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Mission News

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The Reformation in French Canada had a late start. This article by Jason Zuidema gives an update of progress in Reformed teaching. Jason is a former member of the Chatham Free Reformed Church and known in several of our congregations where he attended college and seminary. He is now a PhD student studying the Reformation at McGill University, a Pastoral Candidate in the Reformed Church of Québec, and teaches Church History at Farel Reformed Theological Seminary. He and his wife Anna live in Montréal.

Reformed Work in Quebec

by Jason Zuidema

St. Edward's Last Mass

The Reformation motto *semper reformanda* or "always reforming" has continued to be the motto of Reformed churches for the last half a millennium. In the beginning that motto specifically had to do with the doing away of popish rites and turning toward a simpler Christianity based upon biblical teaching. For the ensuing several centuries, especially in North America, the necessity to do away with the complex Roman Catholic ceremonial system little affected the churches stemming from the Reformation. Yet, in one place, in one small community on the outskirts of Montréal, Québec, the call of Martin Luther nearly 500 years ago has finally been heard. The Church of St. Edward in Fabreville (west of Laval, north of Montréal) was recently purchased by a reformed theological school and is now being transformed into a church, a grade school, and a seminary in which the Gospel will be preached and the Lord's Supper celebrated in a Reformed way for the first time.

Celebrating its 25th anniversary, Farel Reformed Theological Seminary has been given a new burst of life this year with the purchase of this building and the coming of staff, faculty, and students from other parts of Canada and the United States. Farel used to be housed in a building in Québec City, but decided to move to Montréal in 2000 as part of an effort to make the seminary accessible to that metropolis. In 2001 a new residence, library, and classroom space were built in a historic United Church downtown Montréal, but news of the sale of that building caused the seminary's administration to look elsewhere. The stained glass windows in that church being very beautiful, the neighbouring fine arts museum became interested and bought the building from the cash-strapped elderly United Church congregation. Knowing that they would be bought out of our long-term lease, the administration of Farel decided to find something else. Searching downtown, they found that most buildings were either far too expensive or far too small for the work of the seminary. So, they decided to contact the Archbishop of Montréal who holds the title to all the Catholic Churches in the area to see if they could buy some sort of unused space in one of the many large buildings used by Catholic organizations in the city. As the Catholic Church is losing its once-strong power over the people of Québec, many of the very large buildings, which were once full, are now empty. After looking into our orthodoxy, the Archbishop contacted us with the possibility of buying the St. Edward Church. Although not in the downtown area, the church turned out to be a fantastic fit for the seminary. In mid-August the transaction was made and St. Edward's last Mass was August 10. The Reformed Gospel will be preached by a new church-plant in the same building starting, the Lord willing, early this fall. But this is only part of the story.

Farel Reformed Theological Seminary was blessed this year with the coming of several new full and part-time faculty and staff. Joining the administrator Rév. Jean-Guy deBlois, and Rév. Jean Zoellner, lecturer in Missions, are Adriaan Neele, Dean and Professor of Theology, Meine Veldman, Professor of Theology, Philippe deBlois, director of development, Charles Ramangalahy, member of the board, Rév. Reuben Kwint, lecturer in biblical Hebrew, Kevin MacDonald, lecturer in biblical Greek, and myself as lecturer in Church History. Seeing that our seminary will be completely bilingual, all members of the faculty and staff will be able to work in both languages.

For Mr. Neele and his family this necessity brought an entirely providential miracle to the hands of Farel. Mr. Neele and his wife wanted to send their three oldest children to a French-speaking Christian school so that they too would be fluent in this language. After looking around Montréal, he found that the only school available was in the town of Fabreville. He called, but they regretfully informed him the school had just closed due to lack of students. He asked how many they needed; they said 40. He asked how many they had; they said 37. Well, he said, I have three children to send! Yet, this was not enough. Even with 40 children, they had just lost their school building and had nowhere to go for the fall. Happily Adriaan informed them that the school he worked for had just bought a building in that same town and it was far bigger than was presently necessary. The Lord worked wonders and now this little school, The North-Shore Christian Academy, an all-French Christian school is re-opening its doors in September. The Lord is doing great things in Québec. The little group of French Reformed Churches, the Reformed Church of Quebec, will be blessed with a new seminary building, a new church plant, and a new Christian school--all in the space of a couple of months!

If you want to know more about the work in Québec, please log on to the following websites:

- The Reformed Church of Québec: www.erq.qc.ca
- The Farel Reformed Theological Seminary: www.farel.net
- The North Shore Christian Academy: www.acrn.ca

We would love a visit and covet your prayers and financial support. Please call or write:

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