

faith in focus

Magazine of the
Reformed Churches
of New Zealand

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*"For it is by grace you have been saved,
through faith – and this not from
yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by
works, so that no man can boast"*

Ephesians 2:8,9

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Editorial

There was a discussion once between two Reformed Church ministers about what the Latin expression 'reformanda semper' meant. Now, literally translated it means 'always reforming.'

Well, one minister was definite that this phrase from the Reformation, and in particular from John Calvin, meant that Reformed Churches today should see themselves as being open for new horizons in the working of the Lord. He saw that truly following this would take our churches into 'exciting new territory,' 'challenging old perceptions' and 'opening up the way for whole new transparency' in the life of the Church today.

The other minister begged to differ. He believed the phrase referred to a going back to God's Word, which the Church at the time prior to the Reformation had so drastically gone away from. For this principle to be happening today he said you would see a real hunger for God's Word in prayer. God's people, and God's ministers, then would be so moved that their lifestyle would become much more Christ-like.

Which view do you think is more correct? Got your answer? Have you scripture to support it? Now apply it to the follow quote from the review of our recent Synod as it appeared in Trowel & Sword, the magazine of the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. There the Rev. David Groenenboom notes, in relation to the women in the office of deacon issue, "While the CRCA saw Scripture's perceived lack of clarity on the issue of women deacons as a ground to approve the same, the RCNZ see it as reason not to move in that direction. For them any change requires argumentation from Scripture that is proven to be weightier than the formerly accepted position."

Which view fits in with 'reformanda semper'? This is something not only relevant in the month we especially remember the Reformation, but something that affects how we worship and serve the Lord the whole year round. A focus that the Rev. Hans Vaatstra has in our lead article for this month - Reformation Day month.

We had a delightful photograph of a recent wedding in our last Church News. Could I encourage our various church writers to send more? A baptism, a special event, a profession of faith - take them in digital or the old way, and send it in. Let's make *Faith in Focus* our magazine!

"What the Reformers never tire of repeating is that they wish to introduce nothing new into the church of their time; that their sole interest is the revival of New Testament Christianity."

Hugh T. Kerr (Jr.)

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.

Holiness and Unity in Worship

The purpose of the Regulative Principle of Worship

Hans Vaatstra

At our last RCNZ Synod concern was expressed towards our sister church CRCA about the introduction of innovations in their corporate worship services which are a departure from traditional Reformed practice. Some may have read that statement and thought "if they are only talking about tradition why all the fuss?" The basis for that statement is in fact deeper than mere tradition. What follows shows that the use of unscriptural innovations in worship arises from an lack of understanding and application of a biblical principle clearly stated in our Reformed confessions and commonly known as the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW)

This is an important principle because a phenomenon evident in churches today is the variety of worship styles intended to cater for a wide range of tastes and 'needs'.

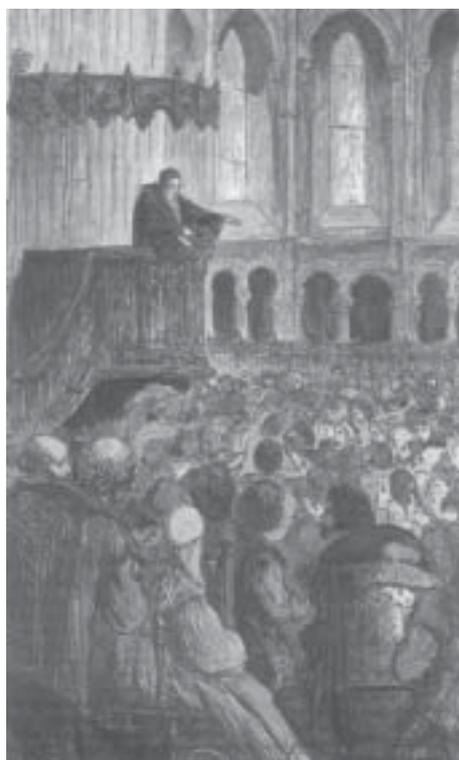
For example, some say worship services must be attractive to the 'unchurched'. In today's television age half-hour length sermons have very little appeal. More entertaining items such as drama or a concert are introduced in order to hold the worshippers' attention. It is deemed that children get little out of a conventional worship service so something needs to be created for them too; a separate children's service or a skit or puppet show during the service. Often when it comes to deciding what to put in or leave out of worship services the questions asked are: Is it attractive? Do I like it? Does it move me? Is it fun? Is it what people want? Rather than: Is this what God wants? Is this what we as a church confess?

Well then, are our Reformed confessions which were written in response to the excesses of Rome, against Mariolatry and worship that had become an icon-revering spectacle relevant today? Or do they merely impinge on Christian liberty when it comes to worship practices? Aren't we free to worship in any way that is not forbidden by Scripture anyway?

Which principle?

In the first place, the principle which guides Reformed worship is not that mentioned above (free to worship in any way not forbidden by Scripture). That principle was formulated by Martin Luther, and allows for the widest possible definition of liberty in worship. Where there is disagreement over what is or is not acceptable for worship, Luther's rule, *Quod Scriptura non vetat permittit*, (J. Atkinson, Marshal Morgan & Scott, 1968, p.259) largely leaves matters in the hands of the office bearers or worship leaders to decide what can or can not be admitted.

Calvin's view, which has become the confessional Reformed view, is that we may only worship as God has commanded. The relevant articles are Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 35, Belgic Confession Articles 7 and 32, and Westminster Confession article 21. To put the matter plainly, these articles state that there ought to be biblical warrant for whatever we do in worship, otherwise leave it out. To put it another way: we are only free to worship in any way warranted by Scripture. To be sure, there are varying interpretations of these confessional statements about Reformed worship. Some are stricter (G. I. Williamson, *The singing of Psalms in the Worship of God* 1970). Others are more



Calvin preaching in Geneva

relaxed, (Steve Schlissel, *The Informed Principle of Worship*, Chalcedon Report, 1999). However, the general understanding is that worshippers of Reformed persuasion believe that it is necessary to find a *clear biblical warrant* either in the form of explicit commands or by good and necessary consequence for every part of the worship service, all the while studiously avoiding human innovations and inventions.

The Biblical basis

The basis for the RPW can be found throughout Scripture. Let's begin with

Deuteronomy 12:32 where it says regarding worship, "See to it that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it." The importance of obedience to this command was underlined by God's judgments against Nadab and Abihu, who offered unauthorised incense (Lev 10:1&2) and Korah, Dathan and Abiram who sought to usurp the priesthood (Numbers 16:35). Those judgments were sent specifically so that Israel learnt to respect the holiness of God, and be holy themselves in the worship ceremonies. Isaiah 1:12 also reveals God's displeasure at Israel's corrupt worship practices, and Jeremiah 7:31 similarly condemns innovations in worship as something the Lord "did not mention or command". Under Jeroboam 1, Canaanite Baal worship was introduced alongside the worship of JHWH at Bethel. It remained in practice until Amos' time. This displeased God greatly—and as God's spokesman, Amos mocked their worship saying, "Go to Bethel!" as if to say, "the outcome of your rituals will only result in further sin." (Amos 4:4&5)

In the New Testament, Christ upheld the principle that worship must be according to God's command. He rebuked the Pharisees, saying they worshipped God in vain because they set aside the command of God preferring their own traditions (Mark 7:7). Our Lord taught that worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). This tells us that worship must be Trinitarian, consistent with God's self-revelation, and have a sound theological foundation. Calvin, commenting on this verse says; "Since men are flesh, it should not surprise us that they delight in fleshly worship. They contrive many things which are full of display but have no solidity. But they should consider that worship has to do with God, and agrees no more with fleshly things than fire does with water. This should be enough to stop us in the worship of God from doing all our heart desires, for God is far from being like us that those things which please us most are the object of his loathing abhorrence. We ought to seek from His word the rule by which we are governed." (NT Commentaries, Eerdmans, 1961, p.101.)

The apostle Paul urged the church to maintain the good order and pattern of Biblical worship in 1 Timothy 4:13, using, as a paradigm, worship practices in the synagogue. "Devote yourselves to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching." He also warned the Colossian church about the "self-imposed worship" practices of the Gnostics and Judaizers which threatened to contaminate the church (Col. 2:23). In 1 Corinthians 14:26-39 we find Paul having to regulate the worship of

the Corinthian church, according to the law of God. Hebrews 12:28 says, "*Worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*" John's Revelation has worship as a predominant theme. Demons, idols, beasts and the dragon rival God and the Lamb for the worship and devotion of mankind. True worship focuses on God alone as Creator, Redeemer and Judge, and the only worthy object of worship. Human innovations in worship will only divert one's focus away from the Triune God and towards the created order. Such man-centred worship has the tendency to become idolatrous.

In conclusion, Scripture teaches that our worship must be holy for God is holy. Our worship must be regulated so that it is done decently and in order as is pleasing to God. Our worship must be sincere and from a converted heart, because we worship in Spirit. (What does that say about trying to make worship appeal to the 'unchurched?') Our worship must be directed by Scriptural warrant because we ought to worship in truth. Our worship follows Biblical precedents because that is what is taught in Scripture, confessions and church history, hence the Reformed Regulative Principle of Worship.

Some applications

Say someone who understands the RPW

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goes into another church and finds a puppet show underway during a children's segment, and has a problem of conscience over it since in his former church such innovations were not admitted. He decides he would rather not worship there. Is he being too critical or pedantic, or is he justified in his concerns? When it comes to conscience, whose conscience should give way? It is only the truth of God's Word which will set him free. So what does the Word say about pantomime, puppets and concerts in worship? Nothing! When it comes to preaching the gospel, the words used in the Bible refer to verbal activity. There is no hint in the command "preach the word" which would suggest that drama, puppets or concerts and the like may be substituted for preaching. Dramatisation of spiritual truths by Ezekiel (4:1-5), in the book of Job, or in the Gospels, are not set in the context of public worship.

Until recently, most churches have not admitted women and children as worship leaders for the reason that there is simply no Scriptural warrant for such practice. If there was, I'm sure our churches would be the first to submit to Scripture and admit women and children in positions of ecclesiastical leadership. As it is, there is not. The meaning of the word "prophesy" in 1 Corinthians 11:5 is ambiguous, and does not provide Biblical warrant for women to lead in worship. When we apply the principle of comparing Scripture with Scripture, the clearer statements in 1 Corinthians 14:34-36 ("*Women should remain silent in the churches*") and 1 Timothy 2:11&12 ("*I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man, she must remain silent*") should put the matter to rest.

Some churches have the practice of placing a large Christmas tree in the front of the worship auditorium around Christmas time. Like the meat offered to idols in 1 Corinthians 10, the pagan origins of the Christmas tree and its materialistic connotations may mean nothing at all to the mature believer who simply sees it as a delightful decoration with a lovely pine fragrance to enhance the festive atmosphere at home. However, in the context of corporate worship, he may not burden the conscience of other believers by including it as a decoration in the worship auditorium at Christmas time. There may be believers who have a problem of conscience over its pagan origins, and see its inclusion as syncretistic. Or they may be opposed to it because to them it symbolises the meaning of Christmas for the unbeliever, which is materialism and hedonism. Since there is no Scriptural warrant for its inclusion and for the sake of the consciences of those who object, the officers of the church are wise not to introduce such an innovation even if it seems perfectly innocent to them.

Neither do we admit crucifixes and other pictures into worship, especially those representing our Lord. Of necessity, these can once again only be human inventions and

representations arising out of men's imaginations, and are expressly forbidden by the second commandment.

Even those things which Calvin describes as "adiaphora", things which Scripture makes no clear statement about but which are necessary to conduct a worship service, must submit to the law of love. These may include the time of the worship service, the colour of paint on the auditorium walls, the arrangement of seating, the kinds of musical instruments to accompany worship, when to sit or stand, body movements and gestures used in worship, the style of building, garments and the like. Poor implementation can destroy a worship service and thus become a moral matter. Scripture does allow for a measure of freedom and variation according to culture and custom. Worship in an African village will have a different 'flavour' for worship in an established city church, but as Calvin says when it comes to such 'adiaphora', "*Love will best judge what will hurt or edify; if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.*" (Institutes, Westminster Press, 1960, p.1209)

Conclusion

For worship to be acceptable in God's eyes, the worshippers heart must be right. The worshipper must be a born again child of God. Only then will his or her worship reach and glorify God. Such a person will also desire to serve God and submit to God's will for His glory. Glorifying God is an objective as well as subjective activity. Objectivity is found in the Scriptures and enables worshippers to worship in truth. God's revelation of His holiness requires worshippers to be holy. This is evident throughout the Scriptures.

Holiness sets us apart from the world. It makes us different so that we can make a difference to the world. The RPW encourages such holiness in the setting of corporate public worship.

Such holiness is further assisted when worshippers are not only respecters of God, but of their neighbors as well. The RPW was also designed to help us do that—respect and love one another by limiting the power of church officers to introduce innovations into worship which have no biblical warrant and may cause offence. The RPW was also designed to help avoid such problems of conscience in the setting of public worship.

(The Rev. Hans Vaatstra serves as the Minister of the Word & Sacraments in the Reformed Church of Dunedin)

September 11, 2001

One year later (Part 2)

John Haverland

In the previous issue we reflected on the shocking events of the 11th of September 2001 and the strength and influence of Islam in the world. We considered how Christians should seek to witness to Muslims with love, compassion, gentleness and a confidence in God's power to convert them. We also compared Christianity and Islam as worldviews. We will now consider a third aspect of a Christian response: that Islam is a false religion.

Islam is a false religion

Not everyone agrees with this statement. This was illustrated in a *Newsweek* article by the religion editor Kenneth Woodward, who asserted that "Mere tolerance of other religions is not enough" and that "even the acceptance of other religions as valid paths to God is insufficient". Rather, "the most important theological agenda of the new millennium" is for committed Christians, Jews and Muslims to "find within their own traditions sound theological reasons for valuing other faiths without compromising their own". (*Newsweek*, Dec 31/Jan 7, 2002, pages 104-5). In a recent *Christianity Today* article a Wheaton College professor, James Lewis, went even further by recommending that Christians "seek Muslim prayer partners and together beseech the true, one and only God to have mercy on us". (*Does God Hear Muslims' Prayers? Christianity Today*, Feb 4, 2002, p. 31). This is wrong.

It is true that there are many similarities between Jews, Christians and Muslims: We all claim Abraham as our Father, we are all people of 'The Book', and we are all monotheistic. We should not be surprised at the similarities between Christianity and other religions. These come about because of God's common grace, His general revelation, borrowings from Christianity, and because all men are "incurably religious" (Calvin), possessing a "universal religious consciousness" (Bavinck). We were made in the image of God, so there is a sense of divinity in all men and women. This means that all people are seeking to worship something or someone, although this desire is distorted by sin. (Spykman, *Reformational Theology*, p. 426).

These similarities, however, do not mean that we worship the same God or that there is true salvation in Judaism or Islam. Islam is a false religion. Christians and Muslims worship a different God, have a different diagnosis of the human condition and a different prescription for salvation.

A different view of God

Muslims refer to God as "Allah", which is simply the Arabic word for God. But what do they mean by this? Most New Zealanders claim to believe in God but they don't believe in the God of the Bible, and they do not use the word 'God' with the same meaning we do. Neither do Muslims. They do not believe in a Triune God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, they have a different idea about the character of God. They seldom call God "Father". They say that God has no sons and people are only his slaves or servants. They have no experience of the intimacy or closeness of relationship that Christians have with the Lord God through Jesus Christ. Rather they emphasise the need for obedience and submission to God in order to avoid His judgment.

A different assessment of the human condition

Muslims believe that people are good and that evil comes from human weakness, ignorance and the bad influence of others. Sin, they believe, is acquired rather than being innate, learned rather than being hereditary. They do not see sin as first and foremost a rebellion against God, but rather as doing wrong deeds.

A different view of salvation

Because they have a false view of human nature, they also have a false view of salvation. Islam teaches that a person is saved by works. A Muslim must keep the Sharia (the law), and by so doing he makes himself righteous and acceptable to Allah. Good deeds will atone for sin. Muslims believe that they can save themselves, and they deny the need for a redeemer.

Christian salvation, however, is very different. We believe that salvation "does not depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy." (Roms 9:16). "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is a gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephs 2:8-9).

We also believe that there must be an atonement for sin—a payment, a covering, an atoning sacrifice that turns away God's wrath—and that no human being can do this. Only Jesus could offer such a sacrifice as God and man, and he did, on the cross. Isaiah prophesied about that, saying: "All we like sheep have gone astray and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all." (Is 53).

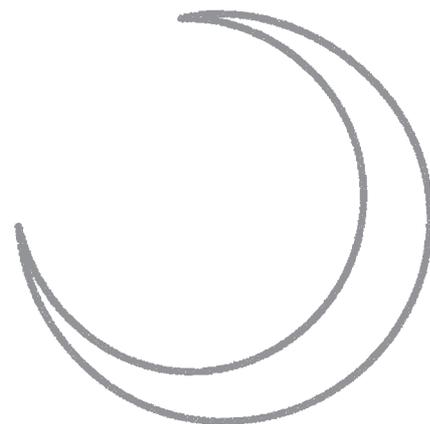
A different view of Jesus

All this means that Christians and Muslims have a very different view of Jesus. Muslims

see him as one of thousands of prophets like Noah, Abraham and Moses. They regard him as only a man, and do not accept that He was the Son of God. Christians believe that Jesus is the Christ, the eternal Son of the Living God. He is "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." (The Nicene Creed). "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation." (Col. 1:15).

A different view of conversion

A person becomes a Muslim simply by saying, "There is no god apart from Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." This profession of faith is the first "pillar" of Islam. By contrast, a person becomes a Christian by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit that results in repentance from sin and faith in God.



The Holy Spirit uses the reading, preaching, teaching and reading of God's word and the life and testimony of other believers as means in His work.

No one can be saved apart from a saving faith in Jesus as Lord. Jesus himself said, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Peter declared this to the Jews of his day: "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). We must declare this truth to Jews and Muslims and secular humanists in our day. "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved." (Acts 16:31). This is the essence of a clear, biblical, Christian response to the religion of Islam.

Christianity is life, Islam is death

Conversions in Algeria

Charles Colson

Since the early 1990s, an estimated 100,000 Algerians have died in a civil war that pits the Algerian government against Islamic extremists. The extremists have targeted not only the government and the military, but also anyone expressing what they call 'non-Islamic' views, like journalists and foreigners.

As you might expect, at the top of their list of targets is Algeria's Christian community. In 1996, seven Trappist monks were kidnapped and then beheaded by Islamic militants, an act that Pope John Paul II called "despicable." Less than three months later, as if to emphasise their disregard for world and Christian opinion, they assassinated the Catholic Bishop of Oran.

All of this is part of their promise to "eliminate" all Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims from Algeria.

You would think that such a campaign would deter conversion to Christianity, but reports out of Algeria suggest just the opposite.

Since the beginning of recorded history, a people called the Berbers have lived in North Africa. The Berbers, who are referred to in ancient Egyptian records, were originally pagans, but many of them eventually embraced Christianity in the first centuries after Christ as the Gospel spread across Roman North Africa.

Then, in the seventh century, the Muslim army conquered North Africa. Within a century, the Christian presence there, a presence that produced theologians like Saint Augustine, disappeared. The Berbers, like nearly everyone else in North Africa, became Muslims.

Now that's beginning to change. A recent issue of *Middle East Quarterly* tells us "people of all ages are converting to Christianity" in Kabylie, the heart of Berber culture. Despite obstacles that forced pastors to work in "absolute secrecy," "the number of [Berbers] who have embraced Christianity has grown rapidly."

What lies behind this spate of conversions? Well, the media plays a role. The magazine reports that radio broadcasts originating in France



have played "an important role in the legitimisation of Christian doctrines."

But the conversions also point to a profound dissatisfaction with Islam among Berbers. The *Quarterly* cites the deterioration of the "image of Islam" as a factor in "the rise of conversions to Christianity."

Berbers, you see, have seen the atrocities committed in the name of Islam in their own communities, and they had to ask the question that many Westerners don't dare ask: Does the problem lie with extremists, or is the problem inherent in Islam itself?

The Berbers have seen the impact of Islam on the lives of ordinary people, especially women, and they have summed up the difference between the two faiths in startling fashion: "Christianity is life; Islam is death." These aren't my words: they are the words of numerous Berber converts.

These Berber conversions should serve as a reminder to pray for Muslims. Islamist extremists are causing Muslims to rethink what they believe. As a result conversions to Christianity are occurring in North Africa, Iran, and elsewhere.

Christianity's message of God's love and grace through the cross stands in such marked contrast to Islam that people are choosing—they're choosing life over death.

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A new hymn book for our churches

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread. Here then, addressing you now, is one very great fool (very likely)! I have worked on the Psalter-Hymnal review committee appointed by Synod for the past nine years along with many other very good (and no doubt, more angelic!) brothers and sisters. It has been a very rewarding experience and I thank my fellow committee members for all the good times we have had together and all they have taught me. Over that time, our mandate has been, principally, to study the Reformed Churches of Australia **Book of Worship** and the new 1987 **Psalter-Hymnal** of the Christian Reformed Churches of North America. While recognizing the fine qualities of both books, the committee could not unanimously agree on recommending

either for full adoption by our Churches and neither could Synod.

The North Shore Session believed it could not either so it presented an overture to our most recent Synod to appoint a committee to prepare our own selection of Psalms & hymns for worship in our Churches. As a session, we recognized that it would not be a simple task. However, it did not seem to us to be insuperable if we remember why we are doing it and go about it humbly. For us, the prime reasons were (and I quote from the North Shore overture here):

1. While the present PH has served us well, it is not perfect. Some of its musical settings are not wonderful, at times the language is difficult, and the selection of hymns could

be better.

2. The most likely substitute, the new Psalter-Hymnal is thoroughly gender-inclusive, which seemed to us, in respect of the Psalms at least, to be submitting the Word of God to an alien ideology. Gender inclusive language also changes the meaning of some of the Psalms (as has been pointed out by a number of our ministers who have studied them, eg. the Revs. M Flinn and H Vaatstra to the Christchurch Conference and Presbytery in 2001) with the result that the male-headship principle is lost, as also is Christ from a number of them.
3. We also believed that the new Psalter-Hymnal had two points against it culturally. Firstly, it uses many Genevan tunes in its

Psalm selection which, while dear to many of us, are not a familiar genre in NZ Church music. Secondly, the book is American. This shows in its hymn selection. NZ tends to have a more Anglican hymnal tradition and many excellent hymns that are familiar to other NZ Christians and that Reformed Christians can sing are not there. It seemed to us then that, to get a Psalm selection that acknowledges the various cultural traditions coming together in our Churches (including the Genevan) and a selection of hymns from the NZ/Anglican tradition, we would have to compile our own selection.

To this proposal Synod agreed – overwhelmingly. A suggestion that it be presented to the Churches on OHP or a words-only book was almost scorned. Synod wanted a full four-part harmony presentation. I hope someone has plenty of money! The committee appointed to this task consists of Mrs Andrea Benfell, Mrs Lieda Brooks, Rev. W Wiersma and yours truly. A small committee for a large task, for sure. But we may well co-opt further members and will certainly be co-opting the talents of others for particular tasks, reviewing our work, etc, as we go along.

Synod also established some guidelines to give the committee some direction of its mind on certain matters before it set to work, viz., the Committee is to:

1. Select Psalm versions that are as faithful as possible in content and form of

expression to Scripture, granting proper room for poetical necessity.

2. Psalm and Bible song selections are to be evaluated for the soundness of their paraphrasing against the relevant sections in the synodically approved Bible versions (NIV and NASB).
3. Provide a reasonably large selection of hymns and songs to take into account the various preferences in our churches, namely, those resulting from our cultural mix, age differences, etc. In this regard, the committee should note the following:
 - a. Where Genevan tunes are presented, the committee is to consider providing a non-Genevan alternative.
 - b. The committee is to solicit contributions from a wide cross-section of our membership. (This is to help the committee in its selection task and to gain a better feel for the preferences of our members. However, while all contributions will receive due consideration, the committee is not bound by the act of contribution.)
 - c. In respect of updating language, the committee is to leave well alone by and large and change only when necessary for meaning.
 - d. The committee will not attempt any writing of its own.
 - e. As far as possible, Psalm, hymn and song selections are to be taken from our

presently approved and provisionally approved sources.

It is particularly in respect of Recommendation 3.b above that this article becomes relevant to you, dear reader. The committee is hereby fulfilling its charge and soliciting through this medium your contributions. This is a serious request – so also is the bit in brackets! We want to put together a selection that is going to last us for many years. We want to hear from young and old. We make no guarantees except that we will give every contribution due consideration. To help you, you might like to consider the *Statement of Principle for Music in the Church* on p.v of the CRC 1976 **Psalter Hymnal**, the *Statement of Principle* adopted by Synod in 1998 (see the **Acts**). Your contributions may be sent to any of the above members and must include full text and music unless it comes from any presently approved source, viz., the 1976 CRC **Psalter Hymnal**, the 1987 CRC **Psalter Hymnal**, the 1961 **Trinity Hymnal**, the **Interim Hymnal** (produced by our own churches; the “Red Book”) and the RCA **Book of Worship**. Alternatively, you may send contributions to Berwyn Hoyt who is acting as our secretary. Address: 1 Glenwood Avenue, Birkenhead, North Shore City; or: hoyt@contact.net.nz.

John Rogers (on behalf of the Committee)

A feminine focus

Susanna Wesley - The strong-willed woman and her trials

Sally Davey

I'm sure you've heard of Susanna Wesley. She was the mother of John Wesley, the evangelist, and Charles Wesley, the evangelist and hymn writer. Perhaps I'm perverse, but I'm often tempted to avoid Susanna. Does she seem too good to be true? All the usual biographies portray her as some kind of frighteningly efficient home schooler with a huge family; or a super-mother in time management overdrive. This kind of portrait seems one-dimensional, and unattractive. But then one day, I overheard a woman student (mother of four) in my church history class at Bible College recommending a biography of Susanna* to a man who was planning to give it to his wife as a gift. Said she: "I'm certainly glad Susanna wasn't my mother!" That's it, I thought maybe, at last, a biography that makes Susanna into a real woman! I was not disappointed.

Our greatest strength is often our greatest weakness

The truth is, Susanna had a very difficult life. Marriage to the erratic and headstrong Samuel Wesley was only one of her difficulties. By nature Susanna



herself was more than a little headstrong; and the strength of her own will doubtless contributed to her many troubles in life. Of course such strength of character can be a quality the Lord uses in His service; and there is plenty of evidence that this was so with Susanna. But as someone has once said, our greatest strength is often also our greatest weakness.

Susanna was the youngest in a family of 25 children. From both her parents she inherited strength and decisiveness of character. Her father, Samuel Annesley, was one of those ejected from the Anglican ministry for his refusal to adhere to the new Anglican Prayer book issued in 1662, after Charles II came to the throne of England. He became in time the beloved pastor of a large dissenting congregation in London, well-known as a preacher who fed them the meat as well as the milk of God's Word. Her mother was a serious Christian, and was studiously energetic in instilling the Christian faith in all her large family. Susanna grew up to have an excellent command of language; and it is well known that she possessed a theological knowledge superior to many ministers of her day.

It is difficult to know when Susanna actually came to believe savingly in Christ. At times in her life she talked of the need for faith and a

belief in the heart; but at others she seemed to rely on the testimony of her own good works. Her sons, John and Charles, spoke of an experience two years before her death as her conversion – an experience that “ended her long legal night”. More likely, she was a Christian who spent most of her life somewhat confused about the complementary role of faith and the works of obedience; and it is delightful to know that before her life ended, she was given a firmer assurance of faith.

Contact with the Puritans

During her childhood, Susanna's household enjoyed frequent visits from some of the leading dissenting ministers of the day: Thomas Manton, Richard Baxter and John Owen were some of the best-known. She would have heard all the arguments against the Church of England and in favour of dissent thoughtfully and persuasively argued. Yet, astonishingly, before she was even thirteen years old, she walked out of her father's home announcing she was going to join the Church of England. Despite the consternation of her parents, she remained there until her death at the age of 74.

Shortly afterwards she met the 19-year old Samuel Wesley, at the time a student in one of London's dissenting academies. Samuel was about to begin studies at Oxford University, in the hope that dissenters would soon be allowed to graduate from there. However, Samuel ended up joining the Anglican communion – perhaps at Susanna's encouragement. After a difficult four years at Oxford, funding his way through his studies by acting as a servant to wealthy students, and by writing poetry (a talent which Charles inherited), Samuel graduated and received his first parish in 1688. On the strength of his £28 per annum stipend, he and Susanna married (she was then 19).

Two dominant personalities

They married for love; but there were difficulties from the outset. Samuel was a man desirous of advancing in life; but prone to offend by strong statements and impulsive actions. As a husband, he was more than a little imperious. Though shorter than Susanna, his appearance was somewhat overbearing at times. He was one of those unwise men who tend to insist on their authority as a husband, speaking often about the duty of wives to submit to their husbands. Of Susanna in the early years of their marriage he wrote in a poem: “She graced my humble roof, and blest my life Yet still I bore an undisputed sway, Nor was't her task, but pleasure to obey: scarce thought, much less could act, what I denied.”

Susanna's life was not easy. Samuel's roof was indeed humble. Their first year was spent in a boarding house – to give birth to their first child she went back to her parents' gracious home for cleanliness, privacy and comfort. And babies arrived frequently – like her mother,

Susanna was to have a very large family – 19 in all, though 9 died in their childhood. Samuel found the frequent pregnancies and the cost of the extra children a trial. In short, it was hard to make ends meet; and he was sore-pressed and in debt his entire married life. It was only due to the kindness of bishops and the patience of his creditors that he managed to keep the family fed and sheltered at all.

Their stressful circumstances put a huge strain on their married life; and we can see the difficulty two strong-willed people can have in managing their life together. Several incidents illustrate this. In 1702 Samuel took an extraordinary step. It seems that Susanna, by no means convinced of the legitimacy of William of Orange's right to the throne of England, refused to say “Amen” at the end of Samuel's prayer for the King. (She had been doing this for some twelve years). But in 1702 Samuel summoned her to his study and told her that unless she repented of this before God and him, he would no longer live with her as her husband. However, Susanna believed she should have liberty of conscience in this matter. Samuel then took an oath not to sleep with her in the same bed, shunned her, and eventually left his home and family for some five months. Susanna's biographer puts this action down to Samuel's desperation at his poverty-stricken circumstances, and the pressure of life at home. He wanted to escape. He finally returned when the family house burned down, but things were never the same again. Susanna never trusted him as she had before; and the incident was probably the cause of Samuel's failure ever to achieve a higher appointment in the church. His disappointments and difficulties continued.

A strict man

Samuel was a hard-working parish clergyman, but tended to be severe. Though he possessed considerable literary abilities, his preaching was not valued by his parishioners, and few attended worship. He believed it was his duty to discipline his parishioners, and any known to be guilty of adultery he ordered to be present during the Sunday morning service, clad in a white sheet, bareheaded and barefooted. They had to shiver through the service and stand on the damp mud of the church floor, “doing penance” as a warning to others. He apparently made many enemies, and opponents were inclined to attack his livestock, burn his crops – and even, on two occasions, his house. In 1705 one of his creditors had him imprisoned for debt. For some months he remained in prison, and Susanna struggled to feed the family. He was released when some people kindly paid his debt; but he was full of a scheme to go and preach the gospel to those in India. His zeal for foreign missions in a day when few thought of evangelising beyond the shores of Europe is commendable. But more than likely, Samuel

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was still dreaming of escaping his troubles and the pressures of family life.

On another memorable occasion, Susanna inflamed matters by acting rather wilfully. Samuel had employed a curate in 1712 to help him in the parish. This man normally only preached when Samuel was away, and he generally managed to weave strong statements against the sin of indebtedness into his sermons. Once, when Samuel was away in London, Susanna decided the people should have something better than this man's fatuous preaching. Being a woman, she could not preach herself, and so she invited anyone who wanted to come and hear her read sermons in her kitchen. She was apparently quite good at it, and soon the hearers overflowed beyond the kitchen – even reaching 200 at a time! When Samuel heard of this, he urged her to stop. Susanna was almost defiant in reply: "If you do, after all, think fit to dissolve this assembly, do not tell me that you desire me to do it, for that will not satisfy my conscience; but send me your positive command, and in such full and express terms as may absolve me from all guilt and punishment, for neglecting this opportunity of doing good, when you and I shall appear before the great and awful tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ." This was a formidable woman!

As parents

But Samuel and Susanna were good parents. Both, despite their weaknesses, loved their children, and seem to have enjoyed good friendships with them. It has to be admitted, however, that their own characters and their difficult circumstances meant an unusual upbringing for the 10 children who grew up to adulthood. Susanna managed to survive these difficulties by setting firm, organised patterns for the household. The children were taught manners and were expected to obey instructions immediately. She wrote that children's wills should be "conquered," and this has earned her criticism. But it seems that she did not use undue severity, especially when the harshness of her day is considered. She taught the children at home herself – and certainly, the educated home from which she came would have provided her with the skills necessary for this task.

Not a completely positive influence

But not everything Susanna taught the children was helpful. She put a great deal of care and time into the religious instruction of all the children, as did her own mother; but what she taught was, of course, no more than she knew herself. I've already mentioned her confusion over the question of how we are saved. For most of her life, she was of the view that our good works are a necessary contribution to our salvation. She certainly didn't believe that salvation is entirely God's work, as stated in the 39 Articles of the Church

of England. When John, who had finished his degree at Oxford, was preparing for ordination, wrote to her that he could not accept the idea of predestination (Article 17), she replied that we must choose ourselves, and that God's "predestination" is foreknowledge of what we will choose. John continued to hold to these views, and teach them to others, for the rest of his days.

Susanna's *methods* also had an important effect on the children. By insisting, as she did, on such a rigorous programme of time management and such fastidious effort in holy living through personal effort, she gave them a distorted view of the Christian life. It is not surprising that both John and Charles, when at Oxford, should have been so confused about the way of salvation. They founded, with some friends, what they called the "Holy Club", a society for the mutual encouragement of the members in an extremely self-disciplined, methodical life of good works (echoing Susanna's approach). This was good as far as it went, but it was based on the mistaken idea that we can please God through our efforts; and both sons were ordained, and went to the mission field even, before they discovered that their view of salvation was wrong. It was only through the help of missionaries from Moravia that they learned salvation is a gracious gift of God to the sinner, who receives it through faith.

In sum

Yes, Susanna was one of those Christians with strong characters whose many qualities God uses for His good purposes. There is no doubt that, despite terribly difficult circumstances, she maintained a well-ordered household where her children learned good habits of self-discipline and perseverance. This must have been very helpful to both John and Charles during their long itinerant preaching ministries in England and Wales. They had learned from both their parents the fortitude necessary to endure all kinds of hardship, opposition and abuse.

And yet, if we have such a character, capable of such good service, we also have to be wary of our potential weaknesses. For one thing, we need to make sure we are well-instructed, and that we are capable of being corrected from the truth if we're found to be wrong. Susanna was so sure of her views – she made firm, decisive, and sometimes rather extreme judgements about important matters. And she taught them to others. If we are strong in our views, then we must make sure they are indeed the *right* views! Strong views, impressed upon others, have major – and lasting – effects on their lives. And it never hurts to be willing to listen to someone else – they may be more right than we are currently!

Marriage was for life

And then, what about their marriage – a difficult one, by all accounts? Surely, many

today would be tempted to put such a marriage in the "too hard" category! It seems to me that we should honour both Samuel and Susanna for their stickability, even though they did both fail alarmingly at times. They kept at it together, until they were parted by Samuel's death; and together they brought up a large and extremely talented family. It seems that they loved all their children dearly – and all their children loved and honoured them, despite the mistakes and the harshness. Certainly, when one looks at the remarkable ministries of John and Charles, it would be hard to call Susanna anything but a fine mother. But when all is said and done, who was really responsible for keeping this family together, for maintaining both Samuel and Susanna, and all their children, in the bonds of faith? Of course it is God Himself – He did in all this family, both parents and children alike, something that would seem to many of our contemporaries impossible. He kept them faithful – in His service – until the end of their days. Take heart – He is the same today!

* This biography, Arnold A. Dallimore's *Susanna Wesley: The Mother of John and Charles Wesley* (Baker Book House, 1993), is a very good book and one I would recommend to anyone who wants to know about Susanna.

*"in all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight."*
Proverbs 3:6

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on 23 October 2002

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The great debate

A different aspect in our senior living options

PROPOSAL: that the Christian Attitude to Retirement Villages should be that of Disapproval.

Although the first retirement villages in New Zealand were established over fifty years ago, often by churches such as a Presbyterian one in Wanganui and an Anglican one in Christchurch (in a simpler form than today), there has been a proliferation of these over the past twenty or more years. Debate about village living seems to be centred on the following questions:

'Are these a cop-out for families?

'Are the modern ones really just a 'get-rich-quick' ploy for the developers?

'Are the administrators exploiting the elderly by their charges and returns?

'Are they suitable places for Christian people to spend their last years?'

These concerns cannot be fully answered here, but will be touched upon in this month's 'case study. Every village is individual, and, every family's situation is different. As always the answer for one will not be the answer for another: what is wrong for one may be right for another.

Willy & Ben

Willy had always had an inkling that Ben would eventually want to go into a village, and she was happy to go along with that. She did not mind, as long as they were together. They were quite happy in the home they had purchased after retirement, but this desire of Ben's always lurked in the background. So they decided to fulfil his dream. Owing to the nature of their work (in business together) before retirement, they knew the length and breadth of New Zealand. While on holiday a couple of years ago, they inspected up to six different villages, in various parts of the country. The presence of many friends in the city where they had been living for sixteen years was a blessing, but their 'roving life' meant the presence of friends in many other parts, too. Ben and Willy eventually settled on one of four villages in their 'home' city—the one that had been developed by a fellow church member, Marietje's son (article 3 of this series.) Influencing their decision were the facilities offered in this particular village, not only individual houses and serviced

apartments, but hospital rooms for those who developed the need of full time care, and also a full community centre, with outdoor and indoor leisure and physical activities, craft room and workshop, a library and a meeting hall.

The concept of a retirement village

Looking at the idea behind retirement villages, let us recognise that they are providing a need for today's increasingly older population. Many of our elderly are well able to continue in their own homes, perhaps longer than in the past, and many live longer, especially with today's advanced medical knowledge, but there is often a "What if?" in the background. Burglaries in the street, the increasing phenomenon of home invasion, loneliness, the possibility of sudden accident or illness such as strokes, the threat of diminished capabilities and finally the possibility of having no say in final decisions for their own well being, may become the sword of Damocles suspended over their heads.

The first point to make is that *Retirement Villages are not glorified rest homes*, although

entering at this age and living to the age of ninety-five would be there for forty years!

Think of it in this way: for the active, for the companionship of contemporaries (what is wrong with that?), for security, for care, for peace of mind, for freedom from worry!

Many who come in at an older age say, "I should have done this years ago."

So the second point to make is that it is time to stop looking upon village living as something we should put off until we are in our late eighties! In the first years of Ben's village, the average age was 68. Living in a village is no different from living in a street or cul-de-sac with other retired people in most of the surrounding houses, as some of us do, and it has many added advantages.

The village of Ben and Willy's choice

Olive Tree Village, which Ben and Willy chose, was established and is owned by a Charitable Trust formed of local authorities for non-commercial benefits. The trust was supported by the City Council and by main-line churches, with leading churchmen serving on the board and a Christian philosophy (indicated by its name) behind its organisation and its requirements. That was an important point for this particular village. Council support to previous requests from other retirement village developers had been refused, as the Mayor stated on opening day, but was given to this village because of the fair nature of its aims and provisions. The houses are individually owned, but the Trust owns the village and is responsible for the maintenance of roads, the community centre, landscaping, and for approval or rejection of the applications for tenancy ownership.

Legal questions must be answered before decisions by

an enquirer are made. Villages vary considerably in their administration, structure and agreements- Find a lawyer who is already familiar with the set up of retirement villages, so that he/she has the knowledge of the legal ifs and buts, the loopholes and the protection clauses (then you do not have to pay him to find out!). Learn what your obligations and your privileges will be. Find out what happens if you want to leave again, or what your estate will be entitled to on your death. Do you receive only



they do have full care facilities attached to them. They are not built for those on their last legs, who can only crawl around and sit about doing nothing. Nor are they "cutting yourself off from life, shutting yourself in with decrepit old 'fossils', waiting to die," as some seem to think, and have expressed it. These villages are for the active, with a potential age difference of fifty years! The lowest age for admission is fifty-five. As this is ten years before retiring age, some residents are still working. Any one

the original price you paid for the house, regardless of any capital gain on the home, or do you receive a fair portion of the current market value? [Remember the case on 'Fair Go': a pensioner wanted to leave a council flat purchased many years earlier, and the agreement she had signed then entitled her to receive from the council today only the original price she had paid, although the flat had far more than quadrupled in value over the years!]

All villages deduct a certain portion on the resale price of a house. Make sure you understand why, and what, this is. Some administrators deduct a quite large percentage of your original purchase price (I have heard it could be up to 28%), and in addition, an even larger percentage of the capital gain. As the latter may be considerable at times of inflation, this can be a hook which snares the unwary. Make sure of the legal implications.

Ben and Willy's village trust deducts a uniform percentage of the total sale price, including capital gain. [To give you an idea, in the case of their village, the deduction has been set at 4% if leaving within one year, plus 2% for each following year, until in five years the highest total deduction of 12% of the selling price is reached.]

Funds from house sales are used for the benefit of the villagers: village community development and upkeep of the centre, the bird aviary and communal amenities, alarms and security (gates closing at dusk and on-call buttons in every resident and community room), roadways and landscaping.

Living costs are the individual responsibility of the residents. Charges for gas and electricity are individual, but the village has a special bulk supply discount rate which is passed on to the residents, negotiated with suppliers when the village was set up. The telephone charges are also individual, but the village has its own exchange, again at a saving to the homeowners. A weekly charge to all occupiers is made to cover the cost of rates, which are charged as a whole to the village, not individually; the wages of a manager to call upon if something goes wrong; the twenty-four hour on-call nursing service; lawn mowing and a hired gardener (although residents may do their own gardening around their home if they wish); outside house maintenance (indoors is their own responsibility); and the insurance of the house itself—contents and personal effects naturally being the responsibility of the owner.

For all this, the weekly charge in their village is very reasonable. Meals at a small cost may be ordered if desired (there is a beautiful dining room), and the residents are as independent as they like to be. They do not live in each other's pockets.

There is freedom in the villages. Ben and Willy have improved their home by the addition of a conservatory to their own specifications—conditional, of course, to it complying with regulations. They are able to entertain as they

wish, have friends to stay overnight, grandchildren for a holiday, day and evening visitors from outside the community. This is great, for 'there are no friends like old friends.' [Another reason for choosing a village in the vicinity of those whose friendship has been built up and stabilised over years.]

Now, what of their family?

Their son, married with four children, had been living in Wellington for many years. Their daughter and her husband (two children) had been considering a move to another country, but now instead have shifted to Auckland. In neither case was it a suitable solution to live with their children, or to purchase a home in one of these two cities. Ben and Willy found it neither practicable nor desirable. Their children were certainly not copping out of anything. It would be safe to say they were given no choice in the matter!

One reason for opting for a village is that to go with children, either a cottage in the garden or under the same roof, is certainly not a solution for everyone. One can think of all kinds of reasons why it may not be the answer for you. The number and ages of the grandchildren, the occupation of the younger family's breadwinner (e.g. shift work, travelling or other) may not be suitable for the additional responsibility of a parent. There may be a burden in the younger family, a sick or handicapped child, or already a parent from the in-law's side of the family. The health of the son or daughter may not be good enough. There may even be clashing differences of personality or life style, or of the cultural background of the son/daughter-in-law. It may simply be that the idea does not attract. No one should feel pressured into a situation that has no appeal.

Further, the prospect of bearing the burden of a parent when the child himself is getting old, can be daunting. If your parent lives to be a hundred (and a surprising number do) the 'child' might well be seventy to eighty himself. A village means the parent can remain there with all the care needed, and who knows, the child might in time join the parent in the same village!

No one should be criticised by others in this respect, or feel guilty over decisions only the family can make. Nor should we sit in judgment on those whose solution is different from our own.

Requirements

If the idea of a village does appeal to you, bear in mind the requirement of most if not all villages is that on entering, the prospective villagers must be able bodied and fit enough to care for themselves. They do not take sick people already needing full nursing into residency. No, it is not a rest home. Ben and Willy were required to produce a certificate from their doctor to this effect

Yet the village does make provision for whole life care of its inhabitants once they are there. One of the blessings of this provision is illustrated by an actual case at Olive Tree. A couple came into Olive Tree about ten years ago, while both were in their late fifties. The husband now needs intensive care. He is in the hospital unit, while his wife remains in their house. She is not separated by long distances, but can walk through the village grounds every day to spend time with her husband. Yes, the husband is young to be so incapacitated, and his wife is so thankful for the village. She knows that she could not have coped if they were still in their former home.

So if the idea of a village attracts you, don't wait until it is too late!

Ben and Willy have been over a year in their village home, and are very contented there. Each week visitors (some old cronies) play pool with Ben on the full-sized billiard table, while their wives, being generally more interested in a pool of another sort, sometimes take a dip in the community swimming bath or the spa pool. These activities are quite permissible as long as a village resident is present with the visitors. (The facilities are not for the whole outside neighbourhood!) The other residents may also welcome outside visitors—some of them have urged a friend of Ben's to come more often and join in their game of outdoor bowls. Need I say he is a good player?

Finally, should Christians live in such villages a 'life of ease', being taken care of? Why not? Surely in old age, or nearing it, they are entitled to security, leisure activities suited to their capabilities, help, peace and comfort, companionship.

But there is another aspect. **God has, and wants, His people everywhere.**

Ben invited some church friends to the Christmas service in the community hall last year. It was indeed a joyful time of praise and fellowship. Organised by the Salvation Army, the hall was full, and the visitors were surprised to see how many at that service were known to them. Visiting singers, including a Christian male quartet from nearby Feilding, sang the Lord's praises.

In the village, monthly services are held, led by ministers and laymen from the city churches. The villagers are able to share their faith in Bible study groups organised amongst themselves. Not all the inhabitants are Christians, however. Entrance is not restricted to active church members, although all must accept a Christian code of ethics. And if your neighbour is not a Christian, what an opportunity to witness to your own faith by deed, and at the opportune moment, by word. Your elderly neighbour needs Christ.

No need to debate any more. Village life might be right for you. If so, go for it!

World news

Death of the Rev. W. van Brussel

On Sunday evening, Father's Day September 1 2002, the Lord called home His faithful servant, Wim van Brussel. The family had a precious week of being very close together and sharing intimate thoughts. Brother Wim was so encouraged and said he didn't deserve all the attention, but marvelled at God's grace and His provision of such a loving, loyal and caring wife of more than 55 years in his beloved Wilma.

Wim was conscious and alert right up to the last few minutes before the Lord called him home. He was able to spend the best part of Father's Day surrounded by family, and then in the early evening spend the rest of Father's Day in the eternal and safe arms of the best Father anyone could have!

Wim's daughter Helen, ably assisted by Peter Kossen (Snr), looked after his pain management regime at home. This was an awesome responsibility, and also a tremendous privilege.

May the Lord sustain Wilma in this time of loss and grieving as she and the family adjust to their new situation. They have been carried

by the Lord and by the prayers of their many, many friends.

Their address is 14 Outlook Drive, Dandenong North VIC 3175 (03 9790 0124).

Murree Christian School attacked

Six persons were killed Aug. 5 when masked gunmen forced their way onto the campus of Murree Christian School in Pakistan and opened fire. No students were among the casualties, which included two security guards, a cook, a receptionist, a carpenter and a bystander. Three others were wounded, none seriously. The attackers escaped after their 15-20 minute siege.

School administrators immediately cancelled classes for at least 24 hours. Murree Christian School is a Presbyterian boarding school in the Himalayan foothills. It was established in 1956 to provide western-style education primarily for the children of Christian missionaries serving in the region. Some 150 children ages kindergarten through 12th grade are currently enrolled at the school.

At a police checkpoint, the attackers killed themselves with a grenade when being questioned later in the day. According to Pakistani military spokesmen, the attackers left a note stating that they "will do more in the future to avenge what is being done by infidels with Muslims all over the world."

+ The Director, Murree Christian School, PO Jhika Gali Murree, Pakistan 47180 director@mcs.com.pk

Lutheran membership exceeds 65 million worldwide

According to the most recent statistics published by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), Lutheran Church membership worldwide has grown by more than 1.4 million, to reach a total of 65.4 million (65,387,677) in 2001, representing an increase of some 2.2 percent. In 2000, global membership fell just short of 64 million, and in 1999 there were 63.1 million members.

Membership of the 133 member churches, eleven recognised congregations and one recognised council of the LWF totalled 61.7 million (61,704,551) in 2001. There were about 60.2 million members in 2000. Last year, the number of LWF member churches increased from 131 to 133, of which 130 are full members and three are associate members. The number of Lutherans belonging to non-LWF-member churches decreased by about 92,000, down to 3,683,126.

The largest 2000-2001 increase was in Africa. The continent now has 1,368,489 more

members, reaching a total of 11,953,068. The Lutheran Church of Christ in Nigeria showed the sharpest increase globally, growing by some 62 percent to reach 1,167,023 members. Two more churches saw 50 percent increases—the Malagasy Lutheran Church, with 2,250,000 members, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) with 300,000. Double-digit percentage increases were also reported by the Kenya Evangelical Lutheran Church with 30,000 members, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi with 25,000 and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe with 110,000. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia (ELCIN) increased by 9 percent to a 580,000 total.

The Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) is still the biggest African Lutheran church, with an unchanged membership of around 3.36 million. The second largest is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania with about 2.5 million.

+ Lutheran World Information, PO Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland

Built on the Rock: the Shorter Catechism on CD-ROM

Anyone taking seriously the responsibility given to parents in Deuteronomy 6:7, appreciates all the help available for bringing the teaching of Scripture to sons and daughters in an enjoyable and insightful way. The computer program

Built on the Rock is just such a resource.

Built on the Rock is a series of programmed lessons that steps the reader through the teaching of the first 38 questions of the Westminster Shorter Catechism, using either the original version of the Catechism or a modern version

+ Presbyterian Church in America, Christian Education and Publications, 1700 North Brown Road, Suite 102 Lawrenceville, GA 30043

Critics say polygamy is thriving

According to an Aug. 20, 2002, report in the Los Angeles Times, it has been two years since Utah's Legislature appointed a full-time investigator to root out crimes associated with polygamy. But only one case—last year's high-profile prosecution and imprisonment of polygamist Tom Green—has been brought to court.

Anti-polygamy activists, who met in Zion National Park, Aug 17, charge the state has not done enough to stamp out "Utah's dirty little secret." They say the inaction is allowing child abuse, welfare fraud and sexual assault to continue unchecked in polygamous

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communities.

Groups from Utah, Arizona, and Canada met for the first time to gather material for a report they intend to forward to the United Nation Commission on Human Rights. They also have recruited former "sister wives" to help build a massive class-action suit to be filed against a polygamous religious group that arranges marriages of girls as young as 13. The activists called polygamous leaders "the American Taliban," saying women are subjugated by the practice of plural marriage.

Colorado City and Hildale, Utah, are polygamous communities that straddle the states' shared border about 40 miles southwest of here. There are an estimated 40,000 polygamists living in the western United States and Canada.

Polygamy was a tenet of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints until 1890, when the practice was outlawed. About 70 percent of Utah is Mormon, and more than 90 percent of the state's elected officials are church members. [GN]

Covenanting Association of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches (CARPC)

After several years of planning and working together, three churches in Washington and California formed the Covenanting Association of Reformed and Presbyterian Churches in August of 2002. The CARPC seeks to bring together like-minded Reformed and Presbyterian churches for the broader work of the church while at the same time maintaining the authority of the local church. Member churches of the Association must hold to either the Westminster Standards or the Three Forms of Unity.

The first meeting of the Association is scheduled for Sept. 7, 2002, in the city of Redding, California. Anyone wishing to attend as an observer is invited to do so.

+ Grace Presbyterian Church, 6620 Churn Creek Rd., Redding, CA 96002
 gracepresbyterian@angelfire.com

IN TOUCH

Subscriptions to the IN TOUCH magazine are available. This is an opportunity for those interested who do not have access to or have joined a Cadet and Calvinette Club (Cadets and Calvinettes will continue to be supplied through their clubs). The costs is \$12 per year for four issues.

This is a Reformed Churches of New Zealand children's magazine especially written for 8 - 15 year olds.

It is filled with stories, photographs, puzzles, Bibles studies, Cadet & Calvinette Club news, competitions, poetry, crafts, cooking and Camp News.



If you would like to receive IN TOUCH please forward your \$NZ12 (or \$AU12), with your details, to the National Board Secretary N.Z.C.C.C. & C., 17 Phoenix Place, Papatoetoe, Auckland. (Make cheques out to N.Z.C.C.C. & C.)

New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology

Faith for *all* Times

An important event to be held in three centres

PROTESTANT AND EVANGELICAL:

Exploring the Riches of the "Solus" of the Reformation.

This is the inaugural conference on Reformation Theology. Our aim is to present the important truths of Scripture, which were rediscovered at the time of the Reformation and which are in danger again of being neglected in our own day. We will explain why it is so important, for the salvation of the lost, that we understand that we can only be saved by **Christ alone**, through **faith alone** by **grace alone**. We will also study the importance of sourcing all our knowledge of God's will in **Scripture alone**. Each lecture will demonstrate that these reformational truths must be understood and taught by the Church today.

SPEAKERS



Dr. JOSEPH PIPA

Dr. Pipa is President of Greenville Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi. He has served as Professor of New Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary. An accomplished and frequent Conference speaker, Dr Pipa is also the author of several books including *The Lord's Day*, *William Perkins and the Development of Puritan Preaching*, *The Root and the Branch*. Joey is married to Cissy and they have two children.

Dr. MICHAEL FLINN
 Rev. JOHN ROGERS

Dr. JOHN HAVERLAND
 Dr. PAUL ARCHBALD

Registration Form

Cost	No. of people
\$30.00 per person (Wellington \$15.00)	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$10.00 per student	<input type="checkbox"/>
	TOTAL <input type="checkbox"/>
Name(s)	
Address	
Phone Email	

Please pay by cheque or cash and forward to **NZCRT, PO Box, 31334 Lower Hutt**. You will receive more Conference information once your registration is received.
\$5.00 DISCOUNT IF YOU REGISTER BEFORE 10 SEPTEMBER
 Morning and afternoon Tea/Coffee provided, but meals not catered for.

Venues and Times

CHRISTCHURCH – Reformed Church of Bishopdale, 90 Highsted Rd, Christchurch. Pastors' and Church Leaders' seminar begins at 1.00pm and the full conference 3.30pm on Friday the 18th October 2002.

WELLINGTON – Reformed Church of Silverstream, 8 Blue Mountains Rd, Upper Hutt. Pastors' and Church Leaders' seminar begins at 9.00am and the full conference 12.30pm on Wednesday the 23rd October 2002.

AUCKLAND – Reformed Church of North Shore, 74 Trias Rd, Totoravale, Glenfield, Auckland. Pastors' and Church Leaders' seminar begins at 1.00pm and the full conference 3.30pm on Friday the 25th October 2002.

New Zealand Conference on Reformation Theology
 P.O. Box 31334, Lower Hutt
 Phone (06) 344-4291
 Fax (06) 344-4291
 Email: gmlne@xtra.co.nz
www.reformedconference.org.nz

Local contacts.
 Auckland Ph. D. Hoek
(09) 414 6357
 Wellington Ph. A Holtslag
(04) 528 0218
 Christchurch Ph. P. Davey
(03) 318 0770

A Conference committed to underscoring the relevance of the Scriptures to all of life
"For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:17.

Missions in focus

Time (and airline) travel

Back in June of this year, I traveled to Perth to meet with my FEBC¹ supervisor, Dr Ross James. I also spent a week helping to train a group of program producers from four different countries: Russia, Mongolia, Cambodia, and Indonesia. I was delighted to find time (late one evening, after assignments were finished) to talk with the two Russian announcers. Let me introduce them .

Greetings, comrades!

Elenna Radosteva (RA-do-ste-va) is 28, and she comes from Kemerovo, a city of about 600,000 in the southern central area of Russia. She's been working for FEBC for 4 years. She produces a program about music and Christianity.

Mike Kuzminykh (kuz-min-EUCH) is 26; he hails from Blagoveschensk, in the Russian Far East. The town's name means "Good News," although living there in the Communist era was far from good news: a Chinese city was directly across the river and the Russian military was correspondingly strict about people's comings and goings! Mike is the only full-time staff member in his local branch of FEBC Russia.

In Kemerovo two years ago, the temperature on New Year's Eve was -53°C (houses are

heated by radiators, placed under the windows, which are double- or even triple-glazed). In summer the temperature in Blagoveschensk is frequently as high as 40°C. Now do you *still* believe all those television commercials about paint that is designed for New Zealand's "harsh weather conditions"?!)

Getting to know you!

It was a real privilege to get to know Mike and Lenna even a little, and hear about their lives, their work, and their vision for reaching out to the people in their respective cities. But rather than telling you about it myself, I'll let Mike and Lenna do the talking after I ask the questions, that is!

Janice: What was it like when the Communist era in Russia came to an end?

Mike: I can't really talk about this, because I was too young to know. My family didn't really hold with the Communist Party.

Lenna: When I was 11, 12—I was in a special club, Young Pioneers. It was a Communist club for children. I was very active there. When I got older, this organisation died from the inside. It was very hard for me, because the people there were important to me. I was afraid, you know, lost. Then I read about Stalin's rule, how so many millions of people were killed, and I got so upset, frustrated. I asked, "Is there anyone who cares for me? That's when I became Christian. When I got involved in the church, for the first three years I was waiting for it to die, too. My experience with the Komsomol was very hard, and I didn't want to go through this stuff again. After three years, I saw that God is faithful, and there is a power inside Christianity, and it doesn't depend on people.

Janice: Is the Church in your city strong?

Lenna: We have churches, even new buildings, but there are a lot of unchurched people. The Church is new, and people are not mature. They have only been Christians since 1992 or 1993 at the longest.

Janice: So, do the churches need solid Bible teaching?

Lenna: Yes.

Janice: Does FEBC have its own stations in your cities?

Mike: No. We rent airtime on a secular FM station, for 15 minutes a day.

Lenna: And in Kemerovo we have 50 minutes each day on the cable radio network: twenty in the afternoon, ten in the evening, and twenty minutes at night.²

Janice: Do you get much encouragement from local churches?

Mike: We do not get any support from Russian churches in our city. There are 230,000 people in the city, but only around five evangelical churches.

Janice: What sort of programs do you produce?

Mike: We have two children's programs, one of those is moral teaching, and the other one is radio plays, dramatising popular books.

Lenna: I listened to those stories, and I really liked them. Now we give them to Christian workers to play at orphanages and children's clubs, and children do like them.

Mike: We also have a youth program, a social program, and another that teaches Christian history. In the past we've had a very popular women's program, and one on literature.

Lenna: We used to do local news and information for the city. This was paid for by the government. Then they asked

us to pay for the broadcasts, so we decided to turn to Christian programming. We had maybe two months of great pressure from listeners and from the Orthodox Church, who didn't like the change. That was about two years ago, but now people have got used to Christian programs. We have programs for children, for men, for the family, and general inspirational programs.

Janice: Your programs, are they really "Christian" or are they more suitable for unbelievers who don't know Christian terminology?

Mike: We are using a secular FM station, so I look for programs that meet their standards to some degree, because of the difference in style. I get the programs from various FEBC stations and evaluate them to see if they're appropriate for the host station.

Lenna: I don't think we have programs for believers. We are trying to reach non-Christians.

>Yawn!<

By this time it was very late, and our discussion degenerated into "pass the crackers" and similar subjects. But it was a good start. I hope I can get to know Mike and Lenna better as time passes and to share that knowledge with you through MIF. In the meantime, do please pray for them, for all program producers who contribute to the ministry of FEBC—and for the powerful effect of the word made airwave, which points people to the Word made flesh.

Auckland RYC

Presents

Go Vertical!

National Youth Convention

Friday 3rd —10th January 2003

Rev Dale Piers

at

Camp Adair

Hunua, Auckland

Watch out for details & enrolments coming soon!

(Footnotes)

- ¹ Far East Broadcasting Company
- ² Cable radio in Russia: a system that was initially installed by the Soviets, in all apartment buildings and office buildings in Russia. When they built an apartment, apart from the regular power outlets, they would have one for the cable radio. Cable radio was used to carry messages for the government, possibly as part of their Communist-era propaganda machine.

News from the OPC:

The Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC) is a sister denomination of RCNZ. They have recently announced the appointment of

Miss Esther C. Maack from Trenton, New Jersey, as a missionary associate to Korea. Esther will be teaching English during the three-month fall term at Missionary Training Institute. Please pray for Esther as she begins her teaching responsibilities and settles into a different living and working situation.

Another OPC missionary associate, working in Japan, writes: *"Recently we met a girl here who studied in Boston for four years her English is great, and she just returned to Japan this summer. She's not a Christian yet, but her parents are and she grew up in church. She's trying to get a job teaching English at a big language school in Japan. We have been praying for her and she appreciates that. She likes talking about spiritual matters, and I hope we will have much more time to talk about those things and to study the Bible together. She says she's uncertain right now about the Bible and Christianity. Please pray that this young Japanese woman will be open to the gospel message that she is hearing. Also pray that our missionary associates' teaching contacts will continue to bear fruit for the gospel."*

MIF Prayer Notes:

The **Overseas Mission Board** needs our prayers, as well. Pray for Board members, who are all busy but still spend much time in setting the direction and focus of our denominational mission involvement. Pray that the Lord of the harvest would raise up more men and women from our churches who will hear and obey the call of mission. The Board asks special prayer for people to help in the work of the 't Harts in Papua New Guinea.

SPROUT promotes the work of missions to the young people in our churches. Please pray for the committee, for energy and enthusiasm as they do this. Pray for wisdom as they plan upcoming conferences (early next year, DV).

Rev Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart continue in the challenging task of helping the fledgling Reformed church in Papua New Guinea to grow strong and true. Pray for strength and joy in

the task, for physical protection, and especially that God would raise up others to assist them in their work.

Janice Reid will travel to Myanmar about the middle of this month. In the last week of October, Lord willing, she will hold a radio training workshop in Yangon. Ethnic program producers from several language groups will learn how to use Firm Foundations, the chronological Bible teaching approach Janice teaches, to help their listeners learn about the Lord. Pray for safety in travel, for good health, for clarity and empathy in teaching. Pray for

those who attend, that the Lord would give them clear understanding of the material and a passion to use it to the glory of God.

Rev Jan Lion-Cachet, Rev Gary Milne and Rev Reinier Noppers are all serving in congregations that currently carry the description, "home mission." Please pray for these men and their families, as they work to encourage the church, and co-operate with church leadership in the establishment of their congregations. Pray for wisdom, compassion, and that the Lord would add to the number of those who are being saved through their ministry.

Country profile: Oman¹

Oman is a mountainous land on the southeast coast of the Arabian Peninsula. It has between 2.5 and 3 million people, 27% of them foreigners who have come to work in the country. Oman is best known as one of the Arab oil producing countries, but it is also a typical Muslim country, with only 2.5% of the population professing to be Christian. Oman is ruled by a benevolent absolute monarchy. No political parties are permitted, but there is considerable personal freedom and political stability. It is of the most socially progressive nations in the region

**Pray for Oman:**

1. Rapid social change since 1970 has transformed Oman. Oil wealth, rising education levels and the opening up to the wider world have broadened the minds of Omanis. The younger generation in particular are outward looking and interested in new ideas. Pray that many may become receptive to spiritual change, too.
2. The unreached, particularly the 92% of Omanis who are Muslim. There are perhaps a handful of indigenous believers, none professing Christ openly—pray that they may grow and begin to meet with other believers. There are no known believers among the Mahra of Dhofar, the Baluch of the eastern coasts, the rural population or the Swahili speakers.
3. Almost the entire Christian population is expatriate. Pray that they would live godly lives that clearly display Christ to their unbelieving neighbours.
4. Christian professionals and workers. The Reformed Church in America has had a good witness here since 1890, when Samuel Zwemer, the famous missionary to Muslims, began his work in Oman. Their hospital, clinics and missionary workers have been incorporated into the government health service. Christians also have a strong presence in the education and business sectors. Pray that by all means the gospel may be proclaimed through a pure lifestyle and fervent witness. Pray also for perseverance and tenacity.
5. Other means of witness:
 - a) *The Bible Society* has a good ministry in distributing the Scriptures in many languages to the expatriate communities. Distribution of Christian literature in Arabic requires more innovation—pray for this to happen.
 - b) *Christian radio broadcasts in Arabic* are clearly heard from FEBA radio (sister organisation of FEBC) and Trans World Radio.
 - c) *Almost 2,000 Omanis are studying in the West.* Pray for effective witness to them.
 - d) *Internet use is accelerating.* Pray that this may prove a good way reach and disciple a new generation of Omanis.

(Footnotes)

- ¹ Information from *Operation World* CD-ROM, Copyright ©2001 Patrick Johnstone. Used with permission.

Between You and Me!

Let your light shine!

Dick Vanderpyl

At the start of World War II Corrie ten Boom was, by all accounts an ordinary, middle-aged unmarried Dutch woman, imprisoned by the Germans because she and her family helped and hid mostly young men to escape from being transported to Germany to become slave-labourers in the armament industry, which would free German men to defend their country!

The whole Ten Boom family converted their home so as to hide those the Germans sought for slave labour. Eventually they were betrayed and the whole family—parents, brothers and sisters—were transported to be imprisoned in one of the notorious concentration camps, tortured and starved. Corrie wouldn't let this prevent her from sharing God's Word and His love, even in the most unthinkable circumstances.

After the war—and until her death—Corrie traveled and taught in over sixty countries around the world.

Her message? Nothing, not even death, can separate us from God's love!

What Corrie said

This is one of her radio addresses via Trans World Radio: "In Matthew 5: 13 & 14ff. we read what the Lord Jesus Christ says to us: "You are the salt of the earth" and "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden; even so neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. So, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

I'd love to tell you about a prisoner in New Zealand who gave me a lesson! At times we may hear totally unexpected and absolutely top sermons from prisoners.

I preached on the text, "You are the light of the world". Could you ever say that to prisoners? Wouldn't it be better to say instead, "You are the darkness of the world?"

I'll tell you something. I've spoken to many prisoners in many countries.

During World War Two (1940-45) I have physically experienced what it is like to be locked up behind a door, which can only be opened from the outside. Maybe my interest in bringing the message of salvation in prisons is because I feel for them! I know what it is like to be locked up.

Still, I got to know many evangelists in prisons. I remember a fellow in Mexico with a very bad history; for whatever he did, he got 18 years! Well, you don't get that punishment

for stealing a car. Well, something happened to him. The Lord Jesus had placed His hand on his life! At some time he prayed, "Come in my heart, Lord Jesus—and Jesus did!

We find this in Revelation 3:20, "Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in and eat with him and he with me."

And that's what happened. This man became an evangelist while in prison. Almost half of those in prison had been brought to the Lord!

I do hope that you, who listen to or read this, may enter heaven, and my hope is to meet you there one day! I'm sure that I may introduce you to many born-again fiery evangelists whom I have met in prisons, men who still had to wait out their time. Not only that, we will also meet up with those who have found their way to heaven.

Even down under

One of them in New Zealand, who heard my message, came up to me afterwards. "This morning I leafed through a bit here and there in the Bible and read the history of three murderers. One was Moses, one David and one Paul!" Were they murderers? Certainly they

were! We know them as heroes of the Lord, but they had been murderers. And a prisoner said, "Fellows, there is hope for you guys and for me also!"

Yes, this shows you what God can and will do with those who listen to Him! What can God do with a total surrender of a "decent" sinner like you and me? Will you too surrender to Him? Miracles will and do happen then. You will become one who has the light of the world and the salt of the earth.

Shall we pray together? Lord, I thank you, that You use sinners! You did not call the angels to be evangelists; they have other work to do. But pray that He may use you and me!

"Lord, hear those who are listening to—or reading—this, who may say, "Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee! O, Lord how wonderful that would be! You can make us be the Light of this World and the salt of the earth! Hallelujah, Amen." "



From the D.A.'s Office

Bishopdale Cadets and Calvinettes

On the back page of the April 2002 issue of Faith in Focus, a group photo from the Bishopdale Cadets and Calvinettes was published. Thank you to the three people who sent in names for the photo. The consensus is that the photo was taken in the St Margarets Church Hall on Farrington Ave, Bishopdale, opposite the Bishopdale Community Centre, where the Bishopdale Church was worshipping at the time. The year is most likely to be 1982.

Here are the names as we now know them:

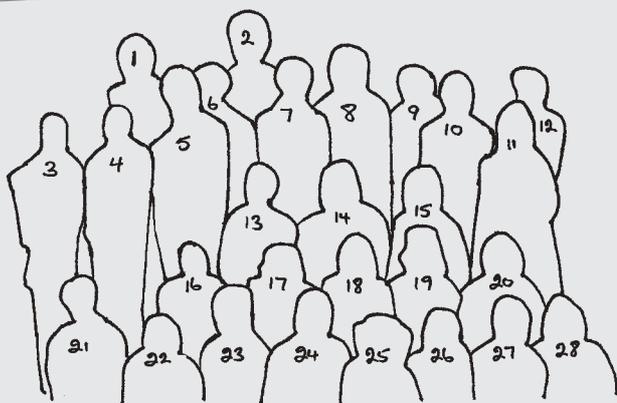
- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Fred Braam | 15. |
| 2. Andy van Ameyde | 16. Andrew Moot |
| 3. John van Ameyde | 17. Cushala Hollander |
| 4. Edwin Racke | 18. |
| 5. Paul Lubbers | 19. |
| 6. James Nihoniho | 20. |
| 7. Vivien Bosma (now Mahoney) | 21. Craig Dolphin |
| 8. Wietske Loef (nee Lubbers) | 22. Simon Hollander |
| 9. Sarah Racke | 23. Peter van den Brink |
| 10. Dierdre Bouman | 24. Natasha Vlaanderen |
| 11. Adrienne Hale | 25. Ruth Nihoniho |
| 12. Gonny van Garderen | 26. Julia Mann |
| 13. Mandy Bosma (now Vanderpyl) | 27. Delinda van Garderen |
| 14. | 28. Anne Marie Lubbers |



Cadet and Calvinette National Camps

Coming up in January 2003, the 10th National Cadet and Calvinette Camp will be held at Forrest Lakes, near Otaki. The camp organisers are wishing to have a display depicting all the past National Camps. They have group photos of all the previous camps except the 1975 Woodend Camp and the 1979 Waitekauri Camp. If anybody has a camp photo, or other photos from either of these camps, they would love to have a copy made. Write to me, and I'll be able to pass it on. Thanks.

Synodical Archivist
 Roy Nugteren
 558 Everett Road
 R D 8 Inglewood
 Taranaki
 E-Mail: archives@reformed-churches.org.nz



achievement, this is only a beginning of our further task in the community in which we have built the church – to shine as a light for our Father in Heaven and to reach out to others with the message of Jesus Christ.

On Sunday 28 July 2002 we had our official opening service, where Rev. John Rogers preached from 1 Timothy 3: 15 with the following text 'I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth'. We had a good number of visitors and after the service representatives from other Reformed Churches in the Auckland Presbytery and neighbouring churches of other denominations delivered greetings. Greetings from other Reformed Churches in New Zealand and former members of the North Shore who now live in other parts of the country and world were read. We appreciate all the good wishes. Newer members in the congregation learned much about the history of the North Shore congregation while listening to anecdotes about cleaning the community hall where services were initially held on a Sunday morning after there had been a huge party in there the previous night, and about a few Reformed boys falling through (or bringing down) the ceiling of part of the community hall!! The morning was concluded with a light lunch and a time of fellowship which gave us the opportunity to catch up with old friends and visitors from other congregations who joined us for the service.

Other news from our congregation is that Martin and Dawn Bradley are back from Melbourne. We also welcomed Berwyn and Veronica Hoyt, who had a baby son recently – Emlyn was the first baby to be baptised in our new church building. Congratulations also to Louise van Tonder with the birth of her son, Christiaan. Quite a few of our members have been on extended overseas trips to the United States, Canada, South Africa, Holland and other parts of Europe. Most came back in time for the opening of our church building and it is good to have all the familiar faces back.

Our Social Club organised a very interesting dinner evening recently where participants could volunteer to be either hosts or guests. All participants were only informed on the evening where they were going to have dinner. Likewise the hosts had no idea who they had coming to dinner until they opened the front door. Later in the evening guests moved on to another host where they had dessert. The purpose of the evening was of course to have fun and to share a good meal, but it was also an excellent idea to bring together people who may not know each other that well. A great evening enjoyed by all! Our next social ominously

Our churches in focus

NORTH SHORE

In our previous report we have told you about our plans to build our own church building on the North Shore and you are probably well aware now that our building has been completed. The first half of 2002 was a very busy year with all the activities accompanying a building project. Everybody was involved in one way or another, whether in painting, electrical work, project managing and planning, refurbishing the chairs that we have bought (this was a project on its own), landscaping or planting the gardens. Thank you also to members of other congregations who supported us in deed and in prayer for our building project.

Well, finally we have a building that we can call our own and that we can use at any time of the week.

The photo on this page shows what it looks like.

We are very pleased with the way it all came together. The building looks like a church building but is also a functional and practical building for worship services and other activities like Cadets and Calvinettes, Youth Club meetings and Bible studies.

We are indeed grateful to the Lord that He has blessed our project. The plaque in the foyer says it all - 'Dedicated to the Glory of God and the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ'. We are well aware that although the completion of the building project may give us a sense of

Our churches in focus (continued)



was also a blessing to witness the baptism of Tyler Minnee, son of Martin and Wilma Minnee. We were also able to witness the Professions of Faith of Samuel de Vries, Sarah de Vries, David Bryant, Tjeerd van der Horst, and the then-Miriam van Leeuwen. Tjeerd and Miriam later married in January, and have moved to Invercargill for study.

Earlier in the year, we bade farewell to Samuel de Vries, who moved to Christchurch for study purposes. Eric van der Kaay found employment in Hamilton, and moved in March. We recently farewelled Kees and Marianne Tanja with their daughter, Sarah, who moved to a new dairy farm in the middle North Island. Robert and Laurel van Wichen

and family (none having even stepped on the shores of Australia before) have moved to Geelong. There, Robert will be continuing his correspondence studies with Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in the US, but will be taking some "live" courses at the RTC as well.

Some of our members have been suffering from illness—some as a result of operations, and others more chronic in nature. While not very pleasant at the time for the sufferer, it can be the Lord's way of joining His people in prayer and practical help. On this note, our thoughts and prayers go to Ido and Lena Funcke on the death of their son, Alex Funcke (aged 21) in June. Our deep condolences also go to the Jochem family on the sudden passing of Dan Jochem in late June. We are grieving the loss of our loved ones. Our days are certainly like the grass and it is the Lord who decides the length of our days.

After 40+ years in the same house, Mr. and Mrs. Hank and Maria van de Waardt moved to a new address in May. You may have read about their search for a house in a recent *Faith in Focus* article. Finally, congratulations go to Mr. and Mrs. Kees and Miep Visser, who celebrated their 45th Wedding Anniversary in Nov 2001.

Our portion of the letter now comes to an

called "The Spectacle" at the end of August. We are all very curious about what it is all about, and will report on that next time!

Greetings in Christ
Johan and Heslia Swanepoel

PALMERSTON NORTH

Greetings to the churches from Palmerston North. Since you last heard from us, we have had many blessings and some sorrows. As

always, however, we are ever giving thanks to God our Father, who has all of our lives in His control.

Our membership continues to change, welcoming new faces and bidding goodbye to familiar ones (I won't say "old ones"!). We welcomed Tjibbe and Claire de Boer from Nelson into our midst in September 2001, and Jan Steenkamp from the North Shore in May of this year. God also blessed us with new life in a baby girl born to Wytse and Helen de Vries (that's us) in April. Her name is Kezia Jant. It

**CASTLECLIFF
HOLIDAY PARK**

CABINS, CARAVAN AND CAMPING

**1a Rangiora Street
Wanganui**

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EMAIL: TOKIWIPARK@XTRA.CO.NZ
WEB SITE:
WWW.CASTLECLIFFHOLIDAYPARK.CO.NZ

end, and Julie Kavanagh will now add some information regarding two of the ministries our church is involved in.

We seem to be a 'busy' congregation. This is something that our pastor, Rev Kavanagh, reflected on at our recent A.G.M. He reminded us that although activity is commendable, we have to take care that our activity is centred in and for our Lord.

With this in mind; we have continued our 'Operation Friendship' ministry to International Students who attend our local tertiary institutes. Overseas students are coming to NZ in increasing numbers, and they present us with a challenging mission on our doorstep. We have been privileged to offer hospitality to students, and to arrange and participate in social functions with them. Some have begun to attend our services of worship, and show a fledgling interest in the Christian faith. We do commend this ministry to other churches. As church co-ordinator, I would be happy to provide further information. Otherwise information can be obtained by the founder of 'Operation Friendship' in NZ, Christchurch-based Mrs Lorna Revis (RevisL@xtra.co.nz).

Another current area of outreach has been our 'Mainly Music' ministry. We have linked up with this national (and rapidly spreading overseas!) Christian organisation, to provide a weekly music and movement session for parents, caregivers, and pre-schoolers in our local community. The music sessions provide quality time for parents and children, and a source of friendships for both children and adults. We follow each session with morning tea, and sometimes lunch together.

It has been our privilege to provide practical support to some of the folk who attend 'Mainly Music', especially when a new baby has arrived, etc. We have also enjoyed some memorable social evenings, such as a recent 'Pyjama & Pizza Party,' when Mums, Dads, grandparents, and older brothers and sisters joined toddlers in pyjamas for a pizza tea, followed by a 'Mainly Music' session. Congregations in NZ and Australia wishing to know more about 'Mainly Music' might like to contact www.mainlymusic.org.nz.

With Christian greetings
Wytse and Helen de Vries

WAINUIOMATA

The congregation of Wainuiomata is still alive and well despite our long absence in *Faith and Focus*. It has been a long time.

Our biggest news is that we welcomed Pastor Leo and Carol deVos and their four children William, Anne-Marie, Ruben, and Phillip to our shores last September.

Leo is a native Canadian who has served congregations in Canada and the States. He is familiar with New Zealand, having visited here several times and marrying Carol here. Leo has

been introduced to the joys of horse(back) riding in the hills of Whitemans Valley, and enjoys the nature that New Zealand has to offer. Carol (nee Schellingerhout) is a familiar face to many of us as a native of Mangere, Auckland. Many remember her from camps in her capacity as camp nurse or as an active, older single. Now that their children attend the local Christian school, Carol is looking forward to having some 'project' time after homeschooling for many years.

Leo and Carol have just purchased a lovely home in Wainui (a first for Leo). I'm sure the joys of owning some New Zealand territory will help keep the roots down.

There is always a settling-in period for a new pastor and his family, as well as the congregation that he serves. This is particularly so when the new family must acclimatise to another culture. However, the faith and the hope in our Lord that we have in common transcends cultural barriers, and the common goals we share for the Lord's Kingdom help the differences to pale into insignificance. We can only learn and be enriched by each other!

There is so much more to church life than the doors opening twice per Sunday and the congregation filling in and filing out again after worship. We need all the extras that keep the body active, nurtured and challenged. Apart from the usual activities we also have a few items that reflect the "lighter" side of body life. Something that many of the women are enjoying at the moment is "Heart-Sisters". Yes, this is organised "warm fuzzies", but the little anonymous gifts and the knowledge that another woman is praying for you is special. We look forward to the unveiling when our secret "heart-sister" will be revealed.

Another tradition that has become firmly rooted in our annual calendar is the Mid-Winter Dinner. Apart from really great food this gives us the opportunity to laugh at ourselves. A couple of members spend the year "digging up dirt" on everyone and then they let it fly on the night—all in good taste of course!

Our natural population growth has slowed somewhat over the last few years. Gemma was born to Luke and Vanessa Veenstra in October of last year.

We welcomed the Durant family, Kevin and Judy and their children, David, Esther, and Andrew from Masterton in January. We also welcomed home Raewyn Couperus, who had left us for the green pastures of Auckland to complete her teachers training at Masters. She is now teaching at our local Christian College.

We have farewelled some of our youth. Marianne van Schalkwyk has left for Bucklands Beach to attend Teachers Training College in Auckland. Mennno Veenstra and Bernhold Zandman departed New Zealand for their big O.E. through Asia and on to Holland. They kept us well posted of their travels while they were away.

In February we celebrated the Profession of

Faith of Kiariske Feenstra, Ian Jongepier, Junet van Schalkwyk, Richard Bartlett, and Nicola and Rachel de Vries. The Lord gave us beautiful weather that day, so afterwards we had lunch together in the church 'garden'.

Jos and Willy Verbokkem reached another milestone and celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary with family and friends in April. We also grieved with Tava Solomona and Rian van Schalkwyk, who both lost their mothers unexpectedly.

For a small congregation, we seem to have many members who have been troubled by serious illness. Calvin Fransen, Robyn Adams, Mr. Joop and Mrs. Willy de Boer, and Sylvia Gavin all underwent major surgery this last year. Sylvia Gavin and Mrs. Willy de Boer have serious ongoing health problems that need much prayer. Mr. Arie de Vries spent some time in hospital, but is now almost back to normal health. Many of our members have had to accept health problems as part of their lives.

Until next time,
Frances Zorn
from the tranquil valley of Wainuiomata.

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

50th Wedding Anniversary

*of our beloved parents
and Opa and Oma*



Tony & Francina de Vos

(nee Markenstein)

**married in Wellington
on the 25th October 1952.**

*From their three children and in-laws,
and eight grandchildren.*

235a Kenilworth Road, Hastings.

**2 Timothy 2:13
If we are faithless, He remains
faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.**

Installation of the Rev. Jan Lion-Cachet

With thanks to God, a large congregation met on July 28 to witness the installation of the Rev Jan Lion-Cachet as a minister of the Reformed Church of Wellington, with special duties as Home Missionary on the Kapiti Coast.

The seeds of this ministry were planted in early 2000. Discussions held with a nucleus of South African immigrants, who were meeting regularly for Bible Study, while attending local church services, started the development. An early focus for this group was on sound Sunday School and Catechism teaching material for their children. In July 2000, the Reformed Church of Wellington began providing fortnightly worship services for this group. Rev John Goris usually led these services, with an elder (usually Dick Spoelstra) and one of our organists (Tineke Mosterd) taking the one-hour trip to Waikanae Beach to officiate for the small group.

Momentum had begun, and the Lord blessed the work. But there was so much more that could be done, and so many more people to be reached, so a full-time worker was required. Inquiries were made in South Africa with our sister church there, and the Rev Jan Lion-Cachet was found, who might well be interested in coming to help us. Jan and his wife Carien visited New Zealand in November 2001.

At the same time, seven families formally became members of the Reformed Church of Wellington at a 're-affirmation of their faith'

service in November 2001. These seven, plus three families from Wellington who live in the area, provide the foundational group.

In 2002 the services became weekly. Various readers from the Reformed Church of Wellington had begun to take their turn leading services, and now other ministers and readers from the wider Wellington Presbytery also helped out on various occasions. The help and support we have received has been tremendous.

With the support of the Wellington Presbytery for the work in Waikanae to be considered a Home Mission Post, a call was extended to Jan in March 2002, and by God's grace the call was accepted, and Jan, Carien and their two daughters, Allien and Wiida, arrived in New Zealand in May 2002.

After sustaining his Colloquium Doctum at the Wellington Presbytery on 5th July, the installation could take place. This occurred on

Sunday, 28th July 2002, in the Kapiti Uniting Church building in Waikanae Beach. The church building was completely full, with visitors from a number of surrounding churches being present to share our joy. Rev John Goris led the service, based on 2 Timothy 4:1-6. John challenged Jan to face his Lord (who is the ultimate task-giver) and preach the gospel to all.

With Jan now working full-time on the Kapiti Coast, the work is already bearing fruit. We hope and pray that God will bless the work of Jan, the newly appointed elders and deacon, and indeed the whole Waikanae group. Once a month an Afrikaans outreach service is also being held, and soon it is hoped to move to two English services per Sunday. We covet your prayers that this work on the Kapiti Coast will continue to grow, and bring blessing and glory to the Lord.

