

Is the Classroom part of the “Household of Faith”?

Within the “Household of Faith” we are blessed with many different rooms with different functions that all connect and work together as a united household. There is: a Consistory room; a parents’ room; a young adults room; a study room; and a living-room for the family gathering. None of these rooms are separate from the household. The question is whether the classroom too is part of the “Household of Faith”, and does it sit within the walls of Zion?

The unique thing about our Reformed Schools is that they were not established outside of the “Household of Faith”, they were not simply started by a group of church parents wanting to have Christian Education for their children. It is the church leaders, church members and parents who have, since the Reformation, been praying and working together to ensure that Reformed Christian Education is available to all children of the church. The Synod of Dort already set out quite detailed guidelines, not only about the catechism instruction of the Youth of the Church, but also about the importance and oversight of Reformed Education. It is interesting to note in the Synod of Dort reports how attention was also given to ensuring such education would be available even for the parents who were least able to afford it.

In Australia the Free Reformed Churches have always seen it as a collective communal responsibility that members of the Church together support the training and education of the children of the Church. This accords with the instruction of Psalm 78 and Deuteronomy 6, where the nation Israel as a whole community is called to ensure that the next generation knows the Lord. Yes, this is a call to the parents in the first instance, but also to the wider community of God’s people as a whole.

Reflecting on the metaphorical example of the household we come to the realisation that, if all members of the household agree that it is good and healthy to have meals every-day, then everyone in the household becomes involved in that (eg: arranging the food, setting the table, sharing the meal, and cleaning-up). So too, in the “Household of Faith” the training and education of the children of the Church involves support from everyone of that household.





Is the Classroom part of the “Household of Faith”? (cntd)

We are very blessed in our Australian Free Reformed Churches where there is a relatively good understanding of that communal support system for the training and education of the children of the church. Some 70% of confessing members and couples within our churches are full members of the school association, and out of more than 800 full members, approximately half are members who do not have children at school.

The Membership benchmark that has been part of our communal system for many years, is Full FRSA Membership for all adult working confessing members of the Church. This is the level of support that is needed in order for the John Calvin Schools to remain sustainable, and to ensure Reformed Schooling is kept affordable so that all children of the church are able to attend the John Calvin Schools.

Since the inception of the Association over 60 Years ago, it has been a collective effort of the Church Leaders, Church Members, and Parents of the Church, who have been promoting Membership of the Schools amongst all Church Members as a calling, as part of that Communal Support for the Children of the Church. The Schools, through the Membership Committee or Membership Representatives, have been there to provide information and support in that task. More recently the Board, through the Membership & Communications Co-ordinator, has been working in a very focused way on getting the message of the blessings of communal support and the blessings of our John Calvin Schools to the young people in various ways. Initiatives include things such as presentations to the Youth Clubs, the appointment of Membership Representatives in each of the Churches, speaking to young people, holding workshop sessions with the year 12's, and preparing a pre-confession course outline that could also be used in the churches to incorporate these instructions as part of the catechism and pre-confession courses. We highlight that these initiatives are not intended to drive the Membership of the FRSA, as that must come from within the Churches themselves rather, they are initiatives simply supporting that work.

For the Classroom to be properly supported within the “Household of Faith”, it is important that the Consistory Room within the “Household

of Faith” comprises of men who are all full supporters and members of the school association. This also has been the norm since the inception of the Association, and for very good reason. If the Consistory room has men who are half hearted about the support for the nurturing and education of the children of the Church, how can they provide a good example and also ensure that the rest of the household is adequately supporting the classroom within the household?

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Thankfully within all the Churches, the Schools and the work of the Schools are often remembered in prayer, in sermons, in pastoral columns, and that is really appreciated, as is the open door that exists between each Consistory and the Schools. The ministers and Consistories are encouraged to continue emphasising to the “Household of Faith” the blessing and the calling that church members have to surround the classroom within the household of faith with their full support. It is our prayer and hope that our John Calvin Schools may continue to be adequately supported within the “Household of Faith”, and that the children of the Church are nurtured and trained in the fear of the Lord for generations to come.

H Dykstra
Board Chairman

