



Broad wooden arches meet at the centre of a high roof in the Christian Reformed Church in Georgetown. Reverend John DeJong said buildings aren't built this way anymore because although it's architecturally attractive, it isn't economically wise. The high ceiling means all the hot air rises above where it can be useful. Fans have been installed to circulate the warm air. (Herald photo)

Dutch church focuses on spirit, followers' ethnic ties take back seat

By ANI FEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer
The Dutch language is slowly being phased out of the Christian Reformed Church. Reverend DeJong, pastor of the Georgetown congregation on Trafalgar Road for four years, said the church has no interest in promoting its ethnic origins.

Founded by Dutch immigrants in the U.S. in 1837, the Christian Reformed Church is made up mainly of first or second generation Dutch.

"The Dutch people here aren't concerned about holding onto their Dutchness," Rev. DeJong said.

He said Christian Reformed Churches are mostly found in urban areas in Canada, which accounts for the fact that the Dutch language has disappeared. Urban settings aren't congenial to holding onto language and customs, as are rural settings which promote closer communities, Rev. DeJong said.



Sixteenth in a series

"We haven't had Dutch (language) services here for a

number of years," he said. "There used to be a Dutch service once a month, but there wasn't enough need or interest in it, so we stopped them in 1979".

The Dutch community in Halton Hills is well-established, dating back 25 to 30 years ago. Many of the Dutch immigrated here from Holland following the Second World War. "Certainly the liberation of the Netherlands by the Canadian forces generated an interest in this country," Rev. DeJong said.

Canada's open door policy for immigrants at that time welcomed the Dutch to leave their heavily populated country for a land sparse in population.

"Those who were interested in agriculture came for the wide open spaces that Holland no longer had," he said.

The post-war period with its tremendous lack of housing in the Netherlands encouraged the adventurous to pack up for Canada.

The history of the Dutch community in Halton Hills is closely tied to the history of the Christian Reformed Church here. The church was started up by the new immigrants, and the congregation celebrates its 25th anniversary Jan. 24.

Meeting originally in the Equestrian Community Centre, and later the Canada Trust building on Main Street, the founding congregation of 60 gathered funds to build the church building in 1967 they currently use. Membership has swollen to over 800, and Sunday mornings, Rev. DeJong said the aisles are full of people.

The Christian Reformed Church was born in the U.S.,

following disagreement about doctrinal teachings and practices among members of the Dutch Reformed Church.

Rev. DeJong also attributes the break with the parent church to the geographic separation between the Dutch community in New York state, then called New Amsterdam, and the Dutch in the wilds of Michigan, where the new church began.

The physical distance between the two Dutch immigrant groups meant they didn't get to know each other and, therefore, didn't trust each other, Rev. DeJong said. However, now the differences between the two churches are few.

CO-OPERATION
"Today, the split should not be there, as we're very much the same," Rev. DeJong said. (Continued on page A5)

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