

The Standard Bearer

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Godliness in Public Life

Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

Titus 3:1, 2

The correct understanding of the truth of Scripture is evidenced in a life of godliness (1:1). This godliness is to be manifest in the believer's life in the home and in the church. And the text we consider emphasizes the fact that this godliness is to be manifest in the believer's life in the world. In this letter to Titus, the apostle Paul is giving instructions as to how Titus, as a minister of the Word, is to teach the young Christians what they are to believe and how they are to live.

They believe in Christ Jesus, who is the great God and Savior, who redeemed them from all iniquity and purified them, making them zealous of good work (2:13, 14). With all authority Titus is to speak to and admonish the

new Christians concerning a life of godliness in the communities in which they live. They are to be good citizens and good neighbors.

As good citizens

It is the calling of the Christian to recognize God's authority in those who have the rule over him. The rulers are identified in this text as "principalities and powers." The word "principalities" refers to the people who are first, the leaders or originators. These actually rule, regardless of the form of the government. The word "powers" refers to authority, that is, the right to set the standard, the right to demand compliance to the set standard, and the right to punish or reward those who disobey or obey the standard.

Titus is to instruct the Christians that they have a calling toward those in authority over them in the country in which they live. This calling is not conditional, that is, dependent on whether the ruler is doing a good job. This God-given calling is twofold. First, they are to obey. The idea is that of yielding and complying. Second, they are to submit, that is, arrange themselves under. Subjection is a willing activity in relationship to others. Put together, the idea is that outward obedience arises from inward

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan.

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Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@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. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave
Hudsonville, MI 49426
benjwig@juno.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
Apartment 10, Block D
Ballycummin Village
Limerick, Ireland

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compliance. A willing heart must be behind the outward activity of paying taxes, being orderly in behavior, and heeding the laws of the land.

The exception that should be obvious is described in Acts 5:29—when the human magistrate lays upon the Christian citizen a regulation that clashes with God’s revealed will. Then the follower of Jesus is “to obey God rather than men.” But he is to do so remaining in subjection, that is, willing to accept the consequences put on him for not obeying man—even if it means a fiery furnace.

The disciples of Jesus Christ have the very highest motive for subjection to earthly principalities and powers, namely, “for conscience sake” they are obedient to their Lord’s will (Rom. 13:1-5)! Christianity touches every part of our life. Always. Nothing is above or beyond our Lord’s will. Faith in our Lord Jesus makes us the very best citizens. Faith makes us conscious that God has all authority (cf. Dan. 2:21, 37; 4:17b). Knowing the true God through Jesus Christ whom He sent, we are aware that He has all authority, and that it is His authority that is being exercised in various spheres of human life: home, state, church, and labor. The fifth commandment teaches believers that positions of authority in the various spheres of our life are ordained of God Himself. Those without faith are completely unmindful of that; they believe that the positions are made by men.

It is because of this biblical instruction that the Reformers emphasized to the kings of their day that Christians are not rebellious. Christianity makes for excellent citizens.

And Christianity makes for good (the best) neighbors

“Put them in mind...to be ready to every good work, to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, shewing meekness unto all men.”

“Ready to every good work.” Paul has just said that the great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, gave Himself for us, that He might purify unto Himself a people

who are “zealous of good works” (2:14). All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped unto all good works (II Tim. 3:17). And he will say that we “learn to maintain good works for necessary uses, that we be not unfruitful” (3:14).

The word “ready” conveys the idea that the Christian is to take the lead in doing good. Christians, grateful for God’s unconditional love, are to be ready always to be joyfully helpful and useful to others. This positive activity excludes the corresponding evil, namely, doing harm with words or actions, failing to benefit others. The motive is purely Christian: consciously reflecting

the image of God’s Son, who went about doing good to all.

Also, the Christian is a good neighbor because he will “speak evil of no man.” The Greek word translated “evil” is transliterated (changing each Greek letter into its English equivalent) “blaspheme.” The idea is to speak reproachfully, to revile. It is translated “railings” in I Timothy 6:4. He who professes to be redeemed from all iniquity and purified unto Christ will not want to use insulting and abusive language (sarcasm), no matter how provoked. Sinful language is out of place for anyone, but especially for those who profess faith in Jesus Christ.

Further, Christians are to “be no brawlers, but gentle.” People who are ever ready to fight and argue make for wretched neighbors. Redemption from all iniquity means that we are not to be contentious or quarrelsome. This is especially to be the case with elders and ministers (I Tim. 3:3). Positively, redemption in Jesus means that one is able to display the positive virtue of being gentle, that is, equitable, fair, and patient. Strive to develop a willingness to yield. This is not a yielding of the truth, but a yielding of self. This is a part of the self-denial required of a disciple of Christ (Matt. 16:24).

Finally, the text declares that true faith in Christ enables one to show “all meekness unto all men.” This

*A willing heart must be
behind the outward activity
of paying taxes,
being orderly in behavior,
and heeding the laws
of the land.*

is the inward virtue behind the outward conduct of not speaking evil, and not being a brawler but gentle. Meekness is not weakness! It is the spiritual strength of continuing in the knowledge of my natural face, which humility is the only way to true liberty (James 1:23-25). The refusal to be meek comes out of pride. Pride can enable one to profess the doctrine of total depravity, but it refuses to live that confession in relationship to other sinners. To be saved by sovereign grace means exactly that there is nothing of me and it is all of God. Meekness is living that truth!

Salvation in Jesus requires meekness unto *all* men. Not some meekness to some, nor all meekness to some, but all meekness to all. Even to the Cretan liars, evil brutes, and lazy bellies. This meekness is possible only by believing that I am the sinner, the chief of sinners. This thought enables us to bear what the sins of others inflict on us. This meekness remembers to give to God the right to execute judgment, which He does perfectly. This meekness to all is helped, too, by being conscious that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven with no abiding place here.


A Good Reminding

Paul commands Titus to put these duties before the

new Christians by constantly reminding them of it. "Put them in mind" of the fact that confession of the truth must be accompanied with a corresponding life. We are God's own ("peculiar") people by virtue of God's work of redemption and sanctification (2:14). We need constant reminding that this gives us a calling (Eph. 4:1). Paul would have Titus exhort us to remember, so that this calling is always before our minds.

Paul's reminder was necessary because the Cretans as a whole were very likely quite unhappy with Roman rule. The Christian Cretans had to be taught to pray for kings and for all in authority (I Tim. 2:1-4).

This reminding is necessary because it is our nature to forget, and especially to forget to bow in subjection. Those to whom we are to subject ourselves are often not easy to obey and to submit to, for they are often sinful and self-serving. But God's undeserved love is powerful, not only to save, but also to give us new perspectives and new attitudes. This is the perspective and attitude of the new man in Christ.

The doctrines of salvation by grace alone are the enabling power. May we grace the gospel by being the best of citizens. And may we adorn the truth of grace by being the best of neighbors. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

Denominational Unity: In Public Worship (1)

When the seminary professors first license students to speak a word of edification in the churches, we make sure they understand what is required of them to lead a congregation in worship. We talk about things like how early to arrive at the consistory room, where to shake hands with the elders after the service, how to announce songs, what to do with announcements the consistory asks to be made, etc. The

professors have a little "Manual" that gives advice for the students. Included in the manual is the heading: "Determine the liturgical details." That is, be aware of the minor differences in the order of worship from one church to another.

In the ten years that I have been responsible for keeping this manual up-to-date, the list of differences in worship has grown. Before the next student is licensed, the list must again be revised, reflecting more

variety in worship practices. This next revision will no longer fit on one page.



The Protestant Reformed Churches have always judged that denominational unity includes unity in *doctrine*. Without a united confession of faith, institutional unity is a thin veneer. The PRC have also judged denominational unity to include unity in *church government*.

There cannot be unity of life in a denomination unless all the congregations agree in and practice one form of church government. In the PRC, that's the government spelled out in our Church Order.

But we have not placed such high value on unity in the order of public *worship*. At least we have not talked about denominational unity in the order of worship as we have about denominational unity in doctrine and church government. In this and the next editorial, I want to press the case, with emphasis on our history, for denominational unity in liturgy.



Reformed churches historically have placed a premium on liturgical unity—if not on the specific *order*, certainly on the *principles* and the *manner* of worship. The sixteenth-century Reformation concerned itself as much with reform in worship as it did with reform in doctrine. In fact, Calvin claimed that reform in doctrine had as its goal a reform in worship. That is, proper worship was so important to him that it was the aim in reestablishing the confession of *truth*. Truth for the purpose of worship.

The purpose of these editorials is not to say that by consistories adopting changes in worship practices the PRC have lost unity in worship. In spite of some differences, we have substantial unity in worship. Rather, the purpose is to note the increase in changes in local congregations, to give a cautionary example from our own history in this regard, and to ask all

the churches—not only those contemplating changes—to face some questions: What is the relationship between the *principles* of worship and the *order* of worship (we hope you are reading Rev. Griess' important articles on worship that address this question)? What changes in worship *practices* are permissible without denominational sanction? That is, what, in PRC worship services, cannot be changed by a local congregation without violating the unity of the denomination? And, not least in importance, who ought to make that judgment?



I list a few of the variations in worship services of which I am aware—even the smallest ones. There may be others I do not remember or have not heard of. The PRC member who does not visit many different churches as seminary professors do may be surprised at the variety.

1. Whether or not a church has pre-service singing (an old Dutch practice).

2. How the service *begins*. The greatest variety exists here. Does worship begin with the minister issuing a call to worship and announcing a silent prayer (a practice not found in early PRC history; “silent prayer” was never considered part of the official worship of the church); or by the organ prelude ending as a signal for the minister to rise and pronounce the salutation; or by the organ raising up the people to sing the opening doxology—“Praise God....”? Does the minister begin by pronounc-

ing God's *salutation*—“Beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ”—or the *votum*—“Our help is in the name of the Lord...”? (Some prefer that God speaks first—to start with the salutation—but one early synod at Dordt declared that Reformed worship services must open with the *votum*.) Does the minister speak both the *salutation* and the *votum*, or does the congregation recite the *votum* (as a few of our churches recently have instituted, to distinguish between God's word to the church—“Beloved...”—and the church's opening confession—“Our help...”)?

3. How the Apostles' Creed is confessed. Does the congregation recite the creed in unison or does the minister read it? Is the old language (“quick” and “Ghost”) or the new language (“living” and “Spirit”) used? Does the congregation stand or sit at this time?

4. Whether, in addition to the use of the Apostles' Creed, the congregation confesses their faith with an article from one of the church's other confessions, like the Belgic Confession.

5. Where the offering is placed—immediately after the congregational prayer, or after the sermon. Whether, during the offering, a Psalter is sung, or the organ/piano plays an “offertory.”

6. Whether there is a special prayer immediately before the sermon. (This “Prayer Before the Sermon” has long historical precedent. The Reformed fathers even adopted *standardized* prayers for before the sermon, as well as different form-prayers for before and after catechism sermons, etc. You

can find some of these prayers in the original (red) *Psalter Hymnal* of the Christian Reformed Church, and in the Psalter published by the Netherlands Reformed Congregations.)

7. Whether Scripture reading takes place immediately before the sermon or earlier in the service after the first *Psalter* number.

Let us be sober in our judgments about these differences. First, even though some may be a bit unsettling for visitors, especially for the guest-preacher, none reflect fundamental differences, even if they may reflect different views of particular liturgical actions. Second, (this is my personal judgment) none of the changes indicate that the churches are interested in liturgical innovation—a desire for change for the sake of change. I judge all of them to be motivated by Reformed principles of worship.

Yet the differences, as well as the increase in differences, raise two questions: what part does *worship* itself have in denominational unity? More specifically, what part does the *order* of worship have in denominational unity?

The Protestant Reformed Churches have certainly determined that worship itself is an important, indeed essential, part of unity. First, the formulas to be used in worship (forms in the back of the Psalter for Baptism, the Lord's Supper, ordination of officebearers, confession of faith, and discipline) are elements of worship that belong to the "churches in common." No church is free to modify the forms or use different forms in the official public worship.

Second, we have a denominational songbook in the Psalter. Although the PRC never took an official decision to use the Psalter, the history of our dealings with the Psalter at synod makes it unquestionable: the churches consider the songbook an essential part of our unity. Third, our denominational Church Order has an entire section on worship. Although this section's title is "Of Doctrines, Sacraments, and Other Ceremonies," this section could as well be labeled "On *Worship*." Here, the Church Order calls for worship conformity, that is, unity, in all areas. Since truth in worship is first, the Church Order requires all officebearers to sign the Formula of Subscription and calls them to fight against false doctrine (Articles 53-55). Other worship practices follow: baptism practices, the Lord's Supper's administration, days on which the churches worship (Sundays and special days), what songs the churches may (and, by implication, may not) sing, and that the Heidelberg Catechism must be preached in one Sunday service. These are significant elements of denominational unity. Fourth, in the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the fourth commandment (concerning keeping of the Sabbath—*when* the church worships), the catechism spells out some of the fundamental elements of worship: preaching, sacraments, offerings, prayers. Finally, and not insignificantly, we are united in the fundamental *principles* of worship as those principles are spelled out in the Heidelberg Catechism's explanation of the first four commandments. How those

principles are applied concretely is often debated—as our history has shown, in the matters of symbols in places of worship, which Psalm book is used, musical accompaniment, even regarding whether the Apostles' Creed is used and the law is read (to give a few examples taken both from our own denominational life and from our relationship to sister churches). But we are united in the *principles* governing public worship.

There is also a *liberty* our denomination maintains, a freedom that each congregation has, to determine—in some areas of public worship—what is best for that congregation. An official declaration of that liberty is in the Church Order's mandate for the Lord's Supper in Article 62. In prescribing the *manner* in which the supper is administered, the article begins: "Every church shall administer the Lord's Supper in such a manner as it shall judge most conducive to edification...." Although the article forbids any change in the outward ceremonies that the Bible prescribes, and requires the use of the Form in the Psalter, it gives each church liberty in determining the details of administration, all the while reminding that the governing principle in making this determination is not feeling or emotion, but "edification." The churches have always recognized that there is liberty in some details of worship.

But the question is, again, at what point does this liberty begin to disturb, or threaten to fracture, the real unity of the churches in the denomination?



To make the point as clear as possible—the question is, “where may other changes lead us?”—let me propose a few, hypothetical changes in worship practices, changes that may or may not have precedents in Reformed church history, but do not violate principles of Reformed liturgy. In each case, ask whether 1) the local consistory should judge merely on the basis of what is most edifying for their congregation and what harmonizes with Reformed principles of worship, or 2) whether the denomination should decide these matters together? Then ask, “What standard must be used to determine the answers?”

- a church has the congregational prayer after the sermon rather than before.
- to emphasize the law as a way to show gratitude rather than a means to expose sinfulness, a church

places the reading of the law after the sermon.

- a church determines that the better emphasis in reading the law is on exposing our sinfulness—in order then to direct us to forgiveness in Christ. Thus, the church not only places the law early in the service, but has the minister declare the forgiveness of sins to the congregation in what is called an “absolution.” Along with this, the Apostles’ Creed follows the declaration of forgiveness, as the congregation’s testimony of belief in the gospel of forgiveness.

- a church decides either not to read the ten commandments, or to read them only once each month.

- a church adopts the practice of singing an “in-between song” before the sermon’s third point.

- a church eliminates the first doxology and considers the first Psalter number to serve the purpose of “doxology.”

All of these changes, and more,

could well be made by one of the churches of our denomination or a sister church. Perhaps they have been already. What constitutes denominational unity in worship?



It is not my contention here that an alarm must be sounded. However, it is my judgment that it is regrettable that the denomination does not have a synodically adopted uniform liturgy; and that the longer we go without a uniform liturgy, the greater will be the differences and the more difficult it will ever be to unite in this aspect of our worship (eventually it will be impossible without great disturbance in the churches). History provides interesting and important lessons for Reformed churches in this regard.

That, next time, God willing. Until then, may God preserve the Protestant Reformed Churches in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace. ☞

MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS

REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

The Qualifications of the Office of Elder (2)

Adult Males

About twelve years ago, in this rubric, I defended the proposition that deacons must be men, that is, male in gender.

In this and the following article, I defend the same point regarding the office of elder in the church of Jesus

Christ: elders must be chosen from the male membership of the church. Not just *any* males may be elders: they must be adult, confessing believers who meet other requirements that God gives in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. But they may not be females.

Admittedly, this position is not a popular one. Publicly to state this position today is almost equivalent to asking others to label you as being old-fashioned, male-chauvinistic, out of touch with today’s culture and society, unap-

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Edgerton, Minnesota.

Previous article in this series: June 2013, p. 399.

preciative of women's God-given gifts, and demeaning to the whole fairer sex.

If this position were not the clear teaching of God's Word, few would risk being labeled in this way. But it is the clear teaching of Scripture. The faithful church *must* not (and, God be praised, *will* not) waver on this point.

In the next article, God willing, we will demonstrate that Scripture permits only males to hold the office of elder. In this article we see why the issue is worth underscoring.

Significant Departures from the Scriptural Norm

We must underscore this point because some Reformed denominations have caved in to the pressure to let women hold office.

The Reformed Church in America permits women to hold all three special offices. Its Church Order defines a "minister" as "those men *and women* (italics mine, DJK) who have been inducted into that office by ordination...."¹ Regarding who may serve in the office, the RCA's *Book of Church Order* states: "The elders and deacons shall be chosen from the confessing members of the church in full communion who have attained the age of twenty-one years or, at the discretion of the consistory, eighteen years."² No mention is made of the gender of the candidate—because the RCA does not restrict the office to males only.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America also permits women to hold all three (actually *four*) offices. Article 3a of the CRC's *Church Order and Supplements 2012* reads: "All adult confessing members of the church who meet the biblical requirements are eligible for the offices of minister, elder, deacon, and commissioned pastor."³

Apart from the inclusion of this fourth office of "com-

missioned pastor," the wording of Article 3a cannot be faulted.

The problem is that the CRC as a denomination does not consider the "biblical requirements" to include gender restrictions; since 1995, the CRC permits women to hold the office of elder, and since 2007, the CRC permits women to hold any office. Synod 2007 said: "All congregations may, but will not be required to, allow women to serve in the office of minister, elder, deacon, or commissioned pastor."⁴

Let me emphasize that not every individual member of the CRC, nor every congregation, nor even every Classis of the CRC, agrees with the position of the denomination. This creates conflict within the CRC. Respecting the autonomy of the local congregation, the CRC does not *require* a church to have women officebearers. But how do churches that understand Scripture to prohibit women officebearers work alongside of those churches that permit women officebearers? Inevitably women officebearers will be delegated to meetings of classis or synod; inevitably synodical deputies who do not agree with women holding office in the church will be asked to participate in a neighboring classis in the examination of a woman who aspires to the office of minister.

In a number of supplements to Articles 3, 45, and 48 of its Church Order, the CRC addresses this real problem. In sum, Synod 2007 made every effort to accommodate male officebearers who believe that women should not serve as officebearers, while at the same time giving every reason to women who aspire to the office of pastor to suppose that they will eventually gain entrance into the office.

The position of these churches that not only men may serve in office is significant.

First, while numerous Christian churches permit women to serve in office, these two denominations are in the *Reformed* tradition. More specifically, the CRC is the spiritual mother of the PRC, and the RCA is our spiritual grandmother.

Second, at one time both of these denominations excluded women from holding special offices in the church for this reason: they understood Scripture to permit men only to hold the office. The position of both of these de-

¹ Cf. *Book of Church Order* (New York, NY: Reformed Church Press, 2012), Part I, Article 1, Section 3. This quote is found online at <https://images.rca.org/docs/bco/2012BCO.pdf>, p. 11, accessed 12/29/2012.

² *Book of Church Order*, Part I, Article 2, Section 14; pp. 16-17 of the online document.

³ Cf. *Church Order and Its Supplements 2012* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Reformed Church in North America, 2012), p. 11. This book can be found online at http://crcna.org/sites/default/files/2012_churchorder.pdf, accessed 12/29/2012.

⁴ *Church Order and Its Supplements*, Supplement to Article 3, Regulation 1a.

nominations is a *departure* not only from the scriptural norm, but from their own previous practice.⁵

That our mother and grandmother have departed from the scriptural norm in this respect is a reason for us to underscore that only men may serve in church office.

The Correct Position on This Issue Is Not Difficult to Discern

The second reason why we must underscore this is that the correct position on the issue is not difficult to discern.

The issue is not that Scripture is unclear in I Timothy 3 or Titus 1. Some would have us think that in fact the Scriptures *are* unclear; after all, if they were clear, why would Christians be of different minds on the issue? But Scripture is clear. Being perspicuous, the whole of Scripture is inherently clear. This is not to deny that one finds difficult passages in Scripture; but I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are not unclear. Arguing that Scripture is *not* clear on this point is to tip one's hand already, to try to muddy the waters, to cause confusion, and to pressure the church to permit women in office.

The following assessment by some members of the CRC some decades ago hits the nail on the head:

Preposterous as it might seem, the Christian Reformed Church is going to spend time and money to "study" this matter [women in office, DJK] which is so very clearly and decisively taught (revealed) in Holy Writ. We submit that laymen could settle this matter in five minutes.⁶

Nor is the issue this, that the Christian church at large has historically had the wrong understanding of this point. I already indicated that the CRC and RCA were once of a different mind than they are today. But take Rome's witness also. Though certainly a false church, her position on this issue is noteworthy because she is

⁵ The RCA set forth briefly the history of its change of position in a document entitled "Position of Women in Ministry." This can be found at <https://www.rca.org/sslpage.aspx?pid=3846>, accessed 1/7/2013. And, as alluded to earlier in this article, the CRC Synod of 2007 made the final decision to permit women to be elders and pastors. As readers know who were following developments in the CRC, this decision culminated a decades-long effort on the part of some members of the CRC to include women in the special offices.

⁶ *A Handbook of C.R.C. Issues, 1968-1978* (Grand Rapids, MI: Association of Christian Reformed Laymen, n.d.), p. 219.

the oldest Christian denomination, and because in fundamental respects, both for good and for bad, Rome does not change her mind despite pressure to do so. On this issue, her position is: "Only a baptized man (*vir*) validly receives sacred ordination."⁷ "*Vir*" is the Latin word for man; it specifically refers to a male. This Latin word is inserted in the Romish catechism, and put in parentheses, to underscore that "man" means "male."

Because on this point Rome was and is correct, the matter of women in office was not an issue at the time of the Great Protestant Reformation.

The issue is not difficult to discern; the only difficulty is *maintaining* the correct position. Pressure from society (feminism and political correctness) makes the churches ask: should we open the offices to women? And the modern view of Scripture and scriptural interpretation provides a "loophole": if I Timothy 3 and Titus 1 speak only of male elders, they do so because such was the culture of the day! Today's culture is different! Therefore, we may open the offices also to women!

Let us be aware of the intensity of the pressure, and of the beguiling arguments used to support it.

The Matter Regards Offices in the Church

Third, we emphasize that only males may be elders because we are speaking of *offices* in the *church*.

The apostle Paul puts it this way, as he concludes the list of qualifications for special offices in the church: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly: But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:14-15).

Notice several points here. First, in God's house (the church), officebearers represent Christ. Whether or not they are the kind of people (men) God would have them be is, therefore, no small matter. So, second, the apostle speaks of necessary behavior in this house. "Necessary" is the idea of "oughtest" in the verse—Paul is not giving some suggestions or personal recommendations; because the church is God's house, how we act in His house is of crucial importance. And thirdly, by necessary behavior, the

⁷ This statement is originally found in Latin in Canon 1024 of Rome's Code of Canon Law (*Codex Iuris Canonici*). I quote from section 1577 of the 1994 English translation of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1995), p. 447.

apostle has in mind men qualified for the office. To put into office men who aren't qualified is to conduct oneself in God's house in an unseemly way. It manifests a lack of respect for that house and its owner—a lack of decorum that befits those saved by grace.

The issue at stake, then, is not whether we appreciate the gifts of women and their place in Christ's church. We do appreciate these. We *must*, for Scripture demands this also of us. The Holy Spirit teaches this in various places—one of which is in I Timothy 2:9ff., immediately before setting forth the qualifications for special office,

and making clear that holding such is *not* the place of women in the church.

The issue is not whether we are relevant to the times, or politically correct.

The issue is whether we will receive the plain teaching of the Scriptures over against the view of the day; whether we will behave ourselves properly in the house of God; whether we will in this respect also give proper glory and honor to the God who saved us.

Will we? By God's grace, we will! 

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE

REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG

Disciplining Our Covenant Children in Love

God commands us to discipline our children in love. The wise God-fearing author of the book of Proverbs makes the statement, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24). God Himself chastens His people because of their sins in order to humble them and turn them to Himself. "For whom the Father loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth" (Heb. 12:6). By the grace of God we as parents are to reveal the love of God our Father in chastening our children when they need this. Our children, from childhood on, must learn who God their Father is by the role model of their earthly father.

Disciplining our children in love is possible. There are worldly child psychologists that maintain that all corporal discipline of children is child abuse. Child abuse of our covenant children is a heinous sin. Loving discipline of our children is necessary for them to be corrected and to grow up in the fear of the Lord.

Loving discipline has as its purpose turning our children from the sin of their nature, correcting them, and teaching them the fear of the Lord. Discipline, when

administered in love, will by the grace of God save their souls. It will prepare our children for ordered and disciplined Christian living in their later life. Children who are not disciplined will grow up to be lawless and ungodly. The reality of our modern society is proof of this.

Sinful discipline of our children must be severely condemned. We may not discipline our children in anger or in a fit of rage. We may not, in the discipline of our children, demean them. We may not discipline our children because of our selfish pride. We are naturally proud of our children. The motive for disciplining our children may not be merely that we are disappointed in them or because our children put us to personal shame. We should be much more concerned about the offense that our sins and the sins of our children cause to the honor and glory of the name of God.

The discipline of our children must be just, fair, and consistent according to the Word of God. The discipline that we administer to our children must teach them the difference between right and wrong according to the Word of God. Arbitrary and inconsistent discipline will discourage and exasperate our children. It will cause them to be confused and wrongly fear their parents and become bitter against them. When discipline is administered in love, it will bring forth the fruit of righteousness

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

and peace in their lives. The spiritually minded of our children will grow up to appreciate the discipline their parents gave them during the days of their childhood. They will be thankful that they do not have the trouble in their lives that so many of the world have. They will thank their parents for the benefit of the order and structure that this gave to their lives.

Discipline usually causes pain at the time it is given. Hebrews 12:11 says, "Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous." Loving discipline will yield a good fruit. We do not like to hear our children cry, but our discipline of them must be persistent, in order to drive out sin from their sinful nature. "Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Prov. 19:18).

Parents must exercise self control when disciplining their children. This is urgent. It is easy to discipline our children in sinful anger. Then we vent our anger on those whom we should love most dearly. Discipline can be administered properly only by earnest prayer of parents. Parents need the restraint and guidance of the Holy Spirit to be able to administer discipline properly. If we discipline our children in love, it will sometimes cause us as much or more pain than it does our children.

We must be tender and kind and gentle to our children. Harshness and cruelty in the discipline of our children cannot be justified by the defense that we are seeking their good. Yet discipline at times must be hard and firm. Sin is deeply rooted in the nature with which our children are born, and it takes discipline to drive it far from them. Softness, compromise, laxity regarding sin will not prepare our children to discipline themselves in later life in the midst of this ungodly world, where we are surrounded by temptation on every side.

We must be longsuffering towards our children. Longsuffering is a virtue of God that He reveals in the manner in which He saves us. Longsuffering means that God suffers when He disciplines us. Speaking anthropomorphically, when God disciplines us, it grieves Him to

see us suffering and hear us crying. But He has the good end of our salvation in mind and therefore bears with the necessary suffering. In the firmness of our discipline, the love of God must shine so clearly that our children will know its blessed reality to enable them to endure the discipline.

God does not abandon us to our sin and the evil of our nature. He chastens and corrects us to sanctify us and to teach us the fear of His name. He does this wonderful work in order to bring us into His own blessed fellowship as the Holy One. So we must also discipline our children to train them to live and walk with God and to enjoy His favor and blessing in their lives.

We as God's children, because of our sin, will fall a hundred times. Yet the Lord will lift us up again and not leave us to the ruin of our own sin. He will hear us when we cry to Him and restore us and reconcile us to Himself. Our children will also fall many times, oftentimes in the same sin—sometimes into the same sins their parents once walked in. We must discipline them persistently and not let ourselves become exasperated and give up on them. Our children need years of loving discipline as they grow up before us in our covenant homes.

Discipline must be tempered with restraint and mercy. When God disciplines us in holy anger, He always remembers mercy. He does not give us the punishment that we deserve because of the greatness of our sins against Him. He will not remain angry forever, but in the way of the repentance of His people He will show mercy and turn again to us in love to save us and embrace us in His own covenantal love. So must also the discipline of our children be. An unmerciful discipline is evil and cruel.

In disciplining our children we must bring them to the cross of Jesus Christ in the way of their repentance and sorrow over sin. We must help them to find there the wonder of God's forgiving mercy. The cross of Jesus Christ is the grand display of the mercy of God. When our covenant children by the grace of God in their hearts repent of their sins, we must lead them in the way


*Harshness and cruelty
in the discipline
of our children cannot be
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of experiencing the wonder of God's forgiving mercy in their lives.

The discipline of our children has not been brought to its ultimate purpose unless we also help our children to be restored and renewed in the grace of God. Proper loving discipline does not create a negative self image in our children. Our goal in the disciplining of our children is not to make our children feel good about themselves. Worldly child psychologists emphasize that a positive self image is, above all else, important for the psychological good and the psychological development of children. However, children who continue in sin and rebellion have no basis for a positive self esteem. But children who are restored to the Lord through godly discipline have the reward and honor of being the children of God and experiencing His favor and blessing in their lives. The great good that God works in us and in our children by His grace and Holy Spirit is a life that is pleasing and glorious in His sight. May He use us as parents to this blessed end.

The manner in which we discipline our children as they grow up in our homes will vary according to their age. Little children need a certain amount of corporal discipline. They need to learn unquestioned obedience

to their parents even before they understand everything in their young lives. They must be taught to obey their parents for the Lord's sake. Teenagers need to learn the principles involved when they are disciplined. God gives our covenant children sanctified reason and understanding. We must labor to mold this reason and understanding, in order to establish conviction and discernment in their own minds and hearts.

The foundation of discipline is the love of God for our children. Discipline requires a great amount of personal investment of time and interest in our children. Our children themselves must know the great care and genuine concern of their parents. As parents we need to make large personal sacrifices for the benefit of our children. Especially in the later teenage years our children must know this. If children are left to themselves when they are young and then grow up to be rebellious and full of anger in their youth, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for us as parents to bring about the necessary changes in their lives and prove the genuine concern we have for them. We want to address this in our next article. 

SPECIAL ARTICLE

MR. CARSTEN LINKE

Jesus Christ Reveals the Name of God (2)

Comments on John 17:6-11

The promises are fulfilled in Christ

When Jesus says in His prayer that He reveals the name of God, He is proclaiming the truth that God faithfully fulfills His promises. But Christ has done still more. He has not only proclaimed. He has not only pointed to a treasure chest. Much more, He has opened this treasure chest, the container with the treasures of salvation, and shared the treasure. That Jesus reveals the

name of God means that He has revealed Himself as the promised Redeemer of His people.

The fulfillment of the promises of God stands or falls with Jesus Christ. In His person the promises come together and become reality. He is the incarnate fulfillment of the promised Word of God. For that the Savior immediately adds, "Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me" (John 17:7-8).

Christ was sent by the Father so that the Father's

Mr. Linke is an elder in the Confessing Protestant Reformed Congregation of Giessen, Germany. The article appeared first in Bekenende Kirche. Translated by Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf.

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promises would be efficacious. Christ had given the words to His disciples that He had received from His Father so that they would receive them. That means that Christ communicated Himself to His disciples in a way that made the promises of God effective in them. This truth the apostle John proclaimed in his first epistle in this way: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1-3).

John denotes Christ as the “eternal life.” Not only does Christ proclaim eternal life. Not only does He work eternal life. No, He is Himself eternal life. Some few verses later in the same epistle the apostle explains what this has to do with us: “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12).

Christ is the fulfillment of the promise. He is that eternal life. But how do we come into possession of this treasure? In that we receive this very Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life.”

In order for us to possess Jesus Christ, He had first to reveal the name of God to us. One could say, He must communicate Himself to us. That Christ communicates Himself to us means not only that He reveals His being and work to us, but also that He makes us partakers of His being and work. That is the decisive thing. For only when Christ reveals Himself to us so that we lay hold on Him and take Him for our own by faith, do we have eternal life.

The revelation is directed to the church

Again, in John 17:6: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.” And in verse 9: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.”

Here we encounter a sharp boundary line. On one

side stands “the world,” and on the other side those “men..., whom thou hast given me out of the world.” The concept of “the world” has various meanings in the Bible. In this text, “world” refers to mankind in its entirety. Christ has received certain men “out of the world.” In other words, out of the entire mass of human beings, a specific number of men have been given to Him. God has taken out of all humanity a few men and “given” them to Christ—at a given time, for a specific reason, and to a given purpose. Which men are meant here? In verse twelve of the high-priestly prayer, we read, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.”

Clearly the reference here is to the disciples of Jesus, with special reference to the traitor, Judas Iscariot. The disciples were given to Christ. To them He had revealed God’s name; and for them He prayed. That is quite straight forward. But does everything that is said above have to do only with the eleven disciples? When we look more closely, especially at verse 20, we see that the Lord becomes more concrete. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word...”

The disciples will carry the Word of God into all the earth. God will reveal His name to other men also. When God reveals His name to men (in other words, when He effectually reveals Jesus Christ to them), they receive Christ in faith, and, with Him, all the blessings of salvation. This has to do not only with the eleven disciples, but with all men who possess Christ in faith. Of them Christ says, “thine they were, and thou gavest them me” (John 17:6).

The church is chosen in Christ

The text is a testimony to the doctrine of election. The apostle Paul teaches about election in Ephesians 1:4-6: “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

God has chosen certain men in Christ before the foun-

dation of the world. That means that He elected Christ and gave them to Christ. For that reason they belong to Him. "And all mine are thine, and thine are mine" (John 17:10). That is true from eternity. For that reason the prophet Jeremiah speaks to the people under the Old Covenant, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3).

That God draws men to Himself and receives them into His fellowship is a fulfillment of His promises and, for that reason, is His revelation as the true "I AM THAT I AM." For that reason Christ can confess in His prayer that He has revealed the name of God to all those who have been given Him out of the world, and to no one else.

The world that stands outside of Christ has no use for Christ. The Lord does not know them and has never known them (cf. Matt. 7:23). The Father has not given these men to the Son. They do not hear Him. Why is that so? Why has God chosen a part of mankind and taken them to Himself as His own, as His special treasure, while the other part is passed over in this election, reprobated? What grounds did He find in the elect? None! What was different in them than in the others? Nothing! Did they do something that differentiated them from the rest? No! The ground for election does not rest with men. For all men without exception are, as sinners, enemies of God who stand under His wrath.

The doctrine of election is not especially popular. It is no wonder, for that doctrine takes away from man every

(even the smallest) bit of self glorification. That is not something that one likes to hear. Nonetheless, the Bible speaks very clearly and in many texts of predestination. Christ declares in His prayer that certain men belonged to God. "They were thine." The verse from Jeremiah 31 speaks of an "eternal love" of God. The following texts proclaim the same message. "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut. 7:6-8).

The only ground of election is God's love and faithfulness to His people; and in this, Jesus Christ is the focal point. So, when we speak of election, it is not to pat ourselves on the back or to exalt ourselves over others. For Christ is "the beloved." We are chosen "in Him." And certainly not *because* we were holy and blameless but specifically "that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (see Eph. 1:4-6). For this purpose the Father gave us to His Son. With this purpose the Son revealed to us the name of the Father. With this purpose He is our High Priest and goes to the Father in prayer on our behalf.

... to be concluded. 

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NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

Congregation Activities

With the Word of God found in I Corinthians 12:12 in mind, "For as the body is one and hath many members...", we extend our

Mr. Wigger is an elder in the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.

congratulations to the First PRC of Edmonton, AB, Canada, celebrating their anniversary as an organized church on September 25, 1975.

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA was invited to a Chili Cook-off fundraiser on Saturday, August 17. The idea, of course, was to enjoy an afternoon

of homemade chili and vote on your favorite one. There were sign-up sheets for those who would like to enter their chili into the contest, and for those willing to bring salads, but, strangely, no sign up sheet for those willing to bring water or soft drinks to help cool the mouths and throats of the chili testers. The money

raised was donated to Hope's church-improvement fund.

The area PR churches were invited to join Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD at Wild Water West on July 25. All-day admission to the park included unlimited access to the go-carts, batting cages, mini-golf, bumper boats, water park, wave pool, and sand volleyball.

The Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN was scheduled to hold their yearly church picnic on Saturday, August 24, at the home of one of their members on the shore of Lake Michigan. What made this picnic somewhat unusual was that Cornerstone expected somewhere between 250 and 300 people to show up. A quick look at our 2013 Yearbook shows Cornerstone having a congregation of 143 members. That's a few extra visitors! In case of rain that Saturday, all the guests were invited to remain and simply move the picnic indoors! That must be some picnic and some house.

Young People's Activities

We are writing this "News" just a couple of days after this summer's annual Young People's Convention. This year's convention was hosted by the Crete, IL PRC and held in beautiful southern Illinois at the Lake Williamson Christian Center in Carlinville, IL. From what we have heard, this year's convention, held August 12 through 16, was a tremendous success. Four hundred forty-three young people were registered to attend, so, taking into account all the chaperones and support people from Crete, there

had to be around 500 at this year's convention. Rev. Nathan Langerak, Rev. Cory Griess, and Rev. Jonathon Mahtani spoke on the theme, "Not Ashamed of the Gospel," from Romans 1:16. By our count, this was our churches' 72nd convention and the 9th hosted by Crete. We add our prayer, along with those of all our members, when we pray that this time together may have been used in a powerful way for the spiritual growth of our young people and for the forming of strong bonds in Christ with each other.

The Young People of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI planned, in their words, a spectacular car wash and bake sale for August 3 at Hope PR Christian School in nearby Walker, MI. Money raised that morning was a start toward the covering of anticipated expenses for next year's convention in Redlands, CA.

There was a special thank-you from the young people of the Hull, IA PRC for the support they received from their congregation in a recent pop-can drive. They managed to raise \$588 for next year's convention. Since Iowa's return deposit on pop cans is 5 cents a can, that's a lot of cans to return.

School Activities

The first annual meeting of the Society for PR Education took place on July 22 at Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD. New members were encouraged to attend.

Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI hosted their 8th annual 10K/5K/1mi Fun Run/Walk Classic on Saturday, August 3.

The annual Northwest Iowa PR School kick-off camping outing at Newton Hills State Park was Thursday and Friday, August 8 and 9. All the friends of Northwest were also invited to join the campers on Friday night for a Family Picnic. Supper was pot provision, followed by a group sing-along around the campfire. Everyone was reminded to bring camping chairs, a flashlight, and a Psalter.

The members of the Hope foundation of the Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI were very pleased with how their 1st annual Bass Fishing Tournament went. This tournament was held on Saturday, July 20, from 7 A.M. until noon, on Muskegon Lake, about an hour north and west of Grand Rapids, MI. The weather was great, the home-cooked meal served at noon was delicious, a lot of fish were caught, and a good time was had by all—so much so, that all the fishermen that the organizers talked to expressed a desire to come back again next year, taking more of their fishing buddies with them. This year's tournament had a total of 12 boats entered, and approximately 45 fishermen, both young and old, were entered. Most boats had fishermen who were 12 years old or younger. Almost all teams caught at least 20 fish, with each team weighing in their top five legal bass. The biggest fish was 4.25 pounds, and it was caught by a 12-year old. After receiving many positive reviews, the Hope Foundation plans to hold the event again next year.

In August of this year, the

Fundraisers of Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI took on what, without a doubt, was their most ambitious project to date. Those ladies of Heritage took on the challenge of running a full-service restaurant at the Hudsonville Community Fair for six days, from August 19-28, serving breakfast, lunch, dinner, and desserts, from 7 A.M. until 10 P.M. What a massive undertaking! The "News" cannot

say enough about the Committee who made it all happen. If you were looking to start a restaurant, you would do well to hire any of these ladies. But, of course, a project this size needs more than six ladies to make it successful. The fundraiser anticipated at least 170 eight-hour shifts that needed to be filled that week. In addition, they also provided a list of a variety of items that could be donated (1,900 hamburger patties anyone?). But then, at the

very least, if you could not donate your time or perhaps some needed food items, you could always show your support for Heritage by eating a meal or two at the Fair.

Minister Activities

We rejoice with Rev. Daniel and Leah Holstege, of the First PRC in Holland, MI, in the birth of twin daughters, Kirsten Leigh and Kiley Danielle, born on August 9. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bound Volumes

■ With the September 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, we have reached the end of Volume Year 89. For those who would like bound volumes of this year, there will be a price increase. \$32 and \$18 for those who bring in their own copies for binding. Reminder—for those dropping off their own copies, please do so by the end of October. Questions, call Paula at 616-457-5970.

Wedding Anniversary

■ It is with joy and thanksgiving to our heavenly Father that we were privileged to celebrate, on August 25, 2013, the 60th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,

TIM and CLARINE KOOIMA.

We thank them for their covenantal instruction and their continued godly example to us and our families. It is our prayer that God may continue to keep them in His care and bless them in the years to come. "For the Lord is good: his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

- ❖ Marvin and Melinda VanMaanen
- ❖ John and Sharon Keizer
- ❖ Steven and Rachel Kooima
- ❖ Glenn and Krista Kooima
- ❖ Kevin and Joan Kooima
- ❖ Mark and Nancy Kooima
25 grandchildren and 1 in glory
20 great grandchildren

Hull, Iowa

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Ladies' Society of Hudsonville PRC expresses loving sympathy to our president of next season, Seminarian Ryan Barnhill, in the death of his mother and our former member,

MARY BARNHILL.

May Seminarian Barnhill and his extended family remember God's promise: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Barb Dykstra, Vice President
Donna Boven, Secretary

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Providence PRC express Christian sympathy to Mike and Cryss Kooienga and their children in the loss of their son and brother,

JORDAN LEE KOOIENGA.

May they be comforted by the Word of God in I Corinthians 15:15-57: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Rev. Bleyenbergh, Pres.
Joe Brummel, Clerk

Classis West

■ The meeting of Classis West originally scheduled for September 4 has been postponed. Classis will now convene in Loveland PRC on Wednesday, October 9, at 8:30 A.M.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Hope Heralds expresses its heartfelt sympathy to long-term member, Mike Kooienga, along with his wife Cryss and their entire family, in the sudden going home of their dear son

JORDAN

on August 6, 2013. May the God of all comfort and the Father of mercies comfort their hearts in the sure and solid hope we have in Christ our Savior (II Corinthians 1:3-5). Together we sing, "And when I come to die, give me Jesus."

Subscription Rate Increase

■ Subscription rates for international subscribers will be increased from \$30 to \$35.00 effective October 1.

OUR ONLY *Comfort* Heidelberg Catechism 450 Years

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What is thy only comfort in life and in death?

The answer to this question has been music to the ears of Christians throughout the world for more than 400 years. That I belong to Jesus...who with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins..., who makes all things subservient to my salvation..., and who makes me sincerely willing and able to live unto Him. That's Lord's Day 1. A stirring introduction to the Heidelberg Catechism! But, more than that, a grand theme that is woven throughout the whole of this precious creed.

This year marks the 450th anniversary of the first publication of the Heidelberg Catechism, a creed that arose out of the Protestant Reformation in Germany during the sixteenth century. An anniversary, it is, that ought not to pass unnoticed—especially by those heirs of the Great Reformation who still today profit from Heidelberg Catechism preaching...every Sunday.

The Protestant Reformed Seminary is pleased to sponsor this special conference on the Heidelberg Catechism, commemorating its 450th "birthday."

**"Reading has a significant place in the covenant of grace
as an instrument of God for the fulfilling of His promises."**

Rev. Brian Huizinga
"Encouraging the Next Generation to Read"

RFPA Annual Meeting
September 19, 2013 at 7:30pm
Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church
7146 48th Ave, Hudsonville, MI 49426

THE COMING OF THE KINGDOM: "CHRISTIANIZING THE WORLD?"

A lecture by Prof. David J. Engelsma
emeritus Professor of the Theological School of The Protestant Reformed Churches

What is the kingdom-calling of the Reformed Christian? Is he to flee the world? Or, is there a positive kingdom-calling given with, and empowered by, salvation by the particular; saving grace of God in Jesus Christ?

October 4, 2013 at 7:30 p.m.

Westminster Seminary California
1725 Bear Valley Pkwy, Escondido, CA

Presented by Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands CA

www.hopeprc.org