

# The Standard Bearer

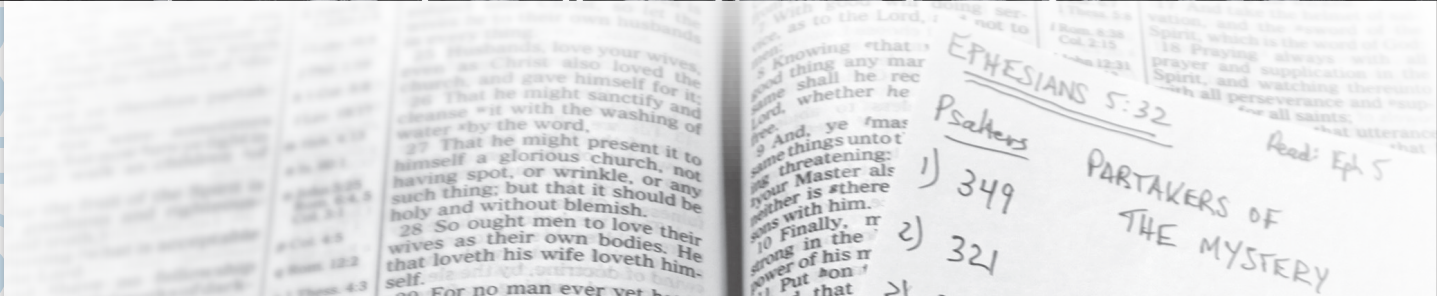
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2016 Highlights



Hull, Iowa

Synod



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### Cover picture of Delegates to Synod 2016

Standing: Ted Pipe, Chester Hunter, Rev. Steven Key, Prof. Barrett Gritters, Lou Regnerus, Brian VanEngen, Howard Pastoor, Rev. Clayton Spronk, Sid Miedema, Prof. Ronald Cammenga, Peter Adams, John VanBaren, Rev. Martyn McGeown, Rev. Andrew Lanning, Seated: Rev. James Laning, Alvin Bylsma, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Allen Brummel, Rev. Doug Kuiper, Rev. Garrett Eriks, Rev. Ron VanOverloop, Rev. Carl Haak

Artist: Jeff Steenholdt

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# Partakers of the Mystery

“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

Ephesians 5:32

**A**s the delegates to Synod 2016 gather, we represent Christ’s bride.

Ephesians 5:32 reminds us that the most important relationship in life, the most blessed revelation of the covenant into which God has taken us, is found not in marriage, but in that which marriage is to reflect. It is that glorious relationship with Christ that is our only comfort in life and death. In the consciousness of that relationship we live in the thankfulness of seeking God’s will in every aspect of our lives.

As is evident in the context, this glorious relationship between Christ and the church is a relationship that those who are married are privileged to reflect in the joyful union of holy marriage. But for our purposes, I would have us focus on the glorious relationship of which this text speaks, a relationship of which we all are partakers and that affects our thinking, our speech, and all our actions.

## A Great Privilege

What a great privilege is set before us in this text!

Marriage has been designed by God to mirror the covenant between Christ and the church.

Not to be overlooked in this context is how the apostle has come to consider marriage. He began by setting forth the heart of the gospel. In the first three chapters of this epistle he unfolded the wonder of the life that is ours entirely by the grace of God revealed in Christ Jesus, and that according to God’s eternal purpose to take us into His own household by adopting us through Jesus Christ to Himself. It is important for us to see that, especially in connection with Paul’s reference in our text to the *mystery*.

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*Rev. Key is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Loveland, Colorado.*

*This is an abridged form of the pre-synodical sermon preached in Hull PRC, June 13, 2016.*

This term *mystery* refers to that which God makes known of His covenant. It is a truth for which we were not looking, a truth so wonderful it can only be revealed by the Holy Spirit. “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant” (Ps. 23:14).

To know the fellowship and love of God Himself, to enjoy that profound and wonderful truth of God’s covenant, is only ours by the Spirit of Christ applying the gospel to our hearts. So John writes in I John 1:3, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” And then follows this: “And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”

The mystery of God’s covenant is the source of our joy!

The text speaks of that union between Christ and the church as the *mega*-mystery, the great mystery. The marriage to Christ is the most extraordinary, most blessed relationship, that a person can have. When you have that relationship, you have a relationship far greater than earthly marriage, the relationship that such marriages can only faintly reflect.

But the joy of this relationship is also the foundation of the life of the church, the bride of Christ, and therefore the life of the Protestant Reformed churches as well.

It is in the consciousness of being partakers of the mystery and the wonder of that, that we ministers must preach the gospel and minister to God’s people.

It is in the consciousness of being partakers of the mystery, living in the joy of Christ’s fellowship, that we rejoice in the bride being pregnant with the arrows of Christ’s quiver, to use the figure of Psalm 127, as He adds to His church such as should be saved.

What a blessing that we may gather as a Synod, rejoicing in what God has given us in the work of missions, not only in this country, but in the Philippines and India and Myanmar, as well as in assisting our sister church in Northern Ireland with the work in Limerick, Ireland! As we consider the needs for missionaries and the work that

God has given us, let us see these things in that light, as belonging to the joys of our being partakers of the mystery.

As we hear of the work being done in our sister churches and by those with whom we have fellowship to one degree or another in various parts of the world, let us rejoice in the acknowledgment that the bride of Christ is bigger than our small denomination and that others too are partakers of the mystery.

As we consider the labors of our seminary, and plan for the examinations of several students next year, God willing, let us see the joy of all these blessings as that which comes to us in Christ as partakers of the mystery.

The blessedness of being one with Christ is emphasized throughout this epistle.

Already in the first chapter, Paul spoke of these things in terms of God “having made known unto us the mystery of his will.” And in chapter 3, he revealed the purpose of his preaching being this, “to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid *in God*.”

In other words, this work of God’s grace, the gospel that Paul was given to proclaim, is that which reveals God’s covenant life. It reveals God’s covenant life as that life of unspeakable joy in the bond of fellowship and love. That which belongs to the triune God Himself from eternity He has been pleased to reveal by taking a people *in Christ* into His own household, into the fellowship of His life and love.

By Jesus Christ the glory of God is revealed in the church throughout all ages. We are partakers of that as Protestant Reformed Churches!

What follows is what the apostle speaks of as walking worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called (Eph. 3:1). It is to bring to expression in this world the fellowship of that covenant relationship with God into which you have been taken. That comes to expression especially in His family, the church—a church, mind you, made up of sinful people who still struggle with the effects of sin and with the old man of sin, even as redeemed children of God.

How can that be done? Only by Christ’s life coming to expression in us, His Holy Spirit applying the gospel to our hearts and minds. For us to bring to expression the joy of life in God’s covenant, we have to be living in

the consciousness of this life that is ours in Christ Jesus, the joy of the relationship in which we stand to Him, the intimacy of which can only be reflected in the intimacy of holy marriage. Lives of thankfulness flow from the *mystery*, the wonder of our fellowship with God in Jesus Christ.

What a privileged place God has given us to be members of the bride of Christ! What a great privilege to live in the fellowship of God’s loving embrace—especially when we know from what He saved us. The mystery is great because of what it took for that union to be established. Jesus gave Himself for us! He humbled Himself even to the death of the cross, to cleanse us and to take us as His bride.

Do you see why the apostle speaks of that relationship between Christ and His church as a *mega-mystery*? This is what life in the church is to reflect. And this is what marriage is to reflect! What a great privilege!

But what a profound calling!

### **A Profound Calling**

In married life husbands and wives are to reflect the great mystery, the joyful life of fellowship and love between Christ and His bride. The way you do that, says the apostle, is by “submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (v. 21).

Such a relationship involves a tremendous amount of work, an incalculable number of acts of giving, expressions of love, and efforts to change—all reflecting the relationship between Christ and the church.

But that is also the reality that our lives as members of Christ’s bride must reflect. That is the reality that our labors as officebearers must reflect. That sacrifice of love, that giving of ourselves to the welfare of the marriage of Christ and the church is what must also be reflected in our labors at this synod.

When we read in the context of Ephesians 5 that Christ had to give Himself for her, “That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish,” the inescapable implication is that His bride was filthy, nothing to look at in herself. That she would be made beautiful was all His work, the exercise of His love.

So, men, do not expect your wife to do all the work in making herself beautiful for you. We are not talking about something so superficial as her putting on her makeup. For your wife to be beautiful, to be the joy of your life, you must love her even as Christ loves His bride. You must serve her, give yourself to her, as the exercise of that love. That is your godly service. That does not take away your headship, the exercise of leadership. But it radically changes the expression of that headship, does it not?

The same holds true for us who serve the bride of Christ as His officebearers.

We have to confront that pride of our natures and cast it off. We have to do that this week, men. We have to be ready to listen to each other, to try to understand each other, and to labor together, all in the service of Christ's bride. After all, He gave Himself for her, remember, "that he might sanctify and cleanse (her) with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, of any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

There will be differences that have to be faced in synod's work. There are a few things on our agenda that undoubtedly will take considerable discussion, even debate. But may it be seen of us that we are all seeking the beauty of the bride and the glory of Her Bridegroom and Savior.

In the earlier chapters of this epistle, Paul had explained our being partakers of the mystery from the viewpoint of Christ fulfilling God's purpose in forming us to the praise of His glory.

Which is to say, that the church in her relationship to Christ is to love Him, to live for Him, to seek His honor and glory. And we do that, because of the relationship

in which we stand to Him—a relationship established by God Himself entirely of grace, sealed by the precious blood of our Jesus. A profound calling God has given us in that relationship to Christ! A tremendously blessed privilege!

That profound calling recognizes not only the mystery of the gospel, but knows the power of that gospel in our own lives.

That alone gives us to understand marriage as a blessed relationship.


### A Blessed Relationship

It is by God's grace revealed in Christ Jesus that you and I know the joy of the Christian life.

That is the mystery. That is the wonder of the covenant relationship into which God has taken us.

In the consciousness of this relationship He would have us live. He would fill our hearts with love for Him. Such is the blessed relationship of Christ and His bride. And that too is the Christian life, a life that comes to expression in marriage, in all our relationships, as well as in our ecclesiastical assemblies—when we are partakers of the mystery.

What a blessed relationship—to be expected by us, and to which we give ourselves in gratitude to the God who gave us a place in Christ's bride. Do not forget, the Christian life can only be understood and lived as we understand and live out of the doctrine of the covenant, the great mystery.

So we testify even before the world that that life in Christ provides a joy unsurpassed by anything the world has to offer. May Synod 2016 labor this week in that light. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. RONALD CAMMENGA

## Protestant Reformed Synod 2016— Partakers of the Mystery

**A**s president of last year's synod, Rev. S. Key (pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, CO) led the pre-synodical worship ser-

vice. The service was held in the sanctuary of the calling church for Synod 2016, the Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa. The service was very well at-

tended, as the synodical delegates, the members of Hull, as well as the members of the four neighboring Protestant Reformed congregations gathered for the divine worship

service that customarily precedes the convening of the annual synod. Rev. Key directed our attention to the Word of God in Ephesians 5:32, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.” He called attention to the ultimate covenantal relationship, the relationship between God in Christ and the church. He pointed out that only as we live in the consciousness of this relationship will we live thankful, holy, and God-glorifying lives. The message was a fitting word for the delegates to hear as they prepared to take up the work of Christ’s church in and through the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA).

### Synod’s Organization

Synod consists of ten delegates from each of the two classes that make up our denomination, Classis East and Classis West. In turn, these twenty delegates are equally divided between elders and ministers, so that five elders and five ministers represent their respective classis. In addition to the elected synodical delegates, ordinarily our three seminary professors also attend synod as advisors. This means that besides serving on committees of pre-advice, they are also given the privilege of the floor during synod’s deliberations. They may not vote, but they may and do speak, and thus contribute to the discussions that take place on the issues before the synod.

The first order of business after synod is lawfully constituted is the election of officers. This year the delegates chose Rev. Garrett Eriks,

pastor of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, to lead them as their president. This was a breakthrough of sorts. Not only was this the first time that Rev. Eriks served as the president of synod, but, at least from the perspective of this writer, he represents the very capable younger generation of ministers who are becoming the leaders in our denomination. I for one am thankful to the Lord for what He has given to our denomination in the younger generation of ministers—and elders—who are now assuming leadership roles throughout our churches. This is, no doubt, a clear indication of the Lord’s blessing on our churches—something for which we ought to be exceedingly thankful and not take for granted.

The other officers of synod were: vice-president, Rev. R. Van Overloop; first clerk, Rev. D. Kuiper; and second clerk, Rev. A. Brummel. The officers worked well together and facilitated the synod’s deliberations.

Besides the elected delegates to the synod, the sister churches of the PRCA sent representatives who were seated with the delegates and given advisory vote (the privilege of speaking). Rev. Andrew Lanning was seated as the representative of our sister church in Singapore, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC). Joining Rev. Lanning was Rev. Martyn McGeown, who represented our sister church in Northern Ireland, the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland (CPRCNI).

Although not an official delegate to the synod, Dr. Jürgen-Burkhard Klautke was a distinguished guest

of the synod. Dr. Klautke, and his beloved wife Ute, are well-known in the PRCA. Dr. Klautke teaches at the Academy for Reformed Theology (ART) in Giessen, Germany. He also pastors the Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde (Confessing Evangelical Reformed Congregation—BERG) located in the same city. For many years the Committee for Contact with Other Churches (CC) has had contact with Dr. Klautke and the BERG. Not only was Dr. Klautke given opportunity to address the synod, he was also able to give a presentation on the BERG and on ART to the members of the Iowa-area churches on an evening sponsored by the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA. We are grateful for Dr. Klautke’s presence at the synod and for the ongoing contact that we have with him and with our brothers and sisters in Germany. He and they stand very much alone in Germany. It is an encouragement to them and to us that we may stand together.

One of the first official acts of the newly elected president of synod is to call for the assent of the synodical delegates to the authority of Holy Scripture, the Reformed confessions, and the Church Order of Dordt. He does this by calling all the delegates to rise as he reads the Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity. That Declaration of Agreement begins: “Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the confession of the truth must be mentioned in the first place.” And it ends with the petition: “May the King of the church

work this faith in the hearts of many and increase it, and those that have received like-precious faith with us show the grace shown them in fellowship to the glory of Him who prayed that all His own shall be one in Him.” Thus began the deliberations of Synod 2016.

The material of synod’s agenda was divided among five committees of pre-advice, according to the Rules for Synodical Procedure. These committees worked through the annual reports of synodical committees (Committee for Contact with Other Churches, Domestic Mission Committee, Foreign Mission Committee, Theological School Committee, Catechism Book Committee, Board of Trustees, Emeritus Ministers Committee, Student Aid Committee, Finance Committee), reports of synodical officers (Stated Clerk and Synodical Treasurer), and material forwarded by the classes, including appeals and overtures, in order to bring well-formulated recommendations to synod as a whole. Besides the material presented by its standing committees and officers, synod also had on its table one significant appeal; more on that later in this report.

### **Partakers of the Mystery in the Work of Home Missions**

Much of Synod’s deliberations concerned the work of missions. Truthfully, it may be said that the Lord has given the PRCA a significant share in His work of gathering the church out of the nations, thus making them with us partakers of the mystery. Both the Domestic Mission

Committee (DMC) and the Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) reported on significant developments in their labors in our country and abroad. And both denominational mission committees brought to synod significant proposals that indicate that their work is expanding.

Great reason for gratitude to the Lord was occasioned by the report that the labors in Pittsburgh, PA have developed to the point that we no longer have a mission work in Pittsburgh. A Protestant Reformed congregation has been instituted in the city known in the past for its coal and steel—as well as for being a bastion of Roman Catholicism. After some eighteen years of diligent labor, most of them by our current home missionary, Rev. W. Bruinsma, and after many ups and downs, the Lord has finally made it possible to organize the fellowship in Pittsburgh as a congregation. The Synodical Deputies from Classis West reported that they attended the meeting of Classis East on May 11, 2016 that dealt with the request for organization and concurred with the decision of the classis to organize the Pittsburgh PR Fellowship. Synod approved this action of the Synodical Deputies and welcomed this newest congregation into our church federation. We pray the Lord’s richest blessing on the PRC in Pittsburgh, PA.

One of the most significant proposals that came to synod from the DMC was the recommendation to call a second home missionary. The work of this second home missionary would be “to develop a field of labor and then to preach and teach

on any field which the Spirit gives through his labors.” The grounds for this proposal as it came to synod were two. First, that a “denomination of our size and resources ought to have more than one home missionary.” And, second, that a second missionary “is necessary at this time for the DMC to carry out its mandate to find possible fields and recommend them to the churches (DMC Constitution, IV, B.)” Synod adopted this recommendation and appointed Byron Center PRC to be the calling church for this second home missionary.

### **Partakers of the Mystery in Foreign Missions**

The Foreign Mission Committee, although involved in other areas, is deeply involved in the work in the Philippines. It happens that our missionary and his wife, Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn, were on their furlough at the time of synod. The first stop on their furlough was Doon, IA, where the calling church for the Philippines is located. This also made it possible for the Kleyns to attend some of the sessions of synod, particularly those sessions at which the mission work in the Philippines was under consideration.

Rev. Kleyn reported on the progress of work this past year. Cause for great rejoicing is the fact that the Lord has led Rev. Daniel Holstege to accept the call to be the second missionary to the Philippines. Plans were set for Rev. Holstege’s installation at a special worship service in Doon on Friday, July 1, 2016. The Holstege family will move to the Philippines some time later this

year after other preparations have been completed and after their fourth child is born.

Although our second missionary to the Philippines has not taken up his labors there, synod adopted the recommendation to call a third missionary to the Philippines. The grounds for adopting this recommendation are that the reports of the missionary, calling church, emissaries, and the FMC indicated that there is an abundance of work, more than enough for three missionaries. At present there is much work that Rev. Kleyn is unable to do, and that even two missionaries will be unable to do. Providing a third missionary will enable the missionaries to expand their work of providing theological training for current and aspiring pastors, including investigation of the possibility of setting up a theological school in the Philippines for the training of men from throughout southeast Asia. Doon PRC will also be the calling church for this third missionary to the Philippines.

Through the report of the FMC, synod took note of the progress of the mission work in India, under the care of the Georgetown PRC and in Myanmar, under the care of the Hope PRC in Walker. Each church continues to send regular delegations to these countries in the hope of further developing the work in both these places.

### **Partakers of the Mystery: Training Laborers**

The work of causing men to become partakers of the mystery requires laborers—men who are

trained and equipped to preach the gospel. The Synodical Deputies of Classis East reported on the examination of pastor-elect Ryan Barnhill. Their report informed synod of their concurrence with the decision of Classis West to sustain Candidate Barnhill's *peremptoir* examination. Since the meeting of Classis West, Candidate Barnhill has been ordained and added to the ranks of the clergy of the PRCA.

Synod admitted one new student to the seminary for the 2016-17 academic year. That student is not a student from the PRCA, but from our sister church in Singapore, Mr. Josiah Tan. Mr. Tan and his wife HuiQi, have already moved to Grand Rapids so that he could finish his pre-seminary courses before the beginning of courses at the seminary this fall. Synod admitted Brother Tan as a diploma pre-licentiate student, who will take the normal four-year course of study. We count it a distinct privilege to be able to continue to train the future ministers of our sister church in Singapore.

There were no graduating seniors from the seminary this year and, therefore, no oral examination before the synod. This made it much more feasible for the synod to meet in Hull, IA this year. Next year it is expected that things will be different. We will then, the Lord willing, be confronted with the necessity of examining seven students, the largest number ever to sit for an oral examination before the synod.

The Theological School Committee (TSC) reported to synod that the seven students who will be

finishing their last year of study will begin their internships on July 1: Matthew DeBoer in Georgetown PRC; Brian Feenstra in Loveland PRC; Joseph Holstege in Calvary PRC; Jonathan Langerak in Edgerton PRC; David Noorman in Hope PRC, Redlands, CA; Stephan Regnerus in Southeast PRC; and Justin Smidstra in Faith PRC. It was reported that three men have completed their first year of study: Matthew Kortus, Jacob Maatman, and Darren Vink.

With a view to the examination of possibly seven men by Synod 2017, the TSC proposed an alternative examination schedule. According to the schedule that was adopted, synod would be divided into two groups with equal representation from Classis East and Classis West in each group. The students would also be divided into two groups and would rotate to allow all the delegates to hear half of each student's examination. The proposed schedule would allow the examinations to run concurrently with professors moving from one student group to the other according to the schedule. Synod adopted this split examination schedule for next year.

### **Partakers of the Mystery: Joint Partakers with Others Also**

An especially joyful aspect of the work of our churches concerns contacts with other churches, particularly through the labors of our denominational Committee for Contact with Other Churches (Contact Committee-CC).



The CC reported on labors involving our sister church in Singapore, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC). The CERC is overseeing a mission work in Kolkata, India, by the Rev. Emmanuel Singh. Brother Singh has applied to enter the ministry of the CERC as a missionary in Kolkata, according to Article 9 of the Church Order. Synod approved the recommendation that Rev. Daniel Kleyn and another PR minister be sent to Singapore to assist in this examination.

Synod approved the work of the CC with our sister church in Northern Ireland. That work consisted of conducting their annual church visitation, according to their request. This year the visitation was conducted by Rev. N. Decker and Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf. While in Northern Ireland, Rev. Decker preached at the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church (CPRC), of which the Rev. Angus Stewart is the serving pastor, as well as at the worship services of the mission fellowship in Limerick (LRF), where the Rev. Martyn McGeown serves as missionary. Rev. McGeown was present at synod and addressed the synod on behalf of CPRC and LRF.

The CC also reported on the request of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP) to establish sister-church relations with the PRCA. The CC acted on that request by sending a delegation of Profs. Dykstra and Cammenga to discuss this request and confirm the unity that we have and that is necessary for

the establishment of sister-church relations. The delegation reported on two extended meetings with representatives of the PRCP at which our unity was confirmed in doctrine, worship, walk of life, and church government. One more delegation will be sent to the Philippines with a view to a recommendation to Synod 2017.

Synod received an oral report from the delegation of Profs. Cammenga and Gritters, who had recently been sent to Namibia and South Africa. In Namibia they reported on contact and meetings with the leaders of five churches that have withdrawn from the Gereformeerde Kerken Suid Afrika because of departures in that denomination in order to form their own church federation. These churches are very open to future contact with and guidance from the PRCA. While in South Africa, the delegation spoke at the seminary (academy) of the Afrikaanse Protestantse Kerk in Pretoria. The five professors on the faculty of the APA, students, and visiting ministers and members warmly received the speeches given by Prof. Cammenga on "Calvin's Life and Theology" and Prof. Gritters on the "History and Practice of Heidelberg Catechism Preaching." The professors also spoke at and led a conference in the Bet-El Gereformeerde Kerk in Pretoria. This congregation is presently without a pastor. The members and especially the elders very enthusiastically received the instruction that the professors brought, in particular their instruction in the doctrine of the covenant. It should be noted

that the contacts in Namibia and South Africa came about through a longtime friend of the PRCA, the Rev. Slabbert Le Cornu, a pastor in the GKSA. The delegates also had some time to meet with him and his family (wife and eight children).

Synod adopted a significant addition to the Constitution of the CC that establishes very specific guidelines and procedure for their future participation in any ecumenical council. On the recommendation of the CC, Synod also accepted the invitation of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) to send observers to their 2016 meeting in Pompton Plains, NJ. Synod judged that sending observers was in harmony with the purpose and duty of the CC. Sending observers gives us opportunity to introduce the PRCA and to promote the distinctive Reformed truths that have been delivered to us. The CC is also to assess whether any member denominations might be candidates for future contact with our churches. The CC was also instructed to complete the mandate given to it by the Synod of 2015, that it study the constitution of NAPARC and make recommendations to Synod of 2017 about our continued participation in NAPARC.

### **Partakers of the Mystery: Psalter Revision and Possible Catechism Book Revisions**

An important aspect of the worship of every Reformed congregation is its worship of God in song. Synod 2016 had before it the de-

tailed report of its Psalter Revision Committee, a subcommittee of the Contact Committee. It should be noted that our committee is part of an interdenominational committee that includes the Free Reformed Churches and the Heritage Reformed Congregations. Included in the report of our Psalter Revision Committee was also a sample of the work of revision that has been done thus far.

Synod instructed the CC and its Psalter Revision Committee to continue their participation in the interdenominational project of Psalter revision. At the request of the committee, synod adopted the fundamental principles that are guiding the committee in its work of revision.

After examining the sample of proposed changes to the Psalter that the committee supplied, synod expressed to the CC and its Psalter Revision Committee a concern that the scope of the revisions has become too broad, both as regards changes to the tunes and the lyrics of the Psalter. This concern our committee is tasked with conveying to the interdenominational committee of which it is a part.

The goal of the Psalter Revision Committee is “to make the best possible Psalter for our churches, keeping it familiar in worship,” while at the same time “increasing the connection to the biblical Psalms, and increasing the singability and usability [of the Psalter] for worship.”

Synod concerned itself not only with revision of the Psalter but also with the possible revision of our catechism curriculum, another very im-

portant part of the life and work of our churches. Synod approved the work of the Catechism Book Committee (CBC) in publication and distribution of *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* in ePub and Mobi formats. But synod also instructed the CBC to poll our consistories with regard to possible improvements to the catechism books and workbooks used in the seven Bible history classes, including the questions and answers, the memory verses, and the amount of memory work. The CBC was also instructed to poll our consistories with regard to possible improvements to the Heidelberg Catechism workbooks. The CBC is to report the results of the poll and to recommend possible changes and improvements of the catechism books to Synod 2017. The Bible history catechism books have been in use in our churches for many years. There is a consensus that improvements could be made to these books that would enhance our catechism curriculum.

### **Partakers of the Mystery: Varia**

One item of a very serious nature on synod’s agenda was the appeal of an elder against statements made by his minister in a sermon that he preached on John 14:6. The elder charged the minister with teaching a conditional covenant. In turn, the elder had been suspended and deposed from office for his refusal to retract his charge against his minister and the charge of the consistory that he was guilty of antinomianism. Classis East had


previously treated the appeal of the brother and had rejected his appeal and sustained his consistory.

Synod did not sustain the appeal of the former elder in his charge that in a sermon on John 14:6 the pastor taught a conditional covenant. That accusation synod rejected. At the same time, synod judged that the consistory “erred in its wholesale defense of the sermon” because the sermon contains statements “that are confusing and apparently contradictory.” Synod also did not sustain the accusation of the consistory that the material brought before synod demonstrated that the appellant held to antinomianism. At the conclusion of its deliberations on this matter, Rev. Eriks, the president of synod, directed fitting words both to the appellant and to the consistory with regard to the way forward and offered prayer on their behalf.

Synod adopted a budget for 2017 based on 2,110 families of \$815.00 per family, an increase of \$25.00 from 2016.

Synod 2017 will convene on Tuesday, June 13, 2017, with Hudsonville PRC designated as the calling church.

May God bless the decisions of Synod 2016 for the good of our churches, our sister churches, and the church of Jesus Christ throughout the world. And may He be pleased to continue to use our churches for the defense of the truth of His Word, the gathering of His church, and the glory of His name.

For so “it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us” to decide (Acts 15:28). 



This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:32

HULL  
Synod 2016 Highlights





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Committees  
and committees  
at work



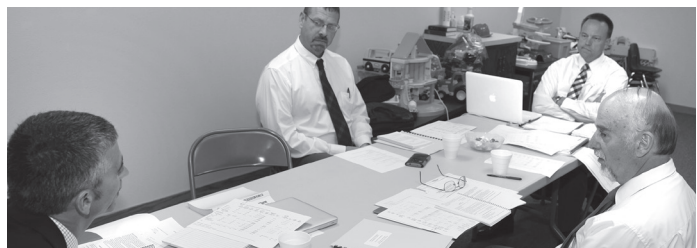
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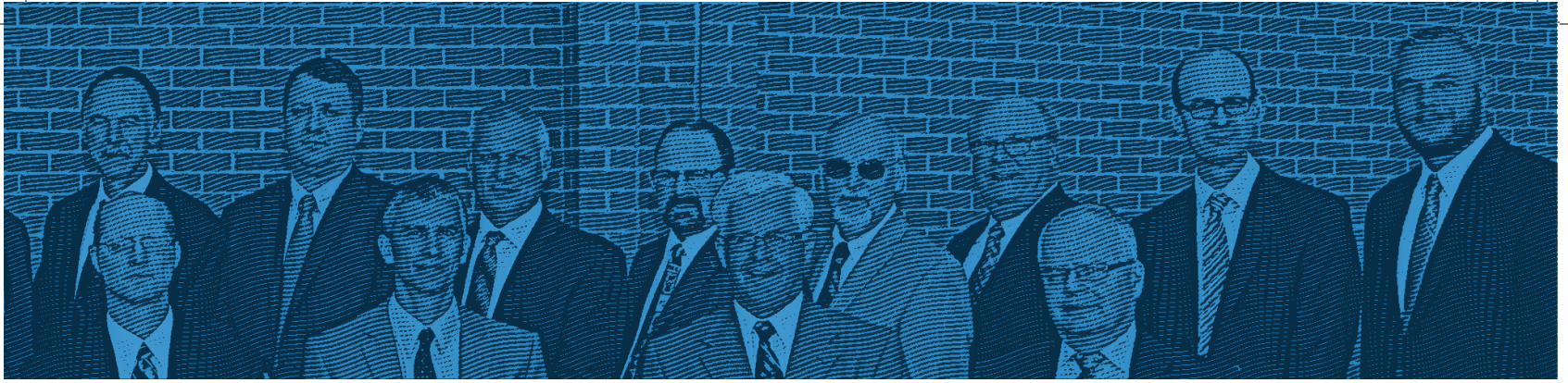


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### ■ Marriage and Singleness

While I did not expect that the special edition of the *SB* (April 15, 2016) on “Reformed Marriage” would address singleness, I was somewhat perplexed by Rev. Slopesema’s meditation “Two Become One.” Rev. Slopesema makes two statements that, despite my reading of his article multiple times, I still find confusing. I hope that the *SB* will give him the opportunity to explain what he means.

He writes, “Husband and wife complement each other in a most wonderful way so that together they can serve the Lord *in a way that neither could achieve alone*” (p. 315) and “In a single state, men and women experience *significant weaknesses* when it comes to serving God and enjoying a blessed life with Him in Christ.... In marriage the Christian husband and wife enjoy the blessings of their spiritual marriage to Christ *in a way that they could not find in the single state*” (p. 316, my emphasis).

If Rev. Slopesema means that marriage is necessary to the raising of children, I agree. But would a childless couple also find themselves unable to serve the Lord in that way? In which *other* ways can an unmarried Christian *not* serve the Lord as well as the married saints? What precisely are the “significant weaknesses” of which Rev. Slopesema writes? In what way is the unmarried Christian unable to “enjoy the blessings of [the] spiritual marriage to Christ”?

How does Rev. Slopesema’s position do justice to Paul’s teaching in I Corinthians 7:32-34, where the apostle teaches that the unmarried are able to serve the Lord “without carefulness” (or without the worries, preoccupations, or anxieties of marriage)? Did the unmarried Paul not enjoy fully the “blessings of [the] spiritual marriage to Christ”? And if marriage passes away in the world to come, where we are all actually seated at the marriage supper of the Lamb, will unmarried Christians, who have never enjoyed the earthly picture of marriage, experience any lack?

Both marriage and singleness are gifts (Greek: *charisma*, gracious gift; I Cor. 7:7), gifts given in love to God’s children. While we encourage marriage, it is not God’s gift to all believers. It is not a mystery (in the sense of enigma, riddle or incomprehensible wonder) that the unmarried “find fullness in the single life.” It is God’s good and gracious purpose for them, and they can, do,

and must serve God and enjoy the fullness of the blessedness of the mystery of Ephesians 5:30-32, even if they never experience the love of an earthly spouse.

Thank you again for an excellent special edition of the *SB*, and I look forward to a clarification of this issue.

Cordially in Christ,  
Rev. Martyn McGeown

Limerick Reformed Fellowship, Republic of Ireland

### RESPONSE:

Rev. McGeown finds two statements in my meditation confusing and would like to have more clarification. The first statement is that “husband and wife complement each other in a most wonderful way so that together they can serve the Lord in a way that neither could achieve alone.” The second statement is that “in a single state, men and women experience significant weaknesses when it comes to serving God and enjoying a blessed life with Him in Christ.... In marriage the Christian husband and wife enjoy the blessings of their spiritual marriage to Christ in a way that they could not find in the single state.”

It is important to understand the two statements in question in light of Genesis 2:18-23. There we read, “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (v. 18). Obviously Adam was incomplete; he was not whole. The Lord had commanded him to “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:28). This involved more than populating the earth, which Adam obviously could not do alone. It also meant that he must rule God’s earthly creation as king and do so in the service of God as priest. For this he needed a help that was meet or fit for him. Alone, he was incomplete and inadequate for the work God had given him. In order for Adam to see his lack, he was given the task of naming the animals that God had created both male and female. “But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (v. 20). Subsequently, the Lord made a woman from Adam’s rib, brought her unto the man, and joined them together into one flesh through marriage. In this marriage Adam found the

help he needed to complete him. And by being joined to Adam in marriage as a fit help, Eve also found completeness. Together they could serve the Lord and enjoy His blessings in a way that neither of them could do alone.

In my meditation I indicated that this incompleteness that Adam found and that was addressed by God in marriage is true of most, not all the saints of God. The second statement that Rev. McGeown cites is introduced by the statement, "Most men and women are incomplete in the single state."

This truth is reflected in the Marriage Form in the back of our Psalter. The form lists three reasons why God instituted marriage:

The first reason is that each faithfully assist the other in all things that belong to this life and a better.

Secondly. That they bring up the children which the Lord shall give them, in the true knowledge and fear of God, to His glory, and their salvation.

Thirdly. That each of them, avoiding all uncleanness and evil lusts, may live with a good and quiet conscience.

For, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband; insomuch that all who are come to their years and have not the gift of continence are bound by the command of God to enter into the marriage state, with knowledge and consent of parents (or guardians) and friends; so that the temple of God, which is our body, may not be defiled; for, whosoever defileth the temple of God, him shall God destroy.

Rev. McGeown questions whether this does justice to Paul's teaching in I Corinthians 7, where the apostle teaches that both marriage and singleness are gifts of God's grace (v. 7) and that the unmarried are able to serve the Lord "without carefulness," that is, without the worries, preoccupations, or anxieties of marriage. (vv. 32-34)

I hinted at this briefly in my meditation: "Although it is not the focus of this passage, it is also a great mystery that those whom the Lord has called to be eunuchs for the kingdom's sake find fullness in the single state. These indeed are special gifts to the church."

But what Rev. McGeown brings out in question form are good and necessary truths that need to be emphasized about those who live in the single state in Christ. Their singleness is a gift of grace. That gift of grace includes not only the gift of sexual continence, but also the gift of being able to live a full life in the service of the Lord without a marriage partner. In fact, God gives this gift to some in

the church so that they can serve Him in special ways that married saints cannot because of the responsibilities of marriage and family. And it must be emphasized that they enjoy the mystery of the marriage between Christ and the church without the joys of earthly marriage.

This, however, does not take away from the truth that the majority of God's people are incomplete in themselves and find completeness in the gift of marriage. In marriage "husband and wife complement each other in a most wonderful way so that together they can serve the Lord in a way that neither could achieve alone." And in their marriages these saints not only reflect the greater spiritual marriage between Christ and the church but are also able to enjoy the blessings of this greater marriage.

*Rev. J. Slopsema*

### ■ Concern for the Childless

In the wake of the special *Standard Bearer* issue on Reformed marriage, the article "Children: Calling and Blessing," and the RFPA blog post "To: Mom," I felt the need to write this letter. I am not addressing these articles specifically but rather to something lacking in Protestant Reformed publications on the family.

Our denomination has published countless articles, pamphlets, and books on bearing children and covenant generations. Almost every year another lecture is given about marriage or family building. This is all very practical and useful information. Parents *do* need encouragement and much grace in the joyous yet weighty responsibility of rearing children and faithfully obeying their baptismal vows.

However, I have observed a great void. As far as I know the PRCA and RFPA have not published any materials to provide consolation to couples battling infertility or to whom God leaves childless. Other than a brief, perhaps passing comment here or there, nothing has been said. Despite the fact that the desire for children is a godly desire (command), childless couples are expected to be silent and content. Infertility remains a taboo subject, even though it affects as many as one in eight couples. Ironically, as a denomination that places so much emphasis on the family, some *scorn those* who cannot have children or seek medical treatment for their infertility. Biting comments such as "Oh, she is a career woman" or "Adoption is fine as long as you don't end up

with a bad one” tear at the goring wounds that childless couples bear on their hearts every day, making them all too often identify with Hannah who was provoked by Peninnah (I Sam. 1:6, 7).

I would like to submit an open request to one of our ministers or members to write a booklet that discusses one or all of the seldom discussed “special cases” of remaining single, infertility, infant loss, fostering, and adoption. The sensitive subject of infertility is rarely broached, and Protestant Reformed couples are forced into an unguided quest to research what other—even non-Reformed—denominations have to say about such issues, trying to find biblical answers.

I will end with a little practical advice for the readers of this letter: If any know a married couple who are not expecting a child by their second or third anniversary,

there is most likely more to their story than “covetous selfishness.” Please be empathetic. If any are walking a childless trail of tears, you are not alone. There *are* ethical infertility treatments. Our daughter would have never been conceived except for the way God worked through modern medical treatment. And adoption is a wonderful means that God uses to gather His elect and continue the covenant line through our children. God’s answers to our prayers and His timing are always perfect. Though difficult, rejoice in your circumstances. “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).

Erika Kiel

Member of Kalamazoo PRC 

## ALL AROUND US

## REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

### ■ Dan Walker, Creationism, and the BBC

The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is probably one of the best-known broadcasters in the world. It is also one of the world’s most liberal media outlets. That is why the story of Dan Walker is so surprising.

Dan Walker is a Christian, the son of a Baptist preacher. And he is a BBC employee.

It is, perhaps, not unusual to find a Christian working in the BBC. We could imagine him as a gardener, or a cleaner, or an office worker. According to *Wikipedia*, the BBC employs just over 35,400 people. Surely there are some Christians among them. Dan Walker does not work quietly behind the scenes, however. He is a presenter. Nor is he a presenter for the BBC’s religious show, “Songs of Praise,” which broadcasts hymn singing from quaint old churches, and whose average audience consists of elderly ladies. He is the presenter on the flagship BBC news program, “BBC Breakfast.” The surprises do not even end there. Dan Walker does not work on Sundays, so that he can keep the fourth commandment and worship the Lord. Incredibly, Dan Walker negotiated a contract with the BBC—the liberal, anti-Christian BBC—that allows him to avoid working on the Lord’s

*Rev. McGeown is missionary-pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland stationed in Limerick, Republic of Ireland.*

Day. Even more surprising, Dan Walker is not a liberal Christian, or even a Roman Catholic, but an evangelical Christian. But the greatest surprise of all is that Dan Walker is a *creationist*.

It is this, Dan Walker’s creationism, that has attracted the ire of the liberal media in the UK. Among the liberal intelligentsia, creationism is akin to “flat earthism” or “Holocaust denial.” People gasp in horror: How could the BBC allow a *creationist* to present its flagship breakfast show?

Rupert Myers, a British barrister and freelance writer, who claims to be a Christian, wrote a scathing attack on Walker’s creationist beliefs in the *Telegraph* in an article entitled, “Dan Walker’s Creationism Is an Affront to Reason, Science And Logic.”<sup>1</sup> The subtitle of the article was, “The BBC has done nothing to explain how someone who believes in the literal truth of Genesis can present the news accurately.”

Myers’ article begins:

A news reporter who denied basic facts from the past such as the French revolution, the explosion of Mount Vesuvius, or the Holocaust would surely raise eyebrows at interview. Climate change denial, or a denial of helio-

<sup>1</sup> Rupert Myers, *Daily Telegraph*, February 11, 2016; telegraph.co.uk.



centrism, would be unlikely to find favour at the BBC. And yet they have just selected a creationist to front their Breakfast show.

Myers goes on:

A belief that the earth is between six and ten thousand years old, and that presumably God planted dinosaur skeletons in the ground to give us all something to talk about, goes well beyond the values for which people of faith can demand respect. The only difference between creationism and a church you could set up tomorrow which believes China doesn't actually exist is that creationism has been around for a longer period of time. Sexism, too, has quite a vintage, but we do not accord it respect for being old.... A belief in creationism may be a religious belief, and we must allow generous margins to the holding of such beliefs, but creationism falls beyond the spectrum. It should be consigned to the bin of unreasonable, untenable, fact-allergic nonsense. Creationists cannot be trusted to report objectively, or to interact reasonably with their interviewees and with the public.

At the same time, Myers writes, "As a Christian, I hope society continues to protect my right to hold beliefs and express them." However, for Myers, creationism is a toleration gone too far.

I have no idea what kind of Christianity Rupert Myers espouses, but he might want to remember that, while Christians do agree that the French Revolution took place between 1789 and 1799, that the Holocaust took place during the Second World War, and that China does indeed exist, none of these facts constitutes an article of Christian faith. The Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the bodily resurrection, and the existence of heaven and hell constitute articles of the Christian faith, which, I hope, Myers believes. None of those beliefs is acceptable to the sneering, liberal intelligentsia of modern secularism. Moreover, the truth that God created the heavens and the earth is an article of Christian faith. Indeed, it is the first article of the Apostles' Creed. While many theologians in the false church deny the historicity of the Genesis account, on which the belief that God created the heavens and the earth is based, the Lord Jesus and the Apostles clearly insisted that the Genesis account must be believed. To professing Christians like Myers, Christ declares, "Have ye not read...?" (Matt. 19:4). Indeed, Christ and the Apostles based fundamental Christian doctrines (original sin and marriage, to name but

two) on the Genesis account (see Rom. 5, for example).

Myers wants to believe in God *and* evolution. He suggests that, if evolution is false, God must have planted dinosaur skeletons in the earth to deceive modern scientists. God created the universe, and then gave us a record of what He did so we would understand. Faith receives God's record as truth, and then interprets the world accordingly (Heb. 11:3). Unbelief rejects God's Word, interprets the physical world without God's Word, and comes to the wrong conclusion. If Myers believed God's Word, he would understand that fossils were formed after the fall into sin (because we know that death entered the world through Adam's sin), most likely (although not exclusively) at the time of the great flood of Noah's day. Observational science does not conflict with the truth of the Genesis account. The philosophy of evolutionism does.

In a sneering article in the *Guardian* entitled "Dan Walker: It's Tricky to Trust A Presenter Who Feels God Got Him the Job," Catherine Bennett mocks both Walker's Lord's Day observance and his creationism, which she views as anti-scientific obscurantism:

Had Walker been in the Breakfast studio this week, covering the discovery of gravitational waves, Walker's refusal to believe in a 13.8 billion-year-old universe or his attempts to convert a physicist, could, after decades of Attenborough, have livened up BBC science coverage as never before.

Then she imagines how a devout Christian such as Walker might conduct interviews:

And even when the news does not conflict quite so egregiously with the final word of Walker's God, it is likely that any Breakfast guests who fall into various spiritually denigrated categories will be rewardingly aware that their interviewer thinks they are, with all due respect, going to hell.<sup>2</sup>

Walker is learning, if he has not already learned, the truth of II Peter 3:3-7:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Bennett, *The Guardian*, February 14, 2016; the-guardian.com.

of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

I personally find it encouraging that even in the secular, anti-Christian BBC, an evangelical Christian can negotiate a contract not to work on the Lord's Day. I wish him well, and hope that the Lord grants him wisdom to be a good witness both on and off screen.

### ■ The War On Gender Reality

LGBT issues have not gone away, and they will not be going away any time soon. The "T" of LGBT is coming to prominence. Indeed, LGBT has been expanded to LGBTQ2, which, in case you were wondering, means, "lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, questioning, and 2-spirited"! I would not be surprised if the acronym expanded to include other letters of the alphabet.

Transgenderism is coming to prominence because now "transgendered" people are demanding equal rights and protections under the law; and they have many allies among the powerful to help them. In transgenderism, gender is fluid; gender is considered a social construct; indeed, gender does not really exist. Gender is not a matter of genetics or biology, but a matter of self-identity. A person determines what he or she is. If a biological male feels that he is really a female, he must, according to transgenderism, be permitted to behave like, dress like, and use the facilities (toilet, shower room, changing room, etc.) that correspond to his "gender identity." Moreover, society must recognize his "reality" and treat him accordingly. This means, among other things, that society must call the man who identifies as a woman by his female name—Georgina instead of George, for example—and society must use the pronouns that "Georgina" prefers ("she," or even "ze").

The most famous recent case of transgenderism is Bruce Jenner, who now identifies as "Caitlyn" Jenner. In fact, Jenner's *Wikipedia* page now calls Bruce "Caitlyn" and has replaced all the masculine pronouns referring to Jenner ("he," "him," "his," etc.) with feminine pronouns

("she," "her," etc.). Jenner, by the way, was married three times and has six children by three different women.

Reality no longer matters—how a person *feels* matters. How a person *defines* reality matters.

Disturbingly, transgenderism includes children. A little girl who feels that she is really a boy, and is very unhappy unless she is recognised and treated as a boy, is encouraged to call herself a boy, dress like a boy, behave like a boy, and use the boys' bathroom facilities. Indeed, parents, teachers and fellow students are encouraged, nay, compelled, to recognise the little girl's "masculine identity." In the worst cases, hormonal therapy and sex alignment surgery are promoted to "change" little girls into little boys.

In New York City it is illegal to discriminate on the basis of gender identity and gender expression in the workplace, in public places, and in housing. "Gender identity" is how a person feels—does he identify as a man or as a woman, for example? "Gender expression" is how a person expresses himself/herself—he could be a man who likes to express himself by wearing a dress, high heels and a wig, for example. "The NYC Commission on Human Rights is committed to ensuring that transgender and gender non-conforming New Yorkers are treated with dignity and respect and without threat of discrimination." If you thought that was complicated, New York officially recognizes 31 different genders, a list officials say is not exhaustive! Among the genders in the list are "pangender," "trans person woman," "gender fluid," "non-binary transgender androgyne," "gender gifted" and "femme person of transgender experience"!<sup>3</sup> Similar lists are recognised across college campuses in the US and Europe. In New York a business can face a fine of up to \$250,000 for discrimination against "transgendered individuals." While a person/business will not fall foul of the law if he *accidentally* "uses the wrong pronoun" to refer to a transgendered person, if he persists in such grammatical sins (calling a "he" a "she," or a "she" a "he") he/she/they could face penalties, especially if the transgendered person feels aggrieved that his/her gender identity/expression is not properly recognized, respected, and accommodated.

The Obama administration is aggressively promoting "transgender rights" in the USA. US Attorney Gen-

<sup>3</sup> See the leaflet published by the NYC Commission on Human Rights, [www.nyc.gov](http://www.nyc.gov).

eral Loretta Lynch recently announced a lawsuit against North Carolina because of that state's so-called "Bathroom Bill," a law that means individuals must use the bathroom that corresponds to the gender on their birth certificate (perhaps, birth certificates and other forms of ID will soon not include gender). The threat behind such a lawsuit is the loss of millions/billions of dollars in federal funding. President Obama issued an order that public schools must accommodate transgendered students—by providing suitable bathroom facilities. There have been cases where teenaged boys who identify as teenaged girls sued for the right to use the girls' bathrooms, changing rooms, and showering facilities, the protestations of the girls notwithstanding. In another case, the school provided a "gender neutral" bathroom for a transgendered teenager, but he was not satisfied—he wanted to use the same facilities as the teenaged girls because he insisted that he was a girl. Again, the US Department of Education threatens the withdrawal of funding from non-compliant schools.


On May 17, which is apparently "International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia," Liberal Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau introduced a bill that would ban transgender discrimination in Canada. The problem with these laws is that the definition of hate crime, prejudice, and discrimination remains vague—until it is tested in court. But is it too far off the mark to imagine that a Christian church that refuses to recognise the "preferred gender identity" of a transgendered individual and refuses to allow him/her to use the bathroom of his/her choice will face sanctions?

Some private businesses have voluntarily changed their policy to accommodate "transgendered customers." The US company Target has stated that customers are free to use the restrooms that correspond to their gender identity. This means, in practice, that a man may enter a woman's restroom, and, if anyone complains, he can simply say, "I identify as a woman." Critics of this policy have argued that this makes especially women and children potential victims of sexual predators and voyeurs, not necessarily that transgendered people are sexual predators and voyeurs, but that others will exploit the law to their advantage. For example, there have been cases of men entering women's restrooms and taking photos with their iPhones, and there have been other cases of little girls

being assaulted in public restrooms. The overwhelming majority of women and little girls do not feel comfortable sharing the bathroom facilities, locker rooms, and showering facilities with men. The overwhelming majority of men do not feel comfortable with the idea of their wives, sisters, or daughters being in a bathroom, locker room, or shower/changing area with men. Despite protests and boycotts of such "transgendered-friendly" businesses, the trend continues.

It is tempting for us to avoid these issues or simply to view them with disgust. Who could have imagined that our society could descend into such lunacy and depravity? But we will face these issues soon enough. What will we do when a man who identifies as a woman walks into one of our churches? What will we do when he asks us to recognise his "gender identity" as a woman? What will we do when he asks to use the same restroom as our wives and daughters? What will we do when he complains that we have diminished him by not calling him by his preferred name and pronoun, and when he runs to the government to settle his grievances? Are penalties for non-compliant private businesses—and Christian schools and churches—in the pipeline? Some have, with more bravado than sense, suggested that if they catch a man using the women's restroom while their female relative is using it, that such a man will need to use the facilities for disabled people! Of course, threats of violence are not the answer, unless you plan to serve a prison sentence for aggravated assault. Christians do not advocate violence against anyone.

Fundamentally, transgenderism is rebellion against reality, which is rebellion against truth. A person refuses to recognise how the Creator has made him/her—as a male or as a female. The first sin was man's attempt to achieve autonomy—not God, but Adam will determine truth. Thus Adam will be like God, knowing (and determining for himself) both good and evil.

Jesus declared, "Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?" (Matt. 19:4). It seems strange that it is on this truth that the next battle must be fought. 

# Candle

The candle is a significant biblical picture. This should not be that surprising, since for thousands of years candles were a prominent appliance in the everyday life and even worship of the church. The fact that candles have little practical value and use today does not diminish their continued spiritual significance as an enlightening symbol for us.


In general, the candle symbolizes the presence, life, and knowledge of God. In a real sense, God gives to every man a candle. The spirit of man (that God breathed into him in the beginning) is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly (Prov. 20:27). But such light is not grace to all. God's presence indeed gives life and knowledge, but it also condemns man and his use of that life as unrighteous, unthankful, and wicked. There is no reward to the evil man, and in anger the Lord shall put out the candle of the wicked (Prov. 24:20; Job 21:17). His sentence upon man's kingdom and culture of sin is that "the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee" (Rev. 18:23). Only in Christ is God's presence a candle of grace. Knowing this, the believer joyfully exclaims, "Thou wilt light my candle; the Lord God will enlighten my darkness" (Ps. 18:28). This candle of the righteous shines so he can walk in darkness (Job 29:3). The smoking flax (wick) of this candle the Lord will never quench (Is. 42:3). And the candle of the virtuous woman goes not out by night, not merely because her godly care knows no limits, but because she lives constantly in the light of God's gracious presence.

The candle is also a glorious picture of the church. A notable feature in the tabernacle was the menorah, a splendid seven-branched candlestick. It is mentioned 22 times in the Torah, including how the Lord ordered it to be crafted out of pure gold, decorated with gold almond blossoms, and fueled by the purest olive oil (Ex. 25:31-35). When moved, it was to be carefully wrapped in fine blue cloth, protected in a leather case, and carried on a pole. When at rest in God's house, it was to be lit

every night. And on the day of dedication, the Lord gave special instruction from behind the veil that its candles were to be mounted to illuminate the way to His mercy (Num. 7:89-8:4). Night and day, the Lord was always home, blessing His covenant people with the light of His Spirit, guiding them to His unfailing grace through His atoning sacrifice.

This picture finds further development in the new covenant vision of the seven golden candlesticks (Rev. 1:11-13). Here, the candles represent more clearly, not simply the presence of God with us, but the church itself as she lives in the world—distinct yet united, imperfect yet glorious in righteousness and works of holiness, by Christ in their midst by His Spirit (Rev. 1:20). As a candle, the church is a continual witness to the grace and glory of God enlightening them before the whole earth (Rev. 11:4). And if any particular church stubbornly refuses to be such a witness by leaving her love for the Lord to walk with the world in unrighteousness, the Lord can and does remove such a candle out of its place (Rev. 2:5).

As candles lit by the Holy Spirit of Christ in the midst of a world dark with sin, the true church and her members have only one purpose: to broadcast the light in us of the power of God's grace to forgive sins, sanctify, and give eternal life. Unlit candles are useless. So are flickering ones. To shine brightly, the whole body must be full of light. Take heed, therefore, that the light in you be not darkness (Luke 11:35-36). Equally useless are bright candles hidden in foolishness, fear, or shame. Candles are not meant to be placed under a bed or a bushel (Mark 4:21). Jesus said, "You are the light of the world; a city set on an hill that cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:14-16).

Yet, in spite of their significance and value here, in the new creation all this changes. There will be no candles there. Not one. Why? Because there in Jesus' presence, there shall be no night, only day; and no darkness, only light (Rev. 22:5). 

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*Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

May 11, 2016

Providence PRC

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 2016 at the Providence PRC. This was the first time that Providence has hosted a meeting of classis. The churches were each represented by two delegates. Rev. G. Eriks was the chairman for this session.

In its first order of business, classis approved the organization of a new congregation in Pittsburgh, PA. The request for organization came via the Council of Southwest PRC. A sizeable delegation from Pittsburgh was present, as was the current home missionary, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma. The delegates *ad examina* from Classis West were present as well and gave concurrence to the decision of classis to organize this congregation. Southwest PRC was given the responsibility to organize this congregation. Rev. A. den Hartog was appointed as its moderator. Needless to say, this was a joyous moment for the classis as God, through the ardent work of its missionary, gave our churches another congregation. The new congregation will consist of six families (seven if the pastor is included) and five confessing adults. Two more adults are in the process of making profession of faith.

Classis considered two protests against the decisions of the January, 2016 Classis regarding the sustaining of a charge of antinomianism against an appellant. The first protestant contended that classis, in its January 2016 decision, adopted grounds that were illogical and contradictory. Further, he contended that Article 79 of the Church Order was misapplied since, he argued, that Article 79 applied only to public sins. Finally, the protestant contended that a countercharge of antinomianism interfered with the protest and appeal process. Classis did not sustain this protest. Classis adopted the advice of its committee of pre-advice that 1) Article 31 does not prohibit a consistory from bringing a charge of sin in the course of a protest or appeal; 2) Article 79 was not used by classis as a ground in its January 2016 decision; and 3) The decision of classis in January

2016 gave proof for its upholding the consistory's charge of antinomianism against the appellant. The protestant failed to cite this part of classis' decision. Classis further decided that the recommendation made was not legally before the classis since the requirements of Article 31 of the Church Order had not been met.

The second protestant contended on the basis of Ezekiel 33:6,7 and Article 31 of the Church Order that the right of a believer and/or officebearer who is protesting or appealing, as compelled by their conscience, is prevented or hindered when charges of sin are brought against him in the course of considering his protest. Classis did not sustain this protest since the brother who brought the appeal to the January 2016 classis has indeed filed his appeal to synod. Classis further ruled that it is legitimate for a consistory to raise a charge of sin when there is sufficient evidence of an unbiblical or un-Reformed position set forth in a protest or appeal.

A notice of appeal to Synod 2016 was received from the brother whose appeal against his consistory had been adjudicated at the January 2016 meeting of classis. Classis took note of this appeal and further informed synod: 1) that the brother fails to comply with the Rules of Synod that apply to protests, appeals, and overtures, which require brevity and exclude the bringing of new material regarding the appeal; and 2) that the appellant adds new explanations that show agreement with classis' and his consistory's decisions regarding his appeal.

In other business, classis received the report of the church visitors, entered closed session to deal with matters of discipline, adopted a classical appointment schedule for Holland PRC and the new Pittsburgh congregation, transferred the Ministerial Credentials of Rev. Daniel Holstege to Classis West, appointed Rev. C. Haak as the moderator for Holland PRC, and approved expenses for the classis' meeting of \$1,868.33

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at Southwest PRC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

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

### Evangelism Activities

In conjunction with the issue published on April 15 on the subject of "Reformed Marriage," we draw

attention to a recent tract the evangelism committee of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA published under the title "The Marriage Bond Is a Life-

long Bond,” written by Joel Sugg, a beloved member of the Redlands congregation, now passed on to glory. This tract is extremely beneficial for parents to use in instructing their children on this important subject, or for individual members to use in witnessing to this truth in the world. It is concise, well organized, and scripturally based. It can be scanned effectively in just a few minutes, and read meaningfully in no more than half an hour. In February, two copies of this tract were mailed to all our churches’ evangelism committees along with the electronic file allowing them to print more copies. If you desire a copy of this tract, please speak to a member of your evangelism committee. You can request a copy through mail at 1307 E. Brockton Ave, Redlands, CA. 92374 or through email at evangelismhopeprc@gmail.com.

### **Denominational Activities**

Classis East met May 11 at Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Classis treated a request to organize the fellowship in Pittsburgh, PA as a congregation. This request came with the approval of the calling church, Southwest PRC in Grand Rapids, MI, and the Domestic Mission Committee. With humble thanksgiving to God, and with the concurrence of the synodical deputies of Classis West, Classis East approved this request. Official organization took place June 24, with Rev. Arie denHartog appointed as their moderator. The group numbers 16 confessing members and 15 baptized children. Two protests were brought against a previous decision of Classis. Classis upheld the decision of Classis East in January and did not sustain these protests against that decision.

(See the Stated Clerk’s report in this issue for more information.)

On behalf of the Contact Committee of the PRC, Professors Ronald Cammenga and Barry Gritters traveled to Namibia and South Africa in late May and early June. They lectured in South Africa for previous contacts, as well as for some new ones. New developments in the Namibian churches visited in 2010 prompted these churches to ask for another visit. Please pray that the Lord prospers these efforts in the promotion of the Reformed faith

Also, Prof. Russell Dykstra and his wife are spending about seven weeks among the saints in Singapore beginning June 12. He spoke at the young people’s retreat on June 23-25 on the topic “Love Made Perfect.”

On behalf of the denominational Contact Committee, Calvary PRC in Hull, IA hosted a speech by Dr. J. Klautke, pastor of the BERG in Germany, in connection with his visit to the PRC Synod. Refreshments followed.

### **Mission Activities**

For two days in May the three Reformed Witness Hour radio pastors converged on the Protestant Reformed Fellowship in the Forest Hills area of Pittsburgh, PA. The purpose was a Spring Seminar weekend event entitled “Building a Godly Family.” Rev. Rodney Kleyn’s speech, titled “Prime Material,” spoke to the single believer in the church. Rev. Carl Haak’s speech, titled “Careful Selection,” addressed how to find and select the right person with whom one can construct a godly marriage and family. Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma’s speech, titled “Meticulous Construction,” spoke to the need of a husband

and wife to pay careful attention to the details of their home and family. A very beneficial topic in every age of history—and especially today!

May 9 was the national Election Day in the Republic of the Philippines. Mayor Rody Duterte won the presidential election with Leny Robredo (a lady) chosen to become the new vice-president. Rev. and Sharon Kleyn were not allowed to vote but many of the members of the PRCP did. Most polling took place in the area schools with school teachers instrumental in the counting of the votes.

The most recent Classis meeting of the PRCP was held in the Maranatha PRC of Valenzuela City on June 13. This Classis approved the examination of Pastor Leovino Trinidad. Rev. Kleyn and his wife left the next day on furlough to the USA for six weeks, with Rev. Richard Smit preaching in the Philippines for four weeks beginning June 19. His son Jay is accompanying him.

### **Congregational Activities**

The city of Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada was at the center of massive wild fires in May. This city lies about four hours northeast of our First PRC of Edmonton. The residents of Edmonton had no effects of the fire except that nearly 20,000 of the 88,000 evacuees ended up in their city. Over 2,400 buildings were destroyed in Fort McMurray, and prevailing north winds brought the smoky fog as far south as our congregations located in Iowa, South Dakota, and Minnesota. As we saw some of the footage of cars driving with flames dangerously close and residents speaking of the fear that gripped them during the evacuation,

we could not help but think of the Judgment Day when terror will cause those who reject God to call for the rocks to fall upon them. May God use such events to bring His own closer to Himself as the day of our Lord's return nears!

The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Hope PRC was celebrated on June 10. A program included a meditation entitled "A House Built by Christ," singing by various Hope groups, a Power-Point presentation, and a panel discussion with refreshments following. A century is quite a milestone! We give thanks with all in Hope church for the faithfulness of God through the years!

### Minister Activities

Following the recent acceptance of the call to serve as second missionary to the Philippines by her previous

pastor, Rev. Daniel Holstege, on Sunday, May 15, 2016 First PRC of Holland, MI announced a trio of Revs. Allen Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Garry Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), and Brian Huizinga (Hope PRC, Redlands, CA) from which to call a new pastor. On May 22 a call was issued to Rev. Eriks, and after careful consideration, on June 12 he declined this call.

### School Activities

Many school graduations have come and gone recently. We note a special one here. The Wingham Protestant Reformed School in Wingham, Ontario, Canada recently held its very first graduation. In this first year of classes there were 16 students in grades 1-8, with one graduate making history and graduating from eighth grade! The school meets in class-

rooms located in the church building and the board is aspiring to add a ninth grade for the next school year. An additional teacher is being sought to assist as the school continues to grow. All the families of Wingham PRC who have school age children thankfully send them to their own school. We celebrate with the graduate and with the constituency there as God has made their own school a reality! May He be praised! And what a blessing our own covenant schools are to our families and congregations! There is more than a bit of truth to the statement made long, long ago: "As the school goes, so goes the church."

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

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Adult Fellowship Society of Hope PRC Redlands, CA, expresses their Christian sympathy to members Steve and Neva Feenstra and Glenn and Beth Feenstra, in the passing to glory of their mother,

#### MRS. FRAN DOEZEMA.

May they find comfort in knowing that "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Brian Huizinga, President  
Linda Smit, secretary

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to Dan and Judy Key, and to Jonathan and Michelle Key and Brian Key, in the death of their granddaughter and niece,

#### BRYNN KEY.

May they remember the words of Christ in Mark 10:14: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President  
Dave Kregel, Assistant Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC extend their sympathy to Cornelius Doezema, to Roger and Anne Veldman, and to Tim and Joan Kaiser and their families in the death of their wife, mother, and grandmother,

#### FRANCES DOEZEMA.

May they find comfort in the words of David in Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President  
Dave Kregel, Assistant Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their sympathy to Phyllis Bylsma and to Tim and Sharon Rus in the death of their mother,

#### BETTY BYLSMA.

May they find comfort in the words of David in Psalm 63:1: "O God, thou art my God: early will I seek thee..."

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President  
Dave Kregel, Assistant Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ With thanksgiving and gratitude to God, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

#### AUGUST and MARGARET

#### HOLLEMA,

on June 5, 2016. We thank them for their godly example and instruction they provide us and for their constant love, encouragement, and support they continually give. May our heavenly Father bless them and their marriage as He has done so faithfully in the past. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and His greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

☺ Dan and Diane DeRooy,  
Christopher, Rachael

☺ David and Esther Hollema,  
Alexander, Zachary, Madison, Jakob  
Loveland, Colorado

*Standard Bearer*

1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137

PERIODICAL  
POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
AT JENISON,  
MICHIGAN

**Wedding Anniversary**

■ On July 8, 2016 our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents, **IRV and BARB VELTHOUSE**, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them and thank our heavenly Father for blessing them with many years of marriage and for the love and instruction given to us through them. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them and keep them in His care in the days and years ahead. Psalm 103:17, 18 “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.”

- ☼ Dan and Dawn Zandstra  
Bartosz and Michelle Grochowski  
(Garreck, Myles)  
Todd and Joy Zandstra (Felicity)  
Danielle, Brittany
- ☼ Mark and Amy Oomkes  
Taylor, Lisa
- ☼ Dan and Kari Timmerman  
Alec, Cherie, Grant
- ☼ Pete and Sara Byker  
Hailey, Tessa, Emma, Jack, Samuel  
Hudsonville, Michigan

**Wedding Anniversary**

■ With thankfulness to God, we celebrate the 65th wedding anniversary of

**DAVE and SUSAN ZYLSTRA**

on July 13, 2016. Their wedding text is as applicable now as it was 65 years ago: “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer” (Romans 12:12). We are also thankful for the blessing of their godly instruction to us, their children, grand and great grandchildren. “But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children’s children; to such as keep his covenant and to those that remember his commandments to do them” (Psalm 103:17, 18).

- ☼ John and Hilda Zylstra
- ☼ Marty and Adeline Zylstra
- ☼ Herman and Geri Klaassens
- ☼ Clayton and Jackie deGroot
- ☼ John and Arlene Goutbeck
- ☼ Ed and Patricia Huizing
- ☼ Rick and Marsha Span
- ☼ Tim and Jill Zylstra
- ☼ Joe and Valerie Van Gelderen
- ☼ Rhoda Hendricks  
77 grandchildren & Ryan in glory  
122 great grandchildren  
Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

■ **PRICE INCREASE FOR STANDARD BEARER BOUND VOLUMES**—Binding new issues: \$42.00. Binding own issues: \$24.00.

**Teacher Needed**

■ The Board of Reformed Heritage Christian School is accepting resumes for a full-time high school and junior high math/science teacher for the 2016-17 school year. Reformed Heritage is committed to teaching covenant students from a distinctively Reformed perspective. Our goal is to train our young people to grow academically, think biblically, and be servants of Christ in all endeavors of life. If you would like more information about our school visit the website: [www.refhcs.org](http://www.refhcs.org).

A cover letter and resume can be mailed to: Reformed Heritage Christian School, 700 N. Fletcher Ave., Kalamazoo, MI. 49006. Attn: Mr. Dave Vander Meer or email: [dnjvm5@att.net](mailto:dnjvm5@att.net)

**Classis East Notice**

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 2016 at the Southwest PRC, Grandville, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 15, 2016.

Jon J. Huisken  
Stated Clerk

**Classis West Notice**

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Randolph, WI, on Wednesday, September 28, 2016, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Material for inclusion in the agenda must be in my hands by Monday, August 29. Delegates should be aware that an officebearers’ conference is being planned for Tuesday, September 27. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should contact Randolph’s clerk, Mr. George Vroom, 920-296-9634, <mailto:george@vrooml.com>.

Rev. Doug Kuiper,  
Stated Clerk of Classis West

*Reformed Witness Hour*  
**July 2016 (Rev. C. Haak)**

Date	Topic	Text
July 3	“Freedom”	Romans 8:2
July 10	“To God, My Exceeding Joy, I Will Go”	Psalm 43
July 17	“Except Ye Be Converted”	Matthew 18:1-5
July 24	“Keeping the Lord’s Day Holy”	Hebrews 10:24, 25
July 31	“Not Weary in Well Doing”	Galatians 6:9