

# WHEATON

## CROSS † CONNECTIONS

### But Then This ...

**By Pastor John**

One of the vocational necessities (and sometimes a hazard!) in my line of work is to be never quite at rest from looking for “what will preach.”

In my personal devotions, it is hard to be just a hearer of the Word of God and to just come to it as someone seeking nourishment. When I read my Bible, I am, of course, being nourished, (that is the promise from God to all who read his Word in faith), but there is this “preacher thing” that is never far away from me too. I am always asking of any passage I read or hear, “What kind of a sermon would that make?” and, “What application for our current lives comes out of this?” and, “How will the people—or this, that, or that other person—hear this?” or, (most importantly and the question that really ought to be asked first), “How does this declare the glory of God and his kingdom?”

And, because I know it is hard to sit and listen, I’m also always looking for “hooks” that is, attention grabbers. Hooks are illustrations or things of current events or stories (sad or funny ones work best), that will help people listen and assist the communication process. However, one of the hardest things about finding and using hooks is their appropriateness to the sermon itself and especially to the text. I have heard sermons (and probably preached them too) in which the hook got in the way of hearing the Word rather than helping it. There are too many times that people (myself included) walk away from a worship service not being able to tell you much about it other than the joke.

When that happens the joke has gotten in the way of the Word rather than helping its spread.

But hooks are important and I look for them. When well chosen and appropriate to the text, they help shed light and they help us understand. Jesus used them all the time. His parables and word pictures are a wonderful example of this very thing. But parables, stories, jokes, etc, need to serve the Lord and his Word rather than themselves being the object of adoration.

Another thing that I am trying to keep myself alert for is visual illustrations—projected pictures, film clips, bulletin covers, etc. This is a fairly new area of interest among preachers. My training, and virtually all the ministers out there are trained in a pretty one dimensional form of oral communication. Preaching, in the traditional sense of one person getting up in front and delivering a message, as exposition of God’s Word for our lives is a pretty sturdy form of communication. It is the principle way the story of God’s kingdom has been delivered for the whole of Christian history up until the present day. And, preaching in that traditional sense will surely endure. No Christian who is willing to think about preaching and its role in the building of the church will ever want to say, “I/we can do without it.”

But, everyone realizes (and you can blame the TV, the internet, etc, etc. for this) that attention spans are shorter today and people are less and less patient with the lecture, the speech and the sermon than they used to be. Now it is pretty easy to dismiss it all as a talking head up front doing nothing more than going “blah, blah, blah.”

It is vital to the health and future of the Christian faith that preaching and sermons remain true to the Word of God and accessible

to the people. I want you to know that I am on the lookout, every waking moment, for what will preach, what will be true, and what will help God's people hear. What the kingdom of God very much needs is for the people who sit and listen to sermons to work hard too.

## Gone Fishing

**By Jim Dekker**

One July Saturday my son-in-law Jason and I took a bike ride outside Ottawa. The country road was mostly flat, almost without traffic. As we were beating up that morning's only serious hill, out of nowhere a Dodge Ram pick-up blasted by well over the 80 km/h limit, nearly clipping my handlebars and, arguably, shortening my life expectancy by several hours.

Lots of things rushed through my mind in the milliseconds between the time I heard the truck and its ram-tough mirror almost brained me: Are we riding in the traffic lane? (No.) Are we hard to see? (Jason wore red; I neon green—so NO!) Is a 61 year old in spandex really that attractive or repulsive that it makes me target practice? (Don't really want to think about that.)

Then the outsized Jesus fish on the tailgate caught my eye as the truck faded into the distance. That glance helped occupy my mind for the rest of the ride. Why do people put Jesus fish on their vehicles, clothing or bodies? I suppose they want to make a statement. But what kind of statements do they make?

The fish is an ancient Christian symbol used as code language among Christians in the Roman Empire during persecution. The Greek word for fish is "ICTHUS." Its letters serve as an acronym: "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior." A simply drawn fish thus may have signaled clandestine house churches or refuge for other believers.

Today the fish isn't a secret, but a brand. Does it do what it first intended--to give Jesus a good name? To protect people? To offer welcome, safety, companionship?

What kind of statement does a Jesus fish make

on a vehicle that endangers other drivers, pedestrians or cyclists? What kind of statement does a Jesus fish-wearer make when he mistreats his students? When she cusses out a telemarketer?

Perhaps Jesus' most famous command is, "Do to others as you would have them do to you." Too often, though, the fish on bodies, clothes and in wearers' behaviors sadly shortens Jesus' words to "DO unto others...." The fish, then, is no secret, but a public statement that gives Jesus a bad name.

After our harrowing ride, an Ottawa friend told me an edgy joke about a priest who drove up behind a woman at a traffic light. She adjusts her makeup while talking on her cell phone. The light turns green. She doesn't notice. He waves his arms wildly, lays on the horn. The light turns yellow, then red. The priest starts a slow burn.

During the red light, the woman continues her mini-makeover, chatting all the while. When the light turns green, she still stays put. The priest leans on the horn longer, shouts again and again. As the light turns yellow, a policeman taps his window, orders him to pull over and demands his license.

The priest simmers until the policeman returns ten minutes later. "Here you go, Father."

"Now you listen to me, young man," the priest complains. "Why'd you stop me? You should have ticketed that woman for impeding traffic."

"Well, Father," sighs the cop, "Here's how I see it. I pull up behind you, and notice the car has a Jesus fish on the trunk and a bumper sticker boasting, "Jesus Loves You." I see the rosary hanging from the rear view mirror. But the driver is gesticulating, leaning on the horn, shouting things I wouldn't want my kids or co-workers to hear. So, I think to myself, 'This must be a stolen car!' But no; you're the registered owner."

A good friend runs a construction business. He drives a pick-up with his company's logo and name with great care and courtesy. He knows people will remember the name if he drives discourteously. Maybe they'll even call if he drives well, gives them a break.

Jesus fish wearers and users can give Jesus a

good name too with courtesy and care.

*Note: Jim Dekker is pastor of Covenant Christian Reformed Church in St. Catharines. He rides*

*bikes, wears spandex cautiously, but uses no Jesus fish in public.*

## Dearest Family at Wheaton Church

**By Greta and Theo Anema**

Recalling Mary Sytsma's congregational prayer from one of our last Sundays with you, "...we have come this far, God helping us." And so we have. Thank you for all the help and the hundreds of prayers that blessed us on our way.

We didn't leave kicking and screaming, it was more fretting and sobbing. But here we are fit and blessed to be in Minnesota.

At first, our new space appeared to have shrunk, but as we slowly move furniture about and hang familiar paintings, it becomes more accommodating. It is livable and we hope one day it will be loveable as well. The population is like us. We all appreciate the levers and cords and buttons that facilitate our lives here, but they do little to please the aesthetic senses. However, that is the small stuff and we have gained much of the other.

We have been at our son's for Sunday dinner. A first! A niece came to help unpack and set up the kitchen. We can walk across the street to church. The pastor's name is Paul Petterson – wouldn't you know. Theo can have coffee and donuts with the guys every day if he chooses. There is even a modest fishing trip scheduled. All new experiences. All good.

As we think about the WCRC, we know there are several others who will be making a similar move in the next year or so. We can say to you

that it is painful, it is very hard and it is a real loss. But we can also say that it is liberating, challenging and interesting. It is liberating in that we have rid our lives of stuff that consumed and needed so much of our energy and care. It is challenging in that we have to find new ways, places and resources to make like workable and pleasant for us here. The interesting part isn't so easily manifest, but we are discovering a few areas we might investigate that could help us expand our lives.

As many of you advised us as we prepared to leave, "It is going to be a whole new chapter in your lives." Well, it really feels like a whole new book – same old characters in a new locale solving new problems. But gratefully, our loving Father has come along to help us live out this very significant chapter.

Blessings and love to you all.

Note: Their new address is as follows:

11201 Fairfield Road #107

Minnetonka, MN 55305

## Theo's View

**Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of insights on our spiritual journey that Theo left us.**



*This Electronic Church Doesn't Move Me!*

# The Garden

**By Ed Gabrielse**

A home for a few months;

Graceful drapes – a living damask

Flat screen – commercial free

mirrored in the ponds and splashing fountains

Spice racks – ever more pungent when crushed

Lush pile – a resting place for the soul

A gathering place for fur and feather  
some welcome, some not

Parts ephemeral

Dog-eared catalogues of impossible perfection

Parts timeless

Arches, decks, rocks and fences

the hardscape built with loving hands

Parts enduring

Annual, biannual, perennial and self-seeding

And just as it seems to reach perfection

The Master spreads the dust covers  
and locks the door

Memories fade and lay dormant

But surge again when He turns the key

**The first warm day in March**

# Missions

**The Goosen Family**

**By Grace Huitsing**

The Goosen family has been ministering at Stellenbosch in South Africa for several years. Wayne and Mary Kok are their current contact persons for a Bridging the Gap Small Group, and Len and Hermina Sytsma remember their coming:

“ For those who do not know Jurie and Magdalene, here is a brief history of how we got to know them. Jurie is a minister in the Reformed Church of South Africa and was sent to Wheaton College to study for a master’s degree. We got to know them when they lived at the missionary furlough homes on President Street. When they returned to South Africa we continued to correspond with them, and Jurie usually stays at our house when he comes here.

“Jurie works among foreign students at Stellenbosch University. The work seems to be increasing since they have had to move to a larger house to accommodate the number of students attending. Magdalene (Maggie) leads a women’s Bible study group which also is growing. The members of this group are spouses of students or students themselves. The boys who were just little tykes when they were here are getting older and help with the entertaining of the students who come to the Goosen home.

“The Goosens introduced us to Rooi Bos tea—a product of South Africa. Jurie thinks this is great tea—he says that mothers put Rooi Bos tea in the baby’s bottle.”

The following prayer list, received by the Sytsma’s and the Kok’s recently, can help us hold them up in praise and prayer:

**The Ministry – Jurie:**

1. Praise God for local and international students that take ownership for the growing

international service. The organizing team, prayer team, and worship teams are a great help. Fifty students are coming regularly on Sundays.

2. Pray for the upcoming camp of the International Fellowship in Kleinmond, a coastal town from September 11-13. Praise God for students from China and other closed countries (Iran) that plan to attend. So far 42 people plan to come.

3. New students joined the Bible study group on Wednesday evenings. Pray that God's Word will transform them, so that they can impact other students.

4. Jurie is planning to attend a course about Evangelism and church planting in Stellenbosch from September 15-17.

### **The Ministry – Magdalene**

1. Give thanks for local helpers for the support group for international wives on Tuesday mornings. Thirty ladies are coming regularly; may the Hindu and Muslim ladies experience Christ's love among Christian ladies.

2. Magdalene (Maggie) needs wisdom and strength in her support of lonely wives and their needs.

### **The Family and Funds:**

1. Pray for a place to rest for the Goosen family during the school holiday (9/23-10/4) after a busy term.

2. Pray for funds as Jurie plans to attend a leader's conference about international student ministry in November in Amsterdam and visit other ministries in the Netherlands while there.

3. Pray for Christo's science studies as a first year student at Stellenbosch and for Philip in his grade 7 studies.

4. We are thankful for the improvement of our son Tito's health as he is sleeping better.

Thanks for all your prayers.

## **Humor Me**

### **Shoplifting**

The 80 year old woman was arrested for shoplifting. When she went before the judge in Cincinnati, he asked her, "What did you steal?" She replied, "A can of peaches." The judge then asked her why she stole the can of peaches and she answered that she was hungry.

Then, with the wisdom of Solomon, he asked her, "How many peaches were in the can?"

She replied, "6."

"Ok then," the judge responded, "I sentence you to six days in jail."

But before the judge could formalize the sentence, her husband stood up and asked if he could approach the bench.

As he did so, he whispered to the judge, "She also stole a can of peas."

### **Sixty Years of Marital Bliss**

A man and a woman had been married for over 60 years. They had shared everything. They kept no secrets from each other except that the little old lady had a shoe box in the top of her closet that she cautioned her husband never to open or ask about.

For all of these years he had never thought about the box, but one day the woman got very sick and was told by the doctor that she would not recover.

In trying to sort out their affairs, the little old woman asked her husband to take down the box and bring it to her. She agreed that it was time that he should know what was in the box. When he opened it, he saw two crocheted doilies and a stack of money totaling \$95,000.

When he asked her about the contents, she replied, "When we were about to be married,

my grandmother told me that the secret of a happy marriage was to never argue. But that if I really was angry with you to keep quiet and crochet a doily."

The little old man was moved to tears. Just think, in sixty years of living and loving only two precious doilies were in the box.

Bursting with happiness, he asked, "Honey, that explains the doilies, but what about the money? Where did that all come from."

She turned to him and in her sweetest voice said, "Oh, that is the money I made from selling the rest of the doilies."

## Miscellaneous

When my grandson asked me how old I was, I teasingly replied, "I'm not sure...." Look in your underwear, Grandpa," he advised, "Mine says 4 - 6."

A grandfather was delivering his grand children to their home one day when a fire truck zoomed past. Sitting on the front seat was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the duties of the dog. One said that they used him to keep the crowds back. Another said that no, they only used him for luck. But the third child brought the discussion to a halt by declaring, "They use the dog to find the fire hydrant."

A six year old was asked where his grandma lived. "Oh," he said, "She lives at the airport and when we want her, we just go and get her. Then when we are done having her visit, we bring her back."

My grandparents are so funny. When they bend over, you hear gas leaks and they blame their dog.

A grandmother was telling her little granddaughter what her childhood was like: "We used to skate outside on a pond. We had a swing made from a tire, it hung from a tree in our front yard. We rode our pony. We picked wild raspberries in the woods." The little girl was wide-eyed taking all this in. At last she

said, "I sure wish I'd gotten to know you sooner!"

I didn't know if my granddaughter had learned her colors yet, so I decided to test her. I would point out something and ask her what color it was. She would tell me and was always correct. It was fun for me, so I continued. At last, she headed for the door, saying, "Grandpa, I think you should try to figure out some of these, yourself!"

# Kids Korner

1. How many days was Lazarus in the tomb before Jesus called him out?

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2. How old was Joseph when his brothers sold him?

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3. What was Jesus' trade before he began his ministry?

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4. What did Moses' face look like after he was given the ten commandments?

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5. At what age did the Levites have to retire?

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6. What happened to Saul's head after he committed suicide?

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7. What were the last word Jesus spoke on the cross?

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8. When Joseph buried Jesus, who was there to help him?

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9. According to Matthew, what was Jesus known as?

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10. What does "Emmanuel" mean?

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11. Who stayed with Naomi rather than return to her own people?

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12. What book comes after Galatians in the Bible?

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## Look it up

1. John 11:39

2. Genesis 37:2

3. Mark 6:3

4. Exodus 34:33-35

5. Numbers 8:23-25

6. I Chronicles 10:8-10

7. John 19:30

8. John 19:38-39

9. Matthew 2:23

10. Matthew 1:23

11. Ruth 1:16-19

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Note: If you are between the ages of 7 and 12 any time during the calendar year 2009, sign your name and put your answers in my mail box (Gabrielse) by Sunday, October 11<sup>th</sup>.

### Running Totals

Sarah Dykstra	24
William Fan	71
Kathryn Kmiecik	34
Dakota Nickols	12

**Once again, we have a contest for a \$25 gift certificate to be awarded in the January, 2010 issue. Don't miss an issue.<**