

The Standard Bearer



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Cover picture of Delegates to Synod 2015

Left-to-right: Rev. Garrett Eriks, Gerald Kuiper, Keith Bruinsma, Prof. Russell Dykstra, Alan Meurer, Rev. Doug Kuiper, Prof. Ronald Cammenga, Howard Pastoor, Rev. Rodney Kleyn, Philip Hall, Robert Drnek, Jack Lenting, Rev. Allen Brummel, Sid Miedema, Rev. William Langerak, Chester Hunter, Rev. Steven Key, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Ron VanOverloop, Jack Regnerus, Tang Yoon Chuan, Rev. James Laning, David Kregel, Rev. Carl Haak

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Noah Found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord

“But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.”
Genesis 6:8

A beautiful gospel word is this. A brief and comprehensive summary of what constitutes faith and faithfulness in every age, but especially in days of mounting evil and apostasy.

The parallels between the days in which Noah was called to represent God’s cause and truth and our own age are simply too striking to miss.

As surely as Noah lived in days just prior to the end of his world bringing God’s judgments upon it, so we live in days that portend the return of Christ and the end of all things.

The sound of the running of the horsemen reverberates ever louder in society and in the very ground itself these days, does it not?

When the mighty Himalayas are being shaken, something momentous is afoot.

And as surely as Noah was called to be a preacher of righteousness and a witness to God’s truth in such momentous times, so are we also as churches.

And essentially our task is no different than that of Noah.

Noah was commissioned by God to build an ark to preserve the church when God’s judgment fell in his day. So we are called to continue building Christ’s church, especially in her institutional form, to be a haven of safety for God’s remnant in these last days.

How are we as churches to be of service to God as Noah was in his age? How else but by being characterized by what characterized Noah as he represented

Rev. Koole is pastor of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

This is the abbreviated text of the Pre-Synodical Sermon that Rev. Koole preached on June 8, 2015.

Christ’s church in his age, namely, by being numbered amongst those who yet find grace in the eyes of the Lord!

One more thing: pay attention to that word GRACE! If that is not the heartbeat of the gospel entrusted to our care for these past ninety years, what is?



“But Noah...”

The contrast between this text and the verses preceding it simply shouts at one.

In distinction from the society in which he lived, Noah found grace.

That does not mean Noah was the only one who knew God’s grace in his day. There was a remnant according to election, starting with his own family, which knew God’s grace as well.

But Noah does stand as representing the church of Christ still living at that time, standing as one whom the world itself identified as taking a lead in being identified with Jehovah God and His righteousness and truth.

Worthy of note is that this is the first time the word ‘grace’ is specifically used in the Scriptures.

At the very outset, let us note that our text describes grace as that which is personal, particular, and distinguishing. There is nothing common or general about this grace of God, as if grace is that which is somehow shared by all and sundry, that which somehow binds all mankind together, Seth’s line and Cain’s line, Christ’s church and the world.

Rather grace is introduced as a distinguishing, separating virtue. That is what is underscored by our text. Not grace as the basis for fellowship between the spiritual and the ungodly, but rather grace as the very reality that puts one in a unique category, namely, as being counted God’s friend in distinction from being counted with those displeasing to God.

A timely reminder: what gave rise to our churches ninety years ago, namely, the insistence on the particularity of grace and its distinguishing power, is clearly set forth in this text.

“But Noah...”—in distinction from that ungodly society described so vividly in the prior verses—found grace in God’s eyes.

Surely, for a son of Adam there can be no greater wonder, privilege, and honor than that!

Grace in the eyes of the LORD.

Note the phrase: the eyes of the LORD. The eyes of the One who observes mankind and assesses all they do. The great I AM; the Almighty, Eternal One, from whom all created reality came.

For the believer, it is a phrase that fills one with encouragement and comfort.

Not so those outside of Christ. For them “the eyes of the LORD” is a frightening and dreadful reality. It means, nothing done in secret will not be made known. Your sins will find you out. And you will give answer in the day of days.

But for the child of God, to have the eyes of the LORD upon you is assurance itself.

You may then be sure that no matter how great the blows of life may be, no matter how overwhelming the enemy that threatens one seems, you have not been overlooked or forgotten by God. You have the full attention of Almighty God.

And further, for the believer those ‘eyes’ mean that one is being watched as carefully as a child is by his father, and that it is the power of that Father (the Almighty One) that is at one’s disposal.

What have we to fear? His eyes are always upon us, watching and assessing, not in judgment and wrath, but rather in love and, in the end, approval.

“But Noah found grace....”

Grace! What a wonderful and astonishing thing grace is!

We commonly refer to it as God’s favor—favor undeserved, favor that we have not earned or merited.

While adequate, that does not go deep enough.

Grace for fallen mankind is not simply that we are not worthy of it, but that it is *contrary* to everything we deserve. What we deserve is just the opposite, namely, everlasting condemnation and wrath. “For the wages of

sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). That is what we have earned.

Yet that is not what we have received! What we have received is life and favor and the promise of the everlasting inheritance—the double portion of the firstborn.

How is it that after ninety years we still exist as a manifestation of Christ’s true church? God’s wonderful grace. What else?

The beauty of God’s grace is that it is shown to a people ugly with sin, a people in themselves disfigured and deformed. The rotting leprosy of sin fills us with a terrible stench.

And yet God is attracted to such a remnant of mankind.

How can it be?

Behold the mystery of electing grace, the will of God to see us in Christ Jesus, determined from before the world began.

And the great beauty of God’s grace is that He will not keep it to Himself. He wills to share it with us. And by ‘share’ we mean, make it known to us and then work it within us as well. In this life already, grace working in a people ugly with sin to transform them into those having a spiritual beauty, the beginnings of the virtues of the great Bridegroom himself.

So it was with Noah, the object and recipient of this electing and transforming grace.

And so it is with us.

That we should yet be numbered with those who find grace in the eyes of the Lord has to do with the mystery of God’s sovereign and electing grace; a grace that has everything to do with God’s gracious provisions in Christ Himself.



That said, let it be understood that when our text declares that Noah *found* grace, it is not simply telling us that Noah was the *recipient* of grace, though he surely was. But the text is declaring that Noah found grace in God’s eyes because he also *sought* it. God’s grace and approval were above all things precious to Noah.

To be sure, that Noah sought grace is evidence of God’s grace working in him. Nonetheless, that Noah sought this grace in God’s eyes is exactly what pleased God and had His approval.

In this respect Noah was strikingly different from

Adam right after Adam fell. Adam first fled and tried to hide himself from God. He was afraid of the eyes of God, what God would find in him.

But here is Noah, a redeemed son of Adam. He does not flee from God's presence; rather, he seeks God out and looks up into God's eyes. As it were, he says, "Tell me, Lord, what your thoughts are, and what I need to know about Thee and about myself. What is it that has Thy approval, and what does not!"

This is clear from what follows (v. 9). Noah is described as a "just" man, meaning 'upright.' And as "perfect," meaning 'spiritually mature and blameless before men.' And as one who "walked with God."

One who 'walks with God' walks in the direction God walks, meaning, exactly contrary to the way of the world. Noah was a 'God-conscious' man, willing, for the approval of God, to kiss friendship with the world 'goodbye.'

So Noah found grace—favor and words of approval—as he sought it by his antithetical walk. And as he sought it by *prayer*.

One who walks with God converses with God in prayer.

Surely, Noah was one who prayed, "Lord God, I am a sinner. For all my spiritual aspirations and desires, I am yet a sinner standing in the need of grace. Need for the grace of forgiveness to be sure, but also, Lord God, I need the supply of grace to walk in Thy ways, or else I too will be swept away by temptation and sin. Lord God, I need the grace of Thy Holy Spirit. Withhold Him not from me."

Such a man finds grace in the eyes of God, the smile of God's approval, and the grace one needs.

Such was true of Noah. Is such true of us as a people? As officebearers? As delegates to Synod? Is this finding grace in God's eyes what we are interested in and committed to in earnestness and humility?

Not just, *has* that been true of us for the past ninety years as churches. But *is* that what we still *are* committed to for ourselves personally and for the sake of our churches as well? Grace as the favor and approval of God, and that power of grace so necessary to walk in His ways.

And make no mistake. Grace in the eyes of the Lord, and knowing that grace, is not automatically ours by virtue of our having faithful forbearers. They found that grace as they persevered in seeking it in the way of life and

prayer. We too must be committed to such seeking, lest we be cut off in our generations. God keep us from all presumptuousness.



Finally, note well *when* Noah found that grace in the eyes of the LORD.

He found it in days of great apostasy, days when only a handful of faithful remained, days of monstrous wickedness and of hatred of all that was right and true. As verse 5 states "And God saw that...every imagination of the thoughts of [man's] heart was only evil continually."

That certainly describes man's depravity, but here especially man's depravity as coming to full expression in boldness and defiance. Society was set on doing evils exactly because it knew these were things forbidden by God and contrary to His Word. They gloried in their shame and dared the righteous to rebuke them!

In such days Noah found grace in God's eyes. He had the courage to live completely contrary to the prevailing current of his day.

But more than that, Noah spoke out against the unrighteous society of his day. As II Peter 2:5 states, he was a preacher of righteousness! This means he had the boldness in the name of righteousness to preach against the unrighteousness of the world, calling society to repent or perish. Judgment draws nigh!

This too was pleasing in the eyes of God, commending Noah to God's approval.

And so it must be with us in these last days, when evil sweeps as a flood across the land.

To represent God's cause in such a day takes great courage—courage to walk against the current of a wicked, immoral society (thus calling attention to one's self), and courage to rebuke ungodly men by preaching and speaking truth, knowing it will stir up malice and even assaults in the end.

Such courage takes grace and more grace, grace that is found by prayer.

But it is exactly such a people upon whom the great Jehovah looks with favor and approval.

By His sovereign, covenantal grace God grant that we in our generations continue to be as 'Noahs'—seekers of and recipients of God's wonderful grace in these last days!



“In the Multitude of Counselors”: Report on Synod 2015

The editorial of June 1 highlighted items on the agenda of the 2015 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Synod met in Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan, completing its work in four full days. Decisions of this ecclesiastical gathering have been published online (prca.org) and in bulletins, so there is no need to report these details here. Instead we call attention to a few decisions, primarily for the purpose of explanation.

A highlight of synod is always the sermon and examination of seminary students who have completed the four years of study. Synod examined Mr. Ryan Barnhill and unanimously approved him for candidacy for the ministry of the Word and sacraments. We rejoice in the good indications of God's blessing on Candidate Barnhill in giving the young man understanding of and commitment to the Reformed truth, as well as the ability to proclaim the gospel for the glory of God and the edification of His people.

Second, Synod ruled in an appeal that concerned whether a consistory has the right to change for its

own congregation the date on which the annual Prayer Day service is held. An appeal sets before the synod a protest that the member brought to classis, with the response of classis, and asks synod to judge between the two. Synod of 2015 ruled with Classis East and thus did not sustain the appeal. On this very narrow issue, Synod accepted Classis' argument that the Church Order does not determine a specific day, and the Protestant Reformed Churches have not determined a specific day (by decision of classis or synod). Keep in mind the narrowness of the case. It does not include whether or not Synod agrees with a consistory's reason(s) for changing the date of Prayer Day, only whether a consistory *may* change the date. Synod, in my judgment, made the right decision; there is freedom here. Whether it is “worth it” to have five churches in western Michigan observing Prayer Day on a different day from eight other area churches, there will be differing views on that.

A third matter of interest is the continuing benefits of sister-church relationships. The delegates from

the PRC were joined again this year by one delegate from both sister churches. Deacon Philip Hall came over from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland. Deacon Tang Yoon Chuan represented the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore. These men were seated as delegates with the right to speak on all matters. Both men had opportunity to address Synod, giving information on the work and circumstances of their churches. Among other things, Deacon Tang conveyed the good news that CERC has been granted three more years by the government to comply with new laws that might require them to give up their current place of worship—a serious matter indeed, for finding a replacement facility would not be easy. On a lighter note, Deacon Hall reported that the CPRCNI is on the cutting edge of energy-saving technology, looking to install solar power panels on the church building. While the synodical delegates surely appreciated this effort to conserve energy and save money, those who had visited Northern Ireland in the oft dreary winter did wonder

about the usefulness of solar panels in that fair land. One delegate quipped, “So these will be used two weeks out of the year?” Another wondered about solar panels that do not need sunshine to produce electricity.

Synod received a heart-warming letter signed by the respective sessions of CPRCNI and CERCS informing the PRC that they have mutually agreed to become sister churches of *each other*. Synod expressed its joy, and thanksgiving to God, for this manifestation of true accord. The circle uniting the CERCS, the CPRCNI, and the PRCA is complete. May God continue to bless these relationships and give this threefold cord a strength that is not quickly broken (Eccl. 4:12).

Fourth, Synod adopted a recommendation from the Theological School Committee that will impact the retirement of the current seminary professors. The existing method for replacing professors can be found in the Constitution of the Theological School (found in the PRC’s Church Order Books and online). The current provision is that when a professor reaches the age of 65, a replacement is called, with a subsequent transition period of up to five years (it has not gone beyond three years to this point). Under the existing rules, replacements for the three current professors were scheduled to be called in 2019, 2020, and 2021. Recognizing that such a quick transition of seminary professors is not wise, Synod adopted a proposal to spread out the replacements to 2017, 2019,

and 2021. In addition, the intent is that the transition period (that is, the further education of the new professors and their taking over the full teaching load) be the full five years for each.

The final matter for explanation is that of Psalter revision. In the recent past, representatives of the Free Reformed Churches invited the Protestant Reformed Churches to consider joining them and other denominations that use the Psalter to investigate possible revision of the song book. Past synods have mandated the Contact Committee to stay abreast of these efforts and report back to synod. Accordingly, the CC presented to this synod documents from a meeting of representatives of the Free Reformed Churches, the Heritage Reformed Churches, and the Protestant Reformed Churches. These documents explained the reasons for looking at a revision. They also gave some goals and a proposed plan of action. The report from this committee included a request that the PRC appoint three men to take up the work. These documents demonstrated that the churches asking the PRC to join them very much love the Psalter, and desire to improve but not radically change it.

The guidelines proposed are:

- a. Review the general accuracy of what we sing. Some selections contain a generalization of the content of the psalms (e.g., selections 410-413 do not include the details in Psalm 150). There are also some omissions of Scripture verses (e.g., Ps. 113:9 and 137:9). Let the revision committee deter-

mine with precision what is and is not included of the psalms in the Psalter.

- b. Evaluate the “redundancies.” For example, a whole psalm may be versified in a number of selections and then versified again in other selections (e.g., Psalm 145 is covered repeatedly in selections 394-400). Sometimes the identical versifications are set to different tunes (selections 142 and 143). The question can be raised whether so many selections are necessary/helpful. At the same time, some ‘redundant’ selections may be congregational/denominational favorites. Let there be careful sifting through the selections.

- c. Replace when possible all instances of unfamiliar and archaic words. E.g.: “minstrelsy,” “deign,” “byword,” “slake,” and “lays.” It is agreed, however, that all pronoun references to God be retained in their Old English form (Thee and Thou).

- d. Review whether all tunes match or fit with the content of the Psalm (e.g., 143); as well as when currently poor tunes are used and finally resolve the matter of tunes that are pitched too high (approx. 25-30 percent).

- e. Aim to improve the layout of the songs on the page. This includes unhelpful musical notations (occasional fermatas) as well as the numbering system. It would be good to renumber the selections so that the selection number is determined by the psalm number. This would strengthen people’s knowledge of the book of psalms (e.g., have 1A and 1B for Psalm 1; 10A, 10B, 10C for Psalm 10, etc.).

In the nature of the case, few of us over the age of fifty will be eager


to see the Psalter revised. The plan is to have three members of the PRC participate in this work for a year. The CC was mandated to oversee this work and report back to the synod in 2016. The synod has not committed the PRC to full involvement. The synod will have opportunity to withdraw at any time.

One significant provision will enable the churches to make informed decisions on the work. This committee plans to prepare a sample

update of ten Psalms and submit it to the respective synods for review by the churches. The effort has all the marks of a careful, even cautious, approach with the desire to keep the changes to a minimum.

Singing is a major portion of the believer's praise to God. The Psalter has well served this function for several Reformed churches of Dutch ancestry for generations. It is well beloved. For these reasons the committee desires an improved song book that is recognizable as

the Psalter, not one that people will say, What have they done to our Psalter? All three denominations involved have the same fears among their members and the same concern for their members.

At the same time, we ought to recognize that the Psalter can be improved. The desire of all is a Psalter that enables us to sing well, and to sing *all* the Psalms. Everyone involved wants to produce a Psalter that will be used, by God's grace, for generations. 

LETTERS

Synod Preview

I am writing this out of a concern about the editorial written by Prof. Dykstra in the June 2015 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. I was dismayed by the comments he made about the work that synod was going to take up in the area of Domestic Missions. In his comments he promotes the idea of a second missionary to Pittsburgh. Is it proper that the author use the *Standard Bearer* to trumpet his own opinion? I Corinthians 6:12 states, "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient." It does not seem that these comments are expedient.

In the first place, the author concedes that, "Southwest's Consistory (Council) is in a much better position than he to make a wise judgment in the field." He then attempts to prove that he sees the bigger picture and that his vision is much broader. How sad! Does the author not think Southwest's Council did not consider these arguments? The author, with no attempt of proof, casually brushes away the work that the Southwest's Council very carefully and deliberately did. Many hours were spent and much careful work was done by the body that is legitimately called by God to oversee this work.

In the second place, I view his comments as an attempt to influence a deliberative body improperly. We have God-given means to address issues that arise. The brother does not use these methods. He chooses instead to use the public platform of the *Standard Bearer*, and does this as synod is about to begin its work. The brother urges synod to overrule the work of the local congregation. He writes, "My prayer is the Lord of the harvest will lead synod to agree with Missionary Bruin-sma."

The author's comments can only serve as a huge discouragement to the churches that have faithfully done the work of a calling church for many years. His comments could certainly give pause to any church considering becoming a calling church for our denomination.

Much discussion, deliberation, and debate must occur as we do the great work of missions, but this deliberation should take place by those who have the God-given calling to do this work. This discussion must be in a proper manner and method. May the Lord of the harvest bless our mission labors.

David Rau
Southwest PRC

Response:

Dear Dave,

We thank you for writing to the *SB*. Not only do we appreciate the evidence such letters are of a healthy interest in and concern for the work of the church, we also welcome the opportunity they provide to clarify misconceptions when that is necessary.

And in this instance I think it is necessary. On careful consideration of your letter, and the letters of several others who expressed similar concerns but did not seek publication in the *SB*, I've concluded that, had I been more careful in the wording of my treatment of the matter in question, it would not have occasioned the misunderstandings that it did.

Some, for example, understood my reference to the "appeal of Rev. Bruinsma for a second missionary to Pittsburgh" to indicate that our missionary was making an official ecclesiastical appeal to synod. That might have been avoided had I simply used the word "plea," which was the idea intended. Rev. Bruinsma made his recommendation *to Southwest*; Southwest was of a mind not to grant it; and, as I wrote in my 'preview,' "the DMC acquiesced to Southwest's decision." That settled the matter. The Domestic Mission Committee did include Rev. Bruinsma's request for a second missionary in the material they brought to synod, but they did so, not for adjudication of a difference, but only, as they said in their report, to enable synod the better "to assess the work in Pittsburgh." Synod's "Agenda" was clear. No one at synod considered the request of Rev. Bruinsma to be an as-yet unsettled debate or conflict between Southwest Council on the one hand and the DMC and the missionary on the other.

Regrettably, several sentences in my editorial could leave the impression that I considered it to be an unsettled matter requiring resolution by our broadest assembly. Which would, in turn, mean, as Brother Rau suggests, that I was using the "public platform of the *SB*" to "influence a deliberative body improperly"—that is, by taking the side of an appellant over against his consistory. Synod's "Agenda," as I said, was clear. It contained no appeal from Rev. Bruinsma to be treated on the floor of synod. Nor did I at all consider there to be one. I apologize for the ambiguity.

Let me add this, however, that I was gratified that Brother Rau caught what I was in fact trying to accom-

plish by my comments in the *SB* about the calling of a second missionary for Pittsburgh. It was indeed an attempt to focus attention on "the bigger picture"—specifically, perhaps, with respect to the Pittsburgh field, but with broader application to the work of the PRCA in missions. I do not fault Southwest for not having addressed the bigger picture in their consideration of the need for a second missionary in Pittsburgh. Southwest Council has been appointed to supervise *this* field, they examine with prayer the needs of *this* field, and they make an evaluation of the needs of *this* field. Southwest has served the denomination well. This year is no exception. For the record, if advisors were permitted to vote at synod, I would have been part of what was a unanimous, and hearty, vote this year to "express thanks...to Southwest PRC for their faithful work and assure them of our prayers for the blessing of God upon their labors."

And yet, there is a larger picture for the churches. I meant to encourage synod, in their evaluation of the work of domestic missions, to bear in mind also something that Southwest had no reason to address, namely, the resources of the *denomination*, particularly with respect to available *manpower*. I am convinced that we ought to be following the biblical pattern of sending missionaries in pairs. In the past, our churches have recognized this as the biblical pattern, but we have lacked the manpower to follow it. I submit that we now have the ministers. With the approval of a candidate, the churches have sufficient men to fill every one of our congregations. From the point of view of manpower, we can afford to call another missionary for a domestic field, as we have for the foreign mission field.

In addition, the fact is that we are facing a potential 'surplus' with respect to available manpower for the work of the church. And that potential is imminent—a large class of students scheduled to graduate, D.V., in 2017! A God-given opportunity for the PRCA! And, it seems to me, the time for careful consideration of the possibilities for use of that God-given resource is now, not two years hence. We must, as a denomination, think proactively about something as important as this. That was the 'broader vision' that I meant to convey in my comments on the labors in Pittsburgh. ☞

A Tribute of Thanksgiving to Donald Doezeema and David Ondersma

For their service to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America
from Synod 2015
June 12, 2015

To the PRC Synod of 1995 fell the responsibility of appointing a new synodical stated clerk. In His providence, God brought the name of Donald Doezeema to the synod's attention, and Don became the seventh man to serve us in that capacity, since we began holding synods in 1940.


Seven years later, in 2002, the denomination found itself in need of a new synodical treasurer, and David Ondersma became the sixth man to serve in that capacity.

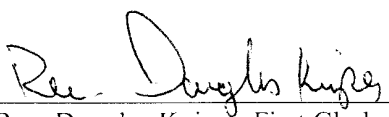
Long before we knew our need, God was preparing both Don and Dave to serve in their respective capacities by giving them natural gifts and by guiding them through life experiences which prepared them for their service to our denomination. When the churches experienced need, God had men ready to meet it.

Both Don and Dave showed themselves to be servants of the denomination, in the true sense of the word "servant." Humbly and quietly, diligently and faithfully, sacrificially and efficiently, they labored for the good of the churches.

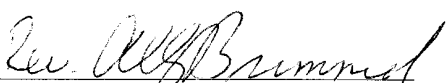
Finding itself now in need of replacing both of them, the Synod of 2015 recognizes Don's 20 years of service and Dave's 13 years of service to our churches. On behalf of the denomination of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, Synod expresses to both Don and Dave our heartfelt thanks for your faithful work, and pray that you enjoy God's richest blessing which He certainly showers on those who serve His church: "The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion" (Psalm 134:3).

The words of the apostle Paul to the saints of Thessalonica, though used now in a different context, are still to the point: "We give thanks to God always for you, . . . remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labor of love . . ." (1 Thess. 1:2-3). Your labors of love for our churches were one aspect of your service to God, to Christ, and to His glorious body. We pray that God will continue to use you in service to His church, according to your ability, until at last He ushers you into the church triumphant, to serve forever.


Rev. Steven Key, President


Rev. Douglas Kuiper, First Clerk


Rev. Carl Haak, Vice-President

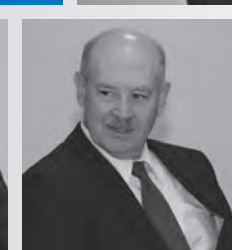

Rev. Allen Brummel, Second Clerk



"Fear Not, Israel"
based on Isaiah 43:1-2

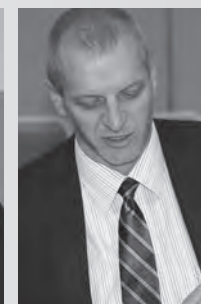
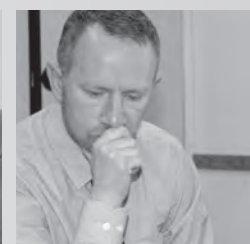
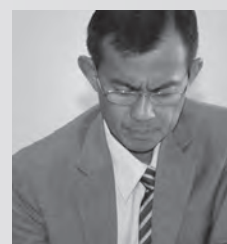
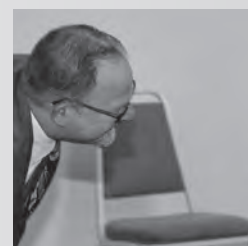
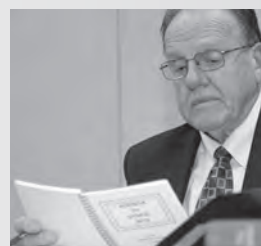


"Noah, One Who Found Grace
in the Eyes of the Lord."
Genesis 6:8



Synod 2015 Officers: Rev C. Haak,
Rev. A. Brummel, Rev. D. Kuiper, Rev. S. Key







■ *De Reformatie* Ceases Publication

The last issue of *De Reformatie* appeared on December 30, 2014 after ninety-plus years of publication (1920-2014).¹ Some of the readers of the *Standard Bearer* know what *De Reformatie* was. But I suspect that many of the younger readers do not know. *De Reformatie* (*The Reformation*) was the Dutch church paper edited for many years by Dr. Klaas Schilder, a Reformed pastor and theologian who, after being ousted from the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) in 1944, helped form a new denomination that still exists today, the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("Liberated"). On the cover of the December 30, 2014 issue appears a painting of Schilder and the title "Afscheid van 'het blad van Klaas Schilder'" (Farewell to 'the paper of Klaas Schilder'). The last issue was devoted to the history and significance of the magazine.

But absent from the issue, not surprisingly, was any mention of the significant dialogue between Schilder and Hoeksema, the Liberated and the Protestant Reformed, in the early 1950s. At the time, there was talk about these two denominations forming closer ties. But with the appearance of the *Declaration of Principles of the Protestant Reformed Churches* in 1950-51, their stark differences on the doctrine of the covenant became clear. Schilder sharply criticized the *Declaration* on the pages of *De Reformatie*, rejecting the doctrine of the unconditional covenant that the *Declaration* maintained. Finally, on November 17, 1951, Schilder published an article entitled "De Kous is Af" ("The Stocking is Finished") in which he declared that the relationship between the two denominations was over. The knitting of the stocking could not continue.

After Schilder's sudden death in 1952, *De Reformatie* remained an important paper in the Dutch Reformed

¹ For the last issue of *De Reformatie*, see <http://www.dereformatie.nl>.

Rev. Holstege is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

church world, and often the editors of the *Standard Bearer* commented on articles that appeared. But now, what was once the most widely read church paper in the Netherlands no longer exists.

The last editor-in-chief did not seem unhappy about it. He wrote (I translate), "...*De Reformatie* came into existence to give a contrary sound to prevalent opinions that were driven to extremes. But the risk of becoming narrow thereby exists as large as life. Over the course of time positions are cherished more than unity is served. Therefore, my ideal is that you discuss your views as Christians of Reformed confession in one paper and if possible talk them out. Then you write with each other, in a guided confrontation if necessary, but not over each other, while the readers discover how questions and developments can be approached and judged in different ways. This I would like to say in this last intro-column of *De Reformatie*. And I hope to contribute something of that in the new paper *OnderWeg* (*On the Way*)."²

The cessation of *De Reformatie* symbolizes what has been happening for some time already in the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("Liberated"). They have departed from the truth, no longer valuing the old paths, but cherishing "unity" at the expense of truth.

Farewell, paper of Klaas Schilder.

■ *The Banner's* Mandate Reevaluated by the CRC

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ocean, the Christian Reformed Church's official magazine, *The Banner*, has seen better days. The CRC Synod of 2014 instructed its Board of Trustees (BOT) to review the 1998 mandate of *The Banner* and report to Synod 2015 with any proposed changes. The mandate says the purpose of *The Banner* is to "stimulate critical thinking about issues related to the Christian faith and the culture of which we are a part." The BOT appointed a committee to study the matter. That committee brought recommendations

² Bas Luiten, "Met Alle Heiligen," *De Reformatie*, December 30, 2014.

to Synod 2015 which met in June at Dordt College in Sioux Center, IA.³

Why, you ask, is the mandate of *The Banner* being reviewed? The answer, as you may recall, is that two articles written in the summer of 2013 ignited a firestorm of protest among the readers of *The Banner*. The first article was entitled “Tomorrow’s Theology” by Edwin Walhout.⁴ That article blatantly promoted the theory of evolution, calling it “an established fact.” Then it went on openly to deny fundamental doctrines of the Christian faith, such as six-day creationism, the historicity of the fall, original sin, and even the nature of the cross of Christ. The second article was entitled “Sex, Intimacy, and the Single Person” by Harry Van Belle.⁵ That article shamelessly endorsed sex before marriage. It claimed that the question of the legitimacy of premarital sex may have been relevant two or three generations ago, but not today. After all, young people today generally practice safe sex that guards against disease and pregnancy. And young people today generally do not get married until their 30s. Thus, although he frowns on purely recreational sex (e.g. a “one-night stand”), he approves of a mature and committed couple living together and engaging in sexual behavior. A cry of protest arose in the CRC.

The BOT’s committee met last fall. They discussed the mandate. They all agreed that “the current *Banner* mandate...is fundamentally sufficient and that issues that arose last year, causing significant concerns, were not the result of a faulty policy or mandate but, rather, came about by an error in judgment on the part of the editor.”⁶ However, they recommended adding the following (italicized) words: “stimulate critical thinking...*in a way that encourages biblical thinking about these issues, in line with our confessional heritage; and offer tools to help readers find fresh awareness to seek, learn, worship, and serve as Reformed Christians in contemporary society.*”

³ For the 2015 Agenda of the CRC Synod, see http://www.crcna.org/sites/default/files/2015_agenda.pdf.

⁴ <http://www.thebanner.org/features/2013/05/tomorrow-s-theology>.

⁵ <http://www.thebanner.org/features/2013/06/sex-intimacy-and-the-single-person>. Prof. Barry Gritters addressed this second article in the SB in a September 1, 2013 article entitled “The Persistent Sanctioning of Sexual Sins by Reformed Churches.”

⁶ cf. BOT Report, Appendix E, 2015 Agenda of CRC Synod.

An “error in judgment,” indeed! We all make mistakes. But would we view it as an “error in judgment” if the editors of the *Standard Bearer* published articles blatantly endorsing evolutionism and premarital sex? No, we would say that they and the denomination in which they serve have evidently been walking for a long time on the path of apostasy. This was no minor slip-up. The fact that such an “error of judgment” could be made in the official paper of the denomination is a window into the deep level of apostasy in the CRC. Those in the CRC who were rightly infuriated by the two articles must hear the call, “Come out from among them” (II Cor. 6:17).

As for the editor, Bob De Moor, many called for his removal, including 24 Christian Reformed church councils and 2 classes.⁷ But when he apologized for the way he presented those articles, neither the BOT nor Synod 2014, would remove him.⁸ Last fall, he decided to retire from editorship. But, he says, his retirement has nothing to do with the controversy over the two articles. Rather, he has decided to return to full-time ministry.

Without any pride or self-congratulations, let us learn from these events to be thankful to God for the faithful Reformed witness of the *Standard Bearer* and for our past and present editors. Let us pray for them too, that they continue to publish articles that stimulate us to grow in the Reformed faith and life, rather than tempt us to depart from it, as those two unbiblical and wicked articles in *The Banner* did.

■ Removal of the Gideon Bibles

Since 1908 the Gideons, a Wisconsin-based Christian organization, have distributed nearly 2 billion Bibles to hotels, schools, hospitals, prisons, police stations, fire stations, and military bases. But according to an article by Jay Nordlinger in the November 3, 2014 issue of *National Review*, “there is a campaign going on to remove them from hotel rooms” (34). Who would do such a thing?! Why would anyone want to remove the Bible? Those kind of questions we are tempted not even to ask

⁷ “Board of Trustees expresses disappointment, keeps DeMoor as editor of the Banner,” <http://www.thebanner.org/news/2013/10/board-of-trustees-expresses-disappointment-keeps-de-moor-as-editor-of-the-banner>.

⁸ “Synod 2014 critiques *Banner* articles, calls for review of mandate,” <http://www.thebanner.org/news/2014/06/synod-2014-critiques-banner-articles-calls-for-review-of-mandate>

anymore. It is hard to be surprised anymore by the assaults of secularism.

But who specifically is behind it? One of the human faces of the devil, known as the Freedom from Religion Foundation (FFRF), whose motto is “In Reason We Trust.” They fight on the side of secularism. They are aggressive and militant. They want to destroy Christianity. So they have begun a campaign to get rid of those Gideon Bibles. They sent a letter to the University of Wisconsin, and soon the Bibles were removed from all guest rooms. They then sent a letter to Iowa State University, and on March 1, 2014 the Bibles were removed from their hotel rooms too. They were not about to stop. Last September they pressured Penn State University to remove them. They even got the Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM) to consider removing the Bibles from their lodges all around the world. But the FFRF is not the only one fighting. They have opponents. The Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) is one of them. They send counter-letters to all the organizations that receive letters from the FFRF. Nevertheless, as Nordlinger points out, their efforts will be futile in the end. “A person can tell which way the wind is blowing. The zeitgeist is fairly plain” (35).

But Nordlinger, evidently a Christian himself, does not think that “Gideon Bibles are the hill to die on” (36). This is not a battle worth fighting, in his estimation. After all, Bibles are still available in hotel libraries. And besides, anyone can download a Bible nowadays right on his phone. Yet, he wonders what will be next, because progressive secularism never rests. Is this merely about people being offended at public expressions of Christianity? If so, says Nordlinger, “couldn’t those who object to the Gideon Bible—you know, suck it up a little?” His answer is precisely true: “No, they can’t, some of them. The impulse to destroy or reshape is too strong” (p. 36). But he does not explain why. The explanation is that the devil is behind it. “Our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us” (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 52).

So, should we fight in the culture wars and protest the removal of the Gideon Bibles? There are certainly ways we can and should fight, such as casting our ballots on important issues. But more importantly, we should pray for strength to resist the temptation to cave in to

secular pressure and for grace to suffer persecution courageously when it comes. We ought also to encourage fellow Christians who are intimidated by groups like the FFRF to stand firm. We must always remember that we do not fight against flesh and blood, but against the invisible principalities and powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12). From events like this we see that the world is drawing near to the day of the man of sin “who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (II Thess. 2:4).

■ The Onward March of ISIS

The onward march of ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) might also indicate a drawing near of the man of sin who will end all wars and realize a brief, albeit tenuous, world peace (Rev. 13). Since last fall, when I first wrote on the rise of ISIS, that terrorist group has not only maintained its hold on the large area of land in Iraq and Syria that it seized last summer; not only gained pledges of allegiance from other terrorist groups around the world, such as Boko Haram in Nigeria; but just recently it also increased its gains by capturing two significant cities. The US-led air strikes and Iraqi ground troops have done little toward defeating ISIS.

Then, on May 17, 2015, the Iraqi city of Ramadi, a little west of Baghdad, fell to ISIS when the terror group took advantage of a sandstorm to drive out Iraqi forces.⁹ ISIS thereby gained a significant hoard of weapons stored in the government facilities of that city. Later that same week, on May 21, on the opposite end of the area controlled by ISIS, they captured the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra, northeast of Damascus.¹⁰ These victories came only two months after they were driven out of the Iraqi city of Tikrit. A seeming setback. But not a real one. These two victories prove that ISIS is not losing the overall fight. These were the most significant victories for ISIS since they rose to power in the desert sands last summer.


The red horseman, over whom Christ is sovereign, who holds a great sword, continues to take peace from

⁹ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/18/world/middleeast/isis-ramadi-iraq.html>.

¹⁰ <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/21/world/middleeast/syria-isis-fighters-enter-ancient-city-of-palmyra.html>?

the earth and to inspire men to kill one another (Rev. 6:4). Let us continue to watch these developments closely. For these events are signs of the coming of our Lord. And He tells us,

Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of man is as a man taking a far jour-

ney, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:33-37). 

The Reformed Worldview: Truth and Its Consequences (8)

The History of the Concept Worldview

We last saw that the Reformed worldview is one that has us living in willing subjection to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. He who has purchased us with His precious blood also owns us body and soul. There is not an aspect of our lives that falls outside the scope of His Lordship.

But it is His work of grace in our hearts that brings us into willing subjection to Him. The Lord of glory who owns us also lives in us! He rules over us—not by force, but by the impelling power of His love as His Holy Spirit sheds that love abroad in our hearts. Christ's rule, therefore, is a rule of grace in us who are His.

That life of Christ in us brings a profound change. The power of the gospel in the hearts of God's people brought such profound change that Paul wrote in II Corinthians 5:17, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

By "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in

the face of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 4:6), the perspective of the children of God is changed in every respect. Their worldview is completely changed under the influence of the gospel of their salvation in Christ Jesus. Their understanding of God has changed. Their view of themselves has radically changed, as has their view of the world and their own relationship to the world. To use the language of Acts 19:20, the Word of God will be seen prevailing over the thoughts that once had governed us and the behavior that characterized our lives apart from the gospel.

This is seen in several specific examples in the New Testament.

To confine ourselves to just three examples of this new worldview formed by the Spirit's work in those who are united to Christ, we give our attention to the church at Ephesus, and the power of the gospel as it took root under the blessing of the Spirit of Christ through the preaching of the apostle Paul.

Two such examples are found in Acts 19.

Ephesus was a prominent city in the Roman Empire, the most important city in the province of Asia, and was located on the western shore of Asia Minor, what today is the country of Turkey.

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

Previous article in this series: March 1, 2014, p. 249.

Ephesus was a large commercial center for that entire region and, as becomes evident in Acts 19, a city well-known for its worship of the goddess Diana. Diana was her Roman name, known among the Greeks as the goddess Artemis. Her worship had gone on for centuries, and a spectacular temple had been built in Ephesus for the worship of Diana, a temple noted as one of the seven wonders of the world at that time.

If Islam is the dominant idolatry in that part of the world today, the worship of Diana was in the days of Paul. While the idolatry of Artemis or Diana was widespread throughout the Greek and then the Roman world, Ephesus was the noted center of that worship. I use the term *worship* in the broad sense of the word. The worship of Diana was worship, the form of which also contributed widely to the economic life of the region, and which was woven into the political and cultural identity of the city of Ephesus.

We might have difficulty understanding the influence of this idolatry if we confine ourselves to the thoughts of a stone idol and its associated images and temple worship. Our Christian brothers and sisters in Singapore and other parts of Asia would have a better understanding of this, because they are surrounded yet with this same type of idolatry.

But idolatry takes on many forms. If we, for example, just wrap our minds around the idolatry of entertainment in our culture, along with the worship of pleasure, and the far-reaching economics involved with the entertainment industry, including professional and even certain collegiate sports, then we might better understand how Paul's labors fit into that culture.

When Paul came to Ephesus, he had to expect very difficult labors, as he had found elsewhere, including Philippi, where he and Silas had been imprisoned, as well as in the cities he visited after Philippi, being driven from every one of them by those who would kill them. But so precious was the gospel to Paul, such a treasure did he find it, that he would press on in his calling to preach that gospel.

Upon arriving at Ephesus, the apostle found a few believers, twelve men, and began with them, teaching them the fullness of the gospel in a way that they had not yet heard.

But Paul did not stop with them. He went to the

synagogue, to those who in the history of their generations had been entrusted with the Word of God. There also he proclaimed, as he stated in Acts 20:27, "*all the counsel of God*" (emphasis added). Which is to say, Paul unfolded to them Jesus Christ as the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes.

We are reminded also in Acts 19 that the preaching of the gospel always has a twofold effect.

Our focus is on the positive effect that salvation has upon the Christian's entire perspective and life. But it is impossible to overlook the fact that the same power of the Word of God brings confusion and confirms the rejection of those who are enemies of the gospel. According to the sovereign determination of God that gospel not only saves, but also hardens (II Cor. 2:15-17).

Verse 9 of Acts 19 gives expression to a truth revealed in a number of passages throughout Scripture, when it says that "divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way." That term "way" refers to the way of the Lord, the gospel that Paul preached, namely, Jesus Christ as the only way of salvation. When those who rejected that gospel spoke evil of that "way," they spoke evil also of those who followed that "way."

Noteworthy is the fact that this was the response from the Jews, the natural children of Abraham.

The apostle was preaching in the synagogue. He was preaching to those who were familiar with the Scriptures, and yet who were in bondage to the law. Having failed to see the wonder to which the law pointed, that of salvation in Jesus Christ alone by grace alone, the Jews clung to their own corrupted view of religion, a view focused on an earthly perspective of the kingdom and that, being man-centered and legalistic, fueled the pride of the human heart.

Whereas their own religion enabled them readily to overlook the issues of the heart and the summary of the law taught by Jesus, thereby giving them ample opportunity to look down upon others and to think of themselves quite highly because they were religious, these people had no need nor desire to look to Christ as their only salvation, let alone to listen to the apostle point to Him as Lord over our whole life. Too proud to be taught, they stood in their opinions, showing themselves as hard-hearted and as hard-headed as their fathers before them, who had killed the prophets.

They proved that by their reaction to the apostle's preaching. They began to find fault with that preaching. They criticized the apostle's doctrine, his approach to the Scriptures, his pointing to Christ as the fulfillment of the law. They criticized those who followed that "way." To use the language of the text, they spoke evil, spreading their pernicious opposition to Christ, until God Himself removed that gospel from them.

But the opposition that Paul faced came not just from the Jews. Among the Gentiles in Ephesus Paul would find the same opposition that he had found in Philippi and many other cities he visited.

These things indicate that God will have our Christian worldview come to expression against the background and in the face of opposition and even persecution, both from within the instituted church and from the unchurched—a truth demonstrated repeatedly in the book of Acts.

But the power of that Word of God, the Word preached by the apostle, was also the power of God unto salvation in all those who believed.

Those who believed followed the apostle as he left his labors at the synagogue and began setting forth the Word of truth among the Gentiles.

Paul found an opportunity to teach daily in a lecture hall of a man named Tyrannus. We learn that part of the day Paul would work in the tent-making trade to support himself, and part of the day he would open the Scriptures to teach (Acts 20:34; 18:3). This went on for about two years, verse 10 tells us. But the power of that Word unto salvation is seen in the rest of what verse 10 reveals: "And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."

In this center of idolatry and magic, in this prominent world trade center, the fame of Paul's miracles and the Word that he preached spread far and wide. Not only tradesmen who traveled to Ephesus, but also those who came to the city to pay homage to their goddess Diana, were intrigued by the reports concerning this man, and were led by God to him, that they might hear the gospel which Paul unashamedly proclaimed.

We do well to remember that the signs and wonders given the apostles were given them by Christ exactly for the purpose of confirming the divine authority of

the Word that they preached, a fact stated explicitly in Mark 16:20 and confirmed in Hebrews 2:1-4. Then we understand that the emphasis in the labors of the apostles was always on the Word preached and on the power of that gospel unto salvation by the work of the Holy Spirit. Thus Acts 19:20 testifies, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed." Christ was at work by His Spirit, and that through the Word of His gospel.

Acts 19:19, therefore, records an event that testifies of the power of the Word of God, not only as it works faith, but also as it brings to expression the life of Christ in those who are His.

A new perspective, a new worldview, marks those who are new creatures in Christ. So verse 19 records, "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver."

That we have here evidence of true conversion is demonstrated in verse 18. The faith worked in them by the Word of God brought the conviction of sin to their hearts. They were given to see the nature of the sin in which they had been involved—it was idolatry. They saw it as the offense against God that it was. They knew that the kingdom of God was closed to any ensnared in idolatry, and that the only salvation was through the Christ whom Paul preached. The Lord Jesus, sent from God to pay the price for the guilt and sins of His people, the Lord Jesus who now was victorious, exalted at God's right hand, working powerfully by His Holy Spirit through the Word, even as confirmed by the signs and wonders they had seen.

Thus, we read, they "came, and confessed, and showed their deeds." Willingly, in heartfelt repentance, they proved the honesty of their sorrow of heart by confessing their sins. They acknowledged the folly to which they had given themselves. They grieved their wickedness and devoted themselves to renouncing it forever.

But their repentance was not mere words. They took all the instruments of their sin, the books in which they had invested great sums of money and time, and made a bonfire out of them. The text tells us that this was an act of great cost. "Fifty thousand pieces of silver" was the value of those books. No matter how you count that silver, whether the Roman denarius or the Jewish shekel, it

amounted to thousands of dollars worth of books going up in flames.

Added to the price of the books was the cost of their reputation in the eyes of their neighbors. After all, “magic and sorcery, witchcraft and superstition, charms and incantations, ‘portents’ and the interpretation of dreams were deeply woven into the tissue of Roman life.”¹ These new Christians, by their actions, were marking themselves in the eyes of their peers as lunatics, crazy extremists.

¹ Will Durant, *Caesar and Christ*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1972, 388.

But that cost was little in their eyes compared to the price that Jesus paid for them.

Consider the testimony that these actions gave in that city where so much value was given to magic and superstition and the worship of Diana.

“What are you doing? Those books are valuable!”

“No, they’re not valuable to us anymore. We have seen the folly of them. We now belong to Him who alone has power over death, and who alone holds the future in His hands. His name is Jesus. Let us tell you about Him.”

The importance of this Word of God for us is found in the effects that the gospel of salvation has in the lives of those who are saved. ☞

CLASSIS EAST REPORT

MR. JON HUISKEN

May 13, 2015
Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at Hudsonville PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. N. Decker was the chairman for this session. Rev. R. Smit attended Classis East for the first time.

A notice of an appeal to Synod 2015 was given by a brother whose protest against a decision of Classis East

in January, 2015 regarding the scheduling of Prayer Day services was not sustained.

The other business was routine. There were no requests for classical appointments since all the churches in Classis East now have pastors. There were no expenses incurred.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at the Byron Center PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. PERRY VAN EGDOM

Congregational Activities

On Sunday, June 7, the congregation at Loveland, CO PRC was unable to use their sanctuary due to the installation of new carpet and

pews taking place during that time. Arrangements were made to use the facilities of the Campion Seventh Day Adventist church on the far south side of the city. Volunteers removed the old pews, carpet, and trim along with moving some furniture on the evening of June 1 in anticipation of the new installations.

Makes one eager to visit Loveland to see the new look!

Minister News

On May 10, the calling church for the mission field located in the Republic of the Philippines (Doon PRC) announced the new trio of Rev. Allen Brummel (Heritage PRC, Sioux Falls, SD), Rev. Gar-

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

rett Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), and Rev. Rodney Kleyn (Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, WA). On May 17, the call was extended to Rev. Rodney Kleyn, and on June 7, Rev. Kleyn indicated in his letter of decline that God had granted him a clear indication of His will in the consideration of this call. May all now humbly bow to the will of the King of the church.

Rev. Nathan Decker (Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI) had been considering the call extended to him from Peace PRC in Lansing, IL. On May 17, Rev. Decker announced that he had been led of the Lord to decline the call from Peace and continue in his work in Trinity. We are thankful for perfect guidance and direction from the Lord in this call also. Peace announced a new trio consisting of Rev. G. Eriks (Hudsonville, MI PRC), Rev. B. Huizinga (Redlands, CA PRC), and Rev. S. Key (Loveland, CO PRC) and on June 14, they called Rev. Huizinga.

On May 27, Prof. H. Hanko and his wife Wilma celebrated their 62nd wedding anniversary with thankfulness to God for his care and guidance through those years.

Rev. and Mrs. Richard Smit (First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI) announced the birth of a son, Silas Timothy, confessing their thanksgiving for the Lord's care over them and rejoicing in His blessing and gift of another child (Ps. 127:3).

Denominational News

Classis East of the PRC met May 13 at Hudsonville, MI PRC, with most of the business being routine. Rev. Richard Smit was a first-time

delegate. Classis East plans to meet next on September 9 at Byron Center, MI PRC.

Synod 2015 convened June 9 at Faith PRC, Jenison, MI with the examination of seminarian Ryan Barnhill highlighting the activities (see Prof. R. Dykstra's report in the editorial of this issue).

Seminary News

The seminary faculty has licensed five seminary students to speak a word of edification in the churches. These men are Matthew DeBoer, Joseph Holstege, David Noorman, Stephan Regnerus, and Justin Smidstra. Please continue to remember all of our seminary students in your prayers. Seminarian Stephan Regnerus will spend about eight weeks working alongside missionary-pastor Rev. Daniel Kleyn in the metro Manila area of the Philippines. For part of the time Stephan is in the Philippines, his parents will be there keeping a watchful eye on him, as Elder Jim Regnerus and Rev. Allen Brummel will make up the next official delegation representing the Doon PRC Council and the Foreign Mission Committee. Their wives plan to accompany them. So traveling halfway around the world might not guarantee an escape from parental supervision. Stephan landed in Manila on May 26 to a really warm welcome.

Seminarian David Noorman is spending approximately six weeks as summer intern in Spokane and Lynden this summer, where he will be speaking in the congregations and at the Spokane young people's

retreat, as well as leading classes on world religions.

School Activities

Adults and children of all ages enjoyed Science Night at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI on May 18. Junior and senior students from Covenant displayed various projects for all to observe.

Once every four years, the upper room students of the Northwest Iowa Protestant Reformed School in Doon, IA make a trip to the state capitol of Des Moines, transported by their teachers and additional chaperones. This happened in May. The group spent Thursday at the Living History Farms and swimming in the motel at night. On Friday they toured the state capitol building, one of the most ornate in the country, and the only state capitol with five domes. The large central dome is imbedded with 23.5 carat gold. If you pass through Des Moines, it would certainly be worth your while to schedule a tour. Later, the school group toured Terrace Hill, home of the governor and on the way home, they spent time at the Lewis & Clark Park keelboat exhibit at Onawa, IA.

Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School Circle in Redlands, CA conducts an annual fund-raiser entitled the "Dime Drive." Supporters collect every loose dime they can lay their hands on and at the end of the school year those coins are collected and added. Last school year the total amounted to \$1,500.00, which happens to be

15,000 dimes. That is a lot of thin dimes!

Missionary News


Fresh mangoes! How many of you have a mango tree in your back yard? Missionary-pastor Rev. Daniel Kleyn and his wife Sharon have a monster mango tree just to the west of their house, dwarfing their home. And this season it has produced mangoes galore! Two Filipino men were recruited to ascend into its leafy heights and harvest the

fruit that had not already dropped. Delicious! There is one drawback to having an enormous mango tree overgrowing your house: when those baseball-type objects drop about twenty feet on to your metal roof in the middle of the night..., well, you get the picture. One might be “in-Kleyned” to sound the air raid sirens!

Sister Church Activities

The Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore re-

ceived good news recently from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). The URA granted CERC a three-year extension of the grace-period to use their current premises at Jalan Mesin, effective from June, 2015. This means they have the government’s approval to continue their current use of the building until June 2018.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Hope PRC Adult Fellowship Society of Redlands, CA expresses sincere Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Lew Bruinsma in the passing of his father,

WILBUR BRUINSMA.

May they be comforted with the words found in I Thessalonians 4:14: “For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”

Marlin Feenstra, President
Beth Feenstra, Secretary

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Grandville PRC express their sympathy to John and Pat Pols in the death of Pat’s father,

ARLEN HOLSTEGE.

May they take comfort in the words of Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
David Kregel, Assistant Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Grandville Protestant Reformed Church express their sympathy to Bob and Linda Huizinga in the recent death of Bob’s brother,

DAVID HUIZINGA.

May they derive comfort from Psalm 118:14: “The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.”

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
David Kregel, Assistant Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Kalamazoo PRC express their Christian sympathy to Doug and Sarah Vlietstra and family in the death of Sarah’s grandmother,

VIRGINIA SAMUELSON.

May their comfort be found in God’s Word: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort” (II Corinthians 1:3).

Rev. Michael DeVries, President
Dan Kiel, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Peace PRC mourn the loss of our dear brother,

MR. WILBUR BRUINSMA,

who went to be with his Lord on May 9, 2015. We express our Christian sympathy to Keith and Wanda Bruinsma and the entire Bruinsma family, including Wilbur’s many grandchildren and great grandchildren. May our covenant God comfort them by His Word and Spirit.

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psalm 121:1-4).

Bob Vermeer, Vice President
Barry Warner, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Immanuel PRC express their Christian sympathy to John and Kay Wierenga, Jim and Elly Wierenga, their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and congregation members in the death of,

GRETA WIERENGA.

Let us confess with the church through all ages: “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Rev. Thomas Miersma, President
Hilgard Goosen, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Edgerton PRC express their sympathy to Glenn and Irene Gunnink and their children and grandchildren in the death of Irene’s mother,

VIRGINIA SAMUELSON.

May they find comfort in the knowledge that our God and Savior is an ever-present Shepherd, lovingly caring for all our needs. “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Pres.
Allen Brummel, clerk.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Consistory and congregation of the Crete PRC express our Christian sympathies to Mr. John Zandstra, Mr. and Mrs. Jack Lenting, Mr. Ed Holleman, Mr. and Mrs. John Holleman, Mrs. Elaine Holleman, Mrs. Carroll Holleman and their families in the death of

MRS. ANNA ZANDSTRA.

"Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:24).

Rev. Nathan Langerak, President
Edward J. Stouwie, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Immanuel PRC express their Christian sympathy to the family and friends of,

GEORGE WIERSMA.

May they be comforted by the assurance of God's word that: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Rev. Thomas Miersma, President
Hilgard Goosen, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Southwest PRC expresses Christian sympathy to our fellow officebearers, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma and Deacon Trevor Kalsbeek, in the death of their father and grandfather

WILBUR BRUINSMA.

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Rev. A. den Hartog, President
Tom VanderWoude, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Hudsonville PRC Ladies Society express their deepest sympathy to their fellow member Mrs. Marty Holstege in the death of her husband

GERRIT.

"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).

Pat Lanning, Secretary
Justin Smidstra, President

Wedding Anniversary

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

GARY and CRYSTAL VAN DYKE,

on May 29, 2015. Their godly parenting and example have been a blessing to us as a family and for this we thank our heavenly Father. We confess with them of God's love and care throughout their years of marriage. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

✿ Eric and Jessica VanDyke
Aaron, Reece, Luke, Aiden, Claire,
Garret

✿ Brad and Trisha Bruinsma

Kari, Skyler, Emma

✿ Mark and Maria VanDyke

Alyse, Kayla

✿ Joel VanDyke

Hudsonville, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ It is with great joy and thanksgiving to God that we celebrated the 40th wedding anniversary of our parents,

RICHARD and MARCIA FLIKKEMA

on June 20, 2015. They have showed us by their love, example, and the sacrifices they made, their love for God and His church. Through their marriage and instruction, they have taught us that in all things and at all times we are to love and trust in God, knowing that His promises are sure and that His grace is sufficient.

Our constant prayer is that God will continue to bless and preserve us and our parents in the years to come, as He has so faithfully done in the years past. May the words of their wedding text continue to ring true in their lives and in ours. Isaiah 26:3-4: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."

With all our love,

✿ Dan and Tammy McHugh
Sean, Colin

✿ Mike and Tricia Brummel
Drew, Gerrit, Sydney

✿ Joe and Heidi Kley

Makayla, Caleb, Hannah, Levi, Will

✿ Kyle Richard Flikkema (in glory)

Jenison, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With much thankfulness to God and joy in our hearts we celebrate with our parents and grandparents,

LEW and DONNA BRUINSMA,

as they celebrate 40 years of marriage on July 10. We are so thankful for the many years of godly parenting, instruction, support, and unconditional love they have always shown us and pray that the Lord will continue to bless their marriage with love for Him and each other. "For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14)

✿ Nathan and Lisa Postmus
Jessica, Dean, Dana

✿ Steve Bruinsma

✿ Dale and Kristin Bruinsma

Hayley, Rylee

✿ Leanne Bruinsma

✿ James and Renae Kuiper

✿ Mike and Gina Cleveland
Michael Jr, Ava, Levi, Seth

✿ Craig Bruinsma

✿ Paul Bruinsma

Mentone, California

Wedding Anniversary

■ With gratitude to God for His covenant faithfulness, we celebrated the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

GARY and JEANNE BUTEYN,

on June 25, 2015. By the grace of God, they have led us to walk in truth and to grow in our knowledge and love for the Lord. We pray that our heavenly Father will continue to keep them in His love and rest His blessings upon them. "O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart" (Psalm 36:10).

✿ Brian & Becky Buteyn
Derek and Hannah Buteyn
Lukas, Brayden

✿ Steve and Rachel Kooima
Travis, Jessica, Lindsay

✿ Paul and Vanessa Buteyn
Hailey, Garret, Brody

✿ Stephanie Buteyn

Randolph, Wisconsin

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 9, 2015 at the Byron Center PRC, Byron Center, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 10, 2015.

Jon J. Huiskens
Stated Clerk

Standard Bearer

1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE
PAID
AT JENISON,
MICHIGAN

Upcoming Lecture

■ Southwest PRC's Evangelism Committee is planning a lecture by Prof. Ronald Cammenga titled "Theistic Evolution: Should the Church Make Peace or War?" to be held at Grace Community Church in Hudsonville, MI on Friday October 9. Save this date for an informative lecture in defense of the sovereignty of our Creator and Sustainer, Jehovah God. We are looking forward to good attendance from our children and young people also.

Notice

■ Southwest PRC invites you to view a recently completed video of Questions and Answers from the 2014 lecture "Kuyper's Common Grace 'Christianizing of Culture'—Reformed Calling or Ecclesiastical Suicide?" In this video Prof. David Engelsma answers important questions that were presented by those who attended or viewed the lecture. This video can be found at www.commongraceandculture.com under the Questions & Answers section. DVDs are also available by requesting a copy at christianandculture@gmail.com.

Classis West

■ Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Edgerton, MN, on Wednesday, September 30, 2015, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 31, 2015. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Edgerton's consistory.

Rev. D. Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

Notification of Candidacy

■ All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2015 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Ryan Barnhill a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Barnhill will be eligible for a call on or after July 11, 2015.

See below for contact information.

Rev. Ron VanOverloop, Stated Clerk



2015 Seminary Graduate

Ryan James Barnhill

4116 Crooked Tree Rd., Apt. 3

Wyoming, MI 49519

Phone: (616) 914-9548

E-mail: ryjbarnhill@gmail.com

Wife: Miranda; children: Mya, Nolan

Reformed Witness Hour

July 2015

Date

July 5
July 12
July 19
July 26

Topic

"Husbands, Love As Christ"
"Husbands, Love With Purpose"
"The Husband Is the Head of His Wife"
"To Protect and Provide"

Text

Ephesians 5:25-27
Ephesians 5:26, 27
Ephesians 5:23
Ephesians 5:23