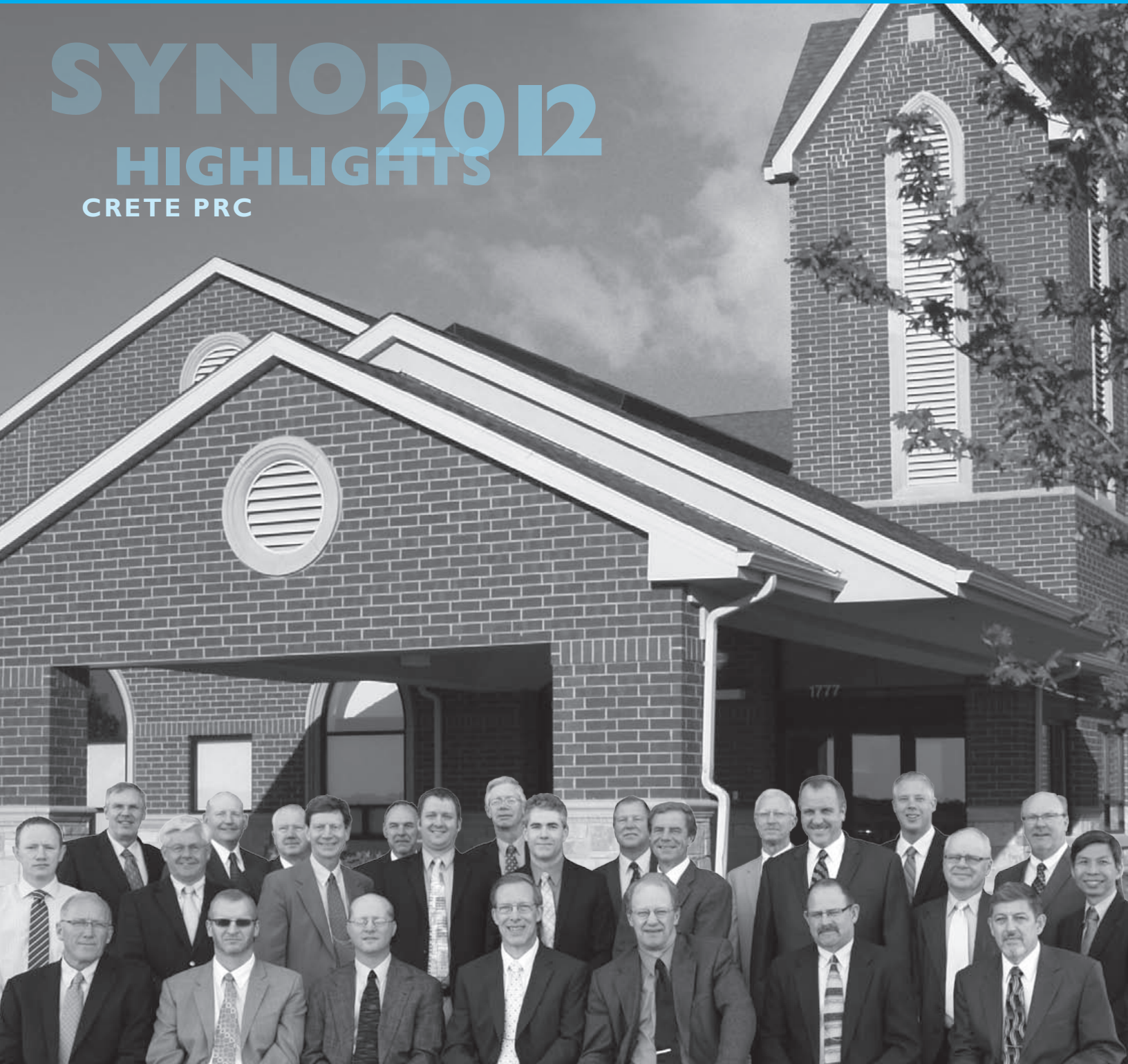


The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • July 2012

SYNOD
2012
HIGHLIGHTS
CRETE PRC



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Cover picture of Delegates to Synod 2012

Back: Rev. Slopsema, George DeJong, Steve Feenstra, Howard Pastoor, Bert Worries, Keith Bruinsma, Leon Uittenbogaard, Rev. Lanning, John VanBaren
Middle: Deacon Philip Hall, Rev. VanOverloop, Pete VanDerSchaaf, Rev. Spronk, Rev. Laning, Dave Rau, Nick Kleyn, Rev. Haak, Deacon Felix Chan
Front: Prof. Gritters, Rev. R. Kleyn, Rev. Kuiper, Rev. Key, Rev. Koole, Prof. Cammenga, Prof. Dykstra.

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Abounding in the Work of the Lord

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

I Corinthians 15:58

Thanks be to God! In the previous verse the apostle Paul gives thanks to God for the victory we have in our Lord Jesus Christ. This victory is the victory over death by the resurrection of the body. This victory over death is part of a larger victory for the kingdom of Christ over all the powers of darkness, including sin itself. Because we are citizens of the kingdom of Christ, this victory is our victory.

Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our text draws a conclusion from all this. Having such great victory, be steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. And know this, your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

It is appropriate to consider this passage as synod takes up its work. The work of synod is truly the work of the Lord. In that work synod must abound, laboring with the assurance that its work is not in vain in the Lord.



The work of the Lord!

This is the work that Jesus does as Lord.

On the basis of Christ's perfect work of atonement on the cross, God has exalted Him to the right hand of power to be Lord over all. As Lord, Jesus establishes

His kingdom, commonly known as the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom is really the church, over which Christ rules. Scripture views the church universal as a great spiritual nation (I Pet. 2:9). Over this great nation of the church Christ rules as Lord and King. This makes the church His kingdom.

The power of this kingdom is the Word of God, which is the gospel of Christ crucified. By the power of this Word Christ brings the elect church to a new life, so that they are translated into His kingdom as citizens. By the power of the Word He also rules them, so that they willingly submit to Him and serve Him as their king. By the power of the Word the citizens enjoy all the blessings of the cross.

The work of the Lord is this work of Jesus to establish His kingdom by the power of the Word.

Earlier in this chapter mention is made of the work of the Lord one day to deliver up the kingdom to God the Father (vv. 24-26). Although the kingdom was established by Christ at His exaltation, it is not yet complete. The redeemed of Christ have not all been gathered into the kingdom by the power of the Word. The powers of darkness that oppose the kingdom still operate and threaten the kingdom. The last enemy of the kingdom, which is death, has not yet been overcome. But there is coming a day when the work of our Lord will result in the completion of the kingdom. All the redeemed will be brought into the kingdom by the power of the Word. Christ will put down all the enemies of the kingdom. And the last enemy, death, will be overcome by the resurrection of the body. This will bring an end to this present age, and the Lord Jesus Christ will deliver up the kingdom to the Father.

Amazingly, this great work of the Lord is also our work. It is our work in that the Lord will use us to accomplish His great work.

Christ has called the church to proclaim His word as it is fully revealed in Scripture. The church must pro-

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

This is the abbreviated text of the pre-synodical sermon that Rev. Slopsema, as President of Synod 2011, preached on June 11, 2012 in the Crete (IL) Protestant Reformed Church.

claim the Word to her members as well as to the entire world (Mark 16:15). The church fulfills this calling primarily through the preaching of the gospel by the ministers of the Word that Christ gives her. But there is a calling that comes to each member of the church. Each member is called to know the Word of God and then bring that Word to others—parents to children, saints to each other in the fellowship of the church, and all of us as we have opportunity to witness to those outside the household of faith. And Christ calls us to many other works that support the gospel, for example, providing financial support for the gospel ministry, serving in a special office of the church, providing the poor with alms....

As we busy ourselves in these works, we are doing the work of the Lord. It is the work of the Lord in that the Lord calls us to these works. It is the Lord's work also in that the Lord will use this work to accomplish His work of perfecting His kingdom.

In keeping with this, the work of synod deals primarily with the preaching of the Word. The agenda is dominated by missions and the theological school, all of which directly involve the preaching of the Word. But it also includes items of catechetical instruction, and contact with other churches in order to help one another preach the Word. As synod busies itself with these matters, it is busy in the work of the Lord.

We are called to abound in this work of the Lord.

This means that we are to excel above and beyond what is ordinarily expected. In verse 10 Paul, using the same word, indicated that by the grace of God he labored in the gospel more abundantly. In preaching, in self denial, in facing perils for the gospel's sake, he abounded more than all the other apostles.

As churches we are to abound in the work of the Lord in the same way, so that we exert ourselves above measure to preach and bring the Word. Our ministers must exert themselves to labor above and beyond what is ordinarily expected of a laborer. As churches we must also exert ourselves above measure to bring the Word on the mission field, maintain an orthodox seminary for the training of ministers, and support the gospel ministry financially and in prayer.

And this abounding in the work of the Lord must also reflect itself in our work as synod, so that all our

decisions are designed to promote the preaching of the Word of God.



Steadfast and unmovable!

To abound in the work of the Lord requires that we remain steadfast and unmovable.

Steadfast carries the idea of standing firm upon a certain and definite place, on a firm foundation. Unmovable adds to that idea. It suggests certain forces that would move you away from the place or foundation on which you stand. It speaks of one withstanding these forces so that one remains standing firm on the place or foundation he has chosen.

The Word of God here calls us to be steadfast and unmovable with respect to the truth of God's Word.

The saints of Corinth had taken their stand on the Word of God. By the power of the Word they had been brought to faith in Jesus Christ. In that faith they had laid hold on the truth of God's Word. They had taken their stand on the Word of God. It was the foundation of their lives and of the church. But there were forces that were seeking to move them away from the foundation of the truth. There were some in Corinth who said that there is no resurrection of the dead (v. 12). In response, Paul demonstrates that the resurrection of the dead is central to the whole truth of the gospel, so that if the resurrection is denied, one loses the whole truth of God, including his salvation. If Christ be not risen, then our faith is vain and we are yet in our sins. The exhortation to be steadfast and unmovable was to be steadfast and unmovable concerning the truth of the resurrection.

This same exhortation comes to us today.

By the grace of God our churches have taken our stand on the truth of God's Word as set forth in our Reformed creeds. This is our great heritage as churches. However, there are many evil forces that would move us away from that foundation into error. That is what happened in 1924, when it was demanded of the fathers of our denomination that they to subscribe to the error of common grace. That is what happened in 1953, when the error of a conditional covenant sought to make its way into our churches. Error of every kind abounds in the church world. Satan has made inroads into many denominations with these errors, and in many cases he

has come to dominate them with heretical teachings. He is working to do the same in our own churches. The call to remain steadfast and unmovable is therefore very timely. In the face of all these errors and the attempts of Satan to destroy Christ's church and kingdom, we as churches must remain steadfast and unmovable, never departing from the truth of Scripture. And that means that the synod must never compromise the truth to gain the rewards of compromise.

How important this is!

Should we be moved from the foundation of the truth, we will not be doing the Lord's work but the devil's work. The Lord's work is to establish and perfect the kingdom by the power of the Word. But it is the Word of truth and not of error that He uses. It is the Word of truth that the Lord uses to bring the elect of God, redeemed by His blood, into the kingdom. The Lord rules the elect as citizens of the kingdom so that they serve Him as King by the truth alone. And by that same truth He preserves them from all danger.

On the other side of the coin, the devil seeks to destroy the kingdom and its citizens with the lies of false doctrine. Satan has assailed every truth of Scripture, presenting the lie of hell in its place. By this deception he sought not only to destroy the kingdom of God but also to establish an imitation kingdom of Christ, which is really antichristian.

And so those that are moved away from the foundation of the truth of the gospel of the kingdom are not doing the Lord's work but the devil's work.

Only those who are steadfast and unmovable with respect to the truth are doing the Lord's work.



And know this: your labor is not in vain in the Lord!

How important to know this!

The work of the Lord is often labor, that is to say, a wearisome toil. It is work that brings fatigue and often discouragement.

This is because the work of the Lord is always opposed. It is opposed by the enemies of the gospel, who are often found in the church. It is opposed by our own flesh and the flesh of the saints.


So every minister, every officebearer, and every member of the church must be careful not to weary of the work of the Lord.

Know this, then: your labor is not in vain in the Lord!

Oh, the work we do in the service of the Lord often appears to be in vain. Many are indifferent to the Word; others are violently opposed to it. Throughout history the church of Christ has been no more than a cottage in a vineyard, a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, a besieged city.

Nevertheless, our labor is not in vain in the Lord.

It is, after all, the Lord's work!

And the Lord's manifold blessing rests upon such work. He will use it to perfect His kingdom and one day to deliver it up to the Father. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

Polemics: Fighting Words (2)

If our churches lose the will to fight, we truly have given up our ability to survive. The church must know that the enemies

Previous article in this series: June 2012, p. 388.

of God's truth are like the Middle Eastern terrorist organizations today: patiently waiting, always observing, ever planning another way to slaughter. Unless we are vigilant, we will fall to the enemy, lose the truth, and become a false church, the

synagogue of Satan (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). We must engage in polemics—oppose the lie with “fighting words.”

The true church protects herself by combating error with fighting words. Fighting words are spoken from the pulpit, inked in books and

magazines, and must be used in almost every venue of the church's life (see below). According to Scripture, the fighting words are Christ's sword (Eph. 6: 17), mighty and effective weapons against heresies.

I pointed out last time that the issue in polemics is God's truth. That is, the issue is God's *name*, which is His *reputation*. God's truth, name, and reputation are one. If the church does not fight for these, it does not deserve to be called church, will not remain church. Under the judgment of God it will inevitably become the false church. We *must* fight for God's name. We *want* to do so because we love God's name and reputation. As every good wife will fight to protect her husband's reputation, the bride of Christ will protect His.

We do not want to forget, either, that at stake is also the welfare of the people of God. If the truth sets free, the lie brings into bondage. So if we love the people of God, we will love and teach the truth and root out the lie.

The polemic against polemics

But there is a long history of opposition to polemics, even in Reformed churches.

Already two hundred years ago, part of the Reformed community in America began a kind of "ecclesiastical suicide" by refusing to fight for the faith by fighting against errors. In 1792 the Reformed Church in America (RCA) removed the polemical section from the Canons of Dordt, the "Rejection of Errors."

In 1857 one of the reasons

more recent Dutch immigrants to America left the RCA to form their own denomination was the RCA's omission of the rejection of errors. Today, we note with great sadness that the descendants of these immigrants—who formed the PRC's mother denomination—will consider a proposal at their synod this summer to adopt a new Formula of Subscription, one that removes all mandates for officebearers to defend the faith by opposing errors.¹ The committee presenting advice to synod was mandated by last year's synod to "address concerns" regarding last year's proposal, one of which was the lack of reference to "defending" the creeds. The 2012 *proposed* formula had no such language, because the committee was determined not to "discourage significant theological discussion" and was determined to participate in "ongoing reflection" on the creeds rather than adopt a document that "precludes or hinders such reflection." The synod in June did insert the words "and defend," although the final product is a complete gutting of the significance of subscription. We pray that God's people will see the fatal mistake it is for a church not to require her officebearers to *oppose* with fighting words all assaults on God's truth, but instead to be interested in "unity with a secondary concern for purity."²

¹ Readers may find the proposed new "Formula," called a "Covenant For Officebearers," and the argument for its adoption at www.crcna.org/site/uploads/uploads/resources/2012_agenda.pdf beginning on page 448.

² *Agenda*, p. 455.

In other Protestant (non-Roman Catholic) circles, the trend of relativism has been growing for generations. Even though the interest in unity at the expense of purity did not begin with the Billy Graham Crusade, it received strong impetus from it. In the 1950s, in order to evangelize America, Billy Graham was determined that fundamentalists should work with Catholics and liberals—who denied Scripture, miracles, even the virgin birth and the resurrection of Christ. Every effort was made not to make sharp doctrinal declarations of truth so as to create controversy. The result, unsurprisingly, was that the unbelief of German liberalism that had infected the elite universities on the United States' east coast quickly spread across America, lodging in influential seminaries like Fuller on the west coast.

By now—in the twenty-first century—America is filled with "emergent churches" that despise doctrinal declarations. We get books from Reformed pastors that embrace doubt.³ And our country spawns churches that refuse to identify themselves in any other way than this-or-that "community" church. Or perhaps not even church, just "The River" or "Crossings" or "Elevation."

What happens when the church loses the will to *fight for truth*!

May God graciously enable us to make clear that unwillingness to fight for truth is the spirit of Anti-

³ See John Suk's new title, *Not Sure: A Pastor's Journey from Faith to Doubt*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011. Watch the promotional video at Eerdmans.com.

christ, who questioned truth already in the garden: “Yea, hath God said?” This spirit killed the Old Testament prophets whose fighting words opposed error, burned their prophecies that exposed the lie, and finally crucified Christ whose preaching ministry was as polemical as could be. What distinguished Jesus from His contemporaries was not that He taught, but that He taught with *authority* (Matt. 7:29), distinguishing truth from error and condemning false teaching. In this, Christ was a *good* shepherd. Reformed churches follow Christ’s lead.

The official Reformed “Call to Arms”

As Reformed believers, we may be reminded that membership in a Reformed church requires us to agree with and promote polemics.

First, our Reformed confessions *model* polemics for us. The creeds not only present truth, they oppose errors. The Heidelberg Catechism’s infamous Q&A 80 (the mass as “accursed idolatry”) is not the only place this relatively peaceful creed engages in battle. In the Belgic Confession, a few examples of real “fighting words” are Articles 7, 12, 14, and 34. And the Canons of Dordt end each chapter with a lengthy “Rejection of Errors” to refute false teachings that opposed these doctrines of grace.

Second, the Formula of Subscription—still maintained by the PRC and a few other Reformed denominations in its original form—has every officebearer promise:

...diligently to teach and faithfully

to *defend* the aforesaid doctrine [of the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, and Canons of Dordt], without either directly or indirectly contradicting the same, by our public preaching or writing. We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine...but that we are disposed to *refute* and *contradict* these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors (emphasis mine).

Further, the Formula even has the elders, deacons, and ministers publicly vow:

...if hereafter any difficulties or different sentiments respecting the aforesaid doctrines should arise in our minds, we promise that we will neither publicly nor privately propose, teach, or defend the same, either by preaching or writing, until we have first revealed such sentiments to the consistory, classis, and synod, that the same may be there examined, being ready always cheerfully to submit to the judgment of the consistory, classis, and synod.

If they violate this, they understand the penalty: “in case of refusal [to submit] to be, by that very fact, suspended from our office.” This is how seriously Reformed churches historically have taken polemics.

If we allow this Formula to be signed with “mental reservations,” or anything less than full sincerity, we will soon lose it, perhaps to our *own* proposal to emasculate it.

May I suggest that consistories make the Formula of Subscription a matter of discussion at the begin-

ning of one of their meetings. The discussion may well come to the conclusion that future nominations for office will involve making very clear what promises the man will be making when he signs the document at his installation. “With all my strength I will *defend* the truth taught in the Reformed creeds!”

But the Formula of Subscription is not the only place that speaks of a Reformed officebearer’s duty to be polemical. Besides the Forms for Installation, the Church Order has two explicit references to defending the faith. Let me mention them, with brief explanation of each:

Article 18: The office of the professors of theology is to expound the Holy Scriptures and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.

By this article, the Church Order gives marching orders to the seminary professors: be polemical! Vindicate sound doctrine! Oppose heresies and errors! When the professors engage in this work, all those who prepare for the ministry are trained to follow their example. We do not oppose heresies in some hidden corner of the seminary, but in the classroom, teaching the future preachers to do so, too. As I showed last time, the Form for the Installation of Professor of Theology demands of us to caution the students “in regard to the errors and heresies of the old, but especially of the new day.”

Article 55: To ward off false doctrines and errors that multiply exceedingly through heretical

writings, the ministers and elders shall use the means of teaching, of refutation or warning, and of admonition, as well in the ministry of the Word as in Christian teaching and family-visiting.

This article, immediately following those that require officebearers to sign the Formula of Subscription, calls both ministers *and* elders to “ward off false doctrines and errors.” Note, first, that the church is reminded how *prevalent* false doctrines are. They are not rare occurrences, but frequent dangers. Second, note that false doctrines come through *writings*. Today, we can add YouTube videos, Mp3 recordings, SermonAudio.com, as well as heretical songs through which false teaching comes into hearts and minds. Our elders as

well as our ministers should be alert to the dangers, reading and listening as much as they are able.


Third, and most striking, are the *settings* in which “refutation, warning, and admonition” take place. First is the catechism classroom. That’s where “Christian teaching” takes place. The youth must learn to say: “Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight” (Ps. 144:1). Carefully, the wise minister will show the church’s children the importance of battle, the proper time to take up arms, and the way to engage in combat. “Christian teaching” also includes writing, in books, pamphlets, and magazines.

Most surprising may be family visitation. The Reformed fathers even asked officebearers to engage

in polemics at family visitation! I must admit that my visits to families did not often include warnings regarding false teachings. Certainly polemics may not dominate visits, normally. But there is a place, even here, to caution members about errors and to refute them. Why, if their life is threatened, how can any faithful shepherd keep silent?

So it is clear that membership in a Reformed church is membership in a church willing to defend herself, because she is God’s church, pillar and ground of the truth. Elders in Reformed churches must know how to fight. And ministers must not only be *permitted* to use fighting words in the pulpit, they must be *required* to do so.

Properly.

But that, God willing, I take up next time. 

FEATURE ARTICLE

PROF. RON CAMMENGA

Synod 2012: “It Seemed Good to the Holy Ghost, and to Us” to Decide

Synod 2012 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) met in the Crete Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois. On Monday evening, June 11, 2012 the pre-synodical worship service was held in the beautiful and spacious sanctuary of the Crete PRC, under the supervision of

Prof. Cammenga is professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Crete’s consistory. Rev. James Slopsema, president of last year’s synod, preached the sermon. Rev. Slopsema expounded I Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” The congregation, as well as the synodical delegates, were edified by a sound exposition of the Word of God that made special application to the work of the synod.

Organization of Synod: **“Let all things be done decently and in order.” (I Cor. 14:40)**

Tuesday morning, June 12, the first order of business was the organization of synod. Synod consists of twenty delegates, ten minister and ten elder delegates each from Classis East and Classis West. As the rules of synod require, the seminary professors also attended the meetings of synod with “advisory vote,” that is, the privilege of the floor—the right to speak—during the sessions of synod. They also served as advisors to the committees of pre-advice. After opening devotions by Rev. Slopsema, synod voted for functionaries. The results of the voting were that Rev. Steven Key was elected president; Rev. Kenneth Koole, vice-president; Rev. Doug Kuiper, 1st Clerk; and Rev. Rodney Kleyn, 2nd Clerk. Rev. Key capably guided the synod, always allowing adequate discussion of the issues, while at the same time moving deliberations along in a timely manner.

The first order of business for the new president was the reading of the “Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity.” While the “Public Declaration” was read, all the delegates rose to express their agreement with the Reformed confessions and their conviction that these confessions do “in all respects agree with the Word of God.”

Representatives from the sister churches of the PRCA were recognized and seated as delegates with advisory vote. Representing our sister church in Northern Ireland was deacon Philip Hall. Representing our sister church in Singapore, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church, was deacon Felix Chan. Deacon Chan was accompanied by his wife, Angela. Also visiting some of the sessions of synod were a group of young people from Singapore, who have been visiting friends in our churches.

Examination of Mr. Vernon Ibe: **“... the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.” (II Timothy 2:2)**

Much of synod’s work—a very joyful aspect of the work—was the examination of Mr. Vernon Ibe. For the past five years Mr. Ibe has studied at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary. Mr. Ibe is married to Melody; the Ibés have two young sons. Synod

examined Mr. Ibe at the request of the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines. Although representatives of the Berean consistory were not able to attend the sessions of synod in order to witness the examination of their student, one of our missionaries to the Philippines was present during the meeting of synod, missionary Rev. Daniel Kleyn.

Mr. Ibe began his examination by preaching a specimen sermon on Matthew 7:13, 14: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” After unanimously approving the sermon, synod proceeded to the rest of Mr. Ibe’s examination, which consisted of oral examination in the Six Loci of Reformed Dogmatics (Theology, Anthropology, Christology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology), Church History, Knowledge of Scripture, Knowledge of Confessions, Church Polity, and Practica.

SEMINARY GRADUATE:



Vernon Razon Ibe

Wife: Melody

Children: Martyn John, Luvin Jedidiah

The examination extended into Wednesday afternoon. After the examination was concluded, synod unanimously approved Mr. Ibe’s examination. Synod adopted a motion to inform the Berean PRC consistory that brother Ibe had successfully sustained his examination and that we judge him worthy of receiving a call.

We rejoice with the Ibess and with our brothers and sisters in the Philippines. The Lord has given another laborer for the harvest, another worker to be busy in His vineyard. May the Lord give to our brother a long and fruitful ministry. And may he be a great blessing in the church in the Philippines. The Ibess plan to return to the Philippines in mid-July.

Sister Churches:

“For as the body is one, and hath many members...” (I Corinthians 12:12)

One of the most significant decisions of Synod 2012 was the decision to approve implementation of the sister-church relationship with the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (CERCS). This was done in light of the fact that our sister-church in Northern Ireland informed us that they had no objection to our establishing a sister-church relationship with the CERCS.

What a joyful moment this was! What a goodness of God in preserving a remnant after the disruption of the sister-church relationship that the PRCA once had with the ERCS denomination, when there were those who wanted to be more broadminded, showed an openness to common grace, the well-meant offer of the gospel, and the conditional covenant, and also desired the permissibility of remarriage after divorce. Now, six years after the dissolution of the denomination in Singapore, and with it the dissolution of the sister-church relationship, the Protestant Reformed Churches again have a sister-church relationship with a congregation in Singapore, the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church. Thanks be to God!

After the motion unanimously passed to implement the sister-church relationship, the representative of the CERC, deacon Felix Chan, addressed the synod. He brought greetings from the session and congregation in Singapore. The letter that he read spoke of the gratitude of the CERC for the love and labors of the PRCA. He spoke of the great joy of the CERC over the establishment once again of the sister-church relationship. And he spoke of the fervent desire of the saints in Singapore that the sister-church relationship be mutually beneficial to our churches, and that God may be glorified by our united witness to the truth of

His Word. The letter will be printed in its entirety in the 2012 Acts.

Not only did the synod approve the implementation, but synod also granted the request of CERC for the calling of a minister-on-loan (MOL) to labor in their midst. Synod approved the recommendations of the Contact Committee (CC) that the arrangements for the MOL be patterned after the arrangements set forth by Synod 1991. On the recommendation of the CC, synod appointed Grandville PRC as the calling church for the MOL.

Synod was also favored with a representative from the congregation in Northern Ireland, deacon Philip Hall. Brother Hall was also given opportunity to address the delegates. In his remarks Mr. Hall expressed the continued joy of the congregation in Northern Ireland over the sister-church relationship with the PRCA. He thanked our churches for their continued spiritual and financial support of the cause in Northern Ireland, including the mission work being conducted in Limerick through Rev. Martyn McGeown. He extended a cordial invitation to the membership of the PRCA to attend the biennial British Reformed Fellowship Family Conference, which will be held July 28 – August 4 at Lorne House, County Down, Northern Ireland. The theme of the conference is: “Ye Shall Be My Witnesses.” The featured speakers are once again Prof. D. Engelsma and Prof. H. Hanko.

Contact Committee:

“To them that have obtained like precious faith with us.” (II Peter 1:1)

The Contact Committee reported to synod that Rev. Chris Connors was granted release from his duties in the Brisbane EPCA due to ill health, leaving the EPCA with only two full-time ministers. Synod assured the EPCA that we hold them up in prayer in this time of great need.

Since last synod, the CC has continued its contact with the Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde (Confessing Protestant-Reformed Congregation—BERG). A letter of greeting from this congregation was received by synod and will be included in the published Acts. The CC was able to have a face-to-face

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From left to right: Rev. Rodney Kleyn, Second Clerk; Rev. Doug Kuiper, First Clerk; Rev. Steve Key, President; Rev. Ken Koole, Vice-President

Rev. J. Slopsema,
Abounding in the Work of the Lord
(1 Corinthians 15:58)

SYNOD 2012

CRETE PRC



SYNOD 2012



meeting with Dr. J. Klautke and elder Carsten Linke in September 2011. The BERG has endured several hardships this past year, particularly the hardship of the split of the faculty and board of the ART seminary in Germany over the question of whether or not Dr. Klautke would continue as professor at the seminary. This controversy was occasioned by the fact that Dr. Klautke stood firm on the infallibility of Scripture, opposed women in office, dared publicly to refute error, and maintained contact with the PRCA. As a result, one of the professors at ART resigned, and some students transferred to a new (rival) seminary that was founded by former colleagues of Dr. Klautke. Notwithstanding, the ART continues to train men to preach the Reformed faith in Germany and Dr. Klautke continues to teach in the ART. The seminary is also looking for another full-time professor to teach alongside of Dr. Klautke.

Synod approved the plans of the CC to send a delegation of Prof. B. Gritters and Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf to Germany this summer. The BERG requested this visit and has invited Prof. Gritters to preach at one of their worship services.

The CC reported on the visit of a delegation of Rev. G. Eriks and Rev. K. Koole to the 2011 meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC), hosted by the PCA in Atlanta, GA. The delegation presented a brief introduction to the PRCA and had opportunity to engage in further discussions with a number of representatives from various member churches. The delegation reported that NAPARC is wrestling with the meaning of "organic union" referred to in their constitution. NAPARC has extended an invitation to the PRCA to send observers to the 2012 meeting hosted by the United Reformed Churches at Mid-America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana. Synod accepted this invitation and mandated the observers to give a brief introduction to the PRCA, report to Synod 2012 the results of NAPARC's continued dialogue concerning "organic union," and investigate whether any member denominations might be candidates for future contact with our churches.

The CC reported that there has been only informal correspondence between members of the CC and individuals in Namibia. These churches and individuals are

members of the Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid Afrika (GKSA), which denomination is on the road of apostasy. For now the CC has decided to maintain informal contact with the saints in Namibia as these churches struggle to know the Lord's will as their denomination continues to depart from Reformed orthodoxy. The CC reported that it oversees fundraising for the translating of RFPA books into Afrikaans.

Missions:

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

The Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) reported on the labors of our Eastern Home Missionary, Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma. The DMC reported to synod that Rev. Bruinsma remains busy in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and leading various catechism classes and Bible studies. The group remains busy in outreach in their neighborhood, as well as throughout the city, making use of the radio and other means of advertising. There have been changes in the membership of the fellowship, with some leaving and others joining. There continue to be new visitors on a regular basis. The core group consists of 11 families and 7 individuals. Synod expressed thanks to Southwest PRC, the calling church for Eastern Home Missions, and to Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma for their faithful labors on behalf of the gospel.

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) reported on the labors in the Philippines. The FMC reports that the two missionaries, Rev. Richard Smit and Rev. Daniel Kleyn, are working well together, and that the saints in the Philippines are very appreciative of their labors.

As noted earlier, Rev. Smit's co-laborer, Rev. Daniel Kleyn, was present at synod. Rev. Kleyn and his wife, Sharon, are presently on furlough. They have visited a number of our churches and given a talk and slide presentation on the mission work in the Philippines. Rev. Kleyn addressed the synod and, besides giving an overview of the work, conveyed the gratitude of the Berean PRC for the labors of the missionaries.

The FMC reported on continued investigation of Myanmar as a possible field of labor for our churches. The Council of Hope PRC (Walker, MI) has been

laboring for five years with the PRC of Myanmar (PRCM), and in particular with the senior minister in this denomination, Rev. Titus. The FMC continues to work with Rev. Titus, placing special emphasis on training officebearers.

Both the DMC and the FMC presented proposals to synod regarding the tenure of missionaries. These proposals differed in several points. For this reason synod instructed the DMC and the FMC to form a joint study committee with an equal number of representatives from each committee, including also Prof. B. Gritters as advisor, to make recommendations to Synod 2013. Synod instructed the special committee to take note of the significant principles and implications involved in the DMC and FMC proposals, taking into consideration as well the Church Order and the history of Reformed missions.

Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary: “Study to shew thyself approved unto God...” (II Timothy 2:15)

Besides Mr. Vernon Ibe, whom the faculty heartily recommended for examination, the synod was apprised of the progress of the other students in our seminary. Of special note is the fact that Mr. Erik Guichelaar, who is in his fourth year, is due to begin his internship under the supervision of the Loveland, Colorado PRC and the mentoring of its pastor, Rev. Steven Key. The Lord willing, Mr. Guichelaar will be examined by Synod 2013. There are no incoming first-year students for the 2012-2013 academic year. There are a goodly number of pre-seminary students, which bodes well for the future. But the fact that we have no incoming students underscores once again the need that our churches have for ministers of the Word.

Synod took the decision to employ Mr. Charles Terpstra as the seminary’s full-time librarian, part-time archivist, and part-time registrar. Mr. Terpstra has worked in the library this past school year. Synod took this decision on the recommendation of the Theological School Committee, with the endorsement of the faculty.

Synod also approved a partial sabbatical for Prof. Dykstra for the 2012-2013 academic year. Prof. Dykstra will be developing a course on Reformed education.

The fruit of his study will be the production of a book or syllabus on the history and principles of Reformed education.

In Conclusion:

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us...” to decide. (Acts 15:28)

Synod treated one protest against the action of Synod 2011 releasing the Contact Committee from its mandate to suggest changes to its constitution that make clear that in the establishment of a corresponding relationship the ultimate goal remains the establishment of a sister-church relationship. Synod rejected the main contention of the protest regarding the content of the decision of Synod 2011.


Synod approved support for twelve emeriti ministers or their widows. It also approved subsidy requests for financial assistance from nine congregations.

Synod 2012 adopted a budget that assesses each family in the denomination \$840 for the year 2013. This represents a decrease from 2012 of \$31 per family, a welcome relief for those families who are struggling financially in a depressed economy.

The denomination currently is made up of 1,971 families, up thirty-one from 2011.

The calling church for Synod 2013 is Hudsonville PRC, where synod will convene on Tuesday, June 11.

For all the decisions of the synod, as well as committee reports and supplements, look for the official Acts of Synod 2012, which should be available later this summer.

May the churches receive the decisions of Synod 2012 as settled and binding. May the confidence of the delegates having finished the work of synod be that of the apostles and elders who met in Jerusalem: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us” to decide (Acts 15:28). May the decisions promote the cause of Christ’s gospel, the gathering of His church, and the coming of His kingdom. And may labors done in weakness and sin be established by our sovereign God, who uses weakest means to fulfill His will, mighty enemies to still. 

Able


The gospel of man proclaims that he can do much, more even than God. The gospel of man proclaims God the Father wills to save all men, God the Son died to save all men, and God the Spirit offers salvation to all men and gives them grace to believe. But God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is unable to save them all because man is able to resist and overcome His grace.

The gospel of Jesus proclaims something entirely different. Natural man, ungodly man, unregenerated man, is not able. He is not able to live, move, or have any being apart from God (Acts 17:28). Being spiritually dead (L.D. 8), man is not able to do good works (L.D. 24) and not able to resist God's will or grace (Rom. 9:19). Man is ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (II Tim. 3:7). Many will seek to enter the kingdom but shall not be able (Luke 13:24). Man mocks God, saying He is not able to save or to fulfill His promises (II Chr. 32:14; Deut. 9:28). Believing not, man will not be able to abide the Lord's indignation (Jer. 10:10). Silver and gold will not be able to deliver them in the day of the Lord's wrath (Zeph. 1:18). They will not be able to hide or be able to escape (Jer. 49:10; 11:11), but shall be cast down and not be able to rise (Ps. 36:12).

God, however, is able. He is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). He is able to save and to destroy (James 4:12). He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think (Eph. 3:20). He is able to deliver from the burning, fiery furnace (Dan. 3:17). He is able to abase those that walk in pride (Dan. 4:37). And He is able to make all grace abound toward us (II Cor. 9:8). Being God, our Lord Jesus Christ is equally able. He is able to subdue all things unto Himself (Phil. 3:21). He is able to save to the uttermost those who come unto the Father by Him since He ever lives to make intercession for them (Heb. 7:25). And in that He Himself suffered being tempted,

He is able to help those who are tempted (Heb. 2:18).

Being God-breathed and applied to our hearts by the Spirit of God, the Scriptures are also able. They are able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (II Tim. 3:15). Engrafted in us, the word is able to save our souls (James 1:21). It is able to build us up and give us an inheritance among all them who are sanctified (Acts 20:32). Elders who hold fast the faithful word that they have been taught are able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers (Tit. 1:9). And the church must commit the teachings of Scripture to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also (II Tim. 2:2).

With few exceptions, no one born-again, regenerated, justified, converted, and sanctified through Jesus by the Spirit of God should ever say, "I can't." We like to, in order to excuse our sins. But then we blame God. For God is able to make all grace abound toward us, that we may abound to every good work (II Cor. 9:8). He makes us able to receive His Word (Matt. 19:12), able to stand (Rom. 14:4), able to serve in His house (I Chr. 9:13), able to fight sin (I Chr. 5:18), able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked (Eph. 6:16), able to speak wisdom (Luke 21:15), able to admonish one another (Rom. 15:14), and able to believe. Especially we believe that God is able to do what He says (Matt. 9:28). Abraham was fully persuaded that what God promised He was able also to perform (Rom. 4:21). Paul likewise, knowing whom he believed, was persuaded that God was able to keep that which was committed to Him (II Tim. 1:12). Therefore our faithful God will not allow us to be tempted above what we are able (I Cor. 10:13). No man is able to pluck out of His hand those whom He has given to Jesus (John 10:29). And nothing is able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:39). Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling and able to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. 

Rev. Langerak is pastor of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Secretary's Report 2011

In Psalm 34:3, David writes, "O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together." The Board of the Reformed Free Publishing Association issues the same call to our Association members and friends tonight; let us examine the work of the RFPA over the last year and together let us magnify the Lord and exalt the name of Him who has so greatly blessed the work of our hands.

This past year we were able to publish two books: *Peace for the Troubled Heart*, a compilation of devotionals written by Rev. Herman Hoeksema, and *Justified unto Liberty*, a commentary on Galatians by Professor Herman Hanko. The Board has been very encouraged by the positive response to both of these books. Regarding *Justified unto Liberty*, one reader wrote, "The new Galatians commentary is wonderful. I read several commentaries and I think this one is right up there with Luther's Galatians!" Additionally, in light of the favorable response we received to *Peace for the Troubled Heart*, the Board approved the publication of the second volume in this Reformed Spirituality series. This, too, will be a compilation of devotionals by Rev. Hoeksema, and will again be edited by Professor David Engelsma. The Board is also looking forward to the release of our newest book, *Covenant and Election in the Reformed Tradition*. We are convinced that this book clearly explains the correct understanding of the relation of covenant and election and clears up the theological waters so often muddled during controversy over these fundamental doctrines.

In addition to new releases, there is the ongoing work of republishing books whose stock is depleted. Of particular significance was the decision of the Board to approve reprinting *Voice of Our Fathers*, H.C. Hoeksema's exposition of the Canons of Dordt.

Mr. Engelsma is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, MI and secretary of the RFPA. His report, appearing here belatedly on the pages of the SB, was read at the annual meeting held on September 22, 2011.

Given that this is a classic work of the RFPA, the decision was made to make significant improvements to the book, as opposed to simply republishing the book in its current form. Modifications to the book that were discussed include interior design and typesetting, addition of indexes, as well as additional data of the synod and its delegates. As with all reprints, this will be completed while maintaining the integrity of the book as the author's own work.

The Board is thankful for the feedback that we receive on our books. Although much of it has been positive and encouraging, there were still those who were critical of the books we have published. This ought not to alarm the Board or the members of the Association (indeed, should such responses cease altogether, that would be cause for alarm). The purpose of the RFPA has never been to publish works that we feel will garner the most praise or admiration. To paraphrase the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, we do not publish books for an adoring public; we publish books that will last forever.

The demand for our books continues to grow. This is evidenced by our expanding Book Club, which now has 1,228 members. Although the truths of the Reformed faith are held in disdain by many, there are those who demand the meat of God's Word, and we are humbled that God should continue to use the RFPA to provide it. We take this opportunity to thank our Book Club agents, who continue to educate people on the benefits of being a Book Club member. Should you have a question about the RFPA, the materials it publishes, or how the Book Club works, please feel free to contact your Book Club agent at church or the RFPA office directly.

The RFPA is resolute in its ongoing efforts to investigate and discover additional ways to promote, and even publish our books. One area of particular focus has been in the realm of eBooks. Consider this fact from an Amazon press release in May 2011. Amazon, which is an online retailer, began selling hardcover and paper-

back books in July 1995. In November 2007, Amazon introduced their ereader, the Kindle, and began selling Kindle books. Today, less than four years after introducing Kindle books, Amazon.com customers are now purchasing more Kindle books than all print books—hardcover and paperback—combined. Since April, for every 100 print books Amazon.com has sold, it has sold 105 Kindle books. This includes sales of hardcover and paperback books by Amazon where there is no Kindle edition. In light of this development in the publishing world, a special committee was formed to investigate how the RFPA could delve into the world of eBooks. This work over the past year is quickly coming to fruition as we hope to publish an eBook in the near future. There will be much more information on this as that time approaches.

In addition to books published, we continue to receive requests to translate our work into other languages. This past year the Board received requests to translate our books into Portuguese, Afrikaans, French, and Spanish. One noteworthy request was to translate *Come Ye Children* into Korean. Each translation request is tracked and investigated further to see if other of our works may be of interest to the organization or individual who is doing the translating.

The other labor of the RFPA involved what has rightly been called our crown jewel, the *Standard Bearer*. The current number of subscribers stands at 2,269. We take this opportunity to express our gratitude to the editors, to Don and Judi Doezema, and to the writers for their work on behalf of the RFPA over this past year.

In the providence of God, the RFPA has received a sizable gift from a supporter who had included us as part of his estate. The RFPA connection with this individual reaches back prior to 1997 as a *Standard Bearer* subscriber and a Book Club member. Although we were entirely unaware of it at the time, the Lord had planted a seed that has grown and developed into a gift that will be used to promote and expand the work of the RFPA.

Recognizing the heavy responsibility that such a gift bears, the Board chairman appointed a special committee to create a plan of how best to use these funds to promote the advancement of the RFPA's mission.


The result of that committee's work was an extensively developed Five-Year Plan. Specifically, this five-year strategic plan is organized under five main areas: Operations, Sales and Marketing, Facilities, Publishing, and Financial. Arranged under these five main headings, the plan identifies specific objectives for the RFPA to implement over the next five years, being exclusively funded by this large endowment. In light of this gift, the Board has been able to fund several projects that were before out of reach. Some of these undertakings include the hiring of a consultant to examine the way we market and promote our materials, and to provide us with a specific and actionable marketing plan that will allow us to track and follow our progress. In addition, we have been able to retain a consultant who can help us operationally. This individual has extensive experience in the book publishing field and will be able to help us work more efficiently as well as utilize more of the resources we have at hand. By the grace of God, the Reformed Free Publishing Association has many strengths. However, the Board also recognizes that we have weaknesses in certain areas and, rather than permit them to remain, we are certain that by working with consultants who have expertise in specific areas, we can turn even those weaknesses into strengths that will thereby enhance our effectiveness in the spreading of God's Word.

Although the Board is grateful for the gift we have received and for the special projects it will allow us to fund, we are also very conscious that the RFPA has, from its very beginning, been supported by contributions that are not measured in the tens or hundreds of thousands, but in the tens and hundreds. There was evidence of this provision again in the past year. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our supporters for their generosity, which continues to enable us to fund our operations on a regular basis.

Our staff continues to perform their labors faithfully, allowing the RFPA to run smoothly on a daily basis. This gives us an occasion to express our gratitude to our business manager Tim Pipe, our book coordinator Evelyn Langerak, and our staff, Paula Kamps and Bethany Kingma, for the work that they do for the RFPA.

And so, 87 years after our founding, we close the

books on another year and look forward with anticipation to the year to come. The future will undoubtedly hold many changes—to our operations, to our processes, and perhaps even to the way our books are published. In fact, viewing the work in which the RFPA is engaged, and seeing the opportunities that are presenting them-

selves in the providence of God, one becomes excited about the years ahead. In all of these things we beseech the Lord our God to continue to bless us abundantly, again testifying with David in Psalm 9:10, “And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.” 

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

PROF. RON CAMMENG

The Commission of the Prophet/Preacher (1)

Members of the Theological School Committee, fathers of synod, esteemed colleagues, honored graduate, and brothers and sisters in our Lord Jesus Christ, the passage of Holy Writ that Rev. Koole read, Jeremiah 1, records God’s commission of the prophet Jeremiah. A commission is authority bestowed on someone in order to perform a certain task, authority to carry out an important calling on behalf of the one by whom one is commissioned.

God commissions Jeremiah. God calls Jeremiah and God bestows on Jeremiah authority to perform a certain task among the children of Judah, the Old Testament people of God. God commissions Jeremiah to be a prophet. He calls him to speak the word of God to the people of God. In verse 5, God says to Jeremiah, “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” In the last part of verse 7, He tells the prophet, “and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.” And in the end of verse 17, He commands Jeremiah, “Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee.”

It is important to understand the circumstances in Judah at the time that God commissioned the prophet Jeremiah. Jeremiah was commissioned by God to the

prophetic office at the time of the reign of Josiah. Josiah was a God-fearing king who brought reformation to Judah. But Josiah was the *last* God-fearing king of Judah, and the reformation that he brought about proved to be only temporary and short-lived. The unbelieving element in Judah, cowed into submission by Josiah during his lifetime, soon gained the ascendancy after his death and remained in the ascendancy until the carrying away into captivity by Babylon.

It was to that Judah that God sent the prophet Jeremiah. It was to the church that Jeremiah was sent, but to the church that was falling away and that was in the process of falling away still farther from the Lord. It was to an apostatizing church that the prophet was sent by the Lord, a people who had forsaken God’s covenant.

What was true of the church in Jeremiah’s day is true of the church generally in our day, and is true of the Reformed church specifically. Many, very many, of the Reformed and Presbyterian churches of our day have forsaken the gospel of sovereign grace, the gospel of the Reformation. Many, very many, of these churches are on the road of apostasy.

In Jeremiah 1:4-19, the Lord commissions the prophet Jeremiah, as He commissions the prophet/preacher in the church today, and as we have every confidence He will also commission, and is in fact in the process of commissioning, you, brother Ibe. The Lord puts His word in the prophet/preacher’s mouth. He sends the prophet/preacher to speak His word. And He promises the prophet/preacher, and the church that sends

Commencement exercises of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary were held on June 19, 2012 at First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapid. The text of Prof. Cammenga’s address on that occasion begins here, to be concluded, D.V., in our August issue.

the prophet/preacher, that He will use the word of the gospel out of his mouth effectively, both for condemnation and for salvation. In the words of verse 10, He will use the word “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant.”

The Prophet/Preacher's Commission

In the passage, God commissions Jeremiah to be a prophet. He calls him to bring the Word of the Lord to Judah. Jeremiah's initial response was to decline this commission by God. He was inclined to reject God's call of him, first of all, because he considered himself unqualified to be a prophet of the Lord. That's verse 6: “Then said I, Ah, Lord God! Behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.” That he felt himself to be but a child means that he felt himself to be inadequate and too inexperienced to be a prophet of the Lord. On the grounds of his inexperience and youth, he drew back from God's call.

Every preacher ought to feel the way Jeremiah felt. He ought to have a sense of his own inability. He ought to feel himself altogether unqualified to carry out the work of the office. The office is too great for any man. The prophet/preacher must know who he is before he ever utters one word to God's people.

He must know who he is, first of all, so that he will ascribe everything that he is and everything that he does as a prophet of God to God and to God alone. He must know who he is, secondly, so that, convicted of his own inability, he will depend not at all upon himself, but on God. And he must know who he is, thirdly, so that when he comes to God's people, he will not exalt himself, but conduct himself among them in humility, deep humility. Nothing is more destructive to the calling of the prophet/preacher than arrogance and pride. That divides and scatters the sheep of God's flock. And that attitude God judges.

There is another reason on account of which the prophet's inclination was to refuse God's call of him. That reason comes out in what God says in verse 8: “Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord.” Jeremiah anticipated opposition and rejection. He knew the spiritual condition of Judah: “And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me,

and have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands” (v. 16). Judah was guilty of forsaking Jehovah God, guilty of the false and hypocritical worship of God, guilty of bowing down to the idol gods, guilty of immorality and violence, guilty of not living faithfully in their marriages, and guilty of Sabbath desecration (Jer. 17). Jeremiah knew how they would respond to the faithful, sharp preaching of the word of God. His fears would be realized. The inhabitants of his own village, Anathoth, would plot to kill him. Zedekiah would have him thrown into a dungeon. Because Jeremiah anticipated opposition and rejection, he was not inclined to accept God's commission of him to be a prophet to Judah.

But no man refuses God's call! God does not take “No” for an answer. Whom He calls, He calls irresistibly.

The Lord's response to Jeremiah's fears is that He will take care of His prophet: “For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee” (vv. 18, 19).

The Lord's response to Jeremiah's objections is also the assurance that as He has called the prophet, so will He also qualify him. This belongs to God's commission of the prophet/preacher. This is the assurance that He gives to His servant. This is the teaching especially of verse 5: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” There are three parts to verse 5, three phrases that describe three closely related works of God that culminate in God's commission of the prophet: “I knew thee,” “I sanctified thee,” and “I ordained thee.”

First, “I knew thee.” “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee.” God did not simply know *about* the prophet, something *concerning* the prophet, but He knew the prophet: “I knew *thee*.” This personal knowledge, as so often in the Old Testament, is the knowledge of love, the love according to which God chooses a person unto Himself, chooses him unto sal-

vation. That knowledge is God's *eternal* knowledge: "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee." In time the prophet was formed by God in his mother's belly. But before God formed him in time, which is to say, from eternity, God knew him. The knowledge of which the passage speaks is the knowledge of which the apostle Paul speaks in Romans 8:29: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate." God knew, that is, foreknew, and predestinated Jeremiah. And so does God know and predestinate the faithful minister of the gospel today.

We are taught here the indispensable qualification of the prophet/preacher. He must be a saved, elect, child of God. Oh, to be sure, God is able to use an unsaved man in the office of prophet/preacher, as He used Balaam in the Old Testament. But the question is, "What is the will of God?" And this is the will of God, that the prophet/preacher be a saved child of God. He must himself know experientially the word that he brings to others. He must be gripped by that word in his own life. He must know by personal experience the grace of God that He proclaims to others.

Secondly, God says, "I sanctified thee." "And before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee." "Sanctified" means literally "to set apart." It refers to that which is set apart by Jehovah God for special service to Himself. That is the case with the prophet/preacher. As an officebearer of God, he has been set apart from the rest of God's people in order to carry out a special service on behalf of Jehovah God.

And third, "I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations." This third expression in verse 5 indicates the

specific calling unto which Jeremiah has been set apart. He has been set apart by Jehovah God to be a *prophet*.

What this comes down to is that Jeremiah has been called by God. Not only is this impressed upon him through God's direct word to Jeremiah actually commissioning him to be a prophet, but this is also the testimony of the prophet's own name. His name is "Jeremiah." "Jeremiah" means "raised up or appointed by Jehovah." His very name must be a constant reminder to the prophet of the truth that God has commissioned him; God has called him; God has ordained him; God has set him in office.

This truth is of the greatest practical importance. For this reason, the very first question that is asked of men at the time of their ordination is, "I ask thee whether thou feelest in thy heart that thou art lawfully called of God's church, and therefore of God Himself, to this holy ministry?" The church needs to know this truth, to be sure. The church needs to know this truth so that she has a proper attitude towards the prophet/preacher in her midst, esteeming him very highly for the sake of his office. But this truth is of great practical importance for the minister himself. Of this truth he must remind himself when he begins to doubt his calling or his ability to carry out his calling, when it seems that more is demanded of him than he can possibly carry out. Of this truth the minister must remind himself when he faces, as every minister inevitably does, opposition and rejection. Then he must remind himself: God has commissioned me! God has called me! And God has sent me!

... to be continued. 

CLASSIS EAST REPORT

MR. JON HUISKEN

May 9, 2012, Georgetown PRC


Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 9, 2012 at the Georgetown PRC. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. W. Langerak, in the absence of Rev. K. Koole, chaired this session.

The business of classis was routine with the exception of two discipline cases presented by two consistories. Classis noted the careful work done by these

consistories and advised these consistories to proceed to the second step of censure for these members.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$45.60. Classis will meet next in Grace PRC on Wednesday, September 12, 2012.

Respectfully submitted.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

Minister Activities

Our vacant Hope congregation in Walker, MI extended a call to Rev. John Marcus, presently serving First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada, to serve as their next pastor.

On Sunday afternoon, June 10, Rev. Doug Kuiper preached his farewell sermon as pastor of the Randolph, WI PRC. Rev. Kuiper chose to preach from the Word of God in II Corinthians 13:11, under the theme, "Finally Brethren, Farewell." Because of Rev. Kuiper's commitment as delegate to this year's synod, he did not preach in Randolph on June 17, and Randolph's consistory had previously granted him vacation the next two weeks, so he preached his farewell sermon June 10 even though he officially continued as pastor of Randolph until June 30.

The Randolph congregation voted to extend a call to Rev. Andrew Lanning, presently serving the Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, to serve as their next pastor.

Seminarian Josh Engelsma, his wife, Courtney, and their children, are presently staying at the parsonage of the Edgerton, MN PRC for a number of weeks before Rev. Doug Kuiper is installed as pastor there.

Since Seminarian Engelsma does not have enough approved sermons, there was a request for him to exchange pulpits with the pastors from that area. All the consistories involved agreed to this arrangement. So Mr. Engelsma was also able to speak a "word of edification" in those churches

as well. We commend the Engelsmas to the church there, and pray that Mr. Engelsma will be strengthened and encouraged in the work.

Congregation Activities

With thanksgiving to God, Calvary PRC in Hull, IA began worship services in their new facility on Sunday, May 13. There was a dedication program on Friday, May 11 and a public open house for viewing of the building by area PR church members and the community on June 1 and 2. Rev. Cory Griess, pastor of Calvary, used Joshua 4:1-7 as text for the dedication, speaking on how the church building is a memorial to the biblical faith recovered in the Reformation. You see that in how the building is built, with the focus on the Word by the placing of the pulpit in the center. The memorial the Israelites built spoke, to the generations, of the faithfulness of God. Calvary PRC also speaks to the generations of God's faithfulness. As one from each tribe built the memorial, so every family at Calvary had a part in its building. The first text Rev. Griess preached on for worship in Calvary's building was Luke 23:33, since this is where the name of the church came from. At the open house, Calvary had booths set up for the RFPA, on the catechism instruction of the church, on the organic life of Calvary, and on the teachings of the PRCA. Calvary also had the introduction to the PRC video playing nonstop for the people who came. Rev. Griess adds that they "had a good turnout of visitors and pray the Lord uses that witness for the good of His church."

Our congregation in Lacombe,

AB, Canada, the Immanuel PRC, commemorated its 25th anniversary with a celebration on May 11 at Parkland Reformed Church in Ponoka. A potluck dinner was held at 6:00, with a program following, consisting of fellowship, singing, and a slide show.

Members of the Hudsonville, MI PRC were invited to join others in their congregation to hear the good biblical instruction for marriage by Paul David Tripp. This Summer Marriage Conference began on June 12 and met for three consecutive Tuesday evenings. Each evening began with the watching of a DVD, followed by a time for discussion.

By our count, there are at least four of our congregations that have plans this summer for their members to participate in a Summer Memorization project. Although the plans are all a little different, each does provide an incentive for both young and not so young to learn a portion of God's Word. These churches are Bethel in Roselle, IL; Georgetown in Hudsonville, MI; Grace in Standale, MI; and Hudsonville, MI PRC.

Members of the Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI participated in a scrap-metal drive throughout the month of June. Dates for drop off of any suitable scrap were June 9 and June 23 at their church property. Money raised would go toward future building expenses.

Evangelism Activities

On Friday, May 11, Rev. Audred Spriensma and Rev. Ronald Van Overloop were in Peace PRC in Lansing, IL to speak on the subject of Personal Witnessing.

In a joint effort, the Evangelism

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

Committees of the Calvary and Hull, IA PRC's arranged for a new introductory issue to the *Standard Bearer* to be sent out to every home in Hull that did not have a subscription to the SB. Page two contained a letter of greeting to the community that both Hull's and Calvary's Councils approved. This issue went out sometime between May 29 and 31.

Mission Activities

Rev. Richard Smit, missionary to the Philippines, traveled to Singapore

on June 15 to provide pulpit supply in the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church from June 17-24, plus provide the lectures for Covenant's annual church camp ("Established in the Faith") from Monday, June 18 to Thursday, June 21.

School Activities

The Genesis PTA of Genesis Christian School in Lacombe, AB, Canada, sponsored a lecture by Mr. Adrian Stoutjesdyk, a representative

of the Trinitarian Bible Society in Canada, on May 15, at Immanuel PRC. With the words, "A more sure word of prophecy," from II Peter 1, as his theme, Mr. Stoutjesdyk spoke about the inspiration, preservation, translation, and obligation of the Word of God. During this meeting, Mr. Stoutjesdyk also told those in attendance about the Society's work at home and abroad and gave encouragement to continue the commitment to the King James Version of the Holy Bible. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Classis West

■ Classis West of the PRC will convene on Wednesday, September 5, 2012, at the Calvary PRC of Hull, IA. All material for the agenda of this meeting must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, August 6, 2012. **PLEASE NOTE THE NEW CONTACT INFORMATION OF THE STATED CLERK**, effective July 1: email - doug.kuiper@prca.org. Telephone - (507) 442-4441. Address: 321 Maple St. W, P.O. Box 212, Edgerton, MN 56128. All delegates must inform Calvary's clerk, Mr. Ed Westra, of the details of their travel arrangements and lodging needs. Mr. Westra can be contacted at (712) 439-2235, or ewestra@hickorytech.net.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Stated Clerk

Teacher Needed

■ The Board of Reformed Heritage Christian School is currently seeking applicants for a full-time high school math and science faculty opening for the 2012-13 school year. Successful applicants will be able to serve the Kingdom of Jesus Christ by teaching His covenant youth. Reformed Heritage is committed to distinctively Reformed Christian education. Our goal is to train our young people to be servants of Christ in all areas of life.

A cover letter and resumé can be mailed to: Reformed Heritage Christian School, 700 N. Fletcher Ave., Kalamazoo, MI 49006, attn.: Mr. Dave VanderMeer; or e-mail: dnjvm5@att.net.

(David Pryor
RHCS Board President)

Wedding Anniversary

■ On June 12 our parents, **JEFFREY and KATHY TERPSTRA**, celebrated 25 years of marriage. Their marriage has been a beautiful example of the love between Christ and His church. We are so thankful to have godly parents who raised us in the fear of His name. We pray that the Lord may continue to bless them and give them many more years together. "Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3-4).

✿ Blake and Lindsey Wieringa
Cameron
✿ Kelsey Terpstra
✿ Michael Terpstra
✿ Melanie Terpstra
✿ Allison Terpstra

Grand Rapids, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With joy and thanksgiving to God, our parents,

GIJSBERTUS and JACQUELINE MULDER,

will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary on July 31, 2012. We extol the name of Jehovah for the many blessings He has bestowed on us. "So we thy people and sheep of thy pasture will give thee thanks for ever: we will shew forth thy praise to all generations" (Psalm 79:13).

✿ Joshua
✿ Eric
✿ Bethany
✿ Stephen
✿ Thomas
✿ Jordan
✿ Mark
✿ Emily

Sherwood Park, AB, Canada

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hope PRC in Walker express their Christian sympathy to Elder Gary Nienhuis and his wife and children in the death of his father,

MR. ALVIN NIENHUIS.

May they be comforted in the words of Jesus Christ: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Dan DeMeester, Vice-President
Joel Minderhoud, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of First PRC of Holland wish to express their Christian sympathy to Shirley Casemier in the death of her husband,

LAVERNE CASEMIER.

We pray that she receives strength and comfort from the words of Revelation 21:4. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Rev. Daniel Holstege, President
Glenn Kotman, Assistant Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ We are thankful for God's preserving care over our parents,

CHARLES and LOIS KREGEL, as they have recently celebrated 65 years of marriage on June 27th. We remain thankful for their care and instruction of children and grandchildren for these many years, and we commit them to our heavenly Father's continued care in their remaining years together. "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17).

✿ Kenneth and Mary Velthouse

✿ Joel and Ellen Bruinooge

✿ Charles Jr.

✿ David and Mary Kregel

✿ Laura Nickle

14 Grandchildren

19 Great-grandchildren

Byron Center, Michigan

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Men's Society of Hope PRC of Walker, MI express sympathy to the Gary Nienhuis family in the death of Gary's father,

MR. ALVIN NIENHUIS.

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

Clare Kuiper, Secretary
Harry Langerak, President

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Southeast PRC extends Christian sympathy to Jim and Beth Koerner and their family in the death of their mother and grandmother,

MAE KOERNER.

We say with Job, "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.... yet in my flesh I shall see God."

Rev. William Langerak, President
Edward Ophoff Jr., Asst clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ On June 30, 2012,

LARRY and PAM KOOIENGA celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. How thankful we are to our faithful heavenly Father for their years of marriage, and for their diligence to raise us in the fear of the Lord. We pray the Lord's richest blessing on them in the years to come. "But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

✿ Jack and Jennifer Kooienga

Cody, Brennen, Adam

✿ Mark and Holly Kooienga

✿ James and Kelly Jansma

Derrick, Dylan, Thomas, Kori

✿ Lee and Laura Kooienga

Calvin, Jake

✿ Chad and Paula Kamminga

✿ Dale (in glory) and Nicole Kooienga

Dalia

Loveland, Colorado

E-subscriptions
to the
Standard Bearer
are now available!
Visit www.rfpa.org
for pricing
and details.

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 2012 at the Grace Protestant Reformed Church, Standale, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 15, 2012.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

Visit the new
RFPA website
www.rfpa.org
and listen to
audio sermons
from the archives of
the PRCA

Reformed Witness Hour July 2012

Date

Topic

Text

July 1

Nehemiah (#9-13)

Nehemiah 8

July 8

"The Power of the Pulpit"

Nehemiah 9:1-31

July 15

"Worshiping God in the Light of His Goodness"

Nehemiah 9:32-38

July 22

"Let Not Our Trouble Seem Little to Thee"

Nehemiah 10

July 29

"Covenant Renewal"

Nehemiah 11

"Jerusalem Filled with Boys and Girls Playing"

Nehemiah 11