

# *The Standard Bearer*

*A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • July 2013*

## **SYNOD HIGHLIGHTS 2013**

HUDSONVILLE PRC



VOLUME 89 • NO. 18

## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Unity, How Good and How Pleasant <b>REV. STEVEN KEY</b>	411
<i>Editorial</i>	PRC Synod 2013, A Denomination in Unity: How Good! <b>PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS</b>	414
<i>Feature Article</i>	A Confessional Ministry: Seminary Graduation 2013 (I) <b>PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS</b>	418
<i>All Around Us</i>	The Doctrinal Impact of Evolution in the Christian Reformed Church <b>REV. CLAY SPRONK</b>	423
<i>Believing and Confessing</i>	The King Is Coming Again <b>REV. RODNEY KLEYN</b>	426
<i>Bring the Books...</i>	Book Review <b>MRS. SARAH MOWERY</b>	429
<i>Reports</i>	Classis East <b>MR. JON HUISKEN</b>	429
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities <b>MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER</b>	430

### Cover picture of Delegates to Synod 2013

Left-to-right: Garrett Eriks, Rev. Key, Rev. Spronk, Prof. Dykstra, Jerry Kuiper, Prof. Cammenga, Alan Meurer, Prof. Gritters, Rev. Koole, John Heystek, Gary Kaptein, Rev. Brummel, Rev. Slopsema, Rev. VanOverloop, Brian Kroese, Rev. Laning, Nick Kleyn, Rev. Kuiper, Dewey VanderNoord, Rev. Eriks, Rev. Langerak, Bill Pipe, John VanBaren, Ivan Reid, Wee Gim Theng

Artist: Jeff Steenholdt

*The Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

#### Reprint Policy

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our magazine by other publications, provided a) that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint appears is sent to our editorial office.

#### Editorial Policy

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and questions for the Reader Asks department are welcome. Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and must be signed. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

**Editorial Office**  
Prof. 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

#### Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$30.00 elsewhere  
New eSubscription: \$21  
eSubscription for current hardcopy subscribers: \$10.50.

#### Advertising Policy

The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10.00 fee. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (e-mail: mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

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

# Unity, How Good and How Pleasant!

Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

Psalm 133:1

Psalm 133 is fitting for our consideration as we gather as the Synod of 2013. The Psalm celebrates the unity of brethren, a unity that we enjoy as churches, which unity extends beyond our own denomination even to those of like precious faith with us in other countries, some of whom are represented here.

The unity that is our great blessing compels us to thank God. Unity is never to be taken for granted—though we often do so, to our shame. Unity calls for celebration. It calls for the grand exclamation *Behold*, which points to the lovingkindness of our God and to grace undeserved but richly bestowed in Christ Jesus.

David himself observed that same blessedness and wrote this Psalm as a song of celebration. As the songs of *degrees* or *ascent* were the songs of those who were preparing to worship, ascending as it were the staircase to the fellowship of God's loving presence, it would appear that this song was written as David had in view the long-awaited gathering of Israel's tribes for worship before the Lord. Those days had been suspended for a long time. The restoration of that fellowship began many years before with the setting up of the tabernacle in Zion. But it had been interrupted during the entire time that the ark of the covenant had been held in Kirjath-jearim and, for a brief period of time, in the house of Obededom. Now that long-awaited unity was to be observed in the gathering of Israel upon the mountains of Zion.

---

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

This is the abbreviated text of the Pre-Synodical Sermon that Rev. Key preached on June 10, 2013.

In a small way, that same unity is reflected here tonight. It is a unity that calls for rejoicing, for looking to Jesus Christ, the fulfillment of David's type, the One who alone is our peace and who has reconciled us "unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:16).

How gladly does the Son of David sing this song, rejoicing in the work of His Spirit!

## A Blessed Relationship

The Psalm speaks of something very uncommon.

The term *unity* is found only three times in Scripture, twice in Ephesians chapter 4. This is the only place in the Old Testament where the term *unity* is found, although the Hebrew word is found in a few other places where it is translated *together*, in the sense of the people being gathered together. Perhaps the limited number of times the Bible speaks of unity is indicative of the rarity of its coming to expression in this fallen human race.

We realize that the most difficult aspect of our labors as pastors and elders, even as parents, is dealing with strife. Even when the spiritual condition of a congregation is characterized by unity, peace, and love, we recognize that such a condition is always fragile because of the sinfulness of our natures. We are reminded of that repeatedly with the sins of individual members or families who break unity with the congregation, walking in ways of sin, and sometimes even striving with those who bring them the Word of God, whether it be parents, family members, fellow church members, elders, or pastors in the faithful preaching of the gospel.

Such cases, besides making our labors difficult and grievous, are humble reminders of how sin disrupts the fellowship that ought to be ours in the body of Christ. They are healthy reminders, too—because we all carry with us the sinful nature that would break unity with God Himself.



Unity is ours only by the wonder of God's grace. As was symbolized in the trek to Zion, that unity is found only in the ark of the covenant, and particularly in what was signified by that ark. To be taken into the fellowship of the Holy One is possible only by our being reconciled to Him through the shed blood of the Lamb of God. It is by that wonder of God's sovereign, particular grace that we gather and rejoice in the unity God has given us in the fellowship of His covenant life. "Behold, how good and how pleasant!"

That unity, therefore, is not something forced, but something vital! It is not a superficial camaraderie or general feeling of friendship. This unity is, for us, a true, spiritual unity. Because that unity is the Spirit's work, it is established in the truth by Him who is the Spirit of truth.

Within the parameters of biblical truth, God's truth, that unity embraces diversity. How many are the differences found among us! We come from different areas in North America, as well as from Singapore, the Philippines, the British Isles, different cultures—yet bound together by the same language of Holy Scripture and our Reformed confessions, united in the truth. One body with many different members, with different gifts, and with different functions, yet all united by one Head, who is Christ—so the Bible describes the unity for which we extol God! "Behold, how good and how pleasant!"

The unity of which the psalmist speaks as a blessed relationship is defined in verse 1 by two things—the word *brethren* and the expression *to dwell together*.

We have to be careful not to confine that term *brethren* to those descended from the same parents. Certainly family harmony is delightful, good, and pleasant. But David's family, partly as the consequences of his own sins, was deeply torn by strife—strife that would not be covered over by the gathering on Mount Zion. Rather, speaking as the type of Christ, David was making reference to the same brethren as Jesus would later define in the last two verses of Mark 3: "And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother."

David is referring to true brethren, those who traced

their lives not merely to the genealogy of Abraham, but to the spiritual lineage of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They were *brethren*, therefore, because of their lives in God's family, the covenant of grace (Gal. 3:7). Faith united them with Christ, the promised Messiah, in whom alone they were justified before God and through whom alone they had access into the fellowship of His covenant life. That is how we ourselves also are numbered among the *brethren*.

As such we *dwell together*. That expression immediately brings to mind the marriage relationship. Peter, in I Peter 3:7, exhorts husbands to *dwell with* their wives. That is far more than simply to live in the same house. Dwelling together reveals a covenant relationship of fellowship and communion. That same idea is emphasized in the glorious unity for which the psalmist praises Jehovah. There is to be in the expression of our unity a seeking of one another, caring for one another. Not only do we delight in each other's fellowship, but with one heart and one mind we glorify God, serving each other in love, bearing one another's burdens, sympathizing with each other in times of trial, praying one for another, being willing to forgive one another when offenses come to expression by the weakness of our sinful flesh, but also encouraging one another to love and to good works. In other words, there is to be, for the sake of all the brethren, a perseverance in the calling God has given us as stewards of the treasures He has entrusted to us as churches.

In our homes we have often witnessed disturbances among our children over the most trivial matters. We ourselves were often guilty of the same. We have addressed our children in those times, recognizing the issues as expressions of sin. Should brethren cease dwelling together over trifles? Satan would always seek to disturb the church's unity over trifles. If he can not stir up some to break the unity of the church with false doctrine and by schism, breaking the fellowship of love, the expression of truth, he would disrupt unity by trivial matters. But with our focus on Christ, or, in terms of what David observed, on the ark of the covenant at the center of our life, and therefore on the great sacrifice that was offered for our being reconciled unto God, we confess, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Unity is

a rare occurrence in the church world of our day. It is a blessed relationship expressing the wonder work of God's grace.

### A Peculiar Excellency

The peculiar excellency of this unity is expressed in this psalm with the use of two figures of speech.

In verse 2 we read, "It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."

By this reference the text once again points us to the riches of Christ. Exodus 30 records the divine instruction given concerning the precious ointment, the holy anointing oil, with which the tabernacle and its furnishings were to be anointed, as well as Aaron and his sons.

That oil, prepared according to the Lord's command with four principal spices and olive oil, was a heavily perfumed oil, which symbolized the power and grace of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon the object anointed, to sanctify them (in the case of the tabernacle and the furnishings), setting them apart for the Lord's service, as was the case also with Aaron and his sons.

But in the case of Aaron, that oil also symbolized the divine influence poured upon him in abundance, thus qualifying him to serve Jehovah in the priestly office in such a way that through the ministry of his office the Lord's blessings would rest upon His people. So the Lord had commanded in Exodus 30:30: "And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest's office." Apart from that sanctifying and qualifying work of the Holy Spirit, as symbolized in the pouring of that holy anointing oil upon the head, it would have been impossible for the priests to carry out their calling faithfully and with divine blessing.

That oil was *poured* upon Aaron's head. In Leviticus 8, where that anointing is recorded, we find that Moses *sprinkled* the furnishings and vessels of the tabernacle. But "he *poured* of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him" (Lev. 8:12). David now testifies that the precious ointment, that holy anointing oil, ran down upon Aaron's beard, even to the skirts of his garments. In Hebrews we are

reminded that the high priestly office of Aaron was only typical of the One who would fulfill the high priestly office. Christ had to come, a priest forever, perfectly qualified with an unchangeable priesthood, to accomplish the salvation of His people. "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us" (Heb. 9:11-12).

David, in speaking of the anointing of Aaron as symbolic of the peculiar excellency of the church's unity, not only points to the historic event of the symbolism in Aaron's anointing, but also prophesies of the fulfillment in the Messiah. All the graces of the Spirit, in rich abundance, centered in the high priestly office and flowed through the exercise of that office into the church, making the brethren blessed partakers of the heavenly gifts. That abundant anointing of Aaron pictured the grace of Christ being dispersed so richly that it flows from the head to the skirts, that is, over all its members.

By the riches of Christ, by the bountiful outpouring of the Holy Spirit's gifts, we brethren dwell together in unity. And our unity itself reflects the riches of God's grace. There is nothing we have done to deserve these blessings, no more than Aaron deserved the office that he occupied and in which he was able to minister effectively. It was entirely God's grace, and the ministry of His Holy Spirit. So it is also with us. And therefore, with our eyes upon Him in Christ Jesus, we say of this unity, "Behold, how good and how pleasant!"

The second figure of speech that describes the peculiar excellency of this unity is found in verse 3: "[It is] as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion."

Once again David points to a familiar figure of rich abundance. It is a figure that is all too easily taken for granted. Dew, after all, is quite common; and it does not seem to provide any great benefit. We look for rain, not just dew. But Mount Hermon was the towering peak of the mountain range, and was noted for its moisture, its heavy dew. The heaviness and freshness of that dew was invigorating and brought pristine beauty to the

vegetation. The same dew fell upon the mountains of Zion as the mist of the morning.

David compares this figure to that good and pleasant unity that is God's handiwork in the midst of the church. This unity is cause for tremendous gratitude, because it comes from the Giver of every good and perfect gift, even as does the dew.

But worth noting is the fact that dew falls gently in cooling temperature and moderate air, not in stormy and blustery weather. When we think of the preciousness of the unity of the church, we do so not ignoring the fact that there will be differences that often rise among us. There are times in the church when there must be contention for the sake of the truth once delivered to the saints. We face that even now, but thankfully not amidst ourselves. Even when there are differences among us, and even should it be necessary to contend over against the introduction of false doctrine, the preciousness of the church's unity moves us to guard ourselves against being stormy and blustery in the pride of our sinful natures. Just as the dew cools, so our rejoicing in the unity of brethren subdues our intensity and reduces our severity, as we seek to preserve and strengthen the church, contributing that which builds rather than destroys. So David is inspired to use these two figures of speech to demonstrate the peculiar


excellency of this unity that is God's rich blessing upon His church.

### A Wonderful Fulfillment

The wonderful fulfillment of this unity is found in the Zion that God loves. There in that church, the dwelling place of Christ, the Lord records His blessing. Christ is the One through whom we have been made *brethren*, members of God's family. By Jesus Christ we have been adopted, and in Him we have obtained an inheritance. That all comes to expression in this worship gathering tonight, as well as in the fellowship of each faithful congregation of Jesus Christ, and in the labors of synod, where the blessed unity of our own denomination and our sister churches and mission fields is also acknowledged to the glory of God.

As David says, this unity comes as a fruit of this wonder of God's grace: "For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore."

Jehovah is at work, in faithfulness to His covenant.

But the day is soon coming when the unity, so feebly expressed and so faintly experienced by us now, shall be brought to its full realization, even life forevermore. Then, at the marriage feast of the Lamb, we shall not only recognize how blessed we were, but we shall see the perfection of that for which we longed. Unity—how good and how pleasant! 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

## PRC Synod 2013

# A Denomination in Unity: How Good!

Rev. Steven Key, pastor of our Loveland, CO, PRC, set the right tone at Monday evening's pre-synodical worship service at Hudsonville, MI, PRC when he preached an edify-

ing sermon on the familiar Psalm 133. While the sermon called the delegates to unity of mind and activity, it also pointed out the great blessedness of unity, one of the great themes of Psalm 133. We

experienced that blessedness for the duration of the short week that synod took to do its work.

Rev. VanOverloop, synod's experienced president, promoted unity by his good leadership, and

the delegates (10 from Classis East and 10 from Classis West, elders and pastors in equal number) worked on the important affairs of the “churches in common” with a sense of unity. There is unity in our denomination. We were called to *keep* the unity. What a blessing to *observe* the unity as the men spoke the truth in love, voted their convictions, and submitted to the settled and binding nature of the “majority-vote” decisions, even if they voted in the minority. That’s how unity is kept.

Two years ago in this column I expressed a desire that more PRC members could observe—by *some* means—the workings of their synod, because witnessing the labors of this assembly fosters a real appreciation for God’s goodness toward us. That year—2011—after the seminary graduation speech was streamed live on the Internet, I wrote: “Perhaps in the future even the student examinations and synod’s deliberations could be accessible in that way.” Synod 2013 accomplished one of these two wishes when all of the public examinations of the seminarian were broadcast live on the Internet. At some points, we were told, over 200 people from the USA to Singapore were listening to the examinations and were able to witness firsthand the good confession of truth the young brother made. And because *truth* is the essence of our unity, these 200 experienced something notable of denominational unity!

As to the second wish—*all* the deliberations of synod broadcast live on the Internet—the mechan-

ics of this may be more difficult, some of the “closed session” discussions would have to be blacked out, and some delegates may initially be more hesitant to speak, but I see none of these as major objections to making the entirety of our already-open-to-the-public synods accessible to interested people of God who are not able to travel to Hudsonville, or wherever synod may be. Synod 2014 would have to approve this latter, but as to the former, would the consistory of Hope, Grand Rapids (next year’s host) make provisions for broadcasting the examination and graduation by arranging for cameras, and a couple of volunteers with the technical expertise? The churches could be informed in advance, and perhaps next year a thousand observers can witness the examination of the students and the deliberations of this, our broadest assembly.



### Seminary

I begin with our Protestant Reformed Theological School because synod began there and a great deal of synod’s time was occupied with our denominational seminary. First, Mr. Erik Guichelaar successfully sustained his final examinations and by unanimous vote was declared a “candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRCA, eligible for a call on or after July 13, 2013.” These public examinations took significant parts of three of synod’s four days, a testimony to the importance our churches place on a well-trained and theologically qualified ministry.

May Candidate Guichelaar soon have a place in the churches.

Our determination to examine all students on the floor of synod may be tested in a few years if God enables all of the nine incoming students to pass the four years of seminary training. God provides the churches with nine students—from seven different PRCs and from our sister church in Singapore—the largest incoming class in PRC history! To examine nine graduates in the way synod is accustomed to would lengthen synod almost unbearably. Our Church Order does permit a committee to “supervise together *or in smaller number* all examinations of future students” (Article 49). Painful as it may be to change, our practice of all the delegates listening to all the examinations in the public sessions of synod may have to be reexamined. God grant success to these nine men who aspire to the ministry!

Synod also granted permanent tenure to Prof. Ronald Cammenga, who has served the seminary since 2005; heard a good report from Prof. Russell Dykstra about the good fruits of his partial sabbatical this past year (a study on Christian education); and granted a partial sabbatical for the upcoming year to the undersigned (for study and writing especially in the area of church government). I can now underscore what each of my colleagues mentioned publicly at synod—how blessed it is to work with faithful brothers of one mind and heart. As one of them put it: the professors respect and trust each other, so that we never fear what the others may



be saying in the classroom next door. The Theological School Committee (the “school board” of the seminary) also gave synod good testimony of the professors’ work. Unity!

### **Missions: Overseeing the missionaries and their work**

Our unity of mind and labor was evident when reports came in both from our home-missionary, Rev. Bruinsma, and our foreign missionaries, Rev. Kleyn and Rev. Smit. Both Bruinsma and Smit were able to attend some of the meetings of synod and report personally on the work in Pittsburgh (development) and the Philippines (expansion). Their calling churches and supervising committees expressed hearty approval of their work. We have confidence in our missionaries!

But the simple fact that most of our churches’ mission work is done with denominational oversight shows the unity of the churches. Think about it: even though our synod’s constitution for missions states that “mission work is the calling of the *local* church,” and that “*some* mission work may *become* the work of the churches in *common*,” nevertheless *all* the PRC mission work performed by full-time missionaries is *denominational* missions—work we perform together. And to do missions via a man called by *one* congregation, but overseen by *all* the churches through a denominational committee, requires great effort and a great infusion of grace. But Doon PRC (Iowa) labors harmoniously with the Foreign Mission Commit-

tee, and Southwest PRC (Grand Rapids, MI) works with one mind with the Domestic Mission Committee, and all of them with the missionaries. Imagine the difficulty for these men if their overseeing consistories could not work well with the denominational committees. Let’s never forget the blessing of the wisdom our fathers expressed in the missions’ constitutions<sup>1</sup> and the call there for unity—between missionary, calling church, and denominational committee. How blessed the unity expressed by our faithful and dedicated missionaries.

### **Missions: Commitment to Missions**

Missionary Bruinsma has spent 12 of his 35-year ministry in missions, the last seven in Pittsburgh. Missionaries Kleyn and Smit moved their families to the Philippines four years ago with a view to (should God permit) long-term missions in this distant land. So Adoniram Judson’s embarrassing description of some missionaries in his day (the 1800s in Burma) does not fit our men: “They are all good for nothing. Though brilliant in an English pulpit, they are incompetent to any real missionary work. They come out for a few years, with the view of acquiring a stock of credit on which they may vegetate the rest of their days, in the congenial climate of their native land....” Our missionaries are devoted to missions. They hardly need encouragement

<sup>1</sup> Find these constitutions on the Internet at [prca.org](http://prca.org), under the “PRC Standards” button, and the “Green Binder of the latest edition” of the “Church Order of the PRC.”

to be more devoted to their work. But synod adopted changes to the missions’ constitutions that reflect a maturing in understanding the special gifts required for mission work and the real blessing of long-term commitment to missions that we pray does encourage them. A committee specially appointed by Synod 2012 brought advice to Synod 2013 regarding these changes, most of which was adopted. Please study these changes when the 2013 *Acts of Synod* is published.

### **Missions: The Denominational website**

Two years ago the PRCA took ownership of the website [prca.org](http://prca.org), and by that decision declared that the website is an aspect of the mission work the churches perform. At this synod, a good policy was adopted for oversight and maintenance of the site. Careful supervision can be exercised without hobbling the webmaster.

Because the webmaster is determined to make this site a good witness to the truth we embrace, and all of us want the site to represent the PRCA faithfully, I convey the webmaster’s invitation to all of you to send in your suggestions for improvements. But please use the site. Promote it by directing others to it. A massive amount of PRC literature—both official documents and unofficial—can be found there.

### **Contact with Other Churches**

There is no room to reflect at proper length on the beauty of our unity with our sister churches in



Northern Ireland and Singapore. Mr. Ivan Reid and Mr. Wee Gim Theng represented their churches in far-off lands. They are with us in a beautiful unity that we experience, in a special way because each of us has endured painful struggles for the sake of confessing and living truth. Through these troubles God graciously led, so that now we truly “dwell together” in unity. The same struggles for truth and godliness are experienced by almost all those with whom we seek fuller expressions of unity—in Australia, Germany, India, Myanmar, Namibia, and wherever else the Lord has His people.



Because the ability of the churches to work together—in the seminary, missions, contact, etc.—depends on financial means, we are very thankful for the support of the people of God through synodical budgets, and for the generous donations given for these causes. It doesn’t hurt our unity, either, that the denominational per-family budget went down \$70/year—because of increased tapping of surpluses. Besides, we have sufficient means to support—not that these causes are last; not at all!—the retired ministers and their spouses, the needy churches, the seminary students, and more. The “day” certainly is one of “prosperity.” May we labor while it is yet “day.”

Lord of the church, be pleased to “command the blessing” (Ps. 133:3) upon the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Of spirit-wrought unity, and “life forevermore”! ♪

On Thursday, June 13, Synod expressed a special word of thanks to Don Doezema for his many years of faithful service as registrar of the PR Seminary, and for the many other duties he has diligently performed for our seminary for the past 25-plus years. The occasion for this special thanks is Mr. Doezema’s retirement this year from the position of Seminary registrar. That evening, at the Seminary commencement, Mr. Doezema was publicly thanked for his service to the Seminary and churches and presented with a new camera by Rev. W. Langerak on behalf of the Theological School Committee (photography is one of his denominational “duties” and personal hobbies.).



## SEMINARY GRADUATE



### Hindirk (Erik) Jurjen Guichelaar

3915 Butterworth St. SW

Grand Rapids, MI 49534

(616) 350-6655

eguichelaar@hotmail.com

Wife: Cherith; Daughter: Kennedy Joy

# A Confessional Ministry: Seminary Graduation 2013 (1)

**M**r. Guichelaar, on this momentous evening for you we call you to be a confessional minister. A “confessional” or “creedal” minister is a minister who knows, loves, and uses the creeds, whose ministry is governed by the creeds.

The *churches* call you to be a creedal minister. The Protestant Reformed Churches are a confessional denomination: as churches, we know, love, and use the creeds; as churches, our lives are governed by them. The PRC call all her servants to serve her by promoting what she is.

This does not mean that the churches want you to be something different than a *biblical minister*—a minister who knows, loves, uses, and is governed by something other than the Bible! No, the Bible governs us. But our understanding of *creedal* is that it is the only way for a minister to be *truly* biblical—biblical in the best sense of the word!

As a servant of the churches, I call you tonight to a creedal ministry.

This call is not a surprise to you. Although I may put it a little differently now than you have heard it in your four years under our instruction, what you hear tonight will conform to *everything* the other professors and I have taught you.

But by doing this, I want to inform, to call, and to send.

---

*Prof. Gritters is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.*

This is the graduation speech—slightly modified for publication—given on Thursday evening, June 13, 2013, at Hudsonville PRC, in the presence of Synod, the church, and the family and friends of Mr. Erik Guichelaar.

I inform your friends and audience what kind of seminary is the Protestant Reformed Theological School. I call us as churches to continue to be what we have always been determined to be: a denomination committed to walk in the old paths, and train young men to do the same. And I send you off with a charge that, I pray, rings in your ears until the last day of your ministry in the churches, if the Lord so pleases to give you one: Be a creedal minister!

## The Calling to Be a Creedal Minister

To be creedal does not mean merely to have a creed. Everyone has a creed. All Christians are confessional. That point needs to be established first of all because the old claim is still being made: “We have no creed but Christ,” or “We have no confession but the Bible.” It’s simply false to say that some Christians are confessional and other Christians are not.<sup>1</sup>

Rather, the division is between those whose creed is *written, public, and open* to scrutiny and critique, and those whose creed is *unwritten, not* open to scrutiny and critique, and probably known only after you’ve signed on as a member—maybe after four or five years.

A few examples will make that clear. Because “creed” means “belief,” and every church has a belief about baptism, every church has a creed on baptism! Perhaps “We believe that infants must not be baptized” is their creed! Or, “We testify that we will only baptize adult

---

<sup>1</sup> Although my yellowed seminary notes show my own seminary professors making this point emphatically over 30 years ago, recently Carl R. Trueman has restated it in a fine new book, *The Creedal Imperative* (Crossway Books, 2012), which served as part of the catalyst for this speech.

...continued on page 422.



## SYNOD HIGHLIGHTS 2013

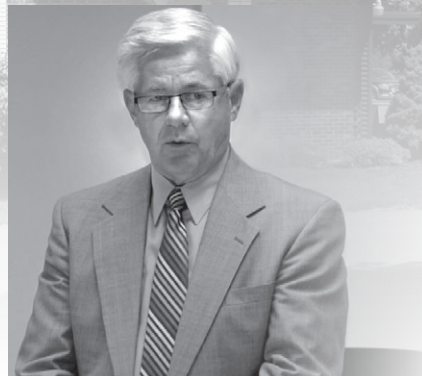
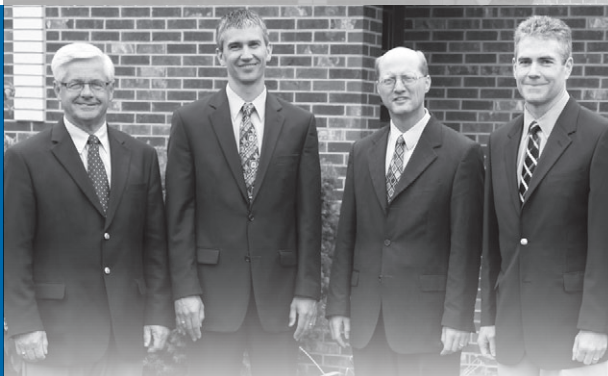
## HUDSONVILLE PRC



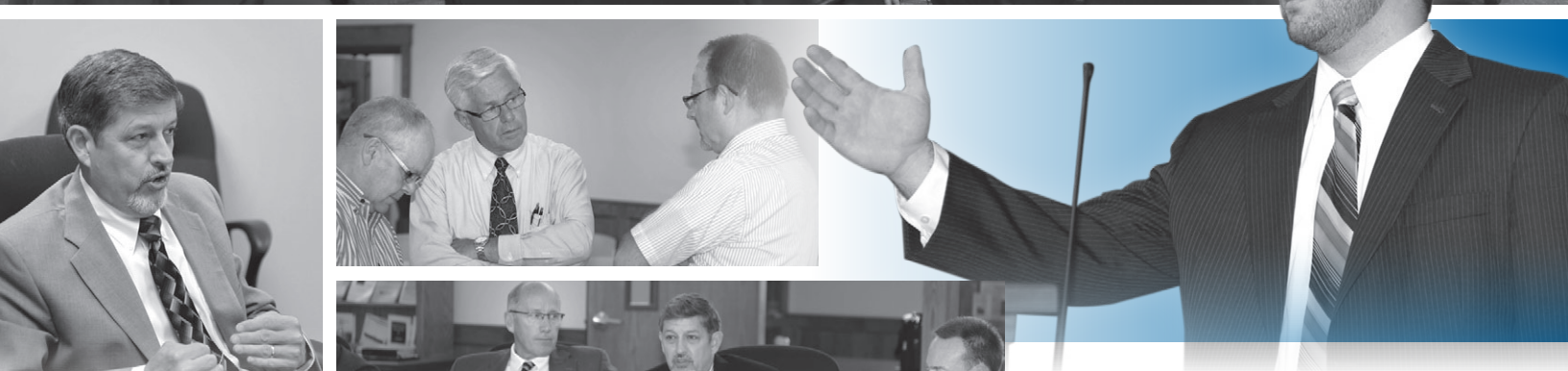
Rev. S. Key; Pre-synodical Service  
*Behold how good and how pleasant it is for  
brethren to dwell together in unity!*  
—Psalm 133:1

Officers of Synod (from left to right):  
Rev. R. VanOverloop, President; Rev. G. Eriks,  
2nd Clerk; Rev. D. Kuiper, 1st Clerk; Rev. J.  
Laning, Vice-President.

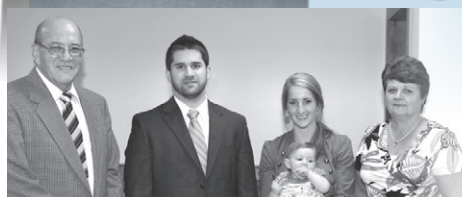
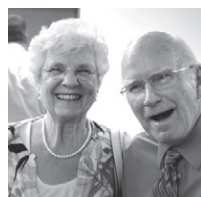
Newly-elected Synod President Van Overloop  
(far right)













believers!" is their creed. The question is not whether they are creedal, but whether they put that on paper for the public to see and examine! Every corner church has a creed on baptism. You must ask yourself whether they have the integrity to put that down on paper. To use another example: every church has a creed (a "we believe") on church leadership. "We believe that women have a place in the government of the church." Or, "We believe that government is the exclusive domain of men." Perhaps, "We are governed by *no* human authority." Each of those is a creedal statement, and no one may deny that this is creedal. Again, the point is whether they will print that for examination and critique.

The same is true with respect to *every* matter that has been controversial over the years.

Rather, to be creedal means that one officially *adopts* creeds, *knows* them, *loves* them, *uses* them, and *binds* himself officially to them. Being creedal means, first, that one officially adopts creeds as his (or their) own.

Second, being creedal means *binding* oneself to them with a solemn oath. We do that when we require all our *officebearers* to subscribe them. Officebearers must sign the Formula of Subscription. The very first action tonight's graduate will take after a classis approves his classical examination—soon, God willing—will be to sign this Formula. Also, each *confessing* member—non-officebearers—binds himself to the creeds. Even though the level of knowledge of the common members of the church is less than that required of officebearers, all confessing members publicly swear an oath that they believe all the truths contained in the creeds to be "the true and complete doctrine of salvation," and that they will *stick to*<sup>2</sup> the doctrine confessed in them.

Third, being creedal means that we *know* the creeds. No one may bind himself to something, or promise to adhere to something, without knowing that something.

Fourth (and this I wish to emphasize tonight), being creedal means that we know, love, and use them in such a way that we adopt a mentality—that it becomes our spiritual DNA—that we are consciously a part of the historic, Christian church that has been in the world

from the very beginning, the church that has been compelled to confess the truth and develop that confession as she has lived in the world for 6,000 years. We are a part of that church that has a history—a God-directed and God-preserved history. Being creedal is at the center of that mentality.

This is what it means to be Reformed!

When I teach teenagers the doctrinal catechism classes, especially the high school students and older, I emphasize to them that to be Reformed means especially three things. We are *Calvinists*; we are *Covenantal*; and we are *Confessional*. I require the young people each week to name our three major creeds, and then explain what it means to be confessional: that we hold the creeds, use them, love them, and bind ourselves to them. I especially emphasize to them the relationship the creeds have to the Bible.

The Protestant Reformed Churches are creedal churches; our seminary is a creedal seminary; and the work of PRC pastors is to exercise a creedal ministry.

Brother Guichelaar, be a confessional minister!



The PRC are confessional in every dimension of their life.

First, the churches have officially adopted, bind themselves to, use, and love the Three Forms of Unity—the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt. We have adopted the four ancient ecumenical creeds. Not to be forgotten are the Church Order of Dordt as well as all the liturgical forms: the forms for Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for Christian Discipline, for Installation/Ordination of officebearers, and for the Confirmation of Marriage Before the Church.<sup>3</sup>

Second, our seminary teaches these creeds. A denomination cannot remain confessional unless her denominational seminary is governed by the creeds, in order that the future teachers in the church learn to be creedal. So the seminary teaches two courses specially dedicated to learning the content and the history of

<sup>2</sup> "Adhere" is the graphic language of the question put to prospective members.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the fact that we print these forms in our Psalter, our official adoption of these is evident in our "Declaration of Principles," which states that we "accept" these forms as part of the PRC's doctrinal basis.



the Three Forms of Unity. In another—Liturgy—we pay attention to the liturgical forms. And for two semesters we study the 86 articles of the Protestant Reformed Church Order.

But our students soon learn that our entire *approach* in our seminary instruction is a creedal approach. Instruction in Dogmatics—the heart and core of our curriculum—is governed and controlled by the creeds. History of Dogma and Church History teach the circumstances of the confessions' formation. Catechetics equips the men to *teach* the confessions. Even the class on pastoral counseling directs these future pastors to use the confessions in their counseling.

But perhaps the best example of a comprehensive creedal approach in our instruction is what I tell the men in the introductory exegesis course. I use an illustration from computing. When a man searches the Scriptures in preparation for making a sermon, the mental and spiritual “program” he uses to perform this work is a *confessional* program. To change the figure only slightly: a large part of his RAM (his “random access memory”)—actively running in the background of his mind, always accessible, instantly available, that cannot be ignored—is the confessions. That is, the *stance* that the men must take as they come to the Scriptures is a confessional stance, so that they approach every text with a keen consciousness of the creeds to which they freely bind themselves.

Being creedal is part of the very “fabric” of this institution. Take away “being creedal” and this institution will not exist as a Reformed seminary.

It is not too strong to say that nothing is done in the life of the PRC independent of the creeds.

A little-known “creedal” document the PRC holds highlights this point. In the opening session of our annual synod, and as nearly the first item of business, the president reads a document called the “Public Declaration of Agreement with the Three Forms of Unity.” In what must always be a solemn ceremony, the newly-elected chairman asks all the delegates to arise while he reads. This short formula begins with this impressive statement: “Of all the marks by which the true church distinguishes itself from all human societies, the *confession of the truth* must be mentioned in the first place...” (emphasis mine). Then, the form has the delegates publicly declaring their *agreement with* the confessions held by the denomination, and their determination to conform all their actions to them, according to the Church Order of Dordt.

As the churches have adopted the creeds and the seminary teaches them, the pastor's calling is so to use the creeds that they become a conscious and vital part of the flock under his care.

Mr. Guichelaar, in your calling to be a confessional pastor, I call you to adopt the proper attitude towards the creeds, live and breathe that attitude in your ministry, and let your love for the Lord Jesus Christ be manifested as a love for His work in the church that *produced* the creeds. Have a creedal ministry!

... to be concluded. 

ALL AROUND US

REV. CLAY SPRONK

## The Doctrinal Impact of Evolution in the Christian Reformed Church

---

Rev. Spronk is pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

### Yesterday's Debate – Discussing Evolution

Once again with sadness we take note of a pernicious article appearing in the *Banner* (<http://www.thebanner.org/features/2013/05/tomorrow-s-theology>). This article is even worse than the articles in a previ-

ous issue of the *Banner* promoting doubt about the fundamental truths of Christian religion. This article goes beyond promoting doubt, for it promotes *rejecting* the historic Christian faith and replacing it with new teachings that are consistent with the conclusions of unbelieving scientists. The title of the article is “Tomorrow’s Theology.” The writer is Edwin Walhout, a retired pastor in the CRC.

In the first part of the article Walhout presents the godless theory of evolution as fact. And he gives the lie to the popular notion that in the CRC different views or theories about creation are to be tolerated. Toleration was touted only when those who believed in evolution were in the minority. In those days it was said, “Those who do not believe in evolution must not shut down debate. No, they must not say that only they know how to interpret the Bible’s teaching about creation. The Bible tells us only *that* God created not *how*. This means that different views must be tolerated.” The time for “tolerance” has passed. Walhout writes, “I am not going to argue whether evolution is true; I accept that the findings of modern science are reliable and must be taken as established fact.” Later he writes, “we need to take seriously in our theology the theory of evolution, now developed into *established fact*” (emphasis mine—CS). Walhout’s meaning is that the debate is over and there is no room anymore, as far as he is concerned, for those who believe God created the cosmos in six 24-hour days. And it means something that this was published in the *Banner*. The powers that be in the CRC have moved past merely attempting to make room for evolution (which was never their true intention in the first place). In his editorial in the March 2013 edition of the *Banner*, Editor Bob DeMoor protests the notion that the magazine pushes an agenda. His inclusion of Walhout’s article in the June issue, an article that promotes evolution as the only explanation for the origin and development of the world, testifies to the contrary.

Walhout does not demonstrate any of the “established facts” of evolution. This is because there are none. Walhout ignorantly accepts as “facts” some of evolutions wildest theories. One of the so-called facts Walhout accepts is the Big Bang Theory! He writes that it is “generally recognized that the universe began

with an enormous explosion—the ‘big bang.’” The *fact* is that this is only a *theory*. No scientist observed the origins of the universe, therefore no scientist can ever propose anything more than a theory about the origins of the universe. And when scientists propose their theories, they usually assume that “all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (II Pet. 3:4). But Peter says these unbelievers are “willingly ignorant” of the flood, which drastically changed the makeup of the earth, so that what scientists observe now cannot teach them about the world prior to the flood, much less about the origin of the world. Nevertheless, Walhout is ready to accept the unproven theories of unbelieving scientists about the origin of the universe rather than believe the special revelation of God.

Walhout also accepts the theory that one “kind” (on the category kind see, for example, Gen. 1:11) can and does develop into another kind which includes the theory that monkeys developed into humans. He claims that scientists “demonstrate how life appeared and how it has matured and diversified over millennia. They see this process of development producing a life called *homo sapiens*, and they trace this development from its common ancestry with other forms of life.” Walhout questions whether it can be maintained that “Adam and Eve were the first human pair” since “the human race as we know it today [shares] ancestry with other primates such as chimpanzees.”

There you have it—God did not create each kind so that each would produce after its kind; no, God created some tiny, simple substance that eventually exploded into a large mass of inanimate material;<sup>1</sup> through the process of evolution, that inanimate material evolved into a simple kind of living creature;<sup>2</sup> and that simple living creature not only produced after its own kind but over billions of years produced (evolved into) another kind of creature; and for billions of years many creatures have evolved into other kinds of creatures.

---

<sup>1</sup> Giving Walhout the benefit of the doubt, I assume he believes that God created this first particle out of nothing and does not believe matter is eternal, although he does not state this in his article.

<sup>2</sup> Scientists have never observed or demonstrated that something inanimate can evolve to become animate.

## But scientists have not “demonstrated” any of this!

That scientists observe similarities between all the creatures in the world is no surprise. The Bible explains why this is. Men and monkeys were both created or formed by God from the earth. Therefore, men and monkeys do have some similarities to each other. But why the vast difference between men and monkeys? Walhout would have us accept, with no proof whatsoever, that this difference developed over billions of years by the process of evolution. He refuses to reckon with the scientific fact that there is no proof in the world that one kind develops into another. In his book *Darwin on Trial*, Phillip Johnson demonstrated that the fossil record actually stands against the theory that one kind develops into another. In other words, even though scientists espouse many theories about how kinds develop into other kinds (monkeys into men), they have never found the “missing link” or “demonstrated” even *once* that one kind became another kind.

One can make these arguments and more. But Walhout and the CRC are not interested in debates anymore. Evolution is yesterday’s debate. For Walhout and the CRC it is time to think about tomorrow’s theology.

## Tomorrow’s Theology – Incorporating Evolution

For a long time “Christian” theologians and scientists have attempted to harmonize evolution with the Bible. Those who warned against this endeavor pointed out that if this was attempted it would not be long before things were reversed and the Bible would be made to harmonize with evolution. This is exactly what Walhout demands in the main body of his article. The main part of the article is that the church’s theologians must adapt what the church believes to the theory of evolution.

Walhout’s simple and accurate premise is that if the theory of evolution is accepted, then Christians need to modify what they believe. Modification must be made, says Walhout, to what Christians believe about creation, Adam and Eve, the fall into sin, original sin, salvation, and eschatology (the study of the end times). Does the Bible teach us the truth about these subjects?

Yes, but now what the Bible teaches must be tweaked to harmonize with the “established facts” of evolution. The church’s theologians are urged by Walhout to view scientists, many of them atheists, as having more authority to determine what the church should believe than does the Bible!

The truth of the matter is that there is little difference between Walhout and atheists. Of course, he would say that the big difference is that he believes in God while atheists such as Richard Dawkins do not. But if Walhout does not accept the biblical teaching about God’s creation of Adam and Eve, the fall into sin, the person and work of Jesus Christ, and the consummation of all things in the second coming of Jesus Christ, but on the contrary believes that the latest scientific theories ought to inform us what to believe about these subjects, then Walhout’s religion has more in common with atheism than it does with historic Christianity. Walhout has given up the heritage of Augustine, Luther, Calvin, Kuyper, Bavinck, etc. and has joined the ranks of Charles Darwin, Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, etc.

Walhout tries to compare his rejection of the cardinal truths of the Christian faith to the Reformed faith’s repudiation of the corrupt doctrines and practices of Rome. But this is a deceitful ploy on Walhout’s part. He dishonestly portrays the Reformed faith as if it is always open to “new theology.” But he knows better. He knows that the Reformers did not reject, for example, the doctrine of purgatory because it was old-fashioned and did not fit in with the advanced thinking of the sixteenth century. The Reformed faith bases all of its beliefs on Scripture. All teachings contrary to Scripture are rejected. The doctrine of purgatory was rejected because it is contrary to the teachings of Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:21, 23; and other passages. Every truly Reformed church, man, woman, and child also rejects, on the basis of Scripture, the theory that man evolved from monkeys. This theory contradicts the Bible’s teaching in Genesis 2:7 that God created man from the dust of the ground.

Walhout is not Reformed. By placing science above the Bible he has rejected the Reformed motto of *sola scriptura*. The result is devastating. Evolution is accepted. The truths of the Christian faith are changed,



and that means they are denied. That the *Banner* published this article is evidence that the CRC is now well on the road of apostasy. It is now possible in the CRC to believe and teach that God did not create Adam and Eve, man did not fall into sin, Jesus is not a Savior from sin, the church's purpose is not to spread the gospel for the salvation of sinners, etc.

Empty theological liberalism is where the theory of evolution leads. This is an urgent warning to the Presbyterian and Reformed denominations that tolerate attempts to harmonize evolution with the teachings of Scripture. If today's theology includes evolution, tomorrow the denomination will be dead. ∞

BELIEVING AND CONFESSING

REV. RODNEY KLEYN

# The King Is Coming Again

## Lord's Day 19

Question 50. Why is it added, "and sitteth at the right hand of God"?

Answer. Because Christ is ascended into heaven for this end, that He might appear as Head of His church, by whom the Father governs all things.

Question 51. What profit is this glory of Christ, our Head, unto us?

Answer. First, that by His Holy Spirit He pours out heavenly graces upon us His members; and then that by His power He defends and preserves us against all enemies.

Question 52. What comfort is it to thee that "Christ shall come again to judge the quick and the dead"?

Answer. That in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head I look for the very same person, who before offered Himself for my sake to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me, to come as judge from heaven: who shall cast all His and my enemies into everlasting condemnation, but shall translate me with all His chosen ones to Himself, into heavenly joys and glory.

**T**his Lord's Day contains two important and comforting truths for the believer. The first is that Jesus is king today; the second is that He is coming in the future as judge of all.

Contemporary teachings on the "millennium" deny these truths and rob God's people of comfort. Both pre- and post-millennialism teach, not that Christ is

King today from heaven, but that His kingdom is future and earthly. And in neither system is the future coming of Christ a comforting deliverance for believers.

This Lord's Day, even though it was written centuries before these debates on eschatology, is decidedly a-millennial in two important ways. First, it speaks of Christ's kingdom as present. Today, in His present position at God's right hand, He "governs all things." Second, it speaks of only one coming of Jesus Christ (not two as the pre-millennialists teach) as Judge to deliver

---

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

His people from a hostile world (not a “christianized culture” as post-millennialists teach).

Our comfort is that Christ rules today over all His and our enemies, and that when the time of judgment is ripe, He will come to destroy them and deliver us into heavenly joys and glory. This comfort is so necessary for us as we live in a world that becomes more and more hostile towards Bible-believing Christians.

### **Sitting at God’s Right Hand**

God does not actually have a right hand, and so this does not describe a place in heaven where Christ sits. Rather, Jesus’ “sitting at God’s right hand” is a biblical figure of speech. Already in the Old Testament this figure was used in prophecy of Christ’s exaltation (Ps. 110:1; Luke 20:42; Acts 2:33). We use this figure when we refer to someone as a “right-hand man,” that is, someone who helps you with your work, someone on whom you depend, and someone to whom you give the right to make decisions in your behalf. God has given Christ this exalted position.

Christ is “sitting” as a sign that He has finished the work He came to do on earth as our Savior. A lawyer, when he completes his argument in a courtroom, says, “I rest my case,” and sits down as a sign he is done speaking. A mother, after a busy day of work in the home, finally sits down. So Christ, “when he had by himself purged our sins” and “after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Heb. 1:3; 10:12). He sits, not to rest, but as a sign that His work of redemption is complete. He has accomplished all that is necessary for our salvation.

“God’s right hand” refers to the position of authority, power, and honor that God has given to the Mediator. After God had raised Jesus from the dead, He “set him at his own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named...and hath put all things under his feet” (Eph. 1:20-22). In this position, besides having power over all things, Christ also has all authority in heaven and on earth, that is, the right from God to rule all (Matt. 29:19). God has given Him the highest place of honor, and before Him every knee shall bow (Phil. 2:9-11). He is King of kings and Lord of lords! (I Tim. 6:15).

From this position, the exalted Christ rules over all things in the interest of His chosen people (Eph. 1:22). In His might He executes the sovereign power of God’s providence, directly controlling all the events of this world to serve His purpose in the salvation of His people (Heb. 1:3). Because of this, no weapon formed against us can prosper (Is. 54:17).

Aside from the sovereign rule of His power, Christ also rules His people by the sovereign power of His grace and Spirit. By nature we do not submit to Him, but in the day His grace comes, He makes us willing servants and equips us to fight against His and our enemies (Ps. 110:3).

The kingdom of Christ is not future, but present. Today He is exalted to the highest position, and today all kings and rulers operate under His control. We are not waiting for the day when we will become citizens and subjects in His kingdom, but we are already His willing servants. From His exalted position at God’s right hand, He has dominion over all things, and by the irresistible power of His grace He conquers sin in the hearts and lives of His people. “He must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (I Cor. 15:25).

### **Coming Again As Judge**

At the conclusion of the Bible, Jesus says, “Surely, I come quickly,” and the constant prayer of God’s people all through the ages has been, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

Jesus will come at the end of this present age, when He has finished gathering His elect by the preaching of the gospel (Matt. 24:14). The second coming of Christ is *future*—it will take place after all the signs of His return are complete; *real*—Christ Himself will bodily appear from heaven; sudden—no man will know the day or hour; and *personal*—every living human will be personally confronted by Christ.

The purpose of His coming will be the judgment of all mankind. We do not know, from the Bible, all the logistics and details of the judgment day. It will be a miracle. But we do know several important facts (see Matt. 25; II Cor. 5:10).

There will be a great white throne upon which Christ, the judge, will be seated. He will be assisted by His angels in separating the elect from the reprobate.

Every last human being will appear personally before Christ to be judged according to his works. Every secret thing will be made open and public. Everyone will be called on to give an explanation for what he has done. Every human voice will be silenced, also the mouth of God's elect. No one will be able to claim, by his works, that he deserves heaven.

The purpose of the judgment is not for God to figure out which people are good enough to go to heaven, and which ones deserve hell for all their wickedness. Rather, it will be a day when God is vindicated before all, and when His justice in punishing the reprobate, and His mercy in sparing His elect, are made plain. The judgment day will be a day in which the grace of God in the cross and suffering of Christ will be lifted high as the only explanation that some inherit eternal life.

### Comfort for Believers

For those who do not trust in Christ for their righteousness, the result of the judgment will be eternal suffering in hell. There is no comfort in the coming of Christ for unbelievers, only terror (II Cor. 5:10-11).

But for the believer there is great comfort. The Christ who comes as judge is "the very same person who before offered Himself for my sake, to the tribunal of God, and has removed all curse from me." I do not have to fear being put on trial before Him, because He already went on trial for me before God. And when the verdict was guilty, and the sentence death, He took that guilt and sentence in my place. Because it has all been paid by Him, there is no chance that He will look at you, or any one of His, and say you are guilty and hell-worthy. Jesus' blood has satisfied!


The judgment day will also be a day of vindication, not only for God, but also for His people who suffered at the hands of those who hate God. On that day all His and our enemies will be banished and destroyed forever in hell. Maybe you do not find much comfort in this, because you have not had to suffer much at the hands of your enemies. But consider this: God is holy and just, and all sin committed against Him must be punished with the suffering of hell. Jesus has already suffered the torments of hell for His people, but the reprobate must bear this themselves. Only then is God

truly vindicated. Christians who endure the hatred of the world and are martyred for their faith understand the comfort of this day of vindication.

The result of the judgment for God's people is that they will dwell in body and soul forever with the Lord. That will be the end of all suffering, sickness, loneliness, disease, and sin. And it will be the beginning of a new and eternal day, an eternal day of praise and joy in God's presence.

This is my hope, and so, "in all my sorrows and persecutions, with uplifted head," I pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

### Questions for Discussion

1. How do the errant views on the millennium rob God's people of comfort?
2. Explain the figure of speech, "Sitteth at God's right hand."
3. What comfort and benefit do we receive from knowing that Christ is exalted as King today?
4. Explain the wickedness of man, and human suffering, in light of Christ's absolute rule over all things. If He is King, then why do these increase?
5. Can we know the timing of Christ's return? How do you harmonize I Thessalonians 5:4 with Jesus' word in Matthew 24:36?
6. What will happen at the moment of Christ's return from heaven? (John 5:28-29)
7. What is the purpose of the great judgment day?
8. What does it mean that we will be judged according to our works? (II Corinthians 5:10)
9. Why will God's elect also be judged? Should this make us fearful?
10. How is the coming judgment an encouragement and comfort to you as a Christian?
11. Explain how a God of love can send people to hell? Why do so many who call themselves Christian deny hell? 



Don Stephens, *War and Grace* (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 2005). Pp. 288. \$12.47. [Reviewed by Sarah Mowery.]

“To ra, to ra, to ra!” Our six-year-old son listens intently as I read about Japanese Commander Mitsuo Fuchida signaling the launch of the attack on Pearl Harbor. As we finish the book, I tell him that Mitsuo Fuchida was converted to Christianity later in life and that the number of people who heard his testimony as a child of Jesus Christ far surpasses the number killed in the infamous air raid. I know this, not from the library book in my hand, but from reading Don Stephen’s *War and Grace*.


War stories—especially World War II stories, it seems—hold widespread appeal. Men, women, and children are drawn to the horror and heroism that characterize that tragic era. At the same time, Christian biographies are infinitely valuable to the child of God, whether old or young. *War and Grace* is both: a compilation of 13 biographies of men and women who either played key roles in the war while clinging to their faith in the Lord or those who were converted by the gospel after the war’s end.

---

Mrs. Sarah Mowery is a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, Colorado.

*War and Grace* is an easy read. Each of the 13 chapters can be consumed in a sitting. The book is carefully researched. In fact, at the end of many of the chapters, Stephens notes that some of the details he shares were gleaned from personal correspondence with the subject or his family members. Stephens, a Reformed man, focuses on 12 men and one woman of Protestant—mostly Reformed or Presbyterian—persuasion. And those about whom he writes are no nominal Christians—the fruits of true conversion are evident in their lives. Stephens does not gloss over the dreadfulness of war; neither does he exploit it. The book may leave the reader wanting to know more about the individuals covered. In that case, Stephens references sources for further reading at the end of each chapter.

The foreword of the children’s book I read to our son ends this way: “If you remember this war and its cost in human lives and suffering, you will never want another war.” I like the conclusion of Stephens’ foreword better: “In a world where fear, war and terrorism are still causing human tragedies, these stories show how the grace of God will always triumph where evil seems to reign.”

*War and Grace* tells the tale of those who remain safe in the Shepherd’s fold despite the staggering trials that they face. It tells of those astray in the mountains of World War II, and it tells of their being found of the Good Shepherd in POW camps in Japan and New Zealand, along the River Kwai, and on the scaffold at Nuremburg. Their stories show forth His praise. 


## CLASSIS EAST REPORT

May 8, 2013  
Faith Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 8, 2013 at the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. David Overway, newly returned to Classis East, was the chairman for this session.

The business of classis was routine. Classis assigned classical appointments to Faith PRC. The expenses for this session amounted to \$264.96.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 11, 2013 at the Byron Center PRC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huiskens,  
Stated Clerk 

### Congregation Activities

Reflecting on the Word of God found in Ephesians 4:4, "There is one body, and one Spirit..." we extend our congratulations to five of our congregations who celebrate their anniversaries this month. The First PRC in Holland, MI organized July 3, 1929; the Grace PRC in Standale, MI organized on July 6, 1995; the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI organized July 12, 1926; the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville organized July 18, 2001; and the Hudsonville, MI PRC organized July 26, 1926.

At a congregational meeting in mid-May, the First PRC in Holland, MI gave their approval for their Council to develop plans, contact trades for pricing, and obtain architect drawings for the "classroom wing" concept for their church building that was presented. We could also add that a large copy of these concept plans is now posted on a bulletin board at First. So if you find yourself at First this summer, have a look.

At a congregational meeting on May 7, the members of the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI gave their approval on proposals for the drawing up of plans for a church building and for site-engineering costs.

The Activities Committee of the Edgerton, MN PRC organized Discussion Groups to be held four times over the summer. Plans called for the groups to meet once a month, in June, July, August, and September.

---

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

At a congregational meeting on May 20, the congregation of the Hull, IA PRC approved the purchasing of a new organ as soon as the cost can be totally paid for out of their Organ Fund. Hull currently has about a quarter of the total in that fund, with four more collections scheduled yet this year.

Adult Sunday School began at the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI in June. This year's theme uses the 450th Anniversary of the Heidelberg Catechism. Georgetown had prepared a variety of speakers and relevant topics for each Sunday.

The Georgetown congregation recently took a collection for the *Gratia Dei Solo* Media Ministry. This organization, based in Singapore, translates our denomination's children's catechism books into foreign languages. They recently distributed 3,000 sets (seven books in one set) in China.

This summer the Men's Society of the Doon, IA PRC invited all the men of their congregation to join them for Bible Study on Monday nights. Joining them this summer is intended to be noncommittal; and the men were not expected to become members or to abandon other societies that they might attend in the winter months. The men began meeting on June 3 with a study of Isaiah, chapter 12, and a look at Belgic Confession, Articles 5 and 6.

Once again this year the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI sponsored a plant sale as a fund-raiser for their Building Fund. This latest sale took place on May 25 at their parsonage and church property. There was a good variety of perennials and bushes,

all coming from their property. This sale could possibly be Providence's last one, depending on future building plans, as noted above. Someday a church will stand where perennials now grow, D.V.

All the members of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL were welcomed to gather at Munster Centennial Park for Park Day, on the first and third Thursday of each summer month, beginning June 6.

### Denomination Activities

As many of our readers already know, the faculty of our PR Seminary recently licensed Mr. Ryan Barnhill to speak a word of edification in our churches. We add our thankfulness, along with yours, to the Lord that He has brought Mr. Barnhill to this point in his preparation for the ministry of the gospel, and we trust that the Lord will use this aspect of his training to equip him further for his life's calling.

We can add that Seminarian Barnhill was welcomed by the Providence congregation Sunday evening, June 2, when he had the opportunity to expound the Scriptures and bring the Word of God for the first time at a worship service.

### School Activities

On Friday evening, May 21, the School Board of members of the Wingham, Ontario PRC sponsored a lecture on the history of the Christian school movement from the time of the Protestant Reformation. The title of the speech was, "The Reformation's Zeal for Christian Schools." The speaker was Prof. R. Dykstra. After the lecture, there was a time for

questions and then a time of fellowship.

On Friday evening, May 3, friends of Covenant Christian School in Lynden, WA were invited to Covenant's annual Science Fair. Those present that evening were promised demonstrations centered in the "Wonders of Science." Guests saw live animals, including a beautiful corn snake. They were also able to see inside a beehive and observe the workings of some of God's most

unique creatures. They could also go inside the gym and try making some of the world's largest soap bubbles, then step outside to see rockets launched hundreds of feet into the air.

Congratulations to the students and teachers in grades K-6 at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville, MI who took part in a Walk-a-thon on April 26. The participants walked a total of 4350 laps around a nearby high school track. That's a

total of 1,088 miles, with total pledges coming to just under \$16,000.

## Minister Activities

Since our last "News," Revs. C. Spronk and G. Eriks declined calls from the Doon, IA PRC, and Rev. R. Van Overloop declined a call from the Randolph, WI PRC.

The Faith PRC in Jenison, MI extended a call to Rev. C. Spronk to serve as their next pastor. ☞

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Classis West

■ Classis West will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 4, 2013, 8:30 A.M., at the Loveland Protestant Reformed Church, Loveland, CO. All material for the agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, August 4. Delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport can contact Loveland's Clerk, Mr. Rob VanUffelen, at rvanuff@comcast.net, or call him at (970) 744-1019.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,  
Stated Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ With all gratitude and glory to God, we celebrated our parents',

**BRET and DEBRA DYKSTRA,**  
35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on May 19, 2013. We are thankful to the Lord for His covenant faithfulness. "Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.... The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life" (Psalm 127:1, Psalm 128:5). We pray God's richest blessings upon them as they continue life's walk together.

☞ Nathan and Brenda Dykstra

Kaitlyn, Emmalie, Seth, Brianna,  
Levi

☞ Jeremy and Amanda Venlet

Brendan, Jerod, Aric, Nolan,  
Liliana

☞ Bruce and Alisha Doezeema

Ryan, Nicole, Calvin

☞ Bret and Kyndra Dykstra

Hudsonville, Michigan

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Women's Bible Society of Southwest PRC expresses sympathy to Dr. and Mrs. Roderick Kreuzer in the death of Evonne's sister,

**ELEANOR MENTINK.**

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:25).

Rev. Arie denHartog, President

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Robert and Phyllis Brands, to their children and grandchildren, and to the many relatives within the Loveland congregation in the death of Phyllis' mother,

**MRS. ELIZABETH SCHWARZ.**

"And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

"We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8).

Rev. Steven Key, President  
Robert Van Uffelen, Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church express their sincere sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Cornelius Jonker in the death of Trudy's sister,

**BERNICE KINGMA.**

May they find their comfort in the words of the inspired apostle, that through our Lord Jesus Christ "death is swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:54).

Rev. Koole, President  
Tom Bodbyl, Assistant Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness and gratitude to our heavenly Father, we celebrate with our parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents,

**CORNELIUS and FRANCES  
DOEZEMA,**

their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on July 21, D.V. We are very thankful to our gracious God for their covenantal instruction and godly example. We pray the Lord will keep them, bless them, and continue to show them His covenant in the years ahead.

"One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:4).

☞ Steve and Neva Feenstra

☞ Robert and Debra Doezeema

☞ Roger and Anne Veldman

☞ Henry and Dorothy Dejong

☞ Glenn and Beth Feenstra

☞ Charles and Heidi Doezeema

☞ Tim and Joan Kaiser

52 grandchildren

21 great-grandchildren

Holland, Michigan

#### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder August and Margaret Hollema and to the David Hollema family in the death of August's father,

##### **MR. HAROLD HOLLEMA.**

"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isaiah 43:2).

Rev. Steven Key, President  
Robert Van Uffelen, Clerk

#### Wedding Anniversary

■ On July 28, 2013

##### **MR. and MRS. HERM SCHIPPER**

will celebrate 70 years of marriage, D.V. We mark this special day with hearty congratulations to them and with gratitude to our faithful, covenant-keeping God, who has preserved them in earthly marriage for these many years. May they together joy in the God of their salvation: "O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 118:1).

Faith PRC  
Jenison, Michigan

#### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 11, 2013 at the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Byron Center, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 11, 2013.

Jon J. Huisken  
Stated Clerk

## Annual Meeting

### REFORMED FREE PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION

## Rev. Brian Huizinga

featured speaker  
from Hope PRC, Redlands, CA

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

#### Notification of Candidacy

■ All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2013 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Erik Guichelaar a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Guichelaar will be eligible for a call on or after July 13, 2013.

Mr. Guichelaar's address is:

3915 Butterworth St. SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49534  
e-mail: eguichelaar@hotmail.com  
Phone: (616) 350-6655

Don Doezema,  
Stated Clerk

### *Reformed Witness Hour* July 2013

Date	Topic	Text
July 7	"Husbands, Love with Purpose"	Ephesians 5:25-27
July 14	"The Husband Is Head of His Wife"	Ephesians 5:23
July 21	"To Protect and Provide"	Ephesians 5:23
July 28	"Wives, Be Subject to Your Own Husband"	Ephesians 5:22-24