



Missions Newsletter

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International Conference of Reformed Churches

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

(Matthew 28:19)

Some reflections on the ICRC Conference

This year the quadrennial meetings of the ICRC were held in Christchurch, NZ. A prayer meeting was held at the Bishopdale Reformed Church on Thursday evening, October 15 led by the Rev. John Goris, retired pastor of the Wellington RCNZ; the Rev. Dirk van Garderen (Bucklands Beach, RCNZ) preached the sermon; and three Conference delegates offered prayer – each focussing on specific areas of need in their prayer. The next day the Conference was officially opened at the Holiday Inn by the Rev. Bort de Graaf of the CRCN, the past chairman of the ICRC, who relinquished the chair to the new chairman, the Rev. Bruce Hoyt of the RCNZ. He did a wonderful job directing the Conference through its Agenda.

No doubt, one of the highlights of the Conference were the excellent presentations on the theme chosen for this year’s meetings of the ICRC: **“The Vitality of the Reformed Faith”**. The delegates, as indeed a large number of visitors each evening, heard stimulating speeches which occasioned lively discussion. Dr. George W. Knight III (of the OPC) spoke on “Facing the Challenges of the Charismatic Movement”; Dr. Nelson D. Kloosterman (of the URCNA) spoke on “Facing the Challenge of Individualism in Church Life”; the Rev. P. Frank van Dalen (of the ARPC) spoke on “Facing the Challenge of Islam”; and Dr. Mohan Chacko (of the RPCI) spoke on “Facing these Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Context”. Each speaker succeeded very well in challenging his audience to give careful thought to – and hopefully encouraged them to actively engage in – the work of missions in the world of the 21st Century, a world so desperately in need of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The ICRC admitted five new federations into its membership,

including the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) (FCS Cont.), the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Independent Reformed Church of Korea (IRCK), the Reformed Churches of Brazil (RCB – IRB), and the Reformed Presbyterian Church of India (RPCI). These federations were heartily welcomed while an additional four federations had their membership applications held in abeyance until the next meeting of the ICRC when it is hoped all the criteria for membership will have been met. The membership of the ICRC now stands at 30 federations with a healthy prospect for further growth.

The work of the ICRC will be on-going in the intervening years (before its next scheduled meeting in 2013 in Wales) not only via the Mandate of its Missions Committee, but also through the work of a “Committee of Review”. This committee will seek to assess the strengths (and possible weaknesses) of the ICRC which has a twenty-five year history behind it and lay out how, and wherein the Conference can better fulfil its calling under the blessing of the Lord.

Let us be much in prayer for the work of these committees and may the Lord richly bless the ICRC for His glory and unto blessing for the Church of Jesus Christ. **RJS**

A Witness to the Impact of the Gospel

In the November issue of “Foi et Vie Reformees” (Reformed Faith and Life) the Rev. Eric Kayayan addresses the question: Does the faithful preaching of the Gospel have an impact on the lives of the people who hear it? by ‘sharing’ with his readers some of the correspondence he has received from listeners to the RFL broadcasts. A Reformed pastor from the Democratic Republic of the Congo sent the following “testimony” to him:

“Our Reformed Faith and Life broadcast is doing wonders in Kananga. Many letters I receive repeatedly ask me to put on the air the same programme after it has been aired. Really it is a great joy to see this. Your messages really counter the many heresies which are propagated from this radio”.

Rev Kayayan continues: “I recently answered personally several questions asked via email by listeners from the same FM station. One person wrote: *I am writing to you as a listener of Reformed Faith and Life, which has become my favourite program on our local station. Last week, my father and I followed the message entitled “the Church under the Cross” [about the persecuted Church through the ages]. Its contents were rich and this allows me to ask you the following questions: The Bible forbids to kill. How then can a Christian be a soldier and submit himself to the discipline and orders he receives? Won’t he sin if he kills? Can one speak of the execution of the Church today?”*

“You can imagine”, says Rev. Kayayan,



Attendees at the ICRC Conference

“that in a country like the Congo, stricken by civil war, and by a so-called regular army which commits as many atrocities as the rebel groups it is trying to eliminate, this is not just a rhetorical question. The answer cannot be simplistic either. But a Biblical answer will always bring light and perspective to people desperately in need of it.”

He concludes by saying: “Yes, the Gospel, preached faithfully, deeply impacts the lives of people! These emails are vibrant proof of that.” So indeed it is! And let us remember it well, they serve to encourage the church of Jesus Christ to continue steadfastly in proclaiming the Word of the Lord to the peoples of the nations – that the Church may be established and the Kingdom of our Lord come with power. **RJS**

A Word of Introduction

At its meetings in Christchurch, the ICRC thanked the Rev. John Goris for his twelve years of faithful service as the Convener of the Missions Committee – in which capacity he served also as the Editor of the **ICRC Missions Newsletter**. Since twelve years is the maximum time-frame for service on this committee, a replacement for John had to be appointed. So it was that the committee of pre-advice proposed that I seek ‘to fill’ John’s shoes – a task I cannot possibly hope to accomplish without the grace and insight the Lord entrusted to John. (I am thankful that the Conference agreed to ask both Rev. Goris and Mr. Mark Bube to serve as advisers to the ICRC MC at least for the next couple of years. John will also serve as the Co-Editor of the Missions Newsletter.) I sincerely request your prayers that I may do my task faithfully and well.

In that connection, I also want to encourage you the readers to send me any newsworthy items relating to the Missions task of the Church. A Missions Newsletter can only be as ‘good and helpful’ for the Mission task to which the Lord calls His Church as the material is that is submitted for publication. So please keep that in mind. You may send it to me, Rev. Raymond J. Sikkema, at: rayandchris@hotmail.com or via “snail mail” at 4169 23rd Street Vineland Station, Ont. Canada L0R 2E0. **RJS**

Reflecting on “Word and Deed” Ministry

While attending the ICRC Conference, I secured a copy of the October 2009 issue of **“Faith in Focus”**, the church magazine of the RCNZ. I read with interest an article written by the Rev. Peter Kloosterman on the “OMB (Overseas Mission Board) and Missions”. Among other things, Rev. Kloosterman deals with the question: “Word and deed Ministries?” Rev. Kloosterman notes that tension re that issue has *“existed throughout the history of the church”*. It reminded me of the years I spent serving on the Mission Board of the CRC which also struggled with that question – and at one time had a special committee appointed to look into the question how the work of its Mission Board and that of its World Relief Board could best be co-ordinated. Rev. Kloosterman relates how that issue came to a head between two missionaries, the one seeking to use the ‘deed’ ministry as *“an avenue”* for the ‘word’, while the other sought to proclaim the word and taught the ‘hearers’ to apply it to their lives. This man, relates Kloosterman, had *“great influence in New Zealand, precisely because ... he sought to bring the claims of God’s word for justice and mercy to bear”* upon the lives of those to whom he ministered the word. I am inclined to say: Yes, of course! After all, such is the renewing/restoring power of the word of the Lord! The word of the Lord

is *“the power of God for salvation”*, and “salvation” involves living a ‘restored unto the service of the Lord’ life in accord with the precepts of the Lord in all areas of life. **RJS**

The Robert Morrison Project

Recently I received a brochure which introduces the reader to the Robert Morrison Project accompanied by a letter requesting that the ICRC member churches be alerted to this project. My curiosity was piqued, so I checked the website for some information – both on Robert Morrison and on the Project named in his honor. Here is what I found. First of all a word about the man, Robert Morrison:

“The year 1807 was a major milestone in the history of the church. On September 4, 1807, the Rev. Robert Morrison set foot on Chinese soil and became the first Protestant missionary to China. Serving under the London Missionary Society, Morrison labored tirelessly for 27 years to acquire the Chinese language, proclaim the faith, and translate the Scriptures for the first time. The early years were filled with untold hardship and toil. Yet from that humble beginning, by God’s grace, over the past 200 years, the church in China has grown from zero to millions today.”

And now a word about the Project named in his honor:

“On the 200th anniversary of Robert Morrison’s entry into China another major milestone in Chinese church history is occurring. Over the last five to six years it has become possible to legally publish some genres of Christian literature. The door for publishing in China is not completely open. However, more and more literature is slowly becoming legally available.”

“The chief objective of the Robert Morrison Project is to begin to lay the foundation for the long-term, legal presence of quality reformed literature in China and beyond. On an annual or semi-annual basis the Board of Directors of the Project will select a number of titles that reflect the Puritan and Reformed tradition (as defined by confessions such as the 1689 London Baptist Confession and the Westminster Confession of Faith). Grants will then be given to various Christian publishing companies in China/Asia to legally publish these titles.”

With the church of Jesus Christ now numbering countless millions of people in China, the member churches of the ICRC face the awesome responsibility to do all they can to supply that church with all the resources potentially available to the Lord’s people being gathered unto Him there. I heartily recommend the work of the Robert Morrison Project to the member churches of the ICRC. Soli Deo Gloria!

RJS

NEWS BITS

- The Missions Committee is due to meet in the Netherlands on May 26/27, 2010, DV. MC members have received details of the agenda from the Convener.
- The forthcoming European Regional Conference will be held this year in Edinburgh, Scotland, DV.
- The Asia-Pacific region is planning a conference in India in October 2010, DV.

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