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NEWS

Can We Join? Catholic-Anglican Relations

by Alex Snider

On October 20, 2009 the Vatican issued a document called the Apostolic Constitution. This document allows Anglican churches to recognize the Pope as their leader and enter into full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. This is the biggest step toward unifying these two churches since King Henry VIII split from the Roman Catholic Church in 1534, when Pope Clement VII refused to grant him an annulment from Catherine of Aragon.

This document is in response to the large number of recent petitions sent to the Vatican from Anglican congregations wishing to become Catholic. The amount of these petitions has increased in the past few years due to the controversial decisions of ordaining women and openly homosexual clergy.

The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, formerly the Inquisition, has stated that these new Anglican converts will be allowed to keep their traditions and liturgies. This includes ordination of clergy who are already married. A visitor to one of these churches will see all of the original parts of the service that are Anglican, only they will be in a Catholic church.

This move brings up the question of "Why now?" Why has the Pope decided this is the right time to accept those Anglicans who think their church is too liberal? Maybe the Pope is simply trying to unify the body of Christ. One possible answer is the added funds the Vatican will see from these new members. More members means more money. Perhaps a better reason is that the Vatican has realized their doctrinal similarities with the Anglicans.

Is the Reformed tradition next? I wouldn't hold my breath.

NEWS

Simulating Poverty

by Kory Plockmeyer

As part of the new Service Learning course, first-year M.Div students had a unique opportunity to participate in

a Poverty Simulation Workshop, presented by ACCESS of West Michigan

The event consisted of three parts. First, participants were placed into “family groups” and given a packet of information detailing the family’s makeup, income, and possessions. The next hour was divided into four 15-minute “weeks,” during which participants were expected to visit the various businesses and services located around the room. Some CTS students were assigned a family role as a small child, others as a single mother, still others as elderly retirees. Each participant had to maintain the role of his/her character – i.e., a 6-year old could not visit the pawn shop or seek employment. At the end of each “week,” the facilitators asked questions, such as “Did you purchase food for the week?” “Did you read to your children this week?” or “Do you find that you have the same set of morals now that you had when you began the evening?”

The second half of the evening, the facilitators divided participants into discussion groups, where students shared their experiences in the simulation. Many expressed frustration at the overwhelming difficulties in doing simple tasks such as purchasing food or cashing a paycheck. Some expressed surprise at the relative ease with which families could slip into illegal means of survival, such as theft or drug sales.

Finally, the volunteers in charge of the evening shared their own stories and experiences with poverty, including moving testimonies by individuals still struggling to escape the cycle of poverty.

For more information on ACCESS of West Michigan and Poverty Simulation Workshops, visit www.accessofwestmichigan.org

NEWS

In Brief

The headlines, just in case you missed them...

An army psychiatrist kills 13 people in a shooting spree at Fort Hood

President Plantinga to retire at the end of 2010

Virginia governor Tim Kaine clears the way for DC sniper’s execution

North and South Korean navies engage in brief naval clash

According to researchers, Australian Koalas could be extinct within 30 years

The New York Yankees win the 2009 World Series

FEATURE

An Interview With Setri Nyomi

by **Nathaniel Van Denend**

Setri Nyomi is the general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Christians (WARC). Nyomi was on campus this past spring and Kerux was given an opportunity to interview him. WARC is a fellowship of 75 million Reformed Christians from 214 different denominations in 107 countries. The Christian Reformed Church joined WARC in 2002 after debate in the 1980s concerning how the CRC should relate to ecumenical bodies which include a broad spectrum of theological diversity. Below Nyomi shares his views of theological diversity and discusses what seminary students should know about ecumenical organizations.

Kerux: At the 2010 conference of WARC, the Reformed Ecumenical Council will merge with WARC, what will

happen?

Nyomi: We will have a better, stronger expression of the Reformed family. When REC was formed, they thought WARC was too liberal. It was also mainly linked to the Dutch heritage. I am thankful to God that by the 1980s that perception began to fall. When we began talking we discovered that those are simply perceptions. We have the most conservative churches, we also have the most liberal churches. For us this is part of what the Reformed family is, we have both and we need to listen to one another. When we are talking in most of our meetings in 2006, we affirmed that the WARC starts with what is God calling us to do in the world and then we find a Scripture [passage to support it]. The REC starts with the Scripture and then says what should we do? Are these opposites or gifts we offer one another? I suspect they are gifts. The people on the liberal side wonder if we will ever be the same. My answer is that God never asks us to be the same. We also have questions like, 'are you growing us into something that is very liberal?' Together we should be a stronger Reformed body.

Kerux: Will your agenda be much different? Will the two organizational structures stay the same?

Nyomi: Both are dissolving. It will become the World Communion of Reformed Churches [WCRC], more difficult to say. I think that yeah the name is good, I like it because when you talk about an alliance, it is a more political word.

Kerux: What can be done at seminaries to help us realize that we are part of a bigger body. How do we work to facilitate what you bring to the table?

Nyomi: If seminaries could see how we teach ecumenical relations ... In 2007 we called a consultation with heads of Reformed seminaries. Neil [Plantinga] could not make it. But, people from all over the world did. We recommended changes in curriculum to include bodies like us in their teaching. A second, is to look at the agenda in church and society classes and discuss papers that come from us. A third is to include the papers on the dialogues we have in the curriculum. I am not sure what has happened at Calvin. Some schools, at least one school in Nigeria wrote a very warm letter they never knew that Reformed views were available, they were able to use them in their setting with those people right there. I have personally been invited to dialogue with seminary students [from around the world] and hope that by being there they have caught a little of the virus.

Kerux: how has being in the ecumenical world shaped your identity?

Nyomi: I come from a setting which is a little more on the conservative side. The first meetings I attended really were a shocker, at that time I thought, "Aren't we laying aside the gospel?" But indeed, I was limiting the gospel. This has shaped my life as a preacher, we do not limit God. We need to be open to other ways that the Spirit is moving us. And yet in the very end, as Christians, we have to test all to see if it conforms to Scripture. So it has shaped my life and it has made me more humble.

Kerux: What would you say are the three central themes to the Reformed faith that under gird the term?

Nyomi: They have not changed since the 15th century. Salvation is by grace through faith. It is only by gratitude to God that we do what we do. We are transformed by God is a very important theme. A second theme is that the basis of everything we do is in Scripture, that means today not doing the lazy job of I read the

Bible and it says this, but the critical reading and rereading to ask what is God saying today? No, that is a reading of Scripture which is disagreeing with Scripture itself, being open to the way that Spirit speaks to us to use Karl Barth. "We have the Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other." God speaks to us in ways that are relevant to us today. To be able to embrace the unity in diversity we have... someone who says that we are Reformed and does not change does not understand that we are always reforming

Kerux: Any advice for seminarians?

Nyomi: Be faithful to your calling, diligent studying and diligent use of the resources. I look back at my student days graduate work as great opportunities to do God's work. I saw someone defending their dissertation today I remember being in that hot seat...

Setri Nyomi is from Ghana and a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church. He currently works as the General Secretary of WARC in their worldwide offices located in Geneva.

Look for more excerpts in future issues.

ESSAY

Learning "Liberaleese"

by **Micah Schuurman**

Many conservative Christians don't know what to do with people who are members of mainstream society. What could you say to someone who probably doesn't believe in absolute truth? Learning to speak the "language" of this part of culture is a step in the right direction.

One could refer to mainstream North American society as liberal, post-modern, relativistic, pluralistic and secular. While each of these words mean something different, I will use them interchangeably because the people who are described by these words tend to share a common way of speaking, a common language. What is the nature of this language? And, more importantly, how can we learn to communicate effectively with persons who speak it?

First, we should look to the Bible to pick up some principles for how to preach the gospel in a non-Christians society.

One of my favorite things about the gospel is the incarnation. I am constantly amazed by a God who comes down from heaven to become one of us. The eternal Word became flesh. The Way, the Truth, and the Life came to us and spoke our language. This process of speaking our language took place in both a literal way and in a more figurative way.

In terms of a literal understanding of language, imagine what would have happened if Jesus had not spoken to us in ways that we could understand. Imagine if he had spoken some heavenly language (speaking in the tongues of angels) instead of Aramaic. The gospel never would have made it into the heads of Christ's disciples much less into Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth.

We see this principle in the words and deeds of the apostles as well. The New Testament was written in Greek, not Hebrew or Aramaic. The gospel was spread by means of the language of the mainstream society.

The figurative way in which God spoke to us in our language is less apparent, but no less important. Christ's parables are wonderful examples of God's efforts to take divine truths and explain them with verbal pictures that move our hearts even to this day.

Similarly, when Paul spoke to the Areopagus in Athens, he used the altar TO AN UNKNOWN GOD as a device to reach his audience.

An even more profound example of this theme is from the apostle John. Tradition holds that John lived in Ephesus for some time and that he wrote his account of the Gospel as well as his three letters while living there. Another famous resident of Ephesus was Heraclitus, the pre-Socratic philosopher who lived and taught there 500 years before John. Heraclitus is remembered today for developing the Greek notion of logos, the overarching principle of all existence. It is no coincidence that John introduces his readers to Jesus by identifying him as the logos in the very first sentence.

Thus, we can see that Jesus and his followers were not afraid of borrowing words, images and concepts from the culture around them, but this does mean they altered the truth which they had received. The Gospel did not lose its essence when Christ taught it to his followers or when his the apostles explained it to the Greeks, the Romans or any other group. Rather, this process simply “translated” the Gospel into a form that connected well with the worldview of the people to whom the Gospel was being preached.

We see this principle at work at Calvin Seminary from time to time. The fact that our Seminary uses the TNIV reflects the Seminary’s desire to talk about God in a culturally astute way. In our culture, the words “he”, “him” and “his” no longer act gender neutrally as they once did. We see this as well in our syllabi. Every syllabus which I have received contains the reminder, “Please use inclusive language both in addressing the class and in your writings.” The seminary is wise to train us in the practice of using language that will not distract those who will listen to us in the future.

But, the language of our culture consists of much more than inclusivity. If we hope to reach out to people who live in a post-modern culture, we will need to learn about the worldview that shapes their beliefs and the way to articulate truth in such a way as to speak meaningfully to them.

When talking about truth, it is helpful to emphasize the beauty of your beliefs rather than the logic behind them. Postmodern people tend to value beauty over logic. This doesn’t mean that they do not use logic. Rather, it is that they have seen too many logical truth systems to find logic alone to be overwhelmingly convincing. Most worldviews are logical, but they can’t all be true. So, if you find yourself in a position where you need to explain Calvinism to a secular person, begin by talking of the beautiful aspects of your faith: perseverance of the saints and Q&A 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism are good places to start. In short, the best way to ensure that you will lose an argument with a relativist is to start one. So, don’t emphasize logic, emphasize beauty.

Another thing to keep in mind about the language of a postmodern culture is that questions speak louder than statements. In our culture, questions come across as humble and genuine while propositional truths seem arrogant and self-deceptively naive. The lesson here is that you don’t have to have an answer for everything. Honestly responding to a question with the words, “You know, I have always wondered about that myself,” will nearly always give you a boost in credibility.

However, there may be occasions where you will need to explain some aspect of doctrine in depth: TULIP or the doctrine of Original Sin. On such occasions, it can’t hurt to preface what you will say with the words, “This is my best guess at the truth, based on what God has revealed of himself in his Word.”

This phrase also serves well to tackle another aspect of postmodern language, the distrust of authority in the process of discerning truth. Avoid quoting your favorite theologian unless absolutely necessary. Secular people tend to dislike hearing hearing the thoughts of some “dead white guy.” They would much rather hear what you think. Personalizing your thoughts (“this is my best guess at the truth”) will help avoid the glazed look that will inevitably come from explaining your beliefs through a long series of quotes.

One final tip for communicating effectively with people in a post-modern society is that it is immeasurably helpful to get a basic understanding of post-modern philosophy. No seminary education can be called complete without a rudimentary grasp of Nietzsche and Derrida. A much more entertaining (but equally illuminating) read is the series *His Dark Materials* by Phillip Pullman.

Speaking in a culturally conscious way has nothing to do with changing the truths that we believe and

everything to do with articulating our beliefs in ways that do not distract listeners from the Gospel. If we can learn to speak truth effectively in this way, we will immediately gain a certain amount of respect in the eyes of the people we are trying to reach. Not only that, but our culture may begin to listen to us attentively for the first time in living memory.

EDITOR'S CORNER

A New Year

by **Kory Plockmeyer**

As you have (hopefully) noticed by now, the Kerux looks a little different from last month. We have decided to try publishing in a format closer to that of a traditional newspaper. This was not a simple matter of aesthetic preference. Rather, we want the format of the Kerux to reflect the direction of the content.

As a staff, we have found that brainstorming sessions typically focus on life outside of the walls of Seminary, on questions and topics that range well beyond the theological. This month's issue features a restaurant review and a recipe column, part of our new section "On the Town." In the future, this section will also include movie, music, and book reviews, as well as the return of recipes and restaurant reviews. The front page tries to make sure that the reader can stay abreast of events at CTS and around the world, both inside and outside the church. Our Features and Editorial pages will strive to present thought-provoking discussion starters, whether on the way we interact with the world at large or on more narrow theological questions. And, of course, spattered throughout the pages of the Kerux you will find advertisements to get involved and submit your own opinion. Far from mere filler, these are designed to remind you with each page of our commitment to listening to you, the readers.

So sit back, relax, and enjoy the discussion. Bake pumpkin bars or head out to Graydon's Crossing. Learn more about postmodern philosophy. Consider getting involved in the work of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. Discuss the implications of Vatican overtures to the Anglican Church. Enjoy this month's issue of the Kerux.

May God bless you in this Thanksgiving season.

ON THE TOWN

Graydon's Crossing at Derby Station: A Review

by **Jonathan Moore**

After wrapping up several hours arduous research on the Parable of the Lost Sheep, I leave Heckman Library and head for one of my favorite places on God's green earth, or at least in Grand Rapids. I weave north through campus and take Lake Drive, following it's winding northwestern path until I end up at Reed's Lake. I turn north on Lakeshore Drive and watch kids scattering leaves in the park, men playing soccer, and a young couple pushing their sailboat off the dock. A left on Wealthy brings me into Gaslight Village, a quaint little street lined with stores and cafés with an old "downtown" feel (and with free parking). Finally, a few blocks down at a corner on the right, there it is... Graydon's Crossing at Derby Station.

I walk in and grab a seat in one of the dark, polished wood booths on my right, pull out my laptop, and begin to expound upon the cultural relevance of Jesus dining with sinners in Luke's account of parable. Ah, who am I kidding, I connect to their wifi and check out my friends' statuses on Facebook.

A waitress comes by after a few minutes with some water and takes my order. Behind me a "thwack, thwack, thwack" followed by the scratch of chalk on the scoreboard lets me know two patrons have begun a game of

darts. A cheer from the bar to my right lets me know Michigan just scored.

My meal comes in less time than it took me to order, a mug of New Holland's Ichabod Pumpkin Ale and a piping hot plate of Shepherd's Pie. The aptly named meal reminds me that I should return to my paper and this place is perfect for just that. The lights are dim but the booth's reading lamp illuminates my notes as I plug in my computer's power cord and end the ceaseless beckoning of its "low battery" light. I sit and write to the soft background music, the "thwack, thwack, thwack" of darts, and the occasional clink of plates from the kitchen. The amazing smell of three entrees wafting past reminds me that I should finish my meal before it gets too cold.

I have a difficult time explaining this place to friends. It's not just a restaurant, or an Irish pub, or a coffeehouse, or a sports bar. It's all these and yet none of them. It's a place I can come by myself and write, a place where I can meet with friends to talk about school projects or to watch a game, a place where I can bring my wife for a romantic date. It's a community. One where they let you keep your mug behind the bar, one where they tap a fresh cask (not keg) of seasonal ale every Wednesday, one where they plan a five course feast in the large dining hall in the back to celebrate the holidays. It's just Graydon's Crossing.

What I love most is the authenticity. Irish flags and brewery banners hang on the ceiling, with old maps of Ireland and swords ordaining the walls. They're probably fake, but there's no claim that they are otherwise. They are not gaudy or gimmicky, or lined in green with shamrock borders. The staff talk and debate and laugh but they don't assault me with random Irish facts or worse, sing me happy birthday in their best Lucky Charms voice. I sit there for hours nursing a beer or coffee or Coke, writing, reading and studying. The staff talks and laughs and swings by now and then to make sure I'm still alive. It's clear they enjoy their work, each other, and having me here.

As with all good things, the time comes for it to end. I pack up the stacks of readings that I've printed off of ANGEL (how can we only be halfway through first semester and my printing quota is already almost up?) and I pay my bill (less than I'd pay for a bagel and coffee at Starbucks). The gaslights outside have turned on and the cool night air carries the music of bagpipes from a nearby street performer. If only I didn't have to sift through 95 pages of the Rule of Saint Benedict when I got home, this would be a perfect night.

RECIPE

Pumpkin Bars

by **Sara Bosscher**

bars:

1 c. flour

1 t. baking powder

½ t. soda

¼ t. salt

1 t. cinnamon

1 c. white sugar

2 slightly beaten eggs

1 c. pumpkin

½ c. oil

frosting:

3 oz. softened cream cheese

(15 seconds in microwave)

1 t. vanilla

1 t. milk
6 T. margarine, softened
(10 seconds in microwave)
2-2½ c. powdered sugar

- 1) Preheat oven to 350F. Flour and grease 9x13" pan.
- 2) In a large bowl, mix all bars ingredients with an electric beater.
- 3) Pour into pan and bake for 25 minutes.
- 4) Beat frosting ingredients until smooth and spread on cooled bars.

Tips for newbies:

c. = cup t. = teaspoon T. = tablespoon

To flour and grease a pan: take a bit of paper towel with a little Crisco/shortening or butter and rub inside of pan. Then, put a small amount of flour in the pan and shake/tap to coat bottom and sides.

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Interested in writing for *Kerux*? Contact the Editor