



# Covenant

CANADIAN REFORMED TEACHERS COLLEGE

*"...tell the next generation..."* PSALM 78:4

## "...prepare your minds for action..."

1 PETER 1:13



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**A Day of  
Celebration**

DR. F. G.  
OOSTERHOFF  
SYMPOSIUM

# CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

PETER VANDERSLUIS

It is already the middle of November as I put "pen to paper" so to speak. Much has already occurred this season. I will not go to great lengths describing things as the events are reported on further in this publication. The board is very grateful to our Heavenly Father that we can welcome back our full-time and sessional staff along with a full complement of students encompassing all years of study and within the two programmes offered. Our principal, Dr. C. VanHalen-Faber, has reported that the year has seen an excellent start.

In my role of chairman I am privileged to work alongside governors and volunteers from across the country. With electronic communication and reasonably priced flights, the governors from Washington and B.C and across the land are able to come out to Ontario to participate in the governance of the College. The annual general meeting of governors occurs in February or March, at which time we meet as complete board for two days. It should again be mentioned here that the board is comprised of governors appointed by local school societies.

At the 2006 annual meeting a significant decision was made. It was decided to move forward with a restructuring of the board. Back in August of 2005, after much study and numerous discussions with similar institutions, the Handbook Committee forwarded a proposal to the Executive Committee for consideration. They proposed a five tier governance model

- Tier 1 - Canada/US wide Board of Governors**
- Tier 2 - Board of Directors (Ontario governors)**
- Tier 3 - Executive Committee**
- Tier 4 - Other Committees**
- Tier 5 - Administrator and Comptroller**

The most significant portions of the proposal were the following:

1. **The appointment of additional Executive members (past chairman and vice-treasurer)**
2. **Bi-monthly Directors meetings (with Executive meetings on alternate months)**
3. **Two-year terms for Executive positions.**

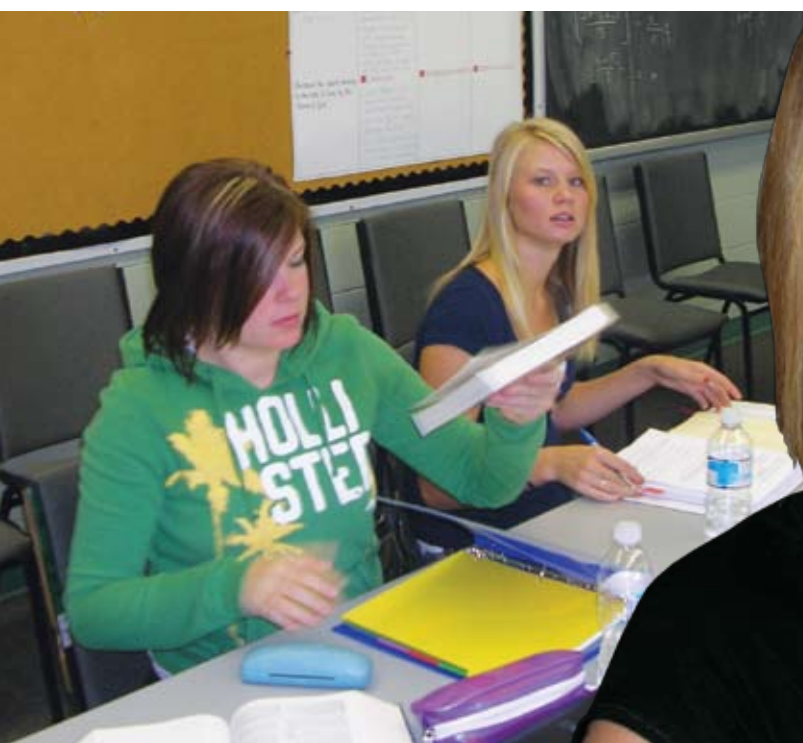
This results in an Executive comprising a chairman, vice-chairman, past-chairman, treasurer, vice-treasurer and secretary. The principal typically attends Executive meetings also.

“ The new governance model has been working well. As a College we are constantly looking for ways to enhance how we function.

The Executive agreed that the proposal had merit and it was then presented to the Board of Directors. Once again, there was agreement and the model was taken to the entire Board of Governors at its 2006 annual general meeting. The AGM adopted the motion to restructure the board in accordance with the recommendations and it has been operating accordingly since then.

The new governance model has been working well. As a College we are constantly looking for ways to enhance how we function. Our foremost purpose is to train teachers for the next generation but we also have to deal with matters such as achieving accreditation, managing our resources, maintaining our facilities, and evaluating how we function.

In all matters related to the College we first and foremost praise our Heavenly Father for all He provides. We experience His mercies from day to day and give Him the glory.







## from the PRINCIPAL **CHRISTINE VAN HALEN-FABER**

The events that marked the festive celebration of Covenant College's twenty-fifth anniversary last year turned the 2006-07 academic year into a very special one: A year in which we were able in many ways to reflect on the *raison d'être* of the college.

The contact with school communities all across Canada served to remind us that Reformed education is an enterprise that involves many of our brothers and sisters from West to East. Within the context of the entire communion of saints, parents and teachers work side by side to "tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD" (Ps. 78). Reformed schools continue to play a vital role in the process of preparing children for a life of active service in the place God has decreed for each one of them. By implication this also means that the person of the teacher continues to be central in the process of schooling. A strong faith commitment, combined with academic excellence and pedagogical knowledge are foundational to the task of teaching. And it is in this light that Covenant College continues its work, fully dependent on the LORD's grace and blessings.

### **2007-08 Semester 1**

It is hard to believe that the first semester of the 2007-08 academic year is rapidly drawing to a close. Somehow it does not seem that very long ago when twenty-two students, three full-time and several part time instructors, along with staff and representatives from the Board gathered in the College's library for the opening of a new year. Our thoughts at the time focused on 1 Peter 1, particularly the words found in verse 13, "...prepare your minds for action..." Teacher preparation at Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College continues to focus on the wonderful challenge our young people face when they move from being a student, to learning to be a student-teacher, to becoming a teacher. Preparing our student-teachers' minds for action implies the learning required to enable future elementary or high school students to do their work. It

is no wonder that for teachers (and for us all), learning is a life-long process.

This year the enrolment at Covenant College consists of twenty-two full-time students distributed as follows: Sixteen students in the *Diploma of Teaching* program (four students in Year 1, eight in Year 2, and four in Year 3), and six students in the *Diploma of Education* program. After completing the special enrolment procedure that includes interviews by Board and faculty members, we are pleased to be able to welcome two students from the Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Norwich, Ontario. It is the intent that these students will prepare themselves for teaching in a Netherlands Reformed School.

### **Practicum Placements**

On-site or field experience represents an important element in the development of a student-teacher. We are grateful to the many school boards, principals, and especially to the associate teachers for their involvement in this particular aspect of the learning process. Our College has four practicum sessions per academic year. During the first session, the students were in various Ontario schools. During the second, third, *continued on page 6...*



Here's a hard question: what do you get when you put banana bread, a collar, Hamlet, and the scientific method into a room coloured with flowers and punctuated by occasional sounds of baby?

# A Day of Celebration

## DR. F. G. OOSTERHOFF SYMPOSIUM

**The modernist answer: character.**  
**The postmodernist answer: construction.**  
**The better answer: a reminder that ideas have a history.**

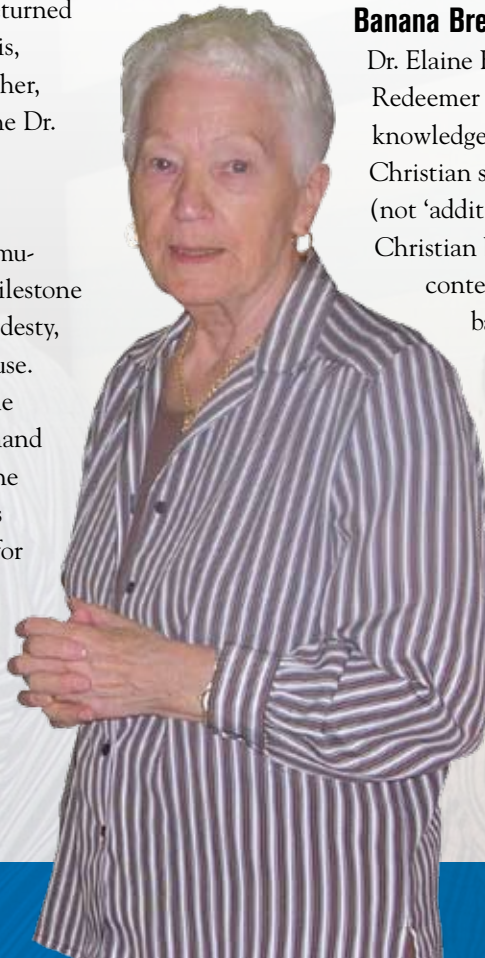
No, these are not the musings of one recently returned from a drinking party – though ‘drinking-party’ is, apparently, an old meaning of ‘symposium.’ Rather, they sketch a picture – to use a metaphor – of the Dr. F. G. Oosterhoff Symposium held in Ancaster on October 20, 2007.

Not all members of the Reformed educational community may know that Dr. Oosterhoff reached a milestone birthday earlier this year and, with her usual modesty, declined to mark it in, for example, an open house. While respecting this personal choice on the one hand, a number of her colleagues on the other hand wished to recognize in a fitting public manner the significant contributions that Dr. Oosterhoff has made to the Reformed educational community for many years – and an octogenarian birthday year seemed the right time to do it. Faced with gentle pressure, Dr. Oosterhoff eventually agreed to the organizing of a day of talks given in her honour on subjects that would intersect in some way with her own interest in

the history of ideas. The symposium was born. In the paragraphs that follow, I will try to give the flavour of the day by returning to the opening lines above.

### Banana Bread

Dr. Elaine Botha, Professor of Philosophy (Emerita), Redeemer University College, called on our knowledge of food to reiterate that distinctively Christian scholarship and teaching is ‘permeated’ (not ‘additive’) scholarship and teaching. That is, Christian belief must enter into the substance and content of the work we do (as bananas in banana bread), not be mixed sporadically throughout it (as raisins in raisin bread). Dr. Botha used her bread metaphor to lead to the central assertions of her lecture: that language cannot be separated into metaphorical and literal camps, but that all language is metaphorical (note, for instance, how the military term ‘camps’ clarifies a statement about language); and that metaphors do not ‘decorate’ but open the world for us. Christian scholarship must examine – and





Christian teachers educate their students about – the perspectives embedded in the metaphors common to specific disciplines and texts (eg. education as delivery). And they must make banana bread.

## A Collar

Dr. William Helder, Vice-Principal, Guido de Brès Christian High School, richly added to our awareness and appreciation of metaphor by providing a close reading of a George Herbert poem titled “The Collar.” In this seventeenth-century poem, the speaker chafes against what he feels as the constraints, or ‘collar,’ of religion; he seems filled with anger (termed ‘choler’ in seventeenth-century physiology [pronounced ‘collar’]); but his rebellion collapses in the face of Christ’s love, evidenced when God (the ‘Caller’) calls him “Child!” Though the speaker is oblivious to the ironies of his own speech, the biblically attuned reader hears the poet’s additional layer of meaning in almost every phrase – as when the speaker’s complaint of a thorn that lets (out) his blood but does not heal him evokes for the reader Christ pierced by thorns, dropping blood, precisely to provide the restoration the speaker thinks is missing. Herbert’s poem thus addresses Dr. Oosterhoff’s interests in bringing theory and practice together by representing the experience of religion as integrated with doctrine.

## Hamlet

Dr. Benne Faber, Assistant Professor of English, Redeemer University College, drew on one debated word in the text of Hamlet (should it be sallied, sullied or solid? the original manuscript is lost and the print quartos and folios give it differently) to explain twentieth-century literary theory’s shift from a modernist to a postmodernist paradigm. The modernist confidence in being able to fix the author’s intentions led to a certain set of critical beliefs and practices – including the description of imagined characters as if they had identities beyond the printed page. Postmodernist scepticism about the ability to find ‘answers’ leads to another set of literary theories and practices – including the assertion that identities are constructed by circumstances and have no ‘essential’ existence. Dr. Faber criticized the modernist position for its failure to recognize that our understanding is limited, and postmodernist scepticism for its denial of ultimate truth. He offered instead the Reformed confessions as realist: though we are fallen, we are being transformed into the likeness of Him who is all Truth.

## The Scientific Method

Fittingly, Dr. Freda Oosterhoff had the last word – at least, in terms of the lectures. She related for us some steps of her intellectual journey, her search for a theory of knowledge that would stand up against the science-religion dualism still so strong in

the 1960s. In a brief review of the history of ideas, and a particular critique of any theory that believes science can be used to ‘prove’ God’s existence (eg. creation science, intelligent design theory), she advocated again the teaching of theories of knowledge to our students. Students must learn, for example, that the scientific method arises from the modernist confidence in observation and analysis as the way to ‘objective’ truth.



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Symposium: “a convivial meeting for drinking, conversation, and intellectual entertainment” (Oxford English Dictionary, second rendering of first meaning). I don’t know that everyone would call the day’s offerings intellectual entertainment, but the attendees certainly agreed on the intellectual stimulation and interest the talks generated. And conversation certainly happened, both in formal and informal discussions. As to drinking – well, coffee, tea and juice were in abundance, and surely no more is necessary. Yes, it was an entirely successful symposium, on all counts. Moreover, it concluded with a special announcement made by Dr. Christine vanHalen-Faber, who presided over the day’s events, of the establishment of the Frederika G. Oosterhoff Book Collection, to be supported by the board of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College. This collection will consist of books that engage with the history of ideas and will – like all materials at the College – be open to public borrowing.

and fourth sessions they will be placed in schools in Alberta, British Columbia/Washington State, and Manitoba respectively, in addition to Ontario schools. We especially thank the West-of-Ontario boards: Your generosity towards our students makes it possible for them to experience continued learning, and represents in a very practical way your support of Covenant College.

### Course Changes

In terms of course changes or adaptations this semester has been a busy one in many exciting ways. Two course-related matters come to mind most readily, and both affect the students of the graduating class. In the first place, after Dr. Oosterhoff's "early retirement" at the end of last year, the "History of Ideas" course is no longer taught by her alone, but is now presented by a three-some in the persons of Dr. Frederika Oosterhoff, Dr. Steve Foster, and Dr. Benne Faber. We welcome Dr. Faber and Dr. Foster as sessional instructors to our College and are confident that their interests and expertise in worldview-related matters will enhance the learning of the students.

In the second place, the graduating class will receive a number of Professional Portfolio seminars aimed at preparing our

teacher candidates for the application process and beyond. In addition to serving as a presentation tool in the application and hiring process, we hope that ongoing portfolio development will become a regular part of a teacher's professional activities. Developing and maintaining a professional teaching portfolio has long been recognized as a genuine professional development activity which seeks to connect classroom practice with theoretical thinking. Such a combination of theory and practice is particularly important in our schools where teachers must continually reflect on the Reformed distinctives that form the basis for all teaching and learning. A teaching portfolio can be an effective tool that provides concrete evidence of our teachers' professional development.

### Special Events

The beginning of the current academic year was marked with several "special events." At the end of September, the second International Conference of Reformed Education was held in Sumas, WA. The excellent preparatory work by the Western Principals and the presence of a large international group of educators



Some of the Dutch visitors/colleagues

made a fine mix for a successful event. Intense discussions on what it means to put Reformed thinking into actual pedagogical practice allowed us to recognize that in spite of great physical distances, there is a common commitment that can be explained only through the bond of faith. As a College we will continue to be involved in the two projects that were initiated at the Conference: The International Apologetics Project, together with other Canadian, Dutch, and Australian educators, and the Teaching Science and Math Conference on February 29-March 1, 2008.

During the week following the conference, sixteen Dutch educators spent the week in Ontario visiting schools, compiling their findings, and presenting these in a mini conference setting. The interaction and exchange of ideas provided us all with much food for thought. Undoubtedly, the discussion will be continued both in the Netherlands and here in North America.

Other "post conference visits" included guests from Australia. We were especially pleased when Mr. Aart Plug, a consultant working out of the John Calvin School Support Office in Armadale, was willing to present a guest lecture on Assessment for Learning.







ogy is part of such a review. We can report that steady progress continues to be made also in this area. At the same time,

of initiating an external review become opportunities to get our own house in order also. This includes a continued effort in implementing the new governance model, as well as developing a Handbook that describes all aspects of the College as significant and necessary steps in this process.

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find a report of the Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff Symposium held on October 20, 2007. Family and friends gathered at this festive occasion in recognition and celebration of the many contributions Dr. Frederika Oosterhoff has made, and continues to make, to our Reformed educational community. May the LORD continue to bless her and keep her in His care.

**Other activities**

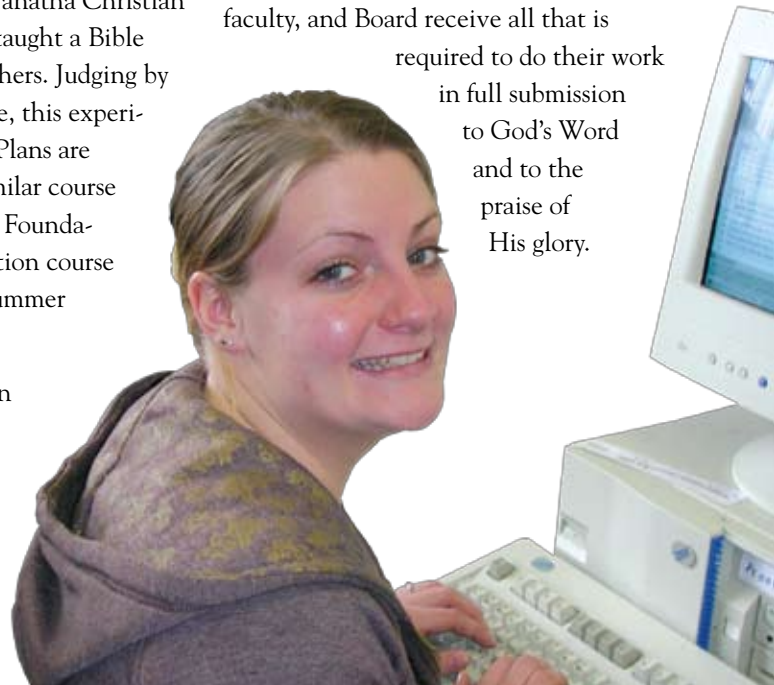
As the first semester is winding down, the Board and its Committees as well as the faculty continue to be engaged in various activities. Now that the Silver Anniversary is in the past it is important to be focused on the future. The College's offering of professional development opportunities for teachers allows us to (re) examine its place in the context of our schools. The role of information technol-

on-site interaction by means of workshops and courses continues to be valued by participants and instructors. During the summer of 2007, Rev. D.G.J. Agema, at the invitation of the Maranatha Christian School Board in Fergus, taught a Bible course for practising teachers. Judging by the very positive response, this experience was enjoyed by all. Plans are underway to present a similar course in Winnipeg, as well as a Foundations of Reformed Education course in Coaldale during the summer of 2008.

The matter of recognition and accreditation also continues to have the attention of the Board and faculty. Contact with other institutions and the option

In conclusion we pray that the LORD who is faithful will continue to grant His blessings on Covenant Teachers College and its supporting community. May students, faculty, and Board receive all that is

required to do their work  
in full submission  
to God's Word  
and to the  
praise of  
His glory.



In recognition of the contributions made by Dr. Frederika Oosterhoff to Reformed education, the Board of Governors of Covenant Canadian Reformed Teachers College announces the

**Dr. F.G. Oosterhoff Book Fund**

The interest generated by the monies in this fund will be used to purchase library books on worldview and apologetics, two topics close to Dr. Oosterhoff's heart, and significant for Reformed teachers today and tomorrow.

To help make this possible, we need to build up the principal of this fund. To make a contribution, please send a cheque payable to the C.C.R.T.C., and marked "Dr. F.G.Oosterhoff Book Fund." Tax receipts will be issued.

# from the finance committee

ANTHONY VIS, Treasurer

By the time you are reading this report, the new school year is well under way. Despite many times of wondering where the needed funds will come from, we are reminded that the Lord continues to bless our work. We are excited about the number of students this year. With so many young people continuing to dedicate themselves to a career in teaching our covenant children, the original goals of the teachers college are being met. There will be an abundance of qualified teachers for our schools who are educated in both teaching theory and the Reformed doctrine.

We are also pleased to report that donations have been much higher over the past year. Automatic withdrawal of funds has proven to be helpful, and enclosed in this newsletter you will find a form – if you have not already signed up. We hope that this will help contribute to the trend of increased and more regular donations.

With the blessings that the College has received with so many students each year, there have also been new financial

encourage you to remember Covenant College as you plan any final donations before the end of the tax year.

**“ The fact that we are blessed with so many students makes us confident that we are busy with a good thing. ”**



challenges. The return to three full-time teachers means an increase in the expense side of our budget. Despite the improvement in the contributions received over the past year, the College continues to run a deficit. As Finance Committee, we hope to face this challenge head-on. We'd like to take this opportunity to

Although it is true that we use this write-up to report a shortage of funds, we can look at things from a different angle. Once again: with thankfulness, we may note that donations have increased over this past year. We encourage you to continue to contribute in any way that you can, both in prayer and by financial aid. The fact that we are blessed with so many students makes us confident that we are busy with a good thing. And so we go forward, trying to see things positively as we address the ongoing financial challenges. God has been good to us as a college and to our schools, in general. All thanks, praise, and honour go to Him for His continuing provisions in regards to the ongoing work of Reformed education.

**Thank you for your support.**

 Please detach and mail to: CCRTC • South Square RD • P.O. Box 30026 • 1576 Upper James Street • Hamilton, ON • L9B 2V5

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- \$396/Annually** - Withdrawn on \_\_\_\_\_ each year
- \$ \_\_\_\_\_/Month** - Withdrawn on the:
  - 15th of the month  30th of the month

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