



Mission News

Mission Activities of the Canadian Reformed Churches

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Urban Mission Board Update – Cloverdale/Langley, BC

September 30, 2007 was an exciting Sunday for the Chinese Reformed church and their mother churches, the Cloverdale and Langley Canadian Reformed churches. Three public professions of faith and two baptisms took place – it was a day of celebration and thanksgiving! The Chinese church service began at 1:30 pm and the room, usually holding about twenty-five Chinese people, was tight for space with over sixty people gathered this time. We began with singing – voices were raised simultaneously in Mandarin and English – diversified in language but united in melody and heart. Some Dutch visitors attended as well, perhaps bringing a third language into harmony.

Due to the large amount of non-Mandarin-speaking visitors, Rev. Dong began the service with an apology and a smile, that the service would be in the Mandarin language. Enamoured by the non-Dutch flavour of the service, we “listened” attentively to the call to worship, joined in more singing, appreciated the silent prayer, sang again, and then “listened” once more as the salutation was given and the Ten Commandments were read. A lesson in language barriers is quickly learned while being there and a humble appreciation for new immigrants (including when our grandparents came to Canada) is felt. More singing was followed by the offering and a pastoral prayer.

It was time for the professions of faith and baptisms. The form was read, in Chinese of course. The three adults stood: Eugene Yu, his wife Jean Zhou, and Jasmine Wang. Upon their professions, Eugene and Jean’s seven-year-old son, Benny Yu, knelt on the kneeling bench and was baptized. Jasmine was baptized, and her little three-year-old son Owen Kui received the sign and seal of the covenant too. Many pictures were taken! The room seemed to swell with smiles and praises to our God. How awesome and gracious He is. May his Name be praised! Soon afterwards Rev. Dong gave the

visitors the option of attending Cloverdale’s (English) church service. Almost reluctantly, most of the visitors slipped out quietly and slipped in quietly to the back pews of the Cloverdale auditorium. While the Chinese service had been beautiful, it was welcoming to hear English once again.

That evening, at 5:30 pm, everyone (and more!) gathered in the hall of Cloverdale church. This time about 130 people sat snugly around tables with mouths watering for the delicious food waiting. It was a potluck dinner and there was a smorgasbord of Chinese and Western/Dutch dishes to delight in. Rev. Dong opened in prayer and then chimed a hearty “Eet smaakelijk!”... a charming remark symbolic and respectful of the deep heritage ingrained in our Canadian Reformed community; a little phrase that seemed to acknowledge and celebrate our cultural differences. We may have different backgrounds, but we’re fully united in faith; a wonderful blessing from our God.

And so, the variety of foods perhaps reflected the variety of people; still an inclusive atmosphere of new and old friendships prevailed. Many congratulations were given to the new Chinese members and their children.



Jean's son



Singing in Chinese and English



Jasmine's baptism

Song sheets were distributed and we again lifted our voices in praise. Rev. Lodder closed the evening commenting on how this was such a “big day” for everyone! We felt blessed to be able to share it all together. He led in a thanksgiving prayer. Unity continued as many hands helped to clear the tables and wash the dishes. Last farewells were finally given and we took our full bellies and fond memories home.

Please keep the Chinese Reformed church in your prayers. May the Lord bless Eugene and Jean and their son Benny and Jasmine and her son Owen with his continued grace and guidance as they grow in love for Him.

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Peter

Contributions to the Urban Mission work are always welcome and appreciated.
Please send all cheques to:

Peter Vandergugten
6237-184 Street, Surrey, BC, V3S 8B1
Please make cheques payable to
Urban Mission Committee CRCC
A receipt will be issued. Thank you!

Brazil – Surrey

Rats, bats, cats, and other creatures that go bump in the night

It's just after midnight and I'm cleaning blood off the kitchen floor. It's not human blood; it's snake blood. You may wonder what a Reformed minister is doing with snake blood at midnight. No, this is not some strange Afro-Brazilian spiritist ritual! Let me explain by starting at the beginning. It all happened when I came home late from doing some open air preaching in Dois Unidos. . . .

Preaching on the heights of hope

Dois Unidos is the youngest of the four Recife congregations, but has a level of commitment and zeal which outstrips some of the older and more established congregations. Although there is no elder yet in the Dois Unidos congregation, the men meet together regularly to talk about the church and how they can promote the well-being and growth of the church, both in numbers and in maturity and holiness.

They came up with the idea to hold a three-night evangelistic symposium right in the open square next to the water tower of Dois Unidos. This highest point of the bairro is known as Alto da Esperança, which translated means "Heights of Hope." Well, it's not every day that you get a chance to preach on the Heights of Hope! I spoke and preached three nights in a row and on the first two nights an elder gave an opening message as well.

The event was remarkably well organized. The men from Dois Unidos congregation had contacted City Hall and as a result the municipal government not only authorized the event, but also helped with the infrastructure. They came out to hook up a string of lights, connected directly to the city lamp posts. They also hammered together a large, one metre-high stage made of boards. Further, they sent out one or two policemen each night of the event to keep order and make sure that we were not bothered by drunks or other possible disruptions.

We had a very satisfying turnout: about fifty people seated in front of the stage and another twenty or thirty who were too timid to come and sit down, but were hanging around, leaning against walls, or sitting on the sidewalk across the street, listening intently. A good number of church members were present, but I would estimate that at least half of the audience were strangers to the gospel of sovereign grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

What was astonishing was the respect and attention that the community paid to the event. In typical Brazilian



style, the organizers set up huge speakers hooked up to a microphone. My voice boomed all over the neighbourhood and was certainly heard by many, many more people than the seventy or eighty who were visible from the stage. Normally, the area in which we held the event is full of noise, as blaring music from a number of bars mixes with cranked stereos from the houses around, and drunken fights add their contribution to the mix. When I paused during my preaching, however, the silence was palpable. All of the neighbours (and the bars) had turned off their stereos and sound systems. The people of Alto da Esperança were listening carefully to the message.

I think one of the reasons they listened carefully is because it is a message they had never heard before. When the Pentecostal sects do "evangelism," they come in with rocking music groups (with "Christian" lyrics, of course). They then proceed to shout "*glória*" and yell over and over about how Jesus loves every one. What people heard at this Reformed event was very different. The gospel was preached; man's fallen condition was explained; God's glorious grace was proclaimed. We were very happy to hear some comments from unbelievers in the area to the effect that they had actually understood the messages.

While we were privileged to be preaching the gospel, the Pentecostal sects had organized a three day vigil. Every night, behind closed doors, they prayed against the Reformed work. They told their people that it was dangerous to listen to even one word of what the Reformed church preached, since this had already led some to "apostatize." We learned this information from believers who have family members in the sect.

Death lurking in the kitchen

On the last night, Friday, I took Chaim along with me. We arrived home very late, because (as on the first two nights) there was a *confraternização* (fellowship time) at Alexandre's place after the preaching. It was midnight when we walked in the door. Chaim walked into the kitchen and suddenly called out, "Dad! There's a snake in here!"

"Calm down!" I replied. After all, the odd garden snake now and again is nothing to get too wound up about. I strolled toward the kitchen and asked Chaim where the snake was. "Right there," he cried, pointing to a spot about fifty centimetres from where I was standing. The snake was curled up just to the right of the doorway in which I was standing. It was not just any snake; it was a Brazilian Coral snake. One of the most venomous snakes in South America.

Thankfully (don't ask why) there was a shovel handy in the hall way. What followed was a rather frantic session of shovel-wielding, snake-crushing violence. In the end, the snake lay in several bloody pieces on a stone floor rather chipped and gouged by the attentions of the shovel. In a startling illustration of Genesis 3:15, the part with the head kept moving, its tongue flicking in and out. Only



when its head was crushed did it finally die completely.

For the last few weeks, I had been turning off all the lights at night (electricity is expensive here!). But now we are back to leaving the veranda and hall lights on. Coral snakes are nocturnal and I hope they prefer to avoid the lights. Either way, it will be a while before I go back to stumbling around in the dark to get a drink from the kitchen in the middle of the night!





This house is a zoo

The house we are now living in is actually the main building of the study centre. We're in it temporarily while we wait for our home to be built. The house had been empty for over a year and as a result we have quite a variety of wild-life which has come to feel quite at home in here.

The first resident we had to get rid of was a rather ugly – though courageous – rat. He would merrily waddle through the living room in the evenings while Tamara and I were reading. We finally dispatched him with the help of a peanut-butter-laced rat trap.

The bats that had taken up residence have still not moved out; they recently scared a visiting Mission Aid member out of her bed to take refuge on the couch in the living room. Then we also have a very strange frog which may just have escaped from a 3M laboratory. You see, he jumps out of the sink or drain and actually sticks to the walls. He acts like Spiderman dressed in a frog suit. We have one of these as a fixture in each bathroom.

Murder at midnight

One of the most terrible illegal squatters in the house is a nasty, murderous cat. He has twice now entered the living room at night and each time murdered one of the budgies. The children were horrified and we were forced to take counter-measures to avoid further bloodshed. The budgies are now locked safely in the bathroom every night. In a recent court case, our family tried the cat (in absentia). Micah (1.5 years old) was the defence lawyer and, although he put forth a valiant effort, he was not able to avoid a nine-fold death sentence pronounced upon his client.

The image of crushing the snake's head has stayed with me most vividly these last days. How amazing it is that the Seed of the Woman has crushed the head of the serpent!! He has broken all the power of the devil and so set us free from this power. What a wonderful, gracious, glorious truth we have! And what an amazing privilege to proclaim this gospel message to sinners who as yet are slaves to sin and death.

Please pray:

1. That the Lord would so bless the preaching of his Word that many more sinners may come to know freedom from slavery to sin
2. Giving thanks that the Lord spared Chaim's life. Chaim was barefoot and almost stepped on the snake in the dark.
3. Asking for a blessing on this year's events and also the preparations for a busy 2008 calendar of events and activities at the Aldeia Training Centre
4. Remembering the Van Spronsen family as they continue to prepare for the field and as they continue to experience the many challenges that this time of transition brings.

In Christ,
Rev. K. Wieske

Wieske family birthdays

Micah Baruch Wieske – March 4, 2006
 Kenneth Edward Wieske – May 23, 1969
 Nathanael Chaim Wieske – June 19, 1996
 Tamara Natasha Wieske – August 13, 1971
 Kyrie Elysa Mé Wieske – September 18, 2000
 Natália Christiana Wieske – December 24, 2003

Owen Sound – “Project Quebec”

Lumière Sur Mon Sentier

It has now been seven years since the congregation of St. Georges approached Owen Sound with the goals and objectives of “Project Quebec.” They approached us desiring the solidification of their congregation in the Reformed faith. As well they wished to develop evangelism efforts in Beauce County, Quebec and grow numerically as a church. Since then our relationship has grown. Many of our members have had opportunity to travel east to enjoy Quebec culture, cuisine, and countryside. More importantly, we’ve had opportunity to worship our God in the fellowship of faith despite the language barrier. We’ve also been able to receive Rev. Bédard and other members of the consistory and congregation in Owen Sound. The Lord has blessed this relationship and we can only stand in awe of our God who causes all things to happen according to his will in his time.

As the project progresses, it is a healthy exercise to evaluate the goals of the project and the “accomplishments” thus far. How does one measure the “accomplishments” of a mission project, many of us are prone to ask. When the congregation doesn’t grow numerically as swiftly as one would hope, when God’s Word doesn’t seem to penetrate the hearts of many Catholics and atheists, how does one continue in their task with zeal and determination? However, the blessings are evident.



Mrs. Bedard

The congregation is small, but the church has been richly fed with the Word of God Sunday after Sunday. The seed is planted in a hard soil, but Bible studies are conducted, catechism taught and pastoral visits made. Friends and family may forsake God’s people, by a strong bond and the unity of faith is evident in the congregation. The visible fruits of evangelism may be few, but the Lord’s faithfulness is seen as the next generation prepares to make public profession of their faith.



Rev. Bedard



*James Gunnink, Gary Nordeman,
Rev. Bedard, his son Daniel*

These are some of the many things that we as congregations assume to be the norm. There is something else that we may take for granted. Many of us have our book shelves full of Reformed literature: devotionals, commentaries, and books on just about any biblical topic. In addition, our coffee tables are riddled with various subscriptions to Christian magazines. These things are not available in French. Much work has been done in St. Georges in the translation of teaching materials: Bible catechism for young children, a study of the Heidelberg catechism, a premarital course, a guide for office bearer training, Bible study outlines, evangelism material, and much more. In light of an evaluation of Project Quebec, the lack of French reading materials, the talents of Rev. Bédard, and a confidence in the guiding hand of the Head of the Church, the consistory of St. Georges intends to publish six times a year a magazine for the edification of the members of the congregations of the ERQ and for the spreading of the Reformed faith.

Elder Luc Thibaudeau, on behalf of the consistory of the Église Chrétienne Réformée de Beauce, Québec describes the magazine:

With the new publication *Lumière sur mon Sentier* (Light on my Path), our congregation wants to offer to God's people and to the French speaking Christians a magazine that will stimulate our reflection on the Christian life, the Reformed faith and the biblical teachings.

Six times a year, the magazine *Lumière sur mon Sentier* will present different articles discussing the following subjects. Every issue will contain most of these columns:

- Study of the Heidelberg Catechism by Rev. Paulin Bédard, minister of the Église Chrétienne Réformée de Beauce

- Meditation on a Bible text revealing all the richness and depth of God's Word and its benefits for our life and our worship
- Articles on marriage, family, and education providing us with biblical insight on our world which is increasingly disrupted
- Articles encouraging involvement in the development of church life and the edification of God's people
- Reflection on the world in which we live and on the impact that our faith may have on the different spheres of our life
- Articles presenting missionary work around the world, or significant events and people used by God in the history of the church
- Articles relating the discovery of some of the wonders of God's creation or presenting Christian scientists who made a significant contribution to the different fields of science
- Teachings and reflections encouraging the young people in their walk with the Lord

We pray that this magazine might be a source of encouragement to live in a manner worthy of our calling. May the Holy Spirit renew and transform our mind so that through our lives we might give praise, glory and honour to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



Rev. and Mrs. Villeux



*St. Georges
congregation*

It is with confidence in God's faithfulness and Christ's church building work that we endorse and encourage St. Georges in this new project. May we pray with God's people in Quebec that his Word would penetrate the hearts of stone, transform wayward lives, and encourage the congregations to continue to run with perseverance the race marked out for us. May we all look forward to being assembled with "a great multi-

tude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" and singing together "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb" (Rev 7:9, 10).

*For the Owen Sound Mission Board,
James Gunnink*

Please add to your Mission Calendar

Birthdays

Rev. J. Witteveen	May 26
Mrs. Nalley Witteveen	March 20
McKinley Witteveen	September 6, 2001

Address

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