

# Reformed Congregations of New Zealand in Carterton



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## Bulletin Sunday 17 May 2026

A warm welcome to our time of worship!

*"The Lord make His face shine upon thee."* Numbers 6:25

The allusion here seems, to my mind, to be to the sun. Sometimes the natural sun has not risen, and the world must needs be dark if the sun be still beneath the horizon. So with many gracious souls; it is darkness with them, midnight darkness, Egyptian darkness, darkness to be felt, because at present neither the Day-star has appeared, nor the Sun of righteousness risen upon them with healing in His wings. It will and must be dark with them until the Sun rises.

But sometimes after the sun has risen we see not his face –clouds, deep, dark clouds, may obscure the face of that bright luminary throughout the whole day, and we may not get a single ray from him through the whole period that he is above the visible horizon. So, many of the Lord's family, after the Sun has risen upon them in the morning of their spiritual life, may pass, perhaps, much of their subsequent time in the dark shadow, until perhaps at evening tide there is light, and a departing ray gilds the dying pillow.

But again, there are sometimes days when mists drive rapidly across the face of the bright orb of day, and yet occasionally he peeps through the breaking clouds. And is not this, in some measure, an emblem of the way in which the Sun of righteousness is continually obscured by the mists and fogs which spring up out of our unbelieving heart, hidden from view by the doubts and fears that, like the vapors of the valley, spread themselves, to our view, over His beautiful face?

Yet there are times when He gleams through the clouds and disperses the mists. When the Lord is pleased to bless the soul and shine upon it with any sweet manifestation, then He breaks in through the dark clouds, but they gather again. It is not in Christian experience one bright summer day. We do

not live in Australia or Peru, where clouds and mists rarely obscure the face of the sun. Our spiritual climate is humid, our inward latitude is the chilling north. "The Lord make His face shine upon thee." Is the Lord, then, sovereign in these matters? Can we not lift up our hand and remove the cloud? We have as much power to stretch forth our hand and sweep away the mists that obscure the Sun of righteousness, as we have power with the same hand to sweep away a London fog. How this puts the creature into his right place! And the creature is only in his right place when he is nothing, and God is all in all.

How blessed to see the face of the Father; and to see it shine! not covered with lowering clouds of justly-merited displeasure, as sometimes we see in the natural sky an obscured sun looking angrily down, presaging wind and storm. It is indeed true that, when we have brought guilt into our consciences, the face of God is seen to lower with anger. We have brought His just displeasure upon our heads; though not angry with the persons of His people, yet is He justly angry with their sins; and a sense of this in the soul covers His face with clouds—"Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through." (Lam. 3:44).

"The Lord make His face shine upon thee." And if He makes His face shine upon you, He will make your face shine too. It was so with Moses, when he was in the mount and was holding sweet communion with God. When he came down among the people, the skin of his face shone; the glory of God was reflected upon it. And if the Lord makes his face shine upon you, it will make your face not unlike the face of Moses when you go among the people of God.

J. C. Philpot

### Prayer / Thanksgiving / Requests

- For Piet Lanser as he is undergoing treatments in Nelson.

### Notices

- Psalter for the children: 89:1
- This Sunday:
  - Lord Supper Sunday
  - Prayer Fellowship at 5.30pm
  - Book Discussion at 8pm
- Tuesday 19 May:
  - Catechism Class Year 11-13
  - Ladies Bible study at Josje's place, 09.30am

- o Wednesday 20 May:
  - Ladies Bible study at church, 09.30am
  - Evening Bible study at church, 07.30pm
  - Leadership Study

### Update from Jessica

Some good news, I had another lot of blood test results back last Thursday. My liver functions have all improved somewhat since last month! God is so good! And all other results are looking good too, including my calcium which continues to be in a healthy range.

### Reviews and Checklists

Ministers and their sermons ... we all have an opinion about it. Even so much that we often cannot listen anymore with an open mind and unprejudiced. Our approval and our disapproval often will hinder a blessing on the sermon.

Thus we can - often unawares - listen to a sermon as if we afterwards need to give a review. We then consider the sermon as a product which requires a judgment. In our head we as if we were given the sermon a number of stars, like we do after we visit a restaurant. The tragic truth is that then the sermon may give us a positive experience, but it will not touch our heart.

We can also listen as if the sermon is a musical piece that needs to strike a chord. When the tone is warm, and when it connects to our feeling, then the sermon speaks to us. There will then be emotion, but the danger is that it will not lead to conversion. For then our feeling determines whether or not we resonate with the sermon. But if the tone and the wording is not to our liking, we inwardly disengage. God's Word may touch a sensitive chord, but the real point is that our heart will be opened.

We can also sit in church with an imagery checklist (or tick box). The criteria can differ, depending on our denominational or spiritual bend. During the sermon we go over the 'checklist' and are disappointed when certain elements are not featured. The number of ticks determine how well we feel connected with the preacher. The sad part is that this manner of listening often remains stuck in the intellectual while the heart remains closed.

### Spectator

These manners of listening are different in terms of but have *one* thing in common: we are spectators. The sermon remains at a distance and does not reach our heart. The real reason for this is that we insufficiently feel the need

of our unconverted heart. Even after receiving grace we can – as grace-possessing people – listen judgmentally and evaluatively [perhaps the author means critically]. But if we really experience our misery, then we sit in church like blind Bartimaeus along the side of the road. When he heard that Jesus walked through Jericho, he began to call, “Son of David, have mercy upon me.” Even though bystanders rebuked him, he continued to call. Jesus was coming past!

The congregation of Berea teaches us what is the Biblical manner of listening. They received the Word with all readiness of mind. They were ready to hear the Word. And, as is written in Acts 17:11, “they searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” Matthew Henry wrote here that they looked up the verses to which Paul referred, read the context, compared the text with other Scriptures, and considered whether the arguments of Paul were sound and valid.

The Jews of Berea are an example for us. They did not measure Paul’s sermon against their own yardstick but after the sermon they searched the Word of God. That attitude leads to a different manner of listening. Then we don’t sit anymore in church as a spectator but as one eager to hear the Word of God because we realize Who God is and who we are. Those who listen prayerfully do not place themselves above the sermon, but under the Word that comes to us in the sermon. Hearing the Word is followed by the searching of the Word and meditating on it.

### Exercise in Humility

Calvin points to another aspect in his book *Institutes*. He calls it a good exercise to obey the Word of God in humility, also when it is preached by people who are our equal, and sometimes even by those who are held in less esteem than we. According to Calvin, God hides the treasure of His heavenly wisdom (the preaching) in breakable, earthly vessels. At the same time, according to Calvin, it testifies a respect for God Himself when we let ourselves be taught by ‘people who are made of dust.’

A preacher is called to preach with a careful exegesis. On this aspect he is also to be approached and spoken to. Those who have concerns about the preaching may bring this to the Lord in prayer. Besides, we can share our concerns with those who are called to preach the Word. In this way we remain under the Word, while we look forward to that the Word being preached clearly and biblically.

## Heralds

Preachers preach on behalf of their Sender. "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." (2 Cor. 5:20) All who are alert to the seriousness of the judgment of the last day have no desire to put down checkmarks or give reviews. The question is then not, "What did I think of the sermon?" But the question is, "What did the sermon do to me?"

Therefore it is good to exercise ourselves in a Biblical attitude while listening. That means that before and after the worship service we ask the Lord to join His Spirit to His Word. What a blessing if, after listening, our mouth may be opened to say,

Come, listen up all you people of God,  
You who fear the Lord with all your heart.  
Hear what God made me experience,  
And what He has done for my soul.

*Translated from the Dutch Periodical of the GG by G. van Veldhuizen, Gouda*

### Future Dates, Lord willing

17 June, 1 July  
Wednesday 24 June

Leadership Course  
Topic on Covenant Theology