



Northern Lights

God Moments

By John Kapteyn, synod executive

We have an opportunity to encourage one another by sharing our “God moments,” the times when God blesses us with a special sense of his presence or activity. I will be sharing such moments occasionally and I ask that you email me your God moments so we can share them through our website and through *Northern Lights*.

One of my God moments started with a deacon calling in sick. “Pastor, I will not be able to take the offering tomorrow as I am not feeling well and will not be at church.”

Two consistory members visited the deacon who had called me. They discovered that she had been drinking wine and was inebriated. The deacon was a recovered alcoholic, and one evening she thought that one glass of wine would not affect her. When she discovered that it had, she made the phone call to tell me she would not be at church.

A couple of days later she called me to resign from her office. I told her she would have to resign in person to the whole consistory, and we arranged a special meeting later that week in the sanctuary.

At the meeting, she confessed her sin and shared that she was no longer worthy to be a deacon in the church of her Lord and Savior.

One by one, the other members of the consistory said that they would also need to resign because they too were sinners and had fallen, perhaps in different ways, but fallen nonetheless.

It was a special time in which we not only forgave a fallen sister in the Lord, but let her know that she was no different than the rest of us. Together we prayed and thanked God for the forgiveness that he gives us in Jesus Christ, and we left the sanctuary more closely knit than we had ever been before.



This is true community—a community of sinners forgiven by the blood of Christ.

Donation Reminders

Canada Revenue Agency requires all money going to charitable organizations outside of Canada to be recorded by a CRA-approved charitable organization with an agency agreement. The Regional Synod of Canada, Inc. has such an agreement, and all donations (from individuals and churches) are to be sent through our office and recorded according to CRA's requirements.

If you would like to make a donation to the RCA for mission projects and Words of Hope, please send a cheque to your church or to the synod office. Please do not send money directly to the U.S.A. These cheques have to be returned to the synod office for proper processing.

The synod sends income tax receipts in January of the following year.

Mobilizing for Mission

We thank the RCA for enabling us to provide you with a larger and better *Northern Lights*. *Northern Lights* will be part of *rcatoday* three times a year and we plan to send another two to four issues separately but with this same format and size. Please send us your upcoming events and news items, as well as any suggestions for improving our content.



Strength from the Past, Hope for the Future

By Frieda Dekker

When we gather at Monarch Reformed Church in August 2009, horses will not be waiting impatiently and buggy seats will not be warming in the hot Alberta sun as they did 100 years ago.

A small group of Dutch families arrived in southern Alberta in 1904.

Together they began holding Sunday services in their homes.

In 1909 some 10

Dutch families gathered in a farmhouse to organize this small prairie Reformed church, the oldest in Canada that is still in existence today.

They budgeted \$1,000 to build their "little white church on the prairie." Construction began in 1910, and for cold Canadian winters they put a fat, black stove in the nave. Those nearby were toasted in contrast to those seated against the uninsulated walls. Men sat together on the right side of the church; women were on the left in their hats and long skirts, of course. There were no pews, but rows of oak chairs. Some members remember a slow-drying varnish on the chairs, which made it problematic to stand after a long service.

Now, a century later, we as a congregation will commemorate the prayerful beginning made by 19 dedicated members on August 12, 1909, as we carry on their Christian hope. Many descendants of that original group are still a part of the congregation.

We plan to bring back memories of the early pioneer days: the perseverance of the settlers in an unfamiliar land and the deep faith that carried them across

the years, sometimes as rugged as the first jolting prairie trails.

In the year leading up to the August anniversary, we will host monthly events similar to church activities of days gone by: an old-fashioned picnic with sack races, an Easter sunrise service, a Mother's Day tea, Scripture reading in Dutch, hot chocolate at a



Christmas Family Festival, a hay ride, and a talent show. There will even be a Sunday or two when ladies will wear hats and sit separate from the men on opposite sides of the center aisle.

We will also establish a fund to purchase outdoor benches for our prairie cemetery to honour those who have walked ahead. The prophet Samuel set up a memorial stone, saying, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12, KJV). We, too, may place a rock on our churchyard to mark this time in our history.

Celebrations will culminate the first weekend of August 2009. Former pastors and members, friends, synod representatives, guest speakers, and neighbouring churches will be invited for a cold lunch on August 1, followed by afternoon activities and historical displays at Monarch Church, then a catered dinner in nearby Nobleford. The following day, a special church service will be held at 10:00 a.m., followed by a potluck lunch. In all we will strive to show how God's amazing love and mercy have brought us this far, and to ask for his gracious help to carry our small country church forward.

Prayer Requests

Pray for healing from cancer for Jack Moerman and Al Nyp.

God's Blessings from Bethel Reformed Church in Brantford, Ontario

By Trudi Flaman

- We have been enjoying the warmer weather as we watch our new fellowship hall emerge from the ground. The outside walls and roof are up and on. The inside is still looking bare, but work is progressing.
- In the month of February, Ava Lynn Flaman and Caleb Rynberk were baptized.
- We are having a soup lunch the first Sunday of the month.
- Please remember to pray for the pastor and his family as they minister to our church, and for his son as he prepares to go to Iraq.
- Pray for the congregation as a whole, that we will be focused on God's will for our church and for general health.

Upcoming Events

Dear friends, on May 10, 2008, we will be celebrating our 40th wedding anniversary with an open house from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. at Hillside Lake Park Hall in Ayr, Ontario. Everyone welcome! Best wishes only.

—Siebrand and Maria Wilts

Commissioned Pastors



By Susan Damon, on behalf of the Commissioned Pastor Committee

Emile Schmid was recently installed at Maranatha Reformed Church in Wainfleet, Ontario, as the first commissioned pastor in the Regional Synod of Canada. (For more on the commissioned pastors program, see article on p. 26).



The synod's Commissioned Pastor Committee, chaired by Dirk Vermeulen, has been exploring how the synod might best meet needs for commissioned pastor training. Susan Damon, a committee representative, attended an initial exploratory meeting at Western Theological Seminary, and the seminary is currently looking at various design options for a distance learning program. Given the distance and cross-border challenges facing potential Canadian commissioned pastor candidates, the Commissioned Pastor Committee feels that this may offer the best solution for the synod. We will keep you posted. For more information on commissioned pastors, visit the RCA website at www.rca.org; highlight "Leadership," then click "Commissioned Pastors."

RSC Prayer Team

The Regional Synod Prayer Team seeks to mobilize prayer at the synod, classis, and local church levels. As we spend more time in prayer, we begin to realize God's work in our churches' ministry. He longs for us to partner with him.

The prayer team includes prayer coordinators in each Canadian classis:

- Ashok Kumar and Esther Dance, Classis of British Columbia
- Vyrle Westra, Classis of Canadian Prairies
- Joanne Radstake, Classis of Ontario

We ask for your support as we will be communicating with local churches about prayer requests and praise reports. We will continue to send a prayer list to all churches, asking them to include it in their bulletins so that we all may be praying for the same church every week.

Visit us at

www.praycanada.blogspot.com and
keep us in your prayers!

Calling Lake Is Calling

By Ron Opmeer, pastor,
Athabasca Reformed
Congregation

Athabasca Reformed Congregation is the northernmost church in the Regional Synod of Canada, and is ready to reach even further with your help—60 kilometers further, to the predominantly Cree native community of Calling Lake, Alberta.

Six hundred people live in a 10-kilometer radius of Calling Lake; 75 percent identified themselves as Roman Catholic in the 2001 census, but the only evangelical witness in Calling Lake is a Bible study group of about a dozen Pentecostal believers. The Athabasca congregation sees the Lord's hand at work in drawing Cree native elder and pastor Norman McCallum of Edmonton to accept an outreach position for Calling Lake at the same time as the Regional Synod's Mobilizing for Mission five-year campaign is preparing to invest in a Canada-wide mission.

Norman McCallum has worked in native employment as an addictions counselor, a Big Horn Reserve Band administrator, a Native Friendship Centre director, a career services information officer for native bands in Saskatchewan, and most recently as supervisor over numerous inner city homes for troubled street youth in Edmonton. He is now on the Edmonton mayor's aboriginal advisory committee. He speaks the Cree language and knows the culture from the inside. Best of all, he is a Spirit-filled believer who has compassion for native peoples.

Last May, Norman researched the needs of the Calling Lake community. He concluded that there is urgency in placing a worker in Calling Lake, especially as Alberta's largest native land

claims settlement will come into effect in 2008, totaling \$300 million for the Bigstone Cree region. He believes the result could be a "trail of tears" for those who come upon money but who are unable to withstand the accompanying temptations.

While this ministry will take place through the sponsorship of Athabasca Reformed with its partners, the initial intent is not to plant a Reformed church in Calling Lake but to have Pastor Norman lay a foundation for future ministry in Calling Lake in partnership with other believers there. His work will include preaching and teaching, worship leadership, visitation, and evangelism to adults and children. He will reach broadly to seek many avenues of witness both on the Cree reserve and off the reserve. In the first year he and his wife, Maria, will live in Athabasca and begin to reach into Calling Lake, and then move to the Calling Lake area in the years to come.

We ask you, the churches of the Regional Synod of Canada, to pray for Pastor Norman and consider if the Lord would have you designate funds to the Calling Lake outreach through Mobilizing for Mission over the next

**Mobilizing for
Mission**

**Mobilizing for
Mission Update**

Donations received: \$22,301.75
Grants awarded: \$5,000

Please help us mobilize God's people. For more information or to donate, go to
[www.reformed-church.com/
MobilizingMission.pdf](http://www.reformed-church.com/MobilizingMission.pdf).



five years. The annual budget is around \$50,000 and could include up to \$20,000 from partnering churches like yours. The work starts this spring.

If you would like to be a part of this new and exciting Mobilizing for Mission ministry through donations or prayer, please contact the regional synod office at (519) 622-1777 or donate through our website, www.reformed-church.com.

Pastor Profile: John and Gail DeGiovanni

In 2001, my wife, Gail, and I moved from Mission, British Columbia, along with our four daughters (Stephanie, Tessa, Abbey, and Emma) to pastor Forestview Community Church in Grimsby, Ontario.

Gail and I met during our undergraduate studies at Simon Fraser University. To put it bluntly, both of us were dissatisfied individuals and it showed in our tumultuous relationship. We were seeking answers to some of life's tough questions but were not making headway. We were challenged by a Campus Crusade for Christ worker to study the life and teaching of Jesus Christ for answers. We were embarrassed, but although we had attended church for over 20 years of our lives, we had to admit that we knew very little about Jesus Christ. Gail and I skeptically began to study the Bible and its reliability as a source of truth. Over the course of a year, however, our skepticism began to dissolve and we discovered a living and loving God who has come to us in the person of Jesus Christ to show us the way, the truth, and the life. Within months of each other, we both made a decision to follow Christ. After turning from our sins and letting God take the lead, our lives have never been the same. This new relationship

with God through Jesus Christ changed everything for us and it wasn't long after that Gail and I were married. Gail began teaching in the public school system, and I began graduate studies at Regent College in Vancouver in 1989. We sensed a strong call to pastoral ministry. This call, however, was tested over the next 12 years. During this time I continued taking seminary courses while running a residential painting business and assisting part-time as a pastor in various church settings. We clung to God's promise that he was calling us to pastor and that he would finish what he had begun. We were assured also by the promise found in Matthew 6:33 (NIV): "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things [the necessities of life] will be given to you as well." With trembling knees and much help from heaven, Gail and I made a decision to take God at his word and simply begin to pastor full-time in a church that did not have the resources to pay us. We trusted God to provide, and guess what? He did!

In a year's time, our prayers were fully answered. The floodgates of heaven were opened and a generous financial gift was given to us from someone we had never met before. This enabled me to complete my seminary training and ordination requirements. I graduated with a Master of Divinity degree from Regent College and we soon received a call from Forestview Community Church to begin a lead pastoral role in September 2001. As a family we cannot contain our thanks to a God who has been so faithful in leading and providing for us. We also know firsthand what it is like to live apart from God, to be dissatisfied with life, to be involved in unhealthy relationships, and to be skeptical about the Holy Bible and matters of faith. For this reason, Gail and I can identify with people

who are struggling. We desire to meet people where they are, to offer them unconditional love, to help them find answers to the tough questions about life and faith, and to lead them into a dynamic friendship with the Living God through Jesus Christ and a loving Christian community.

Being part of the Forestview family has given us a wonderful opportunity to grow in our knowledge of the greatness of God. We have also had an opportunity to make a ton of mistakes and yet still be loved and appreciated as valuable members of the family. God's mercy continues to be fresh every morning, and his grace continues to give us a growing desire to offer undivided hearts for his service. May his mercy and grace meet us all in our time of need, for the glory of his great name!

Help Wanted: Regional Coordinator of Women's Ministries

Gifts from your Blessing Boxes are being used to hire a part-time regional coordinator to further the mission and vision of this synod through the gifts and work of our women. The coordinator will:

- Offer spiritual nurture through Bible studies and retreats
- Connect people to missions
- Mentor
- Help with leadership development

Her work will partner with what's already happening in the Synod of Canada!

For more information, email Mary Clark, the RCA's coordinator of women's ministries, at mclark@rca.org. Send resumes and applications to jkapteyn@reformed-church.com.