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Children at the Lord's Supper

FORUM

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REFLECTIONS ON CHILDREN AT THE LORD'S SUPPER

3

Children at the Lord's Supper
and Reformed Theology
by Lyle D. Bierma

5

United, Separated, Re-united:
The Story of Baptism and
the Lord's Supper
by David M. Rylaarsdam

7

Children at the Lord's Supper
and the Key Text of
1 Corinthians 11:17-34
by Jeffrey A.D. Weima

9

Children at the Table:
Some Provisional Answers
to the Practical Questions
by John D. Witvliet

DEPARTMENTS

| | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| Continuing Education | 12 |
| News | 13 |
| Formation for Ministry | 14 |

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3475 MAINWAY, LCD STN 1
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from the president

Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.



Dear Brothers and Sisters,

An issue of *The Unesco Courier* reminds us that for most of human history, travelers have needed the food, drink, and shelter of strangers. They couldn't travel any distance without it, and in hard climates it often "meant the difference between life and death."

The *Courier* tells of one culture after another whose rituals of hospitality go back for centuries. For instance, to this day Bedouin people in the Arabian desert keep a campfire going all night in order to attract travelers to it. A generous host might even light a second fire on a nearby hilltop so that travelers can see it for miles. When a visitor arrives, the host doesn't offend him by prying into the purpose of his journey. He doesn't even ask how long his guest means to stay. He simply offers him a place by the fire, and maybe a mat, but in any case food and drink.

Always food and drink. Handing food to a guest is momentous. When you pass food to another person you are saying, "I want you to live." In fact, handing food to another is a sacramental act. It binds you together as giver and receiver of life.

That's why the Bible talks about food so much. There's food all over the place in the Bible: fruit trees in Paradise, a Passover meal at the Exodus, manna in the desert, gleaning laws in farmers' fields, multiplication of loaves and fishes in the desert, breakfast on the beach with the resurrected Lord, and parables that are fragrant with cookery and with promise of banquets to come.

At the center of all this is God, giver and host. God keeps providing for all of us pilgrims in the desert because he wants us to live. In fact, he wants us to thrive. In the mystery of communion with God, Jesus Christ not only gives and hosts, but in fact offers himself as our meal so that we spiritually eat and drink our God. The point is that for us travelers, such hospitality may mean the difference between life and death.

And if we are traveling with small children? Does Jesus have anything for them? Is the bread of heaven meant for them as well as for us?

Last summer the CRC graciously said Yes. In this issue of *Forum* four thoughtful colleagues help us ponder questions and implications of this remarkable affirmation.

Grace and peace,

Neal

REFLECTIONS

REFLECTIONS ON CHILDREN AT THE LORD'S SUPPER

Children at the Lord's Supper and Reformed Theology

When the CRC synod decided last summer to “allow for the admission of all baptized members to the Lord’s Supper,” many were surprised at how quickly the measure was passed. It should be remembered, however, that the CRC has been wrestling with this issue ever since 1984. Major studies of the question came before Synods 1986, 1988, and 1995—all with majority and minority reports, and all with extensive biblical and theological arguments on both sides. What Synod 2006 did was point the denomination in a new direction—but on a biblical-theological basis that has been under construction for twenty years. Since many in the CRC are probably not familiar with the theological grounds for this new practice, we shall briefly introduce some of them here.

The traditional Reformed position is summarized in Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 81:

Q. Who are to come to the Lord’s table?

A. Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment to themselves.

The answer to Q&A 81 rests heavily on a common interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. To be displeased with ourselves because of our sins, we must examine ourselves before we come to the Supper (v. 28). In this way, we will not participate in the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner (v. 27) and thus eat and drink judgment to ourselves (v. 29). Since very small children are not capable of such self-examination, the argument goes, they should be excluded from the table.

As Professor Weima points out elsewhere in this issue, however, there is another way of understanding 1 Corinthians 11 that does not necessarily require the exclusion of children from the Lord’s Supper and may even open the door to their inclusion. We will not repeat the details or merits of that interpretation here. The growing shift to this other interpretation, however, opens the way for an appeal also to some of the theological emphases in our tradition, especially the Reformed understanding of the covenant and the sacraments.

The Nature of the Covenant

Synod 2006 decided to open the Lord’s table to all baptized members “on the basis of their full membership in the covenant community.” (See the *Acts of Synod 2006*, pp. 727-731, for the complete record of synod’s action on this matter.) We have

by *Lyle D. Bierma*
Professor of
Systematic Theology



always stressed that God’s special relationship with believers and their children, rooted in the covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17, is essentially the same in both the Old and New Testaments. There is one community of God throughout all redemptive history, and children are full members of that community. As we say in the form for the baptism of children, “God graciously includes our children in his covenant, and all his promises are for them as well as for us.”

On that basis we have long argued that since children of believing parents in the Old Testament received the sacrament of initiation into the covenant community (circumcision), covenant children today should receive the sacrament of initiation that has replaced circumcision (baptism). Why, then, would the same not apply to the sacrament of nurture? If in the Old Testament covenant children participated in the household and communal celebrations of the Passover (Exod. 12:3-4, 21-26) and other sacred meals of remembrance (Deut. 12:6-7), they should also be welcome at the New Testament counterpart to these feasts: the Lord’s Supper. Members of the Old Covenant community were “all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,” and they “all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink” from Christ (1 Cor. 10:1-4). ▶

Children at the Lord's Supper

▶ That pattern did not suddenly change in the New Covenant.

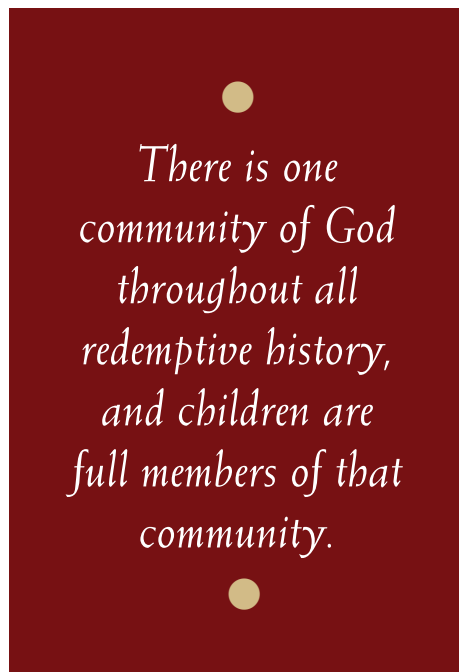
In other words, as critics of infant baptism have often pointed out, it seems as if we in the Reformed tradition are inconsistent when we appeal to the unity of the testaments to support infant baptism but not children at communion. Exclusion of children from the Lord's table suggests a discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments that seems to undermine the very continuity on which the case for infant baptism is built.

The Nature of a Sacrament

When it comes to the doctrine of the sacraments, Reformed theology has emphasized that a sacrament is first and foremost something God does, not something we do. Christ himself instituted baptism and the Lord's Supper, and in both sacraments it is God who acts and speaks. They are, as we say, means of grace—God's grace. There God reminds and assures the covenant community of his promises.

But this gracious character of the sacraments is compromised when we exclude covenant children from the Lord's table. In the baptism of an infant, the covenant community is given a graphic demonstration of the promise of salvation by grace alone as the water of promise is applied to a tiny child—helpless, uncomprehending, and wholly incapable of any merit-earning work. Why, then, must these same children “earn” their way to the table of promise? Why must they first pass a test of understanding and worthiness? That seems to run counter to the very message of grace that the sacraments proclaim. If the sacraments are for members of this community who are weak and in need of God's grace, everyone—whether near the end of their Christian life or in the earliest stages—should feed around the table.

Closely related to this is the fact that both of the Christian sacraments communicate the same message, the heart of the gospel itself. In both baptism and the Lord's Supper God reminds and assures us of the promise to forgive our sins and grant us new life on the basis of Christ's sacrifice on the cross (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 66, 69, 75). If this message is visibly proclaimed as the covenant community



gathers around its children at the baptismal font, it should be visibly proclaimed to that same community gathered with its children at the Lord's table. If there is no difference in the message, why differentiate among those who may hear it?

Where, then, does faith come in? After all, sacraments may be God's visible word to us, but God also calls us to respond to that word. Those who participate in the Lord's Supper are supposed to “remember,” “proclaim,” “examine,” and “discern.” A tiny child is simply not capable of this, at least not at the level of faith that these verbs seem to presuppose.

Once again the parallel with baptism may be helpful. An infant at the baptismal font is not capable of such faith either. But we in the Reformed community have always stressed the importance of *communal*, not *individual*, faith when we baptize our children. At the font God addresses the entire covenant community with his promises, and the faith of the parents and of the rest of the community “stands in” for the child by way of response. Why not also at the communion table? The individual faith of the child can then develop in the midst of the experience of full fellowship with the believing community.

The Reformed Confessions

This has been a very brief introduction to the theological case for the position adopted by Synod 2006. Two of the chal-

lenges for the CRC in the years ahead will be to educate its members about this theological basis and to deal with the theological objections that are sure to arise.

But an even bigger challenge, perhaps, will be to come to terms with our confessions on this issue. As a confessional denomination we look upon our statements of faith as reliable summaries of biblical teaching and the framework for our theological thinking. As we have already seen, the Heidelberg Catechism grants entry to the Lord's Supper only to those who are displeased with their sins. And the Belgic Confession states that Christ instituted the sacrament of the Supper “to nourish and sustain those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family: his church.” Moreover, “no one should come to this table without examining himself carefully, lest ‘by eating this bread and drinking this cup he eat and drink to his own judgment’” (art. 35). Both of these confessions define admission to the table on the basis of the common Reformed interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11.

It appears, therefore, that the CRC's decision to welcome all baptized members to the table is at odds with its own confessional position. What then should we do? Change the confessions in some way or add a footnote? Or could we argue that the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism establish the standards only for *adult* participation in the Supper? Since they do not explicitly address the question of *children* at communion, they cannot be said to forbid the practice. Of course, that is probably not how the authors were thinking when they wrote the confessions, but how much are we bound to an author's intent on matters like this?

These are the kinds of questions we will need to address to maintain our integrity as a confessional denomination. Since many in the CRC are not even aware of synod's decision last summer—let alone the biblical, confessional, and practical difficulties that surround it—it is important that we proceed carefully and charitably as we begin to implement it. This move toward enlarging the circle around the table of the Lord provides a historic opportunity to demonstrate the very unity of the body of Christ to which the sacrament of the Supper points.

United, Separated, Re-united

The Story of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The history of children at the Lord's Supper is essentially the story of the relationship between the sacraments. In the early church, all baptized persons were welcome at communion. This practice was gradually abandoned in the Middle Ages, so that by the Reformation the Western church had separated the Lord's Supper from baptism and attached it to confirmation or profession of faith. Today, Protestant denominations have begun to re-unite baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The story begins in the early church, when the sacraments were intimately connected. Ancient liturgies show that both baptism and communion were part of the ceremonies that marked a person's entrance into the church. These ceremonies included baptism, a laying on of hands (later referred to as confirmation), and immediate participation in communion. From the day of one's baptism, the Lord's Supper was part of a person's entrance into the church that was repeated throughout his or her life.

Clear references to very young children participating in communion go back as far as the earliest arguments for infant baptism. The church father Cyprian (d. 258 A.D.) cited John 3:5 ("Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit") and John 6:53 ("Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man"), arguing that baptism and the Lord's Supper were necessary for membership in the Christian community. For both sacraments, age was not important. The two sacraments were inseparable. To abandon the Lord's Supper would be to abandon the community of Christ and therefore Christ himself.

Augustine also administered communion to infants immediately after their baptism. Infants participated by some

accommodating means such as receiving in their mouths the priest's little finger dipped in the wine. In his Easter sermons to the newly baptized, Augustine would cite 1 Corinthians 12:27 ("You are the body of Christ and individually members of it") and 10:17 ("We who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread"). Then he would point to the bread of the Lord's Supper and tell the newly baptized that they who were now part of the body of Christ would receive the body of Christ in communion; Christ's church body and sacramental body were united in the Supper. For Augustine, infants and the mentally impaired were the ideal subjects for the sacraments, for they imaged the helplessness of the human condition.

A number of references in Augustine's writings imply that participation in communion for all baptized members was the

by David
Rylaarsdam
Professor of
Historical Theology



universal practice of the church and assumed to be ancient. The Eastern church has always allowed baptized infants to commune. However, there were several developments in the medieval West which contributed to a gradual split between baptism, laying on of hands (confirmation), and the Lord's Supper.

First, in an effort to preserve the power of bishops, the Western church insisted on the principle "No bishop, no confirmation." As Christianity spread, a bishop was not available in many regions to confirm a baptized infant. In outlying villages it might be several years after a baptism before confirmation by a bishop was possible. A delay in confirmation often resulted in a delay in a child's first communion. In contrast to the West, the Eastern church insisted on retaining the unity of the ceremonies which marked a person's entrance into the church. Presbyters in the East were allowed to confirm a baptism immediately if a bishop was not available. Therefore, a newly baptized person would participate in communion.

Second, in the thirteenth century the Western church formulated the doctrine of transubstantiation. This doctrine claimed that the substance of bread and wine changes into the actual body and blood of Jesus during communion. The alarming question arose: What might happen if a child dropped the actual body of Christ on the floor or slobbered into the chalice of Christ's actual blood? Fear that a child might profane the consecrated elements led to a reluctance to give communion to young children.

Third, in the later Middle Ages the communion cup was withheld from the laity. Adults were left with the bread

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**United, Separated,
Re-united**

▶ and infants with nothing, since the general practice for centuries was to commune infants with wine alone since they would choke on the bread. In the fifteenth century, the followers of the martyr John Hus tried to restore the cup to the laity, in part, for the sake of young children.

Fourth, the dominant Lord's Supper piety in the later Middle Ages was heavily penitential. It was necessary for a person to make confession and do penance in order to receive communion. Since very young children did not have the ability to confess or do penance as older children or adults did, they were not as worthy to participate in communion.

Finally, confirmation was a practice looking for a theology. Originally a laying on of hands, confirmation gradually became separated from baptism. This independent practice begged explanation. The best that scholars in the Middle Ages could muster was to say that confirmation was a sacrament which augmented the grace of baptism so that a person could bear witness to the faith. Since infants did not need to bear witness to their faith, it was reasoned that they did not need this sacrament until they were older and ready to confirm their place in the church. Many parents, it seems, did not think very highly of this theology. During the later Middle Ages they increasingly disrespected confirmation and did not bother having their children confirmed. Councils responded with threats of severe punishments: negligent parents would be barred from the church and their children would not be allowed to the Supper until confirmation took place.

By the time of the Reformation, Roman Catholics had established in most places a new threshold for first communion: an "age of discretion," not baptism, was necessary for participation. John Calvin did not question that assumption. While he rejected confirmation as a sacrament (he found the term itself problematic because "to confirm" baptism did an injustice to baptism), Calvin salvaged the essential confirmation practice of having an individual give a public account of his or her faith prior to first communion.

For biblical support, Calvin turned to Paul's command to "examine oneself" by

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"discerning the body" (1 Cor. 11:28-29), a text which was not used in the early church or Middle Ages to keep young children from communion. In his commentary, Calvin downplays the problems with the Supper at Corinth. Without pointing to textual evidence, Calvin claims that Paul is not even speaking specifically about division at the Supper in verses 17-19. When Paul, in verses 20-22, talks about Corinthians at the Supper who are drunk while others go hungry, Calvin claims that the apostle is "exaggerating" but does not provide historical or textual support for this conclusion. Regarding verses 23-29, Calvin is "of the opinion" that Paul is not addressing the situation at Corinth specifically but is speaking "of every kind of faulty administration or reception of the Supper" (*Comm. on 1 Cor.*, p. 385). Calvin concludes that "we offer poison . . . to our tender children" at the Supper, for it is vain to expect them "to distinguish rightly the holiness of Christ's body" (*Institutes* 4.16.30). This conclusion is based on an interpretation that pays less attention to the historical and literary contexts of 1 Corinthians 11 than his favorite ancient interpreter John Chrysostom did

or than modern Reformed interpreters do (see Weima's article on page 7).

Calvin's other argument for an "age of discretion" is based on an assumption about the Passover. He claims: "The Passover, the place of which has been taken by the Supper, did not admit all guests indiscriminately, but was duly eaten only by those who were old enough to be able to inquire into its meaning" (4.16.30). No biblical or historical text clearly supports Calvin's claim.

As Calvin makes clear at the end of his very brief arguments for an age of discretion, he simply takes for granted that this practice is so logical that it should not be given a second thought (4.16.30). His assumption is not completely surprising. One generation of the church often inherits practices of the previous generation without being fully aware of their roots. Calvin would likely have been troubled to know that the late medieval legacy of separating baptism and the Lord's Supper was caused by the principle of conserving the power of bishops, by the doctrine of transubstantiation, by the ability to do penance, by withholding the cup from the laity, and by the punishment of parents who disrespected the sacrament of confirmation.

The story of baptism and the Lord's Supper is essentially this: what the early church joined together, the later medieval church gradually put asunder. Today, Protestants are returning to the practice of the early church. For biblical and theological reasons, the Reformed Church in America, Christian Reformed Churches of Australia, Presbyterian Church (USA), Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Anglican Communion, and others have reunited the sacraments. One body in baptism sharing one bread. The CRC also, after more than two decades of reflection, has decided to welcome all baptized persons to the Supper. Synod's 2006 decision returns us to Augustine's sentiment, summarized well by Max Johnson: The Christian life, from entrance into the covenant community onward, is rooted in the graciousness of God, the God who through the Word and sacraments "always acts first, always acts in love prior to our action, leading us by the Holy Spirit to the response of faith, hope, and love within the community of grace" (*Rites of Christian Initiation*, p. 376).

Children at the Lord's Supper and the Key Text of 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

When John Calvin considered the question of children participating in the Lord's Supper, the answer was for him obvious: "Do we wish anything plainer than the apostle's teaching when he exhorts each man to prove and search himself, then to eat of this bread and drink of this cup [1 Cor. 11:28]? A self-examination ought, therefore, to come first, and it is vain to expect this of infants" (*Institutes*, 4.16.30). Paul's meaning, however, may be less plain than Calvin assumes.

It is true that the apostle in 1 Corinthians 11:28 clearly commands the church in Corinth to engage in self-examination. Less clear, however, is what this self-examination involves. The key lies in the following explanatory verse (note how v. 29 begins with the important word "for"): "For anyone who eats and drinks *without recognizing the body* eats and drinks judgment on himself" (NIV; or, "For all who eat and drink *without discerning the body*, eat and drink judgment against themselves," NRSV). The specific exegetical question facing us, then, is this: What does it mean to "recognize the body" and so avoid participating in the Lord's Supper in a way that believers eat and drink judgment on themselves?

Most assume that the word "body" in this key phrase refers to the body or flesh of Christ crucified on the cross and now remembered in the sacrament. To "recognize the body," therefore, means to engage in a self-examination that is primarily *vertical* in dimension—to examine one's relationship with Jesus Christ—rather than *horizontal*—to examine one's relationship to fellow Christians. If believers confess that Jesus is their Lord and that Christ's death pays for their sins, they are "recognizing the body" in a way that allows them

to participate in the sacrament in a worthy manner.

This emphasis on the vertical dimension of self-examination is reflected in the CRC's "Form for Celebration of the Lord's Supper," which calls upon believers to examine three things: their lives ("considering our own sin and the wrath of God on it"), their hearts ("to be sure that we trust in Jesus Christ alone for our salvation and believe our sins are forgiven wholly by grace"), and their consciences ("to be sure that we resolve to live in faith and obedience before our Lord and in love and peace with our neighbors"). It is only at the very end of the form that believers are challenged to reflect on their conduct toward other people.

This heavy emphasis on the vertical aspect of self-examination has an important consequence for the debate over children's participation in the Lord's Supper. Since it is assumed that infants and young

by Jeffrey A. D.
Weima
Professor of New
Testament



children are not capable of "recognizing the body" in the sense outlined above, they should be excluded from the table of the Lord. However, if we examine the historical context of the Corinthians passage—namely, the specific problem that was taking place in the Corinthian church—we will have a different understanding of the key phrase "recognizing the body."

The Historical Context: Rich Believers Humiliating the Poor

The church in Corinth, like other congregations well into the second century, celebrated the Lord's Supper as part of a dinner or full meal. The whole church would first break bread at the beginning of the meal to remember Christ's death, then they would eat their main course, and finally at the end of the meal they would drink wine also to remember Christ's death (note 1 Cor. 11:25, "In the same way, *after supper*, he took the cup, saying ..."). The problem was the main course that took place between these two acts of remembrance: the Corinthians were celebrating the Supper in a way that created divisions (v. 18). The guilty were the wealthy ("those who have homes"), whose conduct at these meals involved "despising the church of God and humiliating those who have nothing" (v. 22). In fact, things got so out of hand that poor church members left the worship services hungry while the rich members staggered home drunk (v. 21)!

Paul does not specifically identify what the wealthy believers were doing at their Lord's Supper celebrations to shame their poorer fellow church members. Nevertheless, there are three plausible scenarios. First, the free-

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themselves?

Key Text

dom of scheduling enjoyed by the wealthy may have allowed them to arrive early and “pig out” on the food and wine, thereby leaving little for the poor members who could not come to the church’s gathering until later. Second, it is possible that there were different amounts and/or quality of food: the rich feasted on “steak and caviar” while the poor barely filled their stomachs with “Kraft macaroni and cheese.” Finally, it is also possible that when the Corinthian believers met together for worship, not in a church building but in a wealthy member’s home, as all the early Christians did, the rich enjoyed their meal in the privileged position of the dining room while the poor ate in the less comfortable and less prestigious parts of the home.

Although we cannot know with certainty what led to divisions over the Lord’s Supper at Corinth, it is clear that the problem involved social discrimination: the wealthy Christians celebrated the Lord’s Supper in a way that “despised and humiliated” their poorer fellow believers.

The Meaning of “Body” in 1 Corinthians 11:29

There are three reasons the word “body” in the key phrase of 1 Corinthians 11:29 likely refers not to the fleshly body of Christ nailed to cross and remembered in the bread and wine, but to the body of believers—the church. First and foremost, this meaning fits the historical context. To a congregation where the rich are celebrating the sacrament in a way that marginalizes the poor, Paul issues the challenge to “recognize the body”—that is, to pay attention to the welfare of their fellow brothers and sisters.

Second, there are important differences between Paul’s use of the word “body” here in verse 29 and earlier in verse 27. In verse 27 where the apostle is, in fact, referring to the fleshly body of Christ, he adds the fuller descriptions “and the blood” and “of the Lord.” Since neither of these additions occurs in verse 29, Paul may well be using “body” here with a different meaning.

Third, “body” as a reference to the church occurs both in the immediately preceding chapter (10:17, “Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf”)

and in the immediately following chapter (12:12-26, Paul’s famous metaphor of “many parts, one body”).

Implications of 1 Corinthians 11:29 for Children at the Lord’s Supper

This alternate interpretation clarifies the criterion for proper participation in the sacrament of communion. When Paul exhorts the Corinthians to “recognize the body,” he is calling them to examine their relationship to their fellow believers and to celebrate the sacrament in a manner that does not humiliate other congregational members. In other words, the apostle is first and foremost calling for a *horizontal* self-examination. Of course, the apostle would be uncomfortable with the distinction between “vertical” and “horizontal,” since he knows that our love for others is rooted in our love for Christ. Nevertheless, his reference to “recognizing the body” stresses the need for the Corinthian Christians to examine carefully their relationship to the rest of the church, the body of Christ.

When children today are excluded from the Lord’s Supper, there is the very real danger of committing the same sin for which Paul criticized the Corinthians: humiliating fellow believers. When our covenant youth watch the platters of bread and juice literally pass over them to nearby

adults, is it not natural for them to feel excluded, like unequal members of the body of Christ?

Should the church, therefore, avoid this danger by including children at the Lord’s Supper? The answer depends on how one views the *application* of Paul’s historically specific command to the church today. Some argue that the principle laid down in 1 Corinthians 11:29—that a person must “recognize the body” in order to participate worthily in the sacrament—is applicable only to those who have appropriate mental and spiritual capacity. Thus, there is no warrant for excluding the mentally handicapped as well as infants and young children during the Lord’s Supper celebration.

Others argue that the principle is a general one that goes beyond the Corinthian situation to a variety of other possible situations. The general principle, they say, involves the necessity of self-examination. Although some argue that it is impossible for a proper self-examination to be carried out by young children, others believe that with the help and direction of parents this can, in fact, be done. After all, it does not take a high I.Q. or S.A.T. score to recognize that the bread and drink are not merely a common everyday snack but stand for the body and blood of Jesus, and that we eat and drink these things not as individuals but communally as members of the family of God.

Conclusion

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 continues to be a key text in the debate over children’s participation in the Lord’s Supper. The interpretation of “recognizing the body” explained in this article removes one of the traditional grounds for exclusion and also warns the church today to celebrate the sacrament in a way that does not marginalize or humiliate these youngest members. This interpretation does not automatically mean, however, that children ought to take part fully at the communion table, nor does it remove the need for some form of self-examination. Nevertheless, it does provide biblical justification for the possibility of children’s participation at the Lord’s Supper—a possibility that may well be clarified by insights from Reformed theology (see article on page 3).

When our covenant youth watch the platters of bread and juice literally pass over them to nearby adults, is it not natural for them to feel excluded, like unequal members of the body of Christ?

Children at the Table

Some Provisional Answers to the Practical Questions

Since the synod of the CRC voted in 2006 to welcome children to the table, the most common response—amply reflected in a denomination-wide survey of pastors—has been that of question-raising. Based on discussions with a variety of leaders in Reformed denominations that welcome children to the table in various cultural contexts, this is a first attempt to draft a response to some of the most common questions. For updated responses to these questions, based on your feedback, along with responses to several related questions, visit www.calvin.edu/worship/sacraments.

How can we celebrate the Lord's Supper in a way that welcomes children?

Some thoughtful congregations in Reformed denominations that already welcome children to the table have done things like this:

1. Have the children (and adults) memorize certain texts that are spoken or sung during each Lord's Supper celebration, including the Lord's Prayer, and phrases like "Lift up your hearts. We lift them up to the Lord."
2. Adjust the Lord's Supper liturgy slightly by having a child ask, "What does this mean?"—just like in the ancient Passover celebration.
3. Prepare a children's book with the text of the Prayer of Thanksgiving that can be both read at home and used in worship.
4. Sing at least one song at the table that is used in church school—"Jesus Loves Me" is one example very appropriate for children of all ages. And children certainly can learn "Holy, Holy, Holy" to sing during the Lord's Supper prayer.
5. Teach children a single phrase to say out loud with the whole congregation before receiving the bread and cup, phrases like "bread of heaven" and "cup of salvation."
6. Make sure that the children can see the breaking of the bread, the pouring of the cup, and gestures of welcome and hospitality at the table, and that their parents and guardians help them to do so.

7. Have children assist the pastor and elders in preparing and cleaning up the communion elements.

The goal is to make the celebration child-welcoming, without feeling the need to make it child-centered, to both accommodate children and their developmental capacities, but also to challenge them to grow. The Lord's Supper, like the Lord's Prayer, the Psalms, and the Creed, is always something we are growing into (adults, too!).

Won't having children at the table make the Lord's Supper less reverent?

It certainly doesn't have to. Children have remarkable capacity for wonder, awe, and imagination, as well as deep joy—four things that fit the Lord's Supper so very

Children have remarkable capacity for wonder, awe, and imagination, as well as deep joy—four things that fit the Lord's Supper so very well.

by John D. Witvliet
Professor of Worship
and Director of the
Calvin Institute of
Christian Worship



well. We should aspire to lead services in ways that help the entire congregation (re-)learn these attitudes from the children.

Still, this is a legitimate worry. So often when we think of children's participation in worship, we (wrongly) think that we have to be cute, simplistic, or entertaining to keep their attention. Any excellent elementary school teacher can testify that this is not necessary or wise.

In Reformed congregations that do welcome children to the table, at what age are they welcome?

In many cases, children participate as soon as they attend a full worship service. Most often, these congregations will set up their education programs, including any children's worship programs, to teach the children about the entire worship service prior to this time. In some cases, congregations have children and their parents meet with an elder or pastor ahead of time. In each case, there may well be special circumstances in the life of the child, a given family, or the church itself that suggest an older age.

There is a lot of wisdom in creating a sequence of events that leads up to a child's participation at the table, involving the child, their parents or guardians, a pastor or elder, and perhaps a church school teacher or children's worship leader. Ideally, the sequence would include

- training for the child and parents or guardians about children's participation in worship as a whole,
- training for the child and the parents or guardians of what the Lord's Supper means, and also about the significance of their baptism and the joy of living the baptismal life,

Practical Questions



- times of prayer for the child, their family, and entire congregation,
- testimonies—by the child, parents, and a pastor or elder—about the goodness of God's grace,
- celebration to acknowledge this milestone in the young child's life.

The point of these sessions is not to create an intimidating litmus test, but rather to model the kind of intergenerational learning, prayer, testimony, and celebration that should be a natural part of congregational life. There are few better opportunities than this moment for strengthening each of these practices.

Won't liturgical forms be deadly for children?

Well, a monotone reading of a very didactic form certainly isn't a very hospitable place to begin.

Providentially, during the last generation, a tremendous amount of historically-informed and theologically-rigorous work has gone into revisions of Lord's Supper forms (see the *Agenda for Synod 1994*, pp. 166-191, for some examples, or go to www.crcna.org/pages/1994_supper.cfm). One of the most promising recoveries is that of the ancient pattern for the church's "Great Prayer of Thanksgiving." That prayer tells the history of God's actions (like many psalms) and uses vivid, story-like language that is well-suited for children.

There are significant theological, pastoral, and educational reasons why a pastor might even adapt that Prayer of Thanksgiving each time to include references to Bible stories that children happen to be studying in their church school classes. Imagine having a prayer that blessed God for creating all people in his image, for saving Noah in the time of the flood, Daniel in the lion's den, and the Apostle Paul in prison, and then asked for that blessing to attend now to us at the table. Here, the presence of children would lead to a liturgical adaptation that helps all of us re-engage our imaginations about the very concrete ways that God works in the world.

Won't we have to teach our children about the Lord's Supper?

Yes indeed. In fact, welcoming children to the table should demand of congregations

Doesn't the presence of children at the table help us clarify our own view of ourselves as people who are still just beginning to truly understand the remarkable mystery of God's saving work in Jesus?

gations more, not less intentionality in educational ministries. Significantly, many curricula (including those published by Faith Alive) already provide for teaching children about the Lord's Supper. The difference is that now teaching can focus on children's participation. Some of the best congregations in Reformed denominations that already welcome children to the table have done things like this:

- Prepare a devotional guide for use in the homes.
- Have a pastor visit each Sunday School class to teach the children about the Lord's Supper.
- Offer a training session to parents to teach them how to be "worship participation coaches" for their children.
- Insist that 3-4 songs the children sing in church school are songs that later are used at the table.
- Involve the middle school or high school youth group in baking the bread used at the table.
- Ask the children to think up all the questions about the Lord's Supper they can and have a pastor write a short set of answers for the church's web site or newsletter.

The good news is that when congregations teach children well, a lot of adults learn too.

But will children really understand what is happening at the table?

Do any of us really understand what is happening at the table? Seriously, doesn't the presence of children at the table help us clarify our own view of ourselves as people who are still just beginning to truly understand the remarkable mystery of God's saving work in Jesus?

Further, might not children have a deeper understanding of this than many of us adults? One pastor tells of how a young four-year-old would wake up on Sunday morning and say, with a kind of serious, but joyful anticipation: "It's bread of heaven day." That is a thought and emotion that could teach many adults.

Of course, none of this is an excuse for not thinking, or not doing theology, or not having a good church education program. In fact, one of the best parts of excellent teaching about the Lord's Supper is that it opens up our imaginations to perceive the profound biblical images for the table.

If we make this change, why would anyone want to make profession of faith?

Because they love Jesus and because the congregation invites them to do so as a way to celebrate God's work in their lives and to commission them for a lifetime of Christian service.

But the question does address a key concern. Have we reduced profession of faith to be merely an entrance to the table? Have we treated participation at the table as the "reward" for making profession of faith?

Profession of faith, ideally, should be a significant adolescent rite of passage in which a congregation

- cares enough to challenge its youth with rich and life-giving learning,
- prays for them by name,
- helps them to discern their individual spiritual gifts,
- finds very specific, concrete ways for each of them to participate in the ministries of the church, with thoughtful mentorship, encouragement, and feedback,
- asks that they, in turn, will mentor younger church members,
- seeks to learn from them about their insights into the gospel and the life of the church, and

- celebrates (!) in memorable ways all that God is doing in their lives.

Perhaps welcoming children to the table can help us make profession of faith more, not less, important.

Even if we come to a different understanding of “discerning the body” (see article by Jeffrey Weima on p. 7), we still need to practice it. How will we do that?

Yes, indeed. To say it another way, the Lord's Supper is closely related to church discipline. Reading 1 Corinthians 11 with serious attention to how we might “examine ourselves” and “discern the body” calls us to be intentional about church discipline, no matter how we interpret the text. For that reason the task force appointed by the CRC Board of Trustees as directed by Synod 2006 is coming to Synod 2007 not only with recommended changes in the church order articles about who is welcome at the table, but also with changes in the articles about educational ministries and church discipline.

Part of this church discipline should be exercised by church councils who self-critically examine congregational life in prayerful efforts to root out any inhospitality and favoritism. And part of this discipline can be exercised every week in worship, as the congregation is invited to confess sin, hear God's words of assurance, and live in obedience to all God commands.

Imagine a call to confession that opens with these words: “As a congregation that regularly celebrates the grace of God at the Lord's Table, we take seriously the Bible's call to regularly examine ourselves, to confess our sin, to discern if there is anything spiritually unhealthy in this church body, and to freely claim our dependence on God's grace.” If such a call to confession (perhaps spoken at the table!) were used on a regular basis, even in services in which the table was not celebrated, many congregations would perceive much more tangibly how to obey 1 Corinthians 11, perhaps more than they do now.

What happens when children who grew up participating end up rebelling as young people? Are we supposed to welcome a sullen 18-year-old to the table just because she has been participating since she was 4?

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This is a difficult challenge that requires enormous spiritual discernment and pastoral wisdom. But it is also important to see that this is not really different than welcoming a sullen, stubborn 39-year-old who cheats on his taxes despite the fact he has been participating since making public profession of faith at age 20.

In both cases, the church should listen to them, care for them, pray for them and call them to a life of faithful discipleship. And the church has the authority also either to suggest or require that they not participate in communion for a time. Wise church leaders might themselves choose to abstain from communion at a given time until they can reconcile with a neighbor.

Why raise such a complicated topic? Our congregation's practice of profession of faith is working great. It worked great for me and for my children.

Your good experience is something to celebrate! At the same time, we should be cautious of anecdotal accounts alone. For every good story, there is a not-so-good one, and vice versa.

In the CRC, as a recent survey tells us, there are a couple hundred pastors quite satisfied with the way things have been. There are a couple hundred pastors (and a majority of delegates to last year's synod) who want to welcome children to the table. There are also many with questions. If we weren't a denomination, everyone could just do what they pleased. Instead, we have the opportunity to pray together, study Scripture together, and talk through all the instructive historical, cultural, and congregational

practices that help us live faithfully together. We have a system in which we covenant to pray, learn, deliberate and move together. As one non-denominational pastor recently told me, “I know that denominations can be unruly and complex, but please don't give up on what you have. Genuine spiritual accountability across time zones and cultures is a gift to be cherished.”

So you're telling me that welcoming children to the table is not simply a case of making things easier, but of making participation deeper?

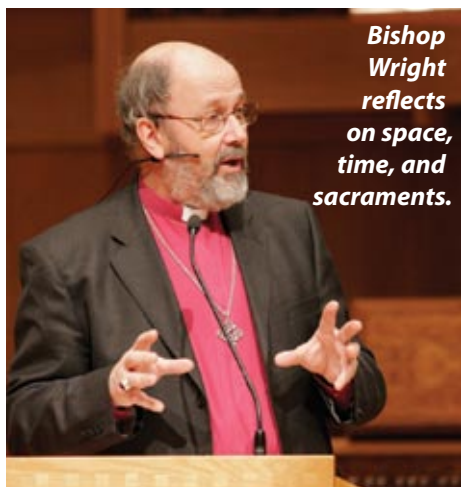
I'm saying that this could well be the case. A few proponents of the change may simply want to challenge the tradition, and water things down a bit. But the majority of those advocating change are motivated more by a desire to make worship and church life in general a source of deeper, more engaged participation.

Get serious here: this change would, in effect, change a set of practices at least as old as the 16th century. This is not going to happen overnight! What gives us the chutzpah to change something that old?

True enough, this is a big change. And in fact, as David Rylaarsdam's article on page 5 suggests, this change deals with something at least 800 years old, much older than the Reformation.

This should give us humility and remind us to be patient listeners to each other. That's why the task force to synod is recommending the formation of a new kind of committee that would not only study the kinds of issues that Lyle Bierma discusses on page 3, but also do a lot of listening to local congregations in a variety of cultural and missional contexts. We need mutual accountability at both the theological and practical levels.

At the same time, the duration of these historical practices should not prevent us from a lively engagement with this topic. “Tradition” must not be at the same level as Scripture for Reformed Christians. We need not fear working together in a mutually accountable way to a new approach, provided it is driven by careful consideration of all the biblical evidence and to each of the related theological and pastoral considerations.



Bishop Wright reflects on space, time, and sacraments.



Seminar on sacraments fills the Calvin College chapel.

Bishop N. T. Wright Leads Seminar on the Sacraments

“**S**acraments are at the heart of the church. That’s why they’re controversial. Try to change them and you will find out.”

Anglican Bishop of Durham N. T. Wright made that statement in his opening remarks at a seminar on “Space, Time, and Sacraments” sponsored by Calvin Theological Seminary and the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship on January 6, 2007.

Wright began his visit by speaking at the January Series of Calvin College on the topic of one of his latest books, *Simply Christian*. In that lecture he laid the groundwork for the seminar on sacraments by teaching a theology of creation in which “heaven and earth are not the same thing, but are not far apart; and they overlap and interlock, and are designed to be integrated, finally.” Wright believes that “our worship takes place in that overlapping space” and that the sacraments occur there as well.

In his seminar Wright explained how the new heaven and the new earth “overlap supremely in Jesus himself”—how the two narratives of Jesus’ baptism and his last meal with his followers “are the interpretive grid through which people not only understand his life, death, and resurrection, but also are the events through which people are nourished.” Through the sacraments Christians “feed on the story to be renewed for the journey ahead.”

In reflecting on the participation of children in the Lord’s Supper, Wright wondered, “How old must children be before they can know anything about God?” His

answer: “A mother can establish an intimate relationship with a newborn baby. If that is so, can the God who created the whole world not establish contact until age 5 or 6 or 10? God has ways of making himself known to children, especially through the love of the Christian community. [Children] can’t say the creed, but they may have a deeper and fuller faith than those who recite it every week.”

Wright used the example of a balloon which can be full whether it is blown up with a little air or a lot of it, and said, “A very little person can be *totally* filled with the love of God, not half full because he or she is half a person.” He used the further example of persons who have Down’s Syndrome participating in communion

because they “know the love of God and respond in wonderful and moving ways more profound than those who have been confirmed and can articulate their faith.”

In relating the sacraments to time and space, Wright noted that the “past and future come to meet us in the bread and the wine.” Since “the purpose of a Christian is to shine God’s light in the world, ... we need the nourishment of the Spirit,” which is found in the Eucharist. At the Lord’s Supper, “we taste new creation on our tongues, on our lips, and in our mouths, so we can go out to do new creation in the world.”

Audio files of Wright’s lectures can be found in the lecture archive at www.calvinseminary.edu.

Professor Avila Earns Second Ph.D. Degree

In November 2006 CTS Professor Mariano Avila (who holds a doctorate in New Testament from Westminster Theological Seminary) was awarded his second doctorate—this one in Social Sciences with a specialization in Political Science—by the Universidad Autonoma Metropolitana in Mexico City. Remarkably, Avila earned his degree from a secular university with a dissertation on the evangelical churches in Mexico—the first to do so at that institution.



This past March Avila gave a lecture based on that dissertation, entitled “The Political Role of Evangelicals in Mexican

Democracy from 1991 to the 2006 Presidential Elections: Lessons and Scenarios,” co-sponsored by Calvin Theological Seminary and the Nagel Institute for the Study of World Christianity at Calvin College. In his presentation he recounted the growing involvement of evangelicals in the political realm in Mexico, which is “one of the most secular Western countries politically, but one of the most religious culturally.” Avila’s personal experience of growing up and pastoring congregations in Mexico added understanding to his extensive research into Mexican politics and religion.



Pastors from the Church of the Servant CRC host the Lord's Supper.



CTS alums Henry Schenkel, Peter Choi, and Gregg DeMey lead evangelistic preaching workshop.



Composer Keith Getty leads his own hymn, "In Christ Alone."



Conferees from around the world worship together.

3rd grade choir from Ada Christian School leads worship.

20th Worship Symposium Brings Glory to God

The Calvin Symposium on Worship celebrated its 20th anniversary this past January with another outstanding conference featuring more than 80 presenters and 1,600 participants. Sponsored by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship with the Center for Excellence in Preaching, the symposium is a significant opportunity for seminary students who spend two to three days learning with some of the best preachers and teachers of worship. Participants were offered a bouquet of topics from architecture and liturgical floral arranging to choral conducting and worship team building, from preaching as pastoral care to worship as spiritual formation, from sacramental song to enacted prayer.

The variety of topics was exceeded only by the great variety of participants. "We never could have imagined how the symposium would grow," said John Witvliet, director of the Worship Institute and professor of worship at CTS. "I'm especially gratified with how people from such completely different kinds of churches are able to be part of this conversation—from urban and rural, long-established and brand-new, North American and beyond North America."

While hailing from countless congregations in 34 countries, attendees found common themes and questions focused on the glory of God. They pondered questions such as these: How can our art, sermons, music, and language more adequately convey God's glory? What palette of colors and sounds, what textures, what metaphors and images best promise to help us evoke and attend to God's glory? What would renewed attention to God's glory mean for worship in our congregations? Would it become more contemplative? exuberant? weighty? vibrant?

Witvliet hopes to see more attention given to how we perceive the beauty and glory of God through the various elements of worship. "So often, our work on the mechanics of planning a service draws our attention away from God. The question we need to ask," he notes, "is how can we look beyond the sounds, words, and elements of worship to comprehend the beauty and glory of God?"

For more information, including audio files from 2007 and a list of confirmed presenters for January 2008, go to www.calvin.edu/worship/sympos.

2007 Recipients of the Distinguished Alumni Awards

At its meeting on February 9, 2007, the trustees of CTS named two recipients of the seminary's **Distinguished Alumni Award** for 2007. The



Leonard Hofman



Jack Vos

award is given annually to recipients who have brought unusual credit to their alma mater by their distinction in Christian ministry. For 2007 the recipients are **The Reverend Leonard Hofman** and **The Reverend Jack Vos**.

Beginning his ministry in 1951, **The Reverend Leonard J. Hofman** served congregations in Kanawha, IA; Kenosha, WI; Zeeland, MI; Jenison, MI; and Holland, MI. From 1982 to 1994 Rev. Hofman served our denomination first as Stated Clerk of the CRCNA, and then as (continued on p. 15)

Seminary, Sexuality, and Ministry

One cannot be a pastor or a Christian in North American culture without dealing head on with matters of human sexuality. Because CTS seeks to be proactive and not shrink from difficult issues that confront the Christian community and that will confront students as future ministry leaders, it hosted three community learning events this year that addressed very different challenges with respect to human sexuality.

Panel Discussion on "Pornography and the Pastorate"

"Pornography is a blight on contemporary life and a threat to Christians and non-Christians alike. As future leaders in the church we need to know about it." So said Calvin Theological Seminary (CTS) President Cornelius Plantinga Jr. in an invitation to an all-seminary "town hall" meeting sponsored by the seminary's student senate, as well as a student group called the Josiah Initiative that is working to raise awareness about the problem of pornography.

Three panelists joined this conversation on "Pornography and the Pastorate": Dan Vander Steen, a counselor at Calvin College's Broene Center; Duane Visser, director of CRC Pastor-Church Relations; and Ruth Boven, a pastor at Neland Avenue CRC. While discussing a difficult topic, the panel enlightened and challenged the 100 people who attended the meeting. The seminary community was sobered by statistics on how many Christians, and Christian pastors, are caught in the grip of internet pornography. Each panelist also offered hope and specific resources for pastors and churches.

Town Hall Meeting on "Christians and Homosexuality"

Discussions of homosexuality usually produce more heat than light. Careful articulation, humility about what one does *not* know, and strong biblical convictions are desirable features of any discussion in the Christian community, especially on a subject as controversial as homosexuality.

Mark Yarhouse of Regent University brought such light and careful thought to this matter. The discussion ranged from

Dan Vander Steen, Ruth Boven, and Duane Visser discuss the problem of pornography.



biological versus environmental factors regarding homosexuality, to the relationship between societal prejudice and homosexual identity development, to other socio-cultural and socio-political dynamics that have an impact on persons who are homosexual and in the church.

The meeting was marked by probing questions, thoughtful answers, and, above all, a commitment to imitate Christ in the way we talk together about this important matter and in the way we seek to reach out in Christ's name to *all* of God's children.

Town Hall Discussion of Gender Bias at CTS

How does gender bias manifest itself in an institution where the faculty and student body are disproportionately male? Totally apart from one's view of women's roles in the church, are there ways the seminary community invisibly favors men? How can we reduce these "blind spots" that, while often unintentional, nevertheless are damaging of not just women but the whole community?

Claudia Beversluis, Provost of Calvin College, Shirley Hoogstra, Vice President for Student Life at Calvin College, and Jack Roeda, Senior Pastor at Church of the Servant CRC, served as panelists to help the seminary community think about these questions and

discern ways to more fully value all members of the seminary community.

Provost Beversluis made it clear that people don't start out to be mean or biased, but operate out of unconscious interpretative frameworks. She playfully asked listeners to identify their "most professorial professor," and then pointed out how the qualities that work positively for a male professor often work against a female. A male professor who is absent-minded will probably be seen as deep in thought, Beversluis explained, but a female with the same behavior will probably be seen as scatter-brained. In the same way, a male professor who is grumpy will probably be seen as demanding excellence, while a female professor who exhibits the same behaviors will be labeled a crab, or worse.

All three panelists had very helpful insights into ways we unwittingly diminish and harm others, as well as ways we can more fully value and affirm one another as God's imagebearers and children.

Each of these events was very informative on vital issues that face the church. Perhaps more importantly, all three of these events were marked by civility, charity, careful listening, and restrained but honest speaking that bodes well for the church in which these students will serve as future ministry leaders.

Professor Ron Nydam facilitates panel discussion on gender bias with (l. to r.) Jack Roeda, Claudia Beversluis, and Shirley Hoogstra.



Four Years of Interns in Cedar Rapids, Iowa

by Paul Delger, Freelance writer and CRC member from Kanawha, IA

If you want to examine a successful Calvin Theological Seminary internship program, look no further than Peace Christian Reformed Church in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, for your model.

At first glance, you may wonder why Peace has attracted a number of seminarians to serve in this one-year program. But if you looked closer, you would see how the interns have quickly been embraced by Peace's pastor, Doug MacLeod, his wife Cathy, and the congregation.

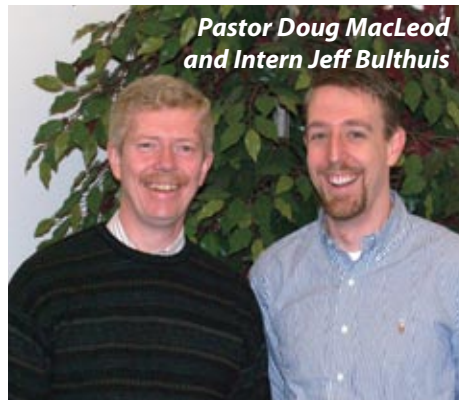
"The best aspect of our time there was the relationships: connecting with members of the church through programs, after church for coffee, going on outings together to the fireworks and Pella's Tulip Time, and sharing meals," said former intern Daryl (DJ) DeKlerk. "I certainly came to appreciate the life experience, intelligence, and spiritual depth of members in the church and community."

Peace hosted intern pastors for four consecutive years beginning in the summer of 2003. Ed Gerber, now pastor in Webster, New York, was the first intern. DeKlerk, a pastor at First CRC in Barrie, Ontario, came next. Christian Pedersen and current intern Jeff Bulthuis fill out the roster.

"The intern does much of what a parish pastor does," said MacLeod, who has served Peace Church for about 14 years. "Instead of a niche role with a particular focus (youth, visitation, or outreach, for example) our interns have wide-ranging pastoral opportunities."

Bulthuis appreciates the wide ministry exposure and has discovered his ministry strengths. "I was excited to be able to approach a large variety of ministry opportunities including preaching, pastoral care, teaching, evangelism, and administration," he said. "This internship allowed me to explore where my gifts are so that I could know where God might use me in the future."

Interns provided MacLeod with high marks in his pastoral training. "He taught me simple yet indispensable things like how to talk, how to walk, how to breathe in and out," Gerber said. "In other words, by example, he taught me a whole lot of intangibles."



Pastor Doug MacLeod
and Intern Jeff Bulthuis

DeKlerk added, "The challenge of learning to preach better was something I loved, and Doug's mature observations enriched me. Personal and pastoral qualities I learned from Doug included the use of captivating images and engaging words to communicate God's great truths in preaching, appropriate sensitivities in pastoral care, leadership sensibilities with church council issues, the need to religiously keep a Sabbath rest day, and the value of spiritual disciplines and physical exercise."

MacLeod appreciated the give-and-take

nature of the intern situation. "I realized that after more than 20 years of parish ministry, I have accumulated experience that has value for those who are starting out," he said. "Moreover, they have each, in their own giftedness, challenged, questioned, and enriched my perspective on ministry and reassured me that the church is being provided with capable pastors for the years ahead."

MacLeod said that the intern program has benefited from his wife's contributions too. "Cathy very intentionally and willingly invested herself in the three interns who have spouses," he said. "The four of us enjoyed supportive and transparent relationships as Cathy and I believe that for married students, an internship and preparation for congregational ministry can also involve clergy couple mentoring."

Peace Church will end its popular intern program after Bulthuis completes his term, but they plan to add a permanent staff position to their church—hopefully with a pastor who has been as well trained as these four.

Distinguished Alumni (continued from p. 13)

General Secretary of our denomination. Rev. Hofman retired in 1994 as General Secretary Emeritus. His church ministry exhibited extraordinary qualities of leadership: highly intelligent and articulate preaching and teaching, compassionate pastoral care, deeply engaged awareness of the church, and, throughout, meticulous attention to detail. He has always been a highly reflective Christian minister. As General Secretary, Administrative Secretary of the Interchurch Relations Committee, and Chairman of the Board of the National Association of Evangelicals, Rev. Hofman's dignity and ecumenical statesmanship earned him respect throughout the world's community of believers. In various significant capacities he was officially present at 35 meetings of the synod of the Christian Reformed Church. The Reverend Leonard Hofman is a leader of the church, and it is fitting for CTS to honor him as a Distinguished Alumnus.

Beginning his ministry in 1962, **The Reverend Jack B. Vos** served congrega-

tions in five Ontario locations: Stratford, Chatham, Toronto (Scarborough), St. Catharines, and Barrie. He retired in 1999. He impressed everyone who witnessed his work—from young persons he led into ministry, to synodical delegates who elected him officer, to ministerial colleagues who simply and deeply trusted him. Rev. Vos has always been an astute student of Scripture and of human nature. Congregation members thrived on his stellar preaching and his warm, faithful pastoral care. They knew his integrity as an anchor of the church. As a member of the denomination's Board of Trustees, or as an officer of synod, Rev. Vos could always be counted on for intelligent, calmly reasoned observations. He practiced fairness until it became his reflex. When he spoke, people listened, in part because he made little of himself and much of the issues and persons before him. He was, accordingly, a superb interviewer. The Reverend Jack Vos is a leader of the church, and it is fitting for CTS to honor him as a Distinguished Alumnus.

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