for our own pleasure. Do we spend more of it watching TV than we put aside for things eternal, for Christian books, for listening to God, for talking to God and for making intercession for others? Can we start by setting aside, say, an extra half-hour a day to prayer, and see where that leads us? What will the result be if every one of us does this? (I wonder how many extra half-hours it would add up to?) May we accept this special ministry as a duty to our Lord, but also increasingly as a privilege and a pleasure as we bask in His presence, and find increasing knowledge of Him and sensitiveness to His presence and His leading.

Between You and Me!

We in our own little corner and others in theirs!

Dick Vanderpyl

You know that little ditty, don't you? "You in your small corner and I in mine."

We like to play it safe and secure, preferring to stay in our own little corner. We close the doors after the flock has settled in their pews. Some churches overseas even lock them.

You may wonder what I am getting at. Our Psalter Hymnbook has a prayer for the beginning of public worship. We used to call it the long one when we were kids. We timed the length of this long prayer, mainly a general confession of sins and a prayer for the well-being of our church people. We hardly got beyond our own boundaries.

As a family, we sat in the front row on the right-hand side of the balcony. We watched them down below and dared each other to flick a pellet of paper, and quickly ducked.

Inclusive prayer

Our congregational prayers each Sunday are purely inclusive; new settlers and visitors wouldn't have a clue for whom

and for what we have prayed.

This one has broken an arm, another has a birthday, a third one is going on a holiday and wants to be mentioned to secure travelling mercies, I suppose. And so we ask the Lord's blessing within our own boundaries for those on the local church roll, safe and secure! All this says so little to new members and visitors.

Being old and alone, I often get up in the middle of the night when I can't sleep, to catch the CNN or BBC World News. Most of it is bad news, suffering news, painful news. And we, we remain in our own, safe little corner within the confines of the local fellowship! New members and visitors have no clue who's who. So that means only a certain number can say 'amen' to the prayer!

Some time last year, I think, I came across quite a pointed article from *New Horizons* a denominational magazine of the OPC - USA. One of their quality articles caught my eye, confirming what I had already observed for quite some time! Frankly it had become an irritant about this narrow, hedged outlook in our circles.

Out of our comfort zone

This is what the author wrote: "*We must, we ought to get out of our narrow field of local confines! With all the international travel and worldwide communications it is so sad how parochial - confining ourselves to a narrow area - our public and private prayers are!*"

He writes that there is nothing wrong in praying for our nearest and dearest, having concerns for the sick and the handicapped, physically or mentally. Far from it! But sadly, there is where it stays! We're unable to go beyond our local and denominational boundaries. Mostly, the church's public prayers stop with the congregation, showing closed doors to the outside suffering world.

Of course, there are exceptions at times when good or bad news does filter through and requires our prayers! But it seems apparent that we cannot go beyond our own conclaves.

The TV and newspapers reveal calamities, such as prolonged droughts, and floods where the poorest of the poor lose all and flee to save their lives. Full-scale persecutions are hardly mentioned, being

'politically incorrect' for the public Press.

However, some Christian magazines do present information to share with the Christian world. And so we can go on and on and on; we could easily fill many pages to

draw attention to the suffering around our globe.

There is though "a Prayer for all the needs of Christendom, to be used on the Sabbath after the first sermon", which can be used as

an outline.

Wouldn't it be great to think and pray a bit more globally and share the joys and pains in this world!

The poverty issue

The Christian response, good news, and good works

Anton D Meister

After decades of economic growth in the developed and developing world, the poor are still with us in large measures. The situation today is that, even after three decades of economic growth in Asia, 70 percent of the world's poor still live there. Over 900 million Asians are trying to get by on less than US\$1 a day. The World Development Report of 2003 states that currently 2.8 billion people live on less than \$2 a day – almost all in developing countries (World Bank, 2003). Almost one in three people in the region is destined to spend his or her whole life without enough food, proper shelter, or safe drinking water. When they get sick, they won't be able to see a doctor. They will probably never learn to read and write because they won't have the chance to go to school. They won't have a future and nor will their children. They will be powerless. (ADB undated, 2).

How can we as Christians reach out to



the poor? What do Scriptures tell us about the poor and about our responsibilities?

The Old Testament, classifies the poor in three groups (Stott, 1984). They are, economically speaking, the indigent poor, those people deprived of the basic necessities of life; sociologically speaking, the oppressed poor, who are powerless victims of human injustice, and spiritually speaking, the humble poor, who acknowledge their helplessness and look to God alone for salvation. All the teachings of the Old and New Testament tell us that God cares for the indigent poor, champions the powerless poor and exalts the humble poor. In each case 'he raises the poor from the dust' (Stott, 1984:220).

Many of the poor do not end up where they are because of personal incompetence. They are born into it. Children born to poor parents have greater health risks and have fewer support services available to them. They are locked into a cycle of poverty, encouraged to some extent by our economic system, and exacerbated by natural disasters to which they are vulnerable. These people live in a 'culture of poverty' and it is nearly impossible for them to get out of it.

Material poverty is often measured solely in terms of income, e.g. income below US\$1 / day, and while this measure is still used widely, it is also universally agreed that such a definition is too narrow. Many today understand poverty to mean a lack of access to essential assets and opportunities. Individuals and societies are also poor, if they lack the ability to participate in making the decisions that shape their lives. Therefore, reducing poverty must also involve eradicating feelings of powerlessness. (e.g. social exclusion due to barriers against ethnicity and race, gender, age or physical handicap).

Good news for the poor

The Old Testament writers saw the poor (who included widows, orphans and aliens) as

people to be cared for, not blamed. They are regarded not as sinners but as "the sinned against" – an expression popularised at the 1980 Melbourne Conference by Raymond Fung.

God champions the poor, rescues them from their misery, and transforms paupers into princes. Many passages can be quoted, showing that God upholds the cause of the oppressed, gives food to the hungry, lifts up those who are bowed down, and the Lord loves righteousness. (Ps 146: 7-10). According to Clouse, if Christians do not work to bring social and economic justice to the people of the world who suffer from such wrongs, they have useless gospel (Clouse, 225). We may not solve all of the problems, but we must try to approximate the vision of God's coming world (see e.g. Isaiah 65), which differs so radically from our own.

In this time between the 'now' (the Kingdom come) and the 'not yet' (the Kingdom coming) we affirm that God is at work in human society. It is our task as Christians, members of the redeemed community, to penetrate society like salt and light. Jesus set the example for us and He intends us to influence the world for good, by hindering decay and dispelling darkness, or by bringing healing, education, social justice, improved working conditions, protection of the weak and the vulnerable (Stott, 1992:390)

God is a missionary God. God loves the lost and broken world, a world and people lost without Christ, and a world in which God uses our evangelistic efforts to move history toward the goal of the coming kingdom (Rom 10.14-21). When we look at Jesus and His work we see that mission is holistic. Jesus used both word and deed in to minister to people in announcing the coming of the God's Kingdom. The Bible records: "Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity (Matt. 9:35, Acts

10:38). Now Jesus sends his disciples into the world as the Father has sent him (John 20:21). The disciples are to share in His ministry and to follow His examples in obedience to His command to love God and one's neighbour (Matt. 22:38), and His commission to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19-20). Love to one's neighbour is comprehensive, we must love the whole person with all his/her needs. As we take seriously the Great Commandment, to love others, we cannot escape the social responsibility of the church's mission (Chongnam Cho, 1985:215).

The Lausanne Covenant in 1974 affirmed that evangelism and social political activity are both part of our Christianity, and in its "Consultation on the Relationship between Evangelism and Social Responsibility" held in Grand Rapids in 1982, this relationship was teased out further. Social activity was seen as (Nichols, 1985, 8) a consequence of evangelism, a bridge to evangelism, and a partner to evangelism.

Social action, far from diverting us from evangelism, will make it more effective by rendering the gospel more visible and more credible.

How to put this in action?

There are many ways in which we can show social concern. Three of the main ones are relief, development and structural change.

Relief is where we help victims of natural or social disasters. We minister to victims of disasters seeking to provide immediate handouts of food, shelter and other necessities so people can survive. Relief work is often a highly sophisticated and technological activity and often secular and Christian organisations, with well-trained people, are involved in this.

Development is where we help people to obtain appropriate tools, skills and knowledge so they can care for themselves. "Give a person a fish, you feed that person for a day, but when you teach a person to fish, you feed that person for a lifetime."

Relief prevents starvation today; development brings self-sufficiency (at least in principle – in an ideal world). However, we do not live in an ideal world, but in a world, where many of the fishponds are owned and controlled by small groups of powerful, wealthy persons. Teaching the people how to fish is not enough, if abusive power and inflexible structures don't allow these people to have a share of the fishpond (Sider, 1993:138). Therefore, at times Christian social action will speak out on issues of

injustice, abusive power, and inequitable resource distributions.

Christian can be involved in all three, because in our involvement we show concern and love, the outworking of God's love in our own lives. It is in the area of development that microfinance is used as a tool to reach the poor.

Microfinance – case study story

Let me start with a story of a lady I visited in the Philippines. Her name is Grace. She is 44 years old, has seven children (ages 4-21). Her husband is a truck driver. She joined the microlending programme in the year 2000. At that time, her family income was approximately NZ\$200/month (This is close to the poverty income level defined by the Government for this region). Her house is a simple corrugated iron shack. The economy of the area had a downturn and her husband was out of work. They couldn't afford to send all the children to school (even sending them to a public school costs money, since they have to ride a jeepney and need money for lunches), and some had to go and find work. Grace borrowed NZ\$100 to start a sari-sari store (a tiny grocery store) from her home. The money was to buy stock. Parts of the stock are little sausages, which she buys in the city and sells in the neighbourhood and at construction sites. Grace works very hard. A typical working day is 4.30am – 8.30 p.m. The store is doing well, and some days she makes more than \$NZ10 net. Last year she went into her fourth loan cycle (P4000). Her husband still hasn't found permanent work in their town, but is able to pick up some casual work from time to time. He is very happy with what his wife is doing and he is very supportive (he looks after the store if she has to go somewhere and he has no work). The children are all back at school, and they have managed to save money to send the oldest to college (which costs them US\$350 per semester).

It is a lovely story. There is more to this story, however. Grace is, as you can imagine, a busy woman and used to spend most her day in and around the house. She told me that she was rather shy, and her social contact circle was mainly her family and next-door neighbours. Grace didn't go to church, although she had been brought up a Christian.

When Grace got her first loan, she joined a group of 14 women. These women meet weekly to repay the loan, to share the Gospel, to have fellowship, share recipes and sometimes produce, talk about the community and plan for the future. Today



Grace has a much wider circle of close friends, and Grace has changed. Yes she is still busy, but is now also much more involved in community life. Today she is the treasurer of the group and she and her children go to Church on a regular basis.

By any economic measure, Grace today is not rich. But she is happy, Grace has hope for herself in her Lord and Saviour and hope for her family, because she now has the ability and the means to provide for them.

This is the story of microfinance, or as some call it Christian Micro Enterprise Development Plus, It is a programme in which we help people to help themselves by giving them the means to do so, but at the the Christian discipleship of showing love is accompanied with evangelism. Some call it holistic development, or holistic mission.

Microfinance – process

I have heard the story of Grace many times.



Not always are the stories as successful—there are also failures (but very few). How does it work? It starts with money. An organisation, e.g. a church, a Non-Governmental organisation, or a foundation makes loan money available for loan funds. The organisation goes into a community, and with the help of local officials identifies the poor. The microfinance scheme is explained to the poor and they are asked if they are interested. Joining requires commitment, in the form of training. After graduating from training, they can form themselves into groups (say 7-14 women). All members of the group get a loan of NZ\$100, which has to be paid back weekly over a 3-month period. The group members are responsible for each other. If one member cannot pay back her dues for that particular week, the members of the group have to pay them and get the money later from her.

The people pay interest on the loan (3%/month or 36% per year). Exploitation? No!

Microfinance is not cheap, but compared to what you pay to a loan shark it is (ever heard of 4/5? You borrow 4 at the start of the day and repay 5 at the end—20% daily interest). It also needs to be remembered that the poor have no alternative sources of capital. The banks don't want to deal with them, since the loans are too small and the poor have no collateral. They are a risk.

With the scheme comes a compulsory savings scheme and a mortuary fund which pays out when one of the members (or a family member) dies.

The weekly meeting starts to mean a lot to the members. They are times of close fellowship and may lead to the group working on collective activities not only to improve their own well-being, but that of the community they live in as well. In one community, the group started a collective business enterprise with the specific aim of being able to employ some of the unemployed in the community. In other cases, groups from their own money build bus shelters for the protection of the children and elderly in the raining season, or conduct training sessions to teach other poor people in the community skills to get into enterprises.

However, as wonderful as the above sounds and it is, it does not always reach out to the poorest of the poor. The poor can often be divided in two groups—the poorest of the poor, and the entrepreneurial poor. The entrepreneurial poor often have skills, and sometimes even small businesses. Often what is lacking to bring them above the poverty line is capital. Microlending is

aimed at them. The poorest of the poor often lack skills or abilities, do not have any economic enterprise, and often suffer from ill health or disabilities. To give them loan money would be very risky, since they often would not be able to repay. Members of microlending groups know this too, and they also know that they are responsible for any money not repaid. Hence, the poorest of the poor often do not get invited to join groups.

Community development helps us to reach those for whom microlending is not appropriate. In community development, we work with the whole of the community. Through a needs analysis we identify which is lacking in the community, especially in terms of minimum basic needs for the poorest of the poor. This analysis is done in co-operation with the poor in the community, who are involved in analysing the situation, looking at the results and determining actions.

The actions chosen can range from training and education, to involving local government and central government in providing minimum basic needs, and creating employment opportunities through projects.

Conclusion

We reach out to the poor for the sake of Christ's name, so that He might receive the honour it deserves. Microfinance helps us to reach those in need both with the gospel and the love God.

In February this year, Anton Meister from the Palmerston North church attended the

regional missions conference of the International Conference of Reformed Churches, of which the RCNZ is a member. Prof. Meister is Professor of Resource and Environment Economics at Massey University, a member of the Overseas Mission Board of our Reformed Churches, and also a Board member of TEAR Fund NZ, responsible for monitoring and evaluating all micro-finance projects that are undertaken by TEAR Fund NZ to help poor communities in the Philippines.

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*The use of "small" in this article refers to any activity that involves making money, such as selling chewing gum to passing motorists or collecting empty bottles for resale.

World in focus

Thomas More joins Roy Moore and the Angels against the ACLU

The Thomas More Law Center has filed a brief in support of Alabama Chief Justice Roy Moore with the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals. The ACLU is suing the chief justice, who ordered the placement of the 5,280-pound monument containing the Ten Commandments, the national motto, and other historical quotations in the lobby of the state Supreme Court building.

Edward White III, associate counsel with the Law Center, says the monument does not violate the constitution. "This display [is] not just a monument with just the Ten Commandments—it's the Ten Commandments along with other indications that, in this country, there is a moral foundation for our law," White says. "It's not something that man just created. This country

has a Declaration of Independence [that] indicates we realize...we receive our rights from our Creator." White says organizations such as the ACLU are against God and America. "This is a battle over of what we are as a people," he says. "Are we just a holy, secular people? We're not—but people are trying to make us into that. Or are we a people who believe in God and want to acknowledge that in the public square? "That is what the battle is here. It's not just over some monument—it's over who we are as a people. And that's why this is a very important case."

Judge Moore says he placed the monument in the building to remind people of the moral foundation of the laws of Alabama and the United States.

The 11th Circuit is expected to rule on the case by early summer.

+ *Thomas More Law Center, 3475 Plymouth Road, Suite 100, Ann Arbor, MI 48105-2550*

World in focus

Homecoming takes a new twist in Pakistan

Forman Christian College (FCC), the crown jewel of Presbyterian educational mission in Pakistan, is back in the hands of the Christian community after 31 years of government control. Following intensive negotiations with four different governments over nine years, the formal papers were signed on March 18, officially returning the college to the management of the Presbyterian Church.

Peter Armacost, president emeritus of Eckerd College in Florida, assumed the office of Principal of Forman Christian College on March 20. He and his wife, Mary Linda Merriam Armacost, have been living on the college campus in Lahore since January.

Forman's longstanding mission is to prepare students for ethical and responsible leadership in Pakistan and the wider world. It tries to turn out people who exemplify the college motto: "By love, serve one another."

The transition won't be easy. Armacost and his colleagues, including Christy Munir, the FCC academic dean who was severely injured in an attack on the Christian Church in Islamabad a year ago, are seeking assistance in identifying candidates for faculty and consulting positions. They are also soliciting financial support.
+ Forman Christian College, PO Box 24, Craftsbury Common, VT, 05827 (802) 586-6913
stonercc@together.net.

Florida bill would target violence against pregnant women

A pro-life bill passed by a Florida legislative committee would charge criminals with a second crime when they kill or injure an unborn child as a result of an assault or attack against a pregnant mother. The bill

(HB 707), which was approved 5-3 by the House Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, would allow prosecutors to apply the same charge in a crime against a pregnant woman—such as first- or second-degree murder, manslaughter or vehicular homicide—provided that the woman is far enough along in her pregnancy to feel the baby, or if it could survive on its own.

Florida law already allows the prosecution of vehicular homicide for unborn babies killed in an accident if the baby would have been able to survive on its own.

+ St. Petersburg Times, St. Petersburg, Florida

Christians get a second chance at Rutgers

Faced with a lawsuit, Rutgers University has lifted a ban on a student Christian group that insisted its officers be Christian. Director of Student Involvement Lawanda D. Irving "derecognized"

InterVarsity Multi-Ethnic Christian Fellowship in September on the grounds that requiring a group's leaders to agree with its beliefs constituted impermissible discrimination. The fellowship, whose membership is open to all, was stripped of university funding and denied the use of campus facilities. Rutgers is the state university of New Jersey.

The matter came to the attention of FIRE, Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, a Philadelphia based campus watchdog group founded in 1999 by University of Pennsylvania historian Alan Charles Kors and Boston civil rights attorney Harvey A. Sliverglate. In December, FIRE wrote to Rutgers President Richard L. McCormick, to members of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors, and to major donors, urging that the decision be reversed.

With the support of Alliance Defense Fund, a Phoenix-based public interest law organisation, FIRE Legal Network attorney David A. French filed a lawsuit against Rutgers on December 30 in the Federal District Court of New Jersey for violating the First Amendment rights of fellowship students.

+ Foundation for Individual Rights in Education, 210 West Washington Square, Suite 303, Philadelphia, PA 19106 (215) 717-FIRE (717-3473)
+ InterVarsity Christian Fellowship/USA, 6400 Schroeder Road, PO Box 7895 Madison, WI 53707-7895 (608) 274-9001 info@ivcf.org

Marriage, sex offence laws at stake in High Court case

In oral arguments held 26 March 26, the US Supreme Court entertained a constitutional challenge to the Texas statute making same-sex sodomy a crime. The challenge, if successful, threatens the ability of states to limit marriage to one man and one woman and to proscribe extramarital sexual relations.

Texas Penal Code =A7 21.06, prohibits "deviate sexual intercourse with another individual of the same sex." Two men, who were caught in the act and fined US\$200 plus court costs, contend that the sodomy statute violates the United States Constitution. The Texas courts rejected their challenge and upheld the convictions, but the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.

In Lawrence v. Texas, challengers are aiming for the Roe v. Wade or Brown v. Board of Education of the homosexual rights movement. The challengers openly admit that under their "due process" theory, bans on sodomy would be unconstitutional, and so would bans on fornication. In other words, a state could not reserve sex for marriage, and deviant sexual acts would enjoy the same protected legal status as the right to free speech. Moreover, any law restricting a consensual sex act— even prostitution, incest, and even some age-of-

consent laws—would be subject to "strict scrutiny," the same demanding standard that applies to racial discrimination. In short, the complex of laws channeling sexual activity into the marital bond and discouraging deviant or abusive sexual practices would be shaken like a Gothic church in an earthquake—with similar results.

+ Alan E. Sears, President, Alliance Defense Fund, Inc., PO Box 54370 Phoenix, AZ 85078-4370
media@alliancedefensefund.org

ARP historical collection on the Internet expands

Rev. Leland Beaudrot, webmaster at the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Center, has added material to the ARP Synod web page which may be of special interest to students of the church's history. The 1896 edition of the Constitution and Standards of the Associate Reformed Church of North America is now available online <<http://66.152.6.103/1896/>>. To read the material, go to the Synod web page at <http://arpsynod.org>, click on Standards," and then click on "Additional Historical Documents."
+ Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church, One Cleveland Street, Greenville, SC 29601

CCAP-Nkhoma has new link with Taiwan Presbyterians

Taipei - The Presbytery of Seven Stars is opening a new centre in Lilongwe, Malawi. The centre will host volunteers in medical and spiritual missions from the Taipei, Taiwan, area. The presbytery, which is found around Taipei, will work in partnership with the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian.

The venture is the first one for a local presbytery in Taiwan. It is also the first Taiwan contact for the CCAP-Nkhoma. Previously, the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan had Malawi contacts only through the Council for World Mission and its Malawi member, the Churches of Christ in Malawi.

The Taiwanese church has already sent two ambulances to Malawi for use in the new centre. They expect that three to five volunteers will live there at a time.

The CCAP Nkhoma Synod, founded in 1889, today has 105 congregations. Some 102 ministers serve 275,000 members but have another 200,000 adherents. The churches meet every two years in a synod. The Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism and Canons of Dort serve as doctrinal standards. The synod is doing mission work in Mozambique at the invitation of the church there.

+ Presbyterian Church in Taiwan, 3, Lane 269, Roosevelt Road, Sec. 3, Taipei, 106 TAIWAN
highedu@mail.pct.org.tw pct@mail.pct.org.tw
+ Dr. W. R. Kawale, General Secretary, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) - Nkhoma Synod, Synod Offices, PO Box 45, Nkhoma, Malawi

Iban Christians become anxious as the Bible is banned in their language

The Malaysian government has banned the Bub Kudus - the Bible in the Iban language. Iban is the language used by the indigenous Iban tribe of Sarawak, a Malaysian state on the north of the island of Borneo. Iban is the largest of all the indigenous tribes in Malaysia, accounting for almost one third of the population of Sarawak. The Iban have had the complete Bible available in their mother-tongue since 1988. It is now in its eighth edition, with five thousand being printed every five years by the Bible Society of Malaysia.

A South China Morning Post (SCMP) article entitled, "Bible ban alarms Sarawak tribes" (Friday 18 April) by Baradan Kuppusamy in Kuala Lumpur, estimates the Iban population at around 550,000 noting that they are "descendants of natives who converted to Christianity under the rule of the Brooke family—also called the White Rajahs—in the 19th century. Many are not literate in English."
+ ASSIST News Service (ANS) - PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126

Christians in Nigeria defy ban on Easter celebrations

Christians in Nigeria defied a three-day ban on Easter celebrations across the country and

trekked to their many churches to participate in Holy Week services. Police officials ordered a dusk-to-dawn curfew from Friday to Sunday and designated Saturday a no-travel day in order to stem electoral fraud and political violence as the country held its presidential and gubernatorial elections. Church leaders, however, denounced the ban as a deliberate attempt to curtail the religious liberty of Christians. "The restriction was an attempt to prevent Christians from celebrating Easter," said Dr. Olusola Ajolore, Kwara State Secretary of the Christian Association of Nigeria. Two Christians were killed and several others injured on Saturday evening in political violence while returning from worship services in the city of Ilorin.

International observers certified the elections as "free and fair," though chaotic, and expressed relief that fewer than expected incidents of political violence occurred.
+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250 (949) 862-0314

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) in Canada

The Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) received a congregation in Smiths Falls, Ontario, Canada into its body in 2002. Rev. Robert McCurley (formerly OPC minister in Bristol, Virginia) was admitted as minister into the FCC on 28 August 2002. The congregation called Rev. McCurley as its first pastor, and he was inducted into the charge on 27 January 2003 by the Free Presbytery of Great Lakes and Western Canada (Free Church of Scotland [Continuing]). This is the first congregation of the FCC in North America.
+ Rev. Robert McCurley, 1429 Matheson Drive, Smiths Falls, ON K7A 5B8, (613) 284-2269 rdmccurley@sympatico.ca

Mary Holmes loses accreditation appeal

The future of Mary Holmes College, an historic Black Presbyterian institution in West Point, Mississippi, grew murkier when an appeals committee upheld a previous ruling stripping the small school of its accreditation. The committee's action, announced 7 April, affirmed a December decision from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). It could be a fatal blow to the financially-strapped college.

Without accreditation, Mary Holmes would be ineligible for crucial federal funding, and its 256 students would lose access grants, loans, and other financial aid.

Mary Holmes College was founded in 1892 as Mary Holmes Seminary by the Board of Missions for Freedmen of the Presbyterian Church, (USA).

Conceived and initiated through the efforts of Rev. Mead Holmes and his daughter, Miss Mary Holmes, the school was named for Mrs. Mary Holmes, wife and mother, who had long been a

JUBILEE

THEN, NOW AND TOMORROW!

The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach
(one of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand)
plans to celebrate 50 years of the Lord's goodness to us
on 13th and 14th September 2003

The programme will include:
Saturday afternoon – Recreational Entertainment for all ages
Saturday evening – Family Anniversary Dinner
Sunday – Celebratory Service followed by Luncheon

Guest Preacher: Dr Murray Capill

Links with Bucklands Beach?
Don't miss this opportunity to renew old
friendships this side of Glory!

To help us with planning, expressions of interest
would be appreciated

Please return the slip below by 17th May to:

"Anniversary"
Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach
PO Box 39 275 Howick Auckland
or email: mbrooks@clear.net.nz



I am interested in attending your 50th Anniversary Celebrations

Please send me further information as it becomes available

Name.....

Address.....

Phone No.....(please print)

Number of people(over 12 years)
.....(under 12 years)

tireless and dedicated missionary in the field of Freedmen's Mission.

Originally built in Jackson, Mississippi, the school was dedicated to the Christian education of "Coloured" girls, largely in the domestic arts. When fire destroyed the original school, it was rebuilt in West Point, Mississippi, where it is now located, and where, in spite of two more destructive fires, it continues to seek to educate

youth for worthy, purposeful lives.

In 1932, the school became co-educational and also added the college department, with the primary purpose of training elementary teachers. At this time private schools like Mary Holmes were the primary sources for the preparation of Black teachers in the south, and the well-prepared Mary Holmes graduates were in great demand.

By 1959, the State of Mississippi had

assumed a greater responsibility for the elementary and secondary education of its youth and so the high school department of Mary Holmes was dropped, leaving the school free to expand as Mary Holmes Junior College.

+ Dr. Nathaniel Jackson, President, Mary Holmes College, PO Drawer 1257, West Point, MS 39773-1257 (662) 495-5210

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Avondale

As I write these words, [Wednesday afternoon] I realise we arrived seven days ago. We arrived to a wonderfully warm welcome at the airport. The next day, last Thursday, we came to a manse, which presented itself as new. The fruit of many days, (weeks?) work. Many of you helped us settle in for which we thank you again. Our new home and study are very functional, though not everything is in its place. That will come. We have ventured out in the superb car you have provided. The street directory has come in very handy. No doubt, in a few months' time we shall be a lot more familiar with Avondale, which already feels like home. It "feels" right to be here. We accept that as confirmation that we have understood correctly the Will of God for us. Now, we begin to walk together in the grace of God. May He be eternally praised! Rev. John & Mrs Corrie Ter Horst.

Bishopdale

Another cultural evening is planned for Saturday 14th June. Please mark this date on your calendar.

From Willem and Janette Pieters: Our denomination has lost so many members since the land invasion started two years ago, that we can no longer justify being a regional synod. We used to be the Synod of Central Africa but we will now become a presbytery of the synod closest to us – just across the border with South Africa. My position is on the line too. We have been praying for

guidance and discernment and we trust that the Lord will show us the way. It is just so sad when the future of millions of people is being affected by the ineptitude of a few power-hungry politicians. Zimbabwe now has the fastest-shrinking economy in the world. In spite of it all, we do believe that God is sovereign and He will continue building His church.

Spirit-wars! Neo-paganism exercises a powerful influence in our western culture and poses a great threat to Christianity. It is vital that Christians are aware of the new spirituality of the pagan revival and are prepared to face this challenge. Dr. Peter Jones will speak about the Neo-Pagan revival and a Christian response. Don't miss this opportunity. These lectures will be given at 7.30 – 10 pm on Friday 25th April at the Reformed Church of Christchurch, 63 Cornwall Street, St Albans. Supper provided. No conference fee charged, but donations are gratefully accepted. Leaflets are available in the foyer.

Buckland's Beach

Joyce Kraak could really do with a bit of 'manpower' help over the next few weeks on Saturday mornings as she endeavours to tidy up the church gardens. Just a couple of men would be a great help, but please come equipped with loppers, secateurs, a saw, spade and fork if you have them. The time is between 9a.m. and 12 noon.

Have you looked at your church photos? Carl and Joyce Larsen would be happy to have a lend of photos of church people and events over the past 50 years, to display at the Anniversary in September. We may all be surprised!

Dovedale

Church Camp Advance Notice: Please mark your diaries now for the Church Family Camp to be held at Glenroy Lodge, May 10th-12th. Last year we had a most encouraging and

enjoyable time, as we studied and fellowshiped together. I would personally commend this event to you and ask that you make plans to be there if possible. Details will follow in the next couple of weeks.

News from the Churches: Rev. Barry James and his wife Anne have come back from Uganda a little early. This is because of ongoing problems on the mission field - differences of view between members of the Presbyterian church there, and the OPC missionaries who are teaching at the seminary. Barry will give a full report to our Overseas Mission Board.

Easter Services: It is coming up to Easter time again, and in connection with this period, there will be Kids Klub (see next item) for community children. Also, the Sunday morning service will be an evangelistic service with special focus on a simple gospel presentation – ideal for friends and contacts that you would like to invite along. Please bear this in mind in prayer, and do think about who you can invite along to this service.

Opportunity: Like to see more of the youth? We, the Dovedale Youth Group, have been getting together for Bible studies at different people's homes from church. This is an excellent opportunity for older and younger people outside of youth group to get to know us a little better. If you're keen to bridge those "generation gaps", why not try having us over to your house one Sunday evening? Just contact Gideon and he will arrange a date.

Dunedin

It was great to come home again to Dunedin after our two-month visit to PNG on behalf of our Overseas Mission Board. It was especially good to be able to worship with you all again last Sunday. Many thanks to the session and congregation for having "released" me for eight weeks to be able to do this work. The report is now in the hands

of the OMB and my journal has been sent to *Faith in Focus*, so everyone will be able to read up on what Hans, Lisa and Eden have been up to in and around Port Moresby. In the meantime a missions evening is planned for the benefit of our congregation. See further this bulletin.

From the Management Committee. Some weeks ago Seth de Reus, on behalf of the youth group, spoke to one of the care ladies expressing their willingness to help the elderly in our church who may have jobs they no longer can do themselves. We gratefully accepted this offer, and will look into it. As the house at 9 Benhar Street has been let again, the garden and lawns needed some work done before the new tenants move in. So I approached the youth group, who were most willing to take on the work. On Saturday afternoon about ten enthusiastic young guys and girls tackled the job. They worked many hours —the result, a very tidy garden. On behalf of the management committee thank you one and all for a great job done. A trip to the tip by Mr Tromop completed the work. A letter of thanks was received from the Salvation Army Foodbank for the donation of food late last month.

Hamilton

Recently there has been an historical occasion at the Hamilton church. I thought it should warrant having a title to commemorate the event but I couldn't decide whether to call it "Reflected Glory" or "A foretaste of things to come" or even "Two for the price of one"!! So I left it without a title. Let me explain.

Recently two of our churches (Christchurch and Auckland) have celebrated 50 years of being an official church in New Zealand. When both churches were instituted their parishes covered a very wide area. In the case of Auckland this also included the Waikato, so their first minister, Rev Bill Deenick was also our pastor, both before and after their institution. As part of Auckland's celebrations Rev Deenick was invited to cross the "Ditch" and join in, much to the great pleasure of all the "oldies" who were there in those first days. He had a very busy week with their congregations and much to Hamilton's delight he also came here for the final weekend of his time in New Zealand, staying with one of our foundation members. On the Sunday morning, not only did Mr Deenick show us he can still hold our

attention with a good sermon, but also the rest of the service was taken by our own first minister, Rev Harry Hoving! A great occasion to have these two first ministers here together, taking part in the same service after all this time. And the following day opportunity was given to all who wished to meet informally with Mr Deenick, bringing with them lots of memories (and photos) of those "good old days"! Older members of our church can tell you many a tale about the visits of br Deenick to the Waikato. How he used to ride around on a motorised bicycle, and was once stopped by a policeman who thought he was a rather sinister looking character.

So not only did we share in the "reflected glory" of having Rev Deenick in New Zealand but it was also a "foretaste of things to come" as Hamilton congregation will also celebrate their 50th anniversary towards the end of this year. So take note, all you former members who have moved elsewhere, we will be extremely pleased to see you towards the end of the year – keep your eyes and ears open for further information regarding this event. (Melva Veersteg)

Wedding: The wedding of Rene Vos and Erene Brooks will take place in this church, unless lawful objections are brought forward, next Saturday, 29 March at 2.00pm.

SPECIAL COLLECTION LORD'S SUPPER At the next Lord's supper on the 13th April we will be having a special collection for the work of "Mission without Borders", which is a Christian programme involved in helping people mostly in the eastern European area in prisons, orphanages, and working with under-privileged and abused children and solo mothers, very common in this war ravaged area. This is a very good form of outreach in this area. Information pamphlets are on the notice board if you would like more information..... the deacons

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT (an extract from a speech given by American news anchor Ted Koppel, the host of Night Line in the States. He said this:) "In the place of Truth, we have discovered facts. For moral absolutes, we have substituted moral ambiguity. We now communicate with everyone and say absolutely nothing. We have reconstructed the Tower of Babel, and it is a television antenna. A thousand voices producing a daily parody of democracy in which everyone's opinion is afforded equal weight, regardless of substance or merit. Our society finds Truth too strong a medicine to digest undiluted. Yet what Moses brought down from Mt Sinai were not the Ten Suggestions, they are Commandments." Are

RTC Biblical Preaching Workshop 2003

Geelong, Thursday 2nd & Friday 3rd October

"Preaching Christ from Old Testament Stories"

(The Gospel in the Book of Judges)

An in-depth support event for ministers, pastors, **lay preachers, senior elders, other Christian workers**

Accommodation available on campus

Reformed Theological College
125 Pigdons Rd Waurn Ponds Geelong
Vic, Aus 3216

For early enrolments contact
Heather on ph + 61 3 5244295,
eml admin@rtc.vic.edu.au

we too scared to stick up for God's Laws, and apply them to our world?

Mangere

Pastoral. Today we are privileged to have the Rev Deenick preaching the Word of God to us. He is with us especially for our 50th Anniversary week. We are most thankful that he could be here as our founding minister. Let's pray for a upbuilding time as we remember together the Lord's goodness to us over these years, and seek His guidance for the future.

Talks on Islam. On Tuesday, May 13th and Wednesday, May 14th from 7.30 – 9.30pm at the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach the Rev Frank van Dalen will be speaking on Islam. Frank has been a missionary to Pakistan for a decade and has studied Islam extensively.

Palmerston North

Don't forget the monthly prayer meeting, which will be held at church at 9.00 am, on Sunday 27th April. All are strongly urged to attend. Mark your calendars now.

Mainly Music: We need a volunteer to do the Treasurer's job for Mainly Music. You don't need to come along to the sessions, just look after our finances. Thanks. See Jenny or Sonja. Please rush, or you'll miss out on this fabulous opportunity!

Prayer Meeting. The regular monthly prayer meeting is scheduled for 7.00 am on Friday 28th March, at church. All are encouraged to attend.

Home Education Workshop 29 March 2003 here at Harmony House 9am to 9 pm Topics include: Home Education on a Biblical Foundation; Training Children's Minds, Tools of Learning, Motivation; Hospitality as a Socialisation Tool; Home Business; Building a Healthy Marriage; Getting Started; Sibling Rivalry or Sibling Friends plus more. For more information please see the poster on the notice board, pick up a brochure or talk to Craig or David.

Pukekohe

Pastoral: We rejoice with Kelly and Sarah Bosgra on the birth of their baby daughter, Cleo, last Monday at home. Our God is an Awesome God.

Men's Breakfast: To breakfast or not to breakfast. Chaps, the third Saturday of the last few months has slipped by without the crackle of communal bacon or the cacophony of men's voices over a shared breakfast. How can that be? you may ask... Well, who knows? But I do know that it's on again. So catch the pig, scrap out the fry pan and, well,

just turn up on Saturday, 12 April, 7:00am sharp. I know that is the second Saturday, but the third isn't available in April. Derek

Wellington

We were deeply shocked to hear about the sudden passing away of brother John Borger last Tuesday, during a brief holiday in Hawkes Bay. We give thanks for a life in which "the joy of the Lord was his strength". We extend our condolences to Alies and all in the family. The burial took place yesterday.

SHORT REPORT OF WELLINGTON PRESBYTERY

Wellington Presbytery met in the Reformed Church of Silverstream, on Friday 14th and Saturday 15th March, 2003. Rev. Paul Archbald chaired the meeting.

Due to a couple of extremely full agendas at the previous two Presbytery meetings, the Church Order Article 47 questions had not been asked for some time. Hence, this time around they were asked of all the churches present. All were able to give positive answers, and two delegates led Presbytery in prayer and thanksgiving for the Lord's blessings over our churches.

Foxton and Silverstream spoke of their efforts toward fostering reconciliation between their members, and it is hoped that a joint statement may soon be worked out by both Sessions. Presbytery was pleased to hear that Rev. John Zuidema had accepted the call to Foxton. He and his wife are expected to arrive in the country toward the end of April.

A youth liaison report was heard from Rev. Rademaker, in which Presbytery was informed that preparations for both the Queen's Birthday Weekend Camp and the National Youth Camp 2004 are well under way. Rev. Milne will be leading the studies at the former on the subject of Evangelism, and Rev. Rademaker will lead the studies at the latter on the topic of Forgiveness/Reconciliation, Lord willing.

Rev. Milne reported as Counsellor for Foxton that things were functioning well in Session there. Rev. Goris reported as Liaison for O.M.B. He is just recently back in the country from attending an ICRC Conference in Thailand, the three-fold theme of which was Poverty, Persecution and Pluralism. He also gave some information on the Reformed Churches in Myanmar, where Rev. Hoyt had recently had opportunity to minister,

A Church Camp Next Year? It has been some time since the Wellington Reformed Church has held a long weekend Church Camp. We would like to gauge congregational interest in holding another camp next year at Vertical Horizon, which is the camp managed by Roy Nugteren on the outskirts of Inglewood. The proposal is to hold the camp from Thursday night 5th February to Sunday afternoon 8th February 2004 (this being a long weekend, as Waitangi Day falls on a Friday).

especially to office-bearers, on the topic of Reformed Church Government. Rev. Hoyt also spoke briefly of his encouraging time there. We heard of the difficult situation in Mbale, Uganda, and that Rev. Barry and Ann James were now having to return a couple of months early because of it. Opportunities and hopes for mission work in PNG were also mentioned, especially given the recent two-month visit of Rev. Hans Vaatstra to Port Moresby.

A letter was received from Wellington informing Presbytery that Rev. Goris had now reached the age of emeritus status, and even though he will continue as the minister for Wellington, it was requested that he no longer be automatically assigned Presbytery and Synodical duties. In line with this request, he was relieved of the responsibility of acting as Synodical Examiner for our Presbytery, and Rev. Milne was elected to replace him.

Wellington Session reported on the burgeoning home mission work in the Kapiti-Mana region. Numbers of members as well as regular visitors have been increasing constantly and rapidly, especially since weekly evening services in Afrikaans began in Porirua on 5th January 2003. The weekly morning English services in Waikanae have seen only modest numerical increase in comparison. While Presbytery was encouraged to hear of the increase and interest among South Africans in that area, concern was expressed over the fact that there is still only the one English service being conducted in this home mission work. We were informed that this would eventually change, as did the early services in our denomination change from Dutch services to English gradually.

Presbytery agreed to a request from Hastings for help in the financial support of Vicar Nigel Cunningham, to the tune of one third of the set Vicar's stipend, while he awaited a call after having been declared eligible for call last November. Hastings is

continuing to provide him with pastoral and preaching work in the interim.

A letter discussing concerns over the conducting of Colloquium Doctii, evaluation of sermons at examinations of ministerial candidates, and the tenure of synodical examiners, was received from Wellington Session and discussed at some length.

Much of the Saturday morning was taken up with discussion of a letter from Wellington, querying aspects of the minuted decisions concerning the statement adopted at the November meeting of Presbytery, in which it was affirmed without dissent that pregnancy resulting from rape did not constitute an allowable exception to the principle that voluntary abortion is a breaking of the sixth

commandment. Wellington Session were asking that the statement be withdrawn, on the grounds that the perceived argumentation within the statement was faulty.

However, after some discussion and debate, Wellington decided to withdraw this request. It was then decided without dissent to overture Synod to adopt the statement Palmerston North Session would supply the grounds to be considered at the next meeting of Presbytery.

Related to this matter was a request from Wainuiomata that Rev. Lion-Cachet be asked to affirm whether or not he could abide by the above-mentioned statement on abortion. But since his Session had already affirmed

previously that he could and would abide by it, and also because Presbytery had not yet determined whether or not this issue should be considered a confessional matter, Wainuiomata, upon further reflection, decided to withdraw their request.

Following this, Presbytery spent quite some time in closed session on matters of advice requested by the Sessions of Silverstream and Wellington.

As Rev. Hoyt closed in prayer, we were able to give thanks for the good spirit of co-operation in which the discussions and deliberations had been conducted between the churches.

Reporter: Rev. Ed Rademaker

2003 Cadet & Calvinette Counsellors Executive Weekend



This year we drove or flew to Karakariki Christian Camp, near Hamilton. Fifty Counsellors attended, including the Australian Cadet Board President, Bill Langerak. Two others were kept busy in the background but thanks so much Annamarie and Evert for all the wonderful food and drinks you served us during the weekend.

This was our last meeting with Ron Voschezang as President, as his term is now finished. Special thanks were given to the 2003 National Camp Committee for organising a much enjoyed camp at Forest lakes, Otaki, in January. Thanks were also expressed to Miranda Mulder, our Supply Centre co-ordinator, for her dedicated work; to the IN TOUCH committee for producing a



NZCCC&C Executive meeting at Karakariki (Hamilton)



The retiring president – Ron Voschezang



A chit chat over a cup of coffee during the break

very worthwhile youth magazine, and to the outgoing Board for their three years of directing our national Movement.

For our Mission Project for 2004 it was decided to support an orphanage in Asia, working through the C.A.R.E. organisation. Our 2002 Mission Project raised \$3,208 for Mbale Covenant Christian School in Uganda. (This year we are supporting Rev. Stephen and Mrs Dorinda 't Hart's mission work in Papua New Guinea with fitting out a classroom or two.)

Our new Board of Jerf van Beek, Yvonne Walraven, Rob Wierenga, and Sonja Murphy,

were elected.

After lunch some of us got very muddy and wet by going caving, while some ladies made use of the local knowledge of the beauty benefits of the caves inner clay and spread face-masks on! Other Counsellors looked for another type of clay, as in Clay-target shooting, while a few stayed at the camp and learnt new crafts.

Saturday evening we played a very noisy game of Balloon towers and witnessed one team of thieves, one of determination (the winners), one who couldn't care less but the popping was great!, and the other wishing

they could have had success. Ian van Woerden was brave and later got a great cardboard box and drill set-up for old fashion fair ground paint-spun pictures, for Counsellors to try.

Sunday morning saw us attending Hamilton church and farewelling each other over lunch and coffee, amply supplied by the welcoming Hamiltonians.

Thank you to the Hamilton Counsellors and congregation for providing us with a lovely weekend.

Missions in focus

Papua New Guinea journal

Rev Hans Vaatstra from Dunedin Reformed Church travelled to Papua New Guinea early this year, to learn what life was like there. Another main aim of the trip was to determine whether Hans and Lisa could serve in Port

Moresby as missionaries of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand. Rev Vaatstra wrote a journal of his experiences in PNG; read on, and learn about his trip!

Arrival

On my arrival at the Port Moresby airport I was welcomed by the 't Hart family, the Knol sisters (short-term missionaries from Canada), and Martin Makusi—elder and chairman of session for the Reformed Church of Port Moresby. On the way home from the airport we stopped at a local supermarket. It is similar to the kind we're used to back home, and a favourite amongst expats. We also visited the Post office in Waigani, and

Gordon and Gotch magazine distributors. These detours gave me a little introduction to the city of Moresby on my very first day.

On the way out of town we traveled north-east towards the Sogeri Valley and Ekoru, where the 't Harts live. On the way, we stopped at the Reformed Church of Port Moresby, inside "8 Mile" settlement. I had heard about these settlements, but actually seeing the poverty, lack of amenities and the squalor was something else. Most of the people who live in these settlements have no employment and must rely on what they grow in the ground around their houses, or on what they can sell at the markets or on the sides of roads. The wantok system still

operates so sometimes family or tribal connections are a way of support.

The bright spot in the middle of the 8 Mile settlement is the Reformed Church. A modest place of worship by our standards to be sure, but a place where up to 70 people faithfully gather each Sunday to sing God's praises and look to Him for grace. Next to the church is the pastor's house. Like most of the houses in the settlement it is hi-set, made of corrugated iron and timber, unlined and consisting of two or three rooms. Construction of the church library had commenced underneath the pastor's house but according to Stephen progress was slow. Later on in my visit, Stephen would ask me

to assist with this project and also help build a VIP pit toilet near the church.

Onward and upward

After our stop at 8 Mile, we continued on through the beautiful Sogeri Valley toward Ekoro. Although this is a journey of only 50 kilometres, it takes an hour and a half. The road is so poor that it can only be negotiated by 4WD—and very slowly at that! The 't Harts live at the end of the Sogeri Valley in a neat 3 bedroom timber home with a separate study and guest room behind. Their house is situated on a hill next to and above the village of Ekoro, where the Reformed Church is located and where Stephen does much of

his work.

Ekoro is a village consisting of about 15 houses. It is the smallest of about five villages in an area which appears to be quite open for out-reach. The nearby village of Beregoro has requested worship services in their area. Some folk from another village named Edebeva are currently members of the church at Ekoro.

Ekoro is a cleaner, greener, higher and cooler place than Port Moresby and the people seem better off than the ones in the settlement at 8 Mile. They have access to more productive and well watered land. They're able to grow enough produce for their own needs and sell the remainder in the local markets for cash.

As in Moresby, the church at Ekoro meets on Sunday mornings at 10:30 am for worship. This is followed by a half-hour break and then the second worship service begins; this one is based on the Heidelberg catechism. The services are back to back lie this, because it is either very hot or very wet in the afternoon, and because some folk must walk long distances in order to get to church.

While I was in Ekoro, I attended a Vacation Bible School at the village of Beregoro which was organised by the Knol sisters and Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart. It turned out to be very popular with children and adults alike.

Port Moresby: city life

One morning, we drove into Pt Moresby to run some errands. Walking through a busy shopping district revealed many of the cultural differences. There are hundreds of people on almost every street, security guards in every shop, razor wire on top of every wall and fence and around every home and business. I learned that crime and corruption are a serious problem in the city. When walking through the city alone one gets the feeling that it's better to keep moving and get on with your business quickly!

Later that day we visited the botanical gardens: they're a beautiful oasis in a city not exactly noted for its aesthetic appeal. I did wonder why we were the only people visiting the gardens at the time. My musings were answered during a second visit there, towards the end of our stay in PNG. We were warned by a security guard in the gardens to be on the alert, as there were a couple of armed bandits at large! Hmm.

Language practice

I was very thankful to be able to learn some Tok Pisin (Pidgin English) from Stanley, one of the locals at Ekoro. Stanley is completely



Stopping at a local supermarket, similar to the kind we're used to back home.



Rev Vaatstra with Rev's 't Hart and den Hollander and the local eldership

blind so the way it worked was that I read the Pidgin Bible and translated while Stanley used his English Braille Bible to correct my translation. It worked pretty well, and during the time I was in Ekoro (about three weeks in all) we had 8 lessons.

Taking a break

On another occasion the 't Harts took Lisa, Eden and I down to Moresby to visit the Royal Papua Yacht Club. Stephen has a little motor boat which he purchased second hand from one of the locals. The 'tHarts love to go swimming but unfortunately the local beaches are often littered with rubbish and open sewage flows into the sea nearby. The only clean beaches to be found nearby are on the islands just out from Port Moresby. Occasional visits to the Yacht club and the islands make for a very pleasant and refreshing break.

Jack of all trades

On Sunday the 2nd of February we went down to the church at Moresby where Stephen conducted two baptisms. I preached on Psalm 78:1-8 about the importance of passing on the praiseworthy deeds of God to the next generation.

After the worship services there were several meetings, including a consistory meeting during which we discussed my program for the next 6 weeks. There was a pressing need for someone to oversee the construction of the library and VIP toilet and I was asked to take on that role. Together with Nick and Ore (the builders) and four sturdy young boys from the settlement the project was completed in two weeks. It was good to be able to take part in the work since it gave me the opportunity to be closely involved with many of the folk in the settlement.

Learning more

Time spent at the Mapang missionary home was valuable, as I met scores of missionaries and mission associates, all of whom had a story to tell. Many of the folk who pass through Mapang are involved in translating the Scriptures into one of the 800 or so languages in PNG. Much valuable time was also spent with Pastor Bas Fairio, during which we discussed various aspects of church life and visited a number of the church folk together. This enabled me to gain some good insights into the way the church runs, what her needs are and how best we can help should our churches decide to send a missionary to Port Moresby.

The weekend after my initial two week period in Port Moresby found me back in

Ekoro filling in for Stephen on Sunday while he was attending the ICRC conference in Bangkok. When he returned, he brought Rev William den Hollander with him: Rev den Hollander is pastor of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto and Chairman of their missions committee. Rev Den Hollander and I had many amicable and interesting discussions. We both feel that our churches should be able to work along side each other in a cooperative manner on the Mission field in PNG.

The growing church

February the 22nd was important day for the Reformed Church at Port Moresby; the day of their ground breaking ceremony at 9 mile.



With funds left over from the sale of a former church property at Hohola (a suburb of Port Moresby) and additional funds donated by the Canadian Reformed Churches, the congregation were able to purchase land on a new sub-division over the main road from the settlement where they hope to commence building a pastor's house soon. The service was lead by Rev 'tHart and Pastor Fairio while Rev Den Hollander and myself were given an opportunity to say a few words on behalf of our respective churches. Brother Elle Marjen, one of the founding fathers of the church planted a tree to commemorate the occasion and then Lord blessed the day with gentle rain to water the trees just planted.

As well as owning the land the church also has about three quarters of the funds necessary to build a manse and a security fence around the property. Plans are also in place to build a house of worship,

classrooms and a workshop. This was a significant and encouraging event for the church. It is hoped that with a little more assistance and encouragement from supporting churches overseas that the development of new church facilities can proceed.

Visiting northwards

February 24th saw yours truly aboard a 70 seater, Fokker Fellowship jet, operated by Air Nuigini and enroute to Lae. Lae is a city of about 75,000 people on the Northern coast of PNG which serves primarily as a shipping port for produce grown in the Highlands. Coffee, Copra and Cocoa are some of the main cash crops processed and

exported from the Port of Lae.

The purpose of the visit was to visit Justin and Karen Bolhuis, mission workers at the Free Reformed Mission Church in Lae. Justin Bolhuis is on a two year contract with his church as an unordained Mission worker. The church was founded and is still supported by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, who were also instrumental in establishing the work in Port Moresby. The Lae Reformed Church is smaller than the one at Moresby but no less enthusiastic for the work of the Lord.

On the first of a three day stay I accompanied Justin Bolhuis and Pastor Bob Bouway into a settlement where we spent a few hours talking to people we met in the street about the Lord Jesus Christ and our desire to establish a church in their community. This was the first exercise of what is hope to be a sustained effort to reach people for Christ in the local community of

the Reformed Church at Lae.

In Lae I also had the opportunity to attend two men's fellowship meetings, spend some time with pastor Bouway and have many helpful discussions with Justin and Karen about various aspects of the work. Family Bolhuis reside close to town in a two story unit within a fenced compound equipped with an electric gate and a daytime gardener/security guard. Their unit is also fitted with steel bars over the windows and security doors back and front. One does feel quite safe inside. The country side is greener around Lae than it is around Port Moresby. The village houses are also more often made of traditional building materials such as woven cane walls and thatched roofs and are surrounded by banana trees and coconut palms.

On another afternoon I walked around Lae and visited the town center and the local markets. As I returned along the highway to Justin's place I was accosted three times by nationals who expressed concern about my welfare. I have since noticed that both in Moresby and Lae expats rarely walk about on their own. On one occasion I decided to go for a jog along the road in Moresby and

was baled up by a police officer in a light truck who thought I might have been in distress or something. Since I wasn't far from my destination I ignored him and ran on without further ado. Evidently white man just does not run on the streets of PNG!

Reunion

The day following my return from Lae saw me back at the airport to meet Lisa and Eden. In order to help minimise culture shock we spent the first night together at the Holiday Inn hotel. Overall Lisa adjusted very well and had no problems but Eden (20mths) did on one occasion develop a severe case of hives. Thankfully I remembered that I had taken some antihistamines along and one half of a tablet had her right in about 20 minutes.

Together with Lisa I undertook to investigate some of the practicalities of living in Pt Moresby such as the cost and availability of housing, grocery prices, health services and the like. Good quality rental accommodation is available but at a price (600-900 Kina per week—equivalent to \$285-\$430NZ). A modern secure three bedroom home can be purchased for about 250,000 Kina but because of the shaky

economy most expats prefer not to invest but to live in rental accommodation.

After a hot week in Moresby we were thankful to shift to the cooler climate of Ekoro and spend six more days with the 't Hart family. Dorinda and Lisa are both home-schooling mums and valued the opportunity to compare notes and spend time together. Many a fine hour was spent together in the evenings discussing a wide range of church and kingdom issues.

One morning Stephen and I walked to the nearby village of Edebeva to visit a church family and see how the chicken raising project was faring. Stephen set this up for the villagers, raising fifty or one hundred week-old chicks to maturity and then selling them for meat. The profits are intended for church or community benefit. Our visit involved walking through 2 meter high grass, on slippery semi-submerged logs across a leech-infested swamp, through an abandoned rubber plantation thick with bloodthirsty mosquitoes, across a high, derelict bridge built during WW2 (a rather shaky exercise), and on through the village market gardens. It was not exactly your average Sunday afternoon stroll, but certainly more interesting!

Fare thee well

The village folk of Ekoro farewelled us on the Wednesday evening with a night time sing-along around a camp fire. Some of the hymns sung in Motu (their native tongue) were beautiful to the ear. The Port Moresby congregation also put on a special little spread for Lisa, Eden and I after the worship services on our last Sunday in Moresby (16th March) after which we said our goodbyes, having made many friends but also leaving with a burden for the people and particularly the Reformed Churches in PNG.

MIF prayer notes

1) Jared Berends from Bucklands Beach congregation is still in Mongolia, continuing his work of English-language teaching. Jared has asked prayer for the church he's involved with, that deeper friendships would develop with local people and they could discuss spiritual matters more productively. He'd also appreciate prayer that the church would have a greater awareness of the need to reach out to the community and the rural area outside of town. Also, for the possibility that's being discussed with church people about a sports event at a

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

singles convention

Attention all singles who want to share a time of Christian fellowship and enjoy a holiday in our nations Capital Canberra. That's right planning is well underway and we like to see as many of you there to share this time with us, so put in for your holidays and start saving now.

- When:** 3rd Jan - 10th Jan 2004
- Where:** Greenhills Murrumbidgee Conference Centre, 1437 Cotter Road, Cotter (Canberra) ACT, Australia.
- Cost:** \$300-\$350 dollars (to be determined)
- Activities:** Generally include- Topical bible studies, Sports, Sight seeing, formal dinner, leisure time etc.
- Transport:** Own, Air, Rail or Bus.

We will keep you posted as more information becomes available. If you want to know what Canberra has to offer you can visit www.visitcanberra.com.au

We asked that you remember the planing committee in your prayers, that we may honour God and serve you well in the preparations we make for this convention.

On behalf of the planning committee,
David Vander Reyden - contact number 02 45765469
(ndavidv@bigpond.com)

local high-school that would be run as an outreach.

2) Members of the OPC's East Africa Mission in Uganda would be grateful for our prayers. In recent times there have been relationship problems with one minister in the presbytery, but congregation members have still been blessed by the work of the missionaries, and ministerial students have received great benefit from the input of Br. and Sr. James (now back in Australia) and others. Pray for the ongoing—and flourishing—work that continues in Karamoja.

3) Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart are busy as always, continuing their ministry in Ekoro and Port Moresby congregations. Pray for health, for safety, and for joy in their work. Pray for the three girls and Dorinda, who homeschools them.

4) Hans and Lisa Vaatstra met with OMB members at the recent Ministers' and Wives'

conference in Otaki. Please pray for both the Vaatstras and for the OMB as they consider God's call for the Vaatstras in the future.

5) Walter and Jeannette Hagoort are preparing for the start of their missionary service in Papua New Guinea later this year, as the Lord confirms His call to them. They hope, Lord willing, to visit PNG for two weeks during the next month or two. This trip will be extremely valuable: helping them to know something of the culture and learning what is expected as they take over the reins of Mapang Guest House. An introduction to church life in Moresby will also help them to determine how they can be of service to the congregation there.

6) At time of writing, Janice Reid still has no answers about what the future will hold. Ongoing discussions with Hamilton session and the OMB, together with Dr Ross James, Janice's supervisor in FEBC, show promising possibilities for continuing in training, and even being able to serve

a wider community of missionary broadcasters. Pray for wisdom, and the willingness to follow the Lord's leading.

7) The Overseas Mission Board has a lot to do these days, but it's a glad kind of busy! Praise the Lord for increased awareness of mission and commitment to reach out to those who do not know the Lord. Pray for Dunedin, Hukanui and Hamilton sessions as they consider the missionary call of Vaatstras, Hagoorts, and future directions for Janice Reid's service with FEBC.

8) Christchurch congregations are hoping to produce radio programs for broadcast on a local community station. Please pray for them as they do this, for clear thinking about strategy and communication effectiveness, and for the people involved who put in the time to prepare scripts and host the shows. Pray also for those involved with radio ministry in other Reformed churches around New Zealand.

Country profile: **Congo**



The Democratic Republic of Congo used to be known as Zaire. In 2000 the population numbered well over fifty-one million. Congo has suffered for centuries from Arab slavers, exploitation during its 60 years as a Belgian colony, and oppression from Africans in more recent times. The country is effectively portioned between the erratic Kabila faction and other military

groups in the east. All international efforts to obtain a cease-fire and eventual peace have foundered on greed, intransigence and pride of the groups involved.

Pray for Congo:

1. Over 95% of the population claims to be Christian. Pray that those with genuine faith would live it boldly. Pray that the many people who have nothing more than a cultural adherence to the church would realize their need for true repentance.
2. The church's role in rebuilding the nation is critical. Most of the hospitals, clinics and schools in the country now operate with Christian initiative.
3. Pray for commitment to the authority of Scripture in the national church, which is often influenced by liberalism and syncretism.
4. Pray for effective training of Christian leaders, who are fundamental to any effective outreach in Congo.
5. Pray for outreach into remote tribal areas away from the cities.
6. Pray for the many millions of people affected by HIV/AIDS, and that the churches would rise to the challenge of reaching out to AIDS orphans and to those who suffer from the disease.

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From the DA's Office ...

Reformed Church of Mangere

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Forty years ago, this month, the Reformed Church of Mangere held a dedication service for their new worship building in Rosella Road, Mangere. The building still stands today, though it is no longer being used for worship services, since a new building was added for this purpose in 1989. The original building now houses a Youth Hall, and parts of the Christian School.

The photo shown below is of the original building, dedicated 2 June 1963. The new building added in 1989 is on the lawn to the left of the one in the photo. The photo is likely to have been taken sometime after the dedication. Can anyone recognise any people, which may help to determine a more exact date for the photo? Or perhaps you may recall owning one of the vehicles in the photo, and can help to date the photo that way? Any information would be much appreciated.

