

faith in **focus**

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of New Zealand

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“So then, just as you received Jesus Christ as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”

Colossians 2:6-7

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Editorial

I was reading through last month's issue and I came across a news item that was a shocker grammatically. I knew straight away why. It was something I had put in myself! At the last minute I couldn't help but quickly type in an interesting piece I had just read. Putting it in at that late stage, though, I had skipped the usual process of using the spell-checker, passing it through the proof-reader, and re-reading. So if there are any mistakes you know who to blame!

How often, though, don't we make mistakes in our own lives when we do the same? The person who has an accident at work has usually forgotten what his supervisor had tried to impress on him very firmly as the right way to do something. One economic analyst said that the major reason for the difficulty in the financial markets in the late 1980's was because people had chosen to ignore or bypass the rules that had been the mainstay of the stock market for centuries.

The rules are there for a reason. A simple reason. The reason that others have learned from their mistakes in the past. Which doesn't say much for us, does it? "History repeats because no one was listening the first time," someone once quipped. And our time and place is not a great one for history. In fact, history gets a bit of negative press. "They weren't so enlightened then," the modern person says. And we know it all?

To truly study history is to realise how much we don't know it all. And especially we realise then how much they did know way back then!

*A page of history
is worth a volume of logic.*

Oliver Wendell Holmes

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.

Mental illness

A Christian perspective

Dirk van Garderen

The more I have worked on the topic I was asked assigned, the more I become convinced of the old adage that *'fools rush in where angels fear to tread.'* The amount of material as well as the diversity of opinion and criticism on the subject of 'mental illness', or, as others prefer, 'mental health' - is enormous!

Where to start?

Let's jump in at the deep end so to speak with a case study. I want to explore what happens and what confronts you if you or a member of your family experience the condition broadly known as *depression*.

What are we talking about? Here is what Gary R. Collins¹ (a prominent Christian psychologist in the USA) tells his readers about it:

Depression (previously called 'melancholia') has been recognised as a common problem for more than 3,000 years. It is a worldwide phenomenon that affects individuals of all ages (including infancy), appears to be increasing among teenagers and young adults, and disrupts the lives of an estimated 30 to 40 million people in the United States alone. (Newsweek, May 4 1987) Some of history's greatest military leaders, statesmen, musicians, scientists, and theologians have been its victims, but depression is no respecter of persons. It is known as the "common cold" of mental disorders and has been called "the most widespread, serious, and costly psychiatric disease afflicting humankind today." On occasion almost all of us experience depression, sometimes when we least expect it. In its milder forms depression may come as a passing period of sadness that follows a personal disappointment. More severe depression may overwhelm its victims with feelings of despair, fear, exhaustion, immobilising apathy, hopelessness and inner desperation. (Collins, p 105)

A sense of familiarity?

Whilst more than willing to take issue with Collins on many of the ideas and presuppositions embedded in this statement, most of us here will, from experience, know and feel a degree of familiarity with the general condition he is describing.

Let me quote the next paragraph as well. Here he describes the **symptoms**.

'Probably no two people experience this common condition in the same way. The word

"depression" covers a wide variety of symptoms that differ in severity, frequency, duration and origin. The signs of depression may include

- *sadness, often accompanied by pessimism and hopelessness;*
- *apathy and inertia that makes it difficult to "get going" or face decisions;*
- *general fatigue, along with loss of energy and a lack of interest in work, sex, religion, hobbies, or other activities;*
- *low self-esteem, frequently accompanied by self-criticism and feelings of guilt, shame, worthlessness and helplessness;*
- *loss of spontaneity;*
- *insomnia and difficulties in concentration;*
- *loss of appetite.'*



To make sure that both ends are fully covered, Collins adds:

'In what is sometimes known as masked depression, the person has many of the above symptoms but denies that he or she feels sad. The alert counsellor may suspect that depression is present even behind a smiling countenance. In many cases the symptoms of depression hide anger that has not been expressed, sometimes isn't recognised and, according to one traditional theory, is often directed inward against oneself.' (Collins 105)

How many of you recognised yourself in the picture just presented? May I suggest

that those of you who say, 'not me' are definitely afflicted by 'masked depression' or are just plain chronic, pathological liars?² You may also note that, if I were a psychologist - a Christian one to boot - I have just established a nice new clientele whom I will see a bargain-base rates: \$60.00 per hour - much less than half of the going rate for a good psychiatrist!

A (simplistic) survey of the current situation.

OK, enough of that. Time to get serious - if only because there is a more than serious side or dimension to depression and a number of other conditions commonly described in popular language as 'mental illnesses' or disorders.

Collins points out that *'the word "depression" covers a wide variety of symptoms that differ in severity, frequency, duration and origin.'*

Suppose that someone feels sufficiently 'down' and unable to find a way 'out' of what seems to be a deep 'hole' and that this person needs help. Where to turn?

A number of possibilities and alternatives present themselves at this point. Who does such a person turn to for help? A doctor? Psychiatrist? Psychologist? A good friend? Minister? Elder?

For the sake of exploring the possibilities, let us follow the route that is most likely to be taken by this person and his or her family.

The first and most common port of call will be your the local GP, usually the family doctor who, more likely than not, knows something of your history. You trust your doctor. Her/his area of training and expertise is in looking for things *physical* or *organic*. Therefore, after explaining 'symptoms' (*'I'm feeling really tired, worn out, lack of zip'...etc, etc*) the doctor will, as he chats with you, look for **organic causes and explanations**: Brain damage ('have you had your head knocked around lately?'), the condition of the thyroid, post-natal hormonal aspects, menstrual problems or whatever. What he is doing is looking for a *causal link* between depression and something physical (organic). Should he find that causal link (or *think* he may have found it) he will treat prescribe a course of treatment for this. - e.g. medication to restore hormonal levels) - and expect the mood patterns of the sufferer to return to a more 'normal' level as a result. Note that the emphasis and primary focus here in identifying a physical or organic cause.³

Because of his training and focus, the doctor is very unlikely to delve too deeply

into non-organic causes of your feelings especially if your condition is reckoned by him to be severe or complex. That's another speciality. Furthermore, he is even *more* unlikely to probe the spiritual realm! That's none of his business. He draws the line carefully!!

Where the specialist comes in

Suppose that the GP fails to find a satisfactory organic cause or explanation of the reported depression and that, as time progresses, the condition remains constant and/or even worsens. The word '*chronic*' begins to loom large. At this point a *specialist* will be considered - more likely than not a **psychiatrist**. The psychiatrist has had initial general training in medicine but has, in an intensive and extensive post-graduate programme, focussed on 'mental' or 'mind' disorders/dysfunctions, especially (though by no means exclusively!) on what is (and has) gone on *within* the individual. The psychiatrist examines depression from an angle that places special emphasis to the 'mental' (or cognitive) processes as a possible explanation of the cause of the depression.

What is the psychiatrist looking for? I asked my sister-in-law, a senior psychiatrist in South Australia, what it is a psychiatrist deals with. What is 'mental illness'? She

pointed out that a **mental disorder** (a term she prefers) is '*a clinical(ly) significant behavioural or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual and that is associated with present distress or disability or with a significantly increased risk of suffering, death, pain, disability or an important loss of freedom.*'⁴

Looking a bit further

Let me attempt to clarify and interact with this description somewhat. In doing so I want to highlight the areas that give rise to concern and criticism.

As a mental disorder, 'depression' manifests itself as a '*behavioural or psychological syndrome*'. In other words, it is identified by what a person is **doing** (or **fails to do**) and **feeling**. No *obvious* organic causes (past or present) have been established. The likelihood is that there may not be. (That is not to say that the psychiatric diagnosis excludes the possibility.) *Because* there is often no obvious or clear organic cause/explanation the diagnosis is forever open to criticism and abuse. There is no diseased organ offered as proof of the condition. Therefore what do you treat? Are you able to treat anything at all?

Note the use of the word '*significant*' used in the diagnosing the condition. What is not altogether clear is when 'significant' is just

that and by what criteria this is measured. It is here that there is lots of room for dispute between psychiatrists themselves. Think for example of what goes on in courtrooms in deciding on whether or not a person is deemed fit to plea. Psychiatrist vs psychiatrist! (See John Grisham's novel *The Testament!* 1999 as an example of what can happen in a courtroom.) This, when reported, causes the lay community to view psychiatrists with raised eyebrows. It is unavoidable that a subjective element that has little to do with science will, at some point enter into the picture. After all, it is the psychiatrist who decides on what is 'significant' and what is not.⁵

Thirdly, the focus is on what the individual reports. To a large extent the psychiatrist will have no choice but to trust in or somehow assess the reliability of the patient. It is at this level that 'duping' becomes a real possibility. When a psychiatrist is duped (and that happens!), you can imagine what this does for the critics.

Fourth, note the potential of the expression '*an important loss of freedom*'. That phrase hides a veritable minefield. Who decides what freedom is? Freedom from what? Who decided what we have a right to be free from? At what point can we speak of it being lost, as opposed to restricted? Is freedom determined scientifically, culturally, along class lines?⁶

You can appreciate therefore that the work of the psychiatrist includes a lot of interpretative judgments, which are more or less subjective. For that reason it is liable to abuse (from all sides) and liable to much criticism. Any of you who have at times read what critics have said will be aware of this. (Especially from a Christian perspective - I think of some big American names like former tele-evangelist Jimmy Swaggart, Dave Hunt, and the most dedicated critics on the Christian block - Martin and Deidre Bobgan.)

Cannot dismiss it

But, be warned against dismissing the real and positive contribution that responsible psychiatry is making. Whilst the criticisms mentioned are true, they in fact address what amounts to a straw man. Modern psychiatry, whilst historically rooted in the work of Sigmund Freud, has developed far beyond him. While Freud is perhaps not quite dead (his idea of the 'unconscious' and its functions - id, ego and superego - have become staple diet to many introductory psychology classes) he is no longer at the heart of current psychiatric theory and research.⁷ '*Mental illness*' diagnosed and treated in purely Freudian terms and using Freudian (talking) therapies is long past.

Whilst Freud is (almost) dead, the language and terminology he introduced is not. Hence we speak of the **mind** being ill

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although, strictly speaking, this is a logical impossibility. The 'mind' is in and of itself a theoretical construct rather than something physical! There isn't a thing called the mind that is able to get diseased or sick! Nevertheless, imprecise language notwithstanding, **conditions described by Freud** (depression, schizophrenia, etc.) are and remain real!

The term 'mental illness' (or disorder) is at best a layman's term and used by professionals because people understand it. However, what a psychiatrist confronted by 'depression' is interested in is much more than simply the mind. My sister-in-law points out in her letter that '*a compelling body of literature shows that there is much physical in mental disorders and much mental in physical disorders.*' Modern researchers know and attempt to study and understand depression accordingly. Modern psychiatry points out that depression involves *both* mind and body in an interactive way. This has led to increasing research into how the human brain works.

By way of example

In May, 1997 *Time* magazine published an article entitled '*How we Get Addicted.*'⁸ Intriguing stuff. As a footnote to it there was a piece entitled, '*Anatomy of Melancholy.*' It reports and discusses the implications of modern research. Readers are informed how '**scientists take a picture of depression and discover that it actually changes the shape of the brain.**' The portion of the brain being studied is located about 6.3 cm behind the bridge of the nose called the 'subgenual prefrontal cortex' - which is known to play '*an important role in the control of emotions.*' When comparing a population of people in the active throes of depression with a comparable number of normal patients, PET scans showed a subtle but distinct difference: the subgenual prefrontal cortex was almost 8% less active in depressed patients than in the controls. When looking at this part of the brain by means of MRI technology, which makes it possible to examine things even more closely, they discovered, to their surprise, that there was an average of 39% to 48% less brain tissue in the affected region of depressed patients. No, let's not jump to conclusions - but **do** let us become a little more cautious in assuming that we understand what is going on in the brain that causes depression. Neither can we necessarily decide whether brain damage as recorded is the cause or effect of depression. However, note well that a depressed person *is* experiencing *more* than something going on in his/her mind only! *This* is the area a psychiatrist will be very interested in take into account.

Let go back to the person in the throes of depression - back to the family doctor's

surgery. The doctor, on determining that there is no obvious organic cause for the depression, knows that she has a choice. He could recommend seeing a *psychologist* rather than a *psychiatrist*. What is the difference? Why might the doctor choose one rather than the other?

Distinguishing conditions

In the past you would often hear of doctors (and more especially psychiatrists from whom they learned the jargon) distinguish between what they judged a *psychotic* as opposed to *neurotic* conditions (psychosis vs neurosis). Broadly speaking, a *psychotic* condition was regarded as one which is *chronic* (ie, going on and on and on!), *complex* and having *no obvious or causal explanations*. Furthermore, the prognosis was that psychotic depression was a more



or less permanent condition. Thus, if deemed a 'manic' or bi-polar depressive - a psychotic condition - it is understood to be permanent (albeit episodic).

On the other hand, a neurotic condition was generally regarded as non-permanent, treatable and able to be explained (whatever theory one adopted by way of explanation) in terms of environmental factors and influences. It was suggested that a *change* in perception, of understanding one's own history and environment as well as providing the tools to maintain that change would cure, remove or alleviate the condition.

Psychologists with their 'talking cures' and hundreds of different therapeutic methods have stepped in alongside of (and often in opposition to) psychiatrists. Therefore, if your doctor thinks that your depression might have something to do with your past history where you learned responses that now discomfort you, he is likely to classify your condition as being a neurosis that you need to be able to explore, come to understand and learn the techniques to deal with, he might well recommend that you see a psychologist.

What about the spiritual?

Now suppose that you are a committed Bible-believing Christian, - Reformed to boot! Someone points out to you that doctors deal with the body (things organic) and psychiatrists/psychologists emphasise a second dimension - what goes on in your head - matters of mind as it is shaped by cognitive, historical and environmental factors. You are asked: but what about the *spiritual*? Aren't we *spiritual* beings created by God in his image? Is it not true that we human beings find no rest or peace until we find rest and peace in God? Shouldn't a **spiritual counsellor** - from a Christian perspective, a **Biblical** counsellor (pastor, minister, elder, a sister/brother in the Lord) also be consulted in coming to grips with your depression?

It is at this point that all of kinds difficulties and dilemmas can arise which, rather than alleviate and deal with the problem of depression, *in fact* introduce new ones. You see, *if* our concern with and criticism of medical and psychiatric advice in dealing with depression is that it ignores the spiritual (divine) dimension (at least as a means of healing/restoration), the shoe should also be placed on the other foot!

Criticism of psycho-therapy (psychiatric and especially clinical psychology) has, to say the least, been sharp very, very strong, especially within fundamentalist evangelical/charismatic circles *and, just as vigorously*, within the confessional Reformed (and dare I say it, especially theonomic) camp. And, may I add, with some very powerful and compelling reasons. You see, from Freud onwards, most of psychological theory and practice (with some recent exceptions which adopt a pantheistic - Eastern, New Age form of spirituality) has been at best indifferent to but more likely to be openly anti-Christian.

Many would claim that traditional 'religion' is a fundamental *cause* of much inner conflict human beings experience. They claim that the removal of religious beliefs, prohibitions, superstitions would remove a big if not *the* major contributing factor to conditions such as depression, guilt, etc.

Secular psychotherapists construct their theories and therapies on the premise that there *is* no divine help *out there* or even *in here*. They proceed on the basis that the *only real help* available is *self-help* and that the only real expert in making an individual aware of and teaching him/her how to help self is the trained psychologist. There is, because there *has to be*, tremendous belief in human ability and the effectiveness of self-help. After all, the only alternative in the absence of divine help is despair.

The impact of humanistic psychology¹⁰ (and Christian psychologists who have attempted to integrate this with the Bible) has led to an age where we have become

obsessed with 'self'. Alongside of that is the belief that all the ills, discomfort, etc., that 'self' experiences are due to forces within and without of which self is the *victim!* No guilt, blame, shame or pangs of conscience should be pinned on the self. 'Self' is forever the innocent, undeserving victim. Responsibility and personal blame/accountability is negated or ignored.

Christian responses

In response to these attacks Christians have responded with equal vigour. Many of us ministers have taken up the cry and criticism that first came from Jay Adams (*Competent to Counsel* 1970) and others such as Thomas Szasz (*The Myth of Psychotherapy*, 1978) and, in a much more sophisticated and elaborate form, John F MacArthur Jr, Wayne Mack, and the faculty of Masters College faculty, (See *Introduction to Biblical Counselling* 1994) stating that **sin is the problem!** In response to psychotherapy, there has arisen the slogan that **there is no such thing as mental illness**. Others, especially so-called fundamentalist evangelicals and Charismatics have also taken up the cry (and their pens).¹¹ These views were and have tended to remain completely antagonistic towards dismissive of 'psychology'. The role of the 'mind' and, except in obvious instances, organic causes, have been ignored or downplayed. This has helped persuade many Christians - also in our own circles - that psychotherapy is 'the enemy'.

The result? Many a serious and sincere Christian or Christian family (especially within our own circles) who experiences or are exposed to a severe, chronic form of depression (or something similar) end up in a very difficult position. If a depressed person in our circles turns to one (doctor/psychiatrist for example) there is going to be the extra tension (and even feeling of guilt) in not turning to Biblical counselling - and vice versa. Its as though you cannot have it both ways! This extra tension (and pain) this causes is, as many of you might well know, is very real.

What to do?

(The second part to this article, together with some personal examples, will appear in the September issue of 'Faith in Focus')

¹ Collins, Gary R, **Christian Counselling: A Comprehensive Guide** (Word Publishing, Milton Keynes, England, 1988)

² Might also draw attention (if warranted) to Edward Welch, *Codependency and the Cult of the Self* in Power Religion ed. Michael S Horton (Moody Bible Institute 1992) p 219-243 where he points out that the book *Codependent No More* (Melanie Beattie 1987) lists 234 symptoms! Says Welch: 'Codependency hooks its readers, including many Christians, with descriptions that inevitably leave people exclaiming, "That's me!" (p225)

³ See however Dr Janet van Leerdam, *Trowel and Sword*, (Feb 1999) a country GP who highlights that she focuses on *talking* as well and recounts immense benefits of this.

⁴ Joanne Lammersma, private communication, 27 Feb 1999. This is taken from DSM IV as paraphrased by her.

⁵ It is at this point that critiques of Martin and Diedre Bobgan begin to have at least some content. (See *Psychoheresy* Eastgate Publishers, Santa Barbara Ca 1987) esp Chapter 10, 'Disease, Diagnosis and Prognosis' p 143 -149)

⁶ Think of the many reports on the way psychiatrists

were used in the former USSR to 'treat' political dissidents.

⁷ Gray, Paul, *The Assault on Freud*, Time, Nov 23, 1993 (p 37-40)

⁸ Nash, J Madeleine, *Addicted*, Time, May 5, 1997 p 47-52.

⁹ Gorman, Christine, *Time*, May 5, 1997 p 52

¹⁰ Thinking here most notably of Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow.

¹¹ Not that helpful - but folks like Jimmy Swaggart and Dave Hunt come to mind. For a compilation of these views, Martin and Diedre Bobgan have stood out in the past decade.

Don't kid yourself!

The harms of cannabis

Richard Egan

Five recent studies published in medical journals conclude that cannabis use causes substantial harm in relation to: the development of schizophrenia; the development of depression, especially in adolescent girls; progression to drug abuse/dependence; and respiratory diseases, including lung cancer.

Also, an analysis of the latest statistics on cannabis-related deaths demonstrates how misleading is the claim, frequently made by advocates of cannabis law reform, that there are *no* cannabis-related deaths.

Schizophrenia

A study by Stanley Zammit on "*Self-reported cannabis use as a risk factor for schizophrenia in Swedish conscripts of 1969*" was published in the *British Medical Journal (BMJ)*, November 23rd, 2002.

This study surveyed 50,087 Swedish conscripts from 1969-70 (97% of the country's male population aged 18-20). Data on self-reported cannabis use prior to conscription was cross-checked against linked records for hospital admissions from 1970-1996 for schizophrenia and other psychoses. Confounding variables such as use of other psychoactive drugs and personality traits linked to social integration were controlled for.

Zammit and colleagues concluded that cannabis use is associated with an increased risk of developing schizophrenia, consistent with a causal relationship. Use of cannabis prior to age of conscription was associated with a 30% increase in risk of developing schizophrenia. Risk increased with frequency of use. Cannabis use more than 50 times prior to age of conscription was associated with a 6.7-fold increase in risk for developing schizophrenia.

A second longitudinal study was published in the same issue of the *BMJ*. This study on "*Cannabis use in adolescence and risk for*

adult psychosis" by Louise Arseneault and others followed 1037 individuals born in Dunedin, New Zealand, in 1972-73 to age 26. It obtained information on psychotic symptoms at age 11 and drug use at ages 15 and 18 from self reports and assessed psychiatric symptoms at age 26.

It concluded that cannabis use is associated with an increased risk of schizophrenia even after psychotic symptoms preceding first cannabis use are controlled for. Early cannabis use confers greater risk for schizophrenia, possibly because cannabis use becomes longstanding. 10% of those who used cannabis before age 15 developed schizophrenia by age 26 compared to 3% of the remaining cohort.

Depression

A third report in this issue of the *BMJ* dealt with "*Cannabis use and mental health in young people*". George Patton and his fellow researchers followed a Victoria-wide (Australian) sample of 1601 students aged 14 to 15 for 7 years to determine whether cannabis use in adolescence predisposes to higher rates of depression and anxiety in young adulthood. Daily cannabis use in young women was associated with a 5.6-fold increase in the odds of reporting a state of depression and anxiety. Weekly or more frequent cannabis use in teenagers predicted a twofold increase in risk for later depression and anxiety.

Patton concluded that teenage girls who use cannabis frequently are predisposed to later depression and anxiety, with daily users carrying the highest risk. Given recent increasing levels of cannabis use, Patton believes that measures to reduce frequent and heavy recreational use seem warranted.

Gateway drug

The January 22/29 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* included a report by Michael T. Lynskey and others

on the "Escalation of drug use in early-onset cannabis users versus co-twin controls".

This study compared later drug use in a national sample of Australian twins who were discordant for early (pre-17 years of age) cannabis use. Individuals who used cannabis by age 17 years had odds of other drug use, alcohol dependence, and drug abuse/dependence that were 2.1 to 5.2 times higher than those of their co-twin, who did not use cannabis before age 17 years.

Lynskey concluded that associations between early cannabis use and later drug use and abuse/dependence cannot solely be explained by common predisposing genetic or shared environmental factors. The association may arise from the effects of the peer and social context within which cannabis is used and obtained. In particular, early access to and use of cannabis may reduce perceived barriers against the use of other illegal drugs and provide access to these drugs.

Respiratory diseases

In late 2002 the British Lung Foundation published "A smoking gun?" This report surveyed the current medical and scientific research into the direct effects of smoking cannabis on the smoker's respiratory health.

It concluded that habitual cannabis smokers have a significantly higher prevalence of chronic and acute respiratory symptoms such as chronic cough and sputum production, wheeze and acute bronchitis episodes; that 3-4 cannabis cigarettes a day are associated with the same degree of damage to bronchial mucosa as 20 or more tobacco cigarettes; that cannabis smoking is likely to weaken the immune system; that the tar in a cannabis cigarette contains concentrations up to 50% higher of many of the known carcinogens in tobacco smoke; that cannabis cigarettes deposit four times as much tar on the respiratory tract as unfiltered tobacco cigarettes and that Benzopyrene, a constituent of the tar in cannabis cigarettes, alters gene p53 which plays a role in 75% of all lung cancers.

Cannabis deaths

Those in favour of cannabis legalisation often claim that there are no reported cannabis-induced deaths. It is important to understand what this means. It means only that there are no reported deaths directly attributable solely and immediately to a toxic overdose of cannabis.

There are, however, cannabis-related deaths. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reports a total of 184 cannabis-related deaths (60 of these in Western Australia) for the five years 1997-2001. ABS breaks these figures down into: 68 Mental (i.e. mental and behavioural disorders due to psychoactive substance use); 98 Accidental

(i.e. accidental poisoning by and exposure to noxious substances); 11 Suicide (i.e. intentional self-poisoning by and exposure to drugs); 7 Undetermined (i.e. drug related deaths with undetermined intent).

Despite these ABS figures the Community Drug Summit — which recommended the toleration of cannabis possession and cultivation for "personal use" — was given a table of drug-related deaths purporting to be based on ABS figures which showed 0 (zero) cannabis related deaths for each year from 1985-1999.

The ABS has only recorded one drug-related death from 1997-2001 where



cannabis was the only drug involved. Cannabis is often one factor in a poly-drug cocktail that causes death, including cannabis in combination with alcohol.

However, United States data from the Drug Abuse Warning Network, based on those counties in which medical examiners test for cannabis, indicates that out of 664 reported cannabis-related deaths in 1999 some 28% or 187 involved cannabis only.

United Kingdom data report some

cannabis-related deaths that were caused by inhalation of vomit while intoxicated only on cannabis.

Norwegian researchers have recently reported a series of six case studies of acute cardiovascular death in young adults where very recent cannabis ingestion was documented by the presence of THC in post-mortem blood samples and no other drugs were present.

Road traffic deaths

A recent report from P Swann of VicRoads Safety Department, "The real risks of being killed when driving whilst impaired by cannabis", shows that cannabis intoxication leads to a relative risk of 6 of causing a fatal road accident. Cannabis intoxication alone (that is excluding cases where alcohol or other drugs were also present) was found to be responsible for 4.3% of driver fatalities. These cannabis-related deaths are *not* included in the ABS figures cited above.

Reckless

In the light of these studies and death statistics it would seem to require a reckless disregard for the mental and physical health of New Zealand young people to do anything likely to increase access to and use of cannabis.

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Between You and Me!

A collection of some of my favourites!

Dick Vanderpyl

Don't say: "I am on the way to the evening of my life" but rather a Christian ought to say, "I am on the way to the morning of a new life".

There is nothing new under the sun, . . . many things are so often extremely tiresome!

It is not easy taking a stand for what is right, when every one around you is running after what is wrong! Don't go with the flow!

One should give a lot of thought to a sudden decision!
It is with your heart that you believe and it is with your mouth you confess!

"Nothing is ever accomplished by a committee unless it consists of three members; one of whom happens to be sick and the other absent.

Without regard to lawsuits among believers. Paul suggest (commands) that it is biblically "to appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 1 Corinthians

6:4. Keep reading the following verses to get the picture. (You didn't know this, didn't you?)

A closed mouth catches no flies!
An old man is a bed full of bones.
A fault confessed is half re-dressed.
A man without a smiling face must not open a shop.

If you answer a silly question, you are just as silly as the person who asked it. (Prov. 26:45).

Reading! He who does not read is no better off than he who cannot read.

Your thoughts: be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts.

A bachelor's fare: bread, cheese and kisses.

Every one says forgiveness until they have something to forgive

Do as I say, not as I do!

Friends are thieves of time!

You know what you know and you don't know what you don't know.

The problem with learning from experience is that the lesson comes after the test.

The more we count the blessings we have, the less we crave the luxuries we haven't.

Eternal Life: Sure! Why do people feel spiritually lost?

1. Never accepted Christ as Saviour.
2. Presence of sin makes one feel unsaved.
3. An over emphasis on emotionalism.
4. Satan tries to tell you that are **not** a child of God.

The path of Righteous:

1. Guard your heart, thought, conscience;
2. Put away perversity from your mouth;
3. Keep corrupt talk from your lips;
4. Fix your gaze directly before you;
5. Make level paths for your feet;
6. Take only ways that are firm;
7. Don't swerve to the right or left;
8. Keep your feet from evil.

The man of few words and settled mind is wise; it pays to keep your mouth shut. (Proverbs 17:27. After all, silence is the most difficult argument to refute.

OUR TESTIMONY:

- 1/ Character = who we are!
- 2/ Conduct = what we do!
- 3/ Conversation = what we say

The Great Commandment: Love Others.
The Great Commission: Witness to Others.
The Great Commitment: Serve others.

A good learner is one whose ears get as much use as is his or her mouth.

Too often Christian Unity can be illustrated by two cold porcupines huddling together – they need each other, but they needle each other.

Little people with little minds jog through life in little ruts, smugly resisting all changes that would jar their little world,

The Melody of praise is best played with the notes of praise, adoration, confession, and thanksgiving.

Child training is chiefly a matter of knowing which end of the child to pat – and when.

Those who expect to repent tomorrow usually die today.

The more a person takes the needs of others to heart, the more he or she will take his or her own heart to God

Too many people pray like little children who knock on doors then run away.

A Christian is one who does not have to consult a bankbook to see how wealthy he or she really is.

Close your eyes and you will see everything you actually possess.

Advice from a mother to a daughter about injustices:
Do not be so ignorant and stupid and inhuman as they are. Go to a wise elderly and ask for the medicine that will turn your heart from bitterness to sweetness. You must learn the wisdom of how to let go of poison.

Our God has a big eraser.

A Point to Ponder:

I am not what I might be, I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I hope to be; but I thank God that I am not what I once was. And I can say with the great apostle: "By the grace of God I am what I am. (John Newton).

To be important is nice, but to be real nice is more important.

That God created us from dust is no reason to treat another person like dirt.

A faith that falters before the finish was faulty from the finish.

Only when we place ourselves in God's hands, can we bring glory to Him and growth to ourselves.

Let us pray not for lighter burdens but for stronger backs.

It is good to be a Christian and know it; it is better to be a Christian and show it!

People like not only to be loved but also to be told they are loved; the realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave.

Good leaders take more than their share of blame and less than their share of credit.

God invites us to burden Him with what burdens us.

Fear the Lord and you will live longer; wicked men die before their time. Proverbs 10:27

The more you talk, the more you are likely to sin. If you are wise, you will keep quiet. Proverbs 10:19

Wisdom will add years to your life! Proverbs 9:11

Don't get so involved with the work of the Lord that you neglect the Lord of the work!

Stop your thoughts attack negatives. Don't allow your thoughts to make your life miserable.

There is no such a thing as an accident, only incidents in the perfect will of God.

A feminine focus

The spiritual discipline of prayer

(This is the third in a series of articles reviewing and applying Donald S. Whitney's Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life. Additional insights are from Don Carson's writings on prayer.)

Martin Luther once wrote: "As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray." God expects us to pray: the Lord's prayer, as it came from Jesus' lips, is full of expressions *assuming* that we will pray, rather than urging us to do it. But of course it ought to be a natural aspect of our lives as Christians. Prayer is spiritual conversation with our Father in heaven. We are in a spiritual relationship with Him. Don't we speak to all those we have human relationships with? If you're married, don't you expect your husband to phone you when he's away on business? If you're young and still at home, don't your parents expect you to contact them to tell them you've arrived safely when you go away? These are the expectations of love. And it's the same with God.

Christian's don't pray

Donald Whitney is at his practical best when he discusses prayer and its place in our lives as a spiritual discipline. But you might ask - why should prayer be a spiritual "discipline" when, after all, talking is as easy as breathing? The answer lies in a simple fact.

Christians don't pray. Or, at least, only a fraction as much as they should. When Paul commanded us to "pray without ceasing" he didn't mean the 5 minutes a day that was the average time 17,000 members of major evangelical denominations surveyed in the U.S. in the 1980s spent in prayer. Sadly, many Christians seem to forget to pray at all - for long periods. Perhaps we are not even as good as the 17,000 surveyed 20 years ago? Whitney knows what we're like - he's a pastor - and he's concerned that we look honestly at our shortcomings and the reasons for them. Only then will we actually do something about them.

The first reason Whitney gives for lack of prayer is a lack of discipline in our lives. Purposeless, drifting days mean important things are not done. If prayer is not planned, if time is not allotted to it, it just gets crowded out by urgencies and distractions. Now, Whitney does give other reasons Christians don't pray (such as doubt that anything will happen, an absence of awareness of God's presence, no awareness of need). But I somehow suspect that such thoughts have little impact on people who have spent their lives hearing good preaching week after week. No, I fear that lack of discipline is the major reason we don't pray as we should.

How many times have you got up in the morning and determined to read the Scriptures, and to pray - for 10 minutes or so? You manage the bible reading, your mind focuses on that all right - but then your mind wanders... better put the jug on for coffee... will I have toast or cereal for breakfast this morning? And then a magazine article catches your eye... the telephone rings... someone calls out a question from another room. Before you know it, it's time to go to work, or get the children out of bed - or whatever. You didn't manage to pray - *again*.

And even if you do start to pray, your mind wanders - something like this:

"Dear Lord, I thank you for the opportunity of coming into your presence by the merits of Jesus. It is a wonderful blessing to call

you Father... I wonder where I left the car keys? [No, no! Back to business.] Heavenly Father, I began by asking that you will watch over my family - not just in the physical sphere, but in the moral and spiritual dimensions of our lives... Boy, last Sunday's sermon was really bad. I wonder if I'll get that report written on time? [No, no!] Father, give real fruitfulness to that missionary couple we support, whatever their name is... Oh, dear! I had almost forgotten I promised to babysit the nieces and nephews on Saturday..." Yes, it's not for nothing that Paul urges the Roman Christians to "*strive*" together with him in prayer. Prayer is hard work. It takes a great deal of energy and concentration. In fact, as Dr Pipa told us last year in a sermon at Dovedale, "regular fervent prayer is the hardest work you can do." The world, the flesh and the devil, in the form of countless distractions, will strive together to keep us from it.



What will help us to pray

But there is a lot that we can do to arrest our habits of mental drift, to get ourselves closeted, alone and praying. There are practical steps – and they add up to spiritual discipline. Don Carson, whose failed prayer I just quoted (with Kiwi adaptation), has practical help to offer. He recommends vocalising our prayer as one of the most useful ways to stamp out daydreaming. We don't have to be loud – even just murmuring or whispering our prayer is enough to discipline the mind and keep it from wandering. I think this works (I've tried it) because it enlists the help of our ears. Because we *hear* what we're saying, we can much more easily order our thoughts and pay attention to the choice of words and phrases. It engages our minds better.

The second thing we can do is pray over, or through the Scriptures. You can, after careful and reflective reading of your bible passage(s) for the day, turn your reflections and applications into prayers. Prayers of thanks and wonder to God for what He has done (as shown in your reading); prayers of supplication that He will help you do what the passage teaches; prayers of intercession that He will do for others (eg give them saving faith) as He gave it to you; prayers of confession of the sin described in what you

have just read. Perhaps you found the passage difficult to understand? You could pray for the Holy Spirit's illuminating help as you read it again, and as you meditate on it during the day. Another way of praying through the Scriptures is to adopt biblical prayers as models. Read them carefully, think through what Paul, or Jesus or David is saying, and then pray similar prayers for yourself, your family, your church – and for many others beyond your own immediate circle.

Journaling is another good way to concentrate our minds for prayer. I want to write more of this later; but in connection with prayer, writing in a daily spiritual journal has real benefits. The mere act of writing down our praying thoughts to God slows us down, forces us to think about the words we are using, and enables us to clarify the muddle that might be going on in our mind. Have you ever found yourself frustrated at not being able to express yourself clearly in an important discussion – particularly over a serious matter? Perhaps you said – let me go away and write down what I mean – it'll come out better. Maybe you wanted to comfort a grieving friend – or bare your heart in a way you're afraid to do face to face lest you say the wrong thing and offend? No doubt you wrote a letter or a card. Well, the same

process of writing can help us express ourselves better to God. Normally we picture prayer as ourselves sitting quietly, communicating with God intimately, in our thoughts as it were. But writing our prayers as we pray them has great value – not only in terms of focus and clarity, but also because we can remember them. Reading them over, days, months or years later can be truly encouraging. It will help us realise that we faced trials before – *and we took them to our Father, who comforted us. We had joys and triumphs – and we thanked Him for those. We asked Him for help, for relief from suffering – and he answered our prayers.* This will encourage our faith, and give us every reason to pray again and again.

We only need to pray

Apart from the need for self-discipline, another reason some us are discouraged about our prayer is the sense that we don't know how to pray very well. This can really get us down – and for many of us, is a real disincentive to pray in public. Maybe you've always avoided going to prayer meetings because you're embarrassed about your praying? Well, here Don Whitney is a great deal of help. Prayer, he emphasizes, is something we learn, and get better at doing. Listen to this kind pastor:

"... it's okay to start the Christian life without any knowledge or experience of prayer. No matter how weak or strong your prayer life is right now, you can learn to grow even stronger. There is a sense in which prayer needs to be taught to a child of God no more than a baby needs to be taught to cry. But crying for basic needs is minimal communication, and we must soon grow beyond that infancy. The Bible says we must pray for the glory of God, in His will, in faith, in the name of Jesus, with persistence and more. A child of God gradually learns to pray like this in the same way that a growing child learns to talk. To pray as expected, to pray as a maturing Christian, and to pray effectively, we must say with the disciples in Luke 11:1, 'Lord, teach us to pray.'"

So, how do we learn to pray, according to Whitney? His most important point is that we learn to pray by *praying*. Just as we learn another language best by having to speak it (for example, by going to live in Germany in order to be forced to speak German constantly), we learn prayer most quickly and effectively by praying; frequently, and in every circumstance. And as surely as it is the presence of the Holy Spirit in our hearts who helps us to pray, He guides us in our prayer better when we are actually praying – rather than simply thinking about it. By praying often

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To:

**The Reformed Church of Hamilton,
Attention Theo Grul
P.O. Box 15-129, Hamilton.
Or alternatively email tcgrul@hnpl.net**

we gain confidence in prayer as a habit, as a reflex response to good news, to bad news, to joy, fear, doubt, and confusion – whatever our situation may be. The more we pray the more fluent and persuasive our prayers will be. And as Whitney assures us, “No matter how weak or strong your prayer life is right now, you can learn to grow even stronger.”

Getting specific

There are also specific helps in learning prayer that, if cultivated and used to profit, can make a real difference to our prayer lives. The foremost of these is studying Scripture. This is not only to find in Scripture the things we ought to be praying about – as meditating on what we have read in our daily readings will teach us in the way we’ve discussed above – but also to instruct us on the subject of prayer. Scripture, for one thing, teaches us why we should pray. Have you ever doubted whether we should pray, given that God knows all things and will sovereignly bring to pass His perfect will anyway? Or, on the other hand, have you ever been burdened by the fear that things haven’t happened as they should have because you neglected to pray – that God’s actions depend on your faithfulness in prayer? Don Carson explains that Scripture, taken as a whole, shows us how to avoid these two wrong attitudes to prayer. God *is* utterly sovereign, and He is also a prayer-hearing and prayer-answering God. If we pray with the knowledge the Bible gives us, we will not “wobble back and forth between a resigned fatalism that asks for nothing and a badgering desperation that exhibits little real trust.”

Scripture also teaches us how to pray by showing us the character, purposes and promises of God. If we know what the God to whom we pray is like, and what His wishes are, we will certainly know how to pray for the things that He wants – that please Him. And if we know what He has promised, we can pray for those things with certainty and confidence that He will hear us, and answer those prayers. The prayers of Scripture also give us useful models of what to ask, and how to ask it. Carson has written a whole book on what the prayers of the Apostle Paul teach us about prayer – which is a great deal, especially when it comes to intercession for others. (One of Paul’s constant prayers was that the early Christians would grow in knowledge, wisdom and maturity).

The language of Scripture also gives us ideas, words and phrases with which to pray. This isn’t just stringing quotations of Scripture together as we construct our prayers (although sometimes that is not such a bad idea). But as our knowledge of Scripture grows, and as our minds and hearts are increasingly filled with it, and changed by study of it, we will find our prayer becoming deeper and more varied. In one of his daily

meditations, Carson (commenting on Psalm 135) notices that as the psalmist “builds his exuberant hymn of praise, consciously or unconsciously he interweaves phrase after phrase, sometimes whole verses, drawn from other Scriptures.” This used to be the way evangelical Christians prayed. As they “poured out their hearts to the Lord in prayer meetings,” Carson observes, “both praise and petition were cast in the language of Scripture. Of course, at its worst this sort of thing was a canned recitation of the same half-dozen texts. But at its best, such praise and prayer roamed through ever-wider vistas of Scripture, as the people’s knowledge of Scripture was itself growing. There is something mature and biblically evocative about such praise, and as different from today’s narrow themes of clichéd sentimentalism as Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony is from “Mary Had a Little Lamb.”

We can also learn a great deal from prayer by praying with more mature Christians. One may teach us how to use biblical reasoning in our prayer as he pleads with God to answer his prayer. Another may show you how to pray through a passage you have just been meditating on. Yet others may simply set us a great example in the frequency, persistence and genuine faithfulness of their habits of prayer. Carson urges us to seek good models for prayer – not just so we can ape their idiom, but so we can study their content and their urgency. He himself was given a fine and humble example of persevering prayer by his parents (his father was a Baptist

church planter serving in small congregations in Quebec – in most discouraging days when fruit was seldom evident). Another man (Martyn Lloyd-Jones) encouraged him by his regular prayer for a wide circle of people. Two women he mentions inspired him with the compassion that was so obviously the motivation for their prayer... “They prayed in line with the truth of Scripture, but they prayed because they loved people.” We need to look for people who are experienced in prayer, who pray with wisdom, conviction, urgency and love. But obviously, we won’t find them unless we are regularly praying with others – and talking with them about prayer. When was the last time you met with someone for prayer, went to a church prayer meeting – or had a serious conversation on the subject of prayer? These are the only ways we will find a good model for prayer – a personal model who will teach us how to pray.

Summing it up

And this takes us back to the beginning of the circle: prayer is a spiritual discipline. It needs to be planned, practised and learned. To be sure, it should be as natural to the Christian who loves her God as breathing: but given our sinful natures there will be many things to distract us from it, which will stifle our spiritual breath, as it were. Prayer *is* one of the hardest things we have to do - if we do it properly. But there is every encouragement: we have the Holy Spirit, who helps us in this, as in all our weaknesses.

Synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia, 2003

[The following fraternal address is abridged. The full text of the speech and the response by the Free Reformed Churches of Australia can be found at the following website: www.frca.org.au]

Mr. Chairman
Members of the Moderamen
Fellow delegates, and visitors to the synod:

Thank you for the welcome I have received and for the privilege of addressing you at this synod. For me, this is the third time that I have stood in your midst in this capacity and we have also been able to welcome your delegates at our synods over the last 12

years...

I bring greetings on behalf our churches in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We don’t always see things the same way, and we are not carbon copies of one another. Our churches have a slightly different history and background from that of your own churches but in spite of minor differences, we stand together in the historic Reformed faith. We testify to the sovereignty of God in the world at large and in salvation and we proclaim man’s calling and purpose to glorify God and enjoy him forever. In a day when there is much misunderstanding and false teaching among those who claim to follow Christ, and much godlessness and unbelief in society at large, these truths that we



profess are a great heritage. They are not a trench into which we must retreat but a citadel from which we must advance, and as churches we would like to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in our service to the King.

Let me update you with something of what lives in our churches across the Tasman...Our Overseas Mission Board has been investigating the possibility of sending a full-time missionary to PNG. One of our pastors was very keen to go there. He would have fitted in very well, but his family circumstances made this unwise at this time. Our churches are committed to exploring this possibility further and we remain in close contact with Rev. 'tHart. As I was putting this speech together, I received word of Mr. Wayne VanderHeide's appointment as Mission Worker for the work in Papua New

Guinea. We are delighted to hear this and will pray for the Lord's blessing upon his work there...

Since it is of particular interest and concern to you, let me give a little more detail about our relationship with the Christian Reformed Churches of Australia. Our sister church relationship with them has been under strain in recent years. We have been concerned about their decision to open the office of deacon to women, although in connection with this, they have separated off the diaconate from the ruling session. We have been concerned about their discussions regarding the procedures by which young people may profess their faith in the CRCA and also the variety of worship practices within the CRCA...

The subject of worship will be a matter of ongoing discussion. On the subject of

children and church membership, I am pleased to report that...the CRCA do not want to move away from the idea of "confessional membership"...However, no congregation requires an exhaustive or comprehensive understanding and appreciation of the confessions as a condition for public profession of faith. It was therefore decided [at CRCA Synod 2003] to go back to the earlier wording for all professions of faith. But this synod clarified what this meant by affirming: 1) that the second question of the profession of faith form does not require a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the confessions; 2) that the aim of this question is that, through ongoing instruction, we may grow in unity in the truth for which our Lord prayed in John 17:16,23.

As fraternal delegates to the CRCA Synod, we were more concerned with the decisions regarding women in the office of deacon. At least 7 CRCA congregations now have women deacons and in some cases the deacons do not meet separately from the session. Some other congregations have no problem with women as deacons but were waiting until the outcome of Synod 2003. On the other hand, some congregations are strongly opposed to the decision on Scriptural and Confessional grounds...

This was a major issue before Synod 2003 because of two significant appeals from two classes against the decision of Synod 2000...Everyone was given ample time to present his views but when the appeals were put to the vote, they were not sustained.

Later, a further decision was taken in relation to this matter. It was decided to establish a committee to further study the confessional issue raised by the CRCA's separation of the diaconate from the session and to bring its findings back to the next synod. It was stated that depending on its findings, this committee may demonstrate the correctness of the traditional interpretation of the relevant articles of the Belgic Confession; demonstrate that the Confession does not in fact require us to keep the deacons on session; or instigate a process leading to a gravamen. As you can see, the matter is still under discussion in the CRCA and we will be monitoring this closely.

We are sad that the discussions between yourselves and the CRCA have broken down. Both your committees responsible for ecumenical contact have concluded that further discussions, at this point, would not be productive. While we respect your decisions and your right to make them, we do believe that face to face interaction is the only way that you will be able to remove the misunderstandings and misconceptions that exist on both sides and make any



progress in discussing the real issues that separate you.

What of our relationship with you? Our Synod 2002 expressed thanks to you for your acknowledgement of the RCNZ as true and faithful churches of the Lord Jesus Christ and for your proposal to establish a fraternal relationship with us...

Synod 2002 re-affirmed its desire to offer the FRCA a sister-church relationship. We do not have the category of fraternal relations and it is our desire to relate to you on the highest level of ecumenical contact. Reading your deputies' report to this synod, I can see that this may not be possible at this stage because of our relationship with the CRCA. You will have to debate this matter, but from our side, we wish to be open to you, to explain clearly where we are at and why in the hope that the remaining impediment can be removed.

Brothers, we pray for the Lord's blessings upon your deliberations – that your decisions may be in accordance with the revealed Word and for the furtherance of the Lord's kingdom here in Australia and further afield.

Thank you.

* * * * *

This speech was warmly received by the FRCA synod, which was held in July in Rockingham, Western Australia. During the last three years the FRCA have experienced both sadness and blessing. In the congregation in Launceston, there have been difficulties which culminated in the withdrawal of a minister from the FRCA in September last year. On a happier note, two new congregations have been instituted – one in Bunbury on December 25, 2001 and one more recently in Darling Downs. The churches' interest in mission work continues unabated, although the FRCA do not have a mission board that coordinates the efforts of all the churches. Instead, individual congregations support different works in different countries including PNG, India and Sumba. The churches have also supported mission work in South Africa through contact with their sister church there, the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa. In connection with mission, the synod made it possible for a person trained with a Diploma of Theological Studies (plus special missiological, language and cultural studies) to be ordained as a minister of the Word (missionary) for foreign mission work only for an agreed term. On completion of that work, the missionary will be released from office by the sending church and thereby his ministerial status will cease. This decision arose as a result of a prolonged attempt to call an ordained missionary to areas such as PNG, but without success. It will mean

that a person will, upon receipt of some training (but less than the training necessary to be a minister in the FRCA), be able to serve in foreign mission and assist developing churches, preaching the Word and administering the sacraments.

As is normal at FRCA synods, the subject of interchurch relations occupied a good deal of time. The FRCA have sister church relationships with the Canadian Reformed Churches, the Reformed Churches of the Netherlands (Liberated) the Free Reformed Churches of South Africa, the Presbyterian Church of Korea (Koshin), and the Reformed Churches in Indonesia. At this synod, fraternal delegates were received from the Netherlands and South Africa and one of the Dutch delegates had also been asked by the Indonesian churches to give a speech on their behalf since they were unable to send a representative. The FRCA have also been pursuing contact with the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia and the RCNZ with a view to establishing sister relations if possible. It was heartening to see the level of interest and involvement that the FRCA have in mission work and their active maintenance and pursuit of interchurch relations. They do not always see eye to eye with their sister churches and there are sometimes concerns and issues that need

to be discussed and worked through, in much the same way as we are doing with the CRCA. But the FRCA very much appreciate their ecumenical contacts and are seeking to be faithful within these relationships.

The matter of the RCNZ was always going to be difficult matter for this synod. There is a deepening appreciation of our churches in the FRCA and a strong desire to enter sister relations, but they have not yet been able to solve the problem of "triangular relations" – that is – how can they have a sister church relation with us while we remain in full sister church contact with the CRCA? They have many concerns about the CRCA and, some decisions, especially the decision regarding women as deacons, have not encouraged them to be optimistic about the direction of our sister church as they perceive it. They realise that we, for our part, are acting faithfully and expressing the very concerns that they also share, but mutual discussions between the FRCA and the CRCA have sadly broken down. They no longer have any formal contact. For the FRCA, there are pastoral issues that arise were they to have sister relations with us. For example, if I as an RCNZ minister, preached in a CRCA congregation in the morning, and an FRCA congregation in the evening (as would be theoretically possible if we had sister

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relations), this would cause great unrest for their members. Also, if our sessions transferred members to a CRCA congregation (and not an FRCA congregation in the very same vicinity) that would also cause hurt and consternation. For us, these may not appear significant problems. I believe our ministers would act with sensitivity if and when it came to preaching in FRCA congregations. And individual sessions would give advice and guidance depending upon where their members were intending to relocate, but for the FRCA these are huge obstacles, which they have not yet been able to resolve in their minds. After listening to the discussion of three FRCA synods now, in my view, the "triangular relation issue" would not be nearly so much of a problem were the CRCA not "on the doorstep" of the FRCA and yet relations between them remain very cool. As evidence of this, the FRCA have no problem with our own sister relations with the GKN Liberated and now with the PCEA although there too the triangle remains "unclosed". It is also my view that misunderstandings and caricatures live in both the FRCA and the CRCA and there is a great deal of "baggage" on both sides. Furthermore, these two federations have different ways of conducting these kinds of discussions. There are different expectations and different methods employed, which result in these churches,

to some extent, talking (or writing) past each other. This makes the pursuit of contact very difficult. Both sides have made a genuine attempt, but both sides have lost heart and at this point have no desire to continue.

So then, what did the FRCA decide in relation to the RCNZ? Here is the text of their decision:

Decision:

1. Not to proceed with the decision in principle to offer fraternal relations.
2. To confirm what the 2000 Synod said in principle, namely, to recognise that the RCNZ are true churches of the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. To ask the RCNZ for time and patience so that we can discuss the matter of third parties and the implications of an offer of sister relation with them, and that we can offer sister relations with unity and joy.
4. To recognise that the only remaining difficulty with entering into a relationship with the RCNZ is the relationship of the RCNZ with the CRCA.
5. To assess the situation with respect to this relation at an upcoming synod to see if this remains a difficulty to entering into full sister-church relations or not.
6. To appoint deputies with the following mandate:
 - a. to convey these decisions to the RCNZ
 - b. to assess to what extent the triangular

relationship needs to be an impediment for entering into full sister-church relations and to report back to the churches on this six months before the next synod.

c. to intensify dialogue with the RCNZ on matters of common concern and interest, also by inter-synodical visits, if the synodical budget allows

d. to invite the RCNZ to send delegate(s) to our next synod, and to authorise deputies to send two delegates to the next synod of the RCNZ.

e. to keep the churches informed of any developments in the RCNZ and to encourage the churches to become better acquainted with the RCNZ by way of literature and visits.

Grounds:

1. From the responses of the churches to the decision of the 2000 Synod and from the appeals of the churches it becomes clear that the offer of fraternal relations does not find general acceptance. The RCNZ have rejected this offer as well.
2. All the reports of the deputies have informed us that the RCNZ has the three marks of the true church and thus the decision in principle should now be confirmed.
3. The triangular relationship with the CRCA continues to be a point of division among the FRCA, although we note that the RCNZ maintain this relationship in a Scriptural manner. In order to build consensus among ourselves to what extent the triangular relations should be an impediment, it is best to take time before we offer sister relations, so that it can be done with unity and joy. Hopefully the RCNZ can accept that desire.

Having attended the FRCA synod, it seems to me that this is a wise and responsible decision. Discussions need to take place within the FRCA in order to help resolve the difference of opinion that they have regarding the significance of our sister church relationship to the CRCA. Our churches should note that the FRCA are not holding out any preconditions to us or asking us to do anything else than we are already doing, which is to act faithfully within our rules for sister church relationships. While there is strong sentiment within the FRCA to enter sister relations with the RCNZ, they are asking us for a little more time and patience so that they can do this with unity and joy. Our churches will have to decide how to respond to their decision at Synod 2005. Personally, I hope that contact may be pursued. The FRCA would be very sad indeed to lose contact with us. Our churches will have to consider the situation very carefully and decide how best to proceed from here.

Rev. Dr. Michael Flinn

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The Fountain Christian School, a caring 18-pupil school with a special character situated in Foxton, has the vacancy for a Principal/Teacher with assistance teaching Y1-Y8 beginning in January 2004.

This position requires a committed Christian with a desire to apply Biblical principles to teaching and school management.

For a job description and application form please write to:

The Secretary HCSA
9 Liddell Street
Foxton, NZ

Please apply before September 12, 2003.

World in focus

Union is closer than unity in the Netherlands

The body charged with finishing plans to unite The Reformed Churches in The Netherlands [GKN], The Netherlands Reformed Church [NHK], and a small Lutheran denomination, adopted a Unification Decision 13 June. The structure envisioned to emerge 1 May 2004 has been on the negotiating table more than 40 years. Property and confession remain sticky issues.

GKN congregations will have five years to leave the Protestant Church in the Netherlands [PCN] with their property if they find the new structure unsatisfactory. Such freedom doesn't satisfy 22 congregations which consider congregational ownership of buildings and unrestricted right of withdrawal integral to their heritage. A proposal to extend the right of departure to 10 years does not seem to be reducing tensions.

On the NHK side some 262 congregations objected to inclusion of the Lutheran confessions in the new confessional cabinet. The NHK churches do not have the right to opt out of the plan, so some of them appear inclined to ditch the entire project over the confessional issue.
+ *Reformed Ecumenical Council, 2050 Breton Rd. SE Ste 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49546-5547*

Circuit court declares Alabama supreme court religion free zone

The 11th US Circuit Court of Appeals on 1 July ordered a 10 Commandments display removed from the Alabama Supreme Court. An AP report quoted the three judge panel as saying "If we adopt his position, [Chief Justice Roy Moore] would be free to adorn the walls of the Alabama Supreme Court's courtroom with sectarian religious murals and have decidedly religious quotations painted above the bench." One week earlier the 3rd circuit in Philadelphia determined to leave a Ten Commandments display on a wall outside a courthouse.

Richard Cohen, general counsel of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which represented Montgomery attorney Stephen Glassroth who filed suit to remove the monument, called the decision "a great day for the people of Alabama" and said Moore should resign as chief justice.

In published reports Moore noted, "Federal district courts have no jurisdiction or authority to prohibit the acknowledgment of God that is specifically recognized in the Constitution of Alabama."

The monument arrived in 2001, during

late night hours of 31 July and early 1 August. He said when the monument was unveiled on Aug. 1 that it was a fulfillment of his campaign pledge to restore the moral foundation of the law.

+ *Southern Poverty Law Center, 400 Washington Avenue, Montgomery, Alabama 36104 (334) 956-8200*

+ *Chief Justice Roy Moore, Center For Reclaiming America, PO Box 632, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33302*

Rivermont Presbyterian Church leaves the PCUSA for the EPC

The Presbytery of the Peaks approved an agreement in which the 122-year-old Rivermont Presbyterian Church will transfer just under 900 members from the Presbyterian Church (USA) to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church.

The Lynchburg, Virginia, congregation voted 22 June by a 95 percent margin to accept the conditions of separation. Rivermont agreed to pay Peaks 30 percent of the appraised value of its current real estate holdings. Presbytery retains the name "Rivermont Presbyterian Church" and could obtain the property, or have first right of refusal to buy it, under certain circumstances.

The PC(USA) has been losing membership each year for decades.

+ *[Rivermont] Presbyterian Church, 2424 Rivermont Ave, Lynchburg, VA 24503 (434)846-3441*

200 police halt church construction in Vietnam

For the second time in three years, authorities in Ho Chi Minh City halted construction of a church. At 4 AM 9 June believers transported building materials to the site and, while one group prayed, another constructed a temporary frame. At 7 AM, an estimated 200 police arrived, but left after realizing they could not legally stop the project.

The incident ended when authorities hauled away the materials. Two weeks later, Catholic priests Peter Nguyen Huu Giai and Peter Phan Van Loi published a "Letter of Solidarity with the Protestant Church in Vietnam" expressing strong support for the building project.

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

Announcing EMO F. J. Van Halsema Fellowship

H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies at Calvin College and Calvin Theological Seminary is offering a research fellowship to pastors from Reformed tradition. The program provides a four-week fellowship and

includes a stipend. Apply by 1 January 2004.

+ *The H. Henry Meeter Center for Calvin Studies, 3201 Burton Street, SE Grand Rapids, MI 49546 (616) 526-7081 meeter@calvin.edu*

Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales

Bethany Christian Fellowship of Neath, Wales, has entered the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in England and Wales. The Brian and Sian Harris family began making the 40-mile trip to Cardiff West to attend EPCWE services at the Bethel EP Church and soon attracted four other adults to make the trip. In January the group began study in Heath of Presbyterian Distinctives with David Cross. In March Sabbath afternoon services and Thursday evening studies started in a local school.

Attendance for Sabbath services climbed to 20 by Easter. Rev. Richard Holst leads the congregation during a search for a full-time organizing minister.

+ *Bethany Christian Fellowship, 8 Woodville Tce., Bryncoch, Neath, SA 10 7EQ Wales, United Kingdom*

Persecution in Pakistan turns deadly

Six gunmen killed a priest on 5 July. Father George Ibrahim, 38, was gunned down while sleeping in his home near Okara, 180 miles south of Islamabad in Punjab province.

Archbishop of Lahore Lawrence J. Saldanha said the main motive for the murder appeared to be the government's decision to return ownership of a church school to Fr. Ibrahim's parish.

In 1972, the government nationalized Christian Urdu-language schools without compensation. But 20 years later the Supreme Court declared forced nationalization unconstitutional and owners began filing for restoration of the institutions, a process which government-employed school administrators and teachers actively resisted.

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

July in history

10 July 1509 John Calvin was born was born in France.

9 July 1896 William Cameron Townsend, American missionary-linguist, was born. He began his career in 1917 as a 21-year-old Bible salesman in Guatemala. Later he also worked in Mexico and Peru. In 1942 Townsend incorporated the Wycliffe Bible Translators in Glendale, California. The organization has since grown to over 4,500 members. W.B.T. is an interdenominational

mission agency involved primarily in Bible translation, linguistics and literacy. Headquartered since 1974 in Huntington Beach, California, W.B.T. works in nearly 750 minority languages in over 40 countries throughout the world.

+ Wycliffe Bible Translators, PO Box 628200,
Orlando, Florida 32862-8200

Larry Burkett 1939-2003

Following a long and courageous battle with both cancer and heart disease, Larry Burkett died 4 July 2003. In 1973, Dr. Bill Bright invited Larry and his wife Judy to join the staff of Campus Crusade for Christ. In 1976, this ministry matured into Christian Financial Concepts and later became Crown Financial Ministries. Larry was a prolific writer producing more than 70 books including several best sellers and his radio program was carried on more than 1,000 stations.

A memorial service is planned for 11 July 2003 at 1:00 PM at the Church of the Apostles in Atlanta, Georgia.

+ Crown Financial Ministries, PO Box 2377,
Gainesville, GA 30503-2377 (404) 534-1000

Is the PC[USA] per capita a franchise fee or a donation?

The appeals highest court in the Presbyterian Church (USA) will determine in July if an Ohio presbytery can punish local

sessions for failure to pay their per-capita allotments that support the denomination. In February 2002, the Presbytery of Scioto Valley approved a statement that requires all congregations to pay assigned per-capita apportionments unless they are specifically excused by the presbytery.

That policy conflicts with long-standing church law, declarations by the General Assembly and church court rulings that say payment of per-capita is voluntary.

Two Ohio congregations challenged the presbytery's policy, but the Synod of the Covenant ruled against that challenge.

+ Presbytery of Scioto Valley, 6172 Busch Blvd.,
Suite 2048 Columbus OH 43229 (614) 847-0565

Invitation to Unitarian Theologian cancelled

Montreat Conference Center has canceled a denominational conference for women that was to have featured a Unitarian theologian who denies that Christ died for the sins of the world. Katheryne L. Goodman of the Women's Advocacy Office of the Presbyterian Church (USA) said the decision to cancel the conference, which was scheduled August 9-12, was made by the Montreat Conference Center.

Officially the conference was canceled because of low registration. Nonetheless,

Goodman said the scheduled keynote address by Rita Nakashima Brock, the Unitarian theologian, was not compatible with the purpose of the conference, but that she did not believe that was part of the reason for the cancellation.

Brock was one of the major speakers at the 10th Anniversary Re-Imagining Gathering in Minneapolis June 19-22.

+ Montreat Conference Center, PO Box 969,
Montreat, NC 28757,

200 Indonesian militants captured - 2,800 still at large

Between 4-12 July, Indonesian police arrested nine suspected Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) militants. At least four other members of the same cell eluded capture. Despite almost 200 arrests, JI remains a serious threat with some 3,000 of its Afghanistan-trained members still at large.

Dozens of JI operatives have allegedly been trained as suicide bombers. Training camps operate throughout the region and are visited regularly by militants from the Middle East.

On 9 July the police seized a huge cache of weaponry. Bomb-making supplies included 1,200 detonators, 900kg of potassium chlorate, 160kg of TNT, 65 high explosive PETN detonators, timers, and batteries.

+ Evangelical Alliance of Australia, PO Box 175, Box Hill, Victoria, Australia 3128

Vietnam updated — Thu Thiem gets its new building

Thu Thiem congregation in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City constructed its new sanctuary despite police orders in June halting work. Pastor Truong Van Nghanh's congregation began worshipping in the sanctuary in July, even though denominational officials had advised Nghanh that the government wanted him to "temporarily stop meeting in the church."

City authorities then invited congregational leaders to an unprecedented meeting on 10 July. Officials of the Bureau of Religious Affairs admitted local government offices had not expeditiously processed the church's request for a building permit. Nghanh admitted he began building before final approval on land use. Mutual admissions opened the way for compromise and resulted in the church being granted permission to continue meeting.

In remote areas authorities do not typically exercise this restraint. Since Christmas of 2002, officials in ak Lak province have destroyed five chapels belonging to the Mnong minority and ordered all Mnong churches to disband.

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

CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCHES

singles convention

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

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

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

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

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

PCA introduces another new magazine

The Presbyterian Church in America magazine, byFaith, premiered at the 2003 General Assembly. To subscribe or receive a complimentary copy of the first issue, go to www.pcanews and click on the byFaith logo, or go to www.byfaithonline.com. The introductory subscription price is \$14.95 for six issues, a savings of US\$5.

+ Presbyterian Church in America, 1700 North Brown Road, Suite 105, Lawrenceville, GA 30043 (678) 825-1000

Canadians stop Lutherans at the frontier

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has issued a last-ditch appeal to the Canadian authorities to issue visas for over 60 participants of the LWF Tenth Assembly. Over 800 participants, including 400 delegates are expected. About 35 percent of the participants require visas to enter Canada.

The Council expressed "deepest concern and outrage" about the visa denials, noting that they only affect participants from among the poorest nations of the world. "This situation reflects one of the most deplorable aspects of globalization." The result is that churches "of the South, the poor and the marginalized" are excluded from the global community.

Founded in 1947 in Lund (Sweden), the LWF has 136 member churches in 76 countries representing over 61.7 million of the 65.4 million Lutherans worldwide.

+ Lutheran World Federation, 150, route de Ferney, PO Box 2100, CH-1211 Geneva 2 Switzerland

Campus crusade founder Bill Bright dies at 81

William R. "Bill" Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ died 19 July from complications related to pulmonary fibrosis at age 81. Dr. Bright spent more than five decades building and leading the Orlando, Florida-based Campus Crusade for Christ.

Campus Crusade for Christ serves people in 191 countries through a staff of 26,000 full-time employees and more than 225,000 trained volunteers active in 60 niche ministries and projects ranging from military ministry to inner city ministry.

In 1956 Bright wrote *The Four Spiritual Laws*, which has been printed in some 200 languages and distributed to more than 2.5 billion people, making it the most widely disseminated religious booklet in history. In 1979, Bright commissioned the *JESUS* film, a feature-length documentary on the life of Christ, which has since been viewed by more than 5.1 billion people in 234 countries and has become the most widely viewed, as well as most widely translated, film in history (more than 800 languages).

Bill Bright is survived by his wife Vonette; his sister Florence Skinner; his brother Forest Bright; his son Zachary, who is pastor of Divine Savior Presbyterian Church in California; son Bradley, who is on staff with Campus Crusade; and four grandchildren. + ASSIST News Service, PO Box 2126, Garden Grove, CA 92842-2126
+ The DeMoss Group, 3235 Satellite Blvd., Suite 555, Duluth, GA 30096 (770) 813-0000

Unification won't disrupt South African churches

The fear that local congregations will be forced to dissolve is ungrounded, the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) wrote to its congregations this month. Coenie Burger, synod moderator, assured the churches that none of the serious models for unity would force a reorganization of local churches. In the letter, he said that much of the distress of DRC members was based on unfounded fear. People worried about what unification of the DRC with others in the Dutch Reformed family would mean in practice.

"We will do all in our power to have a good, transparent process of unification, in which all of our congregations can participate," Burger wrote.

Burger added that the DRC had a meaningful role to play in the future of South Africa. It could not do that on its own,

however, but had to work closely with other churches. The unity with members of its own family was an important part of such cooperative efforts.

The DRC is in conversation about unification with the Reformed Church in Africa, the United Reformed Church in Southern Africa and the Dutch Reformed Church in Africa. (Die Kerkbode)

+ REC News Exchange, 2050 Breton RD. SE - Suite 102, Grand Rapids, MI 49546
+ Die Kerkbode, General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church [Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk] PO Box 4445, PRETORIA 0001, South Africa

Argentines oppose neo-liberal economic injustice

As part of the 35th Synod of the Reformed Churches of Argentina, delegates released a statement "openly condemning the neo-liberal economic system and its consequences for life." Delegates pledged to recall all economic, political, social, and cultural projects that try to displace God as sovereign' Denounce every intent to hinder the development of life in all its fullness. Express solidarity with all women, men, elderly, youth and children who live everyday facing the reality of death in their lives.

[REC]

+ Mr. Mauricio B. Maly, Iglesias Reformadas en la Argentina [Reformed Churches in Argentina], Garibaldi 1131 B7000GSW Tandil, Buenos Aires, Argentina

Homeleigh Christian School,
Masterton, New Zealand

INVITES APPLICATIONS FOR A

Teacher/Principal

IN OUR PRIMARY SCHOOL,
COMMENCING JANUARY 2004

The School is a two Teacher primary school,
operating from years 1 to 8.

Its constitution upholds the Reformed Faith and
Doctrines.

Applicants must be committed to the Reformed
Faith and to Christian Education.

For more information contact:

Mr. W. Stolte on [0064] 6- 377 5519

or E-mail willemstolte@extra.co.nz

Focus on home

Gleanings from our bulletins...

Andrew Reinders

Avondale

Choose wisely. While looking for entertainment for your children over the holidays you may find it useful to visit some internet sites to get a better idea of the different movies/videos available. e.g. www.Kids-in-mind.com and www.moviemom.com Both give a very detailed account of the level of profanity, violence and sexual content and the suitability for certain age children.

Can you speak English? You are just the sort of person we are looking for. Mondays, at the church. You may well be the person to help at English conversation classes. We have so many willing students from the neighbourhood. Will you help? Please see Mrs Christine Addis.

Bucklands Beach

Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? Just a reminder that July 26th will be a special evening in the life of our congregation. What we will be doing is arranging for as many folks as possible to invite or, alternatively, be invited to another member's home for dinner. It will have a surprise element in that the host will not know who to expect until the guest(s) turn up at the door!

Dovedale

Our pastor is away in Australia this week attending the synod of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia on behalf of our churches. If there are any pastoral needs during this time, please see your district elder.

Dunedin

Congratulations are extended to Charlene and Timothy Storm at the arrival of Natascha Jannigje Storm born Friday 20 June. Baby Natascha has had to stay in hospital a little longer than normal to clear up an infection, otherwise mother and child are both well, thanks be to God. Congratulations to Robert and Antje who have become grandparents for the first time.

Foxton

Point to ponder: Said the Robin to the Sparrow: "I would really like to know why those anxious human beings rush about and worry so." Said the Sparrow to the Robin: "Friend, I think that it must be that they have no Heavenly Father such as cares for you and me!"

Hamilton

SPECIAL REQUEST: Kevin Rietveld of CRCA is a missionary in the Solomon Islands, where—contrary to recent news reports—he says he feels safe, and people all around Honiara and the provinces respect the work of the CRCA mission team. In his latest news he writes: "We are looking for a few people to assist Frank with a Clinic Project in beautiful Central Province. One bricklayer is needed for a week (or 2) from 11 August, and 2 carpenters/builders in September for up to two weeks (dates to be finalised). If you stay the 2 weeks, a day or so deep-sea game fishing can be arranged too. Please contact Frank de Hoog on Ph. +677 30013, or email fjdehoog@solomon.com.sb. With continued thanks for your prayers and support."

Pastoral. We rejoice with Rene and Ereine Vos and respective parents as their little daughter (grand- and great- grand daughter) receives the sign of God's covenant promises. May Rene and Ereine look to the Lord for the grace to bring up little Alexandra so that she may grow up in truth and wisdom.

Pastoral. We warmly congratulate (say thanks to God with) Ben and Ina van den Engel who will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this Tuesday, 15th July. We rejoice with you and thank the Lord for you and your family members. May you be granted many more years together in faith and love and so be a blessing to each other and us all.

Hastings

It's a girl. We Rejoice with Lex and Nellie and family in the safe arrival of a daughter and sister who they have called Sabine. Sabine was born on Tuesday evening and weighted in at 7lbs. Nellie and Sabine are doing well and are now at home.

Mangere

Foodbank. Next Sunday, to coincide with our celebration of the Lord's Supper, we will also have the opportunity to donate to the Foodbank. Food donated here is passed on to the Salvation Army.

Congregational Luncheon. After the morning

service there will be a congregational luncheon in the hall. All welcome!

Nelson

Pastoral notes For everyone who attended last weekend's family camp, it was a tremendous time of encouragement and fellowship. This was our first camp in a good number of years, and it was a big credit to those who helped to organize it. Needless to say, the sessions led by the Craig and Barbara Smith were much appreciated.

Inconsistencies in New Zealand: There were 17,400 abortions last year, a thousand more than the previous year. Women aged 20-24 had the highest abortion rate of any age group - 38.9 abortions per 1,000; followed by 25-29 year-olds at 26.9. As a society we are not very consistent when it comes to protecting the most vulnerable; abortion is legalised; child abuse is not. We have an aggressive human rights culture, but have legalised prostitution, which effectively says that exploitation of women is also okay. We decry teenage suicide, but many want to legalise assisted suicide of the terminally ill (euthanasia). Maxim Institute

North Shore

The Bulletin: Jenny Petchell has produced our Church Bulletins off-and-on for almost 23 years, and has called it a day. Jenny, we all thank you very much for your faithful and sterling work for so long. Have a nice break; we'll find something else for you soon enough. And thanks now to Veronica Hoyt who has kindly offered to take over this work. Well, a new broom sweeps in a different direction at any rate. So you see a different format and we hope to publish it every week. Please note then, all material for the Bulletin should be in Thursday 8 pm (or written up in the Green Book in the foyer). Veronica will check it every Sunday night.

Palmerston North

Help A Child: A big thank you to Mr. and Mrs. Meinders, and all those who helped to raise \$365 for Help a Child. The Meinders requested of those who helped them celebrate their recent 50th wedding anniversary, that they make a donation to Help a Child instead of giving them a present. What a great way to share our abundance with those in need! The money raised will assist in building a new home for the children in Dharwad, South India. This home, in which 65 children live, is fully sponsored by people from New Zealand. The project managers are also actively working in proclaiming the gospel among the Devadasis (temple prostitutes).

Pukekohe

Men's Breakfast: After a terrible faux pas last week when I (Jaap) failed to announce the occasion of the boys brekkie, hereby a sincere apology and an official announcement that the men's breakfast is to be held this coming Saturday, the twenty-eighth day of June, at 7:00am. So if you are a man, and an early riser, come and enjoy

prayer, prattle and particularly palatable pork parts and pou'le ovum.

Host Family: At the congregational meeting, a suggestion was made to have a weekly rostered host family. This means that each week a family will have an opportunity to show hospitality to visitors and strangers. This will be done on a purely voluntary basis, so if you feel called to participate in this

ministry, please put your name on the list on the noticeboard.

Ed: Also we heard the news that the Rev. Bruce Hoyt declined the call we extended to him. While we are thankful for the blessed ministry he continues in Hastings we do ask your prayers for this congregation and her elders.

Continued next page ►

Dear Editor,

After several years of vacancy and turbulent times, the congregation of the Foxton Reformed Church rejoice at the Lord's goodness and blessing with the installation of brother John Zuidema as their new pastor. His wife Trudy joins Rev John Zuidema and they see the ministry as a joint effort. Their two children, Pam and Graeme remained behind in Australia.

Rev John Zuidema accepted the call extended to him to come and serve the congregation at Foxton after five years of service in the Hawkesbury congregation in NSW, Australia. Rev John Zuidema took up his duties on the 1st May and after a successful learned discussion with fellow colleagues and elders in the Wellington Presbytery on the 4th July, was duly installed on the 20th July during the morning worship service.

The Rev Gary Milne officiated by installing Br John Zuidema into the office of Minister of Word and Sacrament and by bringing God's word to us from 1 Sam 12:1-5. Many greetings and best wishes were received from local churches as well as churches from within the RCNZ, including greetings brought by Rev B Wiersma from the Hamilton congregations where John served his vicariate in 1997. Br Peter Meindersma, who travelled to NZ for this occasion, brought greetings from the Hawkesbury District Reformed Church in Australia.

The Foxton Reformed Church meets in the Union Church, Avenue St, every Sunday at 11:15 am and 4:30 pm for worship and fellowship. So if you are in the area, why not join us and enjoy our warm hospitality. We would love to make ourselves known to you.



*Elder: Br John Biersteker; Jan Dykstra; Paul Van Echten; Deacon: Paul Dykstra
Seated: Elder Dick Holtslag; John Zuidema; Deacon: Lex Van Echten*

Wainuiomata

We wish Marianne van Schalkwyk and Byron Smith much joy as they become united in marriage on Saturday. May the Lord bless your marriage and any plans you may have.

Congratulations to Arie and Jeanette de Vries on their 50th Wedding Anniversary on Thursday. We hope you have a great day with friends and family celebrating this milestone. We give thanks to God for His lovingkindness to His people as we celebrate this 3rd 50th anniversary in a month!

Wellington

Church Family. Just "Between You and Me"

we have a visitor in church today who is well-known to many: A cordial welcome to bro Dick Vanderpyl, whose daughter Marjory has recently made her home in Wellington.

INDOOR CRICKET SOUTH AFRICA - NEW ZEALAND

Date: Friday 11-July
Time: 7:00pm
Venue: Wgtn Indoor Sports Centre (Hall Street, Newtown)
Cost: \$6.00 per player
Court 1: ages 14-25yrs
Court 2: ages 25+

We have organised two indoor courts for a social 'friendly' game of indoor cricket. If you

are interested in being part of the team, please complete the form in the front of the church. For further enquires, please contact Tim Sterne or Gary Oosterbaan (Wellington), or Gert Smit (Porirua/Waikanae).

Advertise your Happenings and Church events in

faith in
focus

Missions in focus

Missionary expectations: *lessons from William Carey*

by **Tony Curto**

Dr Tony Curto is a missionary with the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), working in Uganda. He was heading up the seminary at which Rev Barry James taught during several months recently. Tony's reflections were published in the OPC magazine, New Horizons, in July.

Many Christians are familiar with the words of William Carey, "Expect great things from God. Attempt great things for God." These words have molded my life as a Christian, as a pastor, and as a missionary. This conviction makes a question like, "Why does mission work sometimes seem so fruitless?" so troubling and difficult to answer. Don't get me wrong here, the Lord is always doing good and his work is always going forward, but sometimes it is hard to see the forest because of the trees. So I have once again been reflecting on these words of Carey as our work here in Mbale, Uganda, goes through the fires of testing.

As you know, we live in a day when the cry is for quick victories with few casualties. If we are doing the right things in the right way, it is thought, we will see positive results at once. If we don't, something must be wrong and we must change our strategy. This is how many have interpreted Carey's statement. If we are not seeing quick, tangible results, we are not really expecting great things from God or are not attempting

great things for God. I think this is a serious misunderstanding.

Carey's words, uttered in a sermon on May 31, 1792, rocked the evangelical community of England and eventually led to the formation of the Particular Baptist Missionary Society. Under this society, Carey was sent to India as a missionary. It was seven years before he saw his first convert. Throughout his long years of missionary work, he and other missionaries suffered many trials and disasters, which gave his critics much room to point and say that this was not God's plan for evangelizing the world.

One such disaster took place on March 11, 1812, when, in a fire, he lost most of his life's work (translation work and writing). This should have devastated Carey. But instead, he preached a sermon from Psalm 46:10 on the words "Be still and know that I am God." He drew the point that "God is God and that it is man's duty to acquiesce in His will."

Carey did not change his ways, for he believed them to be founded upon the Word of God. He continued to expect great things from God until his death on June 9, 1834. As he wrote in a letter in 1795, "I cannot send you any account of sinners flocking to Christ, or of anything encouraging in that respect: but I can send you an account of something which may be viewed as forerunners to the work which God will certainly perform."

As Kathleen and I have been facing many

trials and persecutions over the last several months, it has been tempting to be discouraged. Some have heard of the trials and have wondered why we are here. Some of the trials have been, in our estimation, severe. But we take comfort from those who have gone on before us. Men like William Carey. Carey's convictions did not show him to be naïve or an unrealistic idealist; they made him a man whom God used. Why? He tells us: "I can plod. That is my only genius. I can persevere in any definite pursuit. To this I owe everything."

The OPC has been working here in Uganda with an indigenous Reformed Church. Many have wondered why we do not just separate and do our own missionary work. Why do we work with bodies that have problems and can interfere with our labours? When trials come to our missionaries, we could be tempted to say it's time to change our missionary strategy. This, I have concluded, would be a mistake. Carey's convictions did not allow him to change with trials; they made him plod on. So, by the grace of God, we continue to plod for Jesus in Uganda. In a final letter to his son, Carey wrote:

Be encouraged, my dear son. Devote yourself wholly to your work. For this is the cause God has had in His mind from all eternity, and for which Christ shed His blood, and for which the Spirit and the Word were given. So its triumph is certain.

Note: In June, the Overseas Mission Board received a report from Br. Barry James regarding difficulties the seminary experienced due to the unwarranted intervention of one pastor of the host denomination. Please pray for seminary students, whose study has been interrupted and whose future ministry may well suffer in

consequence. Pray also for leaders of the Presbyterian Church of Uganda, for growth in godliness and a strong stand against that which detracts from the glory of our sovereign Lord.

Papua New Guinea: Special Announcement

The Canadian Reformed Churches, with whom Rev. Stephen and Mrs Dorinda 't Hart are serving in Papua New Guinea, have made the following announcement. Let's praise the Lord for His goodness, but also ask for His continued work in the lives of those whom He would have serve in the mission-field. Having another family to join the work in PNG is a tremendous blessing; but Stephen says there is still a very real need for an ordained minister to join the work....

"Upon the recommendation of the Board of Foreign Mission and Mission Aid, the Council of the Bethel Canadian Reformed Church of Toronto has appointed br. Wayne VanderHeide as Mission Worker for the work in Papua New Guinea. We may thankfully inform you that br.

VanderHeide has accepted the appointment!

Br. VanderHeide is presently employed as a teacher in the John Calvin School in Albany, Western Australia. He is 28 years old, married to Cheronne (nee Vermeulen; 25 years old), also a teacher by profession, and they have a one-year-old daughter, Sjaan. Since br. VanderHeide is bound by contract to the school in Albany, his duties will commence, tentatively, on January 1, 2004. However, if there are training courses scheduled earlier and it is feasible to release him from his contract, he might start his work sooner.

He will be enrolled in a "Culture and Language Learning" course (about 6 weeks), offered by the Wycliffe Bible Translators. In PNG he will also take the Pacific Orientation Course, a 2-month program run by the Wycliffe Bible Translators as well. Besides, they will be starting language training soon, first with the use of tapes and later (in Port Moresby) with the help of a private tutor.

Before his marriage br. VanderHeide spent some time with the 't Harts in PNG. For the longest time already he has had a strong desire either to go into the ministry

or get involved with the work of mission. This appointment is a dream come true for him and an answer to many prayers and much work from all of us! Thank God for providing in His time a man as a Second Worker, who is coming to the task with great competence and highly recommended!" -

W. den Hollander

MIF prayer notes

The Overseas Mission Board ask us to pray:

1. For Walter and Jeannette Hagoort, the OMB, and Hukanui session as they consider the possibility of the Hagoorts joining Stephen and Dorinda 't Hart in their work in Papua New Guinea.
2. That an ordained missionary would be found whom the Lord moves to serve Him in PNG.
3. For the United Reformed Church in Myanmar with whom we have had contact through Rev's John Goris and Bruce Hoyt.

Continued next page ►

Country profile: Yemen

Yemen is a mountainous country on the southern corner of the Arabian peninsula—in fact, the only part of the peninsula that has significant rainfall. Agriculture is important in Yemen, but oil still comprises 95% of foreign earnings.

Yemen has a turbulent history of wars and conquests. The North was part of the Ottoman Empire until 1918, and then an isolated feudal theocracy until the 1962 Egyptian-engineered republican revolution. Aden (the South) was ruled by Britain until independence in 1967. A Marxist coup ousted the traditional rulers

and imposed a leftist regime. The two countries united in 1990 with the north as the dominant partner. A southern secessionist revolt in 1994 led to a northern victory. Yemen is led by a strong presidential government with a measure of democracy.

Pray for Yemen:

1. Yemen is 99.4% Muslim. It is illegal for non-Muslims to proselytize and for Muslims to become Christians. Yet by God's grace, through radio broadcasts, and tactful faith-sharing perhaps 100 Yemenis have trusted in Christ. For Yemenis it is dangerous to openly become a believer in Jesus. Pray for the conversion of the families of believers; it is from them that the worst persecution comes.
2. Most Christians are expatriates. Many are Ethiopian refugees, among whom are several thriving evangelical congregations. Others are Westerners and South and East Asians in secular jobs or serving with some humanitarian NGOs that are permitted to minister in the country.
3. Only 23% of women are literate. Pray that those who cannot read God's Word will have access to the Scriptures by radio or other aural means.
4. Nearly 80% of people chew a locally-grown narcotic, *qat*. The negative effects on productivity, social and family life are immense. Corruption in high places prevents developmental programmes from being effective. Less than half the population have access to any health services and nearly half of all children suffer from malnutrition.



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

4. That our churches will be stirred up to mission zeal, and that God will raise up people as mission workers.
5. For our home mission posts in Wanganui and Waikanae.
6. For the OMB in its administration work.
7. Kevin and Machi Rietveld together with Frank and Janet de Hoog who work for the CRCA the Solomon Islands. They ask for our prayer support, too:
Frank will be very busy building two clinics in September and October. One in Gela, in the village of Belaga, and one in Malaita again, in the village of Fauambu. There

are builders coming from Australia to help him. Please pray that they will not cancel. So many SWIMMERS are canceling because of all the negative press reports. Pray that things will settle down here (they are not anywhere near as bad as the reports might indicate). Rietvelds will be on long service leave from July until end October. Pray for rest, increased strength for ministry, and excellent times of catchup with family and church members.

8. This month, DV, Janice Reid completes the two radio workshops she is holding

in Indonesia on behalf of FEBC. On September 17 she is due to leave Jakarta and go to Cambodia, where she'll be living with two OMF missionaries in a shelter for Khmer factory workers. Please pray for Janice as she adjusts to this new living situation and gets used to life in Cambodia. Pray for health, safety, and especially for language learning!

Quotes from, and information about, William Carey are from David Kingdon's article in Reformation Today, 1973.

Janice Reid

Your effort to assist the food crisis in southern Africa

from the National Diaconate Committee

Mid-year 2002 the National Diaconate Committee launched an appeal for the crisis especially in Malawi. The region was expected to have a food deficit seriously affecting 3 million people especially in the months October 2002 to March 2003.

Many NGOs (Non Government Organisations) Aid Organisations and Churches responded to the challenge. We supported the CRWRC (Christian Reformed World Relief Com) in action they undertook in Malawi (also Zambia and

Mozambique). Our Churches gathered just over \$13,000. When supplemented from NDC general funds \$15,000 was sent. This was employed to purchase and ship corn from the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We understand that this effort has enabled 7,000 households in Malawi to receive supplementary food.

Please continue to pray for the people assisted that they may not only have padded tummies but also hearts at peace with God through the Gospel ministry.

Two photos have been received.

The first is of a Malawi woman wearing a grateful smile taking home a 50kg

donated bag of corn.

The second is a **thankyou** to our readers. Bruce Campbell-Janz writes "Nkhoma Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Malawi was one of our partners in this work. While you folks (in NZ) are not Canadian, you certainly participated in this endeavour. So, the thanks expressed here are yours as well.

The man on the left – Robert Zalira – was the Relief Manager for this partner, and the man on the right – Pastor Kapatuka – was involved in organisation at this particular distribution site. The church he pastors is in the background and served as a short-term storage facility (just before distributions) and as a distribution site. What a witness for the local Christian church to distribute food from this site to people based solely on need and not on creed (Muslim and others in need received food here as well)."



Family Camp 2003-2003

Manager's Report

The NZ Reformed Churches family Camp 2002-2003 was truly blessed with 6 days of great fellowship and perfect weather. Finlay Park, as always, was a wonderful location for our annual Family Camp with top quality facilities. Camper numbers were down from the previous year, perhaps due to the National Cadet/Calvinette Camp in Otaki and the National Youth Camp in Hunua, immediately following the Family Camp.

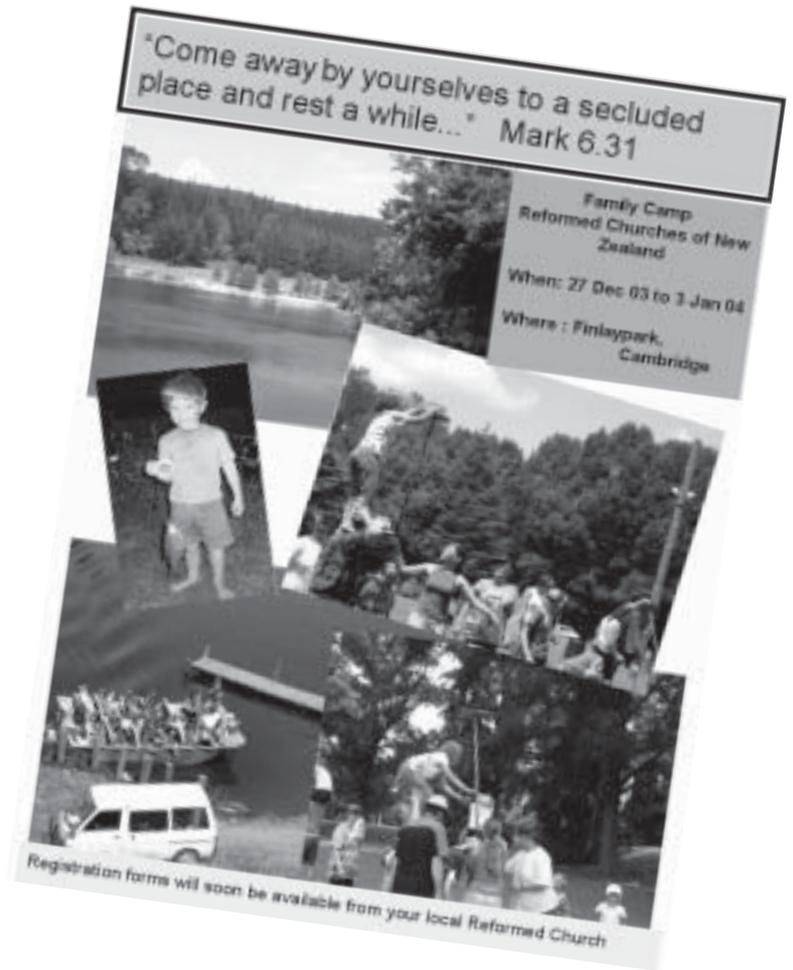
The studies

The Rev Bill Wiersma presented an interesting series of studies entitled "Our Awesome God" based on 1 & 2 Kings. Rev Chris Kavanagh also presented a series of evening devotions, which were well received.

The program was full and varied with activities for all age groups which were well supported. We enjoyed a "Royal Banquet", crowned a Queen of the Banquet, and many of our select company received knighthoods at her instruction.

The organisers

The reality is that these types of camps do not just happen and much organisation is involved some time in advance to ensure the smooth operation of the camp. Thank you to the Auckland Presbytery Family Camp Committee for their hard work. Also special thanks to be given to Nelly and Harry Meinsma for the great job they did as camp cooks, Henk and Jackie Hemmes and helpers for their capable efforts in the Bible School and



Financial Report Camp 2002/2003	
INCOME	\$10,606
Camp fees	476.15
Sunday offerings	140.00
Glowworm trip	39.00
Canoe hire	225.56
Food sales	
	\$11,486.71
EXPENDITURE	\$6,091.40
Camp hire	
Sunday offerings:	337.70
Christian witness to Israel	138.45
National diaconate	140.00
Glowworm trip	90.00
Canoe hire	3,834.66
Food	359.70
Craft materials/decorations	
	496.80
Income/expenditure	
	\$11,486.71

accounts and accommodation. Helen Wassenaar and Esther Kroon for their childrens activities, Jennifer Bearman and Hans van den Dolder for the sports program, and of course Johan Swanepoel for making sure all the tasks that needed to be done, were done.

Many others helped in many ways, which is why it is such a pleasure to serve such a great bunch of campers as Manager. Just witnessing how everyone worked so well together in harmony, bore witness to how we are all part of God's family.

The Purpose

I look forward to meeting up with old friends, and making new friends next year. The Family Camp has two important roles in our churches. One being a time of quiet rest, relaxation, spiritual enrichment and fellowship for families and individuals in our churches, the second being a time that we can interact with members of a number of other Reformed Churches in New Zealand sharing ideas and finding our common ground in the church, thus drawing us closer together. So we'll see you there next year.

Yours faithfully in His service
Paul van der Wel

The past in focus

This month it is the turn of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach to celebrate its 50th Anniversary. This church had its origins in a group from the Howick Presbyterian Church, including Rev. Alex Scarrow and several elders, who could not continue within the Presbyterian denomination with its liberal views and practices. Seeking those whom they could be in scriptural union with, they meet with the Rev. Bill Deenick around May 1953, and then with the Session of the Reformed Church of Auckland in September 1953. Following this a new church was instituted, with a special Synod being held in October 1953 to accept this new church into the federation. They held to their direct Presbyterian roots, however, with a special plea to the 1955 Synod to use the name Reformed Presbyterian Church and to have the Westminster Confession of Faith as one of the subordinate standards.

Since then this congregation has been one known for its support of missions and sending out of missionaries, and a number of men who have gone into ministry, and into the training of ministers.

Now it is a distinctly multi-cultural congregation, with members and adherents being migrants from all over the world. Its present minister is the Rev. Dirk van Garderen, who was installed on the 3rd of February 2002.

- 1 *The original building of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach*
- 2 *The new building of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Bucklands Beach*
- 3 *Outside church after the service*
- 4 *Rev Alex Scarrow leading the worship service in the old building*

