

# *The Standard Bearer*

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • May 15, 2016

## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	All for Good <b>HERMAN HOEKSEMA</b>	362
<i>Editorial</i>	A Preview of the 2016 Synodical Agenda <b>PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA</b>	365
<i>All Around Us</i>	Anti-Christian Bias in the Workplace? <b>REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN</b>	368
<i>Believing and Confessing</i>	The Kingdom Keys <b>REV. RODNEY KLEYN</b>	371
<i>When Thou Sittest in Thine House</i>	Improving Bible Reading in our Family Worship <b>REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG</b>	374
<i>Go Ye Into all the World</i>	The Second Coming of Christ and Missions (4) <b>REV. RICHARD SMIT</b>	377
<i>Church and State</i>	The Supreme Court Finds a Right to Homosexual Marriage (3) <b>MR. BRIAN VAN ENGEN</b>	379
<i>Activities</i>	News From Our Churches <b>MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM</b>	383

# All for Good\*

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28.

**W**ondrous knowledge! We know, we are sure in our mind, that all things work together for our good, for us, who love God, whom He has called according to His purpose!

We know that beforehand!

We are convicted of it, without taking into consideration things as they present themselves to us; yes, even though it seems to be in conflict with all our experience....

What wonderful conviction rising above all earthly things!

In relation to earthly things, who would ever dare to elevate himself so boldly, to have the courage, to possess the power, no matter how capable he still may be, so to boast? Who now would ever undertake something, put

himself to the execution of a plan, to the realization of a goal, and not be conscious of the fact that achieving the intended goal depends on many things over which he does not have any control, so that he could never boast that all things must work together for good for him?

No, the presentation is even bolder here.

Place before yourself a ship in the midst of a violent storm at sea. Fiercely and wildly howls the storm, the raging sea is high and rough, lashed by a raging, furious hurricane whose huge waves destroy everything in their path, while they roll and tumble over the deck of the ship. Everything creaks and groans, and piece after piece of the vessel is carried away by the powerful waves into the gloomy, dark depth, until little more remains than a miserable wreck. In front of the bow, not far away, lie the rapidly approaching cliffs of the rocky coast on which within a few moments the ship, which has become rudderless and a plaything of wind and waves, will be dashed to pieces. The crew is desperate. But in the midst of all this, the captain stands calmly, and with a voice steady and strong, above the roaring storm, he calls out to his men, "All this (storm and seething sea and the menacing cliffs), all is for us and must work together, in order for us to sail into the safe harbor!"

So bold is the jubilation here, the triumph of the faith of the people of God!

\* This is a reprint of a meditation by the late Herman Hoeksema from the September 1, 1928 issue of the *Standard Bearer* and translated by Henry DeJong, a member of First PRC of Holland. The entire meditation is printed. The ellipses are part of the original article.

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

\$23.00 per year in the US, \$35.00 elsewhere  
New eSubscription: \$23.00  
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$11.50.

#### 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](http://www.rfpa.org)  
Website for PRC: [www.prc.org](http://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.

All things!

Without any limitation!

There is not a single exception.

Things in the heaven and things on the earth and things in the depths beneath.

Living and non-living things, rational and irrational creatures. Angels (who are sent out for the service of those who shall inherit salvation), but also devils and evil spirits (who go about as roaring lions in order to devour what can be devoured). Brothers in Christ, but also the ungodly and enemies of God and His covenant. The course of the sun and the course of the stars in the lofty firmament; the shapes of the clouds and the falling of the rain; the eruption of the volcano and the shaking of the earthquake; fire and water, heat and cold; the roaring storm and the gentle wind; good and evil things; love and sorrow, the sweet and the sour, joy but also sadness, rejoicing but also grief; God's Word (that is a lamp for our feet and a light upon our path), but also stake and scaffold, spear and sword; peace but also war; health but also sickness, riches but also poverty; the rumbling of the thunder and the flashing of the lightning, abundance but also scarcity, life but also death....

All things work....

And all things have their influence also on us and on the course and the direction of our life.

They cooperate, they work together, they combine into the end result of their work; they run and push, they toil and trot, they twist and turn themselves around and around, they roll and revolve, they seethe and burn; or they think and ponder, deliberate together and form their plans, they sneak and crawl, they flatter or threaten or bless....

But always in such a way that the total fruit of all the labor of all creation must be for our good. Consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, all things must work together in order to bring us to the Father's house and to place us in possession of the everlasting good!

We know that; in our hearts we are assured of it!

Upon the wings of faith we may lift ourselves far above all the swarming of every creature, and in the light of God's presence, by faith we may know that whatever moves works together for us for good!

What wondrous knowledge!



For good for whom?

For men, for all, for me and for you?

No, not for all is this knowledge, not for all is this boast of faith, not all have the right to boast like that.

For all things can also work together for evil. The ungodly, saith my God, have no peace. Indeed all workers of unrighteousness grow and flourish. They spring up as the green herb. They know of no restraints until their death. They are not in trouble as other men are. They are not vexed. They walk broad, smooth ways. They enjoy more than the heart can desire. Prosperity appears their portion. And all that, in order that they should be destroyed everlastingly....

They do not know this. Of this working of things they have no notion. As the brute beast, they are fattened for the day of slaughter. Yet they continue to rush to destruction, walking in their ungodliness. Though they exalt themselves in their wickedness over against the righteous, all things work together for their destruction!

But it is not so with those who love God.

Not as if they would pride themselves in that love for God, or would seek in it a ground for why all things would work together for their good. God forbid! Also, not as though they were transformed into lovers of God by the choice of their own will. If that were the case, then all this boasting of faith would of necessity be on their lips constantly. No, by nature, of themselves, they were exactly like the others, enemies of God, children of wrath, dead in sins and misdeeds, being hateful, hating God and each other. Also no call by mere human voice could ever bring about a change in them. Should a voice ever seek to call them to God, they would stifle that voice; should a hand ever seek to draw them out of the darkness into the light of God's presence, they would cast off that hand from themselves, in order to stay in perdition. Filled with dreadful resentment against the living God, by nature they too would walk towards destruction....

Not any human work (precisely therein lies the power of the glory of their faith) brought a change in them.

But God called them! Called them according to His purpose. And that purpose lay rooted in the eternal love of the divine heart of the Father!

For God had first loved them, and their love is only the fruit of God's eternal love. Therefore, they stand so firmly. Therefore, they know to be so triumphantly

joyful. Before the mountains were brought forth, or the earth revolved around its axis, in the timeless depth of eternity, God has loved them. Loved them with a love, the depth and height, length and breadth of which can only be measured by the fearful cross of the Only Begotten, the wondrous power of which the believer alone understands, though never fully, who by that accursed tree found redemption for his soul.

That love, that incomprehensibly free, that unfathomably deep love, is the source of all and the ground of the Christian's boast of faith. Out of the wondrous depth of that love arises eternally God's unchangeable purpose to glorify with the very highest glory that people whom He loves, to press them as children to His heart, as brothers of His Son to give them a place in the Father's house, as friends of God to have them dwell in His tabernacle, eternally....

Out of that great love, according to that unchangeable purpose, He called them out of darkness into His marvelous light!

He called them, not with a human voice, but by divine irresistible persuasion. Called them by His all-powerful grace, by His Spirit and Word, laying hold of them in the heart, opening their blind eyes, piercing their deaf ears, pouring into their heart the wondrous love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Thus they came to love God.

For that reason they know that all things work together for their good.

For in that same purpose, according to which He called His people, not only lies their final destiny (the destiny of those who love God) eternally and unchangeably secure, but also the course and development of all things. Nothing stirs or moves, no angel goes out, no devil lies in wait for our destruction, no drop of rain ever falls, no drought burns, no star shoots in space, no little sparrow falls from the roof, except it always happens according to that same purpose. And thus everything lies firmly (in its nature and development, place and destiny and working) in that purpose, so that in relation with the great whole it must work together for good, unto salvation, to the everlasting blessedness of those who love God!

Therefore, because of the consciousness of faith, all things are so secure.

For this reason, in the midst of all the storms of life,

in the midst of every disaster and pain and sorrow, in the midst of accident and suffering, the love of God makes us know that we are so secure.

Because that love did not arise out of ourselves, is not the fruit of our own choice of the will, but *arose* from eternal mercy....

And because by that same eternal mercy, all things were ordained before the foundation of the world....

Therefore, faith rejoices triumphantly: we know that all things must work together for the good of those who love God, whom He has called according to His purpose! Therefore, that same faith does not hesitate to include all things, both good and evil, under His purpose.

All things for good! For whom?

For those who love God!

His called ones!



We know!

Wondrous knowledge!

Blessed assurance!

Joyful triumph of faith over all things!

O, if only our heart would continually participate in that jubilation and this exultant cry of victory would always be heard from our lips in all the circumstances of life!

Ah, how often it is otherwise with a child of God!

No, if all things go according to the flesh, if the heaven above us is unclouded, and no storms threaten; if the way is smooth and does not go through the depths; if there is no enemy in sight and there is peace and no danger; if prosperity on prosperity waits for us each morning anew and there is no misery, then it is not difficult, it makes no sense, it costs no battle, it does not sound wonderful, if we exclaim that all things work together for good!

But when the way changes, when the path rises steeply into the heights, or threateningly descends toward the depth; when in the distance thunder rumbles; when pain and grief in body and soul become our portion, sorrow fills the heart, suffering tears our flesh, the enemy gathers himself for battle, the sword is sharpened against us, and the bow is bent against us for Christ's sake, the scaffold is placed in readiness and the fires are stoked at the stakes; when it is night and no help seems to be forthcoming....

Then to rejoice that all things work together for good,



that is faith! That is the language of triumph! That is God glorifying!

And then, ah, then, we stand so often at first ashamed! Then in place of joyous exultation so often a fearful complaint comes over our lips! Then the half-hearted outcry rises so quickly from the oppressed breast: All these things are against me.

And yet, also then it is eternally true: all things work together for good!

And precisely then, there is the greatest need for that courage of faith.

Precisely then, by that jubilation of love, our faithful covenant God is most glorified!

Oh may the Lord, the Source of all good, the Fountain


of all grace, continually and over-flowingly pour that love of God into our soul, whereby in the greatest griefs we are able to rest in the Lord! For, is it not so, as all things only work together for good for those who love God, so also the knowledge, the joyous assurance of this fact, is only to be enjoyed in the way of the love of God....

He holds us closely to Himself! And we fight the good fight, keeping His commandments!

For in love there is no fear! And walking in love, we shall also be able to speak the language of love, of faith, of hearty confidence:

All things work together for us for good!

Glorious knowledge!

Joyful praise! 

## EDITORIAL

## PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

# A Preview of the 2016 Synodical Agenda

On June 13, the Lord willing, twenty-three delegates and advisors to the 2016 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches will descend upon the town of Hull, Iowa. They will come from Sioux Falls, SD, Edgerton, MN, Loveland CO, Spokane, WA, Randolph, WI, Lynwood, IL, northwest Iowa, and western Michigan. They will be joined by foreign delegates and visitors from Northern Ireland, Singapore, the Philippines, and Germany. They and the folks in the NW Iowa area will gather for the pre-synodical service in the Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Rev. Steve Key (president of the last synod) leading the service. It has been twelve years since the Protestant Reformed synod ventured west of the Mississippi. The fact that

there are no students to examine this year makes this possible. It is a good thing for the churches that the Synod of 2015 accepted Hull's invitation. It is hoped that members of the Protestant Reformed churches as well as any interested visitors in the area will take the opportunity to witness the deliberations. The synod has much significant material on its agenda.

The PRC have seven standing committees to which the Synod of 2015 assigned work on behalf of the churches. These committees report to the synod every year on their activities and make recommendations for future work. Other reports or communications include the Board of Trustees, the stated clerk, the two classes (East and West), and the synodical deputies. Besides, appeals and protests may be brought to the

synod on material finished at the classical level. This constitutes the agenda for synod. Two of the committees (Emeritus and Student Aid) bring routine reports on financing. Though their work is important, and I am grateful for their labors to be sure, I will not bore the reader with finances. Other than those committees, what is on the agenda of the 2016 Synod?

In alphabetical order, we start with the *Board of Trustees*. The BOT reports on various financial matters of the churches. They also come with nominations to fill three important positions. The first is that of synodical treasurer. When Mr. David Ondersma stepped down a year ago (after 14 years of faithful service) no suitable, willing candidate immediately surfaced, and the BOT was instructed to find one.

The BOT comes with the recommendation of a trustworthy, capable man in Mr. Don Offringa. Mr. Offringa has extensive experience in funds accounting and managing. His commitment to the churches is evident from the fact that he has served as an elder in Faith PRC more than once. In addition, the current assistant treasurer, Mr. Kevin Van Overloop, asked not to be reappointed to the position he faithfully served since 1997 (including filling in as synodical treasurer for the last year). For assistant treasurer, the BOT comes with another worthy candidate, Mr. Tom Holstege, currently serving his second term as a deacon in Trinity PRC. And finally, Mr. Don Doezeema, who after 21 years as stated clerk last year switched positions with then assistant stated clerk Rev. Ron Van Overloop, has agreed to stay on as assistant stated clerk. All these appointments will be voted on at synod.

*The Catechism Book Committee* reports that they have fulfilled the mandate of synod to produce *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* in Epub and Mobi formats. It is available on the PRCA website—for free.

*The Committee for Contact with Other Churches* has some of the most significant material on synod's agenda. First, the CC reports on the precious sister-church relationships the PRC has with Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore and Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland. The CC notes

that the relationships are excellent and profitable. At the request of both, the CC conducted church visitations in the last year. Both congregations are enjoying peace and unity, and both are involved in missions. CERCS is beginning a mission work in India. CPRCNI continues its work in Limerick, Ireland, a work that the PRC continue cheerfully to support.

One of the blessings of relationships is the presence of foreign delegates at synod. CERC plans to send Rev. Andy Lanning to synod, and CPRCNI, Rev. Martyn McGeown. They will be joined by Rev. Daniel Kleyn, coming as missionary from the Philippines. One additional foreign visitor to synod will be Dr. Jurgen Klautke from Giessen, Germany (more on that later).

Concerning the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, the CC reports that a joint conference on the Reformation of 1517 is being planned in Tasmania in July of 2017.

With the approval of previous synods, the CC continues its contact with the Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde (Confessing Protestant-Reformed Congregation—BERG) of Giessen, Germany. As noted above, the CC has invited Dr. Klautke to attend synod. The CC is also making arrangements for a public speech to be held on Wednesday evening of the week of synod, inviting the delegates of synod and the members of the area PRC to attend. There Dr. Klautke will inform his audience of the history and witness of the BERG in Germany.

Past synods have given the CC the mandate to recommend to synod “what guidelines synod would follow to determine whether and how to participate in an ecumenical council of churches.” The CC brings its report, with the determination to recommend clear guidelines that will enable future synods to decide when there may be any involvement (as observers or members) with an ecumenical council. At the same time, the CC desires guidelines that will in no way allow compromise on the doctrines and practices maintained by the PRC. Synod will need to study these guidelines carefully to determine whether or not they accomplish these objectives.

The CC reports on new and exciting developments in Namibia. Synod 2015 authorized a trip to Namibia and South Africa. Accordingly, Profs. R. Cammenga and B. Gritters plan to visit these countries in late May/early June of this year. The new development is that five churches in Namibia have left their denomination, which has shown signs of departure from Scripture and the confessions on evolution and women in office. Now it is possible for the CC to pursue official contact with these churches in Namibia. Some sort of report from the delegation should be available for synod, at least orally.

Both the CC and the Foreign Mission Committee report that the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines have written the CC expressing a desire to enter into an official ecclesiastical relationship with the PRCA. Receiving this re-

quest with joy, the CC sent Profs. R. Cammenga and R. Dykstra to the Philippines in December to begin discussions with the PRCP. They report that no significant differences exist between the two denominations in doctrine, worship, church government, or walk of life. The CC comes to synod with a plan to continue the discussions in order to move carefully toward a sister-church relationship. The “slowly and carefully” recommendation is intended to allow both denominations to understand the implications and demands of such a relationship.

Finally, the CC comes with a recommendation on Psalter revision. Anyone who loves the Psalter, but is objective enough to know that it can be improved, will be encouraged by the report. In the last year, nine men from three denominations (Heritage Reformed, Free Reformed, and the PRC) have studied intensely one section of the Psalms and come with their improvements. Changes are being kept to a minimum. Improvement in music (for better singing) and faithfulness to the Scriptures are the touchstones. The CC approved the report of Prof. Gritters, Mr. Josh Hoekstra, and Rev. Doug Kuiper, and brings the recommendation that the PRC continue to participate in this work. Synod must decide.

The *Domestic Mission Committee's* report on the mission fellowship in Pittsburgh is a testimony to hard work, enthusiasm, and innovative use of resources. It is also a testimony to the staying power of the DMC and Southwest PRC, which have supported this field

for over eighteen years. Ah, but missionary Bruinsma writes, “By the time synod treats this report it is my hope that the Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Pittsburgh will no longer be a mission field, but an organized congregation in our denomination.” With the concurrence of the DMC and Southwest Council, the group is bringing its request to the May 11 meeting of Classis East.

The DMC brings a major proposal to call a second home missionary, whose first work will be to develop a field in which to preach and teach. If synod approves, Byron Center PRC is the recommended calling church.

The DMC submits a supplemental report on the Reformed Witness Hour, a radio/Internet ministry of the PRC, which is celebrating its 75<sup>th</sup> year of broadcasting (1941-2016).

The *Foreign Mission Committee* has exciting news on the work in the Philippines. The one of greatest import, perhaps, is that the Lord has granted the prayers of the churches and given us a second missionary, Rev. Daniel Holstege. Although there is no news on when the Holsteges will be able to move, the Kleyns obviously are grateful for this prospect of another fulltime missionary in the work. So, too, are the saints in the Philippines. Their classis adopted a word of thanks, and in it remembered the hardship of Holland PRC in losing their pastor.

There is much about which to be encouraged in the work in the Philippines. The PRC in the Philip-

pinas have grown from two to three congregations, and a fourth group is making steady progress toward organization. The life of the denomination includes regular meetings of classis. The churches are active in missions. And with an eye to the future, they desire seminary training. The FMC brings solid reasons for why the PRC should work towards establishing a seminary in the Philippines. The amount of work being done and the amount left undone makes it plain that the mission field can use the third missionary that the FMC is asking synod to authorize. Missionary Kleyn makes an overwhelmingly strong case for it, and the Doon Council concurs.

The FMC reports on other foreign mission work being done by local congregations. Hope PRC (Walker) continues to work in Myanmar (and are we the only organization that does not use the old name, Burma?). Georgetown PRC continues its work in Vellore, India. The FMC submits an extensive report of the FMC delegation who visited this area last fall.

The *Theological School Committee* reports on a small improvement in the seminary curriculum that will give the students more Hebrew and Homiletics.

The committee also recommends that synod admit one student from our sister church in Singapore. No new students from the PRC seek admittance to the seminary. It would be wise for the synod forcefully to remind the churches that the need for ministers in seven years will far exceed the supply from the current seminary students. We


must not cease praying for laborers.

Last year the synod mandated the TSC to come with a proposal on how efficiently and effectively to examine a large graduating class. The need is obvious. The normal exam, modified for up to eight students, would take synod a full week to finish. The TSC and the faculty worked out a plan that should be manageable, and yet insure that the students get a thorough examina-

tion. Note: Byron Center PRC has graciously invited synod to hold the 2017 Synod in her building. However, synod will need to find a church building that can accommodate two exams running concurrently, scores of visitors, and a place to serve food besides. Not every church building can handle all that.

In addition, one appeal comes to the synod. It contains significant material involving the doctrine of the covenant and the error of anti-

nomianism. Classis East dealt with it in open session. The synod will likely follow suit.

There you have it. A not-so-brief overview of the main business of the synod. May God lead and guide the synod in all its deliberations. An annual synod is a blessing to the churches. Come to observe, and give thanks that politicking and promotion of error are not a part of synod's agenda or manner of operation. 

## ALL AROUND US

## REV. MARTYN MC GEOWN

### ■ Anti-Christian Bias in the Workplace?

"Devout Christian NHS Worker Launches Appeal After Being Suspended for Inviting A Muslim Colleague to Church" (*Daily Mail*, April 5, 2015). "NHS Worker Who Gave Muslim Colleague Christian Book Loses Appeal Against Suspension" (*Independent*, April 8, 2016).<sup>1</sup> The case of Victoria Wasteney, a Christian NHS (National Health Service) worker in London, England, made the headlines recently.

If you are like me, you are tempted to have an emotional reaction to such headlines. Online articles often have comments submitted by readers. The comments in this case were predictable. Many complained that if the situation had been reversed (if a Muslim had given a Qur'an to a Christian or invited a Christian to a mosque), the outcome would have been different. Others averred that this is another typical example of the Islamification of Europe, that Muslims have more rights than Christians. Still others insisted that all Muslims are liars, that lying is part of their religion and that they cannot be trusted. Most commentators, many of whom

I assume profess some sort of Christianity, instinctively took the Christian's side. Few, if any, took the Muslim's side. She is, as far as the commentators are concerned, the unnamed villain of the piece. This was true in both the secular press and the Christian press. The general consensus is that this is simply another example of the persecution of Christians by the anti-Christian, secularized, politically-correct state. Then one comment caught my eye: "The notes on the case are online. You should read them before you pass judgment."

It took me a few minutes to find, and many more minutes to read, the judgment online. I realized that it is easy to be a hasty judge, especially when we *want* the Christian to be right and we *want* the Muslim to be wrong. I also realized that judges have a very difficult and responsible job to do. All too often our knee-jerk reaction is, "The law is an ass. The judge is an idiot." Judges, however, have to sift through reams of evidence before they reach a verdict. That evidence cannot be summarized with any degree of accuracy in a pithy headline.

The press, both secular and Christian, presented the case this way: The Christian gave a book to the Muslim and prayed with her. The Muslim complained. The Christian was suspended. Why would we *not* be outraged at that? However, the Muslim's complaint and the ruling of the Employment Tribunal reveal a much more complicated story.

I quote some of the Muslim's complaint:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3026259/Devout-Christian-NHS-worker-launches-appeal-suspended-inviting-Muslim-colleague-church.html>; <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/nhs-worker-who-gave-muslim-colleague-christian-book-loses-appeal-against-suspension-a6974036.html>.

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



My manager began to invite me to events within her church.... These invites did persist and involved weekend calls and texts...I blocked my manager from contacting me via my personal mobile phone to avoid further invites.... My manager began to provide me with DVDs and tickets to church events. I began to avoid my manager.... My manager informed me that this was an informal meeting and she wanted to discuss something important with me. My manager went on to inform me of a healing that she had set up for me at her home.... My manager informed me that only the power of Jesus could heal me.... Her specific words for me to say were "I believe you are the son [sic] of god [sic], Jesus. I believe in you and your power. Come into me and heal me.... She stated that I would have to invite Jesus to come into my spirit.... My manager also stated that she is aware many people are going to hell and how we are all given a choice and one opportunity about being saved.... I was scared and felt stuck.... I did not know what to say. I felt intimidated.... My manager gave me a book...and asked me to let her know what I thought once I finished it.... My manager then stated that she was going to pray on me. Whilst asking me if she could place her hand on my knee, she began to close her eyes, put her hand on my knee and pray aloud. Although she asked, she had already put her hand on my knee *before* I could respond and she had begun to pray.... She asked me once again to "ask Jesus to come into you"... I left very quickly and felt very distressed. I walked into the toilet alongside the managerial office as I was really upset. Approximately a minute later, my manager walked into the toilets and asked, "Are you alright?" I *was* crying and visibly upset but stated yes at which point she walked out.... Throughout this situation, I have been afraid to discuss or highlight this to higher management. I have been intimidated and afraid....<sup>2</sup>

Let us try to be objective. If you were a senior manager, and a junior member of staff alleged that kind of behavior against a manager under *your* authority, would you investigate? Is "*The Christian Gave the Muslim a Christian Book*" narrative an accurate portrayal of the events that took place? Is it not at least worthy of further investigation? Clearly, the Muslim *could* be lying, but is that credible, given the details in her complaint?

<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the only place I could find a copy of the Muslim's complaint was on the National Secular Society, a group with whose aims I obviously have no sympathy. <http://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/wasteney-susordinatescomplaint-john-howard-centre.pdf>

The ruling of the Employment Tribunal, which is even longer than the eight pages that the Muslim colleague submitted, reveals more details on the case, which the press failed to mention.<sup>3</sup>

First, Wasteney's employer, the NHS Trust, permitted her church, Christian Revival Church (a Charismatic church) to provide Christian worship services for the residents of the John Howard Centre, a forensic center for mental health, where Wasteney worked in occupational therapy. However, complaints were made against Wasteney's church that "service users were being pressurised to dance, sing and clap," and that "they were being encouraged to donate to the [Christian Revival Church]." Following this, the church was "invited to remodel its services so that they could continue, but [they] declined to do so," whereupon the services at the John Howard Centre were discontinued (17, 19). At that time, Wasteney "received counselling and an informal warning from [her manager]...about the boundaries between her spiritual and professional life" (19). So far was Wasteney's employer from displaying a hostile anti-Christian attitude, that he had previously permitted her church to hold services on NHS premises, which permission was only retracted when her church overstepped the boundaries.

Second, the Muslim colleague was in the unenviable position of having Wasteney as her manager and another individual (*from the same church*) as her supervisor. She writes in her complaint that "I have consistently cancelled supervisions with my supervisor as he discusses God when I mention my health." Both these individuals offered to pray with/for her, and urged her to accept Jesus. On more than one occasion, both of them were with her in the manager's office where they exhorted her to accept Jesus for healing. Therefore, the Muslim colleague had to appeal up the chain of command to Wasteney's manager.

Third, the HR (Human Resources) department categorized Wasteney's conduct as "bullying and harassment" (19). The allegations amounted to "placing improper pressure on a junior member of staff" (21) and "blurring the boundaries between manager and subordinate" (22). The disciplinary panel informed Wasteney: "Everyone has their beliefs; however, the panel felt that given the seniority of your role, staff may find it difficult to refuse

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.secularism.org.uk/uploads/wasteney-et-ruling.pdf>. The page numbers are taken from this document.

your invitations and discussions regarding your personal beliefs, as such professional boundaries should be maintained at all times within the workplace” (25). The conclusion of the Employment Tribunal was:

We find that any senior manager who fails to maintain an appropriate boundary between their personal beliefs and their role in the workplace such that junior employees feel under pressure to behave or think in certain ways is likely to be the subject of disciplinary proceedings (35).

It appears that Wasteney was, at the very least, overzealous in her attempts to “help” her Muslim colleague, which did not consist in explaining to her what the Christian faith is, but in attempting to heal her of her illness, Crohn’s disease, a debilitating condition of the intestines that is exacerbated by stress. Wasteney allegedly urged her Muslim colleague to pray these words: “I believe you are the Son of God, Jesus. I believe in you and your power. Come into me and heal me.” If Wasteney knows anything about Islam, she should know that the proposition “Jesus is the Son of God” is extremely offensive to a Muslim. In fact, for a Muslim to confess that Jesus is the Son of God is to commit the unforgivable sin of *shirk*, the sin of ascribing a partner or rival to Allah. (Of course, Islam rejects and fundamentally misunderstands the doctrine of the Trinity). No Christian should urge a Muslim to say, “I believe that Jesus is the Son of God,” *unless that Muslim has received a careful explanation of what that means*.

James White, a Reformed Baptist and Christian apologist (who has debated Muslim apologists in mosques in London and South Africa), explains “*shirk*” in his excellent book, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur’an*:

While some Western adherents do not, many Muslims believe that the doctrine of the Trinity and, in particular, the worship of Jesus is an (unforgivable) act of *shirk*. This has led many of them to conclude that Christians, as a group, are bound for hell as *mushrikim*. This view, which is based upon a consistent reading of the Qur’an as well as many passages in the *ahadith*, is the most prevalent view in the Islamic world.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> James R. White, *What Every Christian Needs to Know About the Qur’an* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2013), 68.

How serious to a Muslim is *shirk*? Mohammed had a beloved uncle called Abu Talib, who died in the state of *shirk*. Allah supposedly gave Mohammed permission to intercede for Abu Talib. This was supposedly a “gracious exception” to the rule that one may not intercede for those who die as *mushrikim*. James White explains:

Abu Talib not only had helped raise him but also greatly protected him during the first period of his prophethood. According to several *ahadith*, as a result of the intercession, Abu Talib has the best spot in the hellfire (the place of least punishment). Details vary: In some versions he stands in shallow fire only up to his ankles; in others he must wear sandals of fire. The consistent element is that the fire is so hot that, even in hell’s least torturous spot, “his brains boil.”<sup>5</sup>

No wonder Wasteney’s Muslim colleague was upset at being asked to pray, “I believe you are the Son of God, Jesus”! If Abu Talib’s brains boil in hell *with the intercession of Mohammed*, how much worse punishment must the Muslim fear, who dies in the state of *shirk without the intercession of Mohammed*! Praise God for the effectual intercession of Jesus Christ! By all means, we must urge Muslims to believe in Jesus, but we must lay the necessary foundation by explaining the gospel. Wasteney appears not to have done that. Instead, she urged her colleague to accept Jesus for healing, which is not untypical for certain kinds of Charismatics.


Victoria Wasteney is, undoubtedly, sincere. It is not my contention that she was at all malicious in her approach to her Muslim colleague. The word “bully,” which suggests deliberate malice, is inappropriate. She thought she was acting appropriately. She genuinely cared for her colleague’s physical and spiritual wellbeing. She did not realize that she was making her Muslim colleague uncomfortable. And she behaved this way over a prolonged period of time. Nevertheless, if I had been in a similar position, I might well have also made a complaint.

I write this to remind us of several things. First, do not judge a story by its headline (Prov. 18:17). If at all possible, try to find *primary sources*. Second, do not look for persecution everywhere. Not all suffering of Christians can be traced to persecution. Sometimes Christians suffer because they behave foolishly (I Tim.

<sup>5</sup> White, 122.

4:15-16). Third, it is not the calling of Christians *in the workplace* to seek to win their work colleagues to Christ. It is the calling of Christians to *work* in the workplace. While we take every opportunity to witness to family, friends, colleagues, fellow students, and others, we need wisdom to draw boundaries. At work, we are not on our own time, but on our *employer's* time: he is not paying us to proselytize. Fourth, and finally, as Christians we need to beware of real Islamophobia. We will never win

Muslims if we behave as online commentators do, many of whom are trolls. Not all Muslims are the same. The command to love our neighbour applies also to our Muslim neighbours. We may not misrepresent them, twist their words, or slander them.

Let me finish by paraphrasing Paul: "To the Muslim became I as a Muslim, that I might gain the Muslim: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (see I Cor. 9:22). 

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

REV. RODNEY KLEYN

## The Kingdom Keys

### Lord's Day 31

Q. 83. What are the keys of the kingdom of heaven?

A. The preaching of the holy gospel, and Christian discipline, or excommunication out of the Christian church; by these two, the kingdom of heaven is opened to believers, and shut against unbelievers.

Q. 84. How is the kingdom of heaven opened and shut by the preaching of the holy gospel?

A. Thus: when according to the command of Christ it is declared and publicly testified to all and every believer, that, whenever they receive the promise of the gospel by a true faith, all their sins are really forgiven them of God, for the sake of Christ's merits; and on the contrary, when it is declared and testified to all unbelievers, and such as do not sincerely repent, that they stand exposed to the wrath of God and eternal condemnation, so long as they are unconverted; according to which testimony of the gospel God will judge them, both in this and in the life to come.

Q. 85. How is the kingdom of heaven shut and opened by Christian discipline?

A. Thus: when according to the command of Christ, those who under the name of Christians maintain doctrines, or practices inconsistent therewith, and will not, after having been often brotherly admonished, renounce their errors and wicked course of life, are complained of to the church, or to those who are thereunto appointed by the church; and if they despise their admonition, are by them forbidden the use of the sacraments; whereby they are excluded from the Christian church, and by God himself from the kingdom of Christ; and when they promise and show real amendment, are again received as members of Christ and His church.

**I**n the previous Lord's Day we learned that the elders in the church have the responsibility to guard the Lord's Table against being profaned by those who are unbelieving (erring in doctrine) or ungodly (erring in life). Now we learn "how" they do this, namely, by exercising the keys of the kingdom.

---

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

### Kingdom Keys

Keys are used to open and lock doors. The keys spoken of here give access to some into the kingdom of heaven, while at the same time barring access to others. The King in this kingdom is Jesus Christ Himself, and to enter into His kingdom is to come under His rule and to enjoy the privileges and peace of His kingdom. To be shut out of the kingdom is to be rejected on account of refusing His rule and not know this peace, but rather to be an enemy of God.

The idea of “keys of the kingdom” is, of course, figurative. The kingdom of heaven (also known as the kingdom of God), is not physical but spiritual, and entrance into this kingdom, through being born again (John 3:5), is also spiritual. So also the keys are spiritual, which means that they deal with the spiritual aspect of a person, his soul, by declaring in his conscience what his standing is in the kingdom of God: does he stand inside or outside the kingdom?

The one who opens and closes this kingdom is Jesus Christ. This is His right, not only because He is the Sovereign in this kingdom, who also knows the hearts of man, but especially because He knows those who are His. In His death He paid the price that gives them access into this kingdom, and He sends His Spirit to give them the new birth by which they enter this kingdom.

The kingdom, the King, entrance into the kingdom, and the keys of the kingdom are all spiritual, but all have corresponding manifestations here on earth. The kingdom is represented here on earth by the church. The King is represented by the elders who are given a position of authority and rule in the church. Entrance into the kingdom is represented by being received into the church as a member. And the keys are represented by the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline within the church.

When Jesus uses the figure of “keys” in Matthew 16, He speaks of giving or entrusting those keys to the care of the disciples, who at that time represented the New Testament church. In other parables, Jesus spoke of going away for an extended time and leaving His servants to care for things. In giving the keys to the church, Christ gives to her both a privilege and a responsibility. This responsibility falls especially on the officebearers in the church, to whom is given the authority to wield the power of these keys.

### **The Key of Preaching**

We do not always think of preaching as a key that opens and closes the kingdom. We might think of it as a means of grace, or as the voice of Christ, or as the power of God unto salvation, but we do not often think of it as a key. The subject of preaching does not receive much attention in the Heidelberg Catechism, but thinking of preaching as a key does help us to understand three

important things about the preaching of the gospel.

First, it brings home the authoritative nature of preaching. Preaching is the declaration on earth of what is actually true in heaven. Preaching declares in the consciousness of the hearer his/her standing in the kingdom of heaven. Whenever a sermon deviates from the Word of God, it loses its authority and its ability to open and close the kingdom. But, when it declares what is true in Scripture, then preaching has power and authority, for then Christ Himself speaks through it. Such preaching is the standard by which God judges men both in this life and in the life to come.

Second, we see that in the preaching the minister must address himself both to believers and to unbelievers. He may not speak always and only in general terms, nor may he address himself exclusively to the beloved of God. Yes, preaching is the saving and loving word of the gospel from God for His people, but preaching must also address unbelievers and the ungodly, to call them to repentance and faith, and to declare to them that they stand exposed to the wrath of God so long as they remain impenitent. That the preaching must address both believers and unbelievers is clear from the great commission of Matthew 28:19, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations.” It is also evident from the fact that there are always in the church “unbelievers and those who do not sincerely repent,” as well as those who “under the name of Christians maintain doctrines and practices inconsistent therewith.” When God’s Word demands it, these must be separately addressed by the preaching.

Third, from the fact that preaching is a key that opens and closes the kingdom, and also from the language of this Lord’s Day, it is clear that the preaching should not be presented as a “well-meant offer” of salvation from God to all who are in the audience. This view of preaching says that in the preaching the minister must declare that God has a desire to save all who hear the preaching, and that God promises and offers life and salvation to all, if they will but believe. This cannot be, for the preaching does not declare to unbelievers that God wants or desires to save them (which is contrary to the eternal will of God in predestination), nor that they can somehow validate the promises of God by their act of faith (which is contrary to the truth of man’s depravity), but rather that they stand exposed to God’s wrath and judgment so long



as they continue in their unbelief. The preaching is not an offer of salvation, but a declaration of man's hopeless sinful condition, of the just wrath of God against man, and of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross, as well as a command to all who are unbelievers to repent and believe on Jesus Christ. Again, this command must be addressed to all, and when it comes to me as a believer, it brings me to new and daily repentance and trust in Jesus Christ.

When you hear the gospel preached, is Christ opening the kingdom to you so that by faith you enter, or is Christ closing the gates of the kingdom to you because you remain in unbelief and rebellion?

### The Key of Discipline

Besides the key of preaching, Christ has given to the church the key of discipline. Often when we think of discipline, we think only of its formal aspect—public censure and excommunication, and so we tend to think of discipline exclusively as the work of the elders. While it is true that the elders alone can place a person under discipline and excommunicate him from the church, all members of the church ought to see that they have a duty in regard to discipline.

This comes out in the way that elders become aware of where discipline is needed in the church. Sometimes a discipline matter can come directly to the elders, as, for example, when it is a public sin; but, in the scriptural procedure laid out by Jesus in Matthew 18:16-18, it is a member of the church who has already been involved in admonishing a sinner who "tell(s) it to the church."

The biblical procedure for discipline involves these steps:

1. Every member of the church is mutually responsible and accountable to every other member. When I see a fellow believer walking in sin, or when they sin against me, I am responsible to admonish them and seek their repentance and recovery. Likewise, I must be willing to receive admonition from every other church member, and also to ask forgiveness of those whom I offend by my sin.

2. If the sinning brother or sister does not repent, then I must take with me one or two witnesses, who are also fellow members of the body of Christ, so that they may hear both sides of the controversy and establish the truth of the situation.

3. Once it has been established that the fellow church

member has indeed sinned, and is unwilling to confess and repent of his/her sin, even though I have admonished the individual and others have also heard this admonition, then the elders of the church must be called on to make a judgment on the case and to take up the situation with more formal discipline.

4. The elders, once they have established that the proper steps of Matthew 18 have been followed, and after making their own investigation into the situation in order to establish the guilt of the brother/sister who has sinned, must first admonish the sinner to repent. If, after repeated admonitions, there is still a refusal to repent, the elders must suspend him/her from the privileges of church membership—such as the sacraments, voting, or serving as an officebearer. If there is still no repentance, the entire congregation is alerted to the discipline by way of announcement, so that they all may pray for and admonish the sinning member. Eventually, if this discipline does not lead to repentance, the unrepentant sinner must be excommunicated from the church and regarded as a "heathen" (unbeliever).

Even though this biblical procedure repeatedly involves all members of the church, if we are honest, we are not as involved in the exercise of discipline as we should be. When was the last time you admonished in love someone who had offended you by their sin? When was the last time, without gossip, that you took someone with you to talk to a sinning brother or sister? When was the last time that your elders received a knock on the door at their monthly consistory meeting from a member who had followed these steps? When was the last time you humbly received an admonition from a fellow church member and repented of your sin, asking for forgiveness from the one who admonished you?

In a spiritually healthy and vibrant church, discipline should be a part of the ebb and flow of congregational life.

Why are we so reluctant to take on this responsibility? The answer: because it is difficult work. The elders of the church who are involved in discipline know this and that is why they need our help and prayers in this work. For one, we ourselves are sinners. Also, we are afraid that we might offend someone by confronting him, thus making an enemy in the church. Or we might feel that it is wrong to judge another person's private life, that it would be better to "live and let live."


Certainly, we see that much wisdom and humility is needed for us to take on this work, but let that not stop us.

We need to understand the purpose of discipline. The purpose is not to remove true Christians from the church. Nor is the purpose to establish a “holier than thou” group of people in the church. Rather, discipline aims at the repentance of the sinner and the honor of Jesus Christ. Much better to offend a sinner than to offend Christ. Much better to address a sin with a view to repentance, than to let a brother or sister perish in his/her impenitence. Much better to “purge out the leaven” than to bring the wrath of God on the whole congregation (I Cor. 5:6, 7).

Let us not say that this is elders’ work, or that a spirit of tolerance for sin comes into the church because the elders are failing in their duty. Instead, let us examine ourselves and our duty here, and let us pray for both a spirit of love for our fellow church members as well as a concern for the honor of Christ.

In conclusion, we ought to remember that the goal of discipline is repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation, and re-admittance. No sin is too great for repentance, or too vile to be forgiven and covered by the blood of Christ. The church that knows and proclaims the gospel of the cross and that sees itself as a company of forgiven sinners, is ready to receive every sort of sinner who comes in repentance to Jesus Christ. After all, this is the first purpose of the kingdom keys—to open the kingdom to all who come in true faith to Jesus Christ.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Why does Jesus use the figure of keys to describe preaching and discipline?
2. What is the purpose of the keys of the kingdom?
3. What is the relationship between the kingdom of heaven and the church here on earth?
4. How does preaching open and close the kingdom? Can you give specific instances of when the preaching in your church has opened the kingdom to you and closed it to unbelievers?
5. To whom is preaching to be addressed? Should the preaching contain threats as well as promises? (See Canons of Dordt, II: 5; V:14).
6. Should we think of the preaching as an offer of salvation to all? Why/why not? How should the preaching address itself to unbelievers and hypocrites?
7. Is the key of church discipline overly used, rarely used, or faithfully used in your congregation?
8. What are the biblical steps for discipline?
9. In what two ways do the elders of the church become aware of sin in the congregation?
10. What are some of your responsibilities with regard to church discipline? Why is personal humility essential in the carrying out of these duties?
11. Which kinds of sins deserve discipline and excommunication?
12. Could the church have as a member someone who has committed a grievous sin such as murder, embezzlement, rape, child molesting, homosexuality, adultery, divorce? How would this be accomplished? What would be the reasons for/against it? How would/could you find a spirit of forgiveness toward such a person? 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

## Improving Bible Reading in our Family Worship

**I**n our last article we opened the subject of *family worship*. By family worship we mean worship at set times together as a family, with all of its members—young and old—present. Family worship is disap-

*Rev. denHartog is pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

*Previous article in this series: January 15, 2016, p. 181.*

pearing in many Christian homes. Neglecting regular worship together as a covenant family will have serious consequences. Family worship is central to real covenant life in our homes. It promotes true spiritual life and unity among the members of the covenant family. We may not allow the busyness of life (as important as the activity may be) to crowd out our regular family worship.

It belongs to the father's role as head of the covenant home to maintain and preserve as well as to lead family worship in his home. Even sending our covenant children to good Christian schools during the day cannot make up for a lack of family worship in our homes. There must be order in our covenant homes to maintain family worship. There must be enough time devoted to it. Family worship is not something that can be done hurriedly, as a short formal religious ritual before family members hurry off to their own daily pursuits.

It almost goes without saying that the reading of the Word of God must be central to our family worship. Everything else depends on this. The Word of God must be read with the purpose of fostering the love and fear of God as well as the knowledge of and love for His truth in the hearts of our covenant children.

The proper reading of God's Word with our covenant children begins already with instilling in our small children the proper attitude towards God's Word. From early youth on our covenant children must learn that, when God's Word is being read, God is in reality speaking. Father must insist that his children pay undivided attention. They may not be preoccupied with other things. They must be taught to listen with the purpose of understanding, even in simple child-like faith. Such reverence when the Word of God is being read in the home will teach our covenant children the proper attitude and behavior in church when the Word of God is read and the sermon is preached.

The regular reading of God's Word in our homes can be an amazing thing. There should be sufficient time given to this reading. We should be reading through the entire Bible as much as possible during the short time that our children are home with us. The knowledge of the Scriptures, what they actually say and mean, should in large measure be taught by extensive regular reading of the Bible with our families. What a blessing it is for young people and for adults in their later life to have a thorough knowledge of the Word of God! Such knowledge will help to make them strong in the Lord and His truth. Such knowledge will equip them to be able to refer to God's Word in the whole course of their life. I have found in some catechism children amazing knowledge of the Word of God; but I have also found in others a grievous deficiency of such knowledge. The latter is usu-

ally to be blamed on poor or irregular practices of family worship.

Repeated reading of the Word of God with our children will familiarize them with the Word. I recently visited with an elderly widow who testified that in their home father regularly required his children to memorize parts of the Word of God. By means of regular Bible reading in their homes our children will learn to take the Word of God with them in their minds and hearts as they go through their daily lives. I have also found that where there is regular reading of the Word of God there will be a realization of the inexhaustible riches of the meaning of the Word of God. Each time we read God's Word, we find in it something new, often something we never before understood. In family Bible reading parents should often speak to their children of new truths they themselves have learned, new depths of understanding. This kind of reading of the Bible fosters in children a love for the Word of God and for its comfort and blessing for life. It may also be good to read a short commentary at the time of family devotions, but we ought never underestimate the power of reading the Bible itself, and doing so over and over again.

As a father, together with my wife, we have watched seven children grow up in our home. We have ourselves learned a lot about raising children. I am thankful to God for the gifts He has also given to my wife, exercised and developed through the experience of having children in our home. We look back with profound fondness to those days after we now are 'empty nesters.' A proof of whether we have been 'successful' as parents in raising our children is whether they will remember the things they learned at the time of family devotions. We trust that they will remember these things with joy and thankfulness to God. This also will give them a pattern for the raising of their own covenant families.

One of the things about child development and pedagogy that we have experienced is the fact that the knowledge of Bible history is foundational to learning Bible doctrine in the later years of our children. While on the mission field, where we had the exciting opportunity of instructing new converts of the faith, I often encouraged these new converts to read Bible history books and even Bible story books to help them build a foundation in the knowledge of Bible history. Many followed this advice for their great benefit and improvement in understanding the truth pre-

sented in pre-confession classes and in the regular hearing of the preaching of the Word of God in church.

We have promoted a proper appreciation for the Word of God in the minds and hearts of our children when they are eager to hear the reading of 'Bible Stories' to them. This is often done while children are sitting in the laps of their mother and enjoying her loving embrace. We have found that the reading of good Bible story books during the younger years of our children was very beneficial. There are a number of good Bible story books, including *Come, Ye Children* by Mrs. Gertrude Hoeksema. We have done 'a good job' in our family devotions if we have seen the fruit of this in the attitudes of our little children. They love these stories more than any others. There is a lot of competition for the attention of our children today, not only from books they love to read but also from television and videos and the Internet. In our family devotions, we have to work very hard as parents to keep alive in our children's hearts and imaginations a great excitement for Bible history and the revelation of God's wonders.


Bible reading must include a measure of instruction for understanding the meaning and sense of the Word of God. It must include meditation on the Word of God. It must include application of the Word of God to our lives and the lives of our children. It must include pointing out examples of sins in the lives of Bible characters and impressing on the hearts of our children the admonitions of the Word of God. In connection with the reading of the Word, there must be warnings against sin and helping our children to condemn the world. They must learn from the Bible what it means to live a true, holy life devoted to God, along with the great blessings of God on such a life. And more than all of these, our Bible reading must include hearty encouragement of our children in the hope and joy of salvation, and in personal love and thankfulness to our Lord Jesus Christ who has fully accomplished that salvation. Yes, our children must be brought with us to church to hear the preaching of the gospel. But the reality and wonder of the gospel and our salvation in Christ must be talked about in our homes and especially at the time of our family worship.

As our children grow up, they must be taught a doctrinal understanding of the Word of God. We ought not minimize the great importance of this. We are thankful

to the Lord for the catechism instruction we have in our Protestant Reformed Churches. Very few churches today have doctrinal instruction for their young people. I often tell our young people that the 'Essentials in Reformed Doctrine' class they are sitting in will probably be the only time in their life that they have a complete systematic course of instruction in Bible doctrine. In the catechism room ministers can build on the diligent labors of parents in their family worship with great benefit for our covenant young people.

Doctrinal instruction will give our young people a sense of the truth of God that takes into account the whole of God's Word and compares Scripture with Scripture. It will help keep them from heretics who often hang their false teaching on a text of Scripture taken out of its context and twisted in its meaning. Under the blessing of God doctrinal instruction in the home will equip our young people to live in a world of increasing apostasy and false teachings. Our Lord has warned us over and over about the times in which we are living, that there will be many false teachers. Our young people need to be strong in the knowledge of the truth. Not all have the same gifts of God for doctrinal understanding, but all of our covenant young people need to be trained in their homes to be able to distinguish truth from error.

One of the most distressing things I have experienced in my ministry is the departure of some of our covenant young people from our churches. One of the most common reasons for this is worldly attachments and friendships, especially in the course of seeking their life partner. I have seen too many cases when young people have been drawn away by boyfriends and girlfriends who sometimes belong to churches quite doctrinally diverse from our churches. In doing this, they have sometimes shown themselves to be ill-equipped to distinguish truth from the lie. They easily go to a church of another denomination. Some of these leave the Reformed church with the naïve imagination that most churches in our day are much the same, with perhaps only a few minor differences in emphasis. Sometimes they learn the bitter consequences of this in their marriages later in their lives.

It makes me wonder with great sorrow sometimes, how could some of our young people raised in Reformed Christian homes among us be so easily led away? 



## The Second Coming of Christ and Missions (4)

We have noted so far that the second coming of Christ and missions are very closely connected. The content of the preaching must include the second coming of Christ according to the Reformed, amillennial confession according to Scripture. Faithful missions serves that second coming of Christ, both in its gathering of the church and in its hardening of those whom God has not ordained unto eternal life. Then we noticed that faithful missions will find its confidence, not in its own work, but in the certain and victorious return of our Lord Jesus Christ. In our final look at this topic, we consider the thought that the second coming of our Lord motivates us correctly and without false illusions to be busy in the difficult work of missions.

As a way to begin a consideration of this topic, it would be good to reconsider a poorly chosen word at the end of my second article in this series (Feb. 1, 2016 SB, 212). The mistake was the word “perhaps” in the sentence “... perhaps, as the day of Christ approaches, faithful missions will be more and more marked by *that* success.” The success described there was both the positive and the negative fruits of faithful preaching in missions. In that regard, “perhaps” does not stand in harmony with the Scriptures and our confessions. According to the Word of God, there is no “perhaps” or “maybe” about what the success of faithful missions will be regarding both its diminishing positive fruit and its increasing negative fruit as the day of the final appearing of Christ comes closer.

In that regard, we do not embrace the postmillennial error of some past Reformed clergy, such as the influential Rev. J. Livingston of the Reformed Church America in the 1800s, who taught that the period of 1800-2000 must be seen as the golden age of missions that would prepare the heathen world for a return of Christ.<sup>1</sup> Contrary to that,

<sup>1</sup> Eugene P. Heideman, *From Mission to Church: The Reformed Church in America Mission to India*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 201-202.

Rev. Smit is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Previous article in this series: March 15, 2016, p. 281.

we believe that as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man. That comparison of Christ applies to a number of things, including the fruits of faithful preaching as the last day approaches. Just as Noah’s preaching resulted in no mass conversions and no need for the construction of multiple arks before the onset of the Flood, but rather in the preservation of eight souls (the church at the time), so shall it be in the coming of the Son of Man. As the end nears, the faithful preaching in Reformed missions will more and more be rejected in its battle against the kingdom of darkness, and then silenced, when the prophecy of the two witnesses killed in the street is fulfilled (Rev. 11:7).

According to the Word of God, the success of the faithful preaching of the church of Jesus Christ in missions will unfold in that way. That success, mostly rejection of the Word with an elect remnant gathered by the same Word, is not success as man would reckon it. Nevertheless, this is the expected success according to the will and wisdom of God. This is how history will be led by God in preparation and service for the final appearing of Christ. This is what we expect because so it has seemed good in the sight of our heavenly Father, according to His sovereign good pleasure. He sovereignly determines and regulates *that* measure of success upon the faithful work of Christ through His church by His Word and Spirit (Matt. 11:25).

Now, does not that perspective extinguish any flames of true, God-centered mission motivation and enthusiasm? Does not Reformed amillennialism, along with its basis in sovereign, electing, particular grace, suffocate the life and activity out of mission work and its support?

It is true that, to our human understanding, the amillennial approach, as regards the realistic fruit of missions at the end of the ages, seems too hard. It is also true that we, with the apostle Paul, have great heaviness and continual sorrow regarding those whom we have known who heard the faithful preaching of the Word of God but rejected it to their destruction (Rom. 9:2). Hence, to expect no mass conversions nor a gradual growth of

the church institute towards global domination before the coming of Christ is not a cause for great rejoicing—from the viewpoint of our common total depravity and mankind's spiritual bondage and ruin in sin, and from the viewpoint of the serious call of the gospel to repent from sin and believe the promise.

Nevertheless, at the same time, the Reformed, amillennial outlook is realistic according to God's good pleasure and purpose. The same apostle Paul who grieved with regard to his fellow Jews declared with certainty the truth of double predestination, which truth governs the success of gospel preaching, determining that many are called, but only a few actually believe (Rom. 9:6-18). It is on the basis of that truth that the church goes forth with vigorous and steady activity in her missions with the humble petition to the Lord, "Not my will, but Thy will be done." Success is having the counsel of the Lord done in the outcomes—both negative and positive—of our mission work. When the Lord's wise and righteous counsel is done, who would dare be gloomy about that?! That prayer and expectation are a real source of motivation for the faithful church of Christ to carry out diligent mission labors while there is still opportunity to do so.

What exactly motivates the faithful church to be busy in mission work? First, the knowledge that faithful mission work serves a victorious cause. What motivation is there for faithful missions in a cause in which salvation is only a possibility or is dependent upon man's uncertain and impotent "free-will"? In contrast to what an Arminian, postmillennial gospel might promote in its mission work, the truth of the Reformed faith motivates its missionaries to vigorous, diligent, and humble work, in the knowledge that such labor will not be in vain because the cause is victorious in the Lord's sovereign and good way (Matt. 16:18; I Cor. 15:58).

Moreover, a Reformed missionary is motivated to labor diligently knowing that the Lord will not let any of His chosen people perish, but will bring them all to true faith in Him. This certainty is taught in II Peter 3:9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." The "all" and the "us-ward" to whom the Lord is longsuffering and whom the Lord wills to come to repentance are the elect, redeemed people of God.

Looking for the Lord, then, to gather His people by His Spirit through the preaching of the Word, a Reformed missionary is motivated to be busy with pure preaching and instruction by all good and lawful means at his disposal, so that he is found of the Lord blameless and faithful.

Although the work of foreign missions is difficult and will become increasingly so, yet the church is motivated to do her work in faithfulness and obedience according to Word of Jehovah to the prophet Jeremiah, who faced similar conditions during his ministry at the time of the decline and end of the kingdom of Judah:

Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee (Jer. 1:17-19).


With that same word the Lord encourages His church at the end of the ages not to be fearful or slothful regarding any of her work, including the work of foreign missions, even while she expects the realistic twofold fruits on her labors. She may not pilfer the time nor the resources that the Lord has given her. She must press them into the service of faithful preaching and instruction within her local congregations as well as outside of them in missions while there is opportunity to do so. The church must examine herself in this regard. She must examine whether she is doing the work faithfully when the Lord does provide the resources and opportunity. She must examine her labors, and be careful to maintain her mission labors in obedience to the Word of God according to the Reformed standards. This she must do through her calling churches and missionaries in the glorious expectation of the final appearing of Christ, the Lord of the harvest.

This close connection between the swiftly coming day of our Lord and an enthusiastic proclamation of the sharp Word of God by the church in missions was taught at the onset of the New Testament age. At the beginning of the new age of the ingathering of God's elect remnant from the nations, an unlikely Galilean preacher, filled

with the Holy Spirit, stood up and explained the reason for the enthusiasm of the church in its proclamation of the wonderful works of Jehovah in the streets of Jerusalem. The apostle Peter taught that the church of Christ does that with a view to and in service of the great and notable coming of the Lord at the end of history. The eye of the church is fixed on her final redemption. On the day of Pentecost and at other occasions, the apostles regularly connected the final appearing of the Lord to the preaching that they were doing and to the preaching that the church would continue to do faithfully through the rest of the New Testament age unto the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 2:17-20).

Knowing that the Lord is coming quickly, what shall the church do?

While there is yet opportunity, let the church be busy first in her work in the local congregations, so that then she may be faithful in sending out her missionaries, domestic and foreign, for the proclamation of the swiftly approaching return of our Lord and of the call to repent and believe in Him alone.

In that way of faithfulness by the Holy Spirit and grace of God, we will see that the Lord's counsel in all of His wonderful works in His harvest is done—not "perhaps," or "maybe," but *surely*. 

## CHURCH AND STATE

## MR. BRIAN VAN ENGEN

# The Supreme Court Finds a Right to Homosexual Marriage (3)

In the last two articles in this series, we looked at the Supreme Court's ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which found a right to homosexual marriage. We also looked at the need for churches and schools to position themselves so that they are able to use the protections available under the First Amendment to the Constitution. In this installment, we will look at churches and schools and the specific measures they can take to assert their rights under the law. I would preface these comments by noting that these specific measures would be helpful to the churches from a legal perspective, but that we must still question the extent to which they are advisable from a church polity standpoint.

As we saw previously, the liberal majority in the Supreme Court specifically stated that "[t]he First Amendment ensures that religious organizations and persons are given proper protection as they seek to teach the principles that are so fulfilling and so central to their

lives and faiths...."<sup>1</sup> The law has long held that sincerely held religious beliefs ought to be protected and accommodated. Churches in particular have been given great deference in governing themselves so that they can operate in accordance with their sincerely held religious beliefs. It is, therefore, helpful for churches or other organizations to defend their religious rights if they have clear statements and policies setting forth their religious beliefs and delineating how those beliefs guide their policies. Groups such as the Alliance Defending Freedom, which specialize in assisting religious groups in defending their religious freedom, have developed sample statements of belief in regard to marriage and homosexuality, as well as policies that can be adopted to govern use of church property and other aspects of church life.<sup>2</sup>

One could ask why our churches would need to adopt policy statements such as these. If there are articles or sermons from our ministers that demonstrate beliefs, why is that not enough? The answer stems from the state of the church world today. In many denominations, one

---

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

*Previous article in this series: February 1, 2016, p. 212.*

<sup>1</sup> *Obergefell V. Hodges*, 576U.S. \_\_\_\_, 135 S. Ct. 2584 (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Sample documents can be obtained from the Alliance Defending Freedom, at <https://www.adflegal.org/campaigns/pym>.

minister or one congregation may oppose homosexual marriage, while others in the same denomination or even in the same congregation may not. Because there is a lack of church discipline on this issue, the fact that someone in a congregation holds to a belief does not mean that it is the sincerely held belief of the congregation. If a congregation adopts a formal statement of its position in opposition to homosexual marriage or any other error, it would be difficult to refute the idea that this position is the sincerely held belief of the congregation.

By the same token, it would bolster the local congregation's legal position even more if the entire denomination would adopt the same position. This can be illustrated by looking at the opposite situation, in which a local congregation adopts a position that is not supported by the denomination as a whole. The undersigned has been contacted by several local congregations who wish to adopt policies confirming their opposition to homosexual marriage. Some of these congregations belong to larger denominations that have refused to take disciplinary action on cases relating to homosexual practices. If a homosexual activist were to sue the local congregation for some alleged act of discrimination, the activist could point out that the congregation is a part of a denomination that is not necessarily opposed to homosexual behavior. The question would be raised as to whether this is really the local congregation's sincerely held religious belief, since they remain a part of a denomination that refuses to discipline homosexual behavior. By the same token, a local congregation's position would be bolstered if the denomination of which it is a part would adopt a statement of its position on homosexual marriage that is consistent with that of the local congregations.

When courts analyze whether policies are based on sincerely held beliefs rather than being mere pretexts for discrimination, it is also helpful if the policies are consistent with the church's normal practices. In Reformed church circles, this is another reason to consider whether such statements of our beliefs should be formulated at the congregational level. Typically, the Reformed churches work together to formulate statements of beliefs, and those statements are adopted by the local congregations and incorporated into the individual congregation's policies. In the case of the PRCA position in regard to homosexuality and marriage, this could mean that a

statement of our beliefs in that regard is formulated by the cooperation and collaboration of the churches, and then the individual congregations could adopt those statements of belief and incorporate them into building-use policies, employment policies, membership policies, and the many other areas of the church's life that are potentially affected. Since local congregations of Reformed churches do not normally formulate statements of beliefs individually, an opponent could otherwise question why a congregation acted alone in adopting such a statement in relation to homosexual behavior and marriage.

Similarly, churches should give careful consideration into which documents such statements of belief or policies should be included. For instance, many groups advocate the inclusion of such statements into a church or school's bylaws or even Articles of Incorporation. The benefit of including our positions in such documents is that statements included in bylaws are generally viewed as carrying more weight than a statement that is simply approved by the organization, because it takes more formal action to amend bylaws. By the same token, it may be viewed as even more weighty to include such statements in the Articles of Incorporation, which must then be formally filed with the state. However, we should again be cautious of incorporating a statement of beliefs into bylaws, if those bylaws contain no other statements of belief. Many of our congregations' bylaws are simply standard non-profit corporation bylaws, and amending these to include a statement on homosexuality and marriage or policies addressing these issues would not only look out of place, it could give the impression that we hold this position to have more importance than other doctrinal positions.

Even if the denomination as a whole were to adopt a position statement, each congregation should still adopt the statement and determine where such a statement should be included in its own documents and records, depending on how statements of other beliefs are handled. But regardless of whether the beliefs are included in the bylaws or in a statement adopted by the council or congregation, formal action to adopt the statements should be taken. If not, the statements could be construed as merely a position statement that does not reflect the official position of the congregation. If the statements are not formally adopted, it could also beg the



question as to why they were not, and whether there is a difference of opinion that prevents the statements from being formally adopted.

In our statement of faith, we should clearly set out our position regarding homosexuality, gender identification, and homosexual marriage. It is also a good idea to set out our basis for opposing these practices, that it is rooted in love—a love for God and a love for the brother/sister who walks in sin. In an age when any opposition to the practices of others is viewed as intolerant and possibly hate speech, it is important that we clearly set forth that true love requires that we oppose such practices and that we voice that opposition.

When a congregation has adopted statements of its beliefs, all policies and documents should be reviewed and revised to incorporate language consistent with those statements. These policies can be revised to address topics such as the preaching, employment with the church, use of church facilities, and volunteers with the church. Revised policies should reference the adopted statement of belief as the basis for the policy. Policies should also be reviewed to insure that policies are consistent across the board. For instance, many of the building-use policies being adopted state that the church property cannot be used by those who do not share the church's stated beliefs with regard to homosexuality. If a church's use policy allows use by others with differing beliefs, such as those from other denominations, this inconsistency could be problematic in a legal setting. We will discuss this aspect of the issue more fully later in this article under the concept of "public accommodation."

Adoption of statements of belief by the churches also aids our Christian schools and even individual believers. We will discuss the protection of schools more fully in short order, but with regard to individuals, we have reviewed cases in the past under this rubric in which courts gave protection to individuals under the First Amendment Free Exercise of Religion based on sincerely held beliefs.<sup>3</sup> If a school or individual can point to the stated belief of the church, this can only aid in proving that it is a sincerely held religious belief.

As with churches, the protection available to our

schools stems from the Free Exercise of Religion guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution. The difficulty with schools is that while churches are clearly recognized as religious institutions, schools are often operated by non-religious organizations, and often for non-religious reasons. This means that special care must be taken to maximize the protection afforded to our schools under the Constitution.

First, our Christian schools should also adopt statements of faith stating our position with regard to matters of gender identity and sexuality. As with churches, suggested language and policies are available from sources such as the Alliance Defending Freedom.<sup>4</sup> Employee handbooks, student handbooks, and other school policy statements should be reviewed and revised as needed to incorporate these policies. It would be best if these statements of faith were consistent with the language adopted by the PRC, for reasons which will be explained shortly. It also aids our legal position if the statements and policies of our schools are consistent.

We should also review Articles of Incorporation and bylaws to ensure that they clearly state that the primary purpose of our Christian schools is to teach all subjects in a way that incorporates our unique doctrinal positions and to incorporate our beliefs in every facet of school life. Although our schools do this in practice, we often do not directly state this in our official documents. The reason that this becomes an issue is that even many private schools do not see religion as something that must be, or even can be, included in every subject. In cases such as the *Hosanna-Tabor Lutheran Church and School* case, the court distinguished between teachers who taught religion classes and other teachers.<sup>5</sup> In our Christian schools, we expect teachers to incorporate our worldview into every subject, into discipline of students, and into the example they set for the students. We expect all school employees to follow suit, whether secretaries or janitors or whatever position they may hold.

It is also helpful if our governing documents refer to the fact that the school is established so that the teachers, standing in place of the parents, continue the instruction

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, "A Clash of Individual Liberty," *Standard Bearer*, vol. 87, 204; "Religious Discrimination in Employment," *Standard Bearer*, vol. 89, 206.

<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://www.adflegal.org>.

<sup>5</sup> *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*, 132 S.Ct 694 (2012).

in the same religious doctrines taught in the churches attended by the families. Some of our schools have bylaws that refer specifically to the doctrines of the Protestant Reformed Churches, and some refer to the Three Forms of Unity or other doctrinal standards. Whatever the case may be, the documents should clarify that the doctrines of the church are being carried over to the school, and that the teachers are expected to incorporate them into every subject. If the supporting churches have adopted statements of our position on these issues, this bolsters the school's position.

The reason why it is so important that our schools clearly state this connection to the church's doctrine is that the law recognizes a "ministerial exception," under which the courts will not interfere with the operations of churches or similar religious organizations. As was illustrated in the *Hosanna-Tabor* case, the Supreme Court has been willing to extend this doctrine to teachers of religion in private schools.<sup>6</sup> Since we require all teachers to incorporate our religious doctrines into their subjects, this exemption would arguably extend First Amendment protection to all teachers in our schools. By the same token, the courts do not interfere in the discipline or other aspects of church life because of this same concept, and our schools should be afforded the same protection because they are meant to incorporate those same religious beliefs into all of school life.

Some might worry that such an approach runs contrary to our practice of maintaining the schools as separate from the church, as *parental* schools rather than *parochial*, church-run schools. What is suggested is not a change to the structure of the school government, but rather a clarification of what already exists. Many of our schools already include language that requires that school society members or teachers be members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. This connection is sufficient for the government to consider the schools to be legally affiliated with the church. For instance, the undersigned has assisted several of our Christian schools in applying for recognition of tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service. The IRS has ruled repeatedly that this affiliation with the church keeps the schools from having to file an annual Form 990, which is normally filed by exempt organizations other than

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

churches. Even though the church does not directly govern the schools, the indirect connection is sufficient because the doctrine of the church will necessarily carry over to the school. If the church excommunicated a member, that person could not hold office or teach at the school either. Even if a school is not implicitly tied to a particular denomination, the governing documents should be reviewed to ensure that they state that the school incorporates the doctrinal beliefs of the parents into every aspect of school life and that the teachers are expected to incorporate those same doctrines into every subject.

Our school policies should be very careful to clarify that we believe our worldview affects every aspect of life, and that we expect that no students, faculty, or employees will live or teach in a way that contradicts our religious beliefs. Even with such language, it may be difficult to enforce such policies with regard to some non-teaching positions. For instance, a court in Massachusetts recently ruled that a Catholic school, Fontbonne Academy, violated an employee's rights by denying him employment as a food service director because he listed his homosexual partner as an emergency contact. The court found that the ministerial exception did not apply because he would not be teaching religious matters.<sup>7</sup> This is why we must be manifestly clear regarding our belief that life and doctrine are completely integrated.

Another issue that affects schools more than churches is the concept of "public accommodation." This is the legal doctrine that facilities that are opened to public use cannot exclude certain classes of people. The idea is that if an organization allows an otherwise private facility to be used by the general public, it cannot then discriminate against any of the protected classes of individuals. As discrimination laws are expanded to include issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, we must re-evaluate our policies in regard to public use of our facilities.

Finally, in a similar vein, we must consider the language allowing students of other denominations to attend our schools. In the *Fontbonne Academy* case, the court noted that the Massachusetts discrimination law exempts religious organizations, but this exemption only applies to organizations that limit enrollment to members of

<sup>7</sup> Daniel James Devine, "Massachusetts Court: Catholic School Must Hire Gay Employees," *The Aquila Report*, January 14, 2016.

their own religion.<sup>8</sup> At the very least, our policies should clarify that students must adhere to our doctrinal positions.

The world around us is rapidly again becoming a place where “every man does what is right in his own eyes.”

<sup>8</sup> Devine, “Massachusetts Court.”

Our adherence to absolute moral standards makes us an object of derision and a target for those who resent our beliefs. Our heavenly Father has provided us means to continue to proclaim the truth for a time, and we should be diligent in using the means provided to continue to let the light of the gospel shine for as long as possible. ☞

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

### Mission Activities

On Saturday, April 9, a youth conference was held in the church building at Maranatha PRC, Valenzuela City organized by the PRC of Bulacan. The topic was “Biblical Courtship and Marriage,” which was divided into three speeches. Rev. Leovino Trinidad gave opening remarks and led devotions. The first speech by Rev. Daniel Kleyn was entitled “Defining Biblical Courtship,” followed by Rev. Vernon Ibe speaking on the topic “Proper Behavior When Dating,” and then Rev. John Flores on the topic “Using Dating as Preparation for Marriage.” All three speeches were followed by interesting question and answer periods, with Rev. Aud Spriensma joining in to answer questions and providing closing remarks. The book table was busy all day too, with 150 books sold! At the end of the conference each young person was allowed to choose one free book from the table.

Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn plan to leave Manila Tuesday, June 14 (after the PRCP Classis on the 13<sup>th</sup>), for their furlough to the USA, and plan to spend the first week in Iowa. Rev. Kleyn will attend the annual synod of the PRCA in Hull and the annual church picnic of Doon PRC before

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

heading to Michigan on June 20. Their return home to Antipolo City is expected to be July 28. May God grant safety in travel and enjoyable experiences with family and friends in the U.S.

### School Activities

More than 200 voices strong! God has blessed our schools bountifully, and that was evident from the God-glorifying event held Thursday, April 14, at 7:00 P.M. A large audience descended on the B.J. Haan auditorium on the campus of Dordt College in Sioux Center, IA to hear the choirs of Covenant Christian High School (Grand Rapids, MI), Loveland, CO Protestant Reformed High School, and Trinity Christian High School (Hull, IA) perform individual and combined numbers. As expected, it was an edifying evening of praise to God! We are glad that the students had a chance to share some time and fellowship together also.

From the bulletin of the PRC of Lynden, WA we find this concerning the Lynden Covenant Christian School Program:

You can see it in the first rays of the morning sun. You can see it in the flowers and creatures of creation. You can see it in the starry nighttime sky. You can even see it...in YOU! The signature of God is everywhere in creation! Do you see it? Come to

Covenant Christian School's spring program on Friday, April 1, at 7:30 and see, through music, video, and song, the signature of our great Creator! Invite family and friends!

Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI invited all supporters to a Night Out at the Horseshoe Smokehouse Restaurant for a delicious supper, with 50% of the proceeds going directly to the school. The restaurant name itself sounds really inviting! We are guessing that some moms took the night off from cooking so their families could give this activity a try!

Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI held their annual Hostess Supper Friday, April 1, at Friesland Reformed Church. This year the junior/senior choir from Trinity Christian High School in Hull, IA made the trip to Randolph to sing after the supper. The choir stayed overnight in Randolph and traveled back to Iowa the next day.

Supporters of Heritage Christian School held their Spring Children's Clothing Sale on a Saturday in March in the large gym there. Many different items were sold, including delicious baked goods!

### Denominational Activities

From the April 17 bulletin of the PRC of Doon, Iowa, the calling

church for the mission field in the Philippines, we read this notice:

The Council would like to inform the congregation that the FMC [Foreign Mission Committee], with the concurrence of our Council, is proposing to Synod 2016 that we begin calling a third missionary to labor in the Philippines. We are convinced that there is an abundance of work on the field, particularly in the area of theological education. We wait now for the judgment of synod, which will treat the matter when it convenes on June 14.

### Congregational Activities

Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI recently approved a recommendation from their building committee to purchase sound boards to be installed in their narthex to reduce the noise/echo in this location. The Council there also approved the installation of a video surveillance system.

The Adult Bible Study of Cornerstone PRC of Dyer, IN invited the

area Adult Bible societies to a combined meeting, discussing Paul's missionary work among the Athenians according to Acts 17. Refreshments and a time of fellowship followed the meeting.

The Reading Club of Hope PRC of Redlands, CA planned to begin reading and discussing a new book, *Spiritual Warfare: A Biblical and Balanced Perspective* by Brian Borgman and Rob Ventura. This book was reviewed in the February 15, 2016 *Standard Bearer*.

Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI held their annual potluck recently, with Prof. R. Cammenga presenting a program on his recent trips to the Philippines.

### Young Adult Activities

The Young Adult Society of Crete, PRC in IL hosted their annual all-day co-ed 4 on 4 volleyball tournament on Saturday, April 16.

### Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of

Edgerton, MN PRC sponsored a presentation in their church by Rev. D. Kuiper on the topic of "Signs, Wonders, and Mighty Deeds: Miracles in the Bible." All the non-B's brought bars or cookies.

### Sister-Church Activities

We find this interesting correspondence from Covenant PRC of Northern Ireland and Limerick Reformed Fellowship:

Thank you for Rev. McGeown's CDs on Psalm 139 and the good book, *Just Dad*. Reading that led me to read again *For Thy Truth's Sake*, which led me to break off to read some of *Calvin's Calvinism!* Having just read the end of chapter 11 of *For Thy Truth's Sake*, it has whet my appetite for reading Hoeksema's *Reformed Dogmatics*. It is lovely being taken on this voyage of discovery!—Yorkshire, England

"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 the Kalamazoo PRC express their Christian sympathy to Doug and Sarah Bishop, Lane Bishop, and John, Jessica, Natalie, and Ethan Bishop in the death of their son, brother, and uncle,

**CHRIS BISHOP.**

May their comfort be found in God's Word where we read, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President  
Steve DeVries, Clerk