

Secretary's Report

Jeremy Kamminga

Welcome to another edition of the Beacon! It's hard to believe that New Year's Day was 2 months ago. The good part is that the days are getting longer and the sun is feeling warmer every day that it shines.

Well, four months in I feel like I'm starting to get used to my new job as secretary of the Board. Thanks to Anton for getting me up to speed so quickly and also thanks to the rest of the board for answering my questions whenever I had them. I also appreciate the patience shown by some of you in dealing with a rookie secretary. Before November 3, 2008 around 8:30pm the only minutes I ever wrote had to do with the measurement of time.

As usual for this time of year, the board is busy with finding qualified teaching staff for next year. We have been blessed to have enough teachers in the past several years, and we sincerely hope the same for next year. We've offered contracts to all of our current teachers and can safely say that most

of them will return next year. We know that Jolene VanDijk will not be returning to DCS, as she has plans to move to B.C. this summer. We have an advertisement published in several places and we ask for your prayers in regards to this. We pray that God will bless our efforts to find a full staff roster and that He will give the staff and applicants wisdom in making their decisions for next year.

This past December we undertook a short administration evaluation. We did this by way of a questionnaire filled out by all the teaching staff and board members. As a result of this I can say, on behalf of the staff and board, that we continue to place great confidence in our Principal. His organizational skills, work ethic, and desire to see the students grow in knowledge and faith have certainly benefitted our school.

The board has also been working on a nomination/voting procedure for electing board members. It was clear to us from the last meeting that quite a few

society members would like to move in this direction. We hope to have a draft proposal ready for the next membership meeting.

Our committees have been busy as well. The Building Committee has been working on gathering information and ideas about what our needs/wants/wishes are in regards to our school building. This information is being prioritized and hopefully soon we can determine what to do next and start planning. If you have any thoughts on what should be done, please share them with the board in writing. It is more difficult for us to move forward when we have no idea what the membership would like to see. A proactive approach rather than a reactive one can save a lot of time in the planning process (and at the membership meetings©).

The Education Committee has been working on many things having to do with the material and subjects taught at DCS. One item of note is the work they are doing on what might be called resource

information packages. The purpose of these will be to provide easier access to information on relevant, specific topics such as: global warming, evolution, carbon dating, ice age etc. The board would also like to thank Marry van Dijk for agreeing to stay on the committee for another term as secretary of the committee.

This past Wednesday I had the opportunity to spend a day at DCS. It was a good day to be there, seeing as the wind chill was around -30 all day – it sure beat working outside. I really enjoyed

being in the school again, though it was a little strange being on the other side of the classroom, so to speak. I could witness firsthand the hard work done by our teachers in educating our children. As board, we encourage you all to keep it up – look to God for all your needs and He will give it. I could also see some of the work done by the students, albeit some with more enthusiasm, some with less. We would like to encourage the students, as well, to do your work to the best of your ability. It may be difficult to get excited about analyzing

poetry, comparing exponentials and logarithms, remembering which Old Testament king did what, or differentiating between the tibia and fibula, but don't forget that God created them all. He created language, numbers, humans, animals, and galaxies, and in the Light of His Word we can only benefit from learning more about His creation.

Well, I think that's all I have for now. I hope you enjoy the rest of the Sunday and wish you God's blessings in the week ahead.

...Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning. Daniel 2:20-21

DCS/ICS Band Concert



Friday, March 6, 2009 Carman West

Church -- Time: 8:00 p.m. You are all invited to our upcoming band concert. Participants for this concert are the DCS Junior and Senior Band members as well as the ICS Band from Winnipeg.

Come on out and enjoy the evening!

Principal's Report**Andy Huisman**

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

As I sit behind my computer, preparing to write another Beacon report, (*the 2nd attempt, the 1st disappeared into computer never-never land*) I came across a question in an article I was reading. The question- *“Why should we send our children to a Christian School?”* On the surface, this question may appear easy to answer, but dig a little deeper and it starts to spark many more questions. What is the purpose and aim of Christian education? What is the role of the student in service to God? What is the responsibility of the parent? How important is education? How do the Home, Church and School work together? What is meant by covenantal, reformed education? There are days when I have far more questions than answers. Before tackling the question of *“Why should we send our children to a Christian School?”* there really is another question that should be answered first – *“What should a Christian school aim to be?”*

Dufferin Christian School is in the 36th year of operation. When there are that many years put into any organization, the danger is that the organization may become lax or complacent. It is often heard that many family businesses fail under the leadership of the 3rd generation. Apparently, the 3rd generation may not have the same drive to maintaining the business as the founding fathers did when establishing the business. Rather, the 3rd generation may be enjoying the fruits of others labour, and seem to be content with the work ethic that states *“The business has always been successful, it will continue to be successful no matter the effort that I put into it”*. Usually, the founding fathers put many long hours of sweat equity into developing the business into a successful enterprise. But what does that have to do with DCS? Are we at the same point as a 3rd generation business owner? Are we content to just send our children to the school and not be actively involved? Do we show up for parent-teacher interviews? Do we attend school functions? Is the school important enough in our lives that we communicate that importance to our children? Do we instill respect for the teachers, for the school and for education in our children? Do we read the newsletter and take an interest in what the children are learning? Do we really see education as something to be valued or do we see it as something to be endured? Do we have the same fervour for Reformed Education that the founding fathers had when they started DCS? I think that it is a very worthwhile exercise to sit back and ask these types of questions once in a while. If we don't ask questions, we run the danger of being complacent and having the opinion that *'we have arrived'*. We need to reflect on the purpose and aim of Dufferin Christian School.

The opening statements in the staff handbook address the aim and purpose of the school and reformed education. Those statements are also found on the website, but I include them here:

The Reformed School

Canadian Reformed parents have established Dufferin Christian School so that the schooling provided will assist them in the fulfillment of the covenant promises made at the baptismal font. Reformed education aims to realize this assistance by equipping the students to employ their talents in the service of God and His kingdom. To ensure that this most basic aim is realized, the following constitute the basis of the instruction given at Dufferin Christian School:

- *The entire curriculum will be taught in obedience to the Holy Scriptures, the infallible Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity of the Canadian Reformed Churches.*
- *Each subject in the curriculum, taken in its own right, will have as its point of departure the cultural mandate, the command to subdue the earth as enunciated in the book of Genesis and elaborated upon in the entire Scriptures.*
- *All teaching will take into account that this cultural mandate is to be exercised in a world which is lost in the misery and guilt incurred by man's fall into sin, but overcome by the work of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

It is the task of the Christian school to assist parents in educating their children from the Biblical perspective and, in so doing, to:

1. *Teach students that their calling in this world is to know God, their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, and to honour and serve Him.*
2. *Help students grow into mature human beings, prepared to employ their talents in the service of their neighbors, at home and abroad, and in all areas of life.*
3. *Assist students in recognizing their value and privileges as God's Covenant children, and remind them that they are enabled by grace to respond in obedience to the call to serve.*
4. *Help students discern the pervasiveness and corrupting influence of secular values and philosophies, so that under the Lordship of Christ they may, with due humility, begin to think in a fundamentally Christian way about all aspects of life.*
5. *Remind students that this world has not been abandoned by God, that Christ has redeemed it, and that, therefore, their work as His followers and co-workers is of value for the restoration of God's Kingdom on this earth.*
6. *Show students that true knowledge and wisdom is only attainable in God, in knowing and*

fearing Him. Wisdom, knowledge, teaching, and learning are bound up with one's relationship to God.

If we really look at these six points, you will notice that every one of them deals with the transition from knowledge to service. Education, especially reformed education is not satisfied with just imparting knowledge, there is also the application of that knowledge in service to God and others.

The last point of the six says that wisdom, knowledge, teaching and learning are bound up with one's relationship to God. They are not separate entities. We cannot just simply teach without recognizing our relationship to God. Students cannot learn without recognizing their relationship with God. That is what sets us apart. That is why we go to a Christian School. Not only to receive knowledge and instruction but to develop that relationship. That is the purpose that God has planned for us. In a previous Beacon article I wrote the following:

"What should be the "single-mindedness, determination and perseverance" that drives our students? Are we going to school for selfish reasons? Are we only interested in learning something if there is a direct benefit to us? What if there is no obvious direct benefit? Do we then assume that the course of study is less important and therefore not worth the time to put any effort into the study. Do we take the attitude that "What good will this do me when I graduate?" Take for example learning a second language. How many of us have asked "What good is learning French anyways? When will I ever use it?" Should we not ask that question from a different point of view? Perhaps we should instead say, "God has blessed me with the ability to learn, how am I using that gift to the best of my ability?" Whatever happened to "learning for the sake of learning" and being proud of the final product?

We have all probably said or heard it said that, "You have to finish grade 12 if you want to get a good job." That becomes the extrinsic rationale for staying in school – you need it to get a good job. That is true, however, it has the danger of becoming extremely selfish. Education becomes all about you, rather than you serving God. Should there not be a deeper, more intrinsic rationale for education, especially from a Christian worldview." January 2007

There is nothing new under the sun. That is so true when it comes to education. In an article written by Dr. R. Faber, entitled "Martin Luther on Reformed Education" (Clarion, Vol 47, No 16, 1998, also available online at http://spindleworks.com/library/rfaber/luther_edu.htm) Dr. Faber summarizes many of Martin Luther's views on education and the need for reformed education. I would encourage you all to read the article, it is rather interesting. I would like to include the concluding paragraph from that article.

"In writing these public letters, Luther sought to promote a reformed view of education which at the same time answered the criticism of opponents. For example, there were the Waldensians, who considered the classical languages as needless for the proper understanding of Scripture. To them, Luther pointed out the value of knowing Greek, Hebrew and Latin. And in advocating

the study of antiquity (its history, culture and literature), Luther intended to silence those who mistakenly wished to abandon all learning on the grounds that it was irrelevant to the study of Scripture. There were also the 'spiritualists', and those who believed in direct revelations from God; these parties placed too little value in the temporal, earthly realm. To these Luther responded by demonstrating the value of education for the understanding of God's working in this world. There was also the continuing influence of scholasticism, with its increasing defunct view of education that appeared both irrelevant and impractical. In promoting his views of education, Luther wished to show that reformed schooling was relevant to both the current world and the future one."

And so, together with the Home and Church, Dufferin Christian School prepares *"God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."* Ephesians 4:12-13. That is why we send our children to a Christian school. What a blessing!

It is important to recognize that everybody involved in education at DCS has a role to play, parents, students, teachers, administration and committee members. We all should ask the questions posed at the beginning of this article. There are many people involved in the daily operations of DCS, and I am thankful for the large support base that the school has, but let us never lose the enthusiasm for the daily happenings at DCS. Be interested, ask questions, hold your children accountable for their school work, communicate with your child's teacher, hold the school up in your prayers. Together with God's blessings, we can continue on this journey of educating the youth and helping them to realize the glorious opportunities that they have before them and to recognize them as such. The mission statement of the school goes hand in hand with Ephesians 4, *'for living a life of Christian discipleship in contemporary society.'*

Other News

Reading Month

The elementary school students and staff are to be commended. This past month has been full of great reading opportunities. The theme was *"Ticket to Travel"*. All students were given a passport and embarked on a journey around the world. Every day the map in the front entrance way was updated to show the progress that the students have made on this journey. One minute of reading was counted as one kilometre of travel. The students did achieve the goal of 90,000 kilometres! The month ended with a fun-filled day of reading activities organized and run by the grade 11 class. Thank you for your effort in this as well grade 11's. Quite a number of parents volunteered to help out with the day. This was another example of everybody working together in cooperation for education!

Skating Evening

On February 13th, many parents and children of DCS gathered for a very enjoyable evening of skating and fellowship. The evening was put on by the Promotion Committee and by all accounts was very successful. Thank s for all of your efforts in promoting the school community.

DCS Honour Roll

Now that all of the first semester marks are finalized and organized, it is time to update the DCHS Honour Roll. There are four plaques in the High School wing of the building that contains the names of all of the students who have met the criteria for placement on the honour roll. (Honours: 80 – 89%, 1st Class Honours: 90%+) As well, there is an “Honours with Distinction” category for students who maintain an overall average of 80% or higher in all of their courses. You will find a copy of the Honour Roll published elsewhere in this Beacon.

Black Light Theatre

The BLT would like to express their appreciation to the Carman audience who attended their show a little while back. They very much enjoyed performing for us and look forward to coming back sometime again. If anyone is interested in purchasing a DVD of the performance for \$15.00, please contact Charles Vanden Akker at 224-5373.

Nut Free Policy

Once again, I would like to remind all parents that DCS does have a “Nut-free Policy”. For the safety of our students, we request that all nut products and treats remain at home. If you are unsure of a product, feel free to contact the school for more information.

DCS Band Concert

There are several events planned in the next month for the Band.

- Friday, March 6th at 8:00 pm in the Carman West Church. This will be a Band concert featuring: DCS Junior Band, DCS Senior Band and the ICS Band. The Senior Band and ICS Band will be performing a number of selections from the upcoming Mass Band concert in BC.
- Wednesday, March 11th at 7:30 pm in the ICS Gym. This will be a Band concert featuring: DCS Senior Band and the ICS Band. (The program will be a repeat of the Carman concert)
- Monday, March 31st – Mass Band Concert in British Columbia featuring bands from Lynden, Edmonton, Langley, Winnipeg and Carman.

The Senior Band will be leaving for BC on March 25th. We would like to thank the many, many people who supported and helped us through our fundraising efforts that enable us to go on such a trip. The

Host Committee in BC has been extremely busy planning many events and excursions for the participating Bands. We promise to take lots of pictures and will put them into a slide show at our year end concert.

Apple Pies

In connection with the Band trip, we will be having one last Apple Pie Sale. This will be your final opportunity to put some pies into your freezer as we will not be making pies again until next October. If you would like a pie or two and you have not received a phone call from a Band student, please phone the school office to place your order. Pies are only \$5.50 and we will be making a limited quantity, so place your order early. Pies will be made on Wednesday, March 18th.

Stingers Athletics Update

At the end of this week we should know if any of our teams are off to the provincial championships for basketball. The Junior Varsity Boys had a great game against MCI (Gretna) in the semi-finals and won 51-41 and play Sanford on Monday in Sanford.

The Varsity Boys and Girls are heading into playoffs this week as well. The girls will be hosting Rosenort on Monday night (6:00) in our gym. They have beaten Rosenort all three times they have played this year, but they still provide some tough competition. Come out, watch the game and cheer on the girls team. They have had a great season so far and finished 2nd in league play. The Varsity Boys will be heading off to Vita for their first playoff game on Monday night.

Thank you to all of the athletes and coaches for your good effort and sportsmanship.

Report Cards and Parent Teacher Interviews

Monday, March 23rd, report cards will be sent home. This signals the end of the second term (getting closer to summer☺). Parent-Teacher interviews are scheduled for Thursday evening (March 26) and Friday morning (March 27). Please book your appointments through the secretary. Elaine does her very best to accommodate your many requests.

I think that is everything for now. I would like to end with a short story that I heard at the Principal's Conference last year.

"A group of Alumni, highly established in their careers got together to visit their old university professor. Conversation soon turned into complaints about stress in work and life. Offering his guests coffee, the professor went to the kitchen and returned with a large pot of coffee and an assortment of cups, porcelain, plastic, glass, crystal, some plain looking, some expensive, some exquisite, telling them to help themselves to the coffee. When all the students had a cup of coffee in hand, the professor said, "If you noticed, all the nice looking, expensive cups were taken up, leaving behind the plain and cheap ones.

While it is normal for you to want only the best for yourselves, that is the source of your problems and stress. Be assured that the cup itself adds no quality to the coffee. In most cases, it is just more expensive and in some cases even hides what we drink. What all of you really wanted was coffee, not the cup, but you consciously went for the best cups. And then you began eyeing each other's cups. Now, consider this: Life is the coffee, the jobs, money and position in society are the cups. They are just tools to hold and contain life and the type of cup we have does not define nor change the quality of life we live. Sometimes by concentrating only on the cup, we fail to enjoy the coffee God has provided for us. God brews the coffee not the cups. Enjoy your coffee."

Do Our Grades Say What We Want Them To Say?

by N. Gunnink

My first formal professional development opportunity included a presentation by Rick Wormeli. Wormeli's material has been useful time and again during my growth as a teacher. When it became apparent that he was going to visit Winnipeg again, I seized the opportunity.

Rick, an accomplished teacher himself, came armed with new personal insights and recent educational research. He started off with the observation that grades play a huge role in the educational system today. However, based on trends around the world, he sees a time when "the grade" will disappear altogether (take a look at a grade 6 Carman Elementary report card!). In the meantime, grades continue to be the way educators communicate student achievement to the parents and the government. While grades still exist, it was Wormeli's goal to get us, the "grade givers", to examine very carefully if our grades were fair, if our grades actually reported what they were intended to report. Rick emphasized that grades are not compensation, ie. for a job well or poorly done. Rather, grades are the manner it has been decided that we communicate student achievement.

Allow me a moment to give you a taste of some of the points he made. Wormeli challenged us on the practice of calculating a report grade as an average of all the terms' marks. He prefers to make a decision about the students' learning by considering what mark the student most consistently got over the marking period. The idea of calculating an average, Rick argued, came from the field of statistics where calculating the average was designed to get rid of sample error. As a simple example,

in order to see how far a homemade cart will coast down the hill, it's best to run it down the hill 10 or 15 times and then take the average of the distances. This process is scientifically sound because all the variables remain the same: the hill's steepness doesn't change, nothing is added or taken from the cart, the starting point is the same etc. However, when you take an average of a student's marks the variables change with every mark. The variables which change include the amount of time spent studying, the amount of sleep the student had the night before, the attitude towards the evaluation, and the level of the student's anxiety as influenced by, for example, what so and so said during recess. Based on this reasoning, Wormeli challenged us to decide on a report grade based on the most consistent mark, not on the average of all the marks.

Wormeli also challenged us to set up our grade books differently. Most teacher grade books are set up with the names down one side and the assignments, tests, and other evaluations along the top. As part two of his challenge to move away from averaging the grades, Rick suggested that we list the outcomes we want students to meet along the top of the grade book page. This would force us teachers to focus on what we want students to be learning. It would also make our grading more accurate. If we keep track of student achievement by outcomes we can know precisely where a student needs additional instruction. For example, if a student gets a B+ or a 63% in math, it tells me (and the parents) nothing about where the student is having difficulty, especially if this is simply an average of all the math evaluations. If I instead assign a grade based on student mastery of multiplying decimals and ordering decimal numbers etc., and report it in this way too, we get a far better picture of student achievement and instructional needs.

One can see the difficulty in implementing these ideas. The logistics and organization involved are substantial. It would also require a substantial overhaul of the report card. However, Wormeli has convinced me that grades that are tied directly to mastery of outcomes are more accurate. I also appreciate the pitfalls of using only an average to determine a report card mark. In the same breath, I'm sure that most teachers only make the average mark a part of their considerations as they formulate a report card grade. I don't think that it is the only factor considered when putting report cards together. Once again, Wormeli gave a stellar presentation and sent us away with practical ways to do our jobs better.

Book Review – Liz DeWit

When People are Big and God is small

by Edward T. Welch

The strip across the top of the book says “**Resources for Changing Lives**”. The large letters “When People are Big” attract attention. Underneath that is a magnifying glass with the words “and God is small” appearing under the glass. The subheading “overcoming peer pressure, codependency, and the fear of man” gives a further indication what this book is about.

All of us are regularly confronted with the “you should read this” words of a friend or relative. Mostly, we never get around to actually reading it. This time, a year later, I did, and found the Biblical attitude to our fear of man.

Do you fear man? Has peer pressure ever motivated your decisions? Do you take on the extra tasks so that you will not disappoint the person who ‘relies’ on you, or so that you will keep up your reputation? Are you easily made to feel worthless? Are you afraid of standing up in front of a crowd? Are you jealous? Do people make you angry? Do you avoid certain people? As I read the book, it surprised me how dependent we really are on what other people think of us. What struck me also, as I read, was that the fear of God was not nearly as immediate.

Jeremiah 17:5-8 says:

Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when the heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.

The author Edward T. Welch states “ The Old Testament indicates that we stand at the crossroads between fear of others and fear of God. The road leading to the fear of man may be expressed in terms of favoritism, wanting others to think well of you, fearing exposure by them, or being overwhelmed by their perceived physical power. When

these fears are not combated with the fear of the Lord, the consequences can be devastating.” (71)

The fear of the Lord is to trust God and obey Him. It is loving good and hating evil. The book of Proverbs shows us that the fear of the Lord is the fountain of life Prov. 14:27 and for those who fear the Lord it is a refuge; they rest content, untouched by trouble. Prov. 19:23 God’s Word, not feelings, must be our standard.

Why then do we fear? What can man do to us? People can expose and humiliate us; people can ridicule, reject, or despise us; people can attack, hunt, or threaten us. God has not forgotten the shamed, rejected, and threatened. God sent His Son, our Saviour, to carry that shame and rejection, to die for our sins and redeem us for a life in His service. Furthermore, He fills us with His Holy Spirit, that we may live for Him, to His honour and glory. Our emptiness and brokenness is covered completely by a Saviour who came to a world that rejected Him. God was faithful to His covenant promises and remains faithful, guarding His elect to His return.

So then, what about those people who are constantly against us, who cause us shame and grief? God commands us to show love to those who make life difficult for us. In our suffering we must trust God. To love in this way takes power and discernment that we, in ourselves, do not have, therefore we must pray to God for strength and for wisdom. We must learn to pray with and for each other. God reconciled us to Himself; therefore we must now be reconciled to each other, united as God’s tabernacle.

Ecclesiastes 12:13 sums up our whole life focus: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Easy? No, but easier as we learn more and more to focus on God and His grace towards us and less and less on man, and what they may think of us. Easier when we realize how much God has given to each one of us, and when we strive to share those blessings with the people around us, to the praise of His glory, relying on His Holy Spirit to guide us. After all, peer pressure does take two sides, one who oppresses and one who submits to the feeling of oppression. Our submission must be to the rule of God.

As the reviews say, this book is enlightening, convicting and encouraging. It is a recommended read!

