

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed semi-monthly magazine

October 15, 2019 • Volume 96 • No. 2

My light and my salvation

Rev. James Slopsema

Whose I am and whom I serve

Prof. Ronald Cammenga

CRC Synod 2019 and the second Sunday service

Rev. Audred Spriensma

Faithfulness to marriage

Rev. Rodney Kleyn

The elders' threefold work

Prof. Douglas Kuiper



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster

Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Reprint and online posting policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting or online posting of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by other publications, provided that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical or Internet location in which such reprint or posting appears is sent to the editorial office.

Editorial policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Subscription price

\$29.00 per year in the US, \$41.00 elsewhere
esubscription: \$29.00
esubscription free to current hardcopy subscribers.

Advertising policy

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: RFPA, Attn: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (email: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org

Website for PRC: www.prca.org

The Reformed Free Publishing Association maintains the privacy and trust of its subscribers by not sharing with any person, organization, or church any information regarding *Standard Bearer* subscribers.

Editorial office

Prof. Russell Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business office

Mr. Alex Kalsbeek
1894 Georgetown Center Dr
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
alexkalsbeek@rfpa.org

Church news editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdome
2324 Fir Ave
Doon, IA 51235
vanegdoms@gmail.com

United Kingdom office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@hotmail.co.uk

Rep. of Ireland office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown
38 Abbeyvale
Corbally
Co Limerick, Ireland

Contents

Meditation

- 27 My light and my salvation
Rev. James Slopsema

Editor's notes

- 29 Prof. Russell Dykstra

PR Seminary installation/convocation address

- 29 Whose I am and whom I serve
Prof. Ronald Cammenga

Pertaining to the churches in common— PR Theological Seminary

- 34 News from the seminary
Prof. Barrett Gritters

All around us

- 36 CRC Synod 2019 and the second Sunday service
Rev. Audred Spriensma

Believing and confessing

- 37 Faithfulness to marriage (Heidelberg Catechism, L.D. 41)
Rev. Rodney Kleyn

Ministering to the saints

- 40 The elders' threefold work (1)
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

When thou sittest in thine house

- 43 Father's influence in the covenant home (2)
Rev. Arie denHartog

Bring the books...

- 45 *The Pursuit of Glory*
Dr. Julian Kennedy

Activities

- 46 News from our churches
Mr. Perry Van Egdome



REFORMED
FREE PUBLISHING
ASSOCIATION



Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

My light and my salvation

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Psalm 27:1

Psalm 27 was written by David. From the psalm itself it is evident that David was facing great danger from his enemies. Some see a connection between this psalm and Psalm 3, which was written in connection with David's flight from Absalom. In verse 5 of that psalm David wrote, "I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me." Others suggest that verse 10 of Psalm 27 links the psalm to David bringing his parents to Moab for safe-keeping because of Saul (1 Sam. 22:3, 4). They translate verse 10 of this psalm, "For my father and mother have left me; but the LORD will take me up." Whether or not either of these events was the occasion for this psalm, it is evident from the psalm itself that David was facing great danger from his enemies.

The theme of this psalm is expressed in verse 1, which we consider for this meditation, "The LORD is my light and my salvation."

Notice that David made a confession here. He confessed that the LORD (Jehovah) was his light and salvation, the strength of his life. It is important to observe what was not David's light and salvation—his army, alliances with foreign powers, his wealth, or earthly counselors. *Jehovah* was his light and salvation. Therefore, he was not afraid. Even though an army was encamped against him to eat up his flesh, he was not afraid.

This confession must also be ours as we make our way through a life fraught with essentially the same enemies that David faced.

A terrible darkness!

The fact that David confessed Jehovah to be his light suggests that David faced a situation that was dark and foreboding.

In the Bible darkness is often a figure of distress and danger, whereas light is a figure of deliverance and salvation. For example we read in Micah 7:8, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise;

when I sit in darkness, the LORD shall be a light unto me." Notice how falling to one's enemy is paired with sitting in darkness and arising once more is paired with the Lord being a light.

It was a very dark day for David. In verses 2, 3 of this psalm David speaks of his enemies. From these verses we learn that his enemies were the wicked. There was a host (army) of them that made war with him. They came upon him to eat up his flesh.

Of importance here is that David's enemies were wicked. In their wickedness they hatred and opposed David for righteousness' sake as a man after God's own heart. Interestingly, these enemies most likely belonged to the nation of Israel, the covenant people of God. Here we see again that the church is often dominated by a large reprobate element. And behind them was the prince of darkness. The intent of David's enemies was to destroy him. They sought to destroy him personally. But they also sought to destroy him as the Lord's anointed and, by destroying David, to destroy the covenant and the covenant nation.

As David faced these enemies, it was a dark day. His enemies were far superior in strength and resources. It appeared that David's life was over and the cause of the covenant destroyed.

The darkness that descended on David's life often descends on our lives as well.

We face the same spiritual enemies as did David. The Devil walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). He hates the living God. He hates Jesus Christ, the Lord's anointed. And he hates us as the people of God's covenant.

His desire is to destroy us spiritually. He would destroy our faith, rob us of our salvation, and bring us under his own control again. His ultimate goal is to destroy the cause and covenant of Jehovah, even if it means killing the people of God.

Satan attacks us without ceasing. Sometimes he does that directly with tragedy as he did to Job, so that hopefully we curse God and die. But more often he attacks us through the world of the ungodly that is under his control and in his service. These attacks come in the

form of the alluring temptations of sin's pleasures, false doctrine, and persecution.

This brings many dark hours to our lives. There are times when we are on the point of being overwhelmed with temptation and sin. There are times when the church is troubled with controversy. There are times of persecution. There are times of sickness, loss, or tragedy that the devil uses to bring us to the point of despair because it appears as though God has forgotten us and there is no hope.

A saving light!

In the dark hour David found himself to be in, he confessed that the LORD (Jehovah) was his light and salvation, the strength of his life.

Jehovah is God's covenant name. His covenant is an intimate relationship of friendship and fellowship that He establishes and maintains with His elect people in Jesus Christ and in which He lives and dwells with His people in blessing. The name "Jehovah" emphasizes His faithfulness to that covenant. David knew Jehovah as his God and he belonged to Jehovah's covenant. It is this covenant relationship that the powers of darkness ultimately seek to destroy as they attack the people of God.

David acknowledges Jehovah to be his light and salvation. In keeping with the figure of darkness and light, light is further defined by David here as salvation or deliverance. David confessed that in the time of darkness and trouble Jehovah was his light and salvation.

This is further explained in that Jehovah was the strength of his life. Jehovah was David's light and salvation exactly because He was the strength of David's life. Jehovah was the strength of David's life, the one who strengthened David in every situation of life, so that he could do battle with his enemies and overcome them. This was true repeatedly in his battle with the Philistines and other nations. This was also true in his battle with Absalom. By strengthening David against his enemies, Jehovah was David's light and salvation in the darkest hours of his life.

Jehovah is also our light and salvation, the strength of our life.

He is this because He first is the light and salvation of Jesus Christ.

We must see David as the type or picture of Jesus Christ. David was the Lord's anointed, appointed by God to be king and thus the defender of Israel and the covenant. As such he was a picture or type of the Lord's Anointed, appointed by Jehovah to be the Defender and Savior of the church of all ages. To accomplish our salvation Jesus Christ was subjected to the darkest of

hours. He was required to bear all the punishment for the elect of God, and do so in one short lifetime, especially on the cross. This alone would defeat the devil by destroying the legal hold he has on the church from the time of the fall of man. Even though Jesus is the Son of God in our flesh, the cross was a terribly dark hour that He faced all His life long.

But Jehovah was His light and salvation, the strength of His life. Jehovah repeatedly strengthened Jesus as the dark hour of the cross approached. He did so with expressions of approval from heaven during the course of Jesus' ministry—"This is my beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!" He did so at the Mount of Transfiguration, when He gave Jesus a foretaste of the glory that awaited Him. He did so also in the Garden of Gethsemane with the presence of the angel. And during the darkness of the cross, Jehovah strengthened Jesus, even though Jesus for a short time lost sight of that help.

It is in Jesus Christ that Jehovah is our light and salvation, the strength of our life. Through Jesus Christ Jehovah strengthens us as we face the onslaughts of the Devil so that we can overcome him and emerge victorious. He does so by His word and Spirit that lead us to prayers of faith. This is true when we are tempted, when we are overwhelmed with adversity, and when we are persecuted. Through the word preached and brought to us by our fellow saints, we are instructed in the reality of each situation and sent to Jesus by the prayers of faith to be strengthened. Remember, we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Phil. 4:13).

A wonderful confidence!

Because Jehovah was his light and salvation, David was without fear in the darkest of hours. He asked rhetorically, "Whom shall I fear? of whom shall I be afraid?" By his rhetorical questions David expressed that he was not afraid and did not tremble before any of his enemies. He is not afraid of Saul, of Absalom, or of any king. And he is not afraid of the prince of darkness himself. He is not afraid, even though from a human point of view defeat looks sure and all appears lost.

Stated positively, David had absolute confidence of victory in the face of all his enemies.

David had this confidence only because Jehovah was his light and salvation. David had come to know Jehovah as his God, the one only light and salvation in the dark hours of life. In that faith David turned to Jehovah as his light and salvation. He looked to Jehovah in prayer as the strength of his life. The result was that David faced his enemies in the confidence of victory and without fear.

The same must be true for us. We must by faith know Jehovah as our light and salvation. In the dark hours of life we by that faith turn to Jehovah, our covenant God, as the strength of our life. He will certainly strengthen

us in Jesus Christ to fight fearlessly the many spiritual battles of life. In Jesus Christ we will fight victoriously, confidently, and without fear!

Editors' notes

In a special worship service in the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church held September 4, Rev. Brian Huizinga was installed as the Professor of Theology and Old Testament Studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. In this issue, we print an edited version of Prof. R. Cammenga's fine sermon on Acts 27:23b ("whose I am, and whom I serve") delivered in the installation service. It replaces the editorial for this issue.

The next issue of the *Standard Bearer* (Nov. 1) will be the annual Reformation issue. The theme will be the Reformation in Zurich, Switzerland, and it will highlight such notable figures as Ulrich Zwingli and Heinrich Bullinger.

The editorials on "The Covenant and Dordt" will resume, D.V., in the November 15 issue.



PR seminary installation/convocation address

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

Whose I am and whom I serve

(This special submission is the text of the sermon preached by Prof. Cammenga on the occasion of the installation of Rev. Brian Huizinga as professor of theology in the PR Theological Seminary on September 4, 2019.)

"... whose I am, and whom I serve."

Acts 27:23b

Introduction

Whose are you? And whom do you serve? Those are the two most important questions in the entire world. They are the two most important questions that every child of God must face. They are the two most important questions that every minister of the gospel must face. And they are the two most important questions that a professor of theology in God's church must face.

These are the two important questions that will be asked of you [Rev. Brian Huizinga]. Four questions will be asked of you later, at the conclusion of the reading of the Form for the Installation of Professors of Theology. But those four questions really boil down to these two questions: Whose are you and whom do you serve?

The most important question is not, *Who* are you? That is considered to be the greatest possible question by unbelieving philosophy and unbelieving psycholo-

gy: Who are you? But that is not the most important question. The far more important question is, *Whose* are you? The answer to that question determines everything—absolutely everything. So, I ask you and the church asks you and God Himself asks you, "Whose are you?" The answer to that question determines the answer to the second question: Whom do you serve? Whose you are determines whom you are committed to serve. If you are your own and belong to yourself, which is the motto of unbelieving men today, as ever it has been, and which is the deception that our fallen, sinful nature supposes to be true, then we will serve ourselves. However, if we do not belong to ourselves, but belong to another, belong to our God and to our Savior the Lord Jesus Christ, then it follows—it *must* follow—that we do not serve ourselves, but serve Him.

This is the apostle's confession in the words of our text. That is the form that the text takes. It is a confession. Glorious confession! Heartfelt confession! "Whose I am, and whom I serve."

Paul spoke these words while he was a prisoner for the gospel's sake on the way to be tried before the emperor, Caesar in Rome. He had been captured in Jerusalem at the end of the third missionary journey. While a prisoner in Jerusalem, his nephew (his sister's son), had discovered a plot against the apostle's life. For safe-keeping, the apostle had been moved from Jerusalem by night and under heavy guard to Caesarea, the capitol of the region of Judea, where the Roman governor had his residence. There in Caesarea Paul was kept a prisoner for some two years. First, he was imprisoned under Marcus Antonius Felix. Later, Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus. It was in the course of his trial before Festus that the apostle Paul finally made his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11). In this passage, Paul is on his way to Rome, traveling by ship. Having set sail from Caesarea, Paul and his company eventually landed in Myra on the southern coast of Asia Minor. There they boarded a second ship that was headed to Rome. Very likely, the captain of the ship hoped to make it to Rome before winter. There was always a bonus for the ships that braved the Mediterranean the last weeks of the sailing season. Having landed off the eastern coast of the island of Crete, it was determined that the ship could not make Rome before the sailing season ended. They would have to winter in a safe harbor and wait for a few months until the new sailing season.

Against Paul's advice, the captain of the ship attempted to round the island of Crete in order to seek safe haven for the winter in a port on the southern side of the island. It was while attempting to sail that short distance that suddenly a great tempest arose. A fierce northeast wind known as Euroclydon blew Paul's ship out to sea. For fourteen days, Paul and his company were at the mercy of the fierce winds and waves, as they were blown across the Mediterranean Sea. Eventually, the ship ran aground and Paul and all who were on board made it safely to land. There was no loss of life. Everyone made it safely to the shores of the island of Melita or Malta. Although the ship was destroyed by the battering of the wind and waves, passengers and crew were alive. That was what God had revealed to the apostle Paul in a dream the night before, which was Paul's testimony in the text and in the verses that immediately follow. Paul gathered everyone around him and informed them: "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (vv. 23-25).

To the centurion, to the captain of the ship, to the

ship's crew, and to all the other passengers, this was Paul's testimony: "There stood by me this night the angel of the God, whose I am, and whom I serve." I call those words to your attention briefly under the theme, "Whose I Am, and Whom I Serve." Notice three things with me. Notice, first, that these words make clear that Paul was conscious of belonging; secondly, that he was committed to serving; and finally, that he was confident of blessing.

Conscious of belonging

"Whose I am." That comes first in the text. It comes first because it is the more important of the two parts of the text. The more important part of the text is the apostle's consciousness of belonging. That determines everything else. That determines what follows: "And whom I serve." For good reason that is where the Heidelberg Catechism begins in the first question and answer: "What is thy only comfort in life and death? That I belong—that I *belong*—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ." Everything else follows from that belonging.

The one to whom Paul belongs is God. That is the text: "For there stood by me this night the angel of God." "God...whose I am, and whom I serve." He belongs to God. This is not just a fact, not only the reality of the situation, but this is the apostle's own conviction. He is conscious of this. He knows that this is true. It lives in his mind that this is so, and he confesses the truth of this before friend and foe alike: "Whose I am." He would have others know that this is what he is conscious of. He would have others know that this is the controlling principle of his life. It is a truth in which he rejoices, a truth that he gladly confesses. It is a truth that makes all the difference in his life and for which he is eternally thankful. "Whose I am."

It is a confession of ownership, of possession. But more than that, it is an expression of love for and delight in that belonging. It is not an expression merely of ownership, as I might say, "My book. My car. My golf club. My boat." It is an expression of *endearment*. The apostle's words bespeak love and delight, as of a husband who says concerning his wife, "She is my wife." As a father says concerning his child, "My son," or, "My daughter," so does God say over us as He said over the apostle, "Mine, Paul is mine."

This is what the apostle has in view in the text. This is the conviction to which he gives expression when he says, "Whose I am." Paul is God's. The God to whom Paul belongs is the triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. There are three things that are included in this truth.

First, he is God's by virtue of God the Father's election of him. Of that Paul was conscious. That is what Paul has in mind, first of all, when he says, "Whose I am." He means, "Whose I am because of His choice of me in all eternity. He choose me to be His own dear son from eternity." God had set His love upon the apostle and chosen Paul unto Himself. In eternity, God had said of Paul, "Mine, mine!" That is what Paul celebrates in the text. Clearly, for the apostle, election was no cold, abstract, theoretical dogma with little connection to everyday life in the world. No, election is the foundation of everything, the basis for everything that Paul went on to say about himself. The assurance of God's sovereign election of him is the foundation of everything in the text.

What enhanced that, what magnified the assurance of the Father's election of him, was Paul's consciousness that God had not so elected everyone. On the contrary, many who were no less sinful than he was, many with respect to whom he was no more deserving, had not been chosen by God. Humbling truth! That made all the greater the wonder of it all in Paul's own mind: "Whose I am!"

Second, Paul is God's by virtue of God the Son's redemption of him. The cross is in view in the text. Paul acknowledges that; that belongs to his confession in the text. That, too, is what his words imply. That which was the heart and center of Paul's own preaching is heart and center of the confession that he makes here. "Whose I am *for Christ's sake*. Whose I am *because of the finished work of Jesus Christ*." That adds to the wonder of it all: "Whose I am." That "I" was a fallen, guilty, totally depraved sinner, who was altogether unworthy of salvation and unable to save himself. That "I" was a "persecutor and injurious," as he says in I Timothy 1:13. That "I" was one who hunted Christians from city to city, and harassed Christians to the death. That "I" was a vile, lost sinner who had absolutely no claim on the love of God for him. He was a sinner who had done absolutely nothing to deserve the love of God or done anything to call forth God's love for him. On the contrary, what he deserved was wrath and judgment, eternal suffering and death. Paul has his eye on Jesus Christ in the text, the one who stood in his place and endured the wrath of God he deserved. Rather than deserving to be the object of God's love and favor, Paul deserved damnation. Paul's confession magnifies grace, the amazing grace of God in Jesus Christ. The grace of God that is altogether undeserving. "Whose I, even I, am."

Third, Paul is God's by virtue of the work of God the Holy Spirit within him, the indwelling and saving

work of the third person of the ever blessed Trinity. The Spirit of God had worked repentance and faith in the apostle. The Holy Spirit had turned him from being a persecutor and injurious to being a conscious, willing servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. By the Spirit he had been translated out of the kingdom of darkness and death in which he was enslaved; the Spirit had translated him into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It was the Spirit who had worked in Paul obedience to the call of the gospel and obedience to the call to be an apostle and a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ. "Whose I am as a minister of the gospel." That, too, is what he means.

That must be your consciousness tonight, brother, as it must be the consciousness of every single unworthy sinner called by God through the Spirit to the gospel ministry. That must be in your consciousness as you are installed as the fifth professor of Dogmatics in the history of our Protestant Reformed Seminary. That must be your conviction as God calls you at this critical time in the history of our Protestant Reformed Churches. You must be confident of the Spirit's call of you, and therefore, of God's call of you to this special work. "Whose you are as a minister of the gospel and professor of theology."

Committed to serving

"Whose I am, and *whom I serve*," the apostle adds. Adding that, the apostle gives expression to his commitment to serve the One to whom he belongs. The second part of the text is closely related to the first part. They are not two unrelated things that he says about himself. "Whose I am," on the one hand, "and whom I serve," on the other hand. But the two parts of the text are intimately and necessarily related. "Whose I am and *because I am His*, whom I also serve." That is the relationship between the two parts of the text. You do no injustice to the text to read it that way: "Whose I am, and *therefore* whom I serve."

That he serves God concerns the whole of the apostle's life. Every aspect of his life is service of God. But especially does the apostle have in mind his service in the office of apostle. Above all, he has in mind his work in the ministry of the gospel, on account of which he is presently a prisoner on his way to trial before Caesar in Rome. Now, certainly, this applies to every Christian. Every child of God is a servant of the Lord. The child of God is in every area of his life, in every circumstance of life, in every relationship of life, a servant of the Lord. The Christian life is a life of service to God. This is what ennobles the Christian life. This is what dignifies every earthly calling, no matter how lowly that calling

may be—husband and father, wife and mother, factory worker or homemaker, construction worker or caretaker of the household. Whether work in the office or on the farm, on the construction site or behind the steering wheel of a truck; whether pounding nails or picking up garbage, changing a baby’s diaper or packing groceries, doing schoolwork or cutting the lawn, it does not matter. Whatever the Christian does, he does as service of God. This is the nature of the life of the child of God: service to God. This is the Reformed doctrine of vocation.

Nevertheless, there is special application to the work of the minister of the gospel, to those who are called to serve in the office of pastor and teacher in the church. And what is true of the ministry of the gospel generally, is true specifically of the work and calling of the professor of theology. The work of the professor in the seminary is and must be work done in service to God.

The word for “serve” in the text is the word that refers to worship. Throughout the New Testament Scriptures this word generally refers to the worship of God. It is not the word that refers to the service rendered by a servant or a slave, but it is the special service of God that is worship. You may also read the text that way and do no injustice to it: “Whose I am, and whom I worship.” This is the meaning of the word elsewhere in the Scriptures. It is the word that is used in the devil’s temptation of Jesus in the wilderness, when Satan confronted Jesus in Matthew 4:9 and promised Him all the kingdoms of the world if He would fall down and “worship” him. It is also the word used in Romans 1:25 of the wicked who change the truth of God into a lie and “worship and serve the creature rather than the creator.” It is the word used in Hebrews 12:28, where we read, “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” This is the Reformed doctrine of vocation. Our earthly vocation is worship of God. Worship of God is not limited to Sunday and what goes on in the church building. Every earthly calling in which the child of God may legitimately be engaged is worship of God. This is not to deny or to minimize the corporate, public worship of God in the gathered congregation on the Lord’s Day, but it is to emphasize that our worship of God is more than that and consists really of the whole of our life. This is the Christian life: worship of God, doing everything that we do with a view to Him, for the praise and for the glory of His name.

Is this your view of your earthly calling, whatever it may be? Is this the view that we ministers have of the

office of the ministry of the gospel? Do we preachers view our work in the church this way? Do we look at our work as worship of God? Does this live in our minds as we go about the labors of the ministry, day in and day out, week after week? All the aspects of our work—the handling of the Word of God, the making of sermons, the teaching of catechism, the visiting of the sick, the counsel of God’s people in their distresses—do we view our work as part of our worship of God? Will this be on your mind, brother Huizinga, in all of the labors to which you are called in preparation to taking up the actual work of teaching in the classroom? Will this be what lives in your mind as you make those Hebrew grammar lessons, as you work to develop your lectures for Dogmatics, your development of your Old Testament exegesis courses? Will it be on your part worship—worship of God? “Whose I am, and whom I worship.”

It belongs to this service of God that it is the service of the one only true God. This is the One whose we are and whom we serve. The only God, the only Lord God; there are no other gods besides Him. Significantly, that is underscored in the text. The text is literally, “for there stood by me this night the angel of *the* God whose I am, and whom I serve.” He is *the* God, the only Lord God, besides whom there is none. This is the truth that you are called to defend and to teach in the classroom of the seminary, and in your writing and preaching. This is the truth that is lost even in Reformed and Presbyterian churches today. It is said by some that the God of Christianity is one God, and that there are other ways to heaven besides the Christian religion and faith in Jesus Christ. That false teaching is contradicted by this text. He is *the* God. The gods of the heathen are idols vain. Included are the gods of the false religions, the god of Roman Catholicism, the god of apostate Christianity, the god of free will, the god of Arminianism—false gods, every one. *The* God is the God of Holy Scripture, the God and Father of Jesus Christ. There is no salvation in any other god than this God. This is the God proclaimed by the Reformed faith. Upon Him alone the Reformed preacher of the gospel calls all men everywhere to believe.

Secondly, that He is the one to whom you belong and whom you serve carries with it an implied warning. The Reformed minister of the gospel does not and may not serve mammon. That we must never forget, all of us who are preachers of the gospel, no matter how many years God may give us in the ministry. That you must never forget no matter how many years of labor He may give you in our seminary. We must never forget from a practical point of view, whose we are, and whom alone

we serve. And that too is the implication of the text. Again, read the text that way and you do no injustice to it: “Whose I am, and whom *alone* I serve.”

You have been called by the church, brother, but you do not ultimately serve the church or the PRC. You have been appointed by the synod, but it is not the synod whom you ultimately serve. You and the rest of the faculty are under the supervision of the Theological School Committee, but it is not ultimately to those men that we render service. Our ultimate service, in the end, the One alone whom we serve, is the Lord God: “Whose I am, and whom I serve.”

I warn you tonight, as I warn myself, against the service of men. That is a real temptation. We must recognize it. I am convinced that it is an especially real temptation faced by professors in the seminary, that we are tempted to be men-pleasers.

There will always be those ready to flatter you—not encourage you; there is plenty of room for that—but flatter you. These folks will have all kinds of complimentary things to say about you, about your preaching, about your writing, and about your teaching. They will put their arm around you and stroke your ego and, usually, they will attempt to win you over to their viewpoint or gain

your support for their position. Beware of them! Beware of the temptation to serve men! Do not ever forget the words of this text when you are confronted by that temptation: “Whose I am, and whom I serve.”

And that brings me to the third implication of the apostle’s word here concerning his worship and service of God: The One to whom we belong and whom we serve is the One before whom we will give account one day. On that day, He will call us to give a reckoning. Woe to that man, woe to that minister, woe to that seminary professor who did not live out of the consciousness that he was the Lord’s! Woe to that man who did not actively, willingly, and consciously serve the Lord in his work in the office! Woe to that man who sought himself! Woe to that man who rather than to be used of God for the sheep, instead used the sheep for his own advantage! Woe to him! It will not go well with him, but ill—eternally ill. If we live out of the consciousness of whose we are and whom we serve, we are going to live also out of the consciousness of the coming judgment day.

Confident of blessing

Just in this way of serving the One to whom he belonged the apostle was confident of God’s blessing. That blessing of God did not mean that the apostle would not have to endure hardship and suffering, sacrifice and loss. I remind you of the apostle’s circumstances at the time that he spoke these words. He was in a life-threatening storm—only one among the many sufferings that he endured in his lifetime for the gospel’s sake. And he is on his way to Rome in order to stand trial before the civil magistrate for the faith of the gospel that he preached. He will be released for a little while, but he will be recaptured and retried and eventually will die a martyr’s death for the gospel’s sake.

That is the experience of every faithful preacher of the gospel, every true minister of Jesus Christ. There

are always sufferings and sacrifices. There is always persecution and death. And as the end approaches—and we are living in the last days, the suffering will become more intense and the sacrifices greater.

But that does not take away from the blessing of which the apostle was confident. That blessing is indicated in Paul’s words: “Whose I am.” Implied is, “Whose I am *forever*; whose I am now

and whose I will always be.” He is confident, then, that he belongs to God for time and for eternity, for life and for the life hereafter.

That blessing also comes out in the very next verse, verse 24. There the angel of God tells Paul not to fear: “Fear not!” Fear not, brother Huizinga. Fear not! Fear not the sufferings and sorrows, the persecutions and the sacrifices. Fear not the death that you may have to die. “Fear not,” says the Lord, “because you are mine. You are mine and you serve me.” That was the word of God dispelling every fear in Paul’s life at this time: fear of men, fear of the storm, fear of an uncertain future, fear of suffering, and fear of death. That is the blessing of God enjoyed by every faithful servant of Christ. The blessing of God enjoyed not because of, but always in the way of obedience. “Whose I am, and whom I serve.” Amen.

The One to whom we belong and whom we serve is the One before whom we will give account one day. On that day, He will call us to give a reckoning. Woe to that man, woe to that minister, woe to that seminary professor who did not live out of the consciousness that he was the Lord’s! Woe to that man who did not actively, willingly, and consciously serve the Lord in his work in the office!



Pertaining to the churches in common— PR Theological Seminary

Prof. Barrett Gritters, professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

News from the seminary

Dear friends of the Seminary,

The 2019 school year has begun well. Pray that we may finish well too, since the Lord calls us always to “endure to the end.” The labors are a joy as we do them in Christ’s name and for His church. But the devil always assaults, too, so please keep the seminary in your personal, family, and congregational prayers.

This school year is different from others in several ways.

New professors

First, Rev. Brian Huizinga is now Professor Huizinga. On September 4, at a full sanctuary of Grandville (MI) PRC where he and his family will be members, Rev. Huizinga was installed as Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies. Prof. R. Cammenga, whose position Prof. Huizinga is taking, preached the sermon from Acts 27:23, Paul’s confession and expression of trust in God when his ship was sinking, “Whose I Am and Whom I Serve.” The sermon is also found in this issue. Prof. Huizinga will spend two years preparing to teach. He takes courses at Calvin Theological



Seminary and Puritan Reformed Seminary, and intends to obtain his degree from Calvin. Welcome, Professor Huizinga, the seminary’s fifth professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament and the seminary’s eleventh professor since the beginning of this institution in 1925.

Professor Doug Kuiper (taking over the church history department from Prof. R. Dykstra) finished his preparatory studies in April when he defended his Master’s thesis (ThM.) on the legacy of Rev. George Ophoff for the PRCA. The thesis is published, available for purchase through the seminary, and a very interesting and

valuable read. Prof. Kuiper is teaching three courses this semester: Greek Grammar (in preparation for teaching Greek reading), Hermeneutics (the principles of interpreting Scripture), and a new course he created for the seminary, Research Methodology.

“What are Profs Cammenga and Dykstra doing?”

That is a common question we get. “Now that the new professors are in place, what are Professors Cammenga and Dykstra doing?” The short answer: They are still teaching full time. The explanation is that, over 30 years ago, the churches adopted a wise transition plan for professor replacement. When a professor turns 65, the churches begin the process of obtaining his replacement. The key word is *begin* because the process takes five years. First, synod calls a new man to replace the professor who turned 65. If he accepts synod’s appointment, he begins to prepare for the specific areas he will teach, taking classes at area seminaries in order to obtain a degree that is higher than the one our seminary grants to its graduates. This study takes two years, during which time the newly elected professor does not teach at all. The man he replaces continues his regular, full-time labors during those two years. In the third year, the new man begins teaching some of the courses, the older man retaining most of them. At the end of the five years (if God so wills to give health) the older man is declared emeritus (ceases his full-time labors, but retains the office of minister) and the new professor teaches all the courses.

Prof. Dykstra and his replacement, Prof. Kuiper, are beginning the third year of the five-year transition. Prof. Cammenga and his replacement, Prof. Huizinga, are beginning the first of the five-year transition. The replacement of the undersigned, God willing, will be called in two years, the year in which he turns 66.

The plan is wise, enabling the new man to prepare well, and continuing to use the gifts of the older man in the process. Professors Cammenga and Dykstra are as busy as they ever have been. We are thankful for that.

The student body

Two of our six full-time students are from our sister church, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) in Singapore—Josiah Tan and Marcus Wee. Both Mr. Tan (in his fourth year) and Mr. Marcus (in his second) are married and have two children. The class of first-year students includes four men. Doner Bartolon, originally from Mexico and then Spokane, now a member of our First PRC in Grand Rapids, is married and has two children. Jeremy Helms and his wife are members of our Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Matt Koerner is a member of our Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids. Isaac Peters is from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPCA) in Tasmania, Australia. The EPCA and the PRCA have corresponding relations. Since 1994 we have had the



privilege of training four of the EPC's ministers. We are thankful to have Mr. Peters among us. He and his wife and four children attend Grace PRC in Standale, MI.

The churches need ministers!

The unique nature of the present student body is that four are from foreign countries and only two have expressed intentions of becoming ministers in the PRCA. Please include in your prayers that the Lord provide students who aspire to the ministry—both for our sister churches and our own denomination.

In the seminary entrance is a framed sign with a quote from John Calvin when the French Reformed Churches pleaded with him for ministers. In a figure of speech, Calvin responded, "Send us wood, and we will send you arrows." When the convocation speech last year mentioned that, the next day a close friend and supporter of the seminary brought to the speaker's home a slab of rough-cut wood. Of course, from it we would make 'arrows' (ministers) for the churches. An idea was born that day, and the fruit of it is hanging in the seminary entrance. See the picture of the sign on this page.

People of God, the churches need 'arrows.' Please send us wood.



Our remodeled building...and an open house?

Not to be overlooked in this news article is this past year's building addition and this summer's library remodel. Synod 2018 approved a significant addition of an archives storage room. The old archives room downstairs was not nearly large enough for our holdings and had some risk of catastrophic loss. The new room (about 25x60 feet) has more than double the capacity of the old and is much more easily accessible now, just off the library. Included in this addition are two spacious offices that can be used temporarily by the older professors who are still active while the newly appointed professors are in the process of replacing them. Eventually, the offices can be used for library and for archive research. While the addition was being completed, the entire library was remodeled. Originally built in 1995, the library was due for an update. The



picture here does not do justice to the fine work done to make the library not only beautiful, but more functional for the students and faculty.

We hear that the Theological School Committee may be planning an open house. If that happens, we hope to see many of you here!

For the faculty,
Prof. B. Gritters, Rector



All around us

Rev. Audred Spriensma, home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches

CRC Synod 2019 and the second Sunday service

In this article, we will look for a while at those closely around us, our mother church, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) and their synodical meeting this past June. The July/August issue of the *Banner* reported decisions taken at this year's synod. I write this not at all to look down our nose at those churches, but rather in a great lament for the people in their churches, and as a warning to ourselves. When I sought to become a pastor in the PRC, a person said to me, "those churches are only 25 years behind us in their practice."

In this article, what I want to address is found under the rubric, "Denominational Life." The headline reads, "Synod Proposes Dropping the Second Service Requirement." We read,

Synod 2019 has proposed dropping two long-standing and fiercely defended worship requirements from the Church Order. One is the requirement that churches host two distinct worship services on Sunday; the second is that churches on an annual basis preach through the Heidelberg Catechism. The two are related.¹

This came by way of an overture from Classis Atlantic Northeast. The feeling was that the Church Order ought to reflect and be in harmony with the current practice of the vast majority of the congregations of the denomination. Is this the case? Is current practice normative or is the Church Order normative? Should not and must not the practice in the churches then be in harmony with the Church Order?

Clay Libolt in his article in the *Banner* wrote,

The question before Synod turned on whether to recognize what churches and members have already done—leave behind the old practice of holding a second service—or to continue to insist on requiring a second service and the preaching of the catechism because the requirement lies at the heart of the Reformed faith.²

The problem is that already in 60-75 percent of the CRC

churches, there is only one worship service. As delegates at the CRC Synod stated, "This train has left the station."

Why were there two worship services on Sunday? The second service was not intended to be a repetition of the first service, but totally different, typically focused on the Catechism. Classis Atlantic Northeast wrote in their overture that "Christian Reformed congregations have held to a deeply embedded practice of assembling for worship twice each Lord's Day, reflecting the biblical practice of morning and evening sacrifice (Num. 28:4; Psalm 92:1) and patterns developed in church history."

My memory of church history is indeed that Reformed churches have held two worship services on Sunday, tied to the Synod of Dordt 400 years ago. In that Synod, the Church Order that was adopted required the instruction in the Heidelberg Catechism each Lord's Day. As we read in our Church Order, Article 68, "The ministers shall on Sunday explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine comprehended in the Heidelberg Catechism, so that as much as possible the explanation shall be annually completed, according to the division of the Catechism itself for that purpose."

The CRC Synod voted for the proposed deletion of their Church Order Article 51, which originally read, "The congregation shall assemble at least twice for worship on the Lord's Day to hear God's Word, to receive the sacraments, to engage in praise and prayer, and to present gifts of gratitude." In 1995, the CRC Synod decided to enter the word "ordinarily" into their Church Order. Article 51 (a) now reads, "The congregation shall assemble *ordinarily* twice for worship on the Lord's Day..." So already in 1995, their Synod recognized that many of their churches, especially mission churches, were not meeting twice on Sunday for divine worship. Synod 2019 voted to propose to Synod 2020 that C.O. Article 51 (a) be dropped completely. Changes to the Church Order require two synods before they can be adopted.

Classis Atlantic Northeast also proposed to the CRC synod the elimination of C.O. Article 54 (b), which requires the preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism. Their ground given for eliminating this article was, "Though

¹ <http://www.thebanner.org/news/2019/06/synod-proposes-dropping-the-second-service-requirement>.

² thebanner.org/news/2019/06.

it is important for our preaching to reflect the instruction of the Reformed confessions, the current Church Order Article 54 (a) already requires that preaching be guided by the creeds and confessions and a specific obligation for catechetical preaching (Art. 54(b)) is an unrealistic expectation when a single Sunday worship service is already our denominational norm.”

There are at least two things that I want to point out in that ground. The first is the claim that our preaching must only be *guided* by the creeds and confessions. Reformed churches have in the past insisted on *preaching* the Heidelberg Catechism! The second item that I come back to is this “denominational norm.” Do current practices and sin in the congregations become a norm that forces the church to change its Church Order?

A CRC pastor, Phil Reinders, wrote in a blog dated May 17, 2012,

At the church I served in Calgary, I conducted an informal survey at a meeting of about 40 of our CRC leaders (elders, deacons, ministry leaders). I asked everyone there (remember, these were the core of our church, the highly committed) to review the past four weeks. I asked, how many attended our church’s Sunday worship service for the past 4 weeks? How many 3 weeks? For 2 of 4? And how many just 1? The results surprised everyone in the room. Of these core

leaders, the clear and dominant majority (over 60%) had attended our church’s worship services only two of the past four weeks.

My question is: Shall this new church normal be used to rewrite the Church Order again?

How sad in this 400th-year anniversary of the Synod of Dordt that the CRC is so seriously departing from the importance of divine worship as well as from Catechism preaching that instructs and comforts God’s people. Although the PRC does not have a specific C.O. article requiring at least two worship services on Sunday, it is assumed in C.O. Article 68 that calls for Catechism preaching. It is also the first question asked by the church visitors each year of each of our church councils: “1. Is the Word administered at least twice on the Lord’s Day? 2. Is the Heidelberg Catechism regularly explained in the services for divine worship, so that no doctrine is left untreated?”

I conclude with these questions: Do we today need more or less worship services for the working and strengthening of our faith? Do we as Reformed people need to be instructed and comforted in our faith? Are we thankful for our Reformed heritage, the requirement of the Synod of Dordt that congregations meet twice on Sunday for divine worship and instruction by what one of my previous pastors called affectionately, “the old Heidelberg”?



Believing and confessing

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington

Faithfulness to marriage

Lord’s Day 41

Question 108. What doth the seventh commandment teach us?

Answer. That all uncleanness is accursed of God; and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock or in single life.

Question 109. Doth God forbid in this commandment, only adultery and such like gross sins?

Answer. Since both our body and soul are temples of the Holy Ghost, He commands us to preserve them pure and holy; therefore He forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto.

In a world that has perverted and idolized sex, we need to have a proper attitude toward sex. God has made each of us a sexual being, either male or female, and each of us will either use or abuse the gift of sex.

Only the Scriptures can give us a proper perspective on human sexuality. God created us with this gift, and God knows our sinful inclinations with regard to sex. The Scriptures speak plainly and purely about sex, pow-

erfully warning us against the dangers of its abuse, as well as extolling its blessedness when used as God intends.

Because there is not a word in Scripture that can be harmful to the believer, and because Scripture speaks openly about sex, we must also discuss this subject openly and biblically with our children. If we do not do this, then they will inevitably learn the wrong lessons about sex from peers and culture.

At the same time, we must be ready, before this commandment, to put off the deeds of the flesh, and to be renewed in the inward man according to God's Word with regard to sex.

Biblical principles

Two basic biblical principles are the foundation on which this commandment stands. One is a creation principle, the other is a salvation principle.

The *creation principle* is that in the beginning God created the man and the woman, Adam and Eve, to be together physically. He created them male and female, different from one another, to complement one another, and each to complete the other. In Genesis 2:18 God says, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" ("meet" means "suited to" or "fit for"). Then, in order that Adam might understand his need for a womanly companion, God caused all the animals to pass before him in pairs, and after Adam had named them we read, "but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him." It was then that God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam and formed Eve from one of his ribs, to which Adam responded, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh." And God's Word to them was that "a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:18-25). These words teach us that marriage is a lifelong institution (see Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:8-9) between one man and one woman (God made them male and female), and that sex is a part of God's good creation to be used exclusively within that union ("one flesh" and "the natural use" Rom. 1:27).

The *salvation principle* behind this commandment is that in a Christian marriage the relationship of husband and wife is a picture of the relation between Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:32). Frequently, the Bible speaks of God's relationship to the church in terms of a marriage. The Fall brought sin into marriage, and apart from grace, marriage is a battleground and a war zone in which each lives for himself or herself. Already, immediately after the Fall, Adam refused to call his wife by her beautiful name, Eve, and he put the blame on

her for his own sin: "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Gen. 3:12). But in grace and by salvation Jesus restores joy and unity to the marriage of two believers. Jesus demonstrates this, very strikingly, by His presence and miracles, at the very beginning of His ministry, at a wedding in Cana. His salvation work is covenantal and begins with the restoration of the covenant of marriage. In uniting a believer to Himself in the work of regeneration, and by the indwelling of His Spirit, Christ causes men and women in marriage to see each other differently (as loved by Him and as "joint-heirs of the grace of life"), and to live in marriage with the same selfless and sacrificial love that He has towards His bride, the church. Out of the experience of the love of Christ, the believer lives selflessly and faithfully in marriage.

A call to action

This commandment demands that we "live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock, or in single life" and that we "preserve (our bodies) pure and holy."

There are demands that this commandment places on every believer. There are ways in which everyone of us is guilty of breaking this commandment.

This must be emphasized because there is, perhaps, no other commandment where we so quickly think of the sins of others and are blind to our own failings.

This is Jesus' point in Matthew 5:28; "I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."

There are so many things that we can get right in understanding and applying this commandment, and yet be guilty ourselves, daily, of violating it. We can have a biblical teaching on the permanence of marriage, and yet not be loving the spouse God has given us as we should. Does God demand only "permanence?" Does He not demand faithfulness and love? We can have a very strict position on "same-sex" marriage, and yet be living unfaithfully or sinfully in a heterosexual relationship. Isn't God's demand more than "a man and a woman?" We can be very outspoken against the evils of our sex-saturated culture in its entertainment, advertising, and freedom of sexual expression, but at the same time indulge our lust privately on the Internet or with our wandering eye. Does God only demand the condemnation of public expressions of this sin, or does He not also demand that we mortify this deed of the flesh, lust? We can become very discontented with the behavior of a spouse who is difficult to live with and even become envious of the joy that others seem to have in their marriages, but what am I doing to promote peace and to live before God in my marriage? Doesn't God

demand that we “lead a quiet and peaceable life” in a difficult marriage relationship?

The application of the commandment must begin with myself. This commandment does not only forbid adultery and similar “great” sins (in others), but teaches that God forbids and hates “all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desires, and whatever can entice men thereto” (in me). Clean humor and entertainment, modesty in attire, purity of heart and mind, sacrificial living in marriage, avoiding situations and places, and much more fall under the scope of obedience to this commandment.

Because this sin is so powerful, the Scripture calls us not merely to fight but to “flee fornication” (I Cor. 6:18). Because it is so destructive, not only to families, children, and society but also to our own hearts, it is personified as an enticing woman that leads “strong men” to “hell” (Prov. 7). Because we cannot be “neutral” with regard to this commandment, we must fight for the purity of our minds and the holiness of our marriages (Matt. 5:29; 6:22). Because by nature we are so discontented, we must take action against the inroads of sinful thinking (James 4:7-8), we must delight ourselves in the Lord (Ps. 37:4-5), and we must “drink waters out of [our] own cistern” (Prov. 5:17-19). Because we love to blame-shift, we must take responsibility for our own temptation and lust (James 1:14-15), and we must wait patiently (in our youth) for God to answer our prayers (Lam. 3:25-27).

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). Whenever we are tempted sexually, Satan promises us something; he tells us this will make us happy. Sex, pornography, a second glance, spending some time with someone who “understands me better than my spouse”—all these, and many other related lures, are presented as ways to happiness. But Jesus says, “The blessed, the happy, are those who are pure in heart.” God’s Word says that true blessedness is to “see God.” In the trenches of this fight against temptation, the real question and the real struggle is one of faith; do you and I believe these words of God? Do we believe that His “lovingkindness is better than life?” (Ps. 63:3). If we spent less time thinking about our sin, and more time meditating on the love God and believing the promises of God’s Word, we would not only be tempted less, but we would sin less in this area.

Action, protection, and repentance. These have been laid down as the steps to fighting and overcoming sexual sin. Action is intentional living. Protection is preventative living. Repentance is transformed living. We cannot “sit around” and expect victory over this sin.

Sex itself is a gift. It is a good gift from God that He

gives to us in His love. It has an appropriate place and purpose in the Christian’s life. A part of its purpose is procreation in obedience to God’s command to the married to bring forth children. Another aspect of its purpose, in a sinful world, is that it be used in marriage as a preventative against sexual temptation (I Cor. 7:9). One further, and obvious, reason that God has given it, is for pleasure and intimacy between a married man and woman. This commandment is a part of the second table of the law which demands that you “love your neighbor as yourself.” In the use of this gift in marriage, all selfishness must be set aside and this gift used for the pleasure of the other and to promote marital unity.

Spirit-filled believers

The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is both the preventative against and the power to fight sexual sin.

The mantra of the unbelieving world, “My body, my choice,” used as the justification for every sort of sin including the murder of the unborn, is antithetical to the principle by which the believer lives. The believer says, “I am not my own; I have been bought with a price; I will glorify God with my body and with my soul, both of which belong to God. I am His in life and in death.”

And so the Scriptures warn us against sexual impurity by telling us that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. A temple is a dwelling place or a house. God does not purchase these houses and then lease them out to tenants, but He Himself comes and lives within us. When we sin sexually, we defile the temple of God. We bring idols into the temple of God. We sin not only against our own bodies, but we sin against the owner and resident, God Himself. This is why the Bible says that in sexual sin we “take the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot” and that in doing this we become “one body” with an harlot (I Cor. 6:15-20). Shall we do this with Christ? When we do this, we “quench” and “resist” the Spirit who is in us, and instead feed the beast of sin that is still alive in us.

By God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we should put to death “fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5). It is our union to Christ that is the source of power to resist and overcome these temptations. “Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (I John 4:4).

Are you engaged in this battle?

Questions for discussion

1. What does the Bible teach about marriage in Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:3-9?
2. What does the Bible teach about marriage in Ephesians 5:22-33 and how does this apply to you as either a male or female? How is this different to what our unbelieving culture has accepted?
3. God has created us “male and female,” that is, we are sexual beings. What is the appropriate biblical place for the expression of our sexuality? What is God’s purpose for sex?
4. Why are the words of Jesus in Matthew 5:28 so important as we think about the application of this commandment?
5. Talk about sexual temptation:
 - a. What unique methods does Satan use in our day to tempt us sexually? How are these represented in Proverbs 5 and 7?
 - b. Are the temptations to break this commandment different for men than for women? What unique temptations do men face? What unique temptations do women face?
 - c. What are the sexual temptations that a single person faces? How are these different from the those that a married person faces?
 - d. Are some people more susceptible to sexual sin than others? Why? Does this in any way excuse or lessen their guilt?
 - e. What Bible passages are especially helpful to you in fighting against sexual temptation?
6. If you are not allured by sexual temptation itself, in what other ways might you be sinning against this commandment?
7. What are some preventative restrictions that you could use while dating to help avoid sexual temptation and sin? How should parents (fathers in particular) help their children with this?
8. What does the Bible say about homosexuality? Is homosexual sin different than other sex outside marriage? How would you love, help, and restore someone who has practiced this lifestyle?
9. What does I Corinthians 7:3-9, together with Proverbs 5:15-21, teach about sex within the bond of marriage?
10. What is the positive side of this commandment? List some things required (positive things) of you in this commandment.



Ministering to the saints

Prof. Douglas Kuiper, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

The elders' threefold work (1)

Confessional basis

Having treated the nature and history of the office of elder, the qualifications for the office, and the call to and ordination into the office, we come now to the meat of the matter—the work of the office of elder.

The work of the office of elder is manifold. They are mistaken who consider the work of the office to be only that of oversight and rule, which work is performed primarily by sitting in the elders' bench during the worship services and by attending consistory meetings. The work is broader than that.

It is broader as regards what the work involves. I judge that the work of the office of elder has three main aspects to it: ruling or overseeing, being a pastor or shepherd, and teaching. And each of these aspects is complex. To take only the first aspect of their work as an instance, the elders as a body have oversight over the congregation as a whole, over each individual member particularly, over the minister in his life and labors, over the individual elders in their labors, and over the deacons in their labors.

In addition, the work of the elder is broader as re-

gards the time involved in performing it. Every moment of his life, the elder is an elder. This means that, while in his waking hours he is busy with his secular employment and often with the responsibilities of being a husband and father, he is also an elder at all times. This is not to suggest that his work as elder is more important than and takes precedence over his calling as husband and father. However, just as he is a husband and father at all times, so he is an elder at all times. The diligent elder has a continual care for the members of the congregation in their needs. Attending consistory and committee meetings are not the whole of his work; they serve and facilitate his real work.

I intend to develop the subject of the work of the elders by using the threefold division that I have proposed—the elder as overseer, as pastor/shepherd, and as teacher. Before doing so, I will demonstrate from the Reformed confessions (in this article) and from Scripture (in the next article) that this threefold division is imbedded in the teachings of Scripture and in our Reformed confessions.

The Church Order¹

Several articles of the Church Order speak explicitly to the work of the elder. In Article 16, which speaks of the duties of the minister, we read that he is, “with the elders, to exercise church discipline and to see to it that everything is done decently and in good order.” Articles 74 and following elaborate on the work of the consistory in the matter of discipline. The following articles address elders’ work specifically:

Article 23: The office of the elders, in addition to what was said in Article 16 to be their duty in common with the minister of the Word, is to take heed that the ministers, together with their fellow-elders and the deacons, faithfully discharge their office, and both before and after the Lord’s Supper, as time and circumstances may demand, for the edification of the churches, to visit the families of the congregation, in order particularly to comfort and instruct the members, and also to exhort others in respect to the Christian religion.

Article 55: To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation or warning, and of admonition, as well in

the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.

Article 64: The administration of the Lord’s Supper shall take place only there where there is supervision of elders, according to the ecclesiastical order, and in a public gathering of the congregation.

Other articles speak implicitly to the work of the elders, but these are explicit, and they serve our purpose. They demonstrate that the work of the elders includes supervision: supervision of the souls of the congregation so that, when necessary, formal discipline is carried out (Art. 16); supervision of the offices (Art. 23); and supervision of worship (Art. 64). Other articles imply that the elders are supervising the congregation, so that all is done well; in fact, all the principles and regulations of the Church Order assume, for their implementation, that the elders are supervising the congregation’s office-bearers, members, and worship.

The articles also mention the pastoral aspect of the office of elder. To “see that everything is done decently and in good order” (Art. 16), to do the work of family visitation (Art. 23, 55), specifically to “comfort” (Art. 23), and properly to oversee the souls of the congregation presupposes that the elders are pastorally visiting, encouraging, and admonishing the members.

That the elders must teach follows from their calling to rule and pastor the flock. Teaching is the means by which the elders carry out their work. The Church Order explicitly mentions this calling in Articles 23 and 55.

Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons

The Form, having summarized the history and nature of the office of elder, sets forth three aspects to the work of the office.

Therefore, in the first place, the office of elders is together with the ministers of the Word, to take the oversight of the church, which is committed to them, and diligently to look, whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation; to admonish those who behave themselves disorderly, and to prevent, as much as possible, the sacraments from being profaned: also to act (according to the Christian discipline) against the impenitent, and to receive the penitent again into the bosom of the church, as does not only appear from the above mentioned saying of Christ, but also from many other places of Holy Writ, as 1 Corinthians 5, and 2 Corinthians 2, that these things are not alone entrusted to one or two persons, but to many who are ordained thereto.

Secondly. Since the apostle enjoins, that all things shall be done decently and in order, amongst Christians, and that no other persons ought to serve in the church of

¹ All quotations in this section are taken from “Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches” as found in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 378-404. Although the PRC has made some modifications to the Church Order, this is essentially the same Church Order as adopted by the Synod of Dordt, 1618-1619.

Christ, but those who are lawfully called according to the Christian ordinance, therefore it is also the duty of the elders to pay regard to it, and in all occurrences, which relate to the welfare and good order of the church, to be assistant with their good counsel and advice, to the ministers of the Word, yea, also to serve all Christians with advise and consolation.

Thirdly. It is also the duty particularly to have regard unto the doctrine and conversation of the ministers of the Word, to the end that all things may be directed to the edification of the church; and that no strange doctrine be taught, according to that which we read, Acts 20, where the apostle exhorts to watch diligently against the wolves, which might come into the sheepfold of Christ; for the performance of which, the elders are in duty bound diligently to search the Word of God, and continually be meditating on the mysteries of faith.²

The work of oversight is prominent here: oversight of the church, of the lives of the members, and of the office of minister. At the same time, as quoted above, the elders are “to admonish those who behave themselves disorderly” and “to be assistant with their good counsel and advice, to the ministers of the Word, yea, also to serve all Christians with advice and consolation.” This includes being a shepherd and a teacher.

The Belgic Confession

Article 30 of the Belgic Confession is entitled “The Government of and Offices in the Church.” It reads:

We believe that this true Church must be governed by the spiritual policy which our Lord has taught us in his Word—namely, that there must be Ministers or Pastors to preach the Word of God, and to administer the Sacraments; also elders and deacons, who, together with the pastors, form the council of the church; that by these means the true religion may be preserved, and the true doctrine everywhere propagated, likewise transgressors punished and restrained by spiritual means; also that the poor and distressed may be relieved and comforted, according to their necessities. By these means everything will be carried on in the church with

good order and decency, when faithful men are chosen, according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul to Timothy.³

The article certainly does not give a broad list of the duties of the office of elder; it does not even explicitly distinguish the duties of the office of elder from that of deacon. But implied in the elders being part of a “council of the church,” and in the punishing and restraining of transgressors, is the idea of oversight; and the preserving of true religion, which falls in part to the elders, involves instruction.

Significance

These and other references to the office of elder in our Church Order, liturgical forms, and confessions are significant for several reasons.

First, they underscore that Reformed churches have a definitely formed view of what the work of the office of elder entails. The fundamental work of the office is not for elders to discover after they get into office. Before entering office, they know what that work is.

Second, they indicate that the work of the office is not simple, but complex—by which I mean, as I stated at the beginning of the article, not merely a matter of sitting in the elders’ row and of making decisions at consistory meetings, but a varied work that never ends. These references set the parameters for the work of the office. They distinguish the work of the office of elder from that of pastor and deacon. Within the parameters set, the elders have plenty of work to do.

Third, this definitely formed view of the work of the office of elder is based on the teachings of Scripture. Our confessions summarize what we know from Scripture to be God’s will regarding the work of elders. Next time, then, we will see that the Scriptures also support the idea that the work of the elders is manifold, but can be categorized into three aspects: oversight, pastoral, and teaching.

...the elders are “to admonish those who behave themselves disorderly” and “to be assistant with their good counsel and advice, to the ministers of the Word, yea, also to serve all Christians with advice and consolation.” This includes being a shepherd and a teacher.

2 “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons,” *The Confessions and the Church Order*, 291.

3 “Belgic Confession” in Philip Schaff, ed., *The Creeds of Christendom With a History and Critical Notes*, 6th ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1931; repr. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1990), 3:421-422.



When thou sittest in thine house

Rev. Arie denHartog, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Father's influence in the covenant home (2)

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2019, p. 467.

In our last article we considered the admonition of Ephesians 6:4, “And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” A father through his own sin and wickedness can do great damage to his children. On the other hand, a God-fearing father who truly loves his children and loves the God of His covenant children is in a position to do great good for his children by the grace of God. As Noah of old was, a faithful father can be the instrument of God for the saving of his house. The book of Proverbs speaks of the joy that a father has in a wise son. The covenant home has great joy when children grow up confessing the name of the God and living for His glory by walking in His truth. This great joy is usually the reward of the diligent and faithful labors of a God-fearing father (together of course with godly mothers).

There are several ways fathers show godly concern for their covenant children. Fathers do this by showing genuine personal interest in the children and giving them their loving attention. These children are dear and precious to him above almost all good on this earth. Fathers show their interest by giving of their time and energy to guide them, to help them in their troubles, and to instruct and encourage them in their ways. This takes personal sacrifices on the part of the fathers. Fathers must know that it is only for a short time that these children are with them in the covenant home. Fathers show their interest by having meaningful conversation with their children and listening to what they have to say.

Every father should give a measure of formal instruction to his children. He not only reads the Bible regularly in family devotions, but he takes the time to explain the true meaning of the Scriptures in a way that his children can understand. He takes the time to make practical application of the Word of God to the lives of his children. In their youthfulness they are not always able to do this for themselves. The Reformed faith has a doctrinal basis. This doctrine is derived from the infal-

lible Scriptures. This doctrine is the important foundation for the whole of true Christianity. This foundation must be laid for the children in the days of their youth. This doctrine is summarized by the confessions of the church. The children must also be taught this. Godly fathers send their children to catechism classes realizing the need of the church's help and her official ministry in this spiritual training. Fathers must be sure that the children are well prepared for the catechism classes. They must inquire about the behavior of their children, teaching them respect for the authority of the church.

Fathers must teach with conviction and sincerity the doctrine that they themselves have learned through their own personal and careful study of the Word of God. Good fathers are men who regularly read solid Reformed doctrinal books to equip themselves together with the church to defend and maintain God's truth. They are up to date on current discussion on and popular false teachings of the time. These can teach their children and bring them to maturity so that they take their own place in the church. Fathers must warn their children regarding the many false teachers that are in the world, and warn children so that they are not deceived, tossed to and fro by the winds of doctrine of the time. In this way, when these children grow up, they do not easily leave the church in which they were raised from their youth in the providence of God. They do not imagine that in this modern-day world all churches are very closely in agreement in what they teach and practice.

Most of the instruction of fathers is conveyed to the children through their daily conversation in the home when the children are listening and when everyone is facing the challenges of life in many areas. Fathers will reveal their convictions and perspectives on the many issues of life by the way they behave in their own daily occupations and businesses and by reading what is the greatest interest in their own lives. Children will learn from this how important honesty, righteousness, and sincerity really is. Watching and listening to their

fathers, children will develop their own opinions, convictions, and perspectives on life. Of greatest importance, of course, is that the confession of the truth we make before our children in our homes is supported by our own daily Christian living. Children are able to detect hypocrisy in the lives of their fathers perhaps better than anyone else. There are few things more destructive to nurturing the true godliness of our children than hypocrisy on the part of fathers.

The personal prayer life of fathers in the covenant home is of great importance for the nurturing of the children. What are we praying for? Do we pray above all for subjects like the glory of the name of God, the coming of the kingdom of God, and submission to His will in all of life? These are the great subjects that our Lord taught us always to make prominent in prayer. A superficial Christianity will be instilled in the minds and hearts of the children if fathers' prayers never rise above earthly and carnal concerns. The regularity, sincerity, and earnestness of fathers' prayers will teach the children by example the need for and reality of dependence of God. Such prayers will teach children the truth of God's sovereignty in practical spiritual perspective. Clichés and stock phrases will teach children that prayer is merely cold, religious formalism.

Fathers' attitudes regarding church and the preaching of the gospel by her is so important. Sinful criticism of the church, potshots at her ministers, and mockery of the truth she preaches and defends will breed in children the same sinful, critical, and mocking spirit. Positively, support and thankfulness for the church and the truth she maintains and preaches will by God's grace have a godly effect on the spiritual attitude of the children. Respect for the church's offices and the sanctity of her worship services must be learned by children from their fathers. Fathers will teach their children by their own example the importance of zealous support for and active involvement in the life and ministry of the church.

God has given especially to fathers the responsibility of exercising consistent, firm, and loving discipline over their children. Contrary to the foolish imagination of men, permissiveness will usually have a negative effect on the behavior of children, continuing also in their later life. Children must learn the seriousness of sin in their lives and the urgency of daily repentance. Sin not repented of will cause hardness of heart and complicated involvement with many sinful behavior patterns. But this discipline must be administered in love. Few things nurture deep-seated bitterness and anger in children more than a cruel and harsh discipline that reveals the pride and grievous lack of self-control on the part of fathers. Discipline must have the purpose of correction

unto godliness. The loving discipline of fathers must reveal God the Father's love for His children. This love sometimes requires chastening to correct and sanctify the children and to instruct them in righteousness. Such loving discipline will have the fruit of peace and order in the home and in the lives of the children. Discipline by fathers must be consistent and measured. It must teach the children the difference between right and wrong. Discipline must not breed legalism and pharisaism in children. It must direct children in a life of thankfulness to God and the serious practice of holiness. The father's discipline in the covenant home must be accompanied by constant words of encouragement and praise for children who show themselves to be obedient. If fathers speak to their children only to criticize and judge them harshly and even belittle them, these fathers can only expect discouragement and even rebellion in the later lives of their children.

A vital part of the influence of the godly fathers in the covenant home is their attitude and behavior towards their wives. The wife is the mother of our covenant children. When things are as they should be in the home of the family blessed by the Lord, mothers are highly regarded and deeply loved by the covenant children in the home. They have experienced their mother's daily self-sacrificing, loving service and care of the family. If then fathers abuse and dishonor their godly wives by callous behavior and constant, sinful words of anger and disappointment toward them, this will have a serious negative effect. Sometimes this negative effect will result in hatred and bitterness on the part of the children towards their fathers. Spousal abuse has terrible consequences in the home and the family.

Fathers must take the time to give their covenant children godly counsel in regards to the important issues effecting the future stability and happiness of the children and the whole way of their life later as adults, including the marriages and homes they themselves will go on to build. Most fathers enjoy seeing the children follow in their own occupation in later life. Often this will result in great financial advantage and the opportunity for fathers to teach their own skills and expertise to their children. This can be a great good. But not all children will choose the same occupations as their fathers. Fathers should not be overly and unnecessarily disappointed in this. Children need guidance in choosing the right occupation, one that will not involve compromise in Christian principles or in the need for moving away from the true church. Children need wise counsel and encouragement to choose occupations matching their God-given talents and interests. Fathers have good opportunity to instill discipline and a good work ethic in

their children. We all have the calling to work hard in life. Laziness is a sin. This has important spiritual implications. Our children must be taught by fathers the importance of hard work in life so that they grow up having the potential for occupations that will help them in later life to be able to support Christian families and give good stability to their homes. Good occupations with sufficient incomes are necessary to support the ministry of the church and pay for Christian school tuition. Fathers must be sure that children do not fritter away the time of their youth or engage in little else than entertainment and useless activities. Children must be taught by fathers to work hard at preparing themselves for later life through careful study and necessary training of themselves.

Fathers must certainly counsel their children regarding the choice of future marriage partners. A father is utterly foolish if he allows young people to make the choice of lifelong partners entirely on their own. Few things will have as great of an impact on the future for our children than the lifelong marriage partners they usually chose in the days of youth. Sometimes when young people are still immature choices are made on the basis of mere outward appearances and superficial romantic attractions. Serious consequences can follow bad choices in the days of youth. These can result in trouble soon after marriages begin, including the disaster of divorce and all of its evil effects.

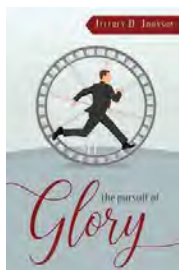
As fathers, we must convey to our children the great

joy of Christian living. Fathers must be daily examples and inspirations of the true joy and happiness of Christian living in their homes. This joy and happiness can only be found in the way of fearing God in the home and keeping His commandments. This joy will never be full even in the home most blessed of the Lord. Our homes are still in a world under the curse of the Fall and sometimes full of sorrow and misery. Christian joy will always be mixed with a measure of sorrow, even sometimes with great trials and suffering. Fathers must prepare their children to endure these, leaning on the grace of God and trusting His goodness even in severe trials. Children must be taught not to become bitter and angry with the Lord's providence. The godly examples of fathers are so important in regard to these realities. Fathers who are constantly murmuring and complaining about hardships and trials in their own lives will not teach their children the way of godliness and patient trust in God in times of great trials. Nevertheless, the joy of the Lord must be known and experienced in the covenant home. Otherwise children will develop an attitude of negativism and pessimism dishonoring to the Lord. Fathers have a great opportunity through the perspective of their own lives and godly attitude to maintain the true joy and blessedness of their home. May God help all those who are fathers in covenant homes to be a good influence for the sake of our God-given children.



Bring the books...

Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary



The Pursuit of Glory by Jeffrey D. Johnson. Reformation Heritage: Grand Rapids, MI, 2018. Paperback, 113 pp. \$12.00. [Reviewed by Dr. Julian Kennedy.]

This book is useful as an evangelistic tool and as a spur to believers. By reading it, I believe, we will find that God uses it to answer the prayer of David in

Psalms 139:23, 24 to search us and know us and lead us in the way everlasting. This book, like Scripture, is a sharp sword (Heb. 4:12) to expose our motives, why we do things, knowing God looks at our hearts.

By covering all the basic human needs, the author shows us how fallen humanity perversely seeks to satisfy them. In the main, the book is theologically sound and very readable. The foreword spells out its basic thesis which is Augustinian, namely, "You have made us

for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you.” The chapters in turn show that the pursuit of happiness, purpose, truth, freedom (from sin, death and selfishness), companionship, peace, holiness and life (abundant) are all only found in relationship with God.

One basic error he repeats, and it is one widely believed among evangelicals, is that we (though fallen) are still made in God’s image. Had he said we *were* made in God’s image, he would be correct; but now as fallen creatures and totally depraved, we have lost all of that image which consisted of true knowledge of God, righteousness, and holiness. That image is only renewed when we are born again (Eph. 4:24). He also ought to have said that pursuing God was part of our original humanity but now no man naturally seeks for God (Rom. 3:11). He gets the *ordo salutis* (order of salvation) wrong when he says, “By faith in God we are not only born again but empowered by the Spirit....” Regeneration *precedes* faith, which is one of its fruits!

Some very pithy sayings found in the book include, “The biblical contrast to glory is vanity.” He maintains that the deep-seated longing of our hearts (he ought to

qualify this by saying *regenerated* hearts) is for eternal glory that is only found in God; it is the satisfying, inter-trinitarian glory (John 17:5). As the Westminster Confession states, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him for ever.” We can never be self-sufficient simply because, unlike God, we are dependent creatures. “The cause of sin stems from a heart that desires to satisfy a legitimate craving with an illegitimate experience.” “Finite and perishable things were not designed to fill the God-shaped hole in our hearts.” “The end of love is the betterment of the other while the end objective of lust is the satisfaction of self.”

Near the end of the book he says something I had to contemplate but eventually had to agree with, namely, that Christ was the “happiest,” that is, most joyful person who ever lived, despite the fact that He was a man of sorrows. He never lost His joy and was able to obey the Pauline injunction to rejoice evermore (Phil. 4:4), except when He was deserted in those awful last hours before He said, “It is finished.” Hence, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10).



News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdom, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question

Of the 19 churches in Classis East, how many are *not* in Michigan? Answer later in this column.

School activities

The Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies is pleased to offer the “History and Principles of Reformed Education” course this coming fall and winter at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. The instructor will be Prof. R. Dykstra. Although the purpose of this course is to educate teachers, it is open to all interested individuals. School board members, parents, grandparents, and lovers of Christian education will benefit from gaining a better understanding of the history and principles of Reformed education. This course is offered at no charge for participants, so please take advantage! The classes are scheduled for

Wednesday evenings with the first two classes being held November 13 and December 11. The remaining classes will be held approximately two times per month, January through May 2020. Visit www.prcs.org/courses/ for more information and registration.

The Northwest Iowa PR School Society in Doon recently approved the project of paving the school parking lot. This was completed in late summer and all are now driving in style on smooth pavement. The Board’s proposal to purchase a 12-passenger van for the school was also approved, so that transportation is supplied for class trips and for the joint band practices in Hull each week.

Denominational activities

Classis East met for two days in September (11, 12). Pastor-elect Jacob Maatman sustained his classical

exam and Southeast PRC was advised to proceed to his ordination. Classis approved the organization of a new congregation with the proposed name of Unity PRC, a daughter of Byron Center PRC. Approval was given for the emeritation of Rev. Michael DeVries effective January 1, 2020 after 41 years of faithful service in five PR congregations. Approval was given in a matter of discipline. In addition, classis treated six appeals and protests and one overture, adopted a pulpit-supply schedule, and appointed a moderator for Kalamazoo PRC.

Classis West met in late September with a lengthy agenda and the examination of pastor-elect Matt Kortus. At last report, brother Kortus had sustained his exam and was to be ordained and installed in Hope PRC (Redlands, CA) on Sunday, October 6.

The annual meeting of the RFPA was held on September 26. Rev. Justin Smidstra spoke on “Training Our Children in the Discipline of Reading” at Zion PR Church in Jenison, MI. All in the area were invited to attend, and for the benefit of those who live out of state, this event was live-streamed as well. Let’s not let reading become a lost art!

Congregational activities

Following pastor-elect J. Maatman’s successful examination by Classis East, the Consistory of Southeast PRC scheduled his ordination and installation into the gospel ministry as their next pastor. This took place on Friday evening, September 27, at Southwest Protestant Reformed Church. Prof. David Engelsma officiated at the service, an official call to worship for the Southeast congregation.

Members of Southeast PRC were all invited to a Fall Pizza gathering at the Mines Golf Course Pavilion on Friday, September 20. Pizza, beverages, and lots of fun were provided! The plans included a few children’s activities, along with a hayride, followed by a bonfire with s’mores. Sounds like a great fall activity!

The congregation in Doon, IA recently accomplished the milestone of singing through the psalms in its services. Since August of 2015 the second song of the second service has been devoted to advancing through the psalms one at a time. When they sang Psalter 409 (Psalm 150) on September 15, the mission was completed. It was a good way to be sure some psalms were not left out in their congregational singing. It remains to be seen if they start over soon with Psalm 1.

Evangelism activities

On September 24 the Southwest Evangelism Committee

invited the congregation to a Society Kick-Off and Ice Cream Social. Pastor David Noorman gave a speech explaining some ways in which this aspect of congregational life might promote a faithful witness. Members were invited to join one of the Bible societies. All were invited to stay around afterward for fellowship and ice cream (served by the young people). A nice start to the society season.

From the Evangelism Committee of Crete, IL PRC comes this note:

The world around us is becoming increasingly digital; we see many instances of this in society as well as in the church. Digital technology can be used wisely and productively; however, we often do not notice or stop to think about the effects it may be having on our spiritual life. Plan now to join for a fall lecture “Living Wisely in a Digital Age” to be given by Rev. Nate Decker on Thursday, October 31, at Crete Protestant Reformed Church, D.V. Rev. Decker will address this topic from a distinct Reformed viewpoint and have the audience consider wisdom in our use of digital media. All in the area are encouraged to attend.

Young people’s activities

Young people of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI were invited to join together Friday, September 20 at church for a night of fellowship and fun. Included were three escape rooms and games. Incoming young people were encouraged to attend and all could take friends along. I hope everyone made it out of those rooms! What if someone didn’t escape?!

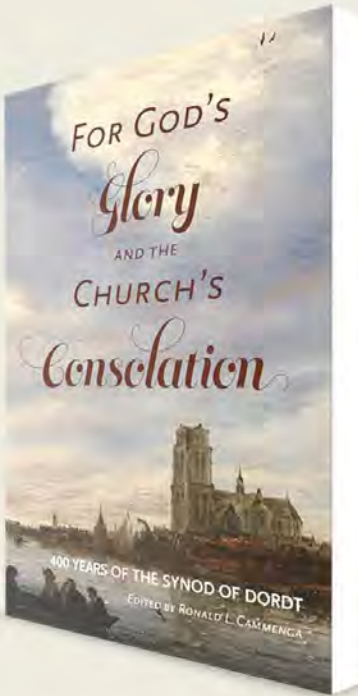
At Grandville, MI PRC the Young People’s Society once again participated in the Farm Girl Flea this Fall. This fundraiser was held on September 28th and all the proceeds will go toward the 2020 YP Convention. Hmmm... I have lived in farm country all my life but never heard of such a thing! Efforts to discern just what this entailed were unfruitful at printing time. Suffice it to say that we’re not sure what it is, but we’re pretty sure it occurred!

Trivia answer

Of the 19 churches in Classis East, only three are not in the state of Michigan. They are: Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, Indiana, Pittsburgh PRC in Pennsylvania, and Wingham PRC in Ontario, Canada. More trivia next time.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements



COMING OCTOBER 2019


***For God's Glory and the Church's Consolation:
400 Years of the Synod of Dordt***

Great has the Synod of Dordt proved to be in the history of the Reformed church that followed Dordt. Great has the Synod been in its enduring legacy. For generations the Synod of Dordt has served with its clear articulation of the truth and its uncompromising rejection of error. In the church and on the mission field, the Canons of Dordt have served as the confessional standard for instruction in the doctrines of grace—the Five Points of Calvinism.

The Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary held a conference to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the Synod of Dordt. *For God's Glory and the Church's Consolation* includes all the presentations made at this conference, plus a bit more. The book explores the heritage that faithful Reformed churches ought to esteem, as that heritage was defended and handed down by the Synod of Dordt.

Retail: \$22.95 | Book club: \$14.92

www.rfpa.org | mail@rfpa.org | 616-457-5970



Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2020–2021 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–5 minus grade 4. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780.

Reformation Lecture

Prof. Barrett Gritters will speak on:
*“Evangelicals and Catholics Together?
Reconciling the Unreconcilable”*
Friday, October 25, 2019 at 7:30 P.M.
at Kalamazoo Protestant Reformed Church
4515 Green Acres Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49009