

faith in **focus**

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

VOLUME 30/10 NOVEMBER 2003



**“If you come across a bird’s nest
beside the road, either in a tree or on the ground, and
the mother is sitting on the young or on the eggs, do not take the
mother with the young.**

**You may take the young, but be sure to let the mother go, so that it may go
well with you and you may have a long life.”**

Deuteronomy 22:6-7

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Copy Deadline:

Six weeks preceding the month of publication.

All correspondence regarding distribution and payment of subscriptions to:

The Secretary:

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79 McLeod Street
Upper Hutt

Subscription per volume:

\$26.00 (eleven issues)
Bulk Rate: \$22.00
Overseas: \$32.00 surface mail
(\$39.00 airmail)

Production Staff:

Distribution: M. & D. van der Zwaag
Design & Layout: Matrix Typography
Printed by: Flying Colours

Editorial

Why say it again when someone else has said it already and said it well? That's why I take the opportunity here to use another Editor's 'Editorial' in this column. He recently addressed the same issue this issue of 'Faith in Focus' addresses. So I quote the words of Larry Wilson from the July 2003 'New Horizons' (the denominational magazine of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of North America):

Don't tell my mom, but when I was a kid I read other comic books besides the ones she approved. One told this tale: A man went to prison for murder. He escaped, intent on murdering the witness whose testimony had convicted him. Then he stumbled across a scientist working on a "time machine." He thought, "If I go back before my trial and murder that witness, I'll change the past. I'll never go to jail." So he stole the time machine and went back in time. He found the witness, and struck with all his might. But his fist went right through him! The murderer discovered that he had become immaterial, like a disembodied ghost. He could neither change the past nor return to the present. He was trapped!

This story is fictional, but so is the common notion that the gospel of Christ is disembodied - that it can go forth in the world apart from Christ's body, the church. But our Lord uses the means of grace in his church to gather and perfect his people. So Satan works to keep people away from the church. If we care about truly evangelising the world and building up believers, then we'll work to build up Christ's church.

*The body is a unit,
though it is made up of many parts;
and though all its parts are many,
they form one body.
So it is with Christ.*

*For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body
– whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free –
and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

1 Corinthians 12:12-13

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.

Covenant youth publicly profess their faith

Why does the church require this?

John Rogers

Sometimes people ask for a biblical justification for requiring our young people publicly to profess their faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour before they may be permitted to join the rest of the congregation at the Lord's Table and otherwise enter into the "full rights and privileges of the Church." Furthermore, if there is not an explicit biblical justification, does the Church have a right to require it?

This question was also raised at one of the Reformation Conferences last year. It seems to be a question being asked rather widely. Having thought about it somewhat, I cannot give a chapter and verse. Which is not really news: the Church has never given any single chapter and verse for the doctrine of the Trinity either. A verse that might spring to mind is 1 Timothy 6:12. But it may well be that Timothy was at that time also baptised as a new convert to Christianity. It is not likely he was baptised as a child and that the "good confession" mentioned there was subsequent to that. Probably he was baptised on his good confession as a convert from the OT faith to Christianity. Our young people are already true members of the Church, and perhaps have always believed and are already active in Church life. They love the Lord and already confess his name anyway at school, university, work, wherever. So why does the church require these members publicly and formally confess their faith before entering into "full communion"?

The question, "does the Church have a right to require it?" is not a bad question and I want to attempt an answer to it. But I must say honestly and first of all that I find the reticence a little difficult to understand. No one disagrees that we must confess our faith before men. The Scriptures are too clear about that. And some of those who have difficulty with the formal Profession of Faith before the Church before admittance to the Lord's Table wonderfully confess Christ before the world in many varied situations of life. Why is that not enough, they ask? I have found it difficult to find material on this question, but it seems to me that there is a practical reason and a principial reason. First of all,

The practical reason

Paul tells us in Ephesians 2:20 that the Church is "built on the foundation of the

apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." Acts 2:42 gives us a picture of the basic ingredients of Church life. In the previous verse we are told that "those who gladly received (Peter's) word were baptised; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (to the body of believers, the Church). Verse 42 goes on to tell us that "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers." So, among other things, the Church is the body of those who have believed in and continue in the apostles' doctrine. If we leave the foundation, if we leave the apostles' doctrine, which they gave by the authority of Jesus, we are not part of the Church (1 Corinthians 3:10-11; 14:37-38; 1 John 4:6). The apostles had authority wherever they went (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17).

That apostolic authority in the Church is continued down through the ages in the elders and ministers of in each local congregation. We see this when Paul speaks to Timothy of things "contrary to sound doctrine, (sound doctrine being that which is) according to the glorious Gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1:10f.). He therefore tells Timothy to "hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, keep" (2 Tim. 1:13f.), "commit to faithful men who will

be able to teach others also" (2:2) ... "correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth" (2:25). Thus, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (4:2f.), ie, the apostles' doctrine.

We are all, therefore, as confessing believers in Jesus Christ according to the apostle's doctrine, by the command and practice of those same apostles, to be recognised as part of that number (Acts 2:42 cf. Hebrews 13:17) that Church of Jesus Christ, founded upon the apostles and the prophets.

But a very practical question arises straight away. There is simply a multitude of 'Christian communions' in the world. Some of that multitude may be as a result of genuine geographical, cultural or language reasons. But many of them are also over genuine disagreements over what actually is the apostles' doctrine! (At least, one hopes they are genuine disagreements; otherwise we are all guilty of mere schism, and that is sin. But at the moment, let us ascribe best motives all round.) So, at the least, we can say that both the understanding of the apostles' doctrine and the continuing administration of the apostles' authority down through history to and in our own day is fractured.



That places a responsibility on the growing Christian to come to an understanding and conviction for himself, in honesty before the Lord, as to what, among all these various understandings available, is according to Scripture. The Reformed Churches lay out their understanding of what the apostles taught in the Reformed confessions. Do you accept them as your confession of faith also? Then it is your bounden duty (Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:5) to acknowledge and publicly accept the authority of the apostles as manifested in this federation of congregations of Christ's Church which understand and confess the faith as you do. I say publicly, in part (see further below), because Jesus did; "*Everyone who shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 10:32). It is interesting that in ancient Israel, an ecclesiastically united (if not uniformitarian) society, Jewish boys were required to do just that. How much more necessary is it for us to do so in our ecclesiastically fragmented situation.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you."
Psalm 32:8

*We're happy and grateful
to announce the*

50th Wedding Anniversary

of our parents and grandparents

Rudi and Betsie Storm



Auckland 14th November 1953

Jeannette and Gerry
Nadiya, Yvonne and Esme – Auckland

Marianne and Terry
Billie and Gabrielle – Ahipara

Kelvin and Carolien
Karina, Matthew and Chris – Beachlands

Kirsten and Martin
Shane, Sharnae and Greg – Christchurch

Tanja and Greg
Dylan, Georgia and Marlin – Beachlands

**Unit 98, 49 Aberfeldy Ave,
Highland Park, Auckland.**

If it be said that we require this out of tradition, I would answer, no. We do traditionally require it, that is true. But it is not a mere tradition, but a good and useful one. Remember, Jesus also stood in and continued in all the good traditions of Israel, eg, synagogue worship, Purim, Hannukah, none of which have Scriptural warrant. And did Jesus go to Jerusalem when he was twelve to do his bar-mitzvah? (Luke 2) But this requirement is more than something good, even practically necessary. So there is also, secondly,

The principal reason

Publicly confessing one's faith in a Reformed Church involves an acceptance of the covenant, a confession of personal commitment to Christ, a confession of the reformed understanding of the apostles' doctrine, and a formal acceptance of the authority of Christ in his Church in this congregation (or federation of congregations). These points are the substance of the four questions in the Form for Public Profession of Faith. All four aspects are necessary to intelligent, mature Church membership. But did you notice the first? an acceptance of the covenant.

You see, at your baptism, God made a covenant with you to be a God to you and to your children also, should he so bless you in the future. It is a continuation and reapplication of the covenant God first made with Abraham (to be a God to him and his children) to one of his children, you. But covenant promises always require a response; so in Genesis 12, Abraham built an altar (v.7). In Genesis 15, we read that "he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness" (v.6). In Genesis 17, after first doubting the Lord and God having to reassure him we then read that he obeyed and circumcised Ishmael and all the males of his household. On Mt Sinai in the desert when God reaffirmed the covenant to Israel and gave the Law of the Covenant, the people responded with, "*All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.*" You see it again at Mts Gerazim and Ebal before the entrance into the Promised Land; and again at the end of Joshua's life before he, the OT saviour with Moses, dies and leaves the OT Church to its regular life and discipline under the "*elders in the gate.*"

Covenant-making ceremonies are always public. For they must be witnessed. They are therefore, necessarily, formal ceremonies. The point I am getting at is this; God has formally made a covenant with you in which he has made a promise to be your God and Saviour. Do you accept that covenant and those promises? Oh yes, I know you do in your heart, and in lip and life also. I believe you when you tell me that. But you have unfinished business with God. You have left

God hanging, half-way through a public ceremony. Of course, he knew you would have to – being just a baby when he extended his covenant to you personally. But does he still have to? He is standing there, in Church, at the baptismal font, waiting for your answer!

One could say it is a bit like marriage. That formal Profession of Faith before the Church can be a mere formality, but the everyday confessing Christ in all sorts of situations in life shows the reality of it. So too, it is not hard to see when a couple are in love with one another; that is the reality. Yet still, society has always required, and biblical society too!, with the Lord's endorsement, a formal entrance into a covenant of marriage before one enters into the full rights and privileges of marriage. And continuing really to love one another in all the various situations in life, "*for good or ill,*" is the proof of the pudding. Yet still, that marriage covenant-making ceremony is not nothing. There you made formal vows to each other and there may be times when it will be the fact and remembrance of those vows that will keep you determined to foster that love again – which can, at least, get lukewarm if it is not constantly nourished.

So there it is. It is good and useful in that it sets the layout of the land very clearly, everybody knows where they are, what are their responsibilities and privileges, and the whole Church rejoices to hear you say to God; I thank God for his covenant promises mediated to me through my parents and the whole covenant community. I now formally and publicly accept those promises because I believe that God has worked the reality of them in my heart by His Word and Spirit. I further declare that, in thankful response to that grace of God, for myself I take on the responsibilities of God's covenant and life in the covenant community as understood in the apostles' doctrine. So help me God. Amen.

The Rev. John Rogers is the minister of the Reformed Church of the North Shore, Auckland.

*Reprints of articles
in Faith in Focus
can be obtained by
contacting the Editor*

Profession of Faith – not an initiation rite

Baptised children are not inferior members

Berwyn Hoyt

There is a little quirk of terminology that we often get wrong – and it has big implications for our children. Often I have witnessed the profession of faith of a baptised church-member, and subsequently heard the professor congratulated that he is “now a member” of the church. I’ve even done it myself! But this is not a Biblical idea.

My concern here is that when we do this we forget that our baptised children are already *truly* members of the church. Yes, I really mean *true* members. No, they are not communicant members – they do not have all the privileges and responsibilities of adults – but they are members. Just like your son is really a full son even before he allowed to drive the family car.

When a baptised young person professes his faith, we easily say to him, “Welcome,” “Glad to have you join us”, or “Welcome to membership in the church!” But has he just become a member of the church? No! He was a member from the time of his birth to Christian parents!

Already at his baptism, God called him one of his people, drew him into the covenant, and gave him the blessings of the covenant. At baptism he was also given the responsibility to respond to God in faith. His profession is merely a response to God working in his life – precisely *because* he is already a member of God’s people. And God is being faithful to his covenant promises – working that faith in him.

So, in order that we may be reminded of how God sees our children, let us review the structure of things as they are in the Bible:

The sacrament of membership

Circumcision (the OT cutting off of sin), and Baptism (the NT washing away of sin) are both:

- The *signs* of separation from sin to be God’s own people, members in his covenant “he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had...” (Rom. 4:11)
- God’s *seal* (guarantee) of faithfulness to his people
“all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus ... walk in newness of life ... For sin shall not be master over you, for you are not under law, but under grace.”
 (Rom 6:3,4,14; cf 1 Pet. 3:21)

Thus, we see that baptism *is* the sign of membership in the God’s people, the covenant, or the church.

Profession of faith

- A vow of belief in and commitment to God
“Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me”. (Ruth 1:16,17) (cf. 1 Tim. 6:12, 13; Heb. 3:1; 4:14; 10:23)
- A response to God’s faithfulness
“Then the people answered, ‘Far be it from us to forsake the Lord to serve other gods! It was the Lord our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt ... We too will serve the Lord, because he is our God.’” (Josh. 24:16-18) (cf. Deut. 27:9ff)

So, we see that a Profession of Faith *is not* the sign of beginning membership in God’s people. Rather, observe the following.

Two cases where profession of faith can occur

- When a new convert wishes to affirm and promise allegiance to God.
- When existing members re-affirm their allegiance

Thus finally, we see that while profession of faith may be made by new Christians before baptism, it may also be made many more times. The new convert is still not a member until they are baptised! Again, it is baptism, not profession, that is the sign of membership. A person may make a profession of faith many times while already being a member of God’s people. This exact thing happened recently in our church, where folk from another church overseas wished to publicly re-affirm their allegiance to God in our church, and gave a public profession of faith.

So, next time you’re tempted to say “Welcome to the church” to a young professor, think again about what that says of your own children. The young professor may already have been a member of the church for his whole life, just like your own children.

But if you’re not going to welcome them into the church, what *will* you say? To be sure, you ought to say *something* to that

person to acknowledge what a beautiful profession he has made. But what will it be?

Let’s just stick with the Biblical idea of the profession of faith. It is a vow of commitment to our Lord as a result of His covenantal grace and faithfulness to us. Then we would say, “May God bless you in your profession,” “We wish you God’s strength,” or “Praise God for his faithfulness to you!”

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"The communion of saints"

John Haverland

Over the last few months we have had a number of people join our church as members. What does it mean to join the church in this way? Do those who join understand what they are doing? Do they know what they are getting themselves into? And what about members who have been a part of the church for a long time – do they still understand the responsibilities and obligations of membership?

I would hope so. But we are forgetful people and so a reminder will not go astray. That is the purpose of this article. As we proceed I want to define the subject, then give a brief description of the church and then spend most of the article looking at practical aspects of membership.

My focus is on those who are *communicant* members – that is, those able to take communion. We also call them *confessing* members – that is, those who have publicly confessed their faith in Jesus Christ. I am distinguishing these members from the baptised members of the church – who are also members – but we expect more from those who have made a conscious decision to respond to God's grace offered in their baptism as full, communicant, confessing members.

The Church as a community

The title for this article comes from the last third of the Apostle's Creed where we confess; *"I believe a holy catholic church, the communion of saints."* The Heidelberg Catechism gives a clear explanation of that statement in Question 55 when it asks;

"What do you understand by 'the communion of the saints?'" The answer comes back; *"First, that believers one and all, as members of this community, share in Christ and in all his treasures and gifts. Second, that each member should consider it his duty to use his gifts readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members."* These words accurately summarise some of what the Scriptures teach about being a member of the church.

They remind us that all believers, individually and corporately, share in all the treasures and gifts of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only do we share in him but in all the benefits and gifts he has gained for us through his work on the cross. Everything we have and are and do comes to us in and through our union with Christ.

Our Lord Jesus also unites us with each other in a community of faith, in the body of Christ, and in a common union of love for God and each other. The Scriptures never picture the believer as an isolated individual but always as part of a larger body of people. Michael Green has written; *"A Christianity which does not begin with the individual does not begin; but a Christianity which ends with the individual ends."* A believer is part of the covenant community of the Lord – part of the people of God. The prophets of the old covenant spoke to believers who belonged to the people of Israel and writers in the new covenant addressed believers who were members of churches. Consistently, throughout the Scriptures, believers are described as belonging to a body of people.

This corporate aspect of our faith is pictured most clearly in the sacrament of the

Lord's Supper. *"Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf"* (1 Cor 10:17). The symbolism of the Lord's Supper is a visible reminder that we are members of a community, parts of a body.

It is not easy to communicate this in our present society. New Zealanders, along with many in our Western world, are strongly individualistic. They prize their independence and are unwilling to be too deeply involved with others or to be accountable to others. Yet everyone needs other people. *"No man is an island, entire of itself"*, wrote John Donne. He was right. God created us for community. We have a longing and a need to associate with other people. Our society gives evidence of this with a proliferation of small sub-groups and specific interest groups. Even the popularity of sporting clubs and teams illustrates the desire of many to get together with others.

True community, however, can only be found in the Church. One of our members testifies to this. He had been an active member of a rugby club for many years, yet before coming to faith he had never experienced the level of honesty, intimacy and support he found in the Church. In this way the Church ought to be a demonstration of *"God's New Society"*. (This is the title John Stott chose for his commentary on the letter of Ephesians, a letter that has the church as its major theme.)

If we are to have churches that give genuine evidence of "the communion of the saints" we have some work to do. Someone has observed that the church needs more labourers, not layabouts. Belonging to the Church involves significant responsibilities. Let me elaborate on some of these.

Worship God together

To worship the Lord together is one of our primary duties. The corporate gathering together of God's people is the most visible expression of the reality of the Church and is commanded by God. Again and again the Psalms call God's people to worship him:

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise.

Give thanks to Him and praise His name. (100:4)

*Come, let us bow down in worship,
Let us kneel before the Lord our
Maker. (95:6)*

Our motive for coming together for the worship of God ought to be obedience to his command but also gratitude for such a great



salvation. That was the desire of the writer of Psalm 116:

*How can I repay the Lord
for all His goodness to me?
I will lift up the cup of Salvation
and call on the name of the Lord.
I will fulfil my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all His people.
(vs 12-14)*

If that was the response of an Old Testament believer, how much more should we as New Testament Christians want to praise God? If you have been rescued from sin and Satan through Christ you will want to thank the Lord! Furthermore, *once* won't be enough! You will want to use *both* opportunities to worship, at the beginning and at the end of the day.

*It is good to praise the Lord
and to make music to your name O
Most High.
To proclaim your love in the morning
And your faithfulness at night.
(Ps 92:1-2).*

Be regular in worship in your *own congregation*. Sure, you can worship the Lord with his people wherever they are, but you are a member of a local church and you have an obligation and commitment to that group of people. There will be occasions when you will worship elsewhere for some reason but your regular commitment ought to be to the church of which you are a member. Don't flit around from one church to another.

Are you regular and faithful in worship?

Participate in the fellowship of the Church

Believers in the early Church met together for fellowship (Acts 2:42) They were keen to be together. Their eagerness is a good example to us. I have already mentioned the opportunity for this is in worship and in conversation with others before and after the services. Another excellent means of seeking this fellowship is to participate in a small group in the church. This could take a variety of forms. It could be a catechism class for young people or for adults, or a Bible study group organised for women, or men, or youth or for a geographical district. Any of these groups provide a forum for studying the Bible, asking questions and learning from others. They are also a means of fellowship and of keeping your faith alive and hot. Just as an ember on its own will not glow so too a member on his own will not grow.

Meeting in a small group through the week also provides a chance to get to know others in the church more intimately than is possible in relatively brief conversations before and after worship. If you feel lonely in the church

it may be a result of not being involved in a setting additional to Sunday worship. If you don't participate in a smaller group it is difficult to build a genuine community.

Are you involved in a Bible study group?

Use your gifts

The Holy Spirit has given you gifts — at least one and probably more — to use in the Church. In Romans 12 and 1 Corinthians 12 the Apostle Paul compares the Church to a body. Both the Church and a body function in a similar manner. Both are one unit made up of many parts. Each part is different. Each part is essential to the proper working of the whole. Each part must fulfil its task if the body is to function effectively. In the Church each one of us is to work for the edification of the other members so all of us may be built up in our faith.

Often members find it hard to determine their gifts. This may arise from a lack of skill in self-analysis or from a false humility. If you don't know your gifts try asking yourself; "What am I good at? Where are my interests? What are my talents and abilities? Where can I be of use to others?" Ask others the same questions about yourself. Another way to discover your gifts is to look for needs in the Church and the community and to respond to them. Ask yourself; "How can I help others? What are the needs in the church that I can respond to? Where are there opportunities for me to do good for other believers?" You'll soon have more than enough to do!

In using their gifts people tend to go to one of two extremes. One is expressed in this little rhyme:

*"Mary had a little lamb,
It was given to her to keep;
Then it joined the local church,
And died for lack of sleep."*

Some are inclined to exhaust themselves in works of service and to do too much. This may be to the detriment of their health, their children, their marriage or all three. Most, however, tend to the other extreme. We are all self-centred by nature and we know how to look after ourselves very well. We would rather stay in front of the wood burner on a cold night rather than venture out to a church activity. We are more inclined to watch TV for an evening rather than visit or phone someone in need.

What are your gifts and are you using them "readily and cheerfully for the service and enrichment of the other members"?

Practise the fruit of the Spirit

When I was a student at the Reformed Theological College (quite a few years ago) I bought a book with the title, "*Building With Bananas*". It is a book about the Church.

While the Bible describes us as "*living stones*" being built into a holy temple, the author observed that we are often more like bananas — all different shapes and sizes — and we find it hard to fit in with each other. For this reason we must "*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace*" (Eph 4:3). Achieving this goal requires that we practice the fruit of the Spirit. "*Be completely humble and gentle, bearing with one another in love*" (Eph 4:2). Love is the central characteristic of the Spirit-filled believer. Peter writes; "*Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins*" (1 Peter 4:8). In my pastoral work I have often quoted this verse to members of the Church when one or



another has been offended by what someone has said or done. Love requires that we forgive others. That enables us to cover over many sins - even seventy times seven!

As a member of the Church are you praying for and practising the fruit of the Spirit to keep the unity of the Church?

Deal honestly and truthfully with each other

God commands us to love other Christians and to forgive them. Often that means we must "cover over" their sins. That must not be a smokescreen for pretending to forgive them while actually carrying a grudge against them. The latter is a common problem in the church. On occasions I have come across people who have nursed resentments against another member of the church for years and years, all the while allowing that resentment to fester into bitterness. This is sin. If you are offended by what another person has said or done, and if you cannot cover that with love, then you need to go

and see that person (Matt. 5:23-24, 18:15). You need to do that *prayerfully*, having asked God to heal the relationship; *carefully*, so that what you say is helpful for that situation (Eph. 4:29); and *honestly*, speaking the truth yet doing so in love (Eph. 4:16,25). If two members of the church have had a serious disagreement, ideally they should meet each on their way to see the other to restore their relationship.

Are you dealing honestly with sin in your own life and in your relationships with others?

Prayer

Prayer is the life-blood of the Church. It reminds us of our absolute and utter dependence on the Lord. *"Unless the Lord builds the house its builders labour in vain"* (Psalm 127:1). We need to pray that the Lord will preserve the unity of the Church, equip us for service, fill us with His Spirit, cause us to be a salt and light in society, make us faithful witnesses and ambassadors of Jesus and use us to extend the kingdom of Christ in this world. There are many opportunities for prayer in our own personal prayers and those of our family. Yet the Church also provides opportunities in specific prayer meetings, or in prayer following a Bible study meeting and in the prayers of public worship.

Are you praying for the Church and as a church?

Seek the lost

A man was late to church. As he rushed in the people were coming out. He asked; "Oh,

is it all over?" Someone answered; "No, it's just begun. We're going out now to practise what has been preached." This little anecdote introduces a key responsibility of church members because one of the truths preached in the church from the Scriptures is the command to be witnesses (Acts 1:8). Jesus commanded his disciples and us to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:18-20). One of the primary tasks of the Church is to build up her members to maturity in Christ. The other is to seek the lost and incorporate them into the Church.

Again this is a subject all on its own but you should ask yourself; "What am I doing to spread the good news about Jesus? As a member of Christ am I confessing his name at school, university or work? How am I fulfilling the great commission the Lord gave to his church? Am I making disciples of Christ?"

Seek the kingdom of God

"The kingdom of God" is the broadest description of the work of God in this world and in history. His kingdom includes all He is doing in the Church and through the covenant. This term describes God's people in God's place under God's rule. True members of Christ's Church leave worship and disperse into society to extend the kingdom of the Lord in the specific place he has put them. Their life in the church strengthens them for kingdom service. The teaching they receive equips them to be good citizens of heaven on earth. Their fellowship in their local

congregation motivates them to go into the world and *"seek first his kingdom and his righteousness."* (Matt. 6:33).

A Final Question

When you profess faith in Christ and become a member of the Church or, if you were baptised into the church, and take up the responsibilities of full membership, you make solemn promises about following Christ, about your life in the Church and about your commitment to His kingdom. Too often too much is left to too few. Sometimes the church is like a rugby match with 25,000 people in the stands in need of exercise and 30 people on the field in need of rest! Is your church like that? What are you doing in the church and in the kingdom of Christ?

If you are a communicant member of your congregation you will have given your assent to the following question (I quote from the second form for public profession of faith):

"Do you promise to do all you can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen your love and commitment to Christ by sharing faithfully in the life of the church, honouring and submitting to its authority; and do you join with the people of God in doing the work of the Lord everywhere?"

How would you answer that today?

The Rev. John Haverland is the minister of the Reformed Church of Bishopdale, Christchurch.

Word + Spirit = Church!

Considering Acts 2:42-47

Sjirk Bajema

Acts chapter 2 is the great story of Pentecost. There's that sound like a roaring wind, the tongues of fire coming down, that speaking in all those different languages. There's the sermon the apostle Peter preached about why it happened to that huge crowd that gathered. There's the amazing response of many of those listening as they are dramatically converted.

This is all quite clearly the work of the Holy Spirit. Because God's Word is being fulfilled the promise of Jesus Christ is fulfilled.

But then there's a break. Well, at least in many of our Bibles. The N.I.V., for example, puts a subject heading in, 'The Fellowship of the Believers.' The New King James entitles it, 'A Vital Church Grows.'

So there's this thought that this is something different, or it's something happening later. It's about when they start up as a church. And that's not quite the same. That's just everyday stuff.

And then it's a church fellowship that is a bit unusual. We don't see it repeated in exactly the same way later on in the New Testament. I mean, where else do you read of people selling all their possessions and joining in like this? It just didn't happen again. The enthusiasm was too much. They couldn't keep up this type of utopian society - it couldn't last.

So we can easily think that the verses 42 till 47 aren't really that relevant to us today. It's an interesting little historical story Luke has remembered.

The text doesn't suggest this at all, though. Rather, it gives every indication of

this being an important part of the great work that God has just done. And why not? This is still part of Pentecost and isn't Pentecost the actual birth-date of the New Testament Church?

The Lord does this to rule over us together

Through the work of His Word and Spirit the Lord is calling out for Himself a special people. For these are the people who bow before Him as the King of kings - their Lord and Saviour.

That was vividly shown with the response of the people in verse 37. They were cut to the heart. And that repentance meant they were taught and baptised.

What we see is how much this is all the Lord's work. It is God who brings His elect into the church. It was the Holy Spirit who

brought those three thousand in. And it's the Lord who, we read in verse 47, keeps adding everyday to the church.

Much as it's marvellous that so many were saved on Pentecost day, that's only because this is about the church. It's through the Body of Christ that the Lord's saving plan for this world is being carried out. As it should be - it's a part of Himself. It's His Body!

So Acts 2:42-47 is only the beginning of how Christ's Church is carrying out His will for the world. The challenge to make this Jesus both Lord and Christ of this world begins under the new covenant here. And, indeed, the book of Acts will tell the story of how the gospel goes out into the world - it's last chapter ending in Rome, the capital of the Empire!

So how does the church begin here in carrying out Christ's will? They start in worship. For what is verse 42 but simply the basic parts to when we come together in Jesus' Name. There is the "teaching of the apostles". That's nothing less than the preaching of the Word, for they were eyewitnesses of the Living Word!

There is "fellowship" - koinonia. No casual social meeting is this. Here it's Christ Himself with His own. As He says in Matthew 18 verse 20, "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

There is "the breaking of bread." This is more than having a meal together. The name used by Luke is his equivalent for what Paul calls the Lord's Supper.

And there is 'prayer'. This would be referring to their set time for prayer, just as they continued to keep to public Jewish prayers as well.

The church begins in worship. She is clearly identified as those gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the four parts to their meeting together there's a constant looking to the Lord. Verse 42 tells us that the Lord does this to rule over us together.

The Lord blesses us as we are together

With that focus in place, we see in the second place that the Lord blesses us as we are together. This is the teaching of the verses 43 till 47. You can see the Lord is here! Indeed, verse 43 speaks as though Jesus hasn't really left. And He hasn't! The miracles done by the apostles are the same as the miracles of Jesus when He was on earth. They are the "signs" of the kingdom of God.

As those miracles were a special sign so too was the way the church then shared everything together. While the gifting of the apostles was especially for this foundation time so also was the gifting of the church to be altogether like this. Because it was what was needed then.

And it wasn't that somehow their enthusiasm died out later. I mean, those believers were from all over the known world. They had to go home sometime. But in this unique Pentecost time the Lord gave them what they needed to establish the church.

And, notice, He hasn't let that church go for a moment ever since! Despite what the cults and sects and even many Christians say, the Lord has kept and blessed His Church in the most powerful way ever since. That's all because it started His way. And He's kept it that way.

R.B. Kuiper pictures the scene well. He says, "The harmony that prevails among the members of Christ's body is made to stand out strikingly in relation to their diversity. Harmony presupposes diversity. When identical voices sing identical notes, no one thinks of harmony. But when different voices singing different notes blend with one another, the product is harmony."

If the human body consisted of several parts, all of the same size and shape, harmony would be out of the question. Now that it consists of widely differing members, all aiding one another, the quality of harmony is outstanding.

There is much diversity among the members of Christ's church. Some have five talents, others but one. Some have attractive characters, others are relatively unattractive. Some are leaders, others followers. Some are rich, others poor. Some are highly educated, others unlearned. Some are strong in the faith, others weak.

But each needs all the others. They complement one another. They co-operate with each other. Collectively they constitute one body. And all are bound together by the greatest of Christian virtues: "love."

This Pentecost church models that love to us. Though it wasn't long after this that

the church suffered attacks by the devil, yet this continues to be the hallmark of the true church. There is love there. As Jesus said in John 13 verse 35, "All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

If you find yourself apart from the church of the Lord, don't straight away think, as we easily do, that it's the church's fault. It's probably you who's moved!

Because there are a lot of Christians who move these days. In fact, the majority of Christians in this country won't be staying at the church they began with. Any little unhappiness and people quickly try to find their fulfilment elsewhere. Happiness as a modern 'right' has affected the church, too.

But tell me - would you treat your mother that way? Yes, your mother! You see, as Christians we know that God is our Father and that Christ is the Bridegroom. But few modern Christians know that we have spiritual mother - the Church.

In the same way that young people aren't offering up their seats in respect to older people on public transport so Christians aren't respecting the very one who has given them their birth and everything else that matters for this life and all eternity. The "awe", the "gladness", and the "sincerity" of these early New Testament believers aren't meant to stay only in the lines on this page. They are meant to be alive today. Because, as verse 47 begins, then we are "praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people."

The devil loves it when Christians worship here, there, and everywhere! There's not enough time to really get to know anyone then - especially the Lord by a faithful commitment to His Church. And the more this goes on the worse it gets. I mean, who would treat their own families like that? Fancy walking out of your family, time and time

Acts 2:42-47

- 42 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*
- 43 *Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.*
- 44 *All the believers were together and had everything in common.*
- 45 *Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.*
- 46 *Everyday they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,*
- 47 *praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*



again, without trying to resolve your differences? That's no family then. So is it any surprise there's no church then?

Some may point out here, however, the difference between the visible and invisible church. They say you can't say that your church is the only church. But we say to them, "You show me the church!" "Where is she found?" It's in your local congregation. It's the place where the saints in that area gather together as the fellowship in Christ. This is where you have your membership. This is where you are a vital part. A part that has the privileges, but also the responsibilities. Here you can raise concerns, but it's also here that you're accountable to others. As

Paul says to the Ephesian church in Ephesians 5 verse 20, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."

The Lord is bringing us all here together

In verse 47, when those new believers are being added to the church, it's clear that there is a visible, local church in mind. It was the church in Jerusalem that they became a part of. There is no reference to people coming to faith without being part of that church in that place.

This is what the true church has confessed ever since. The Westminster Confession of Faith says, in chapter 25 section 2, that outside the visible church "there is no ordinary possibility of salvation."

This doesn't mean that in rare circumstances someone might be saved apart from the church. The repentant murderer on the cross couldn't be baptised. But he was an exception.

For us the way of salvation is by being born of this mother. She is the one who nurtures you in the faith. She knows best.

Sometimes you get people who say they would be quite happy living on their own, on some desert island. They believe they can manage quite well without anybody else. They don't need anyone. A good question to ask them is how they would get to that island. Someone would probably have to take them. And you could trace their dependence on other people all the way back to when they were born. Because everyone has a mother. We have all been babies, cared for and fed until we could do it for ourselves. And if it had not been for that being born and cared for as a child, you wouldn't be here today.

It is the same spiritually. We have been born and nurtured in the church. To turn away

from the church is to insult someone far more important than a biological mother. It is to slap Jesus in the face. Because this is His Bride!

So when the church you're a member of calls you to worship the Lord twice on His Day you should try whatever you can to do it. When the church celebrates the sacrament of the Lord's Supper you should do whatever you can to join it. And if you haven't yet professed your faith, or you're not right with the Lord, then you ought to get that sorted out so that you do come.

It's the same with all the others activities of the church. You have a part to play. It could be even to pray!

And if you don't play your part there's a missing part! As 1st Corinthians 12 verse 13 says, "For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."

John Calvin makes the perceptive comment about verse 47 that the fact the Lord was adding daily to the church shows His blessing on their hard work. He says they strove to the best of their ability to gather into the Lord's sheepfold those who are wandered away and were straying. And then he says, "the fact that the Church is diminishing rather than increasing is to be ascribed to our slothfulness, or indeed our sinfulness."

That's cutting! And some may even say that it's most un-Calvinistic! For they would argue that it's all God's work.

But God's work through who? Ah, the Church! And who is the church?

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Another look at the true church

Rev. Michael Flinn

What is the true church? Why does the Belgic Confession, Article 29, speak of both the true Church and the false Church? According to Guido de Bres, author of this document, we "*ought diligently and circumspectly to discern from the Word of God which is the true church, since all sects which are in the world assume to themselves the name of the Church.*" And at least for de Bres, discernment between the true and the false church did not present significant difficulty: "*These two Churches are easily known and distinguished from each other.*" So there you have it. Simple really. Or is it? Can we speak in these terms today? The Protestant

"Church" is so divided institutionally that we are accustomed to speaking of various denominations. This is quite an interesting term, when you stop to think about it. To *denominate* means to give a name to something. When used as a religious term, "denomination" means "a religious sect or body designated by a distinctive name." According to my Shorter Oxford Dictionary, this usage goes back to 1716. Since then, this term has been applied to "Anglicans" and "Presbyterians," "Methodists" and "Baptists". There are "Churches of Christ" and "Assemblies of God," there are "Brethren," both "open" and "closed," "Apostolic," "Elim," "New Life," "Churches of the Nazarene," "Union" or "Cooperating

Churches". The list goes on and on. How do the categories "true" and "false" of the Belgic Confession apply today given this proliferation of denominations, i.e. "bodies designated by distinctive names"?

The Confession

Well, let's first go back to the Confession itself. If we begin with Article 29, we have gotten a little ahead of ourselves. We have 'jumped the gun', as they say. We really have to go back to Article 27. Using the language of the Apostles' Creed, this article declares that "*we believe and profess one catholic and universal Church,*" which is then defined as "*a holy congregation of true Christian believers, all expecting their salvation in*

Jesus Christ, being washed by His blood; sanctified and sealed by the Holy Spirit." We are then informed that this "Church has been from the beginning of the world, and will be to the end thereof." This is important, because it shows that the Reformers, and de Bres himself, were not thinking in terms of "denominations" at all, when they used the term "Church". They thought of one, holy, catholic (i.e. worldwide) Church resulting from the saving and sanctifying work of God.

De Bres goes further. At times this Church appeared very small, as during the days of Ahab, when the Lord reserved 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal. But again, because this preservation of the Church is a work of God, there has never been a time when believers have not been present in the world. The terms used to designate or describe the church in Scripture imply this. The word "church" in Greek, is the word "ekklesia", which literally means "called out". God's people are called out by God Himself. The sheep hear the voice of Jesus Christ and they respond to it, becoming part of the flock, under His shepherding rule and guidance (John 10:14-16). The "flock" is also "the body of Christ", and according to Paul, as we are part of the body, we are "built up", attaining "unity in the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God". We "become mature attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ." In this way, "we grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ." From him, "the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work" (Ephesians 5:9-16).

The saved are within

Because the gathering and nurturing of the Church is a work of God, it follows that outside of this work, there can be no salvation. Listen to the Confession:

We believe, since this holy congregation is an assembly of those who are saved, and outside of it there is no salvation, that no person of whatsoever state or condition he may be, ought to withdraw from it, content to be by himself; but that all men are duty bound to join and unite themselves with it; maintaining the unity of the Church; submitting themselves to the doctrine and discipline thereof; bowing their necks under the yoke of Jesus Christ and as mutual members of the same body, serving to the edification of the brethren, according to the talents God has given them (Article 28).

Again, when de Bres wrote this, reflecting the view of the Reformers, he was not thinking in terms of "denominations". He was thinking of the one, universal Church of God, the flock of Christ, the body of Christ in which we grow to maturity. The idea of separating oneself from the Church was unthinkable. It would be acting "contrary to the ordinance

of God" and would cut the person off from the spiritual life and nourishment that is vital to his survival as a Christian. Calvin, whose theology significantly influenced de Bres, has a striking passage on this in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Speaking of the church as "mother" (cf. Galatians 4:26), he says: *But because it is now our intention to discuss the visible church, let us learn even from the simple title "mother" how useful, indeed how necessary, it is that we should know her. For there is no other way to enter into life unless this mother conceive us in her womb, give us birth, nourish us at her breast and lastly, unless she keep us under her care and guidance until, putting off mortal flesh, we become like the angels (Mt. 22:30). Our weakness does not allow us to be dismissed from her school until we have*

and takes from them, as it thinks proper; it relies more upon men than upon Christ; and persecutes those who live holily according to the Word of God and rebuke it for its errors, covetousness and idolatry." It is clear, especially when reading Calvin on this, that the Reformers were thinking of the Roman Catholic church of their day when they defined the marks of the false church. However, according to Calvin, *...when we categorically deny to the papists the title of the church, we do not for this reason impugn the existence of churches among them. Rather, we are only contending about the true and lawful constitution of the church, required in the communion not only of the sacraments (which are signs of profession) but also especially of doctrine... To sum up, I call them churches to the extent that the*



been pupils all our lives. Furthermore, away from her bosom one cannot hope for any forgiveness of sins or any salvation, as Isaiah (Is. 37:32) and Joel (Joel 2:32) testify.¹

How you know it's the church you're within

How, then can we recognize this most gracious of ladies? According to de Bres, again following the Reformers, there are three marks by which the true Church is known: *"If the pure doctrine of the gospel is preached therein; if it maintains the pure administration of the sacraments as instituted by Christ; if church discipline is exercised in punishing of sin... hereby the true church may certainly be known."*² And the false Church? Well, it *"ascribes more power and authority to itself and its ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit itself to the yoke of Christ. Neither does it administer the sacraments as appointed by Christ in his Word, but adds to*

Lord wonderfully preserves in them a remnant of his people, however woefully dispersed and scattered, and to the extent that some marks of the church remain... But on the other hand, because in them those marks have been erased to which we should pay particular regard in this discourse, I say that every one of their congregations and their whole body lack the lawful form of the church.³

Notice how Calvin was prepared to speak of congregations within the Roman church as "churches", while at the same time pointing out that they lacked the lawful form of the Church. There were still some marks of the church present, but the crucial marks, (the pure preaching of the Word and the pure administration of the sacraments) could no longer be discerned in Calvin's day. Elsewhere, the Reformer warns against making hasty judgments about churches and being too quick to pronounce them as false because they display errors — even errors

in doctrine and in the administration of the sacraments. For example, citing the cases of the Corinthian and Galatian congregations, he writes:

*Who, then, would dare snatch the title "church" from these who cannot be charged with even a tenth part of such misdeeds? What, I ask, would those who rage with such churlishness against present-day churches have done with the Galatians, all but deserters of the gospel, among whom this same apostle still recognized churches?*⁴

Thus, although there were differences of opinion among the Reformers themselves on some points, as P. Y. de Jong points out, "no one urged the unity of all evangelical Protestant churches with greater consistency and conviction than John Calvin."⁵

The true church today

What does all this mean for us? Should we still speak of "true church" today? Yes, as long as we realize that we are speaking of

the one, catholic and universal Church that is a gathering work of God from the time of the Fall. This is the flock for whom Jesus laid down His life. Should we be part of it? Absolutely! How can we claim to hear the voice of Jesus and not wish to be part of His flock, where He nourishes and feeds us and brings us to maturity? In fact, this is the whole point of articles 27-29 of the Belgic Confession: God has been gathering His Church since the Fall (Art. 27); we are obligated to join and unite ourselves with this Church (Art. 28); and so we must be able to find it (Art. 29)!

What about the various "denominations"? Well, we are not called to make judgments about these — whether they are true or false over against our own local congregation. The Reformers' warning against hasty and uncharitable assessments serves us well here. It will also serve us well as we view our own local congregations. Are the marks of the true Church present? They should be.

Will they be there perfectly? Not this side of heaven. People who make hasty judgments and go off to find greener pastures elsewhere soon discover that all local congregations have challenges and are "more or less true and faithful". We should be more concerned to build up and strengthen the body, not tear it down. And in the process, we ourselves might grow to become more wise and more mature as Christians in the body of Christ.

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¹ *Institutes*, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 4.

² Belgic Confession, Article 29. Calvin lists only the first two of these in his *Institutes* when he speaks of the marks of the true church. He discusses the proper administration of discipline later on when he explains the keys of the kingdom.

³ *Institutes*, Book 4, Chapter 3, Section 12.

⁴ *Institutes*, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 14.

⁵ P. Y. de Jong, *The Churches Witness to the World*, St. Catherines, Paideia Press, p. 268.

Why join a church?

Mark Brown and Larry Wilson

Alice was livid! This was the first time she'd visited this church. "The last time, too," she thought. The church had celebrated the Lord's Supper. "I've been a Christian for four years and the pastor had the gall to tell me to stay away from Communion," Alice fumed. "He asked those who are not right with God or his church to take steps to get right before coming to the Lord's Table. He included *me* just because

I'm not a church member. How dare he!"

It's not uncommon in our day for sincere followers of Christ—like Alice—to regard joining a church as an option. And given the other options—books, tapes, videos, radio and TV broadcasts, Internet resources, parachurch groups, etc.—joining the church is sometimes low on the list—if it's even on the list! Many have never regarded committing to a congregation to be all that important—or all that agreeable. They are usually shocked to hear that Christians have

historically regarded joining a church as essential, not optional.

Is this historic Christian conviction arbitrary? Is it legalistic? What does God's Word have to say about church membership? We think it says plenty. Please consider with us ten biblical reasons why every professing Christian ought to join a local church.

Jesus commanded church membership

First, our Lord Jesus Christ commands his followers to join a church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus tells his disciples, "I will build My church." He pictures the church as the new covenant temple, and those who confess that Jesus is Lord are the building blocks in it (Matt. 16:16; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:19-20).

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus confirms and expands his earlier statement by commanding his followers to make disciples, baptizing and teaching them. Fulfilling this Great Commission entails bringing converts into church membership. Why do we say that? Because part of the Great Commission is a command to baptize. Now, Holy Spirit baptism adds us to the invisible church (1 Cor. 12:13). But we're not to keep our salvation invisible. We're to express it outwardly (Rom. 10:9-10). Water baptism outwardly and visibly symbolizes this invisible reality.

Acts 2:41 tells how the apostolic church implemented this principle: "Those who gladly received his word were *baptized*; and that day about three thousand souls were *added* to them." Added to what? Acts 2:47



gives the answer: "added to *the church*." This was the visible church; the apostles kept track of those who were baptized, and even counted them.

Christ commands us to be baptized. By commanding us to be baptized, he also commands us to be added to the church. In other words, he commands us to join a church. He wants our relationship to him to be honest and observable (Matt. 10:32). He also wants it to be corporate (Heb. 10:24–25).

The Old Testament teaches church membership

Second, the Old Testament teaches that believers should join a church. The Israelites were God's old covenant people. He commanded circumcision as a sign of that covenant relationship and membership in the covenant community (Gen. 17:7, 10–11). The New Testament identifies this old covenant community as "the church" (Acts 7:38 KJV).

If you were an alien, you had to receive circumcision to become a member of Israel before you could celebrate the Passover (Ex. 12:43–44, 48). In other words, you had to "join the church" before you could come to the Lord's Table. If you were not circumcised, regardless of your background or subjective belief, you were to be excommunicated from the people of God (Gen. 17:14).

Can you see the parallel in the New Testament? Baptism is New Testament circumcision (Col. 2:11–12). It marks your addition to the new covenant community, the church (Gal. 3:27, 29; 6:15–16; Phil. 3:3). The Lord's Supper is the new covenant Passover (cf. Matt. 26:17–19; 1 Cor. 5:7). Just as a person had to be circumcised to become a member of Israel before he could celebrate the Passover, so a person has to be baptized to become a member of the church before he can take the Lord's Supper. Accordingly, those who "were baptized" and "added to the church" were the ones who participated in "the breaking of bread" with the apostles (Acts 2:41–42, 47).

The New Testament presupposes church membership

Third, the New Testament assumes that every convert joins the church. Conversion includes being added to a visible, local church (Acts 2:41, 47; 14:21–23). It was unthinkable that a person might embrace Christ and then choose not to join Christ's church. In fact, those who were not church members were regarded as non-Christians (Matt. 18:17). Biblical Christianity is always intensely personal, but it is never private or individualistic.

The New Testament strongly emphasizes the corporate or group character of Christianity. For example, the New Testament speaks of believers as *together* being the

body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the household of faith, the temple of the Holy Spirit, the fellowship of saints, the holy nation, the people of God, the family of God, etc. In apostolic times, every convert joined the church. Until he did, he was not counted as a convert.

Salvation involves church membership

Fourth, the biblical concept of salvation involves joining the church. In the Bible, coming to Christ and coming to his church are one thing, not two. Today people might trust Christ in an evangelistic meeting and later think about whether or not to join a church. Sometimes they never join a church. But God's Word views coming to Christ and coming to his church as two parts of the same thing—kind of like the inside and the outside of full salvation. *Inwardly*, you turn to God and cry out for him to save you through the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. *Outwardly*, you identify yourself as Christ's by professing your faith before the church and continuing in worship, learning, and witness with that assembly (Rom. 10:9–10; Matt. 10:32; Acts 2:41–42; Heb. 10:25). In the Bible, to join Christ is to join the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13, 27; Rom. 12:5; Eph. 5:29–30). Biblically, Christians serve Christ,

not in independent isolation, but as living members of his body.

Church Order implies church membership

Fifth, the Bible's many prescriptions for church order imply that God expects believers to join local churches. God sets admission requirements (Acts 2:47). He provides for expelling someone from the church (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4–5). He ordains that there be leaders (or officers) like pastors, elders, and deacons (Eph. 4:11–12; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1–13). This very fact assumes that Christians will join churches. For how can you have officers without members to elect and follow them? Where would pastors, elders, and deacons come from? What would they be for?

In 1 Timothy, after giving instructions for prayer in public worship (2:1–8), for women in public worship (2:9–15), and for selecting elders and deacons (3:1–13), the apostle Paul explains, "I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (3:15). These rules would be useless unless believers were members of local, organized churches.

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Activities: Generally include- Topical bible studies, Sports, Sight seeing, formal dinner, leisure time etc.

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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)

Many Bible commands imply church membership

Sixth, there are many more biblical instructions that you cannot follow unless you join a church. Christ instructs his followers to *celebrate the Lord's Supper* (Luke 22:19). But he opens the Lord's Table only to those who are baptized members of his church (see the second reason above).

God commands Christians to *love the brethren* and to serve them (Gal. 6:2; 1 Pet. 3:17; 1 John 3:14). But how do you recognize the brethren? Some people claim to be believers, but aren't. How can believers regard others as fellow believers unless they are identified as such by being received into a visible church that preaches the gospel?

A spirit of autonomy is prevalent today; it despises authority. This is nothing new (2 Pet. 2:10). But God commands his redeemed children to "respect those who ... are over you in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:12 esv) and to "obey those who rule over you" (Heb. 13:17). But how can you do that unless you have joined the church over which they are overseers? How else can you know who God has placed over you?

We could give many more examples, but these should be enough to show that there are many biblical commands which believers cannot obey unless they join a church. Accordingly, refusing to join a church of Jesus Christ involves a person in numerous sins of omission, failures to obey the Lord.

Pastoral care requires church membership

Our seventh reason is related to the sixth, but we think it helpful to mention it separately. Biblical care of Christ's sheep is impossible without church membership. God commands the elders to exercise pastoral care and oversight, to shepherd his flock. The *church* is the flock which God has placed under their care (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). They are to focus their attention on those who have joined the church in which God has made them overseers (1 Cor. 5:12). But visitors of the church are not under the jurisdiction of the elders. Unless they join the church, how can they be adequately shepherded? Moreover, the Good Shepherd knows his sheep by name and is known by them (John 10:3-4, 14). Do not his undershepherds need to do likewise (1 Pet. 5:1-4)? How can they shepherd the flock unless they know who is in it?

In Matthew 18:15-18, our Lord Jesus teaches his disciples how to deal with sin and conflict in the body of Christ. If a professing Christian is sinning and persists in stubborn impenitence, the church is to "excommunicate" him and to regard him as a nonbeliever (cf. 1 Cor. 5). If he repents, he is to be restored (2 Cor. 2:5-11). Such rescue and restoration is a chief goal of church discipline (Gal. 6:1). But how can the church do these things unless there is an objective distinction between those who are

"inside" and those who are "outside" (1 Cor. 5:12-13)? It is impossible to obey Christ's instructions on pastoral oversight and church discipline unless Christians become church members.

Practical church life involves church membership

Eighth, there are many practical matters which the church cannot do very well without objective church membership. God commands, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). Churches have to call pastors, elect elders and deacons, adopt budgets, buy property, build meeting places, etc. These are very important decisions. But without objective membership, how is it possible to decide *fairly*—"decently and in order"—who does or does not have the privilege of voting?

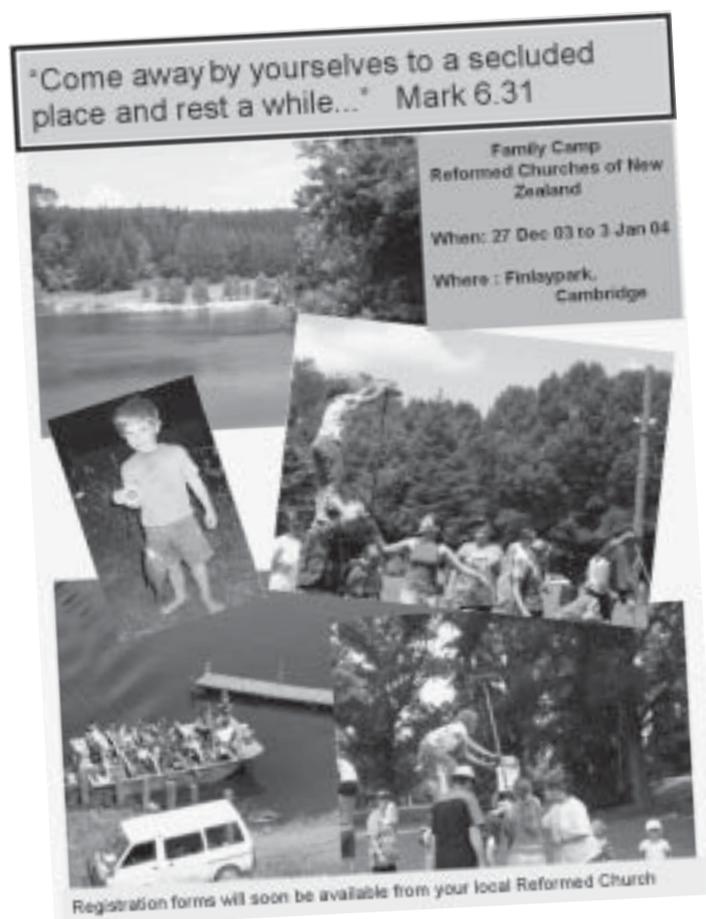
Biblical evangelism demands church membership

Ninth, biblical evangelism is impossible without church membership. Much of today's evangelism stresses *getting decisions*. But Jesus commanded us to *make disciples*. The scriptural gauge of evangelistic success is not getting a large number of professed decisions; it is enlisting people into the privileges and responsibilities of following Christ. Biblically, evangelism is not complete until converts are enrolled in the school of Christ and enfolded into the visible family of believers (Matt. 28:19-20; cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; Acts 2:41, 47).

God's love cries out for church membership

Tenth and finally, God's great love for the church beckons believers to join the church. The Bible repeatedly stresses how vitally important the church is to the living, triune God. The *church* was on his heart in his work of creation (Eph. 3:9-11). The *church* was on his heart in his work of salvation (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 5:25). The *church* was promised his special presence (Heb. 2:12; Matt. 18:20). If the church is so important to the Lord, shouldn't it be important to everyone who loves the Lord? How can you love the Lord and at the same time steer clear of that which the Lord loves? Doesn't this imply that every believer should openly identify with Christ's church?

The authors are Orthodox Presbyterian Church ministers. Mr. Brown is the pastor of Westminster OPC in Hollidaysburg, Pa., and Mr. Wilson is the General Secretary of the Committee on Christian Education. Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are taken from the NKJV. Reprinted from New Horizons, July 2003.



Between You and Me ...

Tales of the early Fifties in Auckland

Dick Vanderpyl

I was asked to make a brief speech at the Auckland Church celebration recently, bringing to mind some memories and incidents of those days in the early Fifties when we came together to establish the Auckland Church, now Avondale and Mangere. That was no problem; I was in the thick of it.

It began when I met a guy, a recent arrival from Holland, in Queen Street in Auckland, and when he asked my name, he told me that 'they' were looking for me and gave me the address of a certain Bill van Rij. My immediate response was "What have I done?" I was hardly here and the search was on!

Rev. Dr. Holtrop from Scheveningen was the Chaplain on the Migrant Boat, of which close to 2,500 migrants for Australia off loaded at Sydney and about 20 of us were flown out on a seaplane from Sydney across the Tasman Sea to Mechanics Bay, Auckland. We landed with no welcome but "just find your own way" we were told. The first thing I did was to go to the top of Queen Street and settle in at the YMCA for a few days to find my way about.

Rev. Holtrop urged Bill van Rij to set up a committee - initially without a mandate; that came much later as we worked out a plan. At that first meeting I was given the task of getting money in the pot. No money, no goal! It was not easy persuading poor migrants to cough up for a good cause.

We worked and slaved long hours in order to secure a future for ourselves. Twelve hours a day and triple pay on Saturdays! Most of us had to learn to be generous for a "good cause"!

There was one fellow who kept on dodging me with his promises to give the money next time! Eventually he owed us 5 pounds, which was more than a weekly 40 hour pay. One evening, I waited till it got dark, hopped on my motorbike and parked it 50 metres from his boarding house. I knocked on the door and there he was at last. To make the story short - he literally threw the five pound note on the floor. I swallowed my pride and picked it up; after all it was for Kingdom work. I never saw him again!

We were quite "shifty", going from one job to another; overtime almost doubled the normal pay. The management of one big company, not to be mentioned for fear of a court case, reduced the overtime and the migrants soon moved on to somewhere else for better pay.

One Saturday we came across an advertisement in one of the large daily papers that said, "No Dutchmen Need Apply". You wouldn't get away with that nowadays.

The new language

Newcomers often struggled with the new language! For instance, when we were invited by a Kiwi family for "tea", we found we were having dinner. Many a migrant had difficulty finding the right word. Some would ask for the "esbeck" (asbak) instead of an ashtray. When a visit ended, they asked for their 'jes' (jas) instead of their coat.

to sit on my bed and teach me proper pronunciation.

One Saturday my friend and I drove in my van along Tamaki Drive at Mission Bay and took a turn into the countryside. My friend spotted a beautiful foal and praised it, saying "What a beautiful fowl it was" - he also spotted a bull and asked the farmer if the he-cow could be trusted.

Kiwi members

Our first Kiwi members, Fred Channing and his family were looking for a true and faithful church and a Dr. MacIntyre from the USA,



"Dick Vanderpyl telling his tales."

I was interested in buying a van and went to a car-dealer in Penrose who had a good selection of them. I said "I want to buy a van". He told me that he didn't sell those things and pointed to a shop across the street where they sold fans and thus he taught me the difference between a hard V and a soft F.

Then there was confusion between a black horse and a dark one - like "he is a bit of a dark horse".

Coming home to my boarding house, I would greet the landlady with a friendly 'goodnight'. While I went to the bathroom to wash my hands, the landlady took my plate away from the table, thinking that I was going straight to bed! One of these boarders, an English man, whom we called a Pom, used

the President of the International Council of Christian Churches, had urged them to join us. Unfortunately, the sermons were still in the Dutch language and we were not yet ready to start in English.

I remember at that time many Christian Reformed Churches in the USA still preached in Dutch. At a session meeting in one of these churches, a decision was made to reach out in the community. One elder queried: "What about if we get a convert, what are we going to do with him!"

My friend Jack Rijnsdorp and I took turns translating the sermons from Dutch to English. We were given a draft and an outline and translated the sermon into English. Often we beat our minister by 5-12 minutes! Our Kiwi members had headphones to listen to

our basic translation and soon their kids fell asleep still with their headphones on!

On the whole Jack was pretty good in his English and our first minister, Rev. Bill Deenick couldn't recognise his own sermon. It also happened to me once but it was once only and never again!

The Auckland session discussed starting a fund to buy a piece of land and building a church. One of the deacons suggested collecting empty beer bottles.

Upon which Rev. Bill Deenick responded: "Not on your life, we are not building God's house on empty beer bottles. No way, that's out of the question."

A small church group of Presbyterians joined us. They were keenly aware of the liberalism in their denomination and had a problem concerning the purchase of a lottery ticket, from which one of their session members had done well.

I was invited for dinner by one of their elders. I was to meet up with him at the Central Post Office and follow him on my motorbike. I was pining for a smoke! However, this group was anti smoking and alcoholic beverages. I decided to take a chance, as most likely I would spot him coming to where I stood waiting. As I took a puff; he stood right behind me and tapped me on the shoulder!

I followed him on my motorbike to Howick. No sooner did I step inside than the question was put to me, asking if I was "born again". Well, I had never heard of it! I told him that I had made a Public Profession of faith in Holland. But he wouldn't give up. I told him that I knew that the Lord Jesus was and still is my Saviour. Later on I understood it. The Dutch word for 'born again' is 'weder geboren'.

My first reading service

I vividly remember my first Reading Service in the absence of our pastor elsewhere. I was dead scared as you can imagine. I confided in a friend in Australia with whom I had correspondence in connection with a combined monthly magazine "Trowel and Sword".

His reply when I opened the mail was most unexpected: "Just look the congregation in the eye and think to yourself: congregation, I despise you! It will greatly help your ego!"

I remember when I was led to the make-shift pulpit and received the handshake that I almost walked back with the elder, holding his hand.

The average migrant had three aims: transport was number one, secondly a roof over his or her head and thirdly to find a wife or husband.

Rev. Deenick brought with him a motorised cycle, powered with a small 50cc motor. One day a policeman wondered what

he was doing calling here and there on that strange motorised pushbike and knocking on doors. Fortunately he was not taken to the station!

Then, after some hard savings we managed to get him a Morris Minor; we all contributed, using the slogan "Everyone a fiver and Rev. Deenick a driver". The Christian Emigration Bureau in Holland also offered a certain amount, which greatly helped us.

Rev. Deenick occasionally had to preach in Hamilton. We would sometimes go together so that our pastor could check his sermon on the way.

However, we had a huge problem to get there and back again in time for the service in Auckland. It was the Bombay Hill Struggle. The trouble was the petrol pump; it would splutter as we climbed up across the Bombay Hill. At times I had to sit on the left side of the bumper with the bonnet up, tapping the electric fuel pump. The bonnet blocked Mr Deenick's view of the road and he also had to hang out the window till we got to the top. Nowadays we wouldn't get away with it in all our traffic.

The trouble was that the valves in the pump did not function properly and so it sucked half air and half petrol, instead of only petrol.

And while we were struggling on our way, the waiting congregation sang Psalms and Hymns till we arrived.

At one time when we were seeking better accommodation for worship services, we temporarily used the Masonic Hall in Princes Street. Their proviso was that we were not to enter their Holy of Holies!

But one Sunday they had forgotten to put the chairs in 'our' hall. One dare-devil – and he is still around – got a hammer and a pin and we managed to get the doors out of the hinges; they almost fell on top of us! After the service we all, young and old, males and females, hastily carried the chairs to the upper floor and put them in the right places. We also managed to get both heavy doors nicely fitted back in their hinges and locked. No problem - and no guilt-feelings!

Fixed freewill!

The Dutch had a scheme for their income for the Church. It was called "Vaste Vrijwillige Bijdragen". Translated it was "Fixed Freewill Contributions" and was worked out on a scale according to one's income. We had been using that scheme in Holland and used it here in Auckland at first. When the Kiwis heard and read about it, they just howled with laughter. They felt that it was a contradiction in terms. I vividly remember one of the elders from Bucklands Beach when he heard about it! For quite some time he teased us about this funny Fixed Freewill Offering.

We started to do some evangelism and

knocked on doors of homes in Parnell, offering a Bible if they would promise to read it. That would give us then a reason to call back.

But many times we were told: "Sorry, we are tykes"!

Tykes? Where do they come from? Soon we found out that it was slang for Catholics. Some said to us, "We don't need Bibles, the Priest looks after us".

Unexpectedly one day, a retired minister of the Presbyterian Church, Rev Lowden knocked at the door of the Manse and told Rev. Deenick that he had heard of us, and our stand. He could identify with us and offered to help us in a strange land. At that time the church had as yet no car so Rev Lowden took our pastor around to meet up with others of the same mind. Once, when I was sitting in the back, we were going to attend a special meeting. Both men up front were in serious conversation and I noticed that Rev. Lowden had totally forgotten to change gears; I think he went in second gear all the way! From the back seat I did not dare to point out that we were in a low gear. We just crawled through Parnell, Newmarket and Remuera, both of them debating the present situation in the Presbyterian Church.

In conclusion, I recently read in Joshua in chapter 4, verse 14: "That day the Lord made Joshua great in the eyes of all the Israelites and for the rest of his life they revered him as much as they had revered Moses." When I read this, I thought of our first, beloved and wise minister in NZ, who helped us with so much wisdom and calmness.

And with regard to us as migrants of that time – I happened to come across Numbers 13: 30, which reads: "We should go up and take possession of the land for we can certainly do it!" And didn't we?

One final question

Can each one of us still place our signatures to this Protocol of half a century ago?

If so, let us then therefore remain thankful to the Lord and His Holy Word, for it is only by the grace of our Heavenly Father.

Dick Vanderpyl has served as an elder in various churches within our federation and as the Stated Clerk of our Synod for many years. He is a member of the Reformed Church of Bishopdale, Christchurch.

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Home mission in focus

Evangelism in the Hukanui Reformed Church

The Hukanui Church was started by a group of people from the Reformed Church of Hamilton some years ago. One of the main reasons was so that we would be better able to reach out to the people of the northeast side of Hamilton where nearly all the new city growth is going.

At the moment there are a number of things being done by our members. Firstly we have a monthly paper called Good News, put out by the weekly Challenge magazine. This paper is distributed in the neighbourhoods of our church families. It is full of testimonials from well-known New Zealanders who became Christians and how that has changed their lives. Even if those who receive the newsletter throw it away, they know there is someone out there that cares enough to give them a magazine with the Gospel in it every month. Normally the name and number of the person delivering it is printed on the back.

There are also a number of people involved in Bible in Schools, a great ministry to the children of our country. This is often the only contact children have with the precious truths of God. Pray that it will bear much fruit in the hearts of the children who hear the Gospel through this work.

Another tool that is being used is what is known as "*The Little Black Book*," which is put out by Why? Ministries. It has on the front of it the title, "*Why good people do not go to Heaven.*" It is a fantastic tool to help you share the Gospel with friends, family, workmates and — get this — complete strangers! As Christians, our first priority is to glorify God and one of the most important ways to do that is to tell others about the amazing things Jesus has done for us. That is what the Great Commission is all about.

The problem is that most of us have a fear of starting a conversation with an unbeliever because we;

1. Don't know how to start a conversation.
2. Once we have started we don't know what to say.
3. We don't feel confident to answer the questions which non-church people ask when we share the Gospel with them.
4. We have fear that others may respond negatively when we share the gospel with them.

Why? Ministries can help you with all that. Find out more about them at www.why.org.nz. Hans Vaatstra also wrote an article about it in the April edition of *Faith in Focus*.

We have been using this tool for about a year and a half now and even though it is never easy it has enabled us to present the Gospel to many people in a loving way. You may ask, what is the result?

Then I say, the result is that many people have heard and understood the Gospel who otherwise might not have, and the Lord can use that little seed even forty or fifty years from now if He so desires.

We would love to see people flood the church, but even if that does not happen we are still commanded to go out and preach the Gospel.

Another series of events that has happened earlier in 2003 is that as a Church we purchased a video series called *Excellence in Evangelism* by Ray Comfort, who is originally from New Zealand but immigrated to the USA in 1989. He is author of more than 30 books, mainly to do with evangelism, and is now an active evangelist in the

USA where his ministry is based. Every Friday evening we would watch one of the videos, which would last approximately an hour. The videos are full of sound biblical teaching on evangelism, very challenging and also very humorous at times. After viewing the videos we have a time of prayer, after which some of the group go into town to hand out Gospel tracts and speak to people about the Gospel. Believe me, this is not done lightly! It frightens us, but we try not to let that stop us. (Remember Satan will flood our minds with all sorts of excuses not to go!) We plan to start this video series up again at the beginning of 2004 at the Reformed church of Hamilton.

Check out Ray Comfort's Website on www.livingwaters.com. He has numerous very effective Gospel tracts. The videos are also available from there. Books that are a must-read are "*Revival's Golden Key*," and "*God Does Not Believe in Atheists*." Another excellent one is "*One Thing we cannot do in Heaven*," by Mark Cahill. In "*Revival's Golden Key*", Ray Comfort explains that the contemporary church has lost the key to Biblical evangelism. We still have that key in our churches but have we been using it as we should? Let me encourage you to get a copy for yourself. The book, "*God Does Not Believe in Atheists*," is a great book to give as a present to unbelievers. It explains the truth of the Bible in such a simple and



The baptism of Levi Pennings in the Hukanui church

readable way that it is impossible to ignore it. The book, "*One Thing We Cannot Do in Heaven*," is another book that encourages faith and makes you see the urgency of our task to spread the Gospel.

Every day sinners are sinking into hell and most people don't even realize it. They think that because they have given everyone their due in this life and that they have not hurt anyone they will be okay, and if there is a God He should let them into heaven. What a terrible day it will be for them when they find that their own righteousness was not enough and that they will spend eternity in the lake of fire, in eternal and conscious pain!

Let us get over our fears, and encourage each other and get on with the job of loving people with the Gospel. Jesus preached, "REPENT FOR THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NEAR." The Kingdom is nearer now than ever before. I pray that many will be mobilized to share the Gospel in their daily environments and also with strangers.

Billy Graham said, "Mass crusades to which I have devoted my life will not finish the job, but 'one on one' evangelism will."

If I can be of any help to you please do not hesitate to contact me Henri Pennings. email: pennings@paradise.net.nz PH. 07 829 4545

World in focus

(Liberated) Reformed split in the Netherlands

A group from the Reformed Church (Liberated) in the Dutch city of Berkel en Rodenrijs has left their local congregation and the Reformed Churches (Liberated). In their press release the group uses the term "vrijmaking," or liberation, to describe their action. "Vrijmaking" was the term employed in 1944 when the now (Liberated) Reformed to churches left the (Synodical) Reformed Churches of the Netherlands. This according to the Dutch dailies "Nederlands Dagblad" and the "Reformatisch Dagblad."

In their press release the group declares that this "liberation" was necessary because of the "decay of the churches and the unbiblical decisions by the General Synod of Zuid Hoorn in 2002." "In spite of the many appeals this synod not only failed to struggle against the ongoing deformation but in fact furthered it with their decisions."

The concerned members of the Liberated Churches United in the "Reformanda" organization have talked about secession over the past few years. This is the first group to leave. The chairman of the "Reformanda" organisation S. de Marie, is part of the group which has broken with the church in Berkel en Rodenrijs.

The possibility of a split in the congregation in Berkel en Rodenrijs became clear in February when the same group of "concerned members" sent an "appeal for Reformation" to the church council. They asked the council to "return to reverent obedience of God's Word in all areas of doctrine and life" and asked the council to reject several decisions of the General Synod. In particular, the group asked the church council to reject the synodical decisions regarding the observance of the Sabbath, the approval of 117 hymns for inclusion in the Psalter (given the objections to about 100 hymns on account of their alleged unbiblical content), and decisions regarding church union with the Christian Reformed Churches

of the Netherlands and the Netherlands Reformed Churches. The group also asserted that "various kinds of heresy and higher criticism of the Scriptures are not just ignored but their existence is even denied."

The group also sees the decay of the (Vrijgemaakte) Churches evident in the false teaching with regard to marriage and divorce, the denial of the confessional teaching about the church, the resistance to ongoing reformation, liturgical aberrations, the dilution of the preaching, unconcern about the antithesis, and the so-called higher criticism present at the Theological University in Kampen.

A week after receiving the appeal the church council in Berkel en Rodenrijs rejected its assertions. It declared that it did not recognise the portrait of the Reformed Churches (Vrijgemaakte) as presented in the appeal. On 2 June 2003, the church council ratified the decisions of the General Synod of Zuid Horn 2002 and informed the congregation that it considered the decisions binding. Authors of the appeal sent a letter to the members of the congregation explaining that "all believers are called upon to liberate themselves." The group invited them to meet with them on 4 Sept.

According to published reports those gathered 4 Sept. do not see any future in appealing the decisions of the synod, that church discipline is being misused, and that the fellowship of the saints is broken. In their press release the group uses the same language that was used in 1944: "The members are liberating (maken zich vrij) themselves of (synodical) decisions which they view as in conflict with God's Word, following Article 31 of the Reformed Church Order and Article 28 of the Belgian confession and they make themselves free from the denomination which they view as illegitimate according to Article 29 of the Belgic Confession."

Starting Sunday, 7 Sept., the concerned members will no longer attend the worship services of the (Liberated) Reformed Church. The gathering is open to 'concerned brothers and sisters from nearby congregations.' The services will be held in a building in Berkel en Rodenrijs." De Marie would not say how many people were in the departing group.
+ Dr. John Elliott, JohnElliott@ChristianObserver.org

Archbishop unwelcome in 350 Anglican Churches

The Sunday Times [London] reported that Dr. Williams "has been barred from conducting communion in 350 Church of England parishes because of his support for women priests." The lock-out is possible because of a 1993 compromise that allowed the ordination of women priests, but which also "enabled those opposed to female ordination to remain inside the church by distancing themselves from a local bishop if he was pro-female ordination."

The paper suggested the Archbishop was considering using the same compromise to "deal with the problems caused by the decision of Anglicans in New Hampshire to ordain a gay bishop."
+ Sunday Times, PO Box 481, 1 Virginia Street, London, E1 9BD United Kingdom

Pakistan does it again

A High Court has upheld the decision of a lower court to sentence two Pakistani Christians to life imprisonment for allegedly burning a Koran. According to a report from Barnabas Fund, on 17 August Amjad Masih and Asif Masih, who are unrelated, had their life sentences endorsed by the Lahore High Court. They had been prosecuted under Pakistan's infamous Blasphemy Law for supposedly desecrating the Koran.

In February 1999, Amjad, 45, and Asif, 40, were arrested in Jhang, 160 miles northwest of Lahore on charges of vagrancy. In prison they allegedly set fire to a copy of the Koran, but they claim that the police framed the evidence because they refused to pay a bribe. The men now plan to appeal to the Supreme Court, but their families are receiving threats from extremists just for trying to pursue the case.

+ Barnabas Fund, The Old Rectory, Pewsey, Wiltshire, SN9 5DB United Kingdom

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Kano under Sharia law

Sharia law was officially launched in Nigeria's northern state of Kano 21 June 2000. However, the then governor, Dr. Rabiu Kwankwaso, was reluctant to enforce sharia in such a cosmopolitan city as Kano city. His primary interest as governor was rural development and he was constantly accused by pro-sharia groups of dragging his feet on the issue of implementation of sharia.

The 19 April 2003 governorship elections resulted in a change of governor in Kano. Dr. Kwankwaso, who was aligned with Obasanjo's PDP, was defeated by Mallam Ibrahim Shekarau, who was aligned to Muhammadu Buhari's pro-sharia, Islamist ANPP. Shekarau campaigned on a platform of rigorous sharia enforcement.

Daily Trust of Abuja reported 20 June that the Kano State House of Assembly had vowed to *"rectify all policies that contradict Islamic and Hausa cultures, inherited from the former administration. The House also resolved that only policies which go in line with principles of Islam would be promulgated."*

The United Nations Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reported on 1 Sept. 2003, *"Kano state government in northern Nigeria has made it compulsory for all girls attending schools run by the state government to wear the hijab (Islamic headscarf), whether or not they are Muslim."*

The directive does not apply to private schools or schools run by the Nigerian Federal Government, but it does apply to all girls of all religions who attend schools run by the state government. Considering that the Kano state government has closed virtually all Kano's Christian schools, Christian families are not going to have much choice.

Christian schools are closed in Kano on the grounds that they do not meet state-mandated standards. The education standards however, include the mandate that all schools (Christian schools included) must employ Islamic clerics to indoctrinate the children in Islam. Those schools that refuse are closed.

+ World Evangelical Alliance Secretariat, PO Box 1839, Edmonds, WA 98020

Staines killer sentenced to death

Dara Singh was awarded the death penalty by a designated Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) court 22 September for his role in the murder of the Australian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two sons. The District and Sessions Judge also sentenced Singh's 12 accomplices to life imprisonment. Christians fear that the death sentence will make Singh a martyr for the militant Hindu cause. As he left the courtroom on Monday, Singh said, *"Injustice has been done to me. I am not going to appeal in the higher court. I would prefer to be a martyr fighting against conversion."* On the day Singh and the other 12 defendants were convicted, BJP (Indian Peoples Party) workers burned hundreds of Bibles and evangelistic tracts in Uttaranchal in response to the sentence, while police stood by watching silently.

+ Compass Direct, PO Box 27250, Santa Ana CA 92799-7250

Nigeria scolds South Africa for hypocrisy

The Archbishop of the Church of Nigeria, the Most Reverend Peter J. Akinola, has written a strongly-worded letter to his South African counterpart, Archbishop Winston Njongonkulu Ndungane of Cape Town, expressing sharp criticism over the stand taken by Archbishop Ndungane on homosexual ordination within the Anglican Church. Archbishop Ndungane had indicated in an interview that African clergymen, including Archbishop Akinola, who were expressing opposition to gay ordination were arrogant, intolerant, and hypocritical.

Nigeria's primate sees matters differently.

After citing hypocrisy and heritage the Nigerian continued, *"One suspects in your unguarded and scathing criticism a resurgence of a hitherto latent feeling of hurt since the Lambeth Conference Committee on human sexuality you chaired was overwhelmingly overruled by the so-called hard-liners who are not willing to compromise the precious heritage of scriptural truth."*

"What is at stake has to do not just with the identity of the Church

universal and our historic faith but also how we treat God and His incarnate and written Word. Yes, we are a worldwide communion, but our church is only a part of the holy, catholic and apostolic Church. Where the autonomy of any part of our communion becomes a scandal in the entire Christian world, then we must be humble enough to accept rebuke and correction. There is still room for repentance. Amen."

+ The Rev. Canon Akinola, Church of Nigeria [Anglican], Abuja, Nigeria

Focus on the Family continues suits over anti-gay ads

According to reports distributed by Religion News Service, a federal appellate court has given new life to a lawsuit by *Focus on the Family* against a Florida bus system that would not advertise its anti-homosexuality conference. The US 11th Circuit Court of Appeals released a decision 12 September that said a federal judge in Tampa was mistaken when he threw out the conservative Christian group's 2001 lawsuit against the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority.

The appeals court said *Focus on the Family*, which is based in Colorado Springs, Colorado, can pursue its claim that the system violated its First Amendment rights when it refused to permit the group to advertise its *"Love Won Out"* convention in St. Petersburg, Florida. *"This is a great victory — not just for us, but for the Constitution,"* Tom Minnery, *Focus on the Family's* vice president of public policy, said in a statement.

The ads, designed for bus shelters, described how those attending the February 2000 event would learn *"truths about coming out of the homosexual lifestyle,"* the ministry said.

+ *Focus on the Family*, 8605 Explorer Drive, Colorado Springs, Florida 80995

Egypt attempts to close Coptic church

Egyptian state and central security officers and soldiers attacked a small historic Coptic church in Assiut during Mass, arresting several deacons



St Andrew's Christian School

Senior Position in Primary School

Established in 1987 as a private Christian School, St Andrew's offers Christ-centred education to meet the academic and vocational needs of children from Year 1 through to Year 10.

A senior teaching position is available in our growing Primary School commencing the end of January 2004. We are looking for a vital committed Christian who is skilled in the nurture and teaching of children.

The successful applicant will have opportunity to provide professional leadership in our upper primary school. Salary negotiable and commensurate with position. Please state your teaching strengths and experience.

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A job description package is available from our school.

and others, throwing communion bread on the floor and stepping on it with their boots, according to reports received by the US Copts Association. The attack on St. George Coptic Orthodox Church occurred 19 September. The officer in charge of the raid reportedly ordered the church priest to evacuate and close down the church. The priest refused, as did the parishioners. When their orders were not obeyed, the police officers attacked the priest, according to the report. Angry parishioners confronted the police, who surrounded the

church and made arrests in an attempt to occupy the church.

Observers say Islamic extremists have successfully infiltrated all branches of the Egyptian government, resulting in repeated attacks on Copts, their churches, and properties by members of the Egyptian government.

+ Michael Meunier, US Copts Association, 8116 Arlington Blvd. #155, Falls Church, VA 22042

Missions in focus

Prayer Points

Van Dalen Prayer Letter - September, 2003

Dear Friends,

A year ago, 5 students participated. They were excited about what happened and 'spread the word.' The result is that this year 16 students attended an eight-day **retreat**

for "Missionary Kid" (MK) students entering Columbia International University (CIU). From August 11 – 20, Emily and five other staffers helped these children of missionaries make the adjustment to college life in the United States. Her work with **Missionary Resources of Columbia** has given her an ongoing relationship with many of the 90 MK students attending CIU.

Emily has also been able to continue her **weekly Bible study for missionary women** on home assignment in the Columbia area. Between 8 and 12 women attend the Monday morning study. These missionaries often spend their weekends speaking at supporting churches. They need a Bible study group into

which they can fit for the short time they are back in the US before returning to the mission field. Please join us in praying for the Lord to refresh their hearts through this ministry.

Much of my own recent ministry has been in five areas: promoting missions in US churches, the ARPConnect outreach to Muslims, preparing for a November trip to Pakistan, organizing and promoting the ARP attendance at the Urbana missions conference in Illinois (Dec 26, '03 – Jan 1, '04), and working my PhD dissertation.

At our most recent **Meeting for Better Understanding with Muslims** on September 9, I spoke on the Christian view of prophecy. I believe that the Lord put the words into the mouth of a Muslim to ask what he thought was a challenging question: "Aren't there more similarities between Moses and Muhammad than there are between Moses and Jesus?" The door was opened to share that Jesus was more than a prophet, that He is the living Lord, and the only Mediator between God and man. Praise the Lord for such opportunities to witness, and pray that the Lord would open hearts and minds who hear but who still do not understand. The Lord is powerful and able to change the hardest heart.

I have been asked to speak at the **Sahiwal Convention in Pakistan** (Nov. 5 – 9) and will also take the opportunity to visit ARP churches, pastors and leaders in Karachi with whom we worked for the 12 years that we were in Pakistan. Pray for safety in travel and the opportunity to teach the word, encourage the brethren, and challenge them to remain faithful in their current difficult circumstances.

I am grateful for the continued opportunity to work on my **PhD dissertation**. It is a study of the connecting pathways in Reformed systematic theology. I believe it will be very relevant to a future teaching ministry overseas. I am enjoying the study. But I am also finding it hard to make much progress with the amount of traveling that I am doing. For that reason, I am asking the Board of World Witness to grant me a **2 – 3 year leave of absence as of January 1, 2004**. During

70X7= 

Reformed Churches. National Youth Camp. Wellington. 2004

National Youth Camp 2004

3–10 January, Kiwi Ranch, Upper Hutt

FORGIVENESS
Seventy Times Seven

— and looking forward to —

The Return of the King

Great camp, great facilities, great people. We've already had interest from tons of youth from Wellington, Christchurch, and Auckland. Enrolment forms will be coming to your church contact soon. Be there!

Organised by the Wellington RYC.
For more info, please contact one of us:

jmcouperus@paradise.net.nz
benhoyt@clear.net.nz

that time I will be working as the Associate Pastor for Christian Education and Missions at Long Creek Presbyterian Church (ARP), here in Columbia, South Carolina. This will enable me to have the stability which I need in order to complete the dissertation so that, Lord willing, I will be able to return to the mission field in the future under the World

Witness Mobile Theological Training Team. Pray for the Lord to work out all the details related to this change. I'll write about them in our next prayer letter as I report on the Pakistan trip.

Thank you for your support and encouragement.

Yours in Christ,
 Frank Van Dalen (for Emily, Chris, Andrew and Laura)
 728 Burmaster Drive, Columbia, SC
 29229, USA
 Ph: (803) 419 4713
 e-mail: vandalen@earthlink.net

Country profile: **Russia**

The world's largest country, the Russian Federation is comprised of 89 administrative regions. The population is in decline, with a loss of 30 million predicted between 2000 and 2050. Vast natural resources make Russia potentially the world's richest country; but crumbling infrastructure and the after-effects of communism have hindered the development of these resources. Criminal "mafia" syndicates control as much as half of the total economy, while about 30% of the people live on something like \$2 per day (2001 estimate). 75% of people are considered to be worse off now than they were under communism.

Freedom of religion is written into the Russian constitution; and the end of the Cold War saw a huge influx of Christian groups as well as cults. But in 1997 a federal law was passed which effectively allows freedom the Russian Orthodox church while restricting all other groups, and discriminating against newer groups and denominations. Russia is ranked 58th on the **world persecution index**; mainly because of the way Christians are treated in some Muslim-majority republics.

Pray for Russia:

- 1) The break-up of the Soviet Union has provided unparalleled opportunities for evangelism, church-planting, and re-establishing a Christian infrastructure. Praise the Lord for the growth of the church in the 1990's: the number of congregations grew from 7,500 to 15,000 across Russia during these years.
- 2) Pray for the government:
 - a) Economic stability: Much must be done to set up the legal framework and financial accountability to privatize industry, make services work and encourage investment. The poverty of the majority and their hopelessness has stimulated crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, family breakdown and suicide to alarming heights. Many ordinary people live for months without wages.
 - b) For justice in a country so much under the control of criminal networks.
 - c) For building up a multi-cultural nation. There is an ardent Russian nationalist movement which is virulently anti-Semitic and anti-foreign. Inflamed nationalism severely hinders the progress of the Gospel.
 - d) For upholding constitutionally-guaranteed religious freedom.
 - e) For health: The combined effects of the collapse of funding for health services, the availability of free abortions for birth control and a general sense of despair is causing accelerated population decline through family disintegration, alcoholism, TB, AIDS, high infant mortality and emigration. Pray for improved funding, morale to be restored and for Christians to play a greater role in health care.
- 3) The Church in Russia has suffered the most severe and sustained persecution of any nation in recent history. All deaths in the *gulags* (prison camps) between 1920 and 1990 are reckoned at 20 million; a further 16 million perished *en route* to them – many were Christian. It is reckoned 200,000 Christian leaders were martyred and a further 500,000 imprisoned. Give thanks to God for enabling His Church to survive, grow and triumph in the end.
- 4) Growth of the Church:
 - a) For renewal and true spiritual understanding among the many adherents of the Russian Orthodox Church (41% of the population)
 - b) For the raising up of godly Christian leaders, of whom there are far too few.
 - c) For a vision for missions within the Russian Christian community.
 - d) Cults have grown at an alarming rate. Pray that Christians may be trained and armed with the Truth to combat false teaching.
- 5) For the family: It is estimated that up to 50% of Russian adults are alcoholics. The effects on family life and society are staggering. Children are often in extreme danger as the family unit breaks down. It is estimated that there are some 1.2 million street children in the cities as well as 650,000 orphans housed in grim, inadequate orphanages and many in prisons. Many turn to extreme violence and crime, just to survive. Pray for ministries that reach out to families and children.



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Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Buckland's Beach

Business Card Project. We now have some business cards to use for inviting or introducing people to our church. Someone has kindly donated the cost. These cards are for anyone to take to give to a friend or a visitor who wants to know more about the church, wants to know how to contact the pastor, or wants to write to us. The cards contain the contact address and phone number of the church, plus the Pastor's name and email address. They are freely available on the book table beside the church entrance. There is room to put your own name on the card as well if you so wish.

A Korean Welcome. You may have noticed the addition to the Church Sign at the front of the church. Yes? Some months ago it was decided that we would include a welcome to Korean folks who would like to join us in our fellowship. It seems that a number of Korean folks do not feel welcomed into our Kiwi churches. On the suggestion of our Korean members, a sign has been prepared pointing out that Koreans are very welcome to attend our services. Br Jabez Cho's name and phone number has been placed on the board - and also an invitation to the English Second Language mid-week Bible-studies. I am assured that the sign makes perfect sense to our Korean sisters and brothers! Thank you to Jabez and those who worked on this project.

Christchurch

Cadet And Calvinette Fundraising. Our mission project this year is the work in Papua New Guinea and apart from our weekly contributions we hope to raise further funds to support this mission. Last month all Cadets and Calvinettes took home a sheet of vouchers which could be exchanged for money earned by doing various jobs. Please encourage your children to ask friends, neighbours and family members if they have small jobs they can do to raise funds. If any members of the congregation have jobs they would like the Cadets and Calvinettes to do please see *Eddy or Sarah Van Leeuwen*.

Dunedin

The Youth of the Reformed Church of Dunedin present... The first midwinter fundraising dinner. To be held this Saturday 23 August in the church hall commencing 5:30 pm for folk from Dunedin and Oamaru. The dinner which the youth of our church are providing is a wonderful opportunity to help give the covenant youth in PNG a brighter future.

With thanks to God we announce the birth of two beautiful blessings. To Susan and Joshua Duthie a lovely little daughter, Lillian Edith, born on Monday 1 September, 2-30 pm at Dunedin. To Katrina and Andrew Miller a lovely little baby girl, Adriana Jean, born 2 September, 4.45 pm at Timaru. Congratulations to the proud parents. Also to the new grandparents Peter and Winifred Balchin, and elated great-grandparents Tony and Anne de Reus. Both mums and their little ones are doing well. Praise God from whom all blessings flow!

Hamilton

Church 50 Year. On November 22, this year

our church is celebrating its 50th birthday and for that we can thank the Lord. For that occasion we would like to have photos of the past. If you have any, put your name on the back and state who or what is in the picture, put them in an envelope and pass them on to Melva Versteeg. If you do remember any happenings or anecdotes, etc. from the past, put them on paper and pass them on to Theo Grul. We are also looking for ex-members, if you know of anyone who has moved away and you know their address, please pass this on to Melva or Theo. We thank you for your cooperation. On behalf of the organising committee.

Theo Grul

Pastoral. Father's Day! A reminder that fathers ought not to be taken for granted. Thank the good Lord for fathers! Which reminds me: I had three fathers. My natural father, my father in law and my Father in heaven. Now I have only one, my Father in heaven. The other two have long since passed away. But their good influence remains. I am grateful that my natural father introduced me to my heavenly Father. It was the greatest thing my father did for me. How did he do it? By reading the Bible and by prayer, at every meal time. By taking us to church and leading us in regular worship. And by living his life under the influence of those Bible readings, prayers and worship services. These things had their effect on us children. Dad taught us that the fear and service of the Lord should be our number one concern in life; it is the beginning of trust, wisdom and justice. He taught us to reckon with God; the God who rules the world and cares about us, as we know from Jesus. That's what I saw as a child and teenager, and by God's grace it had a lasting effect. I pray that all the fathers of this church may be such a witness to their children. It will not leave any regrets.

Mangere

Last Wednesday night's Bible Study had Brian & Vicki Wells speak of their work with Christian Witness to Israel. It was a good introduction to their work and gave us some guidelines for how we may speak to any Jewish friends or folk we meet. It was certainly an encouragement to pray for this ministry and support them where we can.

Nelson

North African family dinner evening at the Nelson Reformed Church Friday 5 September, 6pm - 9pm. Arien and Jill van der Schaaf recently spent 2 years as missionaries in North Africa, and will go to

Hamilton Celebrates!

On the weekend 22nd Nov. we hope to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of our Church. God has blessed us greatly in Hamilton and we want to commemorate his faithfulness to us with a special weekend.

We plan the following:

Sat. 22nd Nov. 12.30-3.30pm picnic and games for everyone (please B.Y.O. lunch and drinks) at the Hamilton Gardens, Cobham Drive. Area: "Rose Gardens".

Sat. 22 Nov. 7 pm Coffee and desert evening with entertainment and a visual presentation on 50 years of church life in Hamilton.

Sun 23rd Nov. 3 pm. We plan to have our Jubilee thanksgiving service at our Aberdeen Worship Centre, followed by afternoon tea.

We warmly invite you to any or all of these events. This will be a great occasion to meet with old friends and acquaintances.

We would love to see you there.

(Contact: Theo Grul, tgrul@hnpl.net 205 Ohaupo Road, Hamilton, Ph:07-843 5193)

join an Operation Mobilisation team based in southern Spain to support missionaries working in North Africa. Arien and Jill will serve a basic North African family meal, explain some of the customs, talk about some of their experiences and about their future work. They will show some video clips about life and ministry in North Africa, teach some North African language, and answer questions about life and ministry there. Be sure to bring your right hand for the meal, and prepare for a fun night with a difference. Please bring the whole family, and bring friends but no journalists and no tape recorders. Don't dress up. COST: \$5 per person, \$20 maximum per family. (to cover the cost of food and drinks) Donations and sponsorships are welcomed to enable Arien and Jill to go as missionaries.

We rejoice with Alison and Justin Radford over the birth of a little boy, Corban, on Wednesday afternoon. Both mother and baby were doing well, and Alison had already made plans to return home on Thursday afternoon. Ashleigh wasn't quite sure what to make of this new little intrusion into her world, but no doubt she will quickly adjust. We thank our ladies who'll be keeping an eye on Alisons situation and provide meals when appropriate.

Palmerston North

Congratulations to Al & Sonja on the birth of Eva (9lbs 6oz) on Friday morning. May the Lord give you strength & wisdom as you raise your children for Him.

Pukekohe

We received a letter from Calvery United Reformed Church that may interest you, concerning Rev Dale Piers. The letter states; "This letter is to inform you that we have taken under our care and supervision Rev. Dale Piers. We are grateful for your letters dated 4 November 2002 (from the Auckland presbytery-ed) regarding this brother and his wife, and are discussing with him the matters brought forth in said correspondence. As to his ministerial status, Rev. Piers is seeking a colloquium doctum in Classis Southwest of the United Reformed Churches that he might re-enter the ministry in the URC, and we endorse his request. We pray as you do, that the Lord might restore him to a fruitful ministry, and are confident that Christ will do just that." Please continue to pray for Dale and Tami.

Going forward, we have identified three possible ministers - one kiwi and two Auzzies. We are collecting sermons/tapes and will be meeting in the next week to evaluate their sermons. All going well we will follow up with a phone interview and by next session meeting hope to have a short list. Please continue to pray for Session as we evaluate

minister candidates. We need to be realistic in looking for some one that will be a faithful servant of God who meets our needs but we need to resist the temptation to compromise just to fill our pulpit.

Men's Breakfast...Yes, it's still quietly happening on the third Saturday of each month. The last bastion of grease, cholesterol and sodium chloride enriched foods. Be there this Saturday, 20 September, at 7:00am, for spiritual and physical enhancing fare.

Silverstream

Youth Club. This afternoon we will be singing at Heretaunga Home. Could everyone please meet there at 1.20pm. On Saturday 16 August we will be having a photo rally. You will be rung this week with details on the time and place to meet. On Sunday 17 August there will be a study in Wainuiomata after the afternoon service. Could everyone please bring a plate for dinner.

We congratulate our Faith in Focus secretary, Nicola Wharekawa, upon the birth of her and Richard's 4th son, Jethro Parekura (Ed).

Wainuiomata

Ladies Fellowship. This will be held on Wednesday 27th August at 800pm at the church. We are having a slide evening with Marjorie van der Pyl showing slides about her time in Antarctica. We have also invited the Wellington and Silverstream ladies and would ask the Wainui ladies to please bring a plate.

Auckland Presbytery

Auckland Presbytery met on Friday evening the 26th September at the Reformed Church of Pukekohe. Rev John Terhorst opened the meeting with a reading from Psalm 62, after which we sang number 37 from the Psalter Hymnal. He then led in prayer.

The credentials of the delegates were checked and found to be in order. Rev D van Garderen was appointed as moderator, Rev W Wiersma as vice-moderator and Rev R Noppers as reporter. First-time delegates signed the Form of Subscription. The Agenda was adopted as circulated with a few minor additions. The minutes of the previous two meetings were accepted with minor amendments as a true and accurate record.

Church Order Article 47 questions were answered by the North Shore, Pukekohe, Avondale and Bucklands Beach Sessions:

North Shore commented on the faithfulness of attendance at both services, and also the commitment of their youth to study groups and church work. They celebrate their 25th anniversary at the end of October;

Pukekohe highlighted the involvement of

Geraldine Loef who will be going to Japan later this year for short term mission work, and that despite being vacant the congregation was in good heart. They would appreciate our prayers as they consider further whom to call to serve in their midst as pastor;

Avondale are very appreciative of their new pastor, whose preaching and pastoral work has been well received by the congregation. They will be running a course for the parents of teenagers in the near future;

Bucklands Beach highlighted their involvement with missions, with Jared Berends spending a year in Mongolia and planning to return there full time: and Michelle Barton planning to go to Thailand for a short term mission with Campus Crusade for Christ. They have been blessed with a steady influx of visitors from various ethnic backgrounds. A Holiday Club will commence the second week of the school holidays which is fully subscribed. A mid-week Bible Study for people with English as a second language is going really well. Bucklands Beach celebrated their 50th anniversary in September.

Rev W Wiersma led in a time of prayer after this time.

Despatched correspondence from the previous two meetings was ratified. Correspondence received was dealt with: items from the various Presbytery and Classis reports were highlighted by Rev van Garderen. Rev R Noppers reported on the OMB meeting held in Palmerston North at the end of August, particularly the decision to support the sending of Walter & Jeannette Hagoort to PNG to manage the Mapang Guest House and assist in the setting up of a Bookstore for Reformed literature.

The initiative of the RYC with their recent "Headship in the Home and Church" seminar was applauded. It was noted that Rev Sjik Bajema had agreed to take the duties of the family camp for this year, and this item will be on the agenda for the first meeting in 2004. North Shore's concerns regarding the decisions made at the November 2002 meeting about tongues will also be discussed further at that meeting.

The National Publications Committee's request for an Auckland Presbytery liaison was duly filled by the Rev J Terhorst. Some clarification was received from Avondale regarding their proposed 'Youth Service'. A meeting with Rev Jan Lion-Cachet regarding the integration of South African immigrants into our churches is planned for Hukanui, commencing at 10:00 am on October 11th. All those interested are most welcome to attend. Rev Lion-Cachet will lead the service in Hukanui on the Sunday morning and in Bucklands Beach that afternoon.

The meeting was closed in prayer by Rev Dirk Van Garderen.

The past in focus

This month sees the Nelson and Hamilton churches celebrate their 50th Anniversaries. So what is presently our smallest congregation and our largest congregation have been kept by the Lord over this past half century. The present Nelson minister is the Rev. Ralph Adams and the present Hamilton minister is the Rev. Bill Wiersma. From Hamilton there has come a daughter congregation, Hukanui, which was instituted last year and whose minister is the Rev. Reinier Noppers.



Hamilton Singles Club



Hamilton's first Counsellor and first Minister 50 years on.



Nelson congregation with new communion set, July 1958



Marriage of Ab & Kay Mes in Hamilton. Rev. Ken Campbell officiating



Nelson church in the early 60's



Wedding of Mr & Mrs A Bajema, in Nelson, 31st March 1956



Nelson church building today



Church bus - out on a Nelson picnic