

# The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • April 1, 2012

## CONTENTS

<i>Meditation</i>	Jesus' Appearance to the Women <b>REV. JAMES SLOPSEMA</b>	290
<i>Editorial</i>	A Call for Christian School Teachers <b>PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS</b>	292
<i>Go Ye Into All the World</i>	A Goal in the Philippines: Self-Propagating Churches (1) <b>REV. DANIEL KLEYN</b>	295
<i>All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee</i>	A Bear Bereaved <b>MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD</b>	297
<i>God's Wonderful Works</i>	God's Purpose with Adam (3) <b>REV. JAMES LANING</b>	300
<i>All Around Us</i>	Robert Godfrey's "Reformed Dream" at NAPARC (1) <b>REV. NATHAN LANGERAK</b>	301
<i>Search the Scriptures</i>	Judgment and the Estate of Men <b>REV. THOMAS MIERSMA</b>	304
<i>When Thou Sittest in Thine House</i>	Happiness in the Christian Home <b>REV. ARIE DEN HARTOG</b>	307
<i>Bring the Books</i>	Book Notices <b>MR. CHARLES TERPSTRA</b>	310
<i>News From Our Churches</i>	Activities <b>MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER</b>	310

# Jesus' Appearance to the Women

And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.

Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.

Matthew 28:9-10

In the 40 days after His resurrection Jesus appeared ten times to His disciples. The purpose of these appearances was especially threefold. First, they were to prove to the disciples that He had truly risen. Secondly, they were to instruct the disciples concerning the nature of His resurrection. Finally, each appearance taught something different about the resurrection.

Jesus' appearance to the women as they returned from the sepulchre to Jerusalem on Easter morning was Jesus' second appearance. He had appeared to Mary Magdalene at the sepulchre just before this.

Let's join the women to whom the risen Lord appeared that glad morning.

---

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

## A reassuring appearance!

Early on Sunday morning a group of women left Jerusalem for the sepulcher of Jesus to embalm His body. In this group were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joses, Solome the mother of James and John, Joanna, and other women. These same women had been present at the cross scene on Friday to witness Jesus' crucifixion. Sadly they had followed the body of Jesus to the sepulcher of Joseph of Arimathea. Either there had not been enough time on Friday to embalm Jesus' body properly, or in their great sorrow the women were not aware that it had been done. And so, after waiting out the Sabbath day, these women went to the sepulcher of their beloved Master at dawn on Sunday to perform this last labor of love.

At the sepulcher these women received the surprise of their life. At a distance they discovered that the stone that had been set to seal the grave had been rolled away. In their grief they had forgotten about it. Mary Magdalene concluded that someone had stolen Jesus' body, and without further investigation she returned to Jerusalem to inform the disciples. But the other women proceeded to the sepulcher. And they found the sepulcher empty! If this was not enough, an angel appeared

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

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

#### Reprint Policy

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

#### Editorial Policy

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

#### Editorial Office

Prof. Russell J. Dykstra  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Wyoming, MI 49418  
dykstra@prca.org

#### Business Office

*Standard Bearer*  
Mr. Timothy Pipe  
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.  
Jenison, MI 49428-7137  
PH: 616-457-5970  
FAX: 616-457-5980  
tim@rfpa.org

#### Church News Editor

Mr. Ben Wigger  
6597 40th Ave  
Hudsonville, MI 49426  
benjwig@juno.com

#### New Zealand Office

*Standard Bearer*  
c/o Mr. B. VanHerck  
66 Fraser St  
Wainuiomata, New Zealand

#### United Kingdom Office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham  
27 Woodside Road  
Ballymena, BT42 4HX  
Northern Ireland  
alisongraham2006@  
hotmail.co.uk

#### Rep. of Ireland Office

c/o Rev. Martyn McGeown  
Apartment 10, Block D  
Ballycummin Village  
Limerick, Ireland

#### Subscription Price

\$21.00 per year in the US, \$30.00 elsewhere

#### Advertising Policy

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

Website for RFP: [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)

Website for PRC: [www.prca.org](http://www.prca.org)

to them to explain the empty tomb. What a message he gave to them. Jesus is risen, as He said. Go tell His disciples that He is risen and that He goes before them into Galilee.

What astounding and joyful news!

Quickly the women departed from the sepulcher to tell the disciples the joyful news.

As they were approaching Jerusalem, Jesus appeared to them. We ought to understand what it means that Jesus “appeared.” Through His resurrection Jesus was changed. His resurrection was not a return to this present earthly existence. It was advancement. His body was glorified, being made heavenly and spiritual. The result was that Jesus’ resurrection-body was invisible to the earthly eye. He literally had to appear to be seen.

As He appeared to the women Jesus greeted them with a customary greeting, “All hail.” This means, “May it be well with you.”

How glad the women were to see Jesus! In their joy they fell at Jesus’ feet and worshiped Him. Their hearts were also gripped with the fear of the unknown. And so Jesus assured them, “Fear not.” But their joy of seeing Jesus was greater than their fear. How they needed to see Jesus! The angel had shown them the empty grave and proclaimed to them the resurrection of Jesus. They had believed and were glad. But they needed something more. They understood nothing of what had happened—neither Jesus’ death nor His resurrection. They needed something more. Jesus must appear to them and explain it all. And when He did, they fell at His feet and worshiped Him.

### **A comforting gospel!**

Jesus proclaimed a most comforting gospel to the women by referring to His disciples as His brethren.

The Scriptures speak more than once of Jesus’ brethren. Jesus identified those that do the will of the Father in heaven as His brothers and sister (Matt. 12:49-50). In the Day of Judgment Jesus will proclaim to the righteous that they had shown mercy to Him by showing mercy to His brethren (Matt. 25:40). In turn, God did predestinate those whom He foreknew, to be conformed to Jesus’ image, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29).

We ought to understand the significance of this

term. It suggests a family, in this case the family of God. In that family God is Father and Jesus Christ is the eldest Son. All those that belong to Jesus are by Jesus’ saving works also sons of God the Father. This also makes them brothers of each other and especially of Jesus, who is their eldest Brother. As sons they are all heirs of God. A son is an heir of all that his father has. This is true also in the family of God. God has an inheritance for His sons—eternal life in glory. This inheritance is earned by the eldest Brother, Jesus Christ.

Now what is amazing is that at this time Jesus still referred to His disciples as His brethren. His disciples had just rejected Him. When Jesus was arrested, they had all fled. This was not so much out of fear, but because they were offended in Him. He was not the earthly Savior they had envisioned Him to be. By abandoning Jesus they had in effect rejected and repudiated Him. They no longer wanted to be associated with Him. He was no longer their Brother. Especially Peter had made that very clear, when later that night he denied Jesus three times. And by rejecting Jesus as their Brother, they had in reality rejected God as their Father. It was true that they were now grieved by their actions. Think of Peter running out into the night upon facing Jesus after his third denial. They had acted in haste. But it was too late to undo what they had done. Jesus was gone. And so it was of greatest significance that Jesus said to the women, “Tell my brethren...” Jesus still counted them as His brethren! They were still part of the family of God!

Here we find a most blessed gospel.

How could Jesus, in light of what had happened, still refer to the disciples as brethren? The answer is that Jesus had just paid the price for sin, even the sin of His disciples in repudiating Him. On the basis of the payment, Jesus had even publicly prayed for forgiveness not only for His disciples but for others of His own that had been involved in crucifying Him. This was His first cross word. And God heard Jesus’ prayer, so that He not only forgave them but also owned them as His own sons.

This blessed gospel Jesus now proclaimed as the resurrected Lord. God’s purpose in Jesus’ resurrection was to bring the blessings of the cross to His people and to do so by proclaiming to them the gospel of the cross.

This is what Jesus did now to the disciples. They had abandoned Him and forfeited their right to the family of God. But by God's grace they grieved over their sins. And so Jesus was quick to put their grieving hearts to rest. He would appear to them later on that evening. But first He appeared to the women with the message, "Tell my brethren..."

And Christ continues to do this as the risen Lord.

All we that belong to Jesus are His brethren. We have been adopted into the family of God on the basis of Christ's perfect work on the cross. This makes us brethren to each other and to Jesus Christ. Together we are heirs of God.

But often we repudiate Jesus Christ and the Father, just as the disciples did. We do this when, for the praise and acceptance of men, we fail to defend Jesus' name. We do this every time we fail to rely upon Jesus' saving power, resulting in a sad turning away from the ways of God to walk with the children of disobedience.

We deserve to be disinherited, just as the disciples did!

But Christ has also removed those offenses by His death on the cross so that we are still members of the family of God and still Jesus' brethren. And the risen Lord Jesus continues still to assure us of that. By the power of His Word and Spirit He leads us to repentance and assures us that we are still His brethren.

### **An important directive!**

Go tell My brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see Me.

The disciples must go into Galilee that Jesus might bring His little flock together once again. The little

flock of God, which numbered about 500, had been scattered as Jesus said it would be. But now they needed to be brought together again. Christ had work for them. He would use them to begin the great work of the new covenant of gathering the elect family of God from among the nations. In His death Jesus had laid the basis for this family and their inheritance. Now in the power of His resurrection He must gather them together. He would do that by the preaching of the gospel to the nations, effectively calling all those ordained by God the Father to be His brethren. But He would accomplish this through His brethren already on the earth. So Jesus called His brethren to Galilee. In Galilee they would be safe from the hostility that they had just witnessed in Jerusalem. There in Galilee Jesus commissioned them to go and preach the gospel. For by the gospel of the cross is the family of God gathered.

This implies a calling today.

The risen Lord is still gathering the family of God. He has already gathered many into the family. And He will continue to do so until the day of His coming.

Christ uses the family of God already gathered to gather still more. He will gather them from the generations of those already gathered. And He will gather them from those raised outside the family of God. Jesus still uses the gospel of His death and resurrection for this purpose.

The calling of the household of faith is to be faithful in proclaiming that gospel.

Then she can also look forward in hope to the final gathering of the whole family of God in heavenly glory.



EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

## A Call for Christian School Teachers

**B**y this time, school boards have offered contracts for teaching positions in our Protestant Reformed Christian schools. Decisions have been made

to sign those contracts. Most positions have likely been filled. If that is true, we may be very thankful.

But there may yet be open positions. Of that, some schools will be

painfully aware. And more vacancies will certainly be created by retirements, female teachers becoming "keepers at home," and the ever-expanding number of classrooms in

our growing schools. There is also the encouraging creation or expansion of special education programs, which take more teachers and special training.

We need good Christian school teachers. Many of them.

My motivation to write is partly, but strongly, personal. My wife and I love our good Christian schools because of our ownership in them for many years as parents and now grandparents of children in these schools. All our children had the high privilege to be taught by good Christian school teachers whose faith and commitment to godly living mirrored our commitments and faith—a privilege I did not have in my youth, and a privilege not all have today. For twenty-five years we joyfully attended parent-teacher conferences, in part to express deepest gratitude to these dedicated servants for their work. Certainly our support for the schools was mixed with weakness, but we supported them in the keen conviction that this was our high calling as Christian parents. Hundreds of other parents have done this as well. Besides the cause of Christ's church, there are few causes as dear to our hearts as our schools. We thank God for the good schools and teachers. Our own parental (and now "grandparental") hearts yearn for good teachers until Christ returns.

But my motivation to write about the need for teachers is deeper than personal love for the schools and teachers. The health of the *churches* is related to the good training of our children. We need

good schools and good school teachers who will stand in the place of parents carrying out their parental, covenantal responsibility—for the sake of the churches. If the parents do not carry out this rich covenant calling of maintaining our schools, the churches will soon disintegrate. I write for the sake of the churches.

Young men and women in the churches, this is a summons to give yourselves for the sake of the schools! I beseech you, consider the need to train to be a teacher of the churches' covenant children.

### Gifts

A good teacher needs at least two natural gifts, *intelligence* and the *aptitude to teach*. A teacher must be *intelligent*, that is, able to think carefully and understand deeply, especially in the particular field he or she teaches. The *aptitude to teach* includes so much that it may better be witnessed than described. It combines the ability to make truth understood, to *all* of the students (not just the intelligent ones), with conviction, all the while managing an energetic group of sinful children or young people... and with a good attitude. It's clear that an aptitude to teach is a gift not everyone possesses, although a good teachers' college will help a prospective teacher *develop* the gift if he has it.

A better teachers' college—a good Reformed teachers' college—could teach the teacher to *apply* the Christian and Reformed faith to all the subjects and to every aspect of the Christian life. Public universities cannot and will not train in this. Many Christian colleges may try, but

often have an improper perspective on the application of the faith to all of life, if they even have the Reformed or Christian faith correct.

Someday God may give our schools the blessing of a teachers' college. In the meantime, the important seminar ("On Reformed Christian Education") taught in the Grand Rapids area for many years by Mr. Jon Huisken, and now taught by another former school teacher, Prof. Russell Dykstra, should be a "must take." Some effort could be made both to supplement this course with others like it, and to make this course available to teachers outside the Grand Rapids area.

But let us not rule out the possibility of some visionaries seeing to the funding of and construction of such a college. May some Christians include such a cause in their wills, and may men and women who love Christian education give sacrificially of their time and energy. A small beginning would not even need a building, a large number of instructors, and certainly not a full four-year curriculum.

A good teacher will also have many *spiritual* gifts. Natural gifts are not sufficient for a *Christian* school teacher. Just as in the gospel ministry, a massive intelligence and great aptitude to teach may be useless, even worse than useless, if they are not paired with humility, godliness, spirituality. Spiritual gifts are developed over the years, very likely in a strong Christian home. They include sincere *love* for God's cause and truth, an *experiential* knowledge of the Reformed

faith, a commitment to covenant children, a deep and genuine will to sacrifice as a servant for the families in whose stead he works, and a full knowledge of and commitment to the PRC. This—Protestant Reformed—is what I, the parent, am. It is what the teacher must be: fully informed and fully committed to the Reformed faith.

One spiritual dimension of teaching in the Christian school is the conviction that teaching is a *calling*. Be clear, teaching is a calling of God, for which God specially qualifies. I urge the young men and women who consider teaching to talk to older teachers about this important reality for teachers: the growing but important conviction that because God has formed his mind and soul for this high task in the kingdom, it is a work he cannot turn from. This doesn't mean that it would be a sin for anyone to leave the teaching profession; it only means that the teacher will be so aware of God's gifts and the schools' needs that he feels a compulsion he can hardly resist.

Spiritual gifts include the grace to *rear* the children. One unique characteristic of a good Christian school is that its teachers see their calling to function largely *as parents*. Teachers stand *in loco parentis*. And no parent is satisfied with mere intellectual growth. A teacher needs wisdom to teach about Christian friendships and about the relationship between boys and girls, and must have the will and wisdom to discipline. Teaching is a *parental* occupation. So I'm neither surprised nor offended when

teachers refer to the students as “my children.” In a very important way, they are. We were always grateful to see this reality: the fatherly/motherly promotion of godliness, and the patient, sympathetic, and *humble* treatment of our children's weaknesses. The teachers understood what it meant to rear the children.

### Hesitation

Not everyone is qualified to teach. But some who are qualified may not know it, or may see obstacles they judge to be too great to overcome.

*I'm neither surprised  
nor offended  
when teachers  
refer to the students  
as “my children.”*

Finances ought not be an obstacle. Most of our teachers, although they are not overpaid, receive sufficient to support themselves, the church, and the poor. The careful work of school boards and the generous gifts of the supporters have made this possible. If a man is not satisfied with a teacher's wage, he may lack one important qualification. One wise teacher gave me his take on wage: the average teacher retires neither opulent nor destitute, and perhaps even better off than most because teachers tend to be prudent money managers. However

that may be, I want to thank publicly the teachers willing to receive a wage not commensurate with their training and abilities.

Others hesitate because they fear criticism that comes with the position of “public servant.” As I was preparing for the ministry, my father, who spent his life as a public servant—both as a teacher, a civil servant, and a long-time elder—told me bluntly, if not in these precise words, “Expect it. It comes with the territory.” It takes thick skin to be a teacher. Not everyone is able to receive criticism—either legitimate or unwise. A warning can be issued to all of us here. Careless criticism will drive away the bad teachers, but good ones too. It will make some cynical, others fearful. In the end, improperly placed criticism hurts the critic. It will damage the critic's children. Worst, it undermines the cause of Christian education. It's “spitting into the wind.” But a good teacher must be able to take criticism. The Lord even teaches them to profit through humble response to criticism. Remember David's response to Shimei's murderous slander: “So let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David.”

There's also legitimate criticism. School boards and principals will regularly assess a teacher's work. What they miss, parents may address. A good teacher will grow from listening carefully to all critical analysis of his work. It's in the nature of being a servant.

Then there is the weight of the work. Teaching is strenuous, time-consuming, demanding in so many

respects. I suppose a teacher with a few years in can rest on his old lesson plans. One of our former seminary professors warned us that an older minister might get away with being lazy. But a teacher who is serious about his work will find it taxing, if not grueling. Besides the long hours of preparation and grading outside normal school hours, the emotional energy needed to care for the dear children is great. It makes me think of what Paul said when he explained the burdens of his ministry (see II Corinthians 11:23-28). I


paraphrase: “Besides those external troubles—shipwrecks, beatings, hunger, cold, assaults, and sleepless nights on a plank in the sea—there is the *anxiety* I have for all the churches” (where *anxiety* is not inaccurate). Like parents, teachers carry the children in their *hearts*.

So it’s no more permissible to say that teachers work but six hours per day and nine months per year than it is to joke that ministers work only one day a week. Good teachers will be exhausted, emotionally and physically. Let no slackers apply.

But God will raise up young men and women with the desire to teach, and then give them the necessary gifts.

He’ll also reward them richly, both in this life and in the life to come.

Let the churches do all in their power to encourage their capable sons and daughters to prepare themselves.

Next time, let me offer concrete ways our covenant communities can do that. 

GO YE INTO ALL THE WORLD

REV. DANIEL KLEYN

## A Goal in the Philippines: Self-Propagating Churches (1)

One of the main goals in foreign mission work must be to establish indigenous churches, churches that are able to exist on their own. The goal must be churches that are self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting.

In a previous article (November 15, 2011, p. 90) we looked at what it means to establish churches that are self-governing. Now we consider the second characteristic of an indigenous church, namely, self-propagating.

What is a self-propagating church?

Every church of Christ on earth is called to carry out the great commission. Every church must go forth into the world and preach the gospel. Beginning in her own land, every church must pass on the truth to others.

A self-propagating church is one that is busy in this

work. She wants others to hear, to know, and to have the truth. She is not selfish with the truth, but speaks of it boldly to others around her.

What must come first, of course, is that she is a self-governing church. She must be properly constituted as a church, for otherwise she cannot call and send forth men to do the work of missions. Closely related to this is the necessity of her being a church that is well grounded in the truth. For how can she teach others if she and her members (including her covenant children) are not well taught? A local congregation must be built up in the faith before she takes on the work of missions.

But once she is well grounded in the truths of God’s Word, and also properly established as a Reformed congregation, a church self-propagates by doing evangelism and mission work. Emulating the Lord Jesus Christ in His love for and compassion toward the lost sheep of Israel (Matt. 9:36), such a church is busy seeking the

---

*Rev. Kleyn is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, the Philippines.*

salvation of the lost through the faithful proclamation of the gospel. She desires the salvation of the elect, for she longs for the return of Christ. She takes up the work of spreading the Word with the prayer that God might be pleased to use her for the gathering in of His elect.

In this connection, one cannot help but be struck by the need for such churches here in the Philippines. Interest in the Reformed faith comes from many parts of the country. Regularly we gain new correspondents and contacts. Frequently we are asked to provide more preaching and teaching. As a country that is steeped in Roman Catholicism, the Philippines is ripe for the spread of the truth that delivers from the bondage of man's works and the awful tyranny of superstition. And each new door that God opens reminds us again of the need to have churches here that are self-propagating—churches that take up the work of preaching the gospel to those who have not yet heard it.

But how do we establish churches that are able to do this, and that do it?

Some missionary endeavors fail because they produce churches that are dependent on the sending churches. This is especially true as regards finances. The approach they take is to use foreign funds in order to assist the local church (especially at first) in its work of spreading the gospel. This often results in churches that can continue to exist only by continuing to receive foreign funds.

What usually brings this about is the desire to use local men for the work of spreading the Word. Realizing that local men are most able to do this, the missionary and sending church focus on training such men for this work. From the outset, suitable local men are chosen and prepared for full-time church work.

This desire and endeavor is good. But sadly, it is often misguided, specifically as regards providing financial support for such men. Because these men are busy in the work of the church, they are unable to earn an income to support themselves and their families. Therefore, they are paid by foreign funds. This enables them to devote themselves full time to spreading the gospel. Usually the idea is that once the work is well underway, and once the local churches are themselves able to support these men, the foreign funds are gradu-

ally discontinued, with the ultimate goal of withdrawing this foreign support altogether.

We certainly recognize that local men are needed for and best able to do this work. Experience has shown us it is indeed true that properly trained local men are best suited to preach, teach, and explain the Word of God to their fellow countrymen. We have seen this in concrete ways in the Philippines, both with the work that the Berean Protestant Reformed Church does in the All of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Gabaldon, and with the work of the First Reformed Church of Bulacan among a fellowship of God's people on the island of Leyte. The local men know the language, including all the nuances of various words (something that takes years for one who is learning the language to grasp). They understand the lives of their own people. They are thoroughly acquainted with their own culture. They have contacts that a foreign missionary does not have—family, friends, neighbors, and fellow-employees. To train local men to do the work of missions and evangelism is indeed the wise way.

But serious problems arise when such men are paid through foreign funds. Jealousy and envy come to the foreground when church members discover that these men are being paid. Novices are appointed for the work, in direct opposition to I Timothy 3:6. Some pursue the ministry simply for the sake of earthly gain, often with the hope of finding a way out of poverty. And a spirit of dependence is created on the mission field, with churches that are unable to survive without the constant input and giving of others.

In the end, this approach is ineffective. The following account makes this clear. It comes from an article entitled "Unhealthy Dependency vs. Sustainability," written by Rev. Joel L. Hogan, a director of the Christian Reformed World Missions of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.


So what does unhealthy dependency look like? Perhaps it is best, at this point, to give some practical illustrations of unhealthy dependency. The first example is from my own past. I worked as a missionary in the Philippines for over 17 years. As a fresh young missionary, I planted an inner city church in the city of... I was working in poor communities in the city and the



response was exciting. We started out in a small community hall, but quickly outgrew the little building, which could only hold about 35 people. I then found a building to rent and I paid all the rent with mission money. I thought I was doing a good thing and that the poor folks I was serving couldn't afford it. The church continued to grow. Finally, we began to outgrow the rental facility and I thought that the only way that this developing church would be able to stand on its own would be to purchase its own facilities. However, the people lacked resources to buy property in the inner city. I helped them to do several fund raising projects to build up a savings account. They were committed to doing all they could to raise money, but if they located in the inner city, it would be a very, very long time before they had enough money to buy a building. Then a supporter visited ... and saw the need. He sent a check to cover the cost of buying a piece of property that had been foreclosed and we purchased the property. The money that the church had saved partially paid for some renovations on the building. I initially felt great and the group was very happy to have a nice worship facility in the inner city. However, as time went on, the group could not even generate enough resources to properly care for and maintain the building. Today the building

is in very poor condition. I had not been sensitive to the fact that I created an unhealthy dependency by building something that was beyond their ability to even maintain. Far too many of their resources had to go into the building for repairs, paying taxes, etc. Moreover, that church in ... has never planted another church. I had modeled a completely irreproducible church planting strategy. In their minds, they could never get the funds to get a building for another group, so they didn't even try.

Notice that Rev. Hogan makes the significant observation that a church that is not self-supporting (something we hope to consider in a future article) will fail to be self-propagating. He provides us with evidence of the fact that to inject foreign funds into a mission field creates dependence. Such funding not only runs contrary to the goal of establishing self-supporting churches, but also ruins the goal of establishing self-propagating churches.

Next time we will direct our attention to the positive aspects of working toward the goal of establishing self-propagating churches. 

ALL THY WORKS SHALL PRAISE THEE

MR. JOEL MINDERHOUD

## A Bear Bereaved

**H**ushai, David's faithful servant and counselor, used the picture of a bear robbed of her cubs to describe David's supposed rage over his recent losses in order to discourage Absalom from pursuing immediately after David (II Sam. 17:8). For who would be so foolish as to go after such a one as that, rashly and unprepared? The unparalleled ferocity and rage of a mother bear who has been prematurely separated from her cubs is used in Scripture to picture a fierce sense of anger. A mother bear will become violent very quickly if she perceives any danger to her cubs

---

*Mr. Minderhoud is a teacher in Covenant Christian High School and an elder in Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.*

and will protect them to the very end. This important instinct given by God to these animals, as a means to maintain the bear population, is worthy of consideration from both a physical and a spiritual perspective.

### Limited Population Growth

In a recent scientific study of grizzly bear populations in the Banff National Park area, where special techniques were intentionally used to try to increase the grizzly population, the overall population change was estimated at only 1.04 (a value of 1.0 would mean the population did not change; a value less than 1.0 would mean the population decreased). The population of any species in a particular region can, of course, fluctuate, depending upon the abundance of food, the

harshness of the climate, the impact of predators, and similar factors. However, this study illustrates that even when some of the limitations on population growth are minimized, the bear population struggles to maintain itself.

Grizzly bears have one of the slowest reproductive rates of all North American mammals. This is due in part to the fact that most female bears are not reproductively mature until they are about five years of age. Add to this that when a bear has cubs, the cubs stay with the mother for the next two or three years, during which time the female will not mate. Since the average life-span of a bear is about twenty years, a female may give birth only five times, usually to a pair of cubs each time. Consequently, the number of bear offspring is quite limited compared to other mammals. In the ten to fifteen reproductive years of a female bear, not even a half dozen cubs will be raised to maturity. Therefore, one can see quite easily why bear cubs are valuable commodities.

In addition to this, it appears that the ability to bring forth offspring is dependent on the amount of energy reserves the female bear has accumulated in the summer months. In a previous article (March 1, 2012, p. 257) we looked at some of the physiological aspects of a bear in hibernation. Another unique aspect in regards to this is that, though bears mate in the summer, the fertilized egg does not implant in the uterus until hibernation. If the female bear has not accumulated enough fat reserves, the pregnancy will not take. This assures that cubs will come only when there is enough energy stores for them all to survive. If the pregnancy does take, the mother bear will wake during the middle of the winter to give birth and then go back into hibernation. The cubs, weighing maybe a pound, do not hibernate but are provided for in the den by the warmth and milk of the mother, a milk that is about forty percent fat—ten times more fat content than cow milk. In about three months they will leave the den weighing only about four to eight pounds, with a mother ready to defend and protect her cubs, for the dangers are many and varied. Male bears, for example, sometimes kill cubs for food. The mothers, therefore, must be especially protective. Consequently, for the next two to three summers the she-bear diligently cares for her precious cubs.

## A Bear Robbed of Her Whelps

Though bears are often viewed as fierce, flesh-tearing creatures, it must be remembered that bears are omnivores—creatures that eat both plants and animals. In fact, the vast majority of a bear's diet comes from plant material and only a small amount is in the form of meat. Most of the latter comes from previously killed or dead animals. Bears do not kill very many animals for food, and when they do, they kill the young and easy-to-catch animals. So in reality bears are, under normal circumstances, not quite as dangerous as we may think them to be.

However, come upon a bear unexpectedly or in some way endanger a bear's cubs, and you will quickly learn of the fierceness of this creature. Researchers find that female bears are highly aggressive when they are with their cubs. And what makes this aggression so formidable is the sheer size and strength of some of these animals. We may very well encounter an angry mother bird and hardly think anything of it; but to come near an angered mother bear is an entirely different matter. Grizzly bears, for example, stand about seven feet tall and range in weight from four hundred to eight hundred pounds, although even heavier bears have been found. They are capable of snapping off tree branches more than six inches in diameter and knocking large boulders from their pathway with a swipe of a paw. It is with this strength and aggression that the she-bear protects her young.

An evolutionist can likely cite several examples of animals that do not care for their young very well, perhaps abandoning them altogether, or even killing and eating their offspring. Such examples are, however, rare. And as we well know, an exception does not prove the rule. In fact, the exception only tends to strengthen or highlight the rule—in this case, that mothers *care for* their young.

## The Lessons Taught

A bear protecting her cubs ought to remind us of the great calling we have of bringing forth covenant children and rearing them vigilantly in the fear of God's name. May our mothers not be as the ostrich, which is hardened against her young ones (Job 39:13-18). But may our mothers (and fathers too, of course)


vigorously defend their children, as God's children, from the attacks of the world (whether in the form of false doctrine, foolish companions, worldly music and entertainment, or any other of the multitude of evils that prey on our children) and teach them diligently to fight against the wiles of the devil and their own sinful natures. May our mothers learn from the grizzly bear to protect diligently the covenant seed in the way of being "keepers at home" and "joyful mother(s) of children" (Tit. 2:5; I Tim. 5:14; Ps. 113:9).

However, Scripture draws our attention more directly to other important truths when it speaks of a bear robbed of her cubs. In Proverbs 17:12 we read, "Let a bear robbed of her whelps meet a man, rather than a fool in his folly." Here we are taught of the seriousness of walking in folly, or of fellowshiping with a fool who walks in his folly. So spiritually dangerous and evil is the fool walking in sinful ways, that it would be better that we meet a bear robbed of her cubs than to meet a fool in his folly. Though a bear might wound physically, foolishness cuts to the soul. One must as carefully flee foolishness and those that walk in it, as one would avoid coming between a mother bear and her cubs. Flee unrighteous anger, reckless pursuit of pleasure, sinful pride, false doctrine, and anything else that is wicked and perverse—for such folly destroys both individuals and the church of God. The danger is a very real thing, for we all have a sinful nature that is inclined to such foolishness. As adopted children of God, we give thanks to God that He has given us a new heart and has freed us from living in bondage to sin and that sinful, foolish nature. Thanks be to God for the grace to "get wisdom...for she is thy life" (Prov. 4:5-13).

Finally, the fierce anger of a she-bear bereaved of her cubs is a reminder that our God is a jealous God and that He will not give His glory to another. In Hosea 13:6-8 we read,

According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten me. Therefore I will be unto them as a lion: as a leopard by the way will I observe them: I will meet them as a bear that is bereaved of her whelps, and will rend the caul of their heart, and there will I devour them like a lion: the wild beast shall tear them.

In this passage we see the terrible consequence of forgetting the Lord. To know God and partake of His good gifts but to refuse to praise Him for them is a serious matter. It is grievous that in times of peace and bounty, when we ought to be bubbling with praise to God, who alone is the giver of every good and perfect gift, we often are unthankful and seem to live as if we have no need of Him. When this characterizes the church as a whole, as it did Israel of old, then the jealous God comes as a bear bereaved of her whelps. As a nation, Israel was destroyed at the paw of the bear. But the elect were then, and are today, saved in the way of this judgment. For God comes in judgment to condemn those who refuse to acknowledge Him as Lord of all, but to awaken in us, His covenant people, a renewed zeal and an appreciation for all the benefits of walking in covenant fellowship with Him. This warning and similar ones in Scripture are real and serve God's purpose to turn us—those whom He loves—from wandering the wrong way. "For grace is conferred by means of admonitions" (Canons III/IV, Art. 17). We must take to heart these admonitions, recognizing the seriousness of forgetting the Lord—even for a time—and turn from our sins. And we must always be reminded of God's sovereign purpose in such warnings and judgments—to accomplish our salvation. How grateful we are to God that He has poured out His wrath on Christ, so that we may be delivered from the guilt of sin and know only His boundless love. Thanks be to God for such a deliverance.

May God give us the grace to see all creatures, including a she-bear robbed of her cubs, in the light of the Word and to learn from them. The great danger of an encounter with a raging bear must teach us of the extreme danger of a fool and his folly. We must pray for wisdom—wisdom to abhor all the folly of a fool; for his folly leads only to death. Let us also learn to heed God's warnings to flee folly and all that would separate us from the fellowship of our covenant God. Rather than walking with the fool or in the way of folly, let us walk the way of wisdom, rejoicing in the true life of the covenant He has graciously given us—a privileged life of service and friendship with Him. 

## God's Purpose with Adam (3)

## God's Purpose That Adam Fall

We have considered the fact that the life we have in Christ is higher than the life Adam had before the fall. Should that not lead us to think about whether it was God's plan all along that Adam would fall, so that Christ would come, and raise us to the higher life that is found only in Him?

Indeed, it was God's plan. In fact, everything that takes place does so according to God's perfect plan.

**God's will always accomplished**

Every event in history is something that God has decreed will take place. In eternity, God ordained everything that happens in time. It is not merely that God *knows* what is going to happen; He has *decreed* what is going to happen. The Scriptures make this very clear when they speak of God as the one: "...who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph. 1:11).

God always accomplishes that which pleases Him. God says: "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure" (Is. 46:10).

Here God makes clear that He is not only able to do all that He pleases, but that He actually accomplishes all of His pleasure. Every person He desires to save He saves. Every event He desires to happen will actually take place.

So what Adam did was evil, yet his sin took place according to God's perfect plan. God's will is accomplished even when men and demons commit wicked acts. The acts themselves are evil, but God uses their evil for the glory of His name and for the good of His people.

---

*Rev. Lanning is pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa.*

*Previous article in this series: March 15, 2012, p. 283.*

**Christ: The goal**

Looking specifically now at the fall of Adam, we see that it was God's will that Adam would fall. When God created all things, He created them not for Adam, but for Christ. Speaking of Christ, the Scriptures say: "...all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:16b)."


There are a number of other verses that speak of all things being created by God's Son. But this verse says that all things were created not only *by Him*, but also *for Him*. Christ was the goal. He was always the goal.

Christ Himself declared this repeatedly in the vision given to the apostle John: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22:13).

The same phrase, "Alpha and Omega," appears also in Revelation 1:8; 1:11; and 21:6. Twice at the beginning and twice at the end of the book of Revelation, Jesus stressed the importance of the truth that He is the beginning and the end (or goal) of all things.

The sending of Christ was not some plan B, to which God supposedly had to resort after His first plan with Adam failed. All along it was God's plan that we would have a life that could not be lost. It was God's eternal intention that we would be brought into Christ, in whom alone we can obtain everlasting life.

With this as the goal, God decreed that Adam would fall, so that we would need the eternal Son of God to become a man to save us. And when this Son would come, He would not only pay the full price that we owed for all our sin, but also purchase for us the right to receive His glorious heavenly life—a life that can never be lost.

How marvelous is the plan of God! How wonderful is His most excellent wisdom! 

## Robert Godfrey's "Reformed Dream" at NAPARC (I)

Rev. Dr. Robert Godfrey of the United Reformed Churches (URC) has a dream. He has written about this dream. He first wrote about his dream in 1997 in a Reformed periodical, the *Outlook*, and again in 2005 when that article was republished in *Modern Reformation*. Now he is speaking about his dream. At the thirty-seventh meeting of the North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) held in November 2011 in Atlanta, Georgia, Dr. Godfrey, as the invited keynote speaker, addressed the council on the topic "A Reformed Dream." He also spoke on the subject in May 2011 at a meeting of Reformed Ecclesiastical Dialogue (RED), a group within NAPARC that was formed largely in response to Dr. Godfrey's original article. RED also dreams Godfrey's dream and is actively working within the boundaries of NAPARC to realize his dream.

NAPARC is a council of Reformed and Presbyterian denominations that have voluntarily joined together. "Confessing Jesus Christ as only Savior and Sovereign Lord over all of life," NAPARC

affirm[s] the basis of the fellowship of Presbyterian and Reformed Churches to be full commitment to the Bible in its entirety as the Word of God written, without error in all its parts and to its teaching as set forth in the Heidelberg Catechism, the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dort, the Westminster Confession of Faith, and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. That the adopted basis of fellowship be regarded as warrant for the establishment of a formal relationship of the nature of the council, that is, a fellowship that enables the constituent churches to advise, counsel, and cooperate in various matters with one another and hold out before each other the desirability and need for organic union of churches that are of like faith and practice.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.naparc.org/basis>.

*Rev. Langerak is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois.*

The member denominations read like an alphabet soup of Reformed churches in North America and include the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church (ARPC), the Canadian Reformed Churches (CanRC), the Reformed Church of Quebec (ERQ), the Free Reformed Churches of North America (FRCNA), the Heritage Reformed Congregations (HRC), the Korean American Presbyterian Church (KAPC), the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC), the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), the Presbyterian Reformed Church (PresRC), the Reformed Church in the United States (RCUS), the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), the United Reformed Churches in North America (URCNA).

The purpose of this fellowship is to

1. Facilitate discussion and consultation between member bodies on those issues and problems which divide them as well as on those which they face in common and by the sharing of insights "communicate advantages to one another" (*Institutes IV, 2, 1*).
2. Promote the appointment of joint committees to study matters of common interest and concern.
3. Exercise mutual concern in the perpetuation, retention, and propagation of the Reformed faith.
4. Promote cooperation wherever possible and feasible on the local and denominational level in such areas as missions, relief efforts, Christian schools, and church education.<sup>2</sup>

The last synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) authorized its Contact Committee to send observers to the 2011 meeting of NAPARC.

NAPARC is in the middle of a revival of discussions about its purpose to promote "organic union." According to a *Christian Renewal* report,

the emphasis of this year's meeting was a consideration of what organic unity means and how it could be accomplished. NAPARC's primary goals are to facilitate cooperation and to emphasize the need for organic union. Over the life of NAPARC, much more time and emphasis have been placed on cooperation than on union, according to some veteran delegates. Two years

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.naparc.org/basis>.

ago NAPARC created a committee to make recommendations about how it could make great progress on that second goal.<sup>3</sup>

One result of this revival and emphasis was NAPARC's invitation to Dr. Godfrey to give his speech "A Reformed Dream."

Intrigued by the title of his speech and of the report of "much excitement about Godfrey's idea and also much concern about how it could be implemented," I contacted him to inquire whether a recording of his speech was available so that I could write a report for the *Standard Bearer*.<sup>4</sup> His secretary informed me that no recording was available from NAPARC or RED. I regret that there was no recording made of the speech. It would have helped to clarify certain questions. However, I asked if I could have a copy of his speech, and Dr. Godfrey kindly sent me an outline of the speech he gave at the November 2011 meeting of NAPARC. The outline is helpful and shows that the original broad outline of Godfrey's "dream" is still very much intact.

What is his dream about which many, including many at NAPARC, are excited? The dream at its most ambitious is nothing less than the formation of a general assembly or general synod composed of various Reformed and Presbyterian denominations as independent synods. In his article on the subject, Dr. Godfrey gave the shadowy outlines of his dream: "Let all of these denominations (or as many as are willing) join together under one general assembly (or general, national synod) with each former denomination becoming a particular synod under that general assembly."<sup>5</sup>

Drawing a fuller picture he continued:

The general assembly would be composed of delegations from the synods according to the size of the synods (in fairness to the larger synods), but the decisions of the assembly would have to be ratified by a majority of the synods (in fairness to the smaller synods.) The

<sup>3</sup> Drew Gordon, "NAPARC wrestles with the question of cooperative unity," *Christian Renewal* 30, no. 7 (January 18, 2012):14.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> W. Robert Godfrey, "A Reformed Dream," *Modern Reformation* 14, no. 5, "Shall We Still Protest" (Sept.–Oct. 2005):16–17.

assembly would have the authority to remove a synod that was judged to have departed from the Reformed faith but would not have the authority to interfere with the internal operations of the synod (*MR*, 16–17).

"Each synod would initially continue to function exactly as it does now as a denomination. All current practices, teachings, and ministries would continue as they are." There is also the hope that "the assembly would encourage greater cooperation and coordination among the synods, and over time some synods would probably merge, but each synod would be free to make those decisions on its own" (*MR*, 16–17).

According to Dr. Godfrey, his dream addresses a "weakness" among Reformed churches in expressing unity. To realize this dream requires Reformed Christians to be "as bold and courageous in pursuing the unity of the church as we have been in pursuing the purity of the church." It also requires "willingness to accept some teachings and practices different from our own" (*MR*, 16–17).

The "dream" is an old one—a dream for unity that allows for significant differences on substantive issues in the name of unity. It was the "dream," or some version of it, that *Outlook* editor Rev. John Vander Ploeg proposed in 1974, to which *Standard Bearer* editor Homer Hoeksema responded.<sup>6</sup> A version of this "dream" resurfaced in the 1990s with the separation of some discontented churches from the Christian Reformed Church and the formation of the Alliance of Reformed Churches (ARC), to which *Standard Bearer* editor David Engelsma responded.<sup>7</sup> It is a siren song that has been sung repeatedly in the history of the church, in its most egregious form by Jehoshaphat to Ahab; by the Roman Catholics at Regensburg; and today in Evangelicals and Catholics Together and the World Council of Churches.

Godfrey's dream shows that the original ARC dream of a trans-denominational unification of Reformed churches is still alive. If he cannot be credited with

<sup>6</sup> Homer Hoeksema, "A Realistic Response to 'A Dream,'" *Standard Bearer* 50, no. 17 (June 1974): 340–42; "Analysis and Response," *Standard Bearer* 51, no. 1 (October 1, 1974):7–10.

<sup>7</sup> David J. Engelsma, "Aloof from the Alliance," *Standard Bearer* 69, no 17 (June 1993): 389–91.

originating the dream, he certainly has taken it to new, ambitious heights.

We should have a problem with Dr. Godfrey's dream.

The problem is not the dream's emphasis on unity. Although for a Reformed man to put the words "unity" and "dream" in the same sentence runs the risk of denying the reality of the unity of the church in Jesus Christ. It is as absurd to speak of the dream of unity as it would be to speak of the dream of holiness or of any other perfection of the church. We believe the oneness and thus the unity of the church.

The PRC and every Reformed man and woman are never against unity. We believe the calling to keep the unity of the Spirit. This is why our local congregations are members of a denomination. This is why the Protestant Reformed denomination has a committee for contact with other churches, whose constitution states the committee's calling to engage in the legitimate activity of discussions with other denominations.

The problem with Godfrey's dream is that while it speaks of the importance of the truth, the confessions, and the need for unity in the truth, it seeks to realize it illegitimately and to the detriment of the truth, the confessions, and unity in that truth.

The dream discounts the unity of the denomination as unsatisfactory, indeed even as a hindrance to the dream, because denominations "allow their individual histories (and suspicions) to block a visible expression of unity" (*MR*, 16–17). In the case of the PRC, the "histories" are matters of the maintenance of fundamental, confessional points of doctrine, and there are no "suspicions" but concrete synodical decisions. Those histories are directly related to the pursuit of unity as well, a unity in the truth.

Godfrey's minimization of denominational unity also comes out in his explanation of the advantages of realizing his dream: "[It] would show our fidelity to the Bible's call for unity" and remedy the "weakness" of Reformed churches to pursue unity. This "weakness" he attributes to a denominational concern to preserve "distinctives," such as exclusive psalmody without instrumental accompaniment that could be given up. The characterization of Reformed churches as strong on purity and weak on unity is preposterous. The

very existence of a Reformed denomination, provided that it is not merely a loose collection of independent churches, or a hierarchy, is a massive testimony to the Reformed pursuit of unity, and its unity is precious. Dr. Godfrey also speaks of "distinctives," as though they are merely parochial concerns of a denomination. But if these "distinctives" involve the doctrines of the Reformed confessions, no Reformed church has the right to give up such "distinctives" or tolerate doctrines contrary to those "distinctives," or she loses her identity as a Reformed church (*MR*, 16–17).

The dream also discounts the work of the denomination to manifest unity through a committee for contact with other churches. Dr. Godfrey suggests as a solution to the "weakness" of failing to express unity among Reformed churches that they could "continue having interchurch relations committees talk to one another and seek organic union after working through all differences and suspicions." He proposes his dream as "another option." His dream would not require "local changes for any of the denominations," if only they "accept some teachings and practices different from our own" (*MR*, 16–17). It is a proposed union as a general synod without working through the differences—substantial difference—that presently keep these denominations apart. It skirts the calling of the church to work through differences and, if unable, to remain separate for the sake of the truth.

Furthermore, the dream is unsound church politically and would completely overturn the decent and orderly government of Dordt. The dream proposes a new denomination. Any new denomination would have to be church politically sound, but the denomination of Dr. Godfrey is not church politically sound.

The general synod that Dr. Godfrey proposes is no synod, at least not according to Dordt. The Reformed polity set down at Dordt knows of no assembly broader than the national (denominational) synod. His general synod is multi-denominational. In Godfrey's dream the general synod "would encourage greater cooperation and coordination among the synods [denominations]," while in Reformed polity the synod is the expression of the cooperation and coordination between federated churches.

Further, his general synod is not Dordt's idea of the

broadest gathering of churches federated together in a denomination, but a loose collection of autonomous denominations with which the general synod could not “interfere.” This is a strange choice of words in itself, because a Reformed man honors the synod and synodical authority and does not view synodical work and decisions as interference, but decency and order. Reformed polity knows of no synod that issues nonbinding advice for the narrower assemblies.

Reformed church polity knows of no titular body as proposed by Dr. Godfrey, because the Bible does not know of it. The Jerusalem synod issued decrees “for to keep,” that is, they were binding on the churches, a principle embodied at Dordt in Article 36 of the church order.

Furthermore, the Reformed provincial synod was not the novel entity that Dr. Godfrey envisions. His vision injects new meaning into the venerable, though largely obsolete, Reformed provincial synod of the more glorious days of Reformed orthodoxy. The provincial synod of Dordt was never meant to be an independent body equivalent to a denomination, with its own rules,

doctrines, and regulations, untouchable by a trans-denominational general synod. It was a synod that was provincial and not national in constitution, and the national synod had the same jurisdiction over it that the provincial synod had over the classes that made it up—real binding authority.

Dr. Godfrey’s proposed denomination has virtually nothing in common with Dordt except some names. Evident in Godfrey’s dream is not the Reformed polity of Dordt, but the strange polity of his own URC, in which local churches are independent and only loosely connected with the denomination, even having the power to ratify—or ignore—synodical decisions, a reactionary polity originating from their stormy beginnings in the CRC.

The problems with Dr. Godfrey’s dream, however, run deeper. His dream is an artificial attempt to bring about a fervently desired unity by brushing aside significant differences and minimizing the deep divisions that exist in the Reformed church world over substantial issues.

About this next time. 

## Judgment and the Estate of Men

### Ecclesiastes 3:16-22

In Chapter 3 of Ecclesiastes, Solomon contemplates God’s sovereign providence, God’s counsel in time, as it shapes the life of men under the sun. Man senses that work of God, but walks over against it in darkness. This is brought out yet more fully in what he says in this section. Verse 15 ends on the note, “God requireth that which is past,” or more literally “seeks what is pursued.” In the activities of men, God is a righteous judge. In His

counsel and purpose, and in His providence, God judges the works of men in time and eternity. Seeing this is, however, a matter of faith.

What is seen under the sun among men stands in contrast to this truth. “And moreover I saw the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there” (Eccl. 3:16). Solomon looked to the place where judgment was to be found, where justice was to be administered in truth. It was not there. Looking to the affairs of men, in court and civil dealings among men, which in Israel were to be according to the law of God, one expected to find justice in the fear of God. But what was found there was a perversion of truth and right, a bending of justice in sin. This is no less

---

*Rev. Miersma is pastor of the Immanuel Protestant Reformed Church in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada.*

*Previous article in this series: March 1, 2012, p. 255.*



true in our day in a sinful world. This was not only in the corruption and perversion of formal judgment, the rule of law, but it was a corruption and perversion found also in the judges themselves. Where uprightness or righteousness in the person of the judge should be found, there was iniquity. They and their judgments were corrupted and perverted. Sin and iniquity lie as a stain upon all the affairs of men. When men stand in places of power and responsibility, in the place of authority to render just judgment, iniquity is there. Men defraud their neighbor under the “appearance of right” (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 42), by cunning devices and with lies and deceit.

Solomon does not enter directly into the causes of this perversion of justice. The Word of God abundantly testifies of the covetousness of men, of the taking of bribes, of influence pedaling, and of the power of rich men to oppress their neighbor. The wickedness of man and his wickedness in judgment fill the world around us under the sun. We should note, however, that Solomon, being king, beholds this not only in the world in general but also as one who rules in the life of the church. In Israel also this perversion of justice was to be found.

Our text does imply a certain spiritual root that is at the heart of such perversion. It is that men, walking in the arrogance of sin and pride of heart, put from them the truth of God and His judgment. They say within themselves that God does not know. In their darkness they say there is no one above them who will require what they do as they pursue their prey and persecute the afflicted. Thus it is with the rich man in Psalm 73, men of power in the earth:

Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth (Ps. 73:6-9).

It may seem under the sun that such wickedness of men goes unchecked and unpunished. Solomon himself, though king, was unable to restrain it. Yet, the testimony of God’s Word, which we hold by faith, stands in opposition to what is seen. Solomon sets before us both what he sees under the sun and what he contemplates in his heart by faith. He shows us his own inner thoughts. “I said in

mine heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked: for there is a time there for every purpose and for every work” (Eccl. 3:17). God does judge the affairs of men according to His own counsel and purpose. Included in that counsel is that wicked men judge wickedly, for sin must be exposed as sin. “Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction” (Ps. 73:18). This too is in the seasons of God’s providence.

But God will judge the matter with a righteous judgment, that men should render an account before Him. He judges between the righteous and the wicked. He did so between Saul and David, and between David and Absalom. The unjust judge is one who is a fool, who walks to his own destruction, but in God’s time and not by man’s determination. God will bring truth and righteousness to light and wickedness into condemnation. He is truly the righteous judge of all. It is not true that God does not see or know. He does. But that is not immediately apparent under the sun, for judgment is not executed instantly but in its season. That God does judge, is judging even now, and will finally judge in eternity is known by faith. God’s judgment serves His counsel and purpose. In that confidence Solomon speaks in his heart of a fact: “God shall judge.” Nothing is hid from His sight. His judgment is sure, “God will judge the righteous and the wicked” (Eccl. 3:17).

Solomon further reflects on this working of God’s providence in judgment: “I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts” (Eccl. 3:18). There is in God’s sovereign dealings a working of judgment that tests and proves men in the affairs of life, exposing what they are in themselves. Over against the arrogance of men stands the reality that he will die. The wages of sin is death, and man is a creature of the dust. In his pride he exalts himself and works wickedness, corrupting also justice and judgment, in the service of his own pride and covetousness. But he is as the beast of the earth.

What stands on the foreground is the truth of man’s creaturely powerlessness. For all his boasting in himself, he is of the earth earthy. The statement is very direct, he is a beast. Lest we misunderstand the point of comparison, Solomon explains it, “For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast:

for all is vanity" (Eccl. 3:19). The beasts of the field were formed of the earth in their creation. They too are of the dust of the ground. Their breath is the breath of a living organism tied to the earth. They too lie under the curse that came upon the creation because of man's sin. Man, as he is formed of the dust of the ground, is not different from the beasts in this aspect of his creation. He breathes the same air, eats and drinks, begets offspring. He is tied to the earth and is earthy, a creature of the dust.

This organic commonality with the animals man shares in such a way that he can see it under the sun. It is not hid from him. It answers and rebukes the sinful pride with which man exalts himself. And like the beast also, he dies. He returns to the dust. "All go unto one place; all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again" (Eccl. 3:20). Solomon has in view the physical reality of death and corruption from the viewpoint of what is seen under the sun. The departure of the breath of a man and that of an animal in death are visibly the same. They both die, and both return to the dust in corruption. From that viewpoint the sons of Adam have not "preeminence above a beast."

Where are the great men of the earth who heaped riches to themselves, defrauding their neighbor? Where is the great name, the powerful man, the statesman of the earth, or the man of power and influence? Their names run across the headlines for a season, under God's providence, in the affairs of life, and then the headlines proclaim: they are dead. They carry nothing with them. The result is that "all is vanity" (Eccl. 3:19). They are like the rich fool in Jesus' parable who heaps and gathers, builds bigger barns, and would then take his ease, "But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20).


That reality of death confronts man under the sun and testifies against him. But there is more, which cannot be seen with the eye. Man is not a mere beast. He is a creature of the dust, and this alone reproves him; but he has also a soul, a human spirit, distinct from the animals. The animal's life is communicated organically by its begetting of offspring. It is of the earth alone, and its life is in its

blood. But man was made by a twofold creation. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul or organism. Physically man is like the beast, and yet he is different. But this difference cannot be seen with the eye directly at the moment of death. It, too, is known by faith and not sight. Solomon therefore adds, "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" (Eccl. 3:21). With that distinction comes the truth that it is appointed unto men once to die and afterward the judgment. The Lord will require the soul of the rich fool. He will stand before God. This truth the wicked of the world do not want to hear in their pride and covetousness. He who walks by faith knows the end of the matter, and the distinction between a man and a beast. The spirit of man goeth upward, unto God who gave it and who judges the works of men.

The application of this truth Solomon will make more fully, particularly to the young man and his labor, activ-

ity, and walk, "...but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Eccl. 11:9). Here he would have us to draw a conclusion concerning the activities of life and their place, by contrast with the folly of sin. God ordains the seasons of life. To walk humbly with God from day to day in contentment is the true value of the transitory gifts of life. The future is in God's hands and under His dominion. God ordains what happens and befalls

us in this life. Not in the life of the world, but in Him is our true refuge, as the God of our salvation in Christ. The things of the world and the activities of this life are our portion under the hand of God.

Solomon thus draws this conclusion, "Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion: for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him?" (Eccl. 3:22). The answer to the question "who?" is no one, no mere man. The present blessings and rejoicing in contentment are our portion. They are from the hand of the Lord. Tomorrow is unknown to us, hidden in God's counsel. It is in His hand that we should thus rest, content with our daily bread. 

*To walk  
humbly with God  
from day to day  
in contentment  
is the true value of the  
transitory gifts of life.*

# Happiness in the Christian Home

One of the richest blessings that God has ordained from the beginning for the happiness of man is marriage and the covenant home. God created man with a deep need for companionship and friendship. It was not good for him to be alone. God gave to man a great and precious gift, therefore, when He created woman for him.

According to Scripture, man and woman were both created in the image and likeness of God. They were created able to know and to love God and also to love one another. They were in this respect made equal. In chapter 2 of I Corinthians we read that God created woman to be the glory of man. The woman was made able to serve him, to fulfill his deepest needs, and to live with him in fellowship and love in the blessed bond of marriage. So mysteriously intimate is the marriage bond ordained by God that in it a man and woman are no longer two but one flesh. Adam called Eve bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh.

After God created marriage for the first man and woman, He blessed them and commanded them to be fruitful and multiply. This command of God was not only for the purpose of bringing forth the human race but also for happy family life and the nurture of children in their home.

This very beautiful and blessed institution and the relationships of marriage and the family were devastated by man's rebellion against God, which rebellion resulted in the corruption of his nature. There is in fact no relationship among men that is more corrupted by sin, and made more miserable and wretched, than the institution of marriage. The very fact that marriage is in its nature such a blessed and intimate bond makes

its tearing apart by the sin and the evil actions of men so bitter and wretched. Contrary to the imagination of those who commit the treachery of it, there is no such thing as a 'friendly' divorce. The tragic consequences of the broken lives of children are often so painful that they last a lifetime. Deep-seated bitterness, anger, and confusion are the psychological and spiritual consequences for the children of divorced parents.

God in His great mercy in Christ has redeemed the marriage institution. So highly has God exalted marriage, in this world of sin and misery, that He made it to be a picture of the blessedness of the love and faithfulness of Christ for His church.

The foundation of true happiness in marriage, we must always remember, is the simple and yet very profound truth that all good things come from God. What man or woman does not want to be truly happy? Sinful man imagines that this happiness is possible without God and even in a life of rebellion and enmity against God. He seeks for happiness in the wrong places. He seeks happiness in ever-increasing riches and glory of this world, popular lifestyles, the building of palatial houses, and entertainment that satisfies his sinful lust and pride. He seeks happiness in the abusing of his own body and the body of his neighbor in the practice of sexual immorality. He corrupts and destroys his own marriage and the marriage of his neighbor, and he brings shame and the judgment of God on himself and ruin upon his own house.

When God saves His elect people in Christ and gives them the gift of His Holy Spirit in their hearts and realizes His covenant with them, He makes Christian marriage and the Christian home and family possible. A covenant home is, for the truly Christian man, a haven of rest, a place of peace and safety, a place for happy life and fellowship with those whom he dearly loves in the Lord.

---

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

The home of the God-fearing man is intended by God to be the sphere for the spiritual nurture and strengthening and equipping of the covenant children that God gives. There the necessary and loving discipline can be administered to turn children away from the foolishness of sin with which they are born. In the Christian home the truth of God's Word can be taught to children. Spiritual principles for godly living can be established in their hearts. In the covenant family children are sheltered from many of the evils of this world, but also in this sphere they are equipped and trained for their calling in this ungodly world. In the home they are to be warned and admonished to live antithetically in this ungodly world in the fear of God and in holiness and obedience to the God who saved them.

Divorce and unbiblical remarriage wrecks all that God has made for the peace and happiness of man in marriage. In the world this is popularized by Hollywood and Broadway. But in all of this, man is cursed of God and will ultimately make himself miserable and wretched. Be not deceived. Let God's people never make watching this lifestyle on TV, on the Internet, or whatever, the source of their entertainment.

By His mercy the Lord delivers us from the great evil of the world, restores His work among us, and enables us to live again in the blessed covenant bond of marriage He has created. What great joy there is in the covenant home and family where the fear of God is and where God's people by His grace and Spirit know and love His truth. Few earthly joys can compare to this great joy.

It is the calling of the church of Jesus Christ steadfastly to teach the great biblical principles of Christian marriage and family living. It is the calling of the Christian church to maintain the sanctity of marriage and to do everything in its power to preserve the holiness and blessedness and happiness of the Christian home. Every church that compromises the biblical teaching of Christian marriage and tolerates impenitent immorality in her midst will reap the judgment of God and will bring into her very midst the misery and wretchedness of broken homes and the treacherous shattering of lives of men and women and children who are her members.

God has blessed our Protestant Reformed Churches

by preserving among us His wonderful and glorious truth of salvation through faith in His Son Jesus Christ by His sovereign and particular grace alone, as well as the beautiful and wonderful truth of the unconditional covenant of grace, wherein is displayed the everlasting faithfulness and mercy of God to His people. Our marriages and Christian homes must be living pictures of those glorious and blessed truths of God's covenant. Often we are ridiculed and mocked for what we believe. Some of the most bitter criticism comes even from family and relatives who try to justify their own serious compromises of God's Word. Let all those who fear and love the Lord be willing to bear this hatred and mockery as suffering for Christ's sake. Let us stand strong for the good of the marriages and homes of others in the church of God among us. In so doing, by the grace of God, we will be a steadfast testimony of His truth and blessing among us and examples for others to follow. Anyone who has lived among our people and in the sphere of our churches will be able to see among us the reality and great joy of many Christian marriages and covenant families.

I say the above not in boasting or human glorying but in humble praise and thanksgiving to God. Neither do I pretend that there is no evil among us and that we do not have within our sinful natures the potential to destroy the blessing and happiness that God has given us. We are all still woefully imperfect. Our own sins often mar the blessings and joys of the covenant that God in sovereign mercy has given us.

We need urgently to be on guard against the influences of the ungodly philosophy of the world in which we live and the apostasy of the church world that surrounds us. This is not a time for us to be careless and complacent. There are great dangers and threats to our marriages and families in this modern, ungodly world. There is a fierce spiritual warfare going on to gain the hearts and minds of our children and to destroy the peace and unity and happiness of our covenant homes.

Our young people need to remember the great importance of choosing the right partners for marriage. One cannot very well have a truly Christian marriage when one is unequally yoked with an unbeliever, or even when one marries a person who is far from agree-

ing in the truth of the Word of God that is the basis for Christian marriage. Parents have a great responsibility to supervise their young people in their dating and in the interests they have in persons whom they might later marry. Our young people must not adopt the philosophy of the world, which promotes the idea that seeking a marriage partner is such an absolutely private endeavor that even parents may in no way interfere with, or give counsel and strong warnings regarding this area of life. Young people, do not be offended when your parents do this kind of thing. Know that they are deeply concerned about your future happiness and, even more importantly, about your continuing to live in a truly godly way in this wicked world.

In order to have truly happy Christian marriages, wives need to be always willing to devote themselves to their God-given calling of submitting to and serving their husbands. They must always be mindful of their calling to devote themselves to being the “keepers,” the guardians, of their home. The raising of children requires constant personal sacrifices and devoted service of truly God-fearing mothers. The practice of the godly virtues of meekness and humility and the fear of God must be maintained in the home. The temptations for following the philosophy and lifestyle of the world in behavior and dress and entertainment must be steadfastly resisted. Godly women must be highly esteemed and praised for the extremely important role they play in maintaining what we have received by the grace of God. The truly godly wife and mother has tremendous influence on the real happiness and blessedness of the covenant home.

Happiness in the home must be maintained by husbands and fathers. They must be greatly concerned about the happiness of their wives. They must honor their wives for their God-ordained calling and sacrificial giving for the sake of the home. Fathers and husbands must be responsible leaders in the home. They must put away sinful wrath and anger, through which they

can do irreparable damage to the happiness of the home and family. Fathers must be examples of the fear of God and of practicing the great principles of truth and righteousness in every sphere of their lives. They must be prepared to work diligently at their daily occupation to support their wives and families, to provide Christian education for their children, and to support the many kingdom causes in which the church is engaged.

Happiness in the Christian home is maintained through the faithful, diligent training of our God-given children. It is maintained by consistent, firm, and loving discipline of the children. It is maintained when children in the home are corrected when they sin and are

instructed day by day in the truth of God’s Word and also positively encouraged in the salvation of Jesus Christ. Loving instruction and discipline in the home will bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness in the lives of children. Sons and daughters who grow up in the fear of the Lord will not only experience great blessing in their own lives, they will also bring great joy and happiness to their godly parents. Instruction in the fear of the Lord will be of greater and more lasting significance than all the time and effort that might be expended in preparing for an earthly career. Such effort has a

proper place, of course, in preparing our children for life in this present world, but greater than all is training in the fear of God.

Undergirding all of the above is maintaining the unity of the truth of God in the home and family. This is possible only when the members of the covenant family are also faithful members of the true church of Jesus Christ. There the covenant family will be continually instructed in the truth of God for marriage and the family and thoroughly furnished for a life of good works in every part of their life. Instruction and training in covenant family living and faithfulness in the true church of Jesus Christ are inseparably joined together in the Word of God. ☞

*There is a fierce spiritual warfare going on to gain the hearts and minds of our children and to destroy the peace and unity and happiness of our covenant homes.*

## New (and Old) Noteworthy Books

*Communion with God: Reformed Spirituality*, Herman Hoeksema; edited by David J. Engelsma. Reformed Free Publishing Association (rfpa.org), 2011. 352 pp. \$28.95 (hardcover).

This is the anticipated follow-up volume of meditations (volume one was *Peace for the Troubled Heart*, 2010) originally written (some in Dutch) in the *Standard Bearer* by noted Reformed pastor-theologian and co-founder of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Herman Hoeksema. This marvelous collection focuses on the believer's "sweet" covenant fellowship with the triune God in Jesus Christ. The chapters are arranged into three parts: Communion with God, Christian Experience, and Christian Activity. Great devotional reading!


*The Day of Worship: Reassessing the Christian Life in Light of the Sabbath*, Ryan M. McGraw. Reformation Heritage Books (heritagebooks.org), 2011. 196 pp. \$16.00 (paperback).

This is a fresh look at the importance of keeping the Lord's Day holy (fourth commandment), especially as the day "designed to be sanctified for the purpose of worship" (author's introduction). The author is pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church in Conway, SC, and draws on his own experience of growing into a mature Reformed/Puritan understanding of the Sabbath.

*Preaching & Preachers; 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones; edited by Kevin DeYoung. Zondervan, 2011. 346 pp. \$22.99 (hardcover).

40 years ago the "Doctor" published this important work on the central task of the minister of the Word, and it remains a classic. This anniversary edition retains the original text while adding subheadings for ease of reading and study questions at the end of each chapter. Interspersed between the chapters are six essays on preaching by some contemporary evangelicals. Not just for pastors—for the pew too!

*The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications; 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition*, John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris. P&R Publishing, 2011. 518pp. \$16.99 (paperback).

In light of the on-going debate about "Darwin and Jesus, science and the Bible, evolution and creation" (backcover), this important classic defending the truth of Scripture concerning a universal flood is welcome. The authors show that there is no conflict between the Word of God and the discoveries of science when viewed by true faith that places Scripture first and foremost. 

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

### School Activities

The Nex Gen fund-raising committee for Genesis PR School in Lacombe, AB, Canada sponsored their first annual Winter Cup Pond Hockey Tournament on Saturday, February 25. In addition to the day of hockey, Nex Gen also provided a Toonie Town for their younger, non-hockey playing guests. For our non-Canadian readers, Toonie Town is the name the fundraisers gave to what we would commonly call a Kiddy Carni-

---

*Mr. Wigger is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

val, which costs two dollars (a toonie) for admission, so the name seemed to work. Toonie Town included all sorts of interesting games for the kids to play. Ice fishing was in the works, not on the ice the hockey teams were skating on, but rather a man-made construction. Also featured was a whack-a-mole game, a laser game, and spray-painting pictures in the snow. Our contact person in Lacombe reported that the tournament itself was a success—the fundraisers raised over \$2,000 for Genesis PR School. But as it was -15 Celsius (5 Fahrenheit, for our non Canadian readers) and snowing like crazy, parents were not too keen on taking their children out in the elements. Hopefully the

weather next year will be better. The winning hockey team received a cash prize and a pizza party, and they got their team-name engraved on the cup. Tournament MVP honors were awarded to Steve Zylstra, a member of Immanuel PRC. All in all it was a fun day, but it took about twenty-four hours for everyone to thaw out.

The Loveland, CO PR Christian School 6th-10th grade choir presented a program entitled, "The Mountains Show Forth..." after their church's evening worship service on February 19. The program featured beautiful choir music along with a PowerPoint presentation showing pictures of God's marvelous creation.

## Young Adult Activities

We usually do not include, as news, items that were canceled, but we thought this activity was worthy of an exception, since we had never seen it before. Due to the warmer weather, the young adults of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA canceled their plans to go ice fishing. Rather, they have made tentative plans for a fishing tournament in late spring.

The Young Adults and Young People of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada enjoyed a combined meeting Sunday, February 26. They discussed the perils of money in today's society. They hoped to consider the subjects of debt, indulgence, bondage, attitudes, and other related topics.

The Young Adults of the Lynden, WA PRC sponsored a Service Auction on February 24 at Covenant Christian School. They promoted the event by asking members of their congregation the questions: What are you good at? Are you good at cooking, or baking? Are you an experienced babysitter? Do you enjoy lawn-care or car-washing? Or do you have some other hidden talent? This was really a service auction for the entire congregation. Any age could offer a service, not just the young adults. Pies and desserts were also included in the auction. Proceeds went towards the upcoming Lynden Young Adult Retreat scheduled for early July.

## Young People's Activities

The Young People of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI sponsored "A Night of Music" on Saturday evening, February 25, at Grace Church. The night proved to be an enjoyable hour of music, featuring performanc-

es by Michelle Pipe, Jim Daling, Dan Van Dyke, Eric/Christa/Gabrielle Phelps, a String Quartet, as well as various numbers by the Grace Young People. A freewill offering was taken to help defray the costs of this year's convention.

The Young People's Society of First PRC in Holland, MI planned an Elegant Dinner and Silent Auction for February 17.

## Congregation Activities

The ladies from the Junior Adult Fellowship of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI planned a Ladies Game Night for the elderly women of their church on February 29. It was held at nearby Sunset Manor in their Town Square.

The Junior Christian Fellowship of the Hudsonville, MI PRC invited the senior members of their congregation to join them for their annual game night on Saturday evening, March 3. In addition to fellowship and games, a potluck supper was also provided.

The Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI enjoyed an evening of Christian fellowship on Friday, February 24, with their annual Pot Luck dinner. A short program followed the supper.

The India Outreach Committee of the Byron Center, MI PRC held an introductory meeting in mid-February for members of their congregation who had signed up as sponsors of boys at the home they support in India. During Byron's monthly Skype calls to Rajastephen in India they received his thanks to Byron Center's Sunday School for the books recently received and distributed to the boys at the home as well.

## Denomination Activities

The Voices of Victory male quartet

hosted a benefit concert on Sunday evening, February 19, at Grace Community Church in Hudsonville, MI. Joining the Voices of Victory were Eric and Crista Phelps (cello/piano) and With One Voice (women's quartet). All proceeds from that concert were given to the families of Leah Griess and Nicole Kooienga, members of the Loveland, CO PRC, to assist them with their expenses following their car crash this past summer. Over sixteen thousand dollars was raised, and Grace Community Church provided their building and service free of charge.

## Minister Activities

Congratulations to Rev. Andrew and Stephanie Lanning, parents of Jason Tyler, born on February 19.

Rev. Clayton Spronk, pastor of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL declined the call he was considering to serve as the next pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. ☺



### Help

Recognize any faces in the above picture? It's the consistory of First PRC in 1954.

Needed, for a special project at the seminary—a good copy of this photograph, and/or of any others of the same era.

Or, for that matter, any pictures of denominational interest. Always good for a denomination's archives.

Able to help? Please contact the seminary (Judi Doezema, doezema@prca.org) or call (616) 531-1490.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Teacher Needed

■ Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI is seeking applications to fill a full-time position in the Academic Support program for the 2012-13 school year. A teaching degree or experience in education and working with young people with learning difficulties is preferred. Please contact Mr. Rick Noorman (616-453-5048) at ricknoorman@gmail.com or Mr. Tom Newhof (949-5857) at tjnewhof@preinnewhof.com.

### Notice

■ The *Standard Bearer* Index Volumes 1-87 is now available in a digital version. The cost is \$10 and it can be purchased at the RFPA website (www.rfpa.org), by calling the RFPA office at 616-457-5970, or email paula@rfpa.org. (The index will no longer be available as a hardcopy.)

### Wedding Anniversary

■ It was with wholehearted praise and thanks to God that our parents,

#### JOHN and JUDY VAN BAREN,

celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on February 9, 2012. He has guided them, sustained them, and blessed them in their marriage. Through this they have provided us with a godly example as to how we are to fulfill our vows and live our lives each day giving all glory to God. We pray that God will continue to keep them in His loving care. Psalm 89:1: "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

✠ John and Linda VanBaren

John and Rachael (fiancée)  
Mark, Laura, Rachel

✠ Jay and Heidi VanBaren

Zachary, Connor, Kaylee, Reid, Breilyn

✠ Jeff and Melonie VanBaren

Kaitlyn, Jillian, Parker

✠ Joel and Brenda VanBaren

Bradley, Elyce, Dana (in glory), Danae, Chase

✠ Jon and Janis VanDyk

Riley, Ayden, Keegan, Kialynn

✠ Jim and Susan VanBaren

Carson, Treyton, Teagen

Grandville, Michigan

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council of Southeast PRC expresses Christian sympathy to Mark and Cindy Ophoff and their family in the death of their father and grandfather,

#### JOEVAN KAMPEN,

and to Robert and Deb Doezema in the death of Deb's brother-in-law

#### MICHAEL MCCLAURY

of Redlands, Ca. "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Rev. W. Langerak, President  
Edward Ophoff, Assistant Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Foreign Mission Committee of the Protestant Reformed Churches expresses Christian sympathy to Rev. & Mrs. Richard Smit and their family in the death of Tricia Smit's father,

#### MR. DAVID DYKSTRA.

"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Revelation 22:5).

Rev. Allen Brummel, President  
Rev. James Laning, Secretary

### Synod

■ All standing and special committees of the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as individuals who wish to address Synod 2012, are hereby notified that all material for this year's synod should be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than April 15. Please send material to:

Don Doezema  
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW  
Grandville, MI 49418

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Kalamazoo PRC wish to express their Christian sympathy to Dan and Deb Kiel and to their children, Brad and Sarah Kiel, Bryan and Erika Kiel, Justin Kiel, and Alyssa Kiel in the death of Deb's father,

#### JOHN NYKAMP.

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

Rev. Michael DeVries, President  
Tom Kiel, Clerk

### Wedding Anniversary

■ On April 3, 2012, our parents,

#### MARVIN and ESTHER SCHWARZ,

will celebrate 25 years of marriage. We are thankful to God for the years that He has given them together and for the godly instruction and example that they have been to us. It is our prayer that God will give them many more years of marriage together and will richly bless them throughout the rest of their lives! "And they shall be my people, and I will be their God: And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them" (Jeremiah 32:38-39).

✠ Caleb and Jenn VanBaren & Joelle

✠ Travis and Kayla

✠ Jon and Aryn

✠ Karl

Lowland, Colorado

### Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 9, 2012 at the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 11, 2012.

Jon J. Huisken,  
Stated Clerk

## Reformed Witness Hour April 2012

Date	Topic	Text
April 1	"Crucified with Criminals"	Luke 23:33
April 8	"Not Faithless but Believing"	John 20:24-29
April 15	"If We Confess..."	1 John 1:8-10
April 22	"Assurance Through Obedience"	1 John 2:3-6
April 29	"The Test of Love"	1 John 2:7-11