

# The Standard Bearer

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## CONTENTS

Meditation	Preparing One's Ways Before the Lord <b>REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA</b>	50
Editorial	Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore —A Painful History <b>PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA</b>	53
Things Which Must Shortly Come to Pass	Postmillennialism (2) <b>PROF. DAVID ENGELSMA</b>	56
Ministering to the Saints	The History of the Office of Elder (3) <b>REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER</b>	58
All Around Us	■ Abortion Is Murder Even in the Case of Rape ■ Church Membership Priorities <b>REV. CLAY SPRONK</b>	62 63
Strength of Youth	Thinking Long-term <b>REV. MARTIN VANDER WAL</b>	65
PR Special Ed	Annual Report to the Special Ed. Society <b>MR. JAMES VAN OVERLOOP</b>	67
Bring the Books...	Book Review <b>REV. CORY GRIESS</b>	69
Reports	Classis East Report <b>MR. JON HUISKEN</b>	71
News From Our Churches	Activities <b>MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER</b>	71

# Preparing One's Ways Before the Lord

So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

II Chronicles 27:6

Jotham was one of the kings of Judah of whom we know very little. His life and reign are recorded in II Chronicles 27 and II Kings 15:32-38. From these passages we learn that Jotham was the 11th king of Judah, the son of the godly king Uzziah. He took over the reins of government from his father when he was 25 years old and reigned for 16 years. Most importantly, he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord (II Chron 27:2).

In keeping with that, we are told that Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the Lord his God.

Do you prepare your ways before the Lord your God?

*Rev. Slopsema is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.*

Because Jotham prepared his way before the Lord, he became mighty. This means that he became established as a mighty ruler in Judah. In this he is a picture of Jesus Christ, who also has become mighty. By preparing His way before the Lord His God, Jesus Christ has become established in the everlasting kingdom of God as the King of all kings. When we who are in Jesus Christ prepare our ways before the Lord our God, we too will become mighty in the kingdom of Jesus Christ.



Jotham prepared his ways before the Lord.

A way is a road or path. Two ideas are expressed. A way speaks of a path down which one travels. A way also speaks of a certain destination to which that path leads.

In Scripture, one's way refers to the path or the course of one's life. It includes the goals one has in life as well as the way one seeks to attain these goals.

The Scripture passage speaks in the plural—of *ways*. This suggests that life is made up of many different ways

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or paths. There is the path one takes in education, in marriage, in child-rearing, in work, in entertainment, etc. In each of these there is a goal and a prescribed way to attain that goal.

What are your ways—the paths that you follow in life? You have goals that you have chosen to pursue—in marriage, in the family, in business, in education. What are they? And what course are you following to attain those goals?

Jotham prepared his ways before the Lord his God.

Notice, first, that God is viewed here as the God of the covenant. The name Lord is really Jehovah, God's covenant name. In addition, Jehovah was *Jotham's* God. This also is the language of the covenant. In the covenant that Jehovah establishes with His people, He becomes their God. As their God, He draws near to them in friendship and fellowship, to live with them and to provide for all of their needs.

In like manner Jehovah was Jotham's God. Judah was the covenant people of God and they knew Jehovah as their God. Jotham was king of this covenant people, and he also knew Jehovah as his God.

Before Jehovah his God, Jotham prepared his ways.

The word translated "prepared" has the idea of directing or ordering. Some versions translate this word "ordered." We direct or order the ways that we follow in life. This includes setting goals and also determining how we will attain these goals.

As Jotham ordered his ways, he did so before Jehovah his God. Literally we read before, or to the face of, Jehovah. This suggests that as Jotham ordered his ways he was conscious of the presence of Jehovah, his covenant God. He constantly looked into the face of Jehovah to see what pleased Him and then ordered his life accordingly. Think of a child who has an eye on his parents to see what pleases them, and acts accordingly.

Jotham did this with Jehovah by keeping his eye on the law that Jehovah had given to direct His people's life in His covenant.

Moreover, Jotham did this throughout his entire life. Jotham's father, Uzziah, faltered toward the end of his life. Taking his eyes off from the face of Jehovah, Uzziah sought to burn incense in the house of the Lord. For this he was struck with leprosy. Special mention is

made in verse 2 that Jotham did not follow in this way. He did not enter into the temple as did his father.

The question is: Do we order our ways before Jehovah our God? Jehovah is also *our* God. The covenant that God had with Israel exists also *today*. It is no longer limited to the Jews but exists with all true believers, Jew and Gentile alike. As you order your ways, where are your eyes focused? Do you order your ways with your eye on the world? on TV? on friends? It is important that we order our ways before the face of Jehovah our God, so that we follow His covenant ways throughout life. The way of His covenant is wonderfully set before us in Scripture.

*In the covenant  
that Jehovah establishes  
with His people,  
He becomes their God.  
As their God,  
He draws near to them  
in friendship and fellowship,  
to live with them  
and to provide for  
all of their needs.*



In considering how this is possible for us to do, we must understand that Jesus Christ ordered His ways before Jehovah His God.

Jehovah is the covenant God also of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus *is* Jehovah, the covenant God. Jesus is the second person of the blessed Godhead. His very name Jesus (Jehovah saves) indicates this. But we are talking about Jesus the mediator of the covenant. As mediator Jesus is the Son of God in our flesh through the virgin birth. Jehovah, the triune God, is His covenant God. In fact, Jehovah's covenant is first of all and primarily with Jesus. Jesus is *the* covenant friend of Jehovah. Jehovah lives in intimate covenant fellowship with Jesus Christ. Jesus knows Jehovah as His God. Think of the cross word of Jesus, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus ordered His ways before Jehovah His God. As Jesus ordered His ways in His short life, He looked to the face of Jehovah to determine His purpose in life and how to accomplish that purpose. Also for Jesus the face of Jehovah was to be seen in the law. God had revealed in the law what ways He had for Jesus Christ. This was not just the Decalogue but also the ceremonial law and the prophets. All the ways that Jehovah had for Jesus led to the cross, to make atonement for sin. Jesus carefully followed those ways as revealed in the Old Testament law, so that His life ended at the cross, where He gave His life as the perfect sacrifice for sin.

The possibility of our ordering our ways before the face of Jehovah our God is found in this perfect work of Jesus Christ.

This is true from two points of view.

First of all, God's covenant with us exists only because Jesus ordered His ways before Jehovah and walked the way to the cross. God's covenant with us depends on the payment for sin, which alone can bring reconciliation and peace between God and us. Jehovah sent Jesus into the world to accomplish this payment for the sake of His covenant with us. By ordering His ways accordingly, Jesus laid the foundation for, and secured, the everlasting covenant of God with His people. In Jesus Christ we know Jehovah as our God and enjoy His covenant friendship.

Secondly, to order our ways before Jehovah's face so that we actually walk in the ways of the covenant is possible only in the power of the work of Jesus Christ. Of ourselves we are powerless to do this. Due to our depravity we would always order our ways before the world. In Jesus Christ, however, we are renewed in the power of the cross so that we can and do order our ways according to God's covenant ways. This does not happen automatically but only as we cling to the cross in faith by the power of the Word and prayer.

Make sure to live out of Jesus Christ by faith with much prayer that you order your ways before the Lord.



Because Jotham ordered his ways before Jehovah, he became mighty.

The word translated "become mighty" is used in various passages with respect to various kings of Judah. It means to be confirmed or become established. It involves gaining firm control of the reins of government and even gaining power over the surrounding nations. For example, David for a time controlled only Judah but not Israel. After David became king over all Israel, he also subdued the surrounding nations that had plagued Israel for several centuries.

This was true also for Jotham. For a while he ruled under the shadow of his father. But when his father died he took effective control of the reins of government. He strengthened Judah militarily. At his father's death, the Ammonites revolted. Jotham subdued them.

This was God's blessing on Jotham for his faithfulness in ordering his ways according to the will of Jehovah. This was not a blessing Jotham earned. It was a blessing of grace received on the basis of the atonement to come. It was a blessing of the covenant that Jehovah gave Jotham.

In this, Jotham was a type of Jesus Christ, who also has become mighty. The great blessing of the covenant that Jehovah bestowed on Jesus Christ is that He exalted Jesus into heavenly glory, crowned Him with honor and glory. He strengthened the hand of Jesus so that Jesus establishes the everlasting kingdom of heaven and triumphs over all His enemies. This blessing of Jehovah upon Jesus is not of grace but of merit. It was Jehovah's great blessing on Jesus' perfect sacrifice on the cross, a sacrifice made because He ordered His ways before His God.

As we, in the power of Jesus, order our ways before the face of Jehovah our God, we too will become mighty. We will become mighty to fight against sin and Satan in this life. We will become mighty to serve Jesus Christ in His glorious kingdom. We will do that in our marriages, our homes, our churches, and our communities. And when the kingdom of Jesus Christ is complete in the day of His coming, we will be given places of honor and glory to rule with Christ in the new creation.

How amazing!

Prepare your ways before the Lord your God! 

## Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore—A Painful History

**T**his year, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (CERC) commemorated twenty-five years as a congregation. It has not been an easy twenty-five years.

One of the charter members of Covenant, and an elder from the start, Elder Leong Fai Chong (John), summarized it well. In the twenty-fifth anniversary booklet he wrote:

In fact, that she is what she is today and that she could celebrate her 25th Anniversary is a miracle indeed. Yes, it is a miracle because for a little flock to go through crisis, turmoil, pains, controversies, and changes and yet be preserved is beyond one's comprehension. For one who began this journey twenty-five years ago and has seen all the steps of her sojourn, I have only these words to say, "It is all by His Sovereign Grace."

The official history of Covenant begins with its organization as a daughter congregation of the original institute, the Evangelical Reformed Church, organized in 1982. A church was born, and quickly a denomination was formed—the Evangelical Reformed Churches of

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*Previous article in this series: October 1, 2012, p. 5.*

Singapore. It was a day of rejoicing there and here in the PRC. God had blessed the tireless work of many men (and women) and especially the preaching of missionary Pastor Arie den Hartog and Pastor Lau Chin Kwee, the minister in First ERCS. Two Reformed congregations existed in a predominately pagan land where the Reformed faith was virtually unknown but ten to fifteen years before.

My personal connection with Singapore began with my seminary training. I attended the Protestant Reformed Seminary with two Singaporeans whom I came to know and love as brothers in Christ. Graduating from seminary in 1986, I accepted the call from Doon PRC, the calling church for missionary den Hartog, and automatically became a member of the Foreign Mission Committee.

Since my Singaporean classmate would become the pastor of the new congregation, I was keenly interested in the organization of Covenant ERCS. The PRC and the ERCS had previously established a sister-church relation, and the PRC rejoiced in God's evident blessing on our sister church in faraway Singapore.

Not long thereafter, Pastor den Hartog returned to the U.S. to take a pastorate in a congregation in the

PRC. Our family had the privilege of hosting his family when they stopped in Doon. What a delightful time we had discussing and rejoicing in God's work of gathering His church from the nations, in particular, in Singapore.

A few years later, Prof. Hanko and I were sent (in Dec., 1990) as a delegation to visit the ERCS. We preached in both churches four Sundays and held meetings with the sessions.

It was my first visit to Singapore. From many points of view, it was a delightful visit. The scenery was lovely. The Christian hospitality was outstanding. I came to know many of the saints in First and Covenant personally, and experienced richly the bond of Christian love.

And yet, there was a negative side. At some of the meetings, tension surfaced concerning practices that the Reformed church had maintained for centuries, such as Psalm-singing, Heidelberg Catechism preaching, and two worship services every Lord's Day. In addition, the members and leaders in ERCS were not united on whether they ought to take positions on such doctrines as common grace, the well-meant offer, and the covenant. And there was the unsettling influence of the Liberated.

Looking back today at that history, I can understand why the ERCS was not of one mind. Some were committed to standing foursquare with the PRC on doctrine, worship, and church government. Others wanted to be Reformed in a general way, and simply ignore issues like common grace, the well-meant offer, and divorce and remarriage. They understood that taking positions akin to those of the PRC would separate them from most if not all other churches in the Reformed camp.

To understand this diverse thinking within the ERCS, recall that the ERCS was not really the fruit of Protestant Reformed mission work. The group that organized as the ERCS in 1982 had its roots in Bible studies in the early 1960s. God led these young converts through conflict and division to the doctrines of grace, until they reached the point where they requested help from the PRC—first emissaries, and in 1979, a missionary. Pastor den Hartog arrived in February of 1980; *one month later* the GLTS (Gospel, Letters, and Tracts Society) drafted a letter to the PRC, asking that Pastor den Hartog be authorized to organize them as a church. In 1981, they pointed out, “We, the GLTS, have been in existence for 18 years and it was only less than three years ago when we came into contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America” (Acts, 1981, pp. 176-7). They had received three years of intermittent instruction from emissaries and one month from the missionary when they requested organization.

The PRC agreed to grant the request, provided that the new congregation be organized on the basis of the Reformed confessions (Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordrecht), and that the newly elected officebearers be able to sign the formula of subscription. Highly significant it is, that the GLTS was not ready to organize with those provisos. Nor did they believe it necessary (confer their protests in the Acts of Synod 1981 and 1982). Nonetheless, the PRC insisted, and the saints of the GLTS acquiesced. Organization occurred, after the study of the confessions was complete, in 1982.

Five years later, Covenant was formed and the same tensions were found there at times. That contributed to some of the difficulties in her history.

Covenant ERCS has endured trials that few churches face in their first twenty-five years of existence. They have lost three pastors in their short history. The first was released through what was essentially Article 11 of the Church Order (they had not yet adopted a church order). The second pastor was taken suddenly and unexpectedly by death. And the third was released from the ministry following the Church Order Article 12. Each event took its toll on the congregation in its own way. Some of the original members have left over various issues connected with the release of ministers. Those losses are painful and can be discouraging.

Covenant also struggled many years to find a place to worship. For a couple of years, the congregation rented a school auditorium—until

the government granted them the right to use a building that was a combination home and shop. After about ten years they lost the government’s permission to use that place for worship. They were forced to rent once again—five different places over the space of ten years. They looked long and hard, but they could not find any government-approved location for worship that they could afford to purchase. Eventually they purchased the fourth floor of a warehouse/factory. They renovated it completely, and made a very suitable place for worship, complete with classrooms, a study, a library, a kitchen, and a large eating area for the entire congregation. In January of 2010 they began worshipping in their new home.

Nothing in Covenant’s history compares with the trauma of the conflict in the churches that resulted in the demise of the denomination. The relationship between First and Covenant would fracture on the issue of divorce and remarriage. After years of study, a committee of the ERCS submitted a position paper that advocated remarriage of divorced persons in limited cases. First ERCS adopted the report. This would lead to the dismantling of the ERCS, and the destruction of the sister relationship with the PRC. Covenant ERCS refused to adopt that report. Painful as it was, Covenant knew that she could not exist in a denomination with First. The denomination was dissolved.

The aftermath was traumatic. Over half of Covenant ERCS’s members departed. Some went to First. Some simply left.

But God preserves His church. Out of First came many members (some of them officebearers) who disagreed with their session, and had the courage of conviction to join Covenant. That included Pastor Lau. Then began the delicate task of rebuilding CERC, and of uniting the two groups into one congregation. God is good. He gave wisdom and courage to the officebearers. God preserved CERC.

With the many from First, and subsequent growth through evangelism, CERC has currently over 140 members. Just last month, through the hard work and personal evangelism of CERC, seven people joined the church. We pray that this continues.

CERC's commemorative booklet reflects on this history in a section headed *Growing in Appreciation for the Truth*:

Though the D&R controversy has come to a close, we must not forget the lessons the Lord has taught us through it. Through the controversy and the dissolution of the denomination, the Lord used such seemingly 'evil' circumstances to preserve His truth in CERC and awaken in us a deeper appreciation for the precious truth of His covenant. Our young people too have come to understand and appreciate better what we stood for in the controversy and are zealous to know the truth more, to proclaim it and to live it. We have become more sensitive to the threat of false doctrines and danger of compromise of the truth, and are therefore more watchful at the gates of Zion. To avoid

"history repeating itself," we should strive to understand and to develop the truths of Scripture as a church, so that we may be established in them and not be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. We are very thankful that over the past few years many PRCA ministers, including seminary professors, came over to teach and reinforce the truths of sovereign particular grace (over against common grace and the well-meant offer of the gospel) and the unconditionality of God's covenant of grace (as opposed to a conditional covenant/federal vision). We pray the Lord will grant us faithful office-bearers who are able rightly to divide the Word of God and to teach its truths to His people. We pray that members will be stirred to seek after and learn the precious truths of the Reformed heritage that is ours. May we as a church love, defend, maintain, and proclaim them for the glory of God.

On hindsight now, we humbly confess that it was by God's providence and preservation that CERC was able to maintain the distinctive truth of the unbreakable bond of marriage in the controversy. Looking back, we can only marvel and thank the Lord that He has maintained the truth of His Word in our midst.

And the booklet concludes:

As we look back on all that has happened over the past 25 years, we wholeheartedly and humbly confess that "*it is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not; great is (His) faithfulness!*" (Lam. 3:22-23), for He is the sovereign, Almighty Keeper of the vineyard

of CERC. In His infinite wisdom, the Lord has ordered all things and brought all things to pass in the past 25 years, for our good and for His glory. "*The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad!*" (Ps. 126:3)....

Looking forward, we must ask ourselves the question: *what is CERC's raison d'être (reason for existence) among the many churches in Singapore today?* How can we maintain a distinctive witness in proclaiming the truth of God's sovereign grace and unconditional covenant? We pray that the Lord will be merciful to continue to keep us faithful to Him and His truth. We are thankful too that He has raised up a second generation of covenant seed among us who are zealous for the truth of His Word. D.V., this second generation will take up their places in CERC and hold high the banner of the Reformed faith here in Singapore.

As our Chief Shepherd has led us these past 25 years, we place our firm trust in Him that He will continue to lead us in the years ahead, for His own Name's sake. From the day of our institution, till today, and always, we make this heartfelt confession: "*Our help is in the name of Jehovah who made heaven and earth.*"

Amen.

Welcome back, sister. You are smaller and more isolated than you were twenty-five years ago as part of the ERCS. You have aged a bit and matured much. But you are stronger than ever before. And your clear witness to the truth continues in your land. God be praised! ☺

## Chapter Four

## Postmillennialism (20)

# The Reformed (Amillennial) Critique of Postmillennialism (cont.)

Having noted the fundamental elements of postmillennial eschatology (doctrine of the last things), I now subject this false doctrine concerning the second coming of Christ to criticism. The criticism is that leveled by Reformed amillennialism, which doctrine I have explained earlier in this series.

I have already criticized the leading doctrinal errors of postmillennialism, centering on its conception of the Messianic kingdom as a temporal, carnal kingdom that must have an earthly victory within history.

At present, I am refuting the main biblical arguments put forward on behalf of postmillennialism by its defenders. I have considered postmillennialism's appeal to the Old Testament prophecies of the future glories of the kingdom of Christ in the world, especially Isaiah 65. Now I examine the other passages of Scripture that are fundamental to postmillennialism. Matthew 24 is certainly one of these passages.

## The Preterist Interpretation of Matthew 24

Matthew 24, as explained by the majority of contemporary postmillennialists, solves one of the biggest problems of postmillennialism. This problem is that the New Testament is filled with warning to the church that future history, like the past and the present, will

not be earthly peace, prosperity, and power for her, but abounding evil, apostasy, great tribulation, and fierce persecution, especially under the world-dominion of the Antichrist. This is the message of II Thessalonians 2:3-17; I Timothy 3; the entire book of Revelation; and many more passages. II Thessalonians 2:3 is representative of the entire New Testament. The day of Christ "shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition."

All of these passages harmonize with, and derive from, the prophecy concerning the last days, with particular reference to the church and her struggles and suffering, by Jesus Himself in Matthew 24.

If, somehow, the teaching of Jesus about the time leading up to His second coming—teaching about wars and natural calamities (vv. 6, 7); about persecution of the disciples of Jesus Christ (vv. 9, 10); about false prophets, deception, and apostasy (v. 11); about abounding lawlessness (v. 12); about great tribulation (v. 21); and about false Christs, or antichrists (vv. 23, 24)—can be made to refer to another time than that preceding the second coming of Christ and to another people than the New Testament church, then, perhaps, all the New Testament passages that contradict the postmillennial dream of earthly victory for the church in the last days can be dismissed.

Postmillennialism thinks it has found the solution to its huge problem in Matthew 24:34.

In response to Jesus' declaration that the grand temple in Jerusalem will be destroyed, which implied that Jerusalem itself would be destroyed (v. 2), the disciples asked Him, "Tell us, when shall these things be? And

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*Previous article in this series: August 2012, p. 442.*

what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?”

In answer to this question by the disciples, Jesus taught the doctrine of the last things that is the content of Matthew 24:4-31 (and of Matthew 24:32-51, as also of Matthew 25).

Jesus’ doctrine of the last things is a prophecy of earthly calamities for the entire human race—wars, famines, pestilence, and earthquakes—and, especially, of distress, struggle, and suffering for His church, right up to His second coming. Indeed, the troubles of the church will intensify immediately before His bodily coming, as verses 21-31 indicate.

In verse 34, the all-important text for postmillennialism, Jesus states that “this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” The postmillennialists explain the statement as meaning that everything foretold in Matthew 24:4-31, particularly the tribulation of the church, happened, completely and exhaustively, before and at the time of the destruction of the temple by the Roman legions in AD 70. A generation in the Bible is about forty years in duration. The time of the generation alive when Jesus spoke the words of Matthew 24 would last until about AD 70. Then the temple would be destroyed. And then “all these things” foretold in Matthew 24:4-31 would be fulfilled.

In keeping with this explanation of Matthew 24:34, the postmillennialists contend that everything foretold in verses 4-31 happened, *fully and finally*, in the time between about AD 33, when Jesus uttered the prophecy of Matthew 24 and 25, and about AD 70, when the Roman army destroyed the temple and Jerusalem.

Therefore, contend the postmillennialists, the passage simply does not apply to the rest of New Testament history. Emphatically, it is not describing the days immediately before the second coming of Jesus Christ. The passage has been fulfilled, *completely*, in the past. Because postmillennialism’s explanation of Matthew 24 locates the fulfillment of the prophecy in the past (with regard to the church that lives after AD 70), this explanation, not only of Matthew 24 but also of all the New Testament passages that predict tribulation for the church, is known as “preterism” (“preterism” derives from the Latin word meaning “past”).

This “preterist” interpretation of Matthew 24:4-34 is

of tremendous importance for postmillennialism. For one thing, it gives postmillennialism a basis for relegating all New Testament prophecies of rampaging wickedness, false doctrine, apostasy, Antichrist, and tribulation to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem—in the past, as far as the church today is concerned—and to dismiss all such prophecy as having been realized upon the Jews in AD 70.

### Re-dating Revelation

Even the book of Revelation is explained as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and to the misery mainly of the Jews at that time. This explanation of the book of Revelation, of course, requires a dating of the writing of the book prior to AD 70, contrary to the church’s recognition of the date as about AD 96, the time of John’s sharing in the persecution of the church by the Roman emperor, Domitian, long after Jerusalem was reduced to rubble and the stones of the temple had been thrown down.

Christian Reconstructionist, postmillennial commentator David Chilton writes: “The Book of Revelation is not about the Second Coming of Christ. It is about the destruction of Israel and Christ’s victory over His enemies in the establishment of the New Covenant Temple.”<sup>1</sup> Chilton set the table for this peculiar analysis of Revelation by asserting an early date of the writing of the book. “The Book of Revelation is primarily a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. This fact alone places St. John’s authorship somewhere before September of A. D. 70.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> David Chilton, *Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Ft. Worth, Texas: Dominion Press, 1987), 43.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 4. In asserting an early date for the writing of the book of Revelation, in the interests of their theology of a future “golden age” in history, the postmillennialists are refuted, not only by the internal evidence of the book itself and by the history both of the world and of the church after AD 70, but also by powerful external evidence, evidence for the dating of an old book that would be conclusive in the realm of secular scholarship. Writing in about AD 185, the church father Irenaeus, a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the apostle John, said about the book of Revelation, that John had seen the vision that is the content of the book “no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign” (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 5.30.3, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, vol. 1, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, repr. 1987, 559, 560).

## Escape from Tribulation

Publisher Gary North frankly states the practical motivation on the part of Chilton and of the other Christian Reconstructionists for their early dating of Revelation and for their applying the book to the Jews in AD 70:

If...these passages of imminent doom and gloom relate to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D., then there is no legitimate way to build a case for a Great Tribulation ahead of us. It is long behind us. Thus, the Book of Revelation cannot legitimately be used to buttress the case for eschatological pessimism.<sup>3</sup>

This statement, by a reliable witness, without a theological ax to grind, places John's vision and, therefore, the writing of Revelation in about AD 96, long after the destruction of Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Gary North, "Publisher's Preface," in *ibid.*, xx. "Pessimism" is North's and his cohorts' derogatory description of the amillennial view of the entire present age, from Pentecost to the second coming of Christ, because amillennialism does not allow for an earthly victory of Christ's church in the world. With regard to history from AD 70 to the present day, even North and his optimistic Christian Reconstructionist colleagues would be forced to admit that the amillennial viewpoint has been proved to be realistic, not pessimistic. History, including the history of Christ's church, has

So basic is the preterist interpretation of Matthew 24 to postmillennialism that the leading postmillennial theologians conclude that the "last days" of Scripture do not refer to the entire new dispensation, much less to the period shortly before the second coming of Christ, but to the time between Christ's prophecy of Matthew 24 and AD 70. The "last days" are past. 

so far been exactly as amillennialism describes the history of the world and of the church. There has not been an earthly victory of the church. To this day, the church has been a remnant (a concept foreign to Gary North)—hated, reproached, for example, as "pessimists," assaulted by heretics, troubled by false doctrine, including postmillennialism, weakened by apostates, and persecuted for her confession that Jesus is Lord. On the other hand, the past 2,000 years of history expose the postmillennial view as a fantasy. In spite of energetic efforts in Munster, in Tyler, Texas, and in other places over the centuries, the Messianic kingdom of the postmillennialists has not achieved earthly dominion. Amillennialism is not "pessimistic" regarding the future. Neither is it optimistic. It is hopeful. The future is bright with the victory of Jesus Christ and His elect church *on the day of Christ's second coming*—the *goal* of history. In the sure hope of that victory—which will include our being glorified with Christ, to reign with Him over all the new creation forever—we amillennialists labor and patiently suffer with Christ in the present age (Rom. 8:17).

MINISTERING TO THE SAINTS

REV. DOUGLAS KUIPER

The History of the Office of Elder (3)

# During the Apostolic Age

**H**aving treated the history of the office of elder during the intertestamentary period and at the time of Jesus in our last article, we now treat the history of the office during the time of the apostles.

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*Previous article in this series: May 1, 2012, p. 353.*

Our thesis is that the office of elder in the New Testament church is the continuation of the office of elder in Old Testament Israel and in the synagogues of the intertestamentary period and of Jesus' day.

This thesis is not original with me. With these words, Samuel Miller begins his treatment of the history of the office of elder in the New Testament:

In this chapter it is proposed to show, that the office in

question is mentioned in the New Testament, as existing in the apostolic church; that it was adopted from the *Synagogue*; and that it occupied, in substance, the same place in the days of the Apostles, that it now occupies in our truly primitive and scriptural Church.<sup>1</sup>

Gerard Berghoef and Lester De Koster agree: “It is this synagogue administration which becomes a model for the early Christian congregations.”<sup>2</sup> And, to cite no more, Edmund Clowney demonstrates that this is the case because “the church developed after Pentecost in close relation to the form of the synagogue.”<sup>3</sup> If the *church* developed according to that pattern, it stands to reason that the church’s *government* would also develop according to that pattern.

### No New Testament Indication of the Origin of the Office of Elder

Evidence that the office of elder developed out of that office in Old Testament Israel, as continued in the synagogues, is that the New Testament Scriptures nowhere speak of the origin of the office.

That Christ would institute the office of apostle, He told His disciples before He died (John 15:27) and after He arose (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-8). That Christ through the apostles instituted the office of deacon in the New Testament church, Acts 6:1-6 records.

But the origin of the office of elder is not recorded in the New Testament. Rather, the New Testament assumes the existence of this office, and requires it to be found in the churches.

When first we read of elders in the church after Pentecost, we read of them in the church at Jerusalem. This makes sense; Jerusalem was the mother church. So in Acts 11:18 we are told that, when God visited the church of Jerusalem with a famine, the saints in Antioch sent a gift “to the elders” of their mother church;

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Miller, *An Essay on the Warrant, Nature, and Duties of the Office of the Ruling Elder in the Presbyterian Church* (General Books [www.General-Books.net], 2009), 23.

<sup>2</sup> Gerard Berghoef and Lester DeKoster, *The Elders Handbook: A Practical Guide for Church Leaders* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian’s Library Press 1979), 224.

<sup>3</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, “A Brief for Church Governors,” *Order in the Offices: Essays Defining the Roles of Church Officers*, ed. Mark R. Brown (Duncansville, PA: Classis Presbyterian Government Resources, 1993), 50.

and Acts 15 records the first church council, in which the apostles and elders of the church at Jerusalem debated how to oppose the false teaching of the Pharisees that the Gentiles must be circumcised according to Moses’ law. But these passages speak of an office of elder that was already in existence.

As more churches were established, elders were ordained in them. Of Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey, we read: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (Acts 14:23). And part of Titus’ work in Crete was to “set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city” (Tit. 1:5).

Without speaking of the origin of the office, then, the New Testament required elders to be ordained when new churches were formed. “Accordingly,” writes Miller,

as soon as we begin to read of the Apostles organizing Churches on the New Testament plan, we find them instituting officers of precisely the same nature, and bestowing on them, for the most part, the very same titles to which they had been accustomed in the ordinary sabbatical service under the preceding economy<sup>4</sup> [that is, the synagogue form of worship, DJK].

And Cornelis VanDam, noting that Luke recorded the appointment of the twelfth apostle in Acts 1, of the deacons in Acts 7, and of the elders in Asia Minor in Acts 14, says, “nothing is said about how the elders came to their office,” and points out that this is not strange “since it would have been perfectly normal for a Jewish congregation to model itself after the synagogue and to have elders from the outset.”<sup>5</sup>

### Characteristics of the Office in the New Testament

Further evidence that the office of elder developed out of that office in Old Testament Israel, as continued in the synagogues, is that the office had the same characteristics in the New Testament as it had in the synagogues.

This means, first, that every church had elders. Acts

<sup>4</sup> Miller, *Essay*, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Cornelis VanDam, *The Elder: Today’s Ministry Rooted in All of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 102.

14:23 says that “every church” had them, and Titus 1:5, “every city.” Whereas in our day any given city could have a number of churches (not just buildings, but congregations), and even a number of churches of the same denomination, in the apostolic days any given city had but one congregation of the church.

This means, second, that every church had a plurality of elders, as Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5 again make clear. So does Philippians 1:1, in which Paul addresses his epistle “to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons” (“bishops” being another word for elder, and used here in the plural). In the five New Testament instances<sup>6</sup> in which the word “elder” is used in the singular (when referring not to elderly people, but to those who hold the office of elder), the reference is to an individual elder. But fourteen times it is found in the plural with reference to this office, each time referring to the body of elders, a plurality of men in every congregation.

Third, this means that the work of the elders was that of rule—spiritual rule of souls and bodies, on behalf of God. So the apostle Paul, speaking of the differing gifts of the various members of the body as they are manifest in the church’s offices, says, “he that ruleth, with diligence” (Rom. 12:8), and adds “governments” to the list of those whom God hath set in the church—that is, those whom God appointed to certain positions (I Cor. 12:28). The inspired apostle tells Timothy that the bishop must rule well his own house,

so that it is evident that he is able to take care of the church of God (I Tim. 3:4); he refers again to “the elders that rule well” (I Tim. 5:17); and the inspired writer to the Hebrews admonishes the Hebrew Christians to “remember” and to “obey them that have the rule over you,” reminding the saints that they “watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:7, 17). To the church at Thessa-

<sup>6</sup> I Timothy 5:1, 19; I Peter 5:1; II John 1; III John 1.

lonica Paul gives the reminder that those who are “over you” are over you “in the Lord” (I Thess. 5:12).

Fourth, this means that in the church, the elders were also authorized to carry out discipline, to the point of excommunication if need be. Jesus authorized this (Matt. 18:15-18) when He said “tell the church”—“which can in no wise be understood of all and every member of the church in particular, but very properly of those who govern the church out of which they are chosen.”<sup>7</sup>

These four characteristics of the office of elder in the New Testament were all true of the elders in the synagogues as well. Again we quote from Miller, who draws attention to these similarities between the eldership in the synagogue and in the apostolic church. Referring to Jesus’ words in Matthew 18, he says:

We can scarcely avoid the conclusion, then, that our blessed Lord meant to teach His disciples, that, as it had been in the Jewish synagogue, so it would be in the Christian Church, that the sacred community should be governed by a bench of Rulers regularly chosen and set apart for this purpose.<sup>8</sup>

*Today’s believers  
must know  
these qualifications,  
and judge the men  
in the congregation  
to be so qualified  
before voting them  
into office....*

### **The First Epistle to Timothy**

A notable development in the office of elder in the New Testament is not that its work or qualifications or basic characteristics changed, but that the Holy Spirit provided the New Testament church an inspired and divine manual regarding the office. This He did in the first epistle to Timothy.

To say this is not to ignore that the Spirit refers to the office in other Scriptures as well. He certainly does, as we have seen above. But the theme

<sup>7</sup> Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons, *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 291. The Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons that the Protestant Reformed Churches officially use is that which was adopted by the Synod of the Hague in 1586, with one notable change—but which change does not affect anything the form says about the office of elder.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, *Essay*, 31-32.

of I Timothy is the place of the special offices of elder and deacon in the New Testament church of Christ.

I Timothy 3 (as well as Titus 1) contains a comprehensive list of the qualifications for the office of elder. The church's elders must be this sort of men. Today's believers must know these qualifications, and judge the men in the congregation to be so qualified before voting them into office and approving of their ordination to office.

In a significant passage, the Spirit through Paul makes distinction between the ruling elder and the elders who labor in the Word and doctrine: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" (I Tim. 5:17). On the basis of this passage, Reformed churches have historically taught that the pastors of the church, like the apostles, were also elders—but a special kind of elder.

In that epistle the church's elders are given direction regarding governing worship (ch. 2) and overseeing the office of pastor (ch. 4). I realize that the words were written to Timothy, a pastor, but they were written to him so that he would teach the church these things.

And the church's calling toward our elders, that of honoring them in every way, is set forth in chapter 5:1, 17-19.

This epistle gives significant instruction regarding the office of pastor and deacon as well; not everything in it pertains specifically to that of elder. But this epistle is as close as we can come to having an inspired manual regarding the office of elder.

## Significance

This New Testament data regarding the office of elder is significant, first, in that it puts beyond dispute the question of whether having the office of elder in the New Testament church is necessary. The institution of a new church requires the choosing and installing of elders. If a body of believers has no elders, it cannot consider itself an instituted church.

This view is confessionally Reformed. Reformed believers confess in Article 30 of the Belgic Confession:

We believe that this true church must be governed by that spiritual policy which our Lord hath taught us in His Word, namely, that there must be ministers or pastors...; also elders and deacons, who, together with

the pastors, form the council of the church.... By these means everything will be carried on in the church with good order and decency, when faithful men are chosen according to the rule prescribed by St. Paul in his epistle to Timothy.<sup>9</sup>

Article 37 of the Church Order adopted by the Synod of Dordt says: "In every congregation there shall be a consistory consisting of ministers of the Word and elders." Article 38 speaks of the organization of a new congregation, but it does so by using the language of establishing a consistory: "It is understood that in places where the consistory is to be newly established, the same cannot take place except with the advice of the classis."<sup>10</sup>

The second significance of this data is that it makes clear that this eldership may not be reduced to one man. Many independent and congregationalist churches do this by representing the office of elder by only one man, the pastor, who is assisted by deacons. Rome does this, in making one man a bishop, with oversight over several churches; and ultimately, in making the Pope the supreme elder of the church. But Christ's will for His church is that each congregation have a body, a plurality, of elders, who are distinct from the pastor.

The third significance of this data is that it sets forth clearly God's norm and will regarding the qualifications for the office, the work of the office, and the honor of the office. The church is not left in the dark regarding this. When the church does not adhere to this norm, she is knowingly guilty; when by grace she does adhere, she shows herself striving to be faithful.

The history of the office of elder after the time of the apostles, as we shall see in upcoming articles, God willing, is one of continually departing from this norm, and then by God's grace returning to it through reformation.



<sup>9</sup> As quoted in *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*, 64-65.

<sup>10</sup> Richard R. DeRidder, *Translation of Ecclesiastical Manual including the decisions of the Netherlands Synods and other significant matters relating to the government of the churches*, by P. Biesterveld and H. H. Kuyper (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1982), 167.

## ■ Abortion Is Murder Even in the Case of Rape

Todd Akin, a U.S. Congressman from Mississippi and that state's Republican nominee for the US Senate, recently stirred up controversy about abortion in the case of rape. Below is an article by Trevin Wax that provides strong arguments for why abortion in the case of rape is immoral in an imagined "do-over" of Congressman Akin's interaction with the news media. The article is entitled *What Todd Akin Should Have Said About Abortion and Rape*.<sup>1</sup>

Abortion is front-and-center in the presidential campaign due to a congressman's flub on national TV.

In case you've missed the news, Todd Akin, a Republican congressman from Missouri running for the Senate, was asked about abortion in the case of rape. His response:

"First of all, from what I understand from doctors, that's really rare.... If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down."

Needless to say, such remarks proved offensive. Akin appeared to be making distinctions between violent rape and other forms (statutory perhaps?) as he sought to answer the question about abortion. Other Republicans are calling for him to pull out of the race while the Romney-Ryan campaign quickly tried to distance itself from the remarks.

Rape is a horrific crime with countless emotional and psychological repercussions. No one should ever speak of such an atrocity without having their heart gripped with sympathy for the victim. Any time we speak about such an unspeakable act of violation, we ought to consider the weight of our words.

Even so, as disturbing as Akin's remarks are, I am concerned about the conflation of issues that suddenly appeared in the aftermath. Once the comment went viral, Republicans all over the country began distancing themselves from the remarks (rightly so) while *also* claiming

<sup>1</sup> The article can be found at: <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevinwax/2012/08/20/what-todd-akin-should-have-said-about-abortion-and-rape/>

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to be pro-life except in the case of rape. (Romney is an example.)

The media circus moved quickly from discussion of Akin's remarks to a wider discussion about the legitimacy of abortion in a tough case. And some "pro-life" politicians took the bait, not only condemning Akin's unfortunate remarks but also declaring their support for abortion in this particular case.

Let me be clear: Allowing abortion in the case of rape is *not* the way to express sympathy toward a victim of this crime. Abortion only destroys the life of *another* victim.

That's why I wish the conversation with Akin had gone more like this...

Host: So you also believe abortion ought to be outlawed in the case of rape?

Akin: Rape is a horrible crime, and a rapist ought to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. I stand for human rights over against anyone who would violate the life of another—from the rapist to the abortionist.

Host: So you'd outlaw abortion in the case of rape?

Akin: Absolutely. As I said, I stand for human rights for *all*, including the unborn.

Host: But why should a woman who gets pregnant out of no fault of her own be forced to carry a pregnancy to term?

Akin: It is a tragic situation indeed. And my heart goes out to any woman in such circumstances. That's why I could never recommend that she abort her child. Inflicting violence upon another innocent victim, in this case the baby, is not the way to move past the tragedy of her own innocence being taken.

Host: So you'd pass laws that would force her to carry on the pregnancy?

Akin: Like I said, I stand for the rights of all human beings. Even in a difficult situation like rape, the unborn child should have human rights. We must not let circumstances dictate to us when humans have rights. Otherwise, we could justify all sorts of atrocities in the name of "difficult circumstances."

Host: But having a child as a result of rape would be a terrible reminder of the crime, wouldn't it?

Akin: That's possible. But let me ask you another question. If a woman chose to carry her child to term and then found that every time she looked at her infant she remembered the horror of the rape, would we allow her to smother the baby?

Host: Of course not!

Akin: You're right. Because no matter how difficult her

circumstances, we recognize the humanity of the infant. Unfortunately, many in our society refuse to recognize the humanity of the unborn.

Host: But your opinion on the humanity of the unborn shouldn't be forced upon a woman who doesn't hold that view.

Akin: Biology textbooks and scientists tell us the same thing we see when we look at a 4-D ultrasound: *the fetus is human*. Now, you can make the case that the unborn human should not have rights. And many do. That's why unborn girls are aborted at a much higher rate than unborn boys, not only in places like China but in the United States as well. That's why the number of children with Down Syndrome has plummeted. That's why so many abortion clinics target inner-city areas with high minority populations. You see, once we begin to discriminate against some human beings, we are on the fast track to denying human rights for others.

Host: So you stand by your conviction that abortion should be outlawed even in the case of rape?

Akin: I believe that all innocent human life should be protected. So, yes. This difficult situation is about three people: the rapist, the mother, and the baby. Currently, there is no death penalty required for the rapist. I refuse to believe we ought to give an innocent victim a sentence more severe than the perpetrator of the crime.

For the most part I agree with the arguments Wax suggests should be made in favor of banning abortion even in the case of rape. What I say below does not take away from the fact that I am in agreement with his fundamental point that abortion even in the case of rape is morally wrong. However, I do not believe that even a politician should speak of abortion as a mere "human rights" issue. In his hypothetical conversation between Akin and a TV host, Wax would have Akin say nothing about God or about abortion as the unjust snuffing out of the life God has given. Wax also avoids explicitly referring to abortion as murder, a move that is too politically correct in my judgment.

If I allow myself to indulge in thinking about what I wish a politician would say about abortion in the case of rape, I would also speak of the providence of God. Life in the womb does not come ultimately from the rapist. God gave that life. Aborting the baby in such a case is murderous rebellion against the will of God. Indeed God wills things to happen that we do not will and that are certainly difficult for us in this life. But

sin is never an appropriate response to hardship in life. A lazy husband does not justify divorce, a rebellious child does not justify abuse, a sickness does not justify suicide, and pregnancy as the result of rape does not justify murder—which is exactly what abortion is.

Finally I would add there is hope for the rape victim who is raising a child resulting from that crime. God's grace is sufficient even for such a case (II Cor. 12:9). And the Christian mother, relying on the grace of God, will say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

We could wish this was the testimony of politicians. This *must* be the testimony of the church!

### ■ Church Membership Priorities

Brian Pikkaart saw the need to join a church. That is a good start. Many "Reformed" Christians do not believe in the necessity of joining a church. When Pikkaart and his family moved to Washington DC (from another unnamed location), he was determined to join a church with his family. But which church? What should be looked for in a church? Pikkaart, writing for the *Banner*, explains how he answered these questions and encourages others to follow his example in an article entitled "Peanut Butter to Potblessings: A Guide to Finding a New Church Home."<sup>2</sup> Sadly, many Reformed people do not know what to look for in a church and are in need of a helpful guide. Unfortunately, Pikkaart's guide is not Reformed and therefore is not helpful. His advice is to do what so many are wrongly doing today—find the church that suits you.

Why did Pikkaart move his family to Washington DC? For a job. He writes, "We thought we were destined for lifelong membership in a Reformed church—that is, until a job change brought us to the suburbs of Washington, DC." This sentence is loaded. First, it expresses that a job takes priority over church membership. Second, it denies the necessity of membership in a Reformed church. Third, it approves of and

<sup>2</sup> The strange reference to "potblessings" in the title of this article stems from the Pikkaart family's visit of a church that, denying there is any such thing as luck, referred to the meal shared by the congregation after the service as a *potblessing* rather than a *potluck*. Cf. <http://www.thebanner.org/departments/2012/08/peanut-butter-to-potblessings-a-guide-to-finding-a-new-church-home> (viewed on August 30, 2012).

even encourages leaving a Reformed church for flimsy reasons—such as one’s career prospects.

Pikkaart claims that he is against “church shopping” because it “has always implied to me a lack of commitment to a local church family, or an unhealthy, ‘consumer’ approach to church attendance (‘this isn’t meeting *my* needs’).” “This isn’t meeting *my* needs” is exactly what Pikkaart said when he left his church for his job. His job and whatever it offered in terms of financial gain, career advancement, and self-fulfillment became more important to him at that point than membership in a particular church.

That Pikkaart shopped for a church that would suit his needs (or fancies) is evident from the options he listed. “Deciding we’d prefer the stability of a denominational church, we eventually visited churches representing the Baptist, Lutheran, Episcopalian and Presbyterian denominations.” What about the church’s teachings? Pikkaart says that he wanted to join a church that is “theologically sound.” But Pikkaart’s list of options demonstrates that a church’s doctrinal positions are not important to him. If Pikkaart was truly committed to Reformed doctrine he would not be able to join churches in a Baptist, Lutheran, or Episcopalian denomination. And if he was committed to Baptist doctrine he would not join a Lutheran, Episcopalian, or Presbyterian denomination.

Pikkaart’s advice comes down to this: *make visits*—until you find the church that suits you. This was basically the advice Pikkaart received from a pastor before he moved.

Before moving, one of our pastors gave us some good [sic!-CWS] advice. He recommended visiting a church for three or four consecutive weeks, arriving at different times and sitting in different locations. That way you’ll be sure to meet different people and experience multiple worship services from varying perspectives. Otherwise you could easily be greeted by the only friendly greeter in the church (or perhaps the only grumpy one), sit by the only nice family in the church (or the only rude one), or hear the pastor’s only good sermon (or only his worst one). By attending on consecutive weeks, odds are you’ll be able to make a more accurate assessment.

This pathetic pastoral advice says nothing about

the Reformed, biblical way of evaluating a church. It says nothing about Belgic Confession Article 29 and the three marks of a true church. The pastor does not insist on finding a church where the Word is truly preached, the sacraments are purely administered, and where discipline is faithfully exercised. The pastor says nothing about how these three marks are only to be found clearly displayed in a Reformed church.

This pastoral advice is evil. It is evil because it denies the sin of leaving a Reformed church for a church that does not have the three marks of a true church. It is evil because it approves of and encourages people to look to join churches that do not possess these marks. It is evil because where such pastoral advice is given it is inevitable that members of Reformed churches will leave for Baptist churches, where the sacraments are not purely administered (the sacrament of baptism is corrupted), for Episcopalian churches where discipline is not properly administered (church government is unbiblical hierarchy), or any church regardless of its doctrinal positions as long as it is in a convenient location and has friendly members.

Pikkaart followed this wicked pastoral advice. He visited and potentially could have become a member of various false churches. Finally, this advice led him from a Reformed church to an Anglican church, which lacks at least one of the marks of a true church, the proper exercise of Christian discipline, since its system of church government is hierarchical. Pikkaart gives guidance to others to follow his example. Thus, astoundingly, the CRC, by publishing this “guide” in its official magazine, also encourages others to follow his example.

Belgic Confession Articles 28 and 29 is the Reformed “guide” for choosing a church. Article 28 establishes that church membership comes before everything else. “All men are in duty bound to join and unite with” and not “withdraw” from the true church of Jesus Christ. In other words, one must not look for a church that is close to his job and home, but one must look for a job and home close to a true church. Secondly, the confession “guides” us to look for and remain committed to membership in Reformed churches where the three marks of a true church are found. Joining and staying in such a church is not a matter of suiting us, it is a matter of pleasing God. 

# Thinking Long-term

**H**ow far can you reach? How far can you stretch? Such is part of your strength of youth. So much of that reaching and stretching has to do with your physical body. In softball, how far can you reach in fielding to catch the ball? In basketball, can you reach far enough by jumping with your legs and by stretching out your arms to slam-dunk? You have competitions among yourselves, not only to see who is taller, but who can stretch the farthest. Or think of distance training. To run fast for a short length requires practice and discipline, but to endure a long race takes a very different kind of discipline. A man who does very well in a race of a hundred yards may not be able to finish a marathon, and simply cannot if he does not know how to reserve his strength.

But there is yet another way you need to stretch out. You must be able to stretch out and reach out with your mind. Can you reach out with your mind when you read? Can you embrace with your imagination the world that an author is trying to create in his book? Can you reach out to understand the theme, the plot, the significance of what you read? Can you go even further and understand the implications of what you read, for yourself personally and for the society and culture that is reflected in these books?

God's Word calls you to be long-term thinkers, to look beyond the here and the now. In fact, this calling from God's Word is but one part of the greatest calling in Scripture: Believe! Faith itself means reaching out long and far with your mind. By it you are able to reach beyond your own self, your sins, and your own sinful nature, all the way out to the righteousness of Christ, and then to bring it back to yourself, to know that you are righteous before God in Christ (Heidelberg Cat-

echism, Lord's Day 23). We see evidence of the long-term thinking of faith in Hebrews 11. In that chapter there are especially two examples of that long-term way of faith.

The first example is Abraham. He was a believer who lived his whole life in tents and confessed that he was a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth. Yes, his whole life! Why? "For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10). Because he was so certain that he would receive that heavenly inheritance upon his death, he was willing to wander on the earth as a sojourner.

The second example is Moses. He was "the son of Pharaoh's daughter." But he was able to look beyond the riches and treasures of Egypt. He was able to look beyond the possibility of being Pharaoh over all Egypt. And he forsook it all. He preferred to suffer affliction with the people of God. He chose that suffering over "enjoying the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11:25).

Other Scriptures clearly require this kind of long-term thinking. Scripture compares your life to an endurance race, and to a lifelong warfare (Heb. 12:1). You must continue to run, you must continue to strive. Scripture warns against thinking that you have arrived and that you have achieved. Scripture warns against despairing because you have not yet arrived (Heb. 12:3). The battle is not yet over, and you may not lay down your weapons until the very end of your life. You are not finished until you stand faultless before God's throne, with the crown of victory on your head (Rev. 2:10). Many are the Christian virtues that touch on that manner of your life and thought: patience, endurance, steadfastness, hope. All these require the ability to understand and appreciate a far-distant goal.

Long-term thinking means that you must consciously and deliberately stand apart from the thinking of the world. The world's thinking is all shortsighted and

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short-minded. The world works very hard to ignore thoughts of eternity, what lies beyond death and the grave. They refuse to acknowledge the wrath of God that they encounter in this world, especially as that wrath warns them of the wrath that is yet to come. The world's thinking is hopelessly bound up in this present evil age.

That short-term way of thinking you see in finances and the economy. More and more people go into debt, not for necessities, but because of their desire for material things. You can have everything now, and pay for it later. Government even encourages this kind of thinking and this kind of spending, to keep the economy churning along. But it does not look far enough ahead to see that such thinking will lead to ruin for the whole country, even for those who do not spend themselves into debt.

Those ways of the world must not be your ways. But even more, the thinking behind those ways must not be your thinking. Think long-term. For such long-term thinking there is only one guide, because nothing else and no one else can take you that far. That guide is the Word of God. Let that Word take your mind, and especially your heart, to the kingdom of God and the hope of glory. Meditate on its truths of the life to come and its promises to you of that glorious and blessed end! Let that Word teach you long-term thinking!



But how do you think long-term? How can you change your thinking, to make it more long-term? We can begin with small matters and work our way forward, stretching farther and farther.

We begin with matters of worship, especially listening to sermons. Think also of your devotions. How much Scripture are you able to read before you are interrupted with your own thoughts? How much time can you spend in prayer before you find yourself out of God's presence and back among your own thoughts, sometimes very far from God? How is your concentration? How is your focus? When listening to a sermon, can you follow a longer sentence from beginning to end? Or are you distracted by your own thinking before the sentence is finished? Can you take in an entire sermon, to understand the whole message?

There are two ways to help you pay better attention and keep your focus. First, turn down the volume of your own mind and clear your mind of your own thoughts. Second, concentrate. Pull your mind together. Give it one direction. Keep that direction toward one object. Make this more and more the habit of your mind and your heart. Developing long-term thinking requires practice, just as much as honing some physical skill that you have.



Then, too, you can think of what the Lord requires of you as young people. In many ways you must wait, and exercise patience while you wait. Are you waiting to be married? Wait until marriage to enjoy its physical intimacy! Are you waiting to drink alcohol until you are legally allowed? Do not drink before then. Do not listen to the world, or even to your friends when they urge you to do something just because you can. Do not give in to those urges inside that seem so strong you think yourself compelled and driven. No. Wait! Long-term thinking knows the benefits of waiting, and wisdom is strong to wait.

To go still further, even while you are young develop long-term goals under the Lord's guidance. Make plans. Think about what you might enjoy doing for a career and how you might best use the gifts the Lord has given you to serve Him your whole life. Look ahead to that time, and plan for it. What kind of education will you need? What kind of gifts and abilities should you strengthen and develop for it? What resources will you need to have for this kind of work? As you think about these things, you need to think long-term. What kind of a career will allow you to be free of the compromise of union membership? What kind of work will not make necessary working on the Lord's Day? Will you be able to get such work that will make it possible for you to support the cause of the kingdom of God, take care of your family, and pay for Christian school tuition? How important it is to keep those requirements in mind!

As you think, long-term, about these things, you come to know more and more your need of the Lord's guidance and His gifts to you. In prayer to God, seek that growth, development, and education from Him

and His heavenly throne of grace. When by the grace of God you seek those things from Him, you will find that He hears you and answers your prayers, by equipping you for a lifetime of faithful service. Your greatest

desire, then, will be to hear Him say to you at the end of your race, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" This is long-term thinking! 

PR SPECIAL ED

MR. JAMES VAN OVERLOOP

## Annual Report to the Society for Protestant Reformed Special Education 5/28/12

**T**he Board welcomes all members present as well as those of you who are viewing through the webcast. This is our first time attempting a webcast, and we look forward to your feedback. It is our desire that interested parties in all areas of the country may benefit from this annual meeting.

We are thankful to all of our patrons whose support is shown by your attendance here and by your financial support of the Special Education Association. More importantly, we are thankful for the prayers to our heavenly Father, who has in His infinite wisdom graciously given us many children, each with his God-given abilities, children whom we are privileged to educate to the best of our ability. It is of great value to all of us to be able to have our special needs children participate in the communion of the saints in our schools. The experience in the regular classrooms is important for all students, and sometimes more so for our able-bodied students. God has given many different abilities. There are many parts of the body, and each part is needed to make the body function properly.

The programs that the Special Education Board supports are not run in a vacuum. The Board thanks all of the school boards, education committees, administrators, teachers, regular classroom teachers, aides, and volunteers, who make this important work happen. The amount of time that is given by these individuals, whether paid or volunteered, is awe-inspiring. Without

all this help, the task would be much greater and the effort would be much less productive.

The list of schools that we assist financially continues to grow. Currently Special Education supports programs at Adams, Covenant Christian High, Eastside, Hope, Doon, and Loveland, as well as fully supporting the Special Education Program located at Heritage Christian School in Hudsonville.

In the past few years the Board has tried to clear up the misconception of some that Special Education is a program belonging to Heritage. It is not. It is true that we as a Society have a room of our own at Heritage Christian, making that school our location of operation, and we as a Society pay for the teachers and aides. But we continue also to assist the Resource Rooms at the above-mentioned schools with 20% of their expenses. Doon and Loveland each have their own special education programs, which are funded by us at a higher level of 50%. With the future expansion of the Special Education Association into Covenant Christian with a dedicated room, perhaps this misconception will finally go away.

The Board receives regular reports from the various resource rooms to give us knowledge of what they deal with and how many students are receiving services. Sometimes a challenge they are facing has been dealt with at another school. For the students who attend some of the regular classrooms, communication between the teachers and faculty of the various programs is very important. The goal is to communicate and share experience for the good of the students. We want to promote communication amongst the various teachers to share and learn from each other. As a Board

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*Mr. VanOverloop is secretary of the Special Ed Board and a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan.*

we also strive to visit the Resource Rooms in the local schools. We go to gain knowledge of what they are doing and to offer encouragement for their work.

We use the opportunity of this report to give a special thank-you to our staff: Karen Ensink, Deb Hoeksema, Nikki Schipper, Shelly Start, Amy Westing, and Mary Van Overloop, who is the administrator of the Discovery Program at Heritage.

The Special Education program supports four students full time in our grade school: Will Hanko, who is in 3rd grade; Kara Kaptein, who participates in 7th grade; Jason Overweg, who is in 5th grade; and Travis Peterson, who also is in 5th grade. We are looking forward to having Isabella Potjer coming to our program next year for a couple days a week. All of the students are integrated into the regular classrooms, so that the student body can be educated and aware of how to interact with these wonderful children.

Last year's financial report mentioned that our drive was about \$35,000 short of its goal. We conducted a second drive and the result was that receipts were more than our shortage. This year's drive fell short by \$44,500 and we are currently conducting a second drive to fulfill our obligations. Through April, we have received \$25,500 from the Spring Drive. Please be mindful of this shortage of \$19,000. As a Board we covet your support, in prayers, in participation, and financially.

In this past year both Iowa schools, Doon and Hull, have contacted us, seeking assistance. Doon has begun a special education program with up to three special education students coming up, one from Doon, possibly one from Sioux Falls, and possibly one from Hull. Hull has a resource room to serve the students and families of their society. We are striving to help them and have committed roughly \$20,000 in total to the two schools. We also have offered them the knowledge and experience of our staff, so they don't have to reinvent the wheel.

The school in Dyer, IN, formerly South Holland, has also been in contact with us. To date, they have not made a request for financial assistance or other support. We do encourage them and anticipate that in the future there may be an additional opportunity for the Society to assist.

As a Board we encourage all the schools to make their

constituents aware of the need to support Special Education through our drives and church collections. In August of 1983, almost 29 years ago, this effort began, with those efforts culminating in the formation of a Special Education Society on April 20, 1984. God has kept us faithful in the work He has given us, to instruct the covenant children with special needs. 2012 marks another beginning. Beginning this fall, the Society will start a secondary education program, as students will begin attending Covenant Christian High School in the Special Ed. Room that was constructed in their recent addition. As a Board we thank Covenant Society for including this room in their addition. We are also thankful that the Resource Room is being relocated to a larger room in the existing facility. The Special Ed. Board has formed many sub-committees to prepare for this transition. Committees are made up of Special Education Teachers, Resource Room teachers, Spec. Ed. Board members, Covenant Board members, and parents.

I would like to make special mention of an annual event here at Heritage and encourage our other schools to consider their own similar event. Heritage had "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Day" again this year. Each classroom has a presentation, each on a particular disability. This day again was a wonderful success. Prof. Dykstra led the school chapel on that special day. We thank all who were involved in organizing this event. The feedback from the students is that this is a very valuable experience for them.

With regard to the work of the Board, we report that the financial books were audited and found to be in good order. Our Publicity Committee has been assigned the task of making short reports for the church newsletters to keep all informed of what is happening, what events are coming up. You should be seeing these regularly now.

We thank the retiring Board members, Eugene Kamps and Deane Wassink. The Board is made up of seven members. Those still serving are Tim Block and Justin Koole with two years left; Jordan Vander Kolk and I have one year left. Our President, Andy Peterson, was appointed at last year's meeting as the Parent Representative. He has two years of service left.

We thank God for His grace and His work in our hearts to make us as a board and as a society faithful. 

*What is the Mission of the Church? Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*, by Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert. Wheaton, Crossway, 2011. 288 pages. Softcover. ISBN 978-1-4335-2690-9. [Reviewed by Rev. Cory Griess.]

“Be missional,” “transform culture,” “build the kingdom,” “be incarnational,” “be Jesus to the world,” “ensure social justice,” “be kingdom agents,” “seek the Shalom of the city.” If you have heard any of these buzzwords you have come into contact with the modern view of the mission of the church in the world. Kevin DeYoung and Greg Gilbert have written a book to examine carefully those buzzwords and the mentality behind them, and to set forth a biblical view of the mission of the church.

The word “mission,” though not a biblical word, is a fine word to use to speak of the calling of the church in the world. As the authors of the book define the word, it simply answers the question, “What is the specific task or purpose that the church is sent into the world to accomplish?” (20). DeYoung and Gilbert believe that the modern church has a skewed answer to that question, and they aim to bring a corrective balance to the church’s view of what she ought to be doing in the world.

The book is aimed at the transformationalist worldview that has its origins in the neo-calvinism of Abraham Kuyper and his spiritual children, and that has thoroughly infiltrated Christian colleges and the missiology of the church world today. Recently, there has been some kickback against this worldview, and DeYoung and Gilbert’s book represents an aspect of that opposition.

In my judgment the authors are successful in accomplishing their purpose with the book. This book is a beacon in the night. Written at a popular level, but not skimping on exegesis or theology, the book carefully and correctly wades through the mess that is modern mission theory, and calls the church back to the mission Christ gave her before His ascension.

DeYoung and Gilbert define the mission of the church as the calling “to go into the world and make disciples by declaring the gospel of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit and gathering these disciples into churches, that they might worship the Lord and obey His commands now and into eternity to the glory of God the Father”

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*Rev. Griess is pastor of the Calvary Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.*

(62). This proposition they derive from Scripture. Indeed, one of the main strengths of the book is that it is thoroughly biblical. There are ten chapters in the book, and three of them are straight exposition of Scripture—and not dry, but lively exposition at that. Out of their thorough and Calvinistic exegesis, the authors carefully define the buzzwords that are commonly misunderstood today: shalom, justice, kingdom, etc. Doing so, they correct the misunderstandings (whether ignorant or willful) in the church world today.

Chapter three of the book takes a sweeping view of the whole of Scripture along the lines of the common fourfold division: creation, fall, redemption, consummation. The authors conclude on the basis of the broad storyline of the Bible,

The whole story is not, as one author suggests, about us becoming “conduits for him to bring healing to earth and its residents.” It’s not about our call “to partner in a restorative work so that the torch of hope is carried until Christ returns.” The story is not about us working with God to make the world right again. It’s about God’s work to make us right so we can live with him again (89).

Not willing to fall to the emotional appeal of the notion that we are the kingdom builders, the book emphasizes the scriptural truth that God builds His kingdom, and we are witnesses of that work, heralds of that work, testifiers to that work.

The book includes refreshing work on passages of the Bible that promoters of the transformationalist view use to give content to their buzzwords. Writing on Jeremiah 29:7, where the Israelites are called to seek the peace (*shalom*) of Babylon, the authors state,

They were not to seek Babylon’s shalom because they were to be building for the kingdom there, but for their own well-being. “In its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jer. 29:7). The Israelite exiles were not seeking any long term shalom of the city, much less the ultimate, eternal kind. In fact, their ultimate hope for Babylon was that it would be not at all peaceful, but completely destroyed (Jer. 50:2, 29).... It’s simply impossible to maintain the meaning of Jeremiah 29:7...that so many modern authors want to give it: that it is an Old Testament statement of the mission of the people of God, namely, that we are to be working toward the eternal blessedness of the cities in which we live by engaging with their social structures (202).

In one of two chapters on “making sense of social jus-

tice," the writers remind the church that "the least of these" in Matthew 25 we are called to aid are Christian brothers and sisters in the church (162). They rightly point out that of course we help anyone and everyone we can when we have opportunity, but the judgment that accords with works in Matthew 25 will be in accordance with works done for love of the brethren in particular. In that same section of the book, commenting on the Old Testament passages that speak of doing justice, especially Micah 6:8, the writers say,

As we've seen time after time in these 'social justice' passages, *the classic form of injustice is siding with the rich against the poor because the former will pay you for it and the latter cannot do anything to stop you* (emphasis theirs)... Doing justice is not the same as redistribution...it implies fairness, decency, and honesty (161).

A wonderful chapter is chapter five on the kingdom of God. The writers affirm that "the New Testament uses the phrase 'kingdom of God' to refer to God's reign specifically over his redeemed people." They explain that God's kingdom is not defined by geographical territory, but refers to Christ's rule or reign over His elect. The calling then is to proclaim the kingdom, and to live as citizens of the kingdom. They draw the conclusion that a proper definition of kingdom "keeps us from thinking that extending the kingdom of God is the right way to describe planting trees or delivering hot meals to the homeless" (120-121). They rightly say that planting trees is a good thing, and delivering meals to the homeless is a good thing, but they are not in themselves the work of building the kingdom.

Another benefit of the book is that it is balanced. The writers are concerned to define concepts correctly and then put them in their right place relative to the mission Christ gave to the church. Their goal is to have priorities straight, to make sure that the calling to spread the gospel and make disciples stays priority number one.

They are also careful not to fall into a ditch of their own in order to prevent people from going into the ditch they write against. Instead of transforming culture, they offer a replacement phrase to describe the Christian's involvement in all spheres of life: "faithful presence." Instead of kingdom building they offer the more biblical notion of "living as citizens of the kingdom" in all of life. Instead of social justice, they call us back to the biblical notion of "loving the neighbor" (p. 21). They speak of the *effects* of the kingdom of God in the world, and laud those effects where God in His sovereignty chooses to

redeem enough people to allow for those effects to exist. They carefully define the difference between the church institute and the church as organism, calling the members of the church to be active in serving others in their lives as God calls us to do, but reminding us that not everything individual Christians are called to do is also the calling of the church institute (232).

They are careful not to promote a mentality in the church that is self-centered and void of motivation for good works. I quote an extensive portion of the book:

We are of the strong opinion that the Bible teaches that we Christians are to be a people of both declaration and demonstration. God has redeemed us from all lawlessness and made us a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. Our hope in this book, in fact, has not been in any way to discourage good works, but rather to encourage them in the long run by being crystal clear about where and how good works fit into Christian theology and into the Christian life. So why do we do good? If "building the kingdom," "proclaiming the gospel without words," and "joining God in his work of making all things new," are not correct motivations for good works, what are? (223-224).

They go on to answer: obedience to God whom we love, love for our neighbors, to show the world God's character and work, they are the fruit of the Spirit in us, and to win a hearing for the gospel, if God so wills (224-229).

The only substantial criticism I have is not of what is said, but of what is left out. There is little to no mention of the covenant in the book. It seems to me, any book hoping to deal with such a broad category as the mission of the church ought to connect that to the only category that is broader, the doctrine of the covenant. The church's mission is as the authors describe, but it is so as part of God's work to establish His covenant. One book cannot do it all, I understand, but recognition at least of the importance of the covenant would have been appreciated.<sup>1</sup>

The book is written in a winsome style characteristic of DeYoung's material. I most urgently recommend the book for evangelism committees, young adults in Christian colleges, and parents of young adults in Christian colleges. But the book is much needed, good, clear thinking for all the church, every member of which ought to be concerned with what the body of Christ is supposed to be doing in the world in these last days.

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert is a Calvinistic Baptist, but DeYoung is Reformed.

September 12, 2012

Grace Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 2012 at the Grace PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. K. Koole was the chairman for this session.

The business of classis was routine. The delegates were on their way home by 10 A.M. Classis approved classical appointments for Faith PRC for the evening services and special services between October, 2012 and January, 2013. Rev. H. Bleyenbergh was elected to serve a one-year term on the Classi-

cal Committee, replacing Rev. A. Lanning who will be leaving to take up his work as minister-on-loan in Singapore.

Classis had no expenses for this session, an event ascribed by the committee to the fiscal diligence of its chairman, Rev. C. Haak.

The chairman expressed special words of encouragement to Rev. A. Lanning, who will soon be serving as minister-on-loan in Singapore.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 9, 2013 at the First PRC, Grand Rapids.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

### Mission Activities

We thank our missionaries to the Philippines, Revs. D. Kleyn and R. Smit, for providing the readers of the *Standard Bearer* with the following update.

“One of the goals in the mission work our churches are doing in the Philippines is to establish a denomination of churches, according to God’s wise will and timing. In anticipation of this, the consistories of the Berean PRC in Manila and the First Reformed Church in Bulacan are already working together toward this goal. On August 22 these two consistories had a combined meeting in order to identify any areas of concern or differences that needed further discussion and resolution in preparation for a future federation, the Lord willing. Rev. Kleyn was appointed by the consistories as chairman of the combined meetings and Rev. Smit was appointed clerk. As a result of the thorough discussions of the approximately four-hour meeting, the consistories identified only two significant matters of practice in which the churches have differed, namely Article 67 of our Church Order and the validity of the baptisms of the Roman Catholic Church and other such churches.

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

In addition, the consistories identified other concerns in which there seems to be full agreement, but more work has to be done, namely, faithful Bible translations, a complete Psalter/Psalm song book translation in Tagalog, an official and accurate Tagalog translation of our Reformed creeds, plus the work of preparing to do other works together as a denomination. The agenda for the next meeting will be to begin a treatment of the issue of Article 67. Please pray for the consistories that they may receive wisdom and strength as well as a continued spirit of brotherly cooperation and love in this work of our seeking to express together the unity of the church of Jesus Christ.”

### Minister-on-loan Activities

Rev. A. Lanning has received the necessary Singaporean government approvals to move his family to Singapore. Rev. Lanning preached his farewell as pastor in Faith PRC on September 30. Installation in our Grandville, MI PRC took place in a special service on October 4, with the move to Singapore planned for the week of November 5. Pastor Lanning will then take up his work as minister-on-loan to our sister church, Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, the first week of December. He and Stephanie and their family covet our prayers as they continue to make preparations for this move.

### Young People’s Activities

We at the “News” are always on the lookout for young people’s fundraisers a little out of the ordinary. Something just a little different. Well, we think we found one. The Young People of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL were selling wontons as a fundraiser for the YP Convention of 2013. For our Dutch readers, Webster’s New World Collegiate Dictionary defines a wonton as a type of Chinese dumpling commonly served in soup or deep fried. Bethel’s wontons were filled with minced pork and green onions.

The Young People’s Society of Grace PRC in Standale, MI served their 3rd annual Labor Day Pancake Breakfast on September 3 at Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI. As noted above, the menu consisted of pancakes, in addition to sausage, scrambled eggs, and muffins. Donations went towards the 2013 YP Convention.

### Young Adult Activities

The Monday Night Bible Class, led most of the year by Prof. R. Dykstra, began September 10 at the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. The first two meetings (Sept. 10 and 17) featured presentations by Nathan Lanning and Brendan Looyenga, dealing with the error of evolutionism. These men addressed how a Christian can and ought to defend the biblical

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doctrine of creation over against it. After those two sessions the class returned to their discussion of Ecclesiastes.

The Young Adult Society of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada hosted a dessert evening for September 21 at their church. This was another in a list of fundraisers that these young adults are sponsoring in anticipation of their plans to host a Young Adults Retreat on July 29-31, 2013, D.V.

### Denomination Activities

The Hope Heralds Men's Chorus presented their annual concert at First Jenison CRC on Sunday evening, September 8. Members of the west Michigan churches were invited to attend as this chorus of over 60 men sang praises to our heavenly Father. We struggle to find words that would adequately describe the evening. Thankfully the Hope Heralds recorded the concert for their 2012 CD, so you will have an opportu-

nity to enjoy it for yourselves later, if you wish. We can also add that the concert was given on Tuesday, September 11, at the Kalamazoo, MI PRC.

### Congregation Activities

The congregation of the Hudsonville, MI PRC was invited to spend Saturday, September 8, participating in Hudsonville's 3rd annual Church Bike Ride. Plans called for the bike riders to bike from Holland State Park on the shore of Lake Michigan, to Tunnel Park, about 2.5 miles north. Refreshments were provided at Tunnel Park, and the younger riders could climb the dunes if they had some energy left. The return trip brought the group back to Holland State Park, where they enjoyed fellowship and brats and hot dogs.

### Minister Activities

Candidate Vernon Ibe accepted the call from the Berean PRC in Manila, the Philippines, to become their pastor. His examination has been scheduled to take place on November 1, with his ordination set for November 2, the Lord willing. Rev. D. Overway and Mr. Ike Uittenbogaard are scheduled to attend as representatives of the Doon, IA PRC and the Foreign Mission Committee.

Rev. R. Kleyn declined the call extended to him to serve as pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. Hope subsequently extended a call to Rev. W. Bruinsma, PRCA-missionary in Pittsburgh, PA.

And after Rev. G. Eriks declined the call he was considering, to serve as the next pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC, Randolph extended a call to Rev. J. Marcus, currently serving as pastor of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada.



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Notice

■ A digital index of the *Standard Bearer* is now available for Volumes I – 88. Go to [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org) to order.

### Reformed Witness Hour November 2012

Date	Topic	Text
November 4	"Endeavoring to Keep the Unity"	Ephesians 4:1-3
November 11	"The Gift of Pastors and Teachers"	Ephesians 4:11, 12
November 18	"Every Creature Received with Thanks?"	I Timothy 4:4, 5
November 25	"Proper Behavior in the Church"	Ephesians 4:31, 32

### Wedding Anniversary

■ On November 7, 2012,

**MARTIN and CLARA (TerHorst) HOEKSTRA**, will celebrate 60 years of marriage. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for the many years He has given us.

Our wedding ceremony was based on Psalm 127:1: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it."

❖ Danis and Gloria Hoekstra  
Brian, Michael, Cindy, Julie

❖ Glen and Sheri Hoekstra  
Lisa, Steven, Laura

❖ Loren Hoekstra

❖ Cheryl and Stan Fynaardt  
Daniel, Stephanie, Shannon

13 great grandchildren (twin great grandsons in glory)  
Sheldon, Iowa