

THE EARLY SETTLERS

It was common in those early years after the Second World War for people belonging to the Gereformeerde Kerken in Holland, who were thinking of migrating, to get together to discuss the possibilities. Already in 1949, meetings of Church people were held in Groningen with a view to migrating as a group. Much interest was shown in migrating together to Brazil, but there was also interest in going to Western Australia.

The deliberations and consultations were endless. Opportunities and concerns were debated. One significant concern was the reports circulating that there were hardly any employment prospects in Australia because of the strong union influence. It was said that you had to join these godless unions to be able to get employment. In order to find out the validity of this report the group wrote to Mr Slobbe to ask his input and advice.

Our Brother Slobbe wrote a long letter with as much information as he could glean about the situation here, and Sister Slobbe also added a few pages, especially for the women and mothers. Mr Slobbe remarked in his diary that in Holland they seemed to know more about the trade unions in Australia than he knew. He encouraged the brothers to come over, telling them that the LORD would provide and that there were ample opportunities for work without having to join the unions.

The J(acob)HW Bergsma family

The publication in the press of the Dutch Liberated Churches about the institution of the church here was an important consideration for those thinking about migrating. Indeed, it even affected those who had already emigrated. It led, for example, to the Jacob Bergsma family, who had migrated to Silvan in Victoria in August 1950 and who also read this news, deciding to pack their bags and come to W.A.

They wrote a letter to see if there was accommodation for them. Mr Slobbe replied by return mail, stating that he and his wife would be delighted to welcome them into their own house until such time as they could find a house to rent.

This was not so easy in those days as vacant houses were scarce. Mr Slobbe and Mr Bosveld were constantly on the look out for any house anywhere in the Byford or Armadale district for prospective migrants. And even if a house was found it was sometimes so dilapidated or infested that it was uninhabitable, as the following example shows.

There was a very old vacant house in Rowley Road, just before the Wungong bridge on your right. The house was situated some 50 metres north from the Wungong River (creek), and some 70 metres off the road. It was surrounded by a few English Jacaranda trees, some Peppermint trees, and of course some very hefty old eucalypt trees. Nearby, close to the creek, was an old horse stable, and behind the house stood a de-roofed laundry and outhouse.



Just behind this gum tree the spot where once the intended migrants' house stood. On the left, the horse-stable is under the Jacarandas, and the laundry stands in the centre.

The Murrays, who lived on Eleventh Road, were quite happy to let the house to the new Dutch people, but it needed repairs and a good clean up. Well, Helen and I were instructed to go there on a Saturday afternoon early in February 1951 to clean up the house.

The house was standing under the shade of the trees, with the front door blown in by the east wind. Some glass panels were broken, and half the ceiling of patterned flat iron sheeting was dangling from some ceiling joists.

The biggest problem was the sand fleas. As soon as we started to clean up, these little black fleas attacked us. There were literally hundreds of them. We did as much as we could, but the fleas made it impossible for us to stay long. And at home we could show the evidence of having been bitten in many places by the fleas. No, this was no place to house a new Dutch migrant family.

So the Bergsmas would, when they arrived, move in with the hospitable Slobbes where they could stay until a house was found for them. Mr and Mrs Bergsma and their seventeen year old daughter Ida arrived by train on Friday, 16 February 1951, at the Perth railway station. Their belongings would arrive by boat sometime later.

That same week also saw another new arrival, Jan Arie de Jong, who had come from Indonesia, where he had served in the Dutch Army. His father had asked him to investigate the possibilities of establishing a steel company here. The intention was that his whole family would then also migrate to Armadale.

The dairy farm house in Thomas Road, Byford, where the Slobbe family resided, was now fully occupied, as Jan Arie also needed a place to sleep. Mrs Slobbe said: "Where there is a will, there is a way."



The happy increase to the congregation. This photo was taken on Sunday 18 February 1951. It shows 21 members including Jan Arie de Jong far left, with Mr and Mrs Bergsma and Ida standing next to Gerritje, far right.

On the day of Jan Arie's arrival the big diesel engine at the dairy seized up. Mr Price, the farm owner, was very happy to hear that Jan Arie could fix it. Consequently Jan Arie immediately landed himself a job on the farm.

Mr and Mrs Price were having a new house built in North South Road No. 1, which would be completed in four weeks time. Meanwhile they lived in a house next door to the dairy farm house. It was Mr Slobbe's intention to ask Mr Price if the Bergsmas could rent the house as soon as Mr and Mrs Price shifted into their new house.

It wasn't easy for Mr Slobbe to approach his boss. Mr and Mrs Price were always so helpful, so quick to comply with Mr Slobbe's requests, that he did not want to misuse their kindness. However, seeing that the Wungong River house was clearly uninhabitable, and houses were as scarce as hen's teeth, he felt compelled to ask.

There was much joy and happiness at the increase in church membership. Only eight weeks after institution, and here they came. A letter was also received from the E Groenewold family from Groningen. They were leaving by boat and expected to pass through Fremantle on 21 March 1951. They were destined to go to Sydney to a migration camp, the only possible way to enter Australia if you didn't have a house permit. Perhaps the brothers could find a house for them?

With the institution of the Church came also teething problems. Jan Arie had his attestation with him, and could hand it in. The Bergsma family had some sort of declaration with them, but believed this was not a proper attestation. So Brother Bergsma decide to request an assestation from the church in Groningen, the city he originally departed from.

Brother Bergsma pointed out that he did not believe that Brother Bosveld had been properly ordained, since the proper ecclesiastical form, as printed in the back of the Psalm Book, had not been used. It was decided to rectify this.

Consequently, after the reading service of Sunday morning 11 March 1951, Brother Slobbe read out the form for ordination of elders, upon which Brother Bosveld re-affirmed to take care of the flock of Jesus Christ.

From correspondence between the Slobbes and their "old" minister, Rev. DK Wielinga, we learnt how ecstatic Rev. Wielinga was when he heard how Brother

Slobbe was involved in the church establishing work in Armadale, particularly with reference to this ordination.

The E Groenewold family

On Wednesday, 21 March 1951, a beautiful summer's day, a Dutch ship "De Groote Beer" sailed into the harbour of Fremantle and along with a lot of other migrants brought the Eppy Groenewold family to our fair shore.

Given the problems with regard to housing, would they have a home? Would there be a house permit for them that would enable them to disembark? Yes, there would. Now that Mr and Mrs Price had shifted into their new dwelling, and the Bergsmas had shifted into the house next door to the dairy farm, there was room for the Groenewold family to live with the Slobbes and the Bergsmas.

Did all this happen in the nick of time? No! Through God's providential care a house permit had been arranged for the Groenewolds. It was a very happy occasion, especially on the afternoon of this Wednesday, 21 March, when the Groenewolds were given the go ahead to disembark.

Unfortunately they could not get to their container, which was locked away in the ship's hold marked for Sydney. It would take six months before the Groenewolds could come and collect their belongings from the Fremantle wharf—all except their bedding, which had been destroyed by Customs in Sydney because it contained feathers.

Mr and Mrs Groenewold with their son Bill, who was also a confessing member, and their two daughters Greetje and Ria, were a welcome addition to the congregation.

And so it was that under the blessing of the LORD, the church began to grow rapidly.

Bill was engaged to his sweetheart Minke. It was not easy to leave her behind, but Bill had come with his parents to settle in this new country and to prepare for his and her future life under God's protection and guidance.

There were nice sunny days in March 1951. Mr and Mrs Groenewold were housed with the Slobbes. Mr Groenewold became known as 'happy Eppy'. There was always a happy smile on his face. Bill and his two sisters found lodgings with the Jacob Bergsma family next door



The E Groenewold family, Sunday after their arrival, 25 March 1951.

to the dairy-farm, even though this was only a small four roomed house (lounge, kitchen and two bedrooms).

Ida Bergsma shared her room with Gre and Ria, whilst Bill slept on the back verandah. What work could the father and son Groenewold do? Both were butchers.



J Bergsma's house. Bill, Ria, Ida, Gre, Mrs Bergsma.

Mr Groenewold had owned his own butcher's shop just to the east of the city Groningen. But there had hardly been any room to move. Their kitchen was their workshop. There was no back yard and no front garden. Mrs Groenewold was really the third butcher. She was as good with the knives as her husband and son.

Bill had done his butcher's apprenticeship at one of the bigger butcher's shops in the city. After serving five months in the Dutch Army, he was released from his duties because of emigration. How often his thoughts went back to the evening before they left, when he had to say goodbye to his seventeen year old fiancée Minke. The time of waiting to see her again would be long. Her parents insisted that she had to be at least nineteen years old before she was allowed to get married. It had been so very hard to part from each other.

The next morning the Groenewolds with all their hand luggage would leave Groningen by private bus with other migrants and go to Amsterdam to depart on the M.S.S. "De Groote Beer". It would take five weeks to reach Fremantle.

Minke was a shop assistant in a cigar and tobacco shop in the main street in Groningen and of course she expected the bus to pass by there. She watched every vehicle come past. She hoped to get a last glimpse of her Bill. But no private bus loaded with emigrants came past. Tears came to her eyes, and she cried and cried. Later on she said: "It would have been much better for me not to have gone to work that day."

But now that the Groenewolds were here in Australia, they really wanted to work. Well, Mr Sexty, an agent for Elders & Co, had plenty of contacts. He knew that Anchorage Butchers, who had a slaughtering yard along the Coogee coastline, needed butchers.



Mr Reginald Grove (John) Sexty.

So on Tuesday, 27 March 1951, immediately after the Easter long week-end, Mr Groenewold and Bill borrowed the two new push bikes from the Bosvelds. They cycled to Forrestdale, where they hid the two bikes in the bush, near the corner of Forrest and Nicholson Roads.

The normal way from Armadale and Forrestdale to Fremantle was along Forrest Road, which led you straight past the Hamilton Hill Hotel. They hitch hiked their way to Hamilton Hill as far as the hotel. From there they walked another three kilometres south to Anchorage and asked for work.

They were allowed to start work straight away, but these two Dutch butchers made a discovery. They saw their Aussie counterparts at work, and did these men get stuck into those sheep-carcasses! A little slit here, and a little cut there, and then with both their hands, they just ripped the meat off the bones.

The Dutch butchers couldn't believe their eyes. They had never been taught to do it this way. The work they had done in Holland could be compared with work of watchmakers, but this was bulldozer work. Unprepared for this type of work the two new migrants were therefore given something else to do.

They were to work in the deep freezers in 20 minute shifts. Wearing heavy shoes, heavy overcoats, woolen and leather gloves, they had to re-arrange all the frozen carcasses. Then they could come out of the freezer and thaw out in the heat of the day. At least it was a job.

At 4.30 pm and it was time to knock off, go-home time. They very easily got a ride from the Anchorage factory to the Hamilton Hill Hotel. Anyone was happy to give hitchhikers a ride in those days. But from Hamilton Hill to Armadale was a different story. There just wasn't anyone going to Armadale. So after waiting along the road for a long time Mr Groenewold and Bill decided to enter the pub to see if any one there planned to go to Armadale.

To enter the pub and not to buy anything did not seem right. Indeed, as Reformed people it did not feel right to even enter the pub. Despite their unease, both of them bought a beer, and asked around to see if there was any one who could give them a ride to Armadale. Sure enough, a big burly bloke told them to just wait for him and when he was ready he would give them a ride to Forrestdale.

So they went outside and waited and waited and waited—6 o'clock, 7 o'clock, 7.30 pm. Finally he came out of the pub. He got his big Harley-Davidson, and father and son were his two pillion riders. Off to Forrestdale.

Mr Groenewold was very worried about his wife, expecting her to panic when her Eppy did not come home on time. Between Jandakot and Forrestdale, just before it was pitch dark, they saw the ute of Mr Slobbe coming towards them.

Waving furiously so that Mr Slobbe would see them, they were relieved to see him slow down and stop. Clambering into the ute they traveled on to Forrestdale, where they found their two bikes in the bushes and loaded them into the back of the ute. What a relief when at about 8.30pm they were greeted at home. It had been a long

day. It had been an eventful day, the first day at work in Australia and never to be forgotten.

Newcomers soon realized that because of the vast distances and wide open spaces here, motorised transport was essential but costly. The early migrants only could afford reasonably cheap vehicles, which were often troublesome. Not so with Mr Price's dairy farm's ute. We always called it "Mr Slobbe's ute".

This ute was indestructible. It never missed a beat. And that was not because the drivers were so careful. Jan Arie de Jong was pretty rough behind the wheel. On the other hand, our old T-Ford ute had given us so much trouble that it had been replaced with a two ton Chevrolet truck.

March 1951 — Fire

We had all heard some awful stories about the Australian bushfires. One day, when everybody had gone to work and school, Mum Bosveld saw a fire coming towards our place, and she panicked.

She ran inside, grabbed the handle attached to the telephone on the wall and swung it around about ten times. We used to call the telephone: "the coffee mill". Turning the handle made the same type of sound as when you grind coffee beans.

Our phone was an extension to the phone of Mr and Mrs Price, who lived only some 400 metres away from us if one went directly through the paddock. The phone was picked up and a voice came through: "Hello, Mrs Price speaking."

Mum screamed at the top of her voice: "*Brand, Brand, kom gauw!*" (Fire, fire, come quickly). Of course Mrs Price didn't understand what she meant, but she perceived something was seriously wrong. So she hopped in her car and came over.

Nothing was wrong: the roads were good firebreaks, and there was plenty of water in the tank on the stand. They took some precautions, filling up buckets and also the double cement troughs with water, in case the fire would jump the road.



A very relaxed Mum Bosveld, after Mrs Price was gone.

On Sunday, 25 March 1951, it was high time to write once more to *Het Gereformeerde Gezinsblad* (The Reformed Family Newspaper).¹⁹ The great majority, if not all of the church membership, tended to read this paper.

Airmail letters usually took two weeks to reach Holland. They cost only seven pennies each.²⁰ Life was busy and finding time to write was a drawback. But now that there was good news to be spread around, it was high time to write.

The letter speaks for itself. Upon receipt the newspaper immediately printed the letter on Saturday, 14 April 1951.

From Brother D Bosveld, P.O. Armadale, West-Australia, we received a letter dated 25 March. We quote as follows:

Since Institution, 25 December 1950, the membership of the Church has grown from 21 to 31. In February the JHW Bergsma family arrived from Silvan, Victoria, and Brother JA de Jong from N.S.W., whilst this week the E Groenewold family and Brother H Bommel arrived by boat from Holland.

And with the April boat we expect approximately another 30 members, for whom we have rented accommodation this week, even though it will be crammed for them.

Since the institution of the Church we have opportunity once a Sunday to bring our sacrifices for the Church, and the result is £50/-/10, equivalent to fl.400 (dutch guilders).

Brother Slobbe is treasurer of the Church. Saturday evenings I give catechism instruction to the children of the Church. We also have a Bible study evening every week, where everybody can use their talents to the wellbeing and salvation of the other members.

Together we have agreed not to ask a Minister of the Word "on loan" but intend as soon as possible to call a Minister (Shepherd and Teacher). He can then, from his congregation in Armadale in Western Australia, visit the members of Christ's Church who live in the dispersion in Australia.

To reach that aim we try our utmost (as far as the Lord gives us the opportunity) to encourage migrants to immigrate to this place. For this purpose we have, this week, rented a farm-house with 10 rooms (Australian rooms by the way). We can now accommodate the brothers and sisters, so that from their temporary abode they can look for something better for themselves.

This week something peculiar and worth mentioning happened. When we went to Fremantle harbour to meet the E Groenewold family and a young brother from Nijmegen, we were asked by some passengers how we liked it here and what the living costs were like. I told them that we were extremely satisfied and as for the living costs the following:

19. A newspaper in Holland published by people belonging to the Gereformeerde Kerken. At that time the paper appeared two or three times per week, later on it appeared six days per week.

20 (approximately \$1.70 in today's value).

1951.

INGEZONDEN

Van br. D. Bosveld, P.O. Armadale, West-Australië, ontvingen we een brief d.d. 25 Maart j.l., waaruit we het volgende overnemen:

Door de aankomst van de fam. Bergsma uit Silvan Vic en br. De Jong uit N.S.W., en deze week de fam. Groenewold uit Groningen (Holland) is de kerk uitgegroeid tot 31 leden. We verwachten met de Aprilboot ongeveer 30 leden, waarvoor we (al zal het behelpen zijn) woonruimte hebben gehuurd. We hebben vanaf instituering der kerk 25 Dec. 1950 tot nu eenmaal per Zondag gelegenheid gegeven voor de offerdienst voor de kerk en het resultaat was £ 50.— 10, hetgeen omgerekend een Nederlands bedrag is van ruim f 400.—. Broeder Slobbe is penningmeester. 's Morgens is bij Bosveld kerkdienst en 's avonds bij Slobbe, en dan is er gelegenheid voor offer (dienst). Zaterdagavonds wordt door mij aan de kinderen der kerk catechisatieonderwijs gegeven. Ook hebben we iedere week Bijbelstudiekring, zodat een ieder zijn gaven ook daar ten nutte en ter zaligheid van andere lidmaten gewillig en met vreugde aan kan wenden. We hebben met elkaar afgesproken om niet om een heempredikant te vragen, maar zelf zo spoedig mogelijk een predikant (Herder en Leraar) te be-

roepen, die dan ook vanuit zijn gemeente te Armadale (W.-Australië) de verstrooide leden van Christus Kerk in Australië kan bezoeken. Om daartoe te geraken, doen we nu al het mogelijke (voor zover ons de Heere daartoe de gelegenheid geeft) om de emigrerende hier te doen immigreren. Zo hebben we deze week een farm gehuurd met niet minder dan 10 vertrekken (Australische hoor!), zodat we daar weer broeders en zusters kunnen doen wonen, opdat ze vanuit deze standplaats zelf kunnen uitkijken naar beter. Een opmerkelijk en vermeldenswaardig iets is ons deze week overkomen, toen we de fam. Groenewold en een jonge broeder uit Nijmegen van de boot haalden. Er werd ons gevraagd (door enige passagiers) hoe of het ons hier beviel en wat zo de prijzen waren. Ik vertelde hen dat het ons hier uitermate best beviel en wat de prijzen aanging het volgende: Voor een heel gewoon weekgeld koop je hier b.v. 10 tot 12 paar goede schoenen, daartegenover in Holland 2 paar. Voor je weekgeld koop je hier 100 pond roomboter. Er is hier geen margarine te krijgen. De huur is hier gemiddeld 1/10 van het inkomen, enz. enz., en zo gaf ik ze een beeld van het leven hier, waarop zij antwoordden dat ze die man, die ze vanmorgen op de kade hadden zien staan, een flink pak slaag wilden geven omdat hij zulke leugens uit Australië had geschreven, n.l. dat de emigranten bij de aankomst van een boot met hopen op de kade stonden te

smeken: neem ons alstublieft weer mee naar Holland, omdat het hier zo ontzettend slecht is. Nu zal het best eens gebeuren dat het sommigen tegenvalt, vooral als men bij emigratie denkt aan gebraden duifjes, die je in de mond komen vliegen, maar als men de nuchtere feiten op zich in laat werken moet men reeds in Holland weten dat emigreren een hoogst ernstige zaak is, ook financieel, omdat men alles moet loslaten. Kerk, broeders en zusters, vrienden, betrekkingen, eigendommen, om dan in een heel vreemde omgeving weer opnieuw van de grond af te beginnen. Maar het

einde van de zaak en ook het voor naamste is: vreest God en houdt Zijn geboden, ook Kerkgeboden. Alles is Kerkgebod; dus ook art. 27 N.G.B. Erken de Heere ook in die wegen en Hij zal alle paden recht maken. De broeders groeten en verwachten u en weest allen Gode bevolen.

Uw aller

D. BOSVELD

P.S. Br. B. wil gaarne eventuele vragen die gesteld kunnen worden, beantwoorden.

Letter from Mr D Bosveld that appeared in
Het Gereformeerde Gezinsblad.

With a normal week's wages you can buy 10 to 12 pairs of good shoes, compared to 2 pairs in Holland. With a week's wages you can buy 100 lbs. of butter. You can't buy margarine here. Rent is generally 1/10th of your weekly income. Etc. Thus I gave them a picture of daily living here.

In response they replied that they would love to give the man whom they met here on the wharf earlier that morning a good thrashing. He had spread blatant lies about Australia, claiming that immigrants came in droves to the wharf whenever a ship arrived, begging: "Please take us back with you to Holland, because here things are terrible."

Now it can happen, of course, that some are disappointed, especially if you expect that with immigration fried turtle doves come flying into your mouth. But if you let the bare facts speak, then you in Holland must understand that emigration is a serious business, also financially. Because you must let go of everything: Church, brothers and sisters, friends, relatives, property, to start all anew in a completely strange environment.

But first of all, and most importantly: "Fear God and keep His commandments", also Church commandments. Everything is Church-commandment. Therefore also article 27 of the Belgic Confession. Acknowledge the Lord also in those ways, and He will make straight all paths. The brothers greet you and expect you. We commend you to God's keeping.

Yours sincerely

D Bosveld.

P.S. Brother B. will gladly answer any questions you may have.

Was 23 March 1951 already Good Friday?

Was 25 March 1951 already Easter Sunday? Has Easter ever been so early in the year?

Good Friday, 23 March 1951 had been another beautiful autumn day with the temperature reaching a warm 90°F. This was a holy day for the Australians, as they remembered the death of the Saviour of the world.

For the new migrants, however, who were accustomed to a normal day's work and attending church only in the evening, it was a normal working day. Mr Price and Mr Sexty couldn't work it out. These people were so religious, and to see them working on Good Friday had them baffled.

I asked my boss, the plumber, Mr Dudley Friar, if he wanted me to work on Good Friday. He immediately said: "Of course; new apprentices don't get public holidays for the first two years."

He was building himself a new house on Bunbury Road, Armadale, and that's where I worked all day. The house is still there: 70 South West Highway, Armadale.



Mr Dudley Friar's house at 70
Bunbury Road, Armadale.

He told me that he was a bush-baptist. I was too scared to ask him what religion that was.

But after carefully making some enquiries I found it meant that he was a heathen.

Easter Sunday, 25 March 1951

It was Brother Slobbe's turn to lead us in the church services that Sunday. In the morning he read an Easter sermon from his highly respected minister from Capelle a/d Yssel, Rev. DK Wielenga, who was now Minister of the Word in Rotterdam Centre Church.²¹ That evening Brother Slobbe wrote a letter to him, with whom he had shared sadness and sorrows in Capelle.

This minister had been a real shepherd to him and his wife. And from the reply letter from this Rev. Wielenga we learn a lot.

Rev. Wielenga just about offered himself as a minister-on-loan, if only his church council would agree. But we know that the congregation here decided not to ask for a minister-on-loan, but rather wanted to call their own shepherd and teacher. This happened three months later.

*To Mr A Slobbe
G.P.O. Armadale
West Australia*

Friday, 4 May 1951

*Rev. DK Wielenga JD zn
Lumey str. 26a
Rotterdam C. Holland*

Esteemed Brother and Sister Slobbe

To tell you the truth, I had difficulty getting this phrase out of my typewriter. I prefer our old custom in Capelle and address you in confidence with 'Dear Aart and Bertha.'

Immediately that sounds different, more confidential and friendlier. Oh, how surprised I was by your letter. To know that far away in Australia one of my Easter-sermons gave encouragement and comfort, that was a comfort to me. But you attached a question to it, and that brings me into difficulties.

21. Rev. DK Wielenga is the father of Rev. JD Wielenga, who was minister in Albany, Western Australia for 12½ years, before moving to Coaldale in Canada.

I had already typed a letter to you dated 11 April, ready to be sent, only to be interrupted by this your letter. But I have found a solution to helping you get sermons, as this was your request. I have on hand a series of Catechism sermons. These are now being re-typed and duplicated. Somebody has been found willing to do this once or twice per month. Couldn't be better.

I will request the Church Council of Capelle to bear the mailing costs. They have certain obligations here, I guess. Brother Dorland, with whom I spoke about these things, couldn't agree more. "And other sermons?" you ask! Well that's more difficult. My handwriting! ... that is not too good as you know. Plus, nowadays I preach from my notes, and you can't use those, of course.

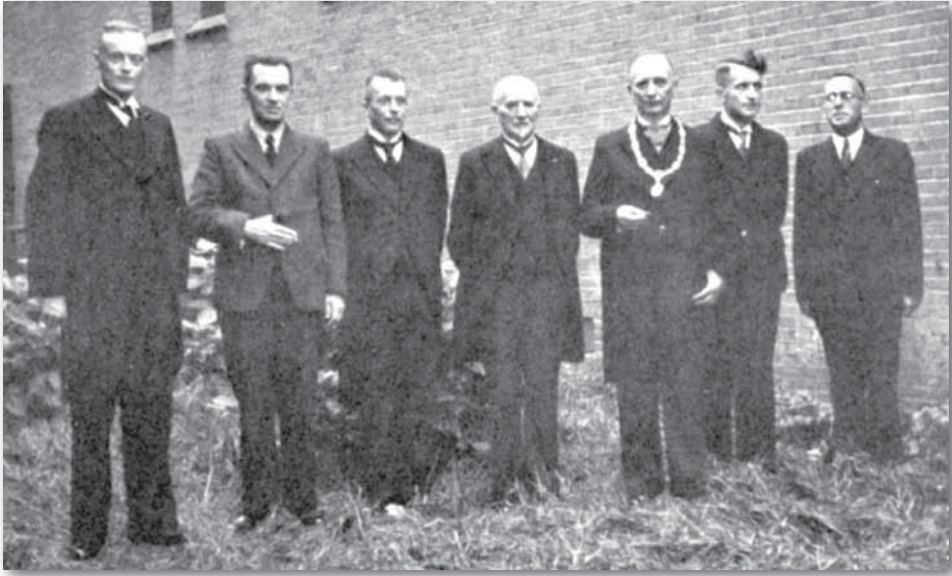
What I can still find in the way of typed sermons, the ones I can do without, these I'll send to you. These are old sermons from the time I was in Capelle. Perhaps you will even remember them! However, when reading them, don't forget that they are dated. But you will also remember that my sermons were not so much concentrated on time and place.

I hope that the delay in my reply will even gladden you, because now I feel that this matter has been organised the best way possible. I greatly rejoice over your church-activities. Aart, whoever would have thought that one day you would ordain someone into his office? To be frank: I had great concern in my heart at the time of your parting. I thought to myself... "What will become of them church-wise and faith-wise?" (wat moet daar kerkelijk en geestelijk van terecht komen?)

Your letter has strengthened and comforted me, the Lord does not let go of us. And He has watched over you and cared for you, and now you may serve Him in His congregation. It is all too wonderful for me, dear friend. I sincerely hope that more church-members from Holland may and will join with you. As far as I am concerned I would love to come over to you for a year, as minister-on-loan. However, whether my consistory will allow it, is a different matter.

As for what the Church of Ymuiden wrote to you, I find this a shame. You will always find some to be sharpshooters. Please, don't let them deter you, and just let them be. They seem to be so very strong on principles, but matters are often not so simple. I wouldn't in the world know how to start differently as home-congregation. The Lord will build His Church. You have done well, and I have respect for your efforts. I will plead your cause at Synod to the best of my ability.

But I am not a man of great influence ... to tell you the honest truth. I have yet to see whether I will be delegated this year. It is not my turn. Nevertheless, I will be present as Lecturer of Mission matters, anyway. But don't have any illusions (about a minister-on-loan) as money is scarce in our land. Church contributions are collected with a certain degree of difficulty. Moreover, the church-mills grind slowly. However, I will do my utmost. At home all things are well.



Lecturer Rev. DK Wielenga, first on left, with Professors C Veenhof, P Deddens, S Greijdenus, K Schilder and B Holwerda, and Dr DJ Buwalda.

Nowadays I am often in Capelle, now that Rev. Verlare has deserted them. I give catechism instructions in Capelle every week. My kind regards to the congregation. I commend you to the Lord.

Regards from my wife and children.

Rev. DK Wielenga.

The letter Brother Slobbe wrote on 25 March wouldn't have reached Holland until 12 or 13 April, a day after Rev. DK Wielenga had just typed his first letter to Aart and Bertha Slobbe since the time they left late in 1948.

It was exactly three weeks before he could respond positively to the various requests from Brother Slobbe regarding sermons. He went out of his way to help the young congregation in far away Armadale, Australia. From his letter we also learn that he could not see a better or a different way of starting a young congregation in a far away immigration land.

Here was a letter which was so encouraging. Not so encouraging for those who disagreed with the institution or had their questions about it, but encouraging for those who had seen it as their calling to institute the Church.

In Albany there were some migrants (the Plugs)²² who mainly came from the Church of Ymuiden, Holland. The Church Council of Ymuiden had written a letter, wherein they expressed disapproval of the institution of the Reformed Church of Armadale.

22. See page 76.

So it is not coincidental that some of the brothers in Albany had difficulty accepting the legality and wisdom of instituting the Church in Armadale,²³ seeing their previous Church Council had shown disapproval.

On the other hand perhaps the Church Council in Ymuiden reacted this way upon having received some (adverse) sentiments from the Plugs in Albany about Armadale.

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The West-Australian published the following on 18 August 1950:

LARGE DUTCH FAMILY GOING TO ALBANY

Bringing with them two trucks (steering wheels on the wrong side, oh, what disaster) and two fishing smack's, 17 members of the Plug family arrived at Fremantle in the Dutch steamer Sibajak yesterday to make their homes at Albany. By the end of the year 39 members of the Plug family will have come to Albany from Holland.

A special bus took the 17 new arrivals from Fremantle to Albany. They were not concerned about accommodation because they had with them two tents, 35ft long and 18ft wide. They said they would live in the tents until another member of the family arrived next month.

He was a builder and they hoped that he would be able to build them houses. The newcomers were met at Fremantle by the family's "pathfinders" Hendrik and Rika Plug.



The second contingent of the Plugs arriving in Fremantle on Thursday, 17 August 1950, to join 'Ome Henk & Tante Riek', in Albany.

In Albany, too, the LORD guided and gathered His children and established His Church. The struggles were many and the road not easy, but the LORD maintains His cause. He does not leave nor forsake His own. We will see later on what strong ties Albany and Armadale enjoyed with each other. But first back to the slippery roads in Armadale in 1951.

April 1951

Ever since the Groenewolds had arrived it had been nice sunny weather, every day around the 85-90°F (29-32°C). Summer seemed to have suddenly changed to winter

23. See also chapter 34.

because, although the average rainfall for April was only 176 points (44 mm), in this second week of April 1951 the rains came tumbling down.

Suddenly over three inches of rain had fallen. The roads were slippery and the large open drains along the roads were all filled with water.

It was Wednesday, 11 April 1951. Bible study meeting would start at 8 o'clock at Bosveld's place. The Slobbes couldn't fit everyone in their ute, for there were Mr and Mrs Slobbe, Mr and Mrs Groenewold, Henk Bommel, Jan Arie de Jong, Bill Groenewold, Mr and Mrs Jacob Bergsma and Ida, ten of them. Gre and Ria Groenewold would do the baby-sitting at Slobbe's place.

The rains had just about stopped, so Daan was told to pick up the Bergsmas with the Chev truck. They couldn't all fit in the front, so the six-foot Mr Bergsma sat on the back, on the flat tray of the truck. Off they went.

It was only three kilometres down the road to Bosveld's place. Coming past the clay-pits in North South Road No.1, where the trucks come out of the claypits loaded with wet clay (some of which tended to spill on the road), the old Chev went into a bad slippery slide, side-ways. Wrenching hard at the wheel, Daan spun the Chev the other way, desperately hoping not to land in the drain along the side of the road.

They all had the fright of their lives. When the Chev had come to a stop, Daan thought he'd better check to see how Br Bergsma, travelling on the back of the truck, was. But when he opened his door and jumped out, he couldn't see him. He had lost him! And that was really frightening.

Mrs Bergsma and Ida also sensed danger. Both came out of the cabin, ashen-faced. Mrs Bergsma started to call for her husband. "Jaap...! Jaaap...! Jaaaap...!"

All listened attentively, but no answer. She called again, and again no answer came out of the dark night. Then came her grave conclusion, "I believe he is dead, because whenever I call him he always answers me."

Daan ran back along the road they had just traveled. To his immense relief, some one hundred metres back he met Mr Bergsma, who had just managed to crawl out of the water-filled drain. He had slid off the back of the truck straight into the middle of the drain. He was drenched from top to toe and not in a fit state to attend the Bible-study meeting. Miraculously he was uninjured. The Lord had preserved the life of Br Bergsma. We all felt humbled.

"What is man, that You are mindful of him?

And the son of man that You visit him?"

"O LORD our Lord,

how excellent is Your Name in all the earth!"

Psalms 8:4,9