

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • December 1, 2016

CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Search Me, O God! REV. DENNIS LEE	98
<i>Editorial</i>	The Urgent Need for 2,189 Covenant Youth: Teachers PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA	100
<i>All Around Us</i>	■ Rodrigo Duterte, the Philippines' New President ■ Further Advances in the Euthanasia Movement REV. ERIK GUICHELAAR	103 104
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	A Spiritual Inventory (Eccl. 7) REV. THOMAS MIERSMA	105
<i>Taking Heed to the Doctrine</i>	The Kingdom of God (3): United with Those in Heaven REV. JAMES LANING	107
<i>All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee</i>	Light and Time DR. BRENDAN LOOYENGA	109
<i>When Thou Sittest in Thine House</i>	Things That Remain MRS. MARGARET LANING	112
<i>Church and State</i>	Women and the Selective Service MR. BRIAN VAN ENGEN	114
<i>Guest Article</i>	The Thoughts and Life of a Missionary's Wife MRS. SHARON KLEYN	116
<i>Activities</i>	News From Our Churches MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM	119

Search Me, O God!

“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalm 139:23-24.

Psalm 139 is a prayer of David in which he exalts the great majesty of God. God is all knowing and everywhere present. He is the absolutely sovereign Creator of all. He is perfectly just and righteous. To such a God and to no other, David submitted himself and was devoted entirely. That submission and devotion is set forth no more concisely and powerfully than in the request that he made of this God to search him in verses 23-24.



The request of the psalmist to be searched by God is a dangerous request. How so? Considering this from a broader point of view, let us understand that the kind of search spoken of here is a *thorough* search. It is like the search of a person looking for something valuable that has been lost. It is like that of the lady in the parable of the lost coin. Just imagine her search! She takes her broom and carefully sweeps the floor. She is on all fours

on the floor itself: feeling, touching, looking at everything. She will not rest with her search efforts until she finds her lost coin.

And besides being a thorough search, let us also understand that the nature of this search is a *spiritual* search, so that what this thorough and deep search uncovers is going to be very revealing! It uncovers and unveils the deepest thoughts and concerns from deep within our hearts! “Search me, O God, and know my *heart*,” says the psalmist.

What is the heart? The heart is the very core of our spiritual being. It is the inmost part of our being, its sanctuary. From a spiritual point of view, the heart is the command and control center of all our thinking, feeling, willing, and doing. For, as we are told in Proverbs 4:23, out of the heart arises “the issues of life”! All our priorities of life, all our concerns, all our purposes, all our thoughts that we express with our mouths as well as those we do not, all our hidden thoughts and ambitions! In his request to God, the psalmist was asking God to know *all* the thoughts of his heart!

That makes this request of the psalmist dangerous, and specifically, for two reasons.

First of all, it is dangerous because we believers know and confess that the thoughts of our hearts are not always good and pleasing to God, do we not?

All who are without true, saving faith in Jesus Christ

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, Inc.: 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.

Editorial Office

Prof. Barrett Gritters
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
gritters@prca.org

Business Office

Standard Bearer
Mr. Timothy Pipe
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
PH: 616-457-5970
tim@rfpa.org

Church News Editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdom
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

Subscription Price

\$24.00 per year in the US, \$36.00 elsewhere
New eSubscription: \$24.00
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$12.00.

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: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (e-mail: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prc.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.

are *never* good and pleasing to God. Even the “best” works performed by man apart from true faith in Jesus Christ fail to please Him (cf. Heb. 11:6)! In some instances, the external deed performed may truly look like a good work to us, but not to God, who does not merely look at things outwardly and superficially. For He looks at our *hearts* and judges perfectly! But in many instances, the external deed performed by all who are apart from Christ is clearly evil, clearly transgressing the commandments of God: lying, cheating, stealing, refusing to honor and worship God, persecuting all who truly love God and desire to please Him in all their ways. This is why the godly psalmist says what he does in verses 19-22 of this psalm. And this is why it would be absolutely foolish and dangerous for anyone who does not have Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord to ask to be searched by God!

But even for the psalmist, and for all of us who share in the same faith as he, this is a dangerous request! For we have but a *small* beginning of the new life of obedience in Christ. We still have the old nature of sin in us. So, are we sure we truly want to repent of our sins when they are brought to our attention? Great sins and weaknesses, but also ones we consider to be “smaller” sins, less serious “faults”? Even hidden faults, those that we might not yet be fully conscious of? When God finds them and brings them to our attention, what will we do? Will we attempt to explain them away or will we humbly confess and confront them? Will we say that others also sin in that way so it is not important that we confess our sin? Or will we be ready to confess our sins, take personal responsibility for them, ask God for forgiveness of them, and turn from them? Are we prepared to do these things? It is dangerous to ask God to search us when we are not ready to flee from our sins.

In the second place, this is a dangerous request when we consider carefully who it is we are asking to do this: *God! God Himself!* His search will be *perfectly* deep and thorough! For He is no powerless idol fashioned by the imaginations of men, but the one true God who is great and majestic! Great and majestic in these four specific ways set forth in Psalm 139.

First, He is *omniscient*! He knows all and everything about the world, including us. The psalmist was deeply conscious of this truth as he applied it to himself in verses 2-4 of this psalm; are we? Second, He is *omnipresent*!

He is present everywhere so that there is no place anywhere in which we can run away from His presence. The psalmist knew and confessed this in verses 7-10; do we? Third, this God is the absolutely *sovereign* Creator of all, a truth that the psalmist valued dearly and applied in intimate detail to himself in verse 14; do we also do the same? Fourth and finally, He is perfectly *holy and just*, for He abhors and punishes sin and all wicked thinkers and doers, something that David confessed in verses 19-20. Do we also know and confess this? Do you want *this* great and majestic God, the God who is all knowing and everywhere present, the absolutely sovereign Creator who is perfectly holy to search you?



The psalmist fervently desired it. That fervency is indicated by a sense of urgency. “Search me, O God,” he said. “O” is an exclamation, making the statement emphatic and communicating a sense of urgency. Still more, the psalmist’s fervent desire is seen by the number of times he repeatedly makes his request to God, though with different words: “*Search* me O God, and *know* my heart: *try* me, and *know* my thoughts...” (v. 23). Then, note the pointed purpose of the psalmist for this stated in verse 24: “And see if there be *any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The theological explanation for the psalmist’s fervent desire and purpose is God’s work of sanctification in him. God was consecrating the psalmist to Himself. The request of the psalmist could be put this way: “God, search me so that I may be separated more and more from sin and devoted more and more to Thee in all my thoughts and ways! Do so because I seek to please Thee with the fullness of my heart, soul, mind, and strength! Hold nothing back, dear God, for I am consumed by a reverence, passion, and zeal for Thee!” This was the psalmist’s fervent desire!

Is it also ours? Do we desire to have the fullness of our thoughts and ways subjected to the all-penetrating searchlight of our God? A searchlight that penetrates into the deepest, darkest crevices of our heart? Will we have God’s searchlight shine upon the music we give our ears to listen to; the objects, words and pictures we give our eyes to be fixed upon; the activities we give ourselves to do; the places we allow our feet to go; the persons with

whom we are friends; and the words that flow out of our mouths when we have been hurt or annoyed? What is our attitude toward our family, our church, and all whom God places in authority over us in every sphere of life? Do you want God to show you *any* way that is wicked in you so that you may repent of it? The psalmist fervently desired this!

This is only possible by the grace and Holy Spirit of Christ dwelling in us. This alone explains why the psalmist could desire fervently that sinful ways be hated by him and more and more put away from him, and to be drawn closer to God in the way of God's deep search of his heart! Dear reader, is that not your fervent desire too? Let it be so!



A blessed result awaits all who make this request sincerely of God. The blessed result is that we will be led away from the wicked way and all its painful misery and sorrowful end; and instead that we will be led unto the way everlasting. This is the ancient way, even the old paths that Jeremiah called God's people to walk in (cf. Jer. 6:16). It is the way that comes from God from eternity past and leads to Him unto eternity future. It is the way that passes through the cross of His Son of love. It is the

way of whole-hearted, loving obedience and submission to God flowing out of a heart that is thankful for that salvation and cross.

In his own language and way, the psalmist was applying Jeremiah's call to himself, asking for those straight and narrow paths, to seek them and walk in them, and to be kept far and clear from the broad and popular path of destruction! All who earnestly ask for and fervently desire to be in the way everlasting will, by the grace of God, be brought out of and turn from the path of sin and destruction, and will turn unto the way everlasting! All who do so will find true joy along their pilgrimage, and will finally arrive safely to be with God in heaven!

That stands to reason. For the God to whom the psalmist makes this request is the great and majestic God! He is all powerful! He is absolutely sovereign! His great love for all His children in the Son of His love will never fail! He who spared not His own Son for our sake will not deny us what is truly good for us. Standing on the ground and foundation of the God to whom he made his request, the psalmist experienced the blessedness of being, staying, and abiding in the way everlasting. Standing on that very same ground and foundation, the psalmist's experience will also be ours! ☞

EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

The Urgent Need for 2,189 Covenant Youth: Teachers!

Editor's note:

These editorials on schools and teachers are, of necessity, somewhat provincial because the focus is on the schools that are maintained by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. I am very much aware that many readers of this magazine are not

directly affected by these schools or their concerns, since these readers are not Protestant Reformed and have no connection (children or grandchildren) to the schools. However, I do not apologize for these articles.

First, throughout its history the *SB* has been a staunch supporter of Christian education in general, and Protestant Reformed schools in particular. Second, the

cause is still worthy of support, and these articles are intended to lend full support to the schools. For those not directly affected, I hope you can gain an appreciation for the hearty commitment to the schools on the part of parents, members at large, and teachers, and especially the latter. With an understanding of the importance, as well as of the struggles, you will be able to pray for this kingdom

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2016, p. 76.

cause, which prayers we sincerely covet.

Secondly, I will use the term “Protestant Reformed schools” to refer to the grade schools and high schools maintained by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Readers should be aware that these schools are parental, not parochial. There is no official connection between the denomination of churches and the schools. Nonetheless, the fuller description of “schools maintained by parents and members of the PRC” is a bit clumsy. Hence the shorter expression will be used most often.

—RJD

In the last issue we (re)started a series on the need for teacher training for the Protestant Reformed schools. In this series our intent is to make a case that it is vitally important for these schools that they provide training for teachers. However, before we go too deeply into that subject, as important as it is, a related issue must be addressed that is not only important, but even more pressing, namely, the need for *teachers*. I say “more pressing” because while a teacher-training program is of tremendous value, having teachers to fill the classrooms is the pressing and immediate need for all the schools. The reality is, these schools are dealing with a serious shortage of teachers.

Members of the PRC maintain fourteen grade schools and four high schools. In the current school year, 2,189 students are enrolled in these schools. The schools have contracted with 159 full-time teachers, 18 part-time, and a number of

aides. These schools have tremendous support from the churches. The members of the PRC will raise over \$12 million to run the schools just for this school year. Where Protestant Reformed schools exist, the percentage of children in Protestant Reformed churches who attend these schools is about 97%. Under the blessing of God, the schools as a whole are growing—some with very large increases. Schools have added on to their existing buildings or are proposing to do so in the future. More students necessitates hiring more teachers.

The negative side of this is that—right now—there are not enough teachers to fill the available positions. When we contacted the schools, every school representative spoke of struggles obtaining an adequate supply of teachers. If you read the last issue of the magazine *Perspectives in Covenant Education*,¹ you know that one very experienced teacher (so experienced that she taught me in the third grade) decided that 45 years was enough. It was time for a teacher of a younger generation to fill her position. She packed up, turned in her key, and left with her memories. Very shortly thereafter, the school board approached this experienced teacher with an earnest plea, “Will you please return and teach another year?” Now, let it be said, that in her case, parents were delighted to have her back. Not all, shall we say, “really experienced” teachers would be so welcome. Teachers can lose some of their energy, zeal, and re-

sourcefulness even before they reach retirement.

That is but one case, which illustrates the serious issue that the schools face—a teacher shortage. This shortage has caused significant trouble for the schools struggling to fill open positions in the last few years. One school had to plead (successfully) with two college students to cut short their college education in order to fill empty classrooms. Mothers have been called out of their homes to teach. Grandmothers, who would prefer to be more involved with their growing grandchildren, are teaching full time instead. Men and women have been drawn into the classroom without good preparation—the regular course of teacher education in a college, and sometimes without a college degree. Schools are being forced to hire multiple part-time teachers to fill in the gaps. Aides are hired to help with larger classes—some of whom are actually teaching. Schools in need of teachers will seek the help of retired teachers—and they have responded in significant numbers—delaying or even coming out of retirement for the sake of the schools. High schools are forced to delay a class or two because no teacher is available to teach them. These are some of the solutions to the shortage.

This problem will not go away. The schools are growing. In research that I did in 2013, the total number of youth enrolled in Protestant Reformed schools was about 1,900. Notice that there has been an increase of nearly 300 students in three years! Some of this is due

¹ Published quarterly by the PR Teachers' Institute, vol. 41:4, www.prti.org.

to a new grade school opening (in Wingham) and years being added for high school instruction. Even so, growth is substantial. Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids has made some enrollment projections. A simple counting of the students in the feeder schools indicates that CCHS could grow from the current 372 students to 496 in the 2025-26 school year! The schools in Randolph and Redlands are making plans to add high school instruction. In another year Wingham will need two teachers to replace their temporary help. The need for teachers will only expand if these trends continue.

Meanwhile, already in November, schools are advertising in the church bulletins for the next school year because they did not get the teachers they needed for the current one. Some of our schools advertise in vain—they get no applicants. It is no exaggeration to say that these shortages threaten to put some of the smaller, “outlying” schools out of existence.

This situation is cause for serious concern. My concern is not merely for the school boards and administrators who work long hours to obtain teachers, but too often need to cobble something together for “another year,” though I do sympathize with them. Nor is my main concern those mothers and grandmothers who would love to remain home but for the sake of the students go back to teach “another year,” though I am convinced that is neither good nor right. My concern is the covenant seed, and the quality of their education.

My purpose in all this is not, you understand, to set up teachers for criticism. Far from it. Many of these men and women sacrifice much to help the schools in their hour of need. I applaud their enthusiasm and their gargantuan efforts. In the great majority of the classrooms the students are receiving excellent instruction. But the question remains, is this shortage good for the schools and is it good for the students? Ordinarily not.

The danger is real that individuals are hired as teachers who are not qualified to teach, much less in a Protestant Reformed school. The danger is real that when a shortage of teachers exists, school boards are tempted to turn a blind eye to faults in a teacher. Serious faults. Everything from inability to teach effectively, to an ignorance of subject material, to a failure to grasp Protestant Reformed doctrine, to serious weaknesses in classroom control. And we have not entered the area of some kind of mistreatment of individual students. If a school board has advertised for applicants for a position, but received none, it is a rather risky business to release a poor teacher. Do you see the significance of the problem?


There is more reason for concern. About 10% of the current teachers are 60 years or older. That is not a large number, but it points to the reality that the schools need *many* new teachers. They need to replace retiring teachers, female teachers who marry and have children, and teachers who opt out of the profession for one reason or another. And the schools need many

more than that to take care of the growth in the schools and the plans to expand into high school instruction.

We need to address the situation. Parents must set this before the minds of their children and impress on them the importance of the calling. Teachers, administrators, and school boards should be looking for good potential candidates for teaching, and encouraging them. Ministers need to be praying in their public prayers, and all of us in our private prayers, that God will provide teachers.

Perhaps we could start by setting before our youth this word from Luther on the importance of teachers.

I wish nobody would be chosen preacher unless he had first kept school.... In a city as much depends on a schoolmaster as on a minister. We can get along without burgomasters, princes, and noblemen, but we cannot do without schools, for they must rule the world.... If I were not a preacher I know no position on earth I'd rather fill (than that of schoolmaster). But one must not consider how the world esteems and rewards it but how God thinks of it and how he will praise it on the day of judgment.²

Next time, we plan to be more positive, and encourage our youth seriously to consider the calling of teacher by setting forth some requirements of a good, Protestant Reformed teacher. 

² Luther, “Table Talk,” No. 5247, *Luther’s Works*, vol. 54, ed. and trans. by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 403-404.

■ Rodrigo Duterte, The Philippines' New President

At the time of the writing of this article, the United States' elections were still underway. But as we brace for the changes of the next presidency, the citizens of the Philippines are also experiencing many changes in their own land with their new president, Rodrigo Duterte. Duterte has only been in office since late June of this year, but has been getting international attention as one of the most controversial and vulgar political figures in the global political arena. What follows are excerpts from a report by Angela Lu for *World* magazine describing how Duterte is carrying out his presidency.

Since Duterte took office in late June, police and vigilante groups have, with his blessing, gunned down more than 3,000 purported criminals, and officials claim another 700,000 people have turned themselves in.

While the international community condemns the extrajudicial killings, at home Duterte enjoys a 91 percent approval rating: Locals love how he stands up to drug dealers and corrupt officials, speaks like a commoner, and cares little about critics' opinions....

Overall, Filipino Protestants (who make up 3 percent of the population) are divided about Duterte, as the promise of effective governance butts heads with the principle of the sanctity of life, including criminal lives. All agree the corrupt, drug-infested country needs to change: The question is how far to go to achieve that change....

It seems no one is immune to Duterte's profanity-laced attacks: He has joked about the rape and murder of a missionary, insulted U.S. President Barack Obama, and flipped the bird at the European Parliament. Even calling the pope a 'son of a whore' hasn't chilled his welcome with the largely Catholic population. In response to a backlash over his comments, Duterte apologized while claiming his words were taken out of context. That's just "how men talk," he said. Yet his harshest words have been reserved for drug dealers and addicts: He vowed to kill even his own children if they were involved in illegal drug activities....

The local embrace of Duterte reflects the population's frustration with a corrupt and weak government, where

officials colluded with drug syndicates and justice was rarely served.¹

Aurora Almendral in a report for *The New York Times* writes,

His government has paved the way for indigenous people displaced by mining and logging to return to their ancestral lands, has committed to providing free irrigation to subsistence farmers, has suspended the operations of mining companies that violated environmental protection laws, and has begun a program of free checkups for the 20 million poorest Filipinos....

But Melinda Quintos de Jesus, executive director of the Center for Media Freedom, said that threats by pro-Duterte online mobs had intimidated the national news media.

The local news media has published some criticism and several reports on specific cases of extrajudicial killings, she said, but the major television stations and newspapers have failed to produce critical analyses of Mr. Duterte's policies. "They like him, they fear him," she said. "They basically are afraid to be singled out."²

Duterte has threatened to impose martial law if his war on drugs is hindered. He has reportedly said, "I don't care about human rights, believe me." He has compared himself to Hitler. His actions are seen by some as a threat to democracy in the Philippines, and a slippery slope towards tyranny. He has also reportedly said, "If you know of any addicts, go ahead and kill them yourself as getting their parents to do it would be too painful."

The new president of the Philippines creates many uncertainties—uncertainties that also affect the Christians there, including, of course, the churches in the Philippines and our missionaries there. With all the uncertainties that come with a new president, we can be thankful that God is in sovereign control of it all. We can have the same confidence Daniel had, when in Daniel 2 he prayed to God, saying, "Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his: And he changeth the times and the seasons: removeth kings, and setteth up

¹ Angela Lu, "Enforcer of the Philippines," *World*, vol. 31, no. 21, September 30, 2016, accessed October 14, 2016, https://world.wng.org/2016/09/enforcer_of_the_philippines.

² Aurora Almendral, "Rodrigo Duterte, Scorned Abroad, Remains Popular in the Philippines," *The New York Times*, October 13, 2016, accessed October 14, 2016, <https://nyti.ms/2dZxnlu>.

Rev. Guichelaar is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.

kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding" (Dan. 2:20-21). Let us remember to pray for the saints in the Philippines, for all those in authority over us, and for ourselves, that we might have the grace to submit to all those whom God has placed in authority over us.

■ Further Advances in the Euthanasia Movement

News headlines this past September told the story of the first minor in Belgium to be euthanized since age restrictions were removed two years ago. Belgium first legalized euthanasia for adults in 2002. In 2014 they legalized euthanasia for minors.

The question comes to us: What could be next?

Then in mid-October there was this report given by Toby Sterling for *Reuters* about what the Dutch would like to do:

The Dutch government intends to draft a law that would legalize assisted suicide for people who feel they have 'completed life,' but are not necessarily terminally ill, it said on Wednesday.

The Netherlands was the first country to legalize euthanasia, in 2002, but only for patients who were considered to be suffering unbearable pain with no hope of a cure.

In a letter to parliament, the health and justice ministers said details remain to be worked out but that people who 'have a well-considered opinion that their life is complete, must, under strict and careful criteria, be allowed to finish that life in a manner dignified for them.'

The proposal is likely to provoke critics who say Dutch euthanasia practice has already expanded beyond the borders originally envisioned for it, with 'unbearable suffering' not only applying to people with terminal disease, but also to some with mental illnesses and dementia.

The euthanasia policy has widespread backing in Dutch society, and cases have risen by double digits every year for more than a decade as more patients request it and more doctors are willing to carry it out. Euthanasia accounted for 5,516 deaths in the Netherlands in 2015, or 3.9 percent of all deaths nationwide.³

Currently in a few states in the United States there is

³ Toby Sterling, "Dutch may allow assisted suicide for those who feel life is over," *Reuters*, October 12, 2016, accessed October 14, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-netherlands-euthanasia-idUSKCN12C2JL>.

the push to legalize doctor-assisted suicide. What follows is part of a report from the editorial board of *The New York Times*, clearly in favor of legalizing doctor-assisted suicide:

New York, Colorado, and the District of Columbia may soon join the handful of states where doctors are allowed to help terminally ill patients die by prescribing a lethal dose of painkillers.

A proposal to allow physician-assisted dying will be on the ballot in Colorado next month. In the District of Columbia, the District Council's Health and Human Services Committee last week approved a physician-assisted dying bill that the full council could vote on before the end of the year. New York lawmakers, meanwhile, are hopeful that support in the Legislature for aid-in-dying bills will soon overcome opposition from religious leaders and some medical groups.

Victories in the three jurisdictions would galvanize a movement that seeks to give terminally ill Americans a dignified alternative to the dismal choices they face in most of the country. In states where assisted dying is banned, some terminal patients manage to get a lethal dose of drugs from medical professionals under the table, which exposes the health care workers to prosecution. Others are advised to starve themselves to death.⁴

Here are some facts obtained from the *BBC* on the advances made in legalizing euthanasia and assisted suicide:

- The Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg permit euthanasia and assisted suicide.
- Switzerland permits assisted suicide if the person assisting acts unselfishly.
- Columbia permits euthanasia.
- California last year joined the US states of Oregon, Washington, Vermont, and Montana in permitting assisted dying.
- Canada passed laws allowing doctor-assisted dying in June of this year.⁵

The *BBC* report also gives a helpful definition of the different terms that are used:


⁴ "Aid in Dying Movement Advances," *The New York Times*, October 10, 2016, accessed October 13, 2016, <http://nyti.ms/2dNdYC9>.

⁵ "Belgium minor first to be granted euthanasia," *BBC News*, September 17, 2016, accessed October 13, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-37395286>.

- Euthanasia is an intervention undertaken with the intention of ending a life to relieve suffering, for example a lethal injection administered by a doctor.
- Assisted suicide is any act that intentionally helps another person kill themselves, for example by providing them with the means to do so, most commonly by prescribing a lethal medication.
- Assisted dying is usually used in the US and the UK to mean assisted suicide for the terminally ill only, as for example in the Assisted Dying Bills recently debated in the UK.⁶

How grateful we can be as Christians that our dignity is not bound up in who we are of ourselves, but in who we are in Jesus Christ. How grateful we can be as Christians

⁶ BBC, "Belgium...euthanasia."

that no matter how miserable our lives may be, we can be confident that the Lord is still using the breath in our lungs to bring glory and honor to His name. How grateful we can be as Christians that there is not one ounce of affliction that is superfluous and unnecessary for us to experience, but that the Lord is in some manner turning it toward our everlasting welfare and the everlasting welfare of all His people. "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (II Cor. 12:9). "From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I" (Ps. 61:2). That is the response of faith. 

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

REV. THOMAS MIERSMA

A Spiritual Inventory

Behold, this have I found, saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found. Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.

Ecclesiastes 7:27-29

In the preceding verses, Solomon spoke of the limits of his wisdom and understanding of God's works and, concerning man, of sin and its deceitfulness. This latter he found especially in the bitterness that came from his union with heathen women, "whose heart is snares and nets" (Eccl. 7:26). This bitterness of heart was rooted in his own sin. This leads him at the conclusion of the chapter to a spiritual inventory in which he wants us to see what he has seen and to behold what he has discerned. He himself wrought many works by wisdom, but found those works in themselves led to vanity. He sought out the ways of God, His providence and judgment, and

they were deeper than he could attain. Likewise, his own sin and weakness were marked by foolishness and madness, even as it was in the world around him among men under the sun. He says of all this, "That which is far off, and exceeding deep, who can find it out?" (Eccl. 7:24).

Solomon now continues, "Behold, this have I found saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account: which yet my soul seeketh but I find not" (Eccl. 7:27, 28). Like one counting coins or change in a counting house to figure out the total, he would add up the sum. He is looking at what he has seen and found in all his labor and activity, in the order and life of the palace, in the city of Jerusalem. It is the inventory he has set before us in the whole course of the book of Ecclesiastes thus far. He would give it now as a summary of what has gone before and have us see it as a personal inventory rooted in his own experience. While it is a summary, it is not the sum. Throughout he has been concerned to give us not an abstract survey but a clear sight of the issues of life under the sun. He speaks with the authority of experience and long reflection. What he has particularly been seeking with diligence throughout are wisdom and understanding. The problem is that he does not achieve a complete

Rev. Miersma is pastor of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta.

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2016, p. 85.

grasp of it. He says, “which my soul seeketh, but I find not” (Eccl. 7:28). He cannot fully attain to the sum of it all, for it is of God and deeper than his understanding to find it out. Man’s wisdom and understanding is limited by the fact that he is man, a creature, and also a sinner. Some measure of understanding he has found, but not complete wisdom. There is always more that is deeper than his thought.

Rather, this survey results in this inventory: “one man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those have I not found” (Eccl. 7:28). Reckoning up the figure to find out the account, the wisdom that is from God was a rare thing among men: only one among a thousand men in his experience. And among women? Not one among all those. He effectively found none, which, given his heathen wives, is to be expected. Keeping in mind that his search took place in his life and among those around him, given his relationships, this is not surprising. He is not making a blanket statement about women or men but speaks of those with whom he dwelt and among whom he sought to see and know. The women were heathen women with the superstitions of idolaters. The men included the members of his court and officers of his kingdom, who were often motivated by political desires for power, wealth, and personal advantage. The result is to be expected. Even the one among a thousand men is of such a kind that he says of this survey, “I find not.” He found something quite different from what he had thought to find.

The reason is that God alone is the giver of true wisdom, of spiritual wisdom and understanding. Wisdom is alone from above. It is not found in man (Adam) and his seed by nature, because we are all fallen in sin. The conclusion of the matter he plainly states, as the result of his spiritual accounting: “Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29). The text, as in other places in Ecclesiastes, speaks of “man.” In the original, it is “the man,” so that the reference is both to Adam, our first father, and to man, Adam’s seed after the flesh. The name Adam has in it, as well, the idea of man’s creation from the dust. He is dust. God created Adam, a creature of the dust, and mankind in him.

God made man upright. His whole nature was good, fitted in conformity to the divine will, righteous and holy.

It was pure. The result is that man was made with wisdom and possessed knowledge and wisdom from God. He was created able to serve God, so that his knowledge and perception of the world around him informed him of the will of his Creator. He could discern and understand God’s design in the making of all things, their purpose, value, and place. Adam showed this in the naming of the animals in Genesis 2. He was given the wisdom or skill to apply that knowledge in the service of God with perfect, though finite human understanding. There was in him no darkness of sin. Foolishness and madness, self-destructive folly, was far from him. He was made upright and given gifts of wisdom. The world also was free from the stain of sin. It was not yet subjected to the curse of the Fall to vanity.

“...But they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29). This is the sad history of the Fall. Solomon has turned to the early chapters of Genesis before, for example, in Ecclesiastes 3:20 and Ecclesiastes 6:10. The period of the Fall, the development of sin, and the Flood shed light upon the vanity of life. In confessing “for there is not a just man on earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20), he leads us to the truth of fallen man’s total depravity by nature, who seeks out many inventions of sin. He leads us to the confession that also sin cleaves to us, so that the old man of sin is present in the children of God. He, in effect, assumes we know and understand this history.

In reflecting on this reality, Solomon would lead us here not to an abstract consideration of the matter, but to see the consequences as they work out in history. He does this both to confirm the truth of that depravity by nature and to understand its effects, in madness and folly. As Solomon has sought out wisdom, so man by nature seeks out sin. (He uses here essentially the same term for seeking out a thing). Fallen man’s mind, his natural wisdom and desire after the flesh, now lead him to devise inventions of his own. They are evil inventions, far from uprightness in their origin in thought, design, and motive, not merely in their external form. The light of wisdom that was in man by creation has been changed into darkness; a skilled use of the creation and development of it he still has, but now in the service of sin. It is, under the judgment of God, subject to vanity as a result.


Nor is it a matter of a few things—the matter is one of “many” inventions. The history of wicked Lamech

and his sons Jabal, Jubal, and Tubal-cain, the seed of Cain and the serpent is here brought to mind. God made man upright, but what became of him through the Fall? Sin developed and man became the gatherer of earthly riches, heaping and gathering them as did Jabal. He gave himself in music and art to the service of sin as did Jubal. He developed technology and the sciences, discovered iron and brass as did Tubal-cain. He walked in oppression as did wicked Lamech, the murderer. Even the woman “whose heart is snares and nets” echoes Lamech’s wives and daughter. Lamech is the original polygamist, a sin that Solomon carried to new depths, contrary to the law of God (Deut. 17:18). The contrast is between the God-created uprightness and these many inventions of men. The evil is not in things, but in man the thinker, developer, and inventor who labors in vanity in the service of sin and bondage to it.

This is the summary. What also became of these sinful inventions? They were destroyed in the judgment of God in the Flood. What has been the history of the works of men? At the tower of Babel, the city of Sodom, the land of Canaan under the Amorites, Egypt with its plagues, the Red Sea, Jericho, the history is one of judgment and destruction. Works wrought in vanity.

What then of Solomon’s own works? What of the

glory of his kingdom? He has wrestled throughout Ecclesiastes with the issue that he must give his works to the one who comes after, and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? But more than that, there is the fact that stands at the end of the book, and it is to this that Solomon would lead us: “For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil” (Eccl. 12:14). This is the testimony of God’s judgments in history, already now in this life and certainly in the final judgment.

Solomon by this sober assessment as a preacher is step by step leading the reader to the conclusion he will set before us at the end, “Fear God and keep his commandment: for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). That conclusion is well founded, for “Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.” This is the only conclusion possible, that which “only I have found,” and to which alone one may come in a world fallen in sin and in itself under judgment. This is what is to be found by nature under the sun. Salvation and renewal, forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life can only come from above, and by a wonder of grace from God alone. True heavenly wisdom that walks in the fear of God is also from above, a gift of God’s grace. 

TAKING HEED TO THE DOCTRINE

REV. JAMES LANING

The Kingdom of God (3)

United with Those in Heaven

Not long ago a young adult asked me a question about something he had heard at college. One of his instructors cited Colossians 1:20 as proof that Christians have a calling to strive to renew everything in this world. That specific passage in Colossians speaks of Christ “reconciling all things” unto God. What does that mean, and what does it imply as to our calling in the midst of this world?

Rev. Laning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.

Previous article in this series: September 1, 2016, p. 468.

Colleges training “agents of renewal”

Both Calvin College and Dordt College refer to themselves as institutions designed to train students to go out and “renew” things. The King, they say, calls us to be “agents of renewal”¹ wherever we go. If we are busily engaged in this renewing activity, then we are said to be establishing the kingdom of God on the earth.

One book that has often been required reading at

¹ Sometimes the word “redeem” is used instead of “renew.” I have chosen to use the term “renew” when referring to their position, since both of these colleges have mission statements posted on their websites that use that term.

Dordt College is called *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview*. Written by Albert Wolters,² this book lays out an argument for why Christians are called to renew everything with which they come into contact.

The argument goes basically like this: Colossians 1:20 says that Christ died to reconcile all things. That means that “[t]he scope of redemption is as great as that of the fall.”³ Christ died to make *possible* this renewal of all things, and we are now called to complete this work and establish His kingdom everywhere.

The obvious implication is that the new humanity (God’s people) is called to promote renewal in every department of creation. If Christ is the reconciler of all things, and if we have been entrusted with “the ministry of reconciliation” on his behalf (2 Cor. 5:18), then we have a redemptive task wherever our vocation places us in his world. No invisible dividing line within creation limits the applicability of such basic biblical concepts as reconciliation, redemption, salvation, sanctification, renewal, the kingdom of God, and so on.⁴

It will take a number of articles to look at this argument in detail. In this article, let us begin by considering what is meant by the reconciliation and union of all things in heaven and earth.

Who are reconciled

Both Colossians 1 and Ephesians 1 speak of all things in heaven and earth being united together. The Colossians 1 passage speaks of them being reconciled unto God: “And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20).

The Ephesians 1 passage says they are now being gathered together in Christ: “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Eph. 1:10). Since we know

that Scripture does not teach universal salvation, what is meant by this reconciliation and uniting of all things?

We should note, first of all, who these people are who are said to be united in Christ.⁵ It is certainly not speaking of a uniting of the church with the ungodly of this world. Rather, it is speaking of the uniting of all the elect, wherever they may be. The context of Ephesians 1:10 is speaking about how only certain people have been unconditionally chosen to be in Christ. They are the ones who are being referred to as having been reconciled to God by the blood of the cross.

These saints are now being gathered together. They are found among all the nations of the world. The second chapter of Ephesians speaks of how the elect Jews and elect Gentiles gathered out of all the nations are now being built into one temple on one foundation. Drawn to Christ by the preaching of the gospel, the saints among the nations are being joined together as one holy nation that has Christ as her King.

But what is meant by the uniting of these elect saints with the things in heaven?

The union of all in heaven and earth

These two passages are speaking of the glorious and everlastingly union that exists between the elect saints on earth and the elect humans and angels in heaven. There is an unbreakable bond uniting all the elect human beings, whether they are still on earth or have already been taken to heavenly glory. Yet it is not only the elect humans with whom we are united.

We along with the elect angels together serve King Jesus. The “angels desire to look into” the same mysteries of the kingdom of heaven that we enjoy looking into (1 Pet. 1:12-13). We are led by the same Spirit, and together eat the same Word of God as our spiritual food. We have the same Father and are said to belong to the same family: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named” (Eph. 3:14-15). The angels have the same eternal Father that we have. They also are called

² Wolters is an emeritus professor at Redeemer University College in Ontario, Canada.

³ Wolters, *Creation Regained* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1985), 72.

⁴ Wolters, 73.

⁵ The phrase translated “all things” is also found in 1 Corinthians 12:19, where it refers to all the persons who are united in Christ. Although it is true that Christ delivers the creation itself, Colossians 1:20 is referring centrally to the persons who have been reconciled to God by Christ’s death on the cross.

“sons of God.” Job was told that by God Himself when He laid the foundations of the earth: “all the sons of God shouted for joy” (Job 38:7).

While battling our spiritual foes in this life, we long to be more like the angels. We cry out to God “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,” looking forward to the day when all who are on the new earth will attend to and perform their duties “as willingly and faithfully as the angels do in heaven” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 49).

Those in Christ are like the angels, and long to be even more like them. Having been risen with Christ, we “seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). Those gathered and united in Christ have their heart set upon the same things—the heavenly things.

Indeed, Colossians 1:20 and Ephesians 1:10 are telling us that if we are holding to what Christ taught about His kingdom, our minds will be set not on the things of earth but the things of heaven. Those promoting society “renewal” are tempting us to join with this world and to keep our mind focused on earthly things. Yet the Colossians 1 passage they cite speaks of us being united not with this world but with the angels. Together with them we seek heavenly things, not earthly things. We truly have been “born from above” (John 3:3), and with Abraham confess that the heavenly land is our fatherland. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). This is our confession and our hope, and it manifests itself in what we do.

... to be continued. 

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

DR. BRENDAN LOOYENGA

Light and Time

“What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.”
—Saint Augustine

“And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good.”
—Genesis 1:3,4

The concept “time” is among the most commonly experienced, yet most mysterious, of God’s creatures. I call it a concept because defining *time*—at least in any meaningful physical sense—is incredibly difficult. Saint Augustine struggled extensively with this question in his *Confessions* (Book XI) while working to refute some of the heresies regarding creation and reality that plagued the church in his day. The quotation at the beginning of this article reflects the common experience that we all have with time. That is, we all have a sense of time from everyday experience; time is intimately familiar if no one asks too much about the details. But if pressed,

we would have a hard time giving time a formal explanation outside our understanding that “things happen” in a specific direction that runs only one way.

This is not to say that having an advanced degree in physics would provide a clear understanding of time. In fact, the problem of defining time has plagued philosophers and scientists alike since the days of the ancient Greeks, and is still essentially unresolved today. From the point of view of modern physics, there is no mathematically precise definition for time, or even any reason why it has to move in one direction.¹ As far as the equations that govern our understanding of physical reality are concerned, time can move in either direction and remain mathematically “correct.” But none of us are planning to experience last Tuesday anytime soon; our everyday experience completely defies the idea that this could happen, even if the laws of physics do not.

Which is precisely why our everyday experience isn’t particularly helpful for understanding some of the stranger aspects of time that have been worked out in

Dr. Looyenga teaches in the Science Department at Calvin College and is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan.

¹ Tracy, Gene. “A science without time.” April 25, 2016, <https://aeon.co/essays/why-doesn-t-physics-help-us-to-understand-the-flow-of-time>.

the past century. As earth-bound creatures with little experience outside of the comfortably predictable confines of our earthly home, our sense is that time is a fixed entity regardless of where we go on earth. Whether on a mountaintop or deep in the sea, our watches would predictably tell us that time is passing at a constant rate, and in a single direction.

Before we go any further into the mysterious science of time, however, it is important that we acknowledge the biblical view of time as a creature of God. Just like the matter and energy that compose the entirety of our universe, *time was created by God*. This is clear from the fact that Scripture deals with the creation as having a definitive beginning separate from the existence of God, who clearly exists “in eternity”—that is, outside of time (Ps. 90:2; II Tim. 1:9; Rev. 1:8). Furthermore, when the Bible speaks of time, it always does so from an *anthropo-centric* point of view.² That is, when the Bible speaks of time, it refers to the hours and days that we as humans experience here on earth. The discussion that follows regarding the “relativity” of time is not therefore a license to play “fast-and-loose” with the term in the Bible.

That being said, God has also given us the revelatory power of His creation as another sort of lens through which to see His glory (Belgic Confession, Art. 2). The specific “lenses” we now turn to are the collective laws of modern physics, which provide a mathematical description of what we observe in the creation. From the point of view of physics, time is a “fourth dimension” that acts much like a series of fixed snapshots linked together in order. From this perspective, we can compare the concept of time to the first animated cartoons, which were made by rapidly flipping through a stack of two-dimensional sketches in which the animator’s subjects assumed subtly altered positions that merged into a concerted movement. In the case of time, however, we would need to consider the position of every particle of matter and energy in the three-dimensional space (length x width x height) of the universe, and allow for each and every one to change position in every frame. If strung together into a single, wondrously complex animation, the change in positions of each particle would represent the passing of time—a fourth dimension to space.

² Mortenson, Terry. “Real Time or ‘God’s Time’?” Jan. 1, 2012, <https://answersingenesis.org/genesis/real-time-or-gods-time>.

But this analogy breaks down on closer examination because all of the components of animated pages in a cartoon sketch move *uniformly* as you flip through them, whereas time does not. In the case of time, the changes in position of particles throughout the universe would appear different depending on where you were watching the three-dimensional animation unfold. If you were on an incredibly fast-moving space shuttle, they would appear to move more slowly than if you were fixed in place. Similarly, if you were on Jupiter—or some other massive planet or star—time would also seem to pass more slowly than if you were on earth. Strange, but true. Why?

The answer to this strange reality is that God linked together time and space into a marvelously intricate and unified tapestry that physicists have dubbed “space-time.” Like space, which can be more or less dense in its contents, time is similarly non-uniform across the universe. Because these two entities are actually just different “threads” of the same tapestry, places of high spatial density in the universe that exert strong gravitational forces literally compress time, such that it runs at a *different pace* relative to places of lower density. Which is an exceedingly strange thing to say, since the word “pace” presumes a rate, that is, something divided by time. Like miles per hour. Or pages per minute. Or words per second. How then can *time* run at a different *rate*? How can time have, in effect, different speeds? Is not time itself the “constant” on which we judge rates?

On earth, yes, because every experience we have here happens under essentially the same gravitational force. But in a cosmic sense, no, because gravity is not the same everywhere. Indeed, *time is different depending on gravity*. This is not just idle conjecture. It was experimentally demonstrated by synchronizing two extremely precise clocks, and then putting one on a commercial jet while the other remained in place on earth.³ Because the effects of gravity are the same as rapid acceleration on a jet, the experiment nicely mimics what high gravity—or high density in space-time—would do to time. Upon return from the flight, the clock on the jet actually showed that time passed more slowly in flight compared to time

³ This is the famous “Hafele-Keating experiment” performed in 1971 using ultra-precise atomic clocks. *Science*, Jul. 14, 1972;177 (4044):166-8, <http://science.sciencemag.org/content/177/4044/166.long>.

on the surface of earth. So in the ultimate sense, time is not a fixed entity.

Then what is the constant to which we can calibrate rates, if *time* is not constant? The answer is the speed of light. This surprising conclusion emerged from Albert Einstein's work in the mid-twentieth century, and is explained by the laws of General and Special Relativity. Though highly complex in their mathematical basis, the laws of Relativity in their essence reveal (1) that time and space are simply different dimensions of the same thing ("*space-time*"), and (2) that all rates we measure on earth—or anywhere else—depend on the force of gravity we are experiencing. This ground-breaking work came from Einstein's unique ability to provide mathematically sound answers to unusual questions, such as what a person would see if he were able to travel at the speed of light.⁴ Though such questions started as Einstein's theoretical musings, their answers have provided the basis for our understanding of large astronomical phenomena such as black holes, as well as important physical/chemical relationships between matter and energy, summed up by the well-known equation $E=mc^2$.

But now the most important question of all for us. How does this knowledge—that space and time are inter-related, that both are warped by gravity, and that light is the one constant of physics—bring glory to the Creator? I would point out four God-glorifying aspects that we can extract from the laws of physics regarding space-time and light.

First, it is notable that space and time are not independent, but that they are related to each other as a single, malleable creature—space-time. When we confess that God is the Creator, we also see in His creative acts a clear demonstration of His power and divinity (Rom. 1:19, 20). But I think that we can be even more specific here, and point out that God's creation of space-time as a single entity also reveals His attributes of being eternal and infinite. Why? Because only a divine being that exists "above" space and "before" time could have created this one marvelous creature. Either/or is not enough; our God must be both eternal and infinite in His be-

ing. This is something we pray for as believers when we petition God, "Hallowed be Thy name." The Heidelberg Catechism (LD 47) reminds us that in this first petition we are asking God to "grant us, first, rightly to know Thee, and to sanctify, glorify, and praise Thee in all Thy works, in which Thy power, wisdom, goodness, justice, mercy, and truth are clearly displayed." The laws of physics point to the God of Scripture.

Secondly, it is notable that the very first creative act we read of in the Bible is God's creation of light (Gen. 1). Remarkable! Why? Because as we discussed above, the central constant in our cosmos is this very creature! No matter where you are, no matter how fast you move, no matter when you observe it, light moves at a constant speed. And as such, though we do not read that time was God's first creation, He in effect made that creature too when He fashioned light as His first creature. And so while Einstein's work may have pointed to the primacy of light as a constant, it was our heavenly Father who fashioned it to be His standard for the physical laws governing the Creation. A mere coincidence, says the scoffer. No, say we, a providential work of the Creator!


In the third place, I would point out that God's omnipotence over time is not only key to our understanding His creative power, but also to understanding the possibility of the cross. It was there that our Lord Jesus Christ suffered for sin, conquering it completely and atoning for sin such that we may have fellowship with God. But the puzzling thing about that atonement is that our Lord accomplished it in the space of just three hours. Stop and think about that. *Complete* atonement for an *eternity* of punishment for sin—in *just three hours*. No mere man could do this, regardless of his perfection, because no man could bear eternity in the space of time, regardless of its length. But we confess that Christ was not only man; He is God incarnate! As fully divine, He was able to bear an eternity's worth of suffering for all His people, compressed into a temporal space of three hours. No man could do this; but "with God nothing shall be impossible." (Luke 1:37).

The last thing I would draw to the reader's attention is how points two and three connect. Recall that during the three hours of suffering on the cross, the earth was bathed in darkness, as recorded by three gospel accounts (Matt. 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44–45). This event

⁴ Einstein's thoughts on hearing a bell tower sound the hour are a great example of how simple questions can lead to remarkable scientific insights. To read more on this see: <http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20160901-the-clock-that-changed-the-meaning-of-time>.

no doubt has many facets of significance. For instance, we see that *the* “light of the world” Himself (John 8:12) was obscured in hellish agonies; that the darkness of our sins was exposed on the cross (I John 1:5-7); and that the clear judgment of God for sin was being executed (Ex. 10:21-23).

But again, I think we can say more. If light—the first of God’s creatures—is the standard for time, its absence at the cross implies the weight of eternity being experienced by Christ. No, I am not saying that time stopped

at the cross. But for Christ, experiencing the hellish agonies of eternity, time ceased to exist. And to tell us that eternity was being accomplished, and that time no longer had meaning, God removed the standard—for a little while. But when the weight of eternity was accomplished, the light returned. No longer a standard looking forward to victory, but a standard for counting the days until *the Light* would return as victorious Lord of the creation! 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

MRS. MARGARET LANING

Things That Remain

How can one measure stress? Some use a numbering system called the Holmes and Rahe Stress Scale. Although any given event can affect individuals differently, some 43 events have been assigned stress points, to give a rough estimate for the general public. For example, death of spouse is at the top of the list with 100 stress points. For the child, it is death of a parent, with the same number of points. Divorce is 73 points for adults and 90 for children of divorced parents. A parent dismissed from work can add 47 points, while for the child of that parent, it adds 46 points. An increase of arguments between parents? Add 35 for the parents, but 47 points for the child. A senior in high school can receive 42 points, and so on. The authors of the scale propose that the higher the number, the more likely one may be at risk for illness—especially with a total of over 300 stress points within one year’s time. This is similar to the pain scale used in hospitals with a number system from one to ten—the higher the number, the more excruciating the pain.

There is another scale commonly used to measure stress—seismic stress. The Richter Scale assigns magnitude numbers to measure the energy released by an earthquake. Buildings sway, ceiling fixtures fall, shelves topple over, so the U.S. government has an educational campaign for earthquake prone areas. The slogan is,

Mrs. Laning is a wife and mother in Hull Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa.

“Drop, Cover, and Hold On.” The idea is to drop to the floor, crawl under a desk or table, and hold onto the leg of the table. Certainly, the higher the magnitude the more of a challenge this is when the table does not stay put. If you have ever been in an earthquake, you know you seek just one thing—something stable to which to hold.

In our trials, when pressure and strain builds, when everything around us seems to be collapsing, we seek to hold on to something stable, too. Whether our stress adds up to 10 points or 310, God uses events like this to teach us that He alone is our unshakeable Rock. He teaches us this by the use of illustrations as well. Earthquakes are for “...the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain” (Heb. 12:27). We must examine what we are standing on in our afflictions—is it the created or the Creator, the shaken or the unshaken? When we stand on what we thought was dependable but is now crumbling right from under us, we are standing on the wrong thing. Christ is teaching us to hold on to, to trust, that which will remain.

Our Protestant Reformed children understand, especially the ones in earthquake-prone Redlands, California, that tremors get our attention so that we look to Scripture. They know that earthquakes are birth pangs very similar to the painful contractions their mother experienced when they were born. These labor pains will continue until the return of Christ at the end of the world. Then there will be an enormous earthquake,

breaking the Richter scale. Christ is coming to remove the shaken in order to reveal that which cannot be shaken! All the sin, wickedness, and haters of God will be destroyed, while Christ and His unmoveable kingdom will be revealed in all of its fullness, glory, and majesty. We long for the birth of this new day.

Until then, we are prone to tremble with fear and doubts when the Lord gives us trials. Our home is destroyed. Our health or the health of our loved one is failing. We have anxious thoughts, fearing the unknown. Will the surgery be successful? Will the chemotherapy work? Our child is wayward. Our husband loses his job and financial worries keep us awake. Our spiritual enemies do not want us to be firmly grounded on the Lord. They try ways to shake us to stop trusting our heavenly Father. They tempt us to doubt God's love and inscrutable wisdom in the trials He sends for our good. These are the times, most especially, that God is turning our eyes to look on the things that remain.

God says to us, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). Our spiritual enemies try any temptation they can think of to get us from being steadfast and unmovable. One of the ways is the attempt to trick us into thinking our labor is in vain. This mindset can cause great upheaval. For example, if a Christian mother begins to listen to this lie, she leaves herself open to anxiety, depression, and loss of hope. She hears the world making those negative remarks about mothers at home in contrast to high praises for the career woman. Perhaps she is buffeted by a relative who tells her to hire someone else to watch the children while she finds a career to use her gifts better.

The mother at home may begin to think life is passing her by. She spends much time cooking meals—only to have them devoured within minutes. She changes diapers unending, holds crying babies while defusing sibling squabbles, scrubs and washes dishes and clothes—and wonders, is this all in vain? Everything will get dirty all over again. Is this why I went to school? Her sinful nature begins to get the upper hand and she feels discontented and trapped.

Throughout history, one of the tactics used on prisoners in forced-labor camps has been to have them do

meaningless work—dig holes and fill them back up, move stones or cannonballs to one location and then back again. Turn a crank by hand all day, or walk for hours on a treadmill staircase with no useful purpose at all. This was designed by cruel taskmasters to send the prisoner into despair and madness.

A mother who loses her sense of purpose may feel like a prisoner forced to do meaningless work. How miserable she is as she listens to her spiritual foes, who are the cruelest taskmasters of all. She is forgetting how valuable her influence, teaching, love, and nurturing are for her covenant children. How precious she is to her husband. Maybe you or someone you know is struggling in this area. Think of these three simple words: "in the Lord." No matter what our calling is, whether we have children or not, married or single, our labor is not vanity of vanities but victory of victories in Christ Jesus! This is a promise from God and we may not stagger at His promises. Even the smallest of tasks we do for others is the same as doing it to Him, when we do it for His sake. Our labor has eternal worth.

In a world filled with bad news, what glad tidings we have! The next time you begin to feel the weight of anxious cares upon you, think on God's glad tidings and have a few tools ready. For starters, call out to your little one to please fetch you a minstrel. Yes, the child is trained to know exactly what this means. Two small feet pitter-patter across the room. Dimpled hands clasp a disk and click a few buttons. Ah, the tranquil, meditative notes of the Psalter or hymn envelop the room. Peace and comfort spring up in the soul. "Sing with grace in your heart to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). Read II Kings 3:15, and see how God's good gift of music helped Elisha in a time of distress.


Cast off the jumbled, anxious thoughts crowding your mind and think on God's unchangeable promises. Try writing a few of them on index cards. A stack can be a helpful resource. Though nothing can replace the constant reading and studying of all of Scripture, God's promises are a simple, comforting way to meditate on His perfect will at any moment. For example, are you experiencing loneliness? "Then shalt thou call, and the LORD shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am..." (Is. 58:9). Impatient? "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart..." (Ps. 27:14). Fearful? "Fear not: for they that be with us

are more than they that be with them" (II Kings 6:16). Angry? "The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy" (Ps. 145:8).

There are so many precious promises. Try suggesting to your older children to write out a few as well. Or you might purchase a Bible promise book for them. Younger children may enjoy making their own book. Help them choose some Scripture promises, and let them write them out and color them. God's promises are invigorating, for they contain our highest hopes. He confirms them by an oath and His Spirit renders them powerful in our hearts.

There is an old saying that some Christians are "so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good." On the contrary, we are prone to be so earthly minded. We are called to "seek those things which are above..." (Col.

3:1). Clinging by faith to the immovable Rock is the key to holding on in this ever-shifting, tumultuous world. And pray—we pray and ask, not because we are so strong, but because we are so needy.

The world studies stress but will never understand how God uses these events to teach the believer patience and wisdom, to test us, and to conform us to be more like Him. We are so sinful and frail—how we tend to cleave to the created rather than our Creator! Our merciful Father uses the shaking up of the created things in our lives to drive us to Him. Whether in poverty or prosperity, health or sickness, we must learn that we cannot stand on our own. "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). 

CHURCH AND STATE

MR. BRIAN VAN ENGEN

Women and the Selective Service

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." Holy Scripture sets out the simple truth that God created humans as male and female right at the beginning of the Bible, at the conclusion of the creation history in Genesis 1:27. Yet as simple as this truth would seem, the world increasingly seeks to blur the lines between male and female. First homosexuality became legalized and even promoted by society and by our government institutions. More recently the conflict has focused on so-called "transgender" individuals, who act as if they are a member of the other sex or even try to become a member of the other sex.

While this behavior has been around for years, it is only recently that the law has begun to protect this behavior and penalize those who do not accommodate such lifestyles.

But the blurring of the lines between the sexes takes more subtle forms as well. The movement for "women's equality" has been around for years. However, this move-

ment has gone far beyond advocating that women are of equal value with men, to essentially advocating that women are no different than men, and that they should be expected to fulfill the same roles as men. This movement has recently manifested itself in legislative actions that may very well require women to register with the Selective Service. Registration for the Selective Service would be the first step towards actually drafting women to serve in the military. The history of this issue once again reminds us that we must be very watchful, because often seemingly insignificant actions by our government have far-reaching ramifications.

The issue began many years ago as advocates of "equal rights" pushed for inclusion of women in the military. The Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 was passed by the 76th United States Congress on September 16, 1940. It required all men between the ages of 18 and 65 to register with the Selective Service. As early as the 1970s, legal challenges were raised as to whether or not it was unconstitutional for only men to be required to register with the Selective Service. However, in 1981, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Rostker v. Goldberg* that because they were ineligible

Mr. VanEngen, a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, is a practicing attorney.

for combat roles, women did not need to register for the Selective Service.¹ Chief Justice William Rehnquist, writing for the majority, wrote:

The existence of the combat restrictions clearly indicates the basis for Congress' decision to exempt women from registration. The purpose of registration was to prepare for a draft of combat troops. Since women are excluded from combat, Congress concluded that they would not be needed in the event of a draft, and therefore decided not to register them.²

The combat restrictions referred to was the United States military policy that women could not be in positions that would place them in open combat. This legal precedent, which kept women from having to register with the Selective Service, remained the law from the early 1980s until the present. Then, in December of 2014, the Pentagon announced that it was opening all combat positions to women. This change in policy took place without a great outcry from the public. While some voiced displeasure with the action, stories concerning the change and the opposition to it barely lasted for a normal news cycle. After all, on the face of it this change would only appear to affect women who choose to enter military service and want to be engaged in combat positions. However, as is often the case, this policy change had far-reaching implications that are not readily apparent, implications that affect our daughters as well.

In April of this year, California congressman Duncan Hunter, who is himself a Marine Corp veteran, introduced an amendment to the defense policy bill, which provided that women would also be required to register for the Selective Service.³ Hunter, who is an opponent of having women in combat roles, introduced the measure, which he called the "Draft America's Daughters" bill, in order to bring discussion of the issue. Apparently, he anticipated that the measure would not pass, and voted against it himself. However, support for the provision was unexpectedly strong, and it passed. The provision was ultimately removed from the final version of the House bill by a procedural maneuver, but a similar pro-

vision appeared in the Senate version of the bill, which was passed. Since inconsistencies between the houses of Congress must be reconciled before a final bill can be approved for signature by the President, the issue will not be resolved unless the houses come to agreement. However, it appears that if proponents bring the issue up again, it could pass with bi-partisan support, since many prominent Republicans such as John McCain and Mitch McConnell have already voiced support for the measure.

Even if legislation mandating Selective Service registration for women does not pass in Congress, it is possible that a legal challenge could again be mounted by proponents in the courts. As was discussed above in *Rostker v. Goldberg*, the Supreme Court based its decision largely on the fact that women were not eligible to serve in combat roles, and therefore, exempting them from registration was not improper discrimination. Now that women are eligible for combat roles, this basis for the opinion has been removed. It is possible that the courts could find a different basis to support non-registration, such as the fact that including women in a draft would be counter-productive. For instance, the purpose of the Selective Service is to raise an army quickly if a large-scale war requires more combat troops than are available with the current all-volunteer forces. However, if women are included in the draft pool, this would necessitate sorting out which women are actually physically capable of performing combat duty, which would use precious time and human resources with less results, as presumably far fewer women would be physically able to perform combat duty. However, given the current trend of trying to ignore any differences between the sexes, it is possible that this common-sense issue would be ignored as well.

The question then arises as to what we can and should do if and when the time comes that the law requires that our daughters register with the Selective Service. Some would point out that even though failure to register carries a potential penalty of a \$250,000 fine and five years in prison, there have been very few prosecutions for failure to register. Nevertheless, it is our calling to obey the magistrate unless doing so causes us to violate God's law. Failing to register also prevents an individual from obtaining federal student aid for college or from employment with the federal government.

As with many other issues in this day and age, it is

¹ *Rostker v. Goldberg*, 453 U.S. 57 (1981).

² *Id.*, at 77.

³ Steinhauer, Jennifer, "Senate Votes to Require Women to Register for the Draft," *The New York Times*, June 15, 2016, at A10.

important that we as churches set out clear statements of our positions in regard to this issue. Is it acceptable for a young woman to go to war? If not in a combat role, is it acceptable for a young woman to leave her home and perform a non-combat role for the military? Is it permissible for a young woman to perform some other service in lieu of military service? If so, what type of service would be permissible? We need to provide clear answers to these questions, as well as clear statements demonstrating how our religious beliefs dictate our answers to these questions.

Under current law, even conscientious objectors are required to register with the Selective Service System. Then, if the person is drafted, that individual would have an opportunity to make a claim for classification as a conscientious objector. The person would have to appear before a local draft board to explain her religious beliefs and why they prevent her from serving. In the words of the Selective Service, "In general, the [person]'s

lifestyle prior to making his claim must reflect his current claims."⁴ It would obviously be helpful if the individual could articulate a clear religious basis for the objection. A conscientious objector who successfully states her case would then be placed in an alternative service program. This would typically be a job in the area of conservation, caring for the very young or very old, education, or health care.⁵ The length of time of service would be the same as what the military service would have been.

As the world changes rapidly around us, we know that the time will come when we can no longer in good conscience comply with the laws of the world. Our prayer must always be that we will be able to discern when that day arrives, and that our heavenly Father will give us the strength to stand in that day. ☞

⁴ "Conscientious Objection and Alternative Service," accessed September 30, 2016, <https://www.sss.gov/consobj>, Selective Service System.

⁵ *Id.*

GUEST ARTICLE

MRS. SHARON KLEYN

The Thoughts and Life of a Missionary's Wife

What believest thou concerning the "holy catholic church" of Christ?

That the Son of God, from the beginning to the end of the world, gathers, defends, and preserves to Himself by His Spirit and Word, out of the whole human race, a church chosen to everlasting life, agreeing in true faith; and that I am, and forever shall remain, a living member thereof.

Lord's Day 21, Q&A 54

The above Lord's Day on the holy, catholic church of Christ has always been a favorite of mine. I remember as a young person receiving comfort from the confession we make with an assured confidence at the end of the answer in those beautiful words, "I am, and forever shall remain, a living member thereof."

Mrs. Kleyn is the wife of Missionary Daniel Kleyn, stationed in the Philippines.

This confession thrills the heart of the child of God. The church in which we are living members is "from the beginning to the end of the world," is "out of the whole human race," and is "chosen to everlasting life." What grand words! And what an all-encompassing work! This work of the Son of God extends through all of history from Adam until now and into all eternity. It extends over the whole earth and to all nations and peoples. That God has gathered us into that church and defends and preserves us as living members of that church is a marvelous wonder of His grace.

For most of our lives, my husband and I have seen Christ's work of gathering in the established church. We heard the faithful gospel preached from the time we were very young. We were baptized ourselves, and since then have seen many more babies born to believing parents and baptized into membership in the church. We saw young people make public confession of their faith and, by God's grace, we also made the same public confession.

We saw young men and young women marry and become covenant fathers and mothers, and young men take up leadership in the church.

But now we are privileged to see Christ's work on the mission field. We witness this when, as the gospel is preached, some hear the truth for the first time, and believe and love it. One man said, "Reformed preaching always first humbles you, but then it gives you comfort and hope." We witness this when pastors gather to learn more of the Reformed faith and life (there are sometimes as many as 30 to 40 questions in a few hours of class time). We witness this when churches organize for the first time or reorganize on the basis of the Reformed confessions and church order (we started with one congregation here and now God has added two more.) We witness this when families come to know and apply the doctrine of the covenant (fathers start leading their family in devotions, mothers start teaching their children to pray at meal time and at bed time). We witness this when new members are baptized and added to the church (sometimes as adults or even as whole families). One of the joys of mission work is to be a firsthand witness to all of this. Although, we do also see the other effect of the gospel in that some turn away and oppose it. God's Word is a two-edged sword.

One of the main joys in the work of missions is to meet so many of God's people from a different nationality and culture, and to see that God gathers, defends, and preserves His people in all these different circumstances and struggles. The church gathered out of the whole human race lives in different cultures, with each culture and country having its own evils and sins and unique problems. Some of God's people have an abundance of material possessions and have to fight the battle against the love of the things of the world. Some of God's people face poverty and the temptations and struggles that come with that. Some of God's people live in a culture that idolizes man—whether that be man's knowledge and science, man's athletic abilities, or man's determination to make this world his world and force God out of it. Some of God's people live in cultures that are very superstitious and among people who trust in pagan gods or images.

One of the reasons that God gathers His church from so many different nations and so many of these different circumstances is that His grace can shine forth in all its power. His grace defends and preserves His people,

causing them to overcome the world, the devil, and their own sinful flesh in all the diverse evils and circumstances of their lives, wherever they live. We rejoice when we see God's grace at work.

In contrast to the joys in the work, one of the difficulties is when we see that there is so much work to do, so many requests for help, and we are not able to do it all. There are contacts and groups who would like more teaching, more visits, more guidance in organizing as a Reformed church. So often we receive questions and requests: "How do you teach catechism?" "What is the work of deacons and how should that be carried out?" "When can we become a Protestant Reformed Church?" "My brother is seeing the errors of Pentecostalism and wants to learn more about the Reformed truth. Are you able to work with a group in his area?" Often we feel, and are, inadequate for the task.

When we see the people crying out for more teaching and guidance and we are not able at this time to help, then we eagerly anticipate the arrival of the Holsteges (and also a third missionary, the Lord willing). But it is also a reminder to us that this is God's work and not ours. God knows (better than we do) where His people are, what they need, and even the exact time they need it. He is all wise. He sees the whole picture, while we see only a few details in our corner of His church. And He is adequate and faithful to supply all their needs in His time. The Son of God does the work of missions, not we. "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering and to conquer" (Rev. 6:2).

Aside from the above-mentioned aspects of mission work, life on the mission field can be very quiet and routine. When we were first on the field, there were many changes, adjustments, and things to learn. There was nothing routine about it! We sometimes felt confused or frustrated because of our ignorance and unfamiliarity with just about everything around us—the food, the climate and geography, the shopping, the way of communicating, the driving, just to mention a few. It took some time to learn and feel comfortable with just the day-to-day necessary activities of our life. Because of this our life was always interesting, sometimes exciting, and, at times, overwhelming.

Now that we have been on the field for several years,

a lot of these things have become more routine and our day-to-day life has settled down into something more “normal.” Our daily routine is generally rather quiet, and we spend a lot of our time at home. As far as the work goes, my husband (Rev. D. Kleyn) preaches in mainly two different churches on Sundays, leads pastor classes several times a month, as well as leading a weekly Bible study and catechism class, and being a part of other regular meetings (consistory meetings, committee and classis meetings). I am able to assist him in some of that work in a small way.

One of the main ways I “help” him is to be his traveling companion. With the traffic situation in Manila, we spend a lot of time on the road whenever we go out for church, Bible studies, and whatever errands we have. The monthly trips to Negros Island (Bacolod City and Sipalay) include a few hours in the air, several hours in airports, and around ten hours on the road. It reduces the tedium of travel to do it together, and is also safer.

The distribution and sale of Reformed materials is fairly steady. In the last six months we have had an average of twenty orders a month. The ordering and stocking, the sales and shipping, and the finances of the book and literature distribution give me a few hours of work each week. With the help of Rev. Kleyn and some of the church members, we also set up book tables at the various conferences, two of which were held so far this year.

Learning the language is an important part of living in a different country. A country’s language can teach you about the culture and people of that country. For example, being indirect in communication so as not to create offense is an important part of Filipino culture. In Tagalog there are many, many different forms of each verb, which allow a person to express himself indirectly. Also, respect is very important in Filipino culture and is built into the language. There are a lot of different terms and titles for family members, strangers, friends and elderly that express your respect for them.

Learning the language helps us understand and thus also relate to the people in their day-to-day lives. Although we wish we were faster and better at learning, we do use Tagalog words and phrases and can sometimes understand what others say. In this way we seek to show a respect for and interest in their country, language and people, and to convey that we have a long-term commit-

ment to the work here and have made the Philippines our home.

On the mission field God’s people are still learning just how far reaching and all encompassing the Reformed faith is. It reaches into every nook and cranny of our hearts and minds and encompasses every area of our lives—marriage and home, work and walk in the world, church and school. As missionary and wife, we have to be extra careful to be examples in all of these areas, as God gives us opportunity. We pray that, though we often fail, God can use us to show the Reformed Christian’s role as husband/wife, fellow church member, member of society in general, as well as pastor and wife with the congregations and with other pastors.

On Sundays we enjoy fellowship with our fellow saints. Often times, while my husband is in consistory meetings at the various churches (these are mostly held on Sundays), I have occasion to spend time visiting with some of the ladies. Also, over the years, there have been various sisters in Christ who are at times looking for answers to questions or struggles they are having. As new Reformed Christians, they desire and are often working hard (as we all should be) to align their lives with the Word of God and are looking for guidance regarding the Christian life. Sometimes there are questions about marriage and children, about their work, about which church to attend if there is not a PRC in their area, or about how to answer the questions or objections of a friend. In this way we help each other grow and establish close friendships.

Many people here work long hours, travel is not so easy, and Rev. Kleyn is busy. But we do have times when we are able to spend some relaxing time during the week with our fellow saints. We are sometimes invited to birthday or anniversary parties (these are important occasions for Filipinos), or we are able to have a day outing with some of the people. On holidays we have the occasional opportunity (if there is not a church meeting) to open our home to one or more of the church groups so that we can spend the day together.

We love God’s people in the Philippines and feel privileged that God has called us to live and work in His church in this part of the world. We invite you to come and see our life and the churches here first hand! ☞

Congregational Activities

From the bulletin of Lynden, WA PRC:

Banket making continues this week Friday. We'll start in the morning and continue on through the evening. Come whenever you can and stay as long as you can! We can use as many hands as possible! Come with no jewelry, an apron in a bag, and a smile. (If you don't have an apron, one will be provided. If you don't have a smile, well, we'll do our best....) Hope to see you there!

The PRC at Kalamazoo, MI began using their new organ in worship services not long ago.

Young Adult Activities

We hope our young adults plan on celebrating the 25th Colorado Young Adults Retreat from August 14-18, 2017 as it returns to Covenant Heights Camp and Retreat Center in the Colorado Rockies! You will note that the dates and location of this summer retreat have changed, as this exciting opportunity became available. The Loveland PRC Young Adults hope to see you there!

Sister-Church Activities

The Covenant Keepers and Covenant Keepers Seniors of Singapore invite all PRC young adults and young people to attend a camp from December 14-17, 2016. Those who are interested can email Daniel Tang at daniel.tang93@gmail.com. More info about this camp can be found at www.cerc.org.sg/ckckscamp.

In late October the CERC of Singapore arranged the examination of Brother Emmanuel Singh, a resident

Mr. Van Egdome is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa.

of Kolkata, India. This examination was with a view to Brother Emmanuel being sent by the CERC to Kolkata, India as a missionary. Pastor Andy Lanning of the CERC provides this background information:

For the past few years, CERC has been working with one Emmanuel Singh, a 37-year-old Indian pastor living and working in Kolkata. Emmanuel had been ordained by an independent Indian parachurch organization some years ago, but he had problems with the Arminianism he encountered there. In God's providence, Emmanuel came into contact with Rev. Haak through the Reformed Witness Hour online, who then put him in touch with Revs. Kortering, Woudenberg, and Van Overloop. These brothers meet with Emmanuel weekly via Skype to instruct him, and it was largely through their work that Emmanuel came to know the Reformed faith. When our colleagues judged the time to be ripe, they put Emmanuel in touch with CERC to see if we as a church might be willing to oversee his work. After much investigation and prayer, CERC took on the oversight of Emmanuel, including our own meetings with him via Skype and sending delegations to Kolkata.

Almost instantly, we were presented with the problem of how to oversee a foreign man on a foreign field who had no ecclesiastical connection to CERC. We viewed Kolkata as a mission field the Lord had opened to us, but we did not have a missionary to work the field. It seemed obvious to us that Emmanuel was the only one we knew who could labor in India, being the only one who spoke Bengali, but we constantly came up against the question of the nature of our relationship to him. Could we do mission work without a missionary? Could we oversee Emmanuel's work with no ecclesiastical connection to him? We more and more came to the

conclusion that the prevailing situation could not last, and that for CERC to do justice to the mission field in Kolkata, we should seek a way to call Emmanuel as our own missionary.

After much discussion, we decided that the only church orderly way open to us was to have Emmanuel enter the ministry of CERC according to Article 9. We judged this to be the best way, and proceeded to prepare him for his "classical" exam.

I say "classical" because CERC is alone in Singapore, which means that CERC's Consistory really conducted the exam. To make up for our lack as best we could, we asked the PRCA Synod 2016 for help in examining Emmanuel, and the synod graciously sent help in the form of Rev. Daniel Kleyn and Rev. Bill Bruinsma.

Emmanuel's examination was conducted October 29, from 9:30 A.M. to around 3:45 P.M. It was a draining day for our brother, but he answered the questions more than satisfactorily. His answers demonstrated a command of, and commitment to, the Reformed faith. CERC's Session approved the exam and declared Emmanuel eligible for a call to the ministry of the gospel in CERC as a missionary to India. The delegation from the PRCA concurred, and Emmanuel signed the Formula of Subscription. It is difficult to describe the joy that the Consistory and Congregation have today as the Lord has so mercifully led us step by step to this point.

We are thankful, too, for this God-given opportunity to spread His Word in a far-away land.

Rev. Kleyn and Bruinsma also conducted church visitation with the session of the CERC while they were in Singapore.

Evangelism Activities

Rev. Doug Kuiper spoke at Edgerton, MN PRC's recent evangelism

presentation. The topic was: "TULIP, the Reformed Flower in a Theological Garden."

School Activities

The Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies will be offering the History and Principles of Reformed Education course this coming winter at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. The instructor is Prof. Russell Dykstra. This course is open to all interested individuals. School Board members, parents, grandparents, teachers, and prospective teachers will benefit from gaining a better understanding of the history and principles behind the Reformed Christian school. The Federation has decided to offer this course at no charge for all participants, so now is

a good time to take it in! Classes will be held in the evenings approximately two times per month, from January through May. For more information and registration, visit www.prcs.org.


Denominational Activities

It is quite possible that we will welcome another congregation to the PRC in the near future! A daughter group of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI has begun holding worship services at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville under the oversight of Faith's Council. Rev. James Slopsema is scheduled to preach the Heidelberg Catechism each Sunday morning.

Mission Activities

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines

was hosted by the PRC in Bulacan on October 31, with Rev. Vernon Ibe chairing the meeting. The work of the Classis was mostly routine. Reports from the two standing committees were received and treated, along with some correspondence from the PRCA (stated clerk of synod, contact committee, and FMC). The above-mentioned reports included a proposed constitution for PRCP mission work, and a proposed pre-seminary program, both of which were approved and adopted by the Classis. The next Classis is scheduled for February 25, to be hosted by the Maranatha PRC in Valenzuela.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their sympathy to Jack and Karen Brands and their children in the death of their father-in-law and grandfather;

RICHARD MOORE.

May they be comforted with the words of Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their sympathy to Rich and Jane VanTil, to David and Sara Bleyenbergh, and to Jason VanTil, in the death of their father and grandfather;

RAYMOND VAN TIL.

May they find comfort from the words of Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength...Be still and know that I am God."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
David Kregel, Asst. Clerk

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, January 11, 2017, at the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by December 12, 2016.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour

December 2016

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Date	Topic	Text
December 4	"The Benefits of Fearing Jehovah"	Psalms 25:12, 13
December 11	"Man's Place in God's Creation"	Psalms 8:5, 6
December 18	"Remembering the Creator in Youth"	Ecclesiastes 12:1
December 25	"The Ruler from Bethlehem"	Micah 5:2