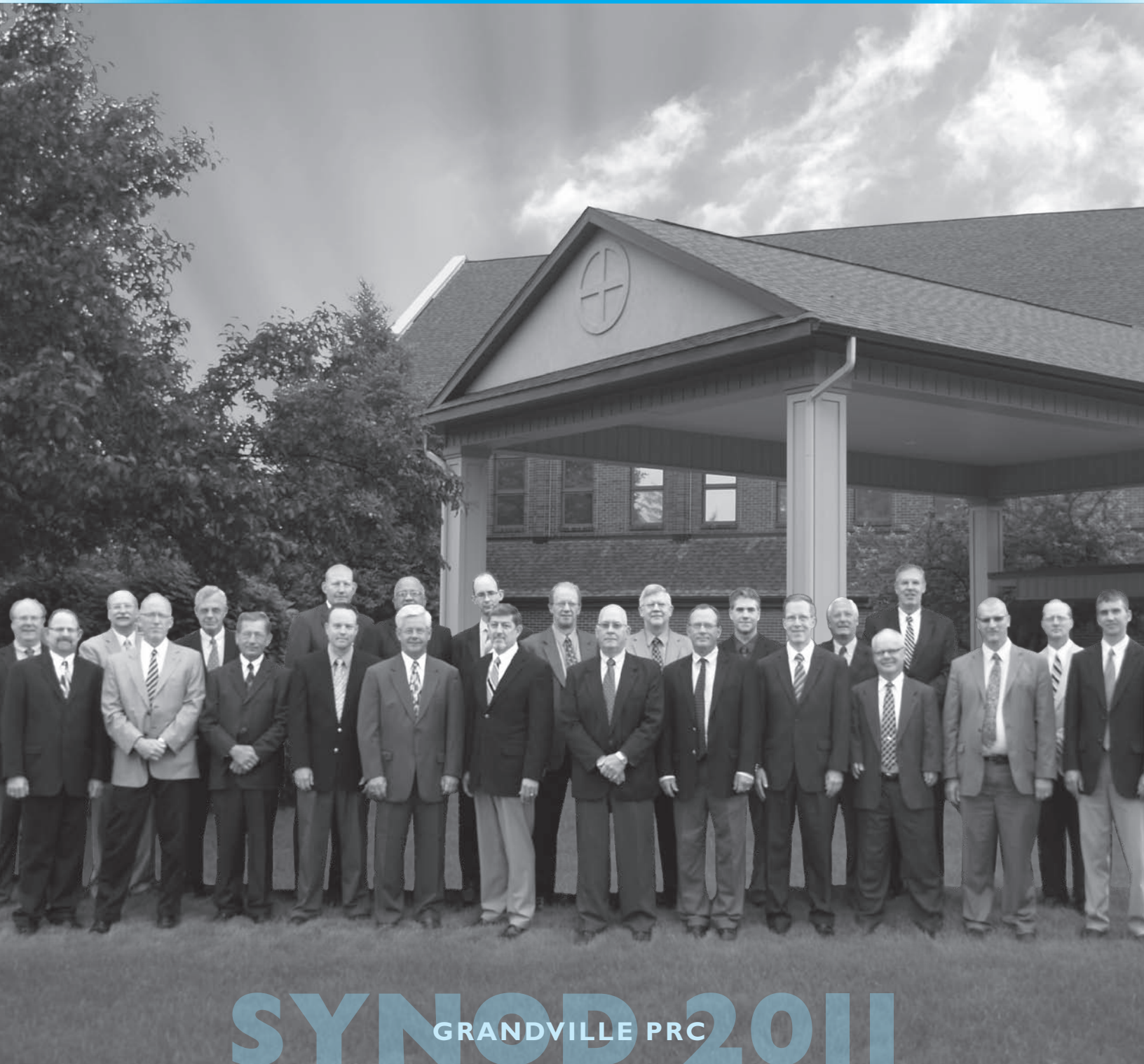


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The Calling of the Slaves of Christ Jesus

“Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness; in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; but hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, mine own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.”

Titus 1:1-4

In the May 15, 2011 issue of this magazine Prof. Russell Dykstra gave a preview of the agenda of the Protestant Reformed Synod of 2011. He titled his article, “Synodical Agenda, 2011: Orders for the Slaves of Jesus Christ.” He indicated that his examination of the material of the agenda indicated that “the PRC is blessed with an extraordinary number of members who *serve* in the church.”

Paul identifies himself as a servant of God (the above text) and of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1 and Phil. 1:1). As do also James (1:1) and Peter (II Pet. 1:1). Those delegated to Synod 2011 are to *serve*. The officers of the synod (president, vice-president, first and second clerks) *serve* the synod. The concept that lies behind the word “servant” describes well what is to be the right attitude of every one of the twenty delegates.

Paul and Titus worked for a while in various cities on the island of Crete. This resulted, by God’s grace,

in there being newly converted Christians in many cities on this island. It was then that Paul had to leave the island (for unknown reasons). In this brief letter Paul first gives to Titus a list of the things that were wanting or incomplete (5) for the organization of the groups of Christians into instituted congregations. Additionally, this letter gives a good summary of the duties of a minister of the Word.



At the beginning of this inspired letter to his “own son after the common faith,” Paul identifies himself in three ways.

Paul identifies himself as “an apostle of Jesus Christ.” An apostle is, literally, one sent out by Jesus Himself. Like the other eleven (but by special revelation: Acts 22:14, 15; Gal. 1:12ff.; II Cor. 12:1-7) Paul was called, equipped, and sent out by Jesus Himself to serve the entire church. By identifying himself this way, Paul is showing the weight of his letter. It is not simply friendly, fatherly advice. Rather, *Christ* is speaking through Paul to Titus (and to us).

Paul identifies himself also as a preacher. To him was committed the task of preaching God’s Word (3). Paul was entrusted with this calling by divine command. God, our Savior, commissioned him with the responsibility to preach, i.e., to serve as a herald of the King, to proclaim authoritatively the gospel. Paul must obey this commission! And so must Titus.

What was committed to Paul? God’s Word concerning the Savior. The good news of Jesus Christ, the only Savior, was spoken of in the Scriptures as Paul had them. As he was inspired to write to Timothy, those Holy Scriptures were able to make wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus, for all Scripture is given by inspiration of God (II Tim. 3:15, 16).

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

This is the abbreviated text of the pre-synodical sermon that Rev. VanOverloop, as President of the 2010 Synod, preached on June 13, 2011 in Grandville Protestant Reformed Church.

While Paul does identify himself as an apostle and a commissioned preacher, that which he mentions *first* about himself is that he is “a servant of God.” He is conscious especially of his *servanthood*. And this is what he wanted others to know about himself first. (Would that be the first way I would identify myself?)

The Greek word that is translated “servant” means literally “slave.” Some believe it incorrect or unwise to use the word “slave” because of the bad connotations often connected with it: involuntary service, forced subjection, and very harsh treatment. Regardless of whether it is translated “servant” or “slave,” the idea is that one is owned by his master, is always obliged to render absolute submission to the unrestricted authority of his master, and is completely dependent on his master. Such are the characteristics of those men whom the Scriptures identify as the servants of God: Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, and, chiefly, THE Servant of Jehovah, Jesus Christ. Paul is God’s servant/slave from three perspectives: by virtue of creation, by virtue of redemption, and by virtue of his calling in the church! He is very aware that there must be no attempt to use his position to bring profit to himself. He is in the service of his King. For all of God’s people, the wonder of being a slave by redemption is that the very grace that redeems is also the grace that makes Paul and us willing to be slaves of the Most High God. Grace makes it our joy to belong to our faithful Savior and Lord!

This has implications for those who serve as delegates to synod. Because you are slaves of God, you are not to do your own will or to strive to get your own goals accomplished. Never may you be self-centered. Your consideration must be always for the Master and the Master’s house, the church. And as mutual slaves you are to work together to a common goal, pulling together in a common yoke, never contentious.



Paul has this calling for three specific purposes. So do the delegates to the PRCA Synod 2011. And this is the calling to which the three seminarians who are to be examined at this synod aspire.

Our text expresses the first purpose as: “according to the faith of God’s elect.” The meaning is that the calling

to preach is given “with a view to” God’s elect. God’s elect are those whom God has chosen in eternity past, those whom He has given to and united with Christ, to be saved by Him and to be taken to eternal glory. In saying that he preaches with a view to God’s elect, Paul is assuming the perspective that God has for the preaching, namely, the means to give grace to God’s chosen children. Paul does not know (nor does he need to know) who are the elect, in order to perform his commission. He does not have to be concerned about identifying them. But he is to be concerned to preach so that they can identify themselves as God’s elect (cf. Canons I, 12).

Paul was commissioned to preach God’s Word, and the faith of the elect hearers respond to that preaching by holding it for truth, by believing it, by delighting in it. So Titus is to preach with an eye toward the elect gaining an accurate knowledge of the truth. This, in turn, will lead to their glad recognition of this redemption truth in Christ and what it means for them. Note too that it is the knowledge of objective truth that frees the elect from errors and falsehood—from vain talkers and deceivers (11).

Second, right preaching of God’s Word is to be with a view to the elect holding the truth “which is after (according to) godliness.” Paul admonishes Titus and Timothy to reject any preaching and teaching that tends to vain curiosity (fables and commandments of men, 1:14), foolish questions and contentions, and striving about the laws (3:9). Positively, Titus’ preaching must have in mind that which becomes sound doctrine, namely, godliness. Godliness is the conscious, reverent bowing in obedience to God in everyday life. It is living as before the face of God. It is a conscious devotion to God. It is the fear of the Lord.

Paul instructs Titus so to preach and teach that the young Christians on Crete are instructed to live a life that flows from sound or healthy teachings (2:1). The goal of faithful preaching must be more than giving head knowledge. In the second and third chapters of this short letter, Paul describes this godliness. Godliness is a lifestyle that adorns the doctrine of God our Savior (2:10), that does not bring blasphemy to the Word of God (2:5), that shames their critics (2:8), and that is zealous unto good works (2:14).

Third, Paul preached, and admonished Titus (and every minister) to preach, so that the elect have the “hope of eternal life” (2). The elect must be taught how to live “in this present world” (2:12). But they are also to be taught to look to eternal life. We live here, but we also long, with confident expectation and patient waiting, for the fullest development of salvation in Jesus Christ. This hope is to be a very real part of the thinking and life of the elect.

This eternal life God promised “before the world began.” In eternity past, God made a promise concerning the eternity to come! This is similar to having God’s grace given to us in Christ before the world began (II Tim. 1:9). The fulfillment of God’s decree to give eternal life to the elect is so certain that it can be spoken of as having been already given. Our salvation is traced to its origin in God’s eternal plan, just as in Romans 8:29, 30; I Corinthians 2:7; II Thessalonians 2:13, and elsewhere. What makes the promise of eternal life so certain is the fact that this is the promise of “God that cannot lie.” It is likely that this is added because Paul is writing to Cretans, who were known to be liars (1:12). God is faithful. He never lies, for to do so would be to deny Himself (II Tim. 2:13). Right preaching keeps the hearers in mind of the promise of eternal life.




Titus may perform his work with the assurance of blessing (4). So may Synod 2011. The normal introduction of Paul’s epistles includes a blessing. So here. But here it must be connected to the commission of Paul and Titus (and every minister) to preach God’s Word. And this is an efficacious declaration. It is not just a wish or an offer. It is efficacious because it origi-

nates in the Father and was merited by the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is the content of this blessing? “Grace” is God’s unmerited favor—a love that pardons—that continuously is given to God’s children. The salutation of grace assures Titus of God’s pardon, which will operate as a spiritual power in his life and ministry. He may be assured that he will be carried, in the performance of his work, by all-sufficient grace. And this amazing grace will use even a weak means like him to accomplish God’s will in the saving of the elect.

“Mercy” is God’s earnest desire to bless His miserable but beloved children. Mercy puts tender compassion into action. The salutation of mercy assures Titus of God’s lovingkindness in his difficult labors and in every situation of life. Mercy, given as continuously as grace, will be present in every moment of Titus’ work on Crete.

“Peace” always follows grace and mercy. The peace given to God’s children is the consciousness that they are reconciled to God through Jesus. God is not at war with them. On the contrary, He is in a relationship of wonderful friendship with them. The salutation of peace assures Titus that what was broken by sin is made whole. He may perform his labors in the assurance that God is his faithful Friend and constant Companion.

Titus and every called/sent preacher must know that God has called and commissioned them to preach His Word as God’s servants. The God who cannot lie assures them that He will bless them with His grace, mercy, and peace. May they preach and teach so that God’s elect come to a conscious faith that is evidenced in godly living and a lively hope. 

LETTERS

Previewing synod’s work

Dear Editor,

I appreciated your summary of the agenda of Synod 2011 in the May 15 *Standard Bearer*. However, I do want to comment on the references that you made to past decisions of Classes and upcoming decisions of Synod 2011 in our Protestant Reformed Churches.

On page 365, on the overture of Faith PRC Council:

“They are withdrawing it after both Classes rejected the concept. It seems a pity.”

On page 355: “Synod should bear in mind that we are tinkering with a relationship that already exists....”

It strikes me that the Reformed way for comments and opinions on decisions of our governing bodies is best kept to the official floor, where free deliberation can take place.

Wes Koops
Holland, Michigan

Synod 2011: God's (Undeserved) Goodness to the PRCA

I could not help but hum the *Psalter* tune and say its words in my heart: "The lines are fallen unto me (us!) in places large and fair; a goodly heritage is mine (ours!) marked out with gracious care." My heart was glad. It still is.

What goodness our God showed to us this year at our annual assembly called synod! How I was wishing all our people could witness the public examination of the three seminary students—now candidates—and sit with us to hear Prof. Dykstra's graduation sermon. What joy if even more could hear synod deliberate and decide to become sister church with Covenant ERC in Singapore; welcome Rev. M. McGeown of our other sister in Northern Ireland; approve the work of and commend our missionaries; and more. True, the *handful* of visitors who heard Missionary Richard Smit's emotional report on the floor of synod were joined by over seven hundred on Sunday night as he gave a slide/video presentation of the work in the Philippines. But there were thousands more who, with us, could have wiped away tears of joy as our souls were refreshed by this good news from a far country. Someday, all of you who can ought to try to visit these important meetings.

People in all parts of the world were able to listen in on the graduation speech as it was streamed live on the Internet. Perhaps in the future even the student examinations and synod's deliberations could be accessible in that way. Whatever problems might be involved in such a broadcast, it could be to our great advantage. To be a part of the synodical proceedings is instructive, even moving, especially as you reflect on the (undeserved!) goodness of God to the PRCA.

And I am committed not to allow even the few controversial issues with which synod needed to deal, to erase my sense of thankfulness to God, sobering and discouraging as such disagreements usually are. God's goodness and mercy followed us even then when He was setting the crooked over against the straight, the day of adversity against that of prosperity...for our profit.



Synod began with a summons to worship in the beautiful sanctuary of the congregation of Grandville (MI) PRC. (What gracious and capable hosts these saints were all week!) Rev. R. VanOverloop, president of last year's synod, proclaimed

the good news to us from Titus 1:1-4, and led synod and the assembled congregation in singing and in a meaningful prayer for this "work of the churches in common." Tuesday morning, synod elected four men who showed themselves to be very capable servants of synod: Rev. J. Slopesma (President, for the sixth time, by my count); Rev. K. Koole (as Vice-President); Rev. D. Kuiper (we have lost count how many times, as efficient First Clerk); and Rev. G. Eriks (as Second Clerk).

The reader may find on the prca.org web-site a more comprehensive report of synod's actions from our Second Clerk. In a few short months, our stated clerk will make available the official *Acts of Synod and Yearbook* to all the members of the PRCA (free), and to others by special request. In this July editorial we commonly report and *reflect on* what we consider to be some of the more significant items synod treated.

Seminary

The churches may rejoice greatly in the able and faithful men the Lord provides for our vacant churches. Mr. Nathan Decker, Mr. Brian Huizinga, and Mr. Jonathan

Mahtani preached edifying sermons for the synod and sustained the lengthy oral examinations. Unanimously they were approved and declared eligible for call on or after July 16, 2011. In a special way, the professors who taught these men are humbly grateful that the Lord uses their instruction and example to fit these men for the ministry. Each student testified that the Lord used many other things as well to prepare them for the ministry. May God bless each of them and their families, and prepare a congregation to receive them. They love the Lord. They love His church. God is good. How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings.... We are undeserving.

With joy, synod approved the admission to our seminary next year of Mr. Ryan Barnhill, of our Hudsonville, MI, PRC. But student population has dipped. Are the churches praying fervently for the Lord to separate unto the gospel sons of their congregations? The seminary's rector reported that a larger-than-normal number of young men plan to take pre-seminary Greek this fall. May they all succeed! May God be good in providing *many* sons of the churches who aim at this high calling!

Contact with Other Churches

Synod kept busiest with the cause of missions and the churches' "sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of Christ's church on earth in as far as that is possible...with all churches which

have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign." God has been good to the PRC in this regard also.

Is it possible that synod is now finished with the modifications of the constitution of the Contact Committee? In recent years, our churches made room for a *corresponding* relationship between the PRCA and others, and approved this with our long-time contact, the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches in Australia. The differences between us prevent a full sister relationship; but the agreements are enough to permit a "corresponding relationship." The precise wording of the constitution to govern this relationship was at issue—how much the relationship must involve discussion of differences? The carefully balanced wording of the constitution now directs this committee of synod to interact with these brothers and sisters by discussing "areas of agreement and matters of difference." God is good.

We have *full* sister relations with the CPRC in Northern Ireland. Their missionary from Limerick in the Republic of Ireland, Rev. Martyn McGeown, was seated at our assembly and observed all our deliberations. He reported on their mission work in Limerick as well as on the state of the church in Ballymena. As the Lord has provided for the PRCA materially, we gladly provide some support for these gospel labors in the UK.

The Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, after a lengthy recovery, following a very difficult period of her existence, becomes our sister again. Precious

unity, good and pleasant! "Gracious God, do not allow sin and folly to break this bond again; covenant God of friendship, allow no barriers to be built between us; teach us to live in truth and holiness, without compromise, with saints in all the regions of the earth."

The churches eagerly await another invitation from the churches in Namibia, Africa, whose struggle for the faith keeps them too busy presently to extend another invitation. Private correspondence gives hope for an invitation in the future. It also indicates we are still in need of funds for translating Rev. Ronald Hanko's *Doctrine According to Godliness* into Afrikaans. Rich gifts for this have already been offered. May all of us who are rich be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate. Please contact Rev. Garrett Eriks for details if you have an interest in the translation of this and other good, Reformed literature into Afrikaans.

Missions

Even though there is so much positive to report about missions, I begin with a couple of those "controversial issues" I referred to earlier. Already last year, synod denied, on two grounds, a request of the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) to call a second home missionary. This year, the DMC brought an objection against the grounds synod used. The important issues raised in the grounds were: 1) whether vacancies in the local congregations have a bearing on whether synod approves the calling of another

missionary; and if so, how much; 2) whether a mission field can be maintained and developed in the absence of a missionary. After much debate, reformulation of advice, and more debate, synod did not sustain the DMC's objections. This year, the DMC again proposed the calling of another home missionary, but synod again rejected it, this time because the proposal was late, did not appear in the printed Agenda, but rather in a later, supplemental report. Synod applied its rule that "matters of importance" may not be presented to synod if they do not come on the normal Agenda. Synod must make judgments in cases like this. Both these decisions were discouraging to the DMC and others. We submit to the Reformed way of deciding matters "by majority vote," even when the decision is by slimmest of margins.

Two other matters relating to missions were not easily decided. In fact, a proposal for a process of "tenure" for home missionaries, although not rejected, was sent back to the DMC for further study. Hours of debate revealed some disagreement, but the worth of the proposal for tenure includes 1) the emphasis it gives to the unique gifts needed for a missionary, 2) the promotion of *long-term* labor in home mission works, and 3) a way for both the missionary himself, his calling church, and synod to assess whether he indeed has the gifts to do the work of missions...and release him from the position if he does not. This proposal for missionary tenure parallels, although is not identical to, the process of tenure for a semi-

nary professor: after he begins his work, he and synod's Theological School Committee must evaluate whether he has the gifts that he and the synod thought he had. Next year will reveal whether the DMC desires synod to revisit its proposal.

Last, synod decided to "take ownership" of what for many years has been the unofficial website of the PRCA. The DMC will be responsible for monitoring its content and maintaining it weekly. Rev. G. VanBaren spent 14 years developing what many report to be one of the most extensive and useful web-sites of its kind. The churches can be very thankful (and synod expressed this gratitude) for the brother's untiring efforts to extend the witness of the PRCA worldwide.

About this decision, two matters. First, the DMC will have to decide what standards are used to "monitor" the content. Since this is now an official denominational work, it will be interesting to see what responsibility *synod* will have for personal opinions expressed on the web-site, for links to sites some may judge to be questionable, etc. The shift from "unofficial" to "official" raises some sticky questions.

Next, in taking ownership of the web-site, the DMC will do well to remember synod's first ground used to justify this ownership. ("As an aspect of missions, and rightly the mission work of the churches in common, the website prca.org properly belongs to the work of synod.") This first ground clearly *implies* that the web-site is an *ecclesiastical* matter, and specifically *states* that it is work that belongs to the churches

in common—to the DMC. No reasons were given to defend these positions; perhaps they were considered self-evident. However, the DMC can help the churches if the committee can consciously and openly work through why the web-site should not more properly be taken up by a para-church organization (the RFPA is a para-church organization), or by a local congregation which may need some synodical support (the Reformed Witness Hour is the local work of First PRC Grand Rapids, but has some support from and reports to synod).

Raising this point is no criticism of the DMC, but is rather a reminder to us as churches. Fundamental to the Reformed Church Order (Article 30) is the demand that our ecclesiastical assemblies (consistory, classis, synod) treat *only* "ecclesiastical matters"; and that the *major* assemblies (classis and synod) treat *only* that which could not be finished in the minor assemblies, or what *pertains to the churches in common*. As an "ecclesiastical matter" it belongs either to a local congregation or to a major assembly—it is the work of the office of Christ and not to believers generally. As a matter pertaining to "the churches in common," it is the business of the synod, and not only of the local church. Synod's adoption of the web-site is a statement that the web-site is both "an ecclesiastical matter" and is a matter of "the churches in common." It would be a service to the denomination if the DMC, in its taking up this task and fulfilling its

responsibility, would demonstrate that the web-site does truly fit both requirements.


I raise this because denominations today are adopting as their business many things that are not ecclesiastical matters. They own and maintain colleges, run publishing houses, engage in social efforts—all of which may be useful, even important, but are not *ecclesiastical*—that is, the work of the church *as church*. The PRCA have long warned about the church engaging in business that is not ecclesiastical. As the PRCA grows larger and our synod faces

other proposals of importance, let us remind ourselves of the vital importance of Article 30 of the Church Order to direct the churches in their own work.



But let us return to rejoicing in the mission work we are able to perform as the churches band together to do what otherwise one could not do alone. Let our hearts sing with joy at the reports of the missionaries from the Philippines, and from our home missionary from Pittsburgh. Let us pray for the Lord's provision of many able and faithful men who

aspire to the work of missions, and for the denominational will to send them. May He encourage those who are involved in missions and its oversight that "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister" (Heb 6:10).

May He forgive what sins we committed at synod, overrule all our faults and weaknesses, and prosper the Protestant Reformed Churches as they labor in His cause, until Christ comes again. 

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

The Militant Pastor: Warring a Good Warfare; Gentle unto All

I Timothy 1:18; II Timothy 2:24, 25

There is a certain paradox about the ministry of the Word. We reject the notion that there are theological paradoxes—irresolvable contradictions in theology. There are, however, characteristics and callings of the minister that seem contradictory. For instance, the ministry of the Word and sacraments is a high calling indeed. A minister is a herald of the

King—Jesus Christ, Lord of lords and King of kings. Yet the same minister is slave of the One whom the Bible calls a servant, the One who said of Himself that He came to minister (serve) not to be served.

The minister of the Word is an ambassador of the Lord. He comes into the home of a member of the church as a representative of Christ Himself! But his work in that home is to minister, i.e., to *serve* the people of God there.

A minister is trained, even highly educated. As the graduates demonstrated at synod, they will begin their labors with a head full of knowledge. But their calling is not to exhibit their great knowledge. Knowledge, Paul warns, puffeth up. Charity edifies. Love for the congregation is what must be on constant display, not knowledge.

Commencement exercises of the Protestant Reformed Seminary were held on June 16, 2011 at Grandville Protestant Reformed Church. An abbreviated version of Prof. Dykstra's address on that occasion begins here, to be concluded, D.V., in our August issue.

A minister is a trained orator who can construct and deliver logical, compelling messages. Sermons are delivered with passion and conviction. But when the minister comes to his first congregation (and each one thereafter), he says with Paul, I come not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, nor with enticing words of man's wisdom. One thing only I preach, namely Christ, and Him crucified.

And though the minister of God brings a word so powerful that it kills or makes alive, yet he confesses that he is not sufficient for these things; his sufficiency is Christ.

Tonight I focus on another of those seeming paradoxes of the ministry. On the one hand, a minister is called to fight. Paul's instruction to Timothy, a young minister of the Word, is that he is to "war a good warfare" (I Tim. 1:18). But the minister is also a pastor, one called upon to bestow pastoral care for the sheep of God. Accordingly, to the same minister Paul wrote, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth" (II Tim. 2:24, 25).

In this speech I will address this seeming contradiction of "The Militant Pastor," noticing first, the contrast; secondly, the calling; and finally, the possibility.

The Stark Contrast

That a minister is called to the life and work of a soldier is no surprise in light of the fact that the life of every Christian involves fighting the good fight of faith. God made that clear already in the garden of Eden after the fall, when He announced that He would put enmity—hatred—between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. That this meant warfare became apparent when Cain rose up and killed his brother Abel. The war was on, and it was real.

The nation of Israel was born to a life of fighting. They were barely delivered from Egypt when the Amalekites attacked them in the wilderness, and Israel was forced to fight for its life. Joshua was called to lead the armies of Israel to war against the nations of Canaan. David was a fighting king, fighting the battles of the Lord against the heathen nations. That fighting was God's will for Israel is

expressly stated in Judges 3:2, where the Bible tells us that God deliberately left some of the Canaanite nations in the land in order to teach Israel war.

The New Testament retains the call to fight, though it removes the typical element of physical battles, and makes it plain that the warfare is spiritual. Put on the whole armor of God, we are commanded (Eph. 6). Earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3). Besides all that, Jesus, the fulfillment of the Old Testament types Joshua and David, is called the captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10), who conquers His and our enemies (Col. 2:15, Rev. 17:14, et al.).

One expects, then, that fighting will be required of the minister of the Word. He is a soldier. Paul exhorts Timothy to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3). He presses Timothy to "fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12) and sums up his own life similarly: "I have fought a good fight" (II Tim. 4:7). And if in those latter two instances the emphasis is on contesting a good contest (literally), the instruction in I Timothy 1:18 is unmistakably about *fighting*—"war a good warfare." The reference is to the activity of a soldier, not an athlete. It speaks of soldiers going to battle, and of military campaigns.

The Reformed church impresses that calling upon the minister. The form for the ordination of ministers declares that the minister must be "refuting with the Holy Scriptures all schisms and heresies which are repugnant to the pure doctrine." Concerning the refutation of false doctrine, the form quotes Paul's instruction to Titus (1:9): "That a minister must hold fast the faithful word of God, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers."

The Form of Subscription is even more explicit. There the minister promises "diligently to teach and faithfully to defend the aforesaid doctrine." And this additional pledge is made:

We declare, moreover, that we not only reject all errors that militate against this doctrine, and particularly those which were condemned by the above mentioned synod, but that we are disposed to refute and contradict these, and to exert ourselves in keeping the church free from such errors.

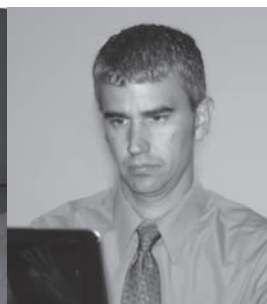
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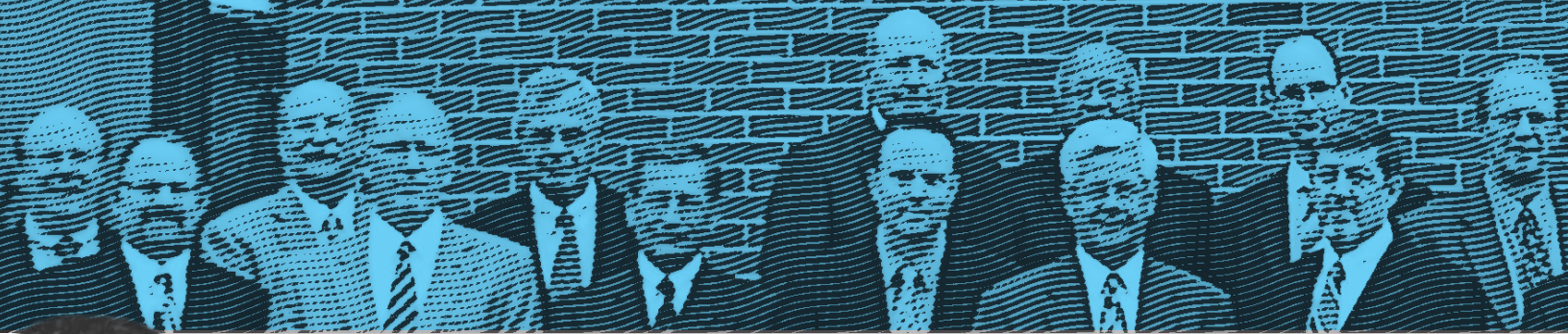


Rev. R. Van Overloop
Called to be Slaves of
Jesus Christ.
(Titus 1:1-4)

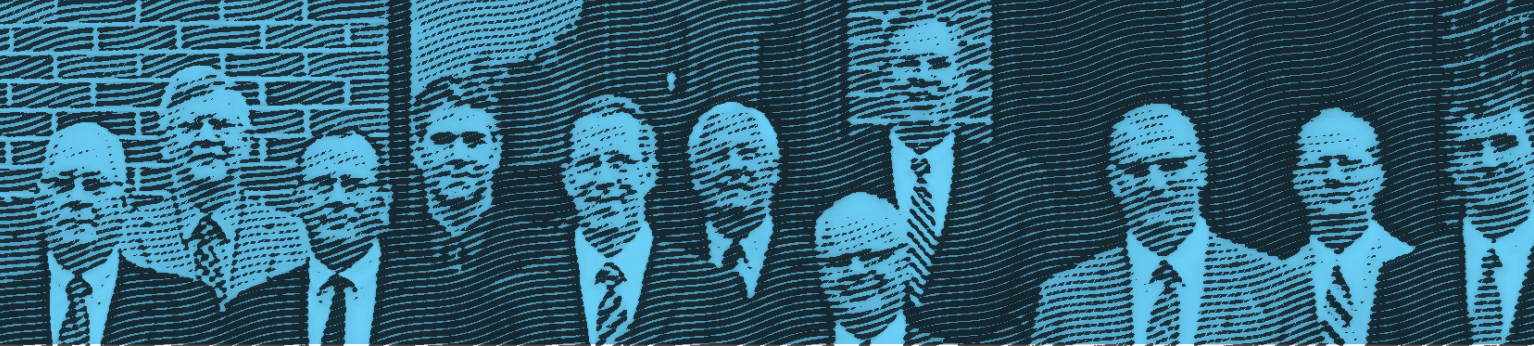


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SYNOD 2011 GRANDVILLE PRC



The Battle for the Gospel

Let it be clear that the warfare of the minister is a battle for the gospel. It is not a culture war. It is not a struggle to improve social conditions in the land. It is not a political contest for power in America. Nowhere does the Bible give any such calling to the instituted church, much less to the minister.

That this is combat for the sake of the gospel is evident from the words “a good warfare” (I Tim. 1:18). Not all warfare is good. This warfare of Timothy is good from three points of view. First, it is a profitable war, i.e., there is some value to this war. Some wars are pointless—they accomplish nothing. For a minister, pointless wars involve battles over words and foolish questions that Scripture does not answer. There is no spiritual value to these wars. But the “good warfare” has spiritual purpose and profit, namely, that the truth is upheld, and quite possibly can be set forth more clearly after the battle is over.

Second, it is a good warfare because the *cause* is good. It is the cause of the truth of God and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Third, it is good in that it will triumph. (A lost war is disastrous for the loser, and it were far better that a minister had not fought at all.) A particular minister will not always triumph in the battle. But the battle for the truth of God will be victorious, that is certain!

Earlier in I Timothy 1, Paul made it plain that the battle for Timothy in Ephesus was for the gospel. He instructs Timothy not to fight over worthless matters that only raise questions (v. 4). However, there were members of the church who desired to be teachers, teaching things concerning the law that were “contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my [Paul’s] trust” (10-11). The *gospel* was at stake in this war.

The graduates ought to take notice of Paul’s words—“the glorious gospel...committed to my trust.” In a few months, D.V., you will be ordained into the ministry of the Word. And this gospel will be committed to your trust to defend.

What a glorious gospel it is—this good news of salvation! It begins with the knowledge of God, the holy, sovereign, covenant God, whom to know is life

eternal (John 17:3). This knowledge is in and through His Son, Jesus Christ—the Mediator of the covenant, God in the flesh, the Savior. This gospel gives us the knowledge of our sin and guilt—the inability to do one thing towards our salvation, and our total depravity, that we are inclined to all evil. We are worthy of eternal damnation.

But the good news is the cross—the atonement—effectual because it was both substitutionary and an actual payment for the sins of all those, and those only, given to Christ. Accordingly, the good news includes justification by faith alone without works; sanctification by the Spirit; sovereign, irresistible, particular grace. Such a gospel teaches that the goal of salvation is the covenant of grace—an unconditional, eternal, one-sided, bond of friendship that God establishes with believers and their seed. All the cardinal truths are included, even to the coming of the Lord and the new heavens and earth.

That is sound doctrine. Doctrine according to godliness.

The battle for the gospel is a spiritual battle, and it requires spiritual weapons. The weapons of the minister are obvious. He is a minister of the *Word*. A minister of the *gospel*. The chief weapon is the Bible, and especially the *preaching* of the Bible.

The battle for the truth in the preaching begins with a sermon that sets forth the truth as clearly and fully as possible from the text. It defines the doctrine. It carefully explains the meaning of the text. It sets forth Christ crucified and exalted as the core of each concept, and of the entire text.

But the warring of a good warfare does not end there. It has only begun. The sermon must be antithetical, that is, it must set forth the truth over against the lie, exposing the lie and rejecting it. Closely related, the sermon must be polemical. It must refute the errors that would oppose the truth set forth in *this* text. Both the Bible and the Reformed confessions are the weapons at his disposal. And third, the good warfare includes a proper application in the sermon to the hearts and lives of God’s people. For the truth is doctrine according to godliness. Every truth has an application to the lives of the members. And the battle is not only against the lie, it is against all sin.

Obviously, such sermons will require hard work, diligent work, rightly dividing the word of truth.

This same hard work is required for teaching catechism to the children and youth of the church. The minister must put forth all the same efforts, maintain all the same goals. He brings instruction from the Bible and the confessions at the level appropriate to the catechumens. Doctrine is the heart. You soon-to-be ministers must require your catechumens to learn the catechism questions and answers so that they will know the doctrines. You want them to know the truth. You must help them to see the lie and how the Bible and the confessions condemn the lie. And you must show them the life that is in harmony with the truth.

In addition, the pen is a powerful weapon in the spiritual battle. The Protestant Reformed minister must set himself to write for the *Standard Bearer* and the *Beacon Lights*, and if the Lord gives time and ability, pamphlets and books. In such writings he sets forth the truth—sound doctrine; he condemns sin and the lie; he exhorts to faithfulness.

This is the minister's calling: Affirm the truth; condemn sin; confront the lie; oppose errors of every kind. War a good warfare. A minister is a soldier.

But he is also a pastor. He may not strive, but must be gentle to all.

... to be concluded. 

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Lion

The Lion of Judah is Jesus. But it might surprise us that the lion is also a metaphor for the devil and the ungodly. It is a metaphor with which people living in the Middle East during Bible times were very familiar, for they lived among those wild beasts. With his bare hands, Samson killed a lion that roared at him in the way, giving rise to the riddle, “Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judg. 14). The young shepherd David slew a thieving lion who had snatched a lamb from his flock, perhaps giving occasion for the proverb, “The righteous are bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). The Lord saved Daniel from a whole den of lions (Dan. 6:27). But the Lord also used lions to punish and correct. A disobedient prophet sent to rebuke idolatrous king Jeroboam was killed by a lion that then mysteriously guarded his carcass. And the Lord sent lions to plague the alien Samaritans who knew not the way of God (II Kings 17:26).

The lion comes by its title “the king of beasts” honestly, for the Lord created the lion with high honor among the animals. The lion is one of four creatures that hover continually around the throne of God on angelic wings praising God and saying, “Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4:8). Of those four creatures, the lion alone represents the wild animals of the field. Among the beasts, the lion is the preeminent symbol of strength, ferocity, tenacity, and courage, which is why statues of lions flanked Solomon’s ivory throne, and he wrote that the king’s wrath is as the roaring of a lion (I Kings 10:19; Prov. 19:12). The lion’s heart is valiant (II Sam. 17:10). Strongest among beasts, he turns not away from any (Prov. 30:30). He does not lie down until he eat of the prey or drink the blood of the slain (Num. 23:24). And when he crouches or lies down, who shall rouse him up (Gen. 49:9)? This also explains Job’s distress when he thought that the Lord was hunting him as a fierce lion, and the comfort of the Lord’s response that, rather, He hunted prey for the lions to fill their ceaseless appetite (Job 10:16; 38:29).

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What great peril are we in, therefore, when Scripture tells us our adversary the devil walks about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour; and with what urgency we are exhorted to watch and be sober (I Pet. 5:8)! Only a fool would ignore the danger. The devil is the ultimate ambush predator. A man-eater. The most powerful, stealthy, persistent, and fearless of beasts, a master tactician, skilled in camouflage and deception, he has perfected the art of the kill. Exploiting any weakness, he preys upon the unsuspecting and presses every advantage. If you hear him roar, it’s already too late. And the only evidence of an attack is often just another missing person or a mangled bloody soul. For he kills to devour, to consume in the dark pit of hell in order to add to his own strength. And the wicked are the pride over which he rules, a collective killing machine that seeks to tear the soul of the godly, to rend it in pieces (Ps. 7:2). As a lion, they lie in wait secretly and crouch down low, waiting to catch the poor in their claws (Ps. 10:9-10). Greedy of prey, they stalk the righteous and lurk in secret places (Ps. 17:11-12).

The devil may be *like* a lion, but our Lord Jesus *is* the Lion. What a difference between usurper and reality! Not just king of beasts, lord of angels, or prince of this world, He is King of kings. Not an indiscriminate killer, who loves no one but seeks whomever he may devour, He is the King who rules in righteousness. The devil is not only under His control, but in His clutches, defeated wonderfully by Jesus’ death and resurrection. There at Calvary, the Lion of Judah was reduced to a worm, beset by that wicked one circling round with gaping jaw (Ps. 22:13). But He trod upon that lion and trampled him (Ps. 91:13; Gen. 3:15). Then, in the grave, He entered the den of the beast, overtook him, and rendered him impotent against His flock. His flock becomes the Lion’s whelp, who, rather than being prey, rises up and breaks the bones of its enemies (Gen. 49:9; Deut. 33:22). And soon, in the last day, this great Lion of Judah shall again roar, destroying the last vestige of our adversary (II Thess. 2:8; Rev. 13:2) and bringing peace to His kingdom. The only lions that will remain are of His own pride, or those whom He creates anew, who dwell together with the fatling and eat straw like the ox (Is. 11:6-7). 

Update:

Federal Vision on Trial in the PCA (4)

A Case Study in Working Hard Not to Exercise Discipline

The last article began an examination of the Missouri Presbytery of the PCA's exoneration of Federal Vision heretic Jeffrey Meyers. In that article it was pointed out how Meyers contradicts the Reformed doctrine of justification by faith alone. We turn now to Meyers' second main error and a brief explanation of the significance of the Meyers case.

The Root of it All: Jeff Meyers Believes in a Conditional Covenant

Meyers' second error, and the root of his heretical views, is his belief in a conditional covenant. The fact that the doctrine of a conditional covenant is the root of the FV heresy and must be repudiated in order to condemn the FV effectively has been demonstrated in the pages of the *SB*, and I will not elaborate on that point here. The purpose of this article is to demonstrate how Meyers' doctrine of the covenant is the root of all his errors.

Meyers believes in a doctrine of the covenant of grace in which all who are baptized "have a covenant union with Christ" (Questions for TE Jeffrey J. Meyers, p. 71). This covenantal union is conditional. Meyers explains, "Ultimately, for the non-elect this covenantal union does not result in their salvation because they refuse to accept the covenantal promises of God made to them in baptism, choosing instead to rebel against his offers of grace and mercy in Christ" (Questions, p. 71). The covenant is made with elect and reprobate alike.

Within the covenant community, elect and reprobate alike receive the promise of salvation. Elect and reprobate alike must fulfill the condition of accepting the promises of God in order actually to attain salvation. According to Meyers, the reason why the reprobate in the covenant community are not saved is that they do not fulfill the condition of the covenant.

As is typical of those who believe in a conditional covenant, Meyers denies that God's eternal decree governs the covenant (cf. Questions, pp. 85-87). God's decree of election and reprobation does not determine who will be in the covenant. All who are baptized are in the covenant in a way that "is not merely sociological and external"—meaning that all receive real saving blessings. How can this be reconciled with God's decree of election and reprobation? Meyers says, "I cannot fully explain how this all ties in with God's predestination and election." Meyers indicates that he understands that putting the reprobate in the covenant and giving them real saving benefits at least seems to contradict the decree of predestination when he goes on to say, "But I will not deny one or another of these truths in order to achieve some rational solution to the mystery. I am determined to believe what I nevertheless cannot fathom or understand perfectly."

Meyers' conviction that election does not govern the covenant of grace can only mean that he holds to a conditional doctrine of the covenant. Somehow the elect remain in the covenant and the reprobate fall out of it. How does this happen? The elect fulfill the condition of the covenant, and the reprobate refuse to fulfill it.

It is this view of the covenant (that it is cut off from God's eternal decree and that it is conditionally established with all who are baptized) that leads to all of Meyers' errors. Four of the errors identified by the Letter of Concern (LOC) are the logical implications of

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Previous article in this series: May 15, 2011, p. 368.

Meyers' conditional covenant doctrine¹ (cf. the previous article for information about the LOC). He teaches that "baptism effects saving, covenantal union with Christ," and that this "saving union occurs with all the baptized." He does this because he believes that all who are baptized are included in the covenant of grace, and that baptism, as a sign and seal of the covenant, is a sign and seal that all the children are conditionally saved and united to Christ. He denies that "all who are saved will ultimately end up in heaven." This denial is based on Meyers' belief that the reprobate are conditionally included in the covenant of grace, i.e., temporarily receive grace, but then fall away because they do not fulfill the conditions of the covenant. He denies justification by faith alone. This denial is based on his belief that the covenant includes elect and reprobate alike, and that the only way for an elect man to distinguish himself from the reprobate is by exercising faith, to show his "faithfulness to the covenant," which "is* his righteousness," as Meyers explained in his interpretation of the parable of the publican and Pharisee.

Why didn't the Missouri Presbytery (MOP) condemn Jeffrey Meyers' gross theological errors? Why, for example, didn't the MOP condemn Meyers' teaching that the reprobate have union with Christ? The decision of the Presbytery explains:

The danger of misinterpreting TE Meyers' statements in part stems from [his] dual use of the term "union with Christ" – only one usage of which ("saving union with Christ") conveys the same intent as "union with Christ" does in the [Westminster Confession of Faith]. ...MOP has previously warned "...we deny that it is prudent to use the terminology of 'union with Christ' to describe the relationship of all those in the covenant community (elect and non-elect alike) without carefully clarifying the difference between the specific sense the terms have come to have in our theological tradition, and the other senses they may have in the Bible" (p. 20).

The MOP accepts Meyers' teaching that the "non-elect" have union with Christ in some sense. The MOP ac-

cepts this teaching of Meyers because it agrees with him that the "elect and non-elect" belong to the covenant and both receive "real" but "temporary" saving benefits. The MOP believes the same conditional covenant Meyers does and could not condemn his heretical views that flow out of that doctrine.

The LOC did at least recognize the serious errors that flow out of Meyers' conditional doctrine of the covenant. However, the LOC does not identify and reject the conditional doctrine of the covenant as the root of Meyers' errors. This is sad because the errors of Jeffrey Meyers and the FV are easily swept away by rejecting a conditional doctrine of the covenant.

The Significance of the Meyers Case

The Meyers case is very significant, first of all because it exposes all the errors of FV theology and makes clear that the root of the error is the doctrine of the conditional covenant. It is significant also because it exposes as folly the popular practice of denominations adopting study reports condemning the FV rather than condemning those who teach the FV. The PCA adopted a report in 2007 that (supposedly) condemned the FV. Here we are in 2011, and a man who has identified himself as a proponent of the FV was for a number of years not charged with teaching false doctrine, and when finally charged he is fully exonerated.

The Jeff Meyers case is significant also because it shows how far the FV has made inroads into the PCA. Meyers is the senior pastor of a congregation located near Covenant Theological Seminary, the PCA's official seminary, and appears to enjoy close affiliation with the seminary, even speaking at the seminary occasionally. Faculty members of the seminary have known about Meyers' teachings and his affiliation with the FV for a number of years. It is disturbing that none of the faculty members of the seminary were involved in initiating the investigation into Meyers' views. It is even more disturbing that as many as six of the members of the MOP's committee that advised the Presbytery to exonerate Meyers are involved in teaching at the seminary. Thus, the Meyers case at least indirectly provides insight into the attitude of faculty members of the PCA's denominational seminary towards the FV. Ominously, a man who has been teaching FV doctrines under the

¹ Everything Meyers believes about the status of the reprobate in the covenant stems from his belief they have "formal" or "covenantal" union with Christ. Cf. Questions for TE Jeffrey Meyers, pp. 56-58.

noses of the faculty of Covenant was not found guilty of teaching heresy but was declared orthodox.

The Meyers case indicates either the hesitancy or refusal of those who are opposed to the FV in the PCA to initiate discipline against those who teach FV doctrines. The LOC is a weak attempt to hold Meyers accountable for his heretical views. At least the twenty-nine men who signed the letter were willing to go on record opposing Meyers' teaching. But there are other prominent men in the PCA who seem to have gone AWOL when it comes to fighting the battle against the FV. They have been involved in condemning the teachings of the FV in the past but appear to refuse to be involved in cases of discipline against the teachers of the FV.

The first men who come to mind are R.C. Sproul and J. Ligon Duncan. How is it that these men, who were praised for their part in the effort to pass the PCA General Assembly's 2007 report to condemn the FV, have not had any public involvement with the efforts to discipline the proponents of the doctrines they claim to reject in their own denomination? It is inconceivable that these men can plead ignorance with regard to the heretical teachings of Jeffrey Meyers and Peter Leithart.

They knew in 2007 that the FV was being taught in the PCA meaning they knew about Meyers and Leithart. For at least four years they have known that Meyers and Leithart espouse FV doctrine, and they have not brought any charges. In fact, they have gone almost completely silent on the FV. The unwillingness of leaders who have a reputation that they are orthodox to be involved in the discipline of the teachers of the FV in the PCA means the FV is not hindered by the opposition of these men and in fact enjoys their tacit approval. These men bear a great deal of responsibility for allowing the FV to spread relatively unchecked throughout the PCA.

There is a warning in this for the Reformed and Presbyterian church world. Silence on the FV is dangerous. Unwillingness to discipline those who teach the FV is deadly for a denomination. May God grant Reformed and Presbyterian churches the ability to see the great truths at stake—the doctrine of justification by faith alone and the doctrine of the unconditional covenant—and may He grant a strong love for these truths that leads to the discipline of those who contradict them.



BIOGRAPHIES OF MISSIONARIES

REV. ALLEN BRUMMEL

Robert Moffat

The continent of Africa has been dubbed the “Dark Continent” by missionaries. Africa is a grand and mysterious land, full of wildlife, and having a rich history, with ancient civilizations, and intriguing geography. It is also a continent that abounds in the deepest pagan practices of witchcraft and superstition involving cruelties and dangers hard to imagine. Those who dared to explore Africa, or were sent there to do missions, more often than not were martyred or died of sickness. Ruth Tucker writes that “Black Africa, known for centuries

as the ‘white man’s graveyard,’ has claimed the lives of more Protestant missionaries than any other area of the world.”

The earliest missionaries to Africa came during the eighteenth century and began labors in the Cape Cod colony with the Moravians. By the end of that century the London Missionary society was laboring in South Africa, and through Robert Moffat they began penetrating the interior of the country. Robert Moffat is known not only as the patriarch of South African missions, but also as one of Africa’s greatest missionaries of all times.

Moffat was born in 1795 and raised in Scotland in humble circumstances that allowed very little in the way of formal education or Bible training. His parents were Presbyterians, and his mother is said to have gathered her

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children together on cold winter evenings to read aloud stories of missionary heroes. Initially, however, Robert did not show interest in religious things, but pursued the vocation of a gardener. He moved to England to begin a career in gardening at the age of seventeen. He joined a small Methodist society that was meeting in a nearby farm house. After coming into contact with Rev. William Roby, a director of the London Missionary Society (LMS), Robert applied for missionary labors through the LMS. He fell in love with the daughter of his boss, but her parents were not willing to allow her to accompany him to Africa. So, after being accepted as missionary, he left her behind and landed in Cape Cod in 1817 with four other missionaries.

After eight months of language study, Robert Moffat was not content to remain in the civilized areas where other missionaries were laboring. He wanted to bring the gospel into the interior of Africa, where no white men had ever gone, despite the fact that the travel was very difficult

and dangerous. Rivers, rocks, swamps, and forests had to be avoided or mastered in some way. By day the travel was intensely hot and by night very cold. There were wild animals to contend with, including lions, jackals, hyenas, crocodiles, snakes, and monkeys. Then there were also the warlike bushmen, who did not warmly receive the gospel that Moffat was bringing. Even those familiar with the country rarely undertook these journeys. But Moffat was motivated by his missionary call. He was determined to learn the language and the customs, and he gradually became physically acclimated to Africa's extreme climates.

Moffat had heard about Africaner, an African chief who was guilty of many terrible crimes throughout the colonies. Africaner had come into contact with some missionaries and was thought to have become more civilized. Moffat wanted to establish a mission in Africaner's village. Although warned by many not to go, and nearly dying of thirst on the way, in January of 1818 Moffat came into the presence of the chief. The chief seemed pleased. He instructed his people to build Moffat a hut. For one year Moffat led worship services morning and evening each day and gave education to the children of the village, teaching them to read and write. Soon the chief showed interest and started to read the Bible, which Moffat had

translated into their language. In time there appeared more and more evidence of sincere conversion and of genuine repentance on the part of the chief. Moffat was thrilled with this evidence of God's goodness in his work. But he was also becoming increasingly lonely for companionship. He wanted to make a trip to Cape Town, and he suggested that the chief, Africaner, accompany him. Africaner feared for his life because of the murders that he had committed in those areas and was hesitant to make the trip, but Moffat convinced him of the protection and forgiveness of the Christians.

*To the Dark Continent
came a great light!*

The day Moffat came to Cape Town with Africaner became a pivotal day in the history of missions to the Africans. The evidence of God's grace was seen by all. The man who had been a murderer was now compassionate toward others and sought to be a peacemaker to warring tribes. The LCM encouraged Moffat to move on to a work among another tribe, the Bechuanas. Reluctantly, Robert

said goodbye to Africaner and agreed to their proposal. A letter from Mary, his girlfriend, thrilled him in that she wrote that her parents had agreed to her leaving and traveling to Africa to marry Robert. After being apart for so long, with no communication, a joyful reunion took place and they were married shortly thereafter.

Mary became an important part of the work of missions in Africa as she joined her husband for what would be 30 years of remarkable service among this remote tribe. Their home would be blessed by ten children, two of whom died in infancy. But first, there was the honeymoon, which involved arduous travel covering fifteen miles a day for eight weeks with a single missionary along with them to begin their labors among the Bechuanas. Through hard work, which included being a builder, a carpenter, a smith, and a farmer, along with his preaching duties, he slowly built trust among the nationals. When a warring tribe threatened the Bechuanas, Moffat tried to avert war. When that was not possible he equipped the Bechuanas with firearms so that they were able to conquer the Zulus. It was then that the tribe began to recognize Moffat's bravery and compassion for them and they respected him more as a friend. But it was more than twelve years before the gospel began to bear fruit

in the lives of the nationals. God's grace began to work in the hearts of the people, and heathen songs and dancing came to an end. Prayers and the songs of Zion were heard on the lips of the people. Converts were made, and they turned away from their wicked habits. After showing themselves faithful over a period of time, they were baptized, and the gospel began to spread to other tribes.

Moffat began to realize the need to get the Bible translated into their language if the Word was to have any lasting impact in their lives. So he not only translated the entire Bible, but was able to get a printing press, learned how to operate it, and started printing Bibles in the language of the people.

In the fifty years that Moffat was missionary in Africa, he returned only once to England before going back to retire. Today it is customary for missionaries to go to foreign countries for a definite number of years, and we as a denomination see much wisdom in allowing our missionaries regular furloughs to return home. But Robert Moffat went to Africa to work as long as God would permit him, which ended up being fifty years. In all that time he took only one furlough back to England, and that after twenty-three years. During his furlough he was so booked with teaching engagements, and so determined to get the Bible translated and printed, that he ended up staying in England four years, during which time God used him mightily for the promotion of missions in Africa. He was able to convince many young men to consider seriously the African mission, including one young man, David Livingstone, who would become his son-in-law, and who returned to Africa a couple of years before Moffat to build mightily on what Moffat had begun. Although Liv-

ingstone often receives the majority of attention regarding African missions, Livingstone was more the adventurer and explorer, while Moffat was the preacher, teacher, and translator who devoted his life to discipling the nationals.

After his furlough, Moffat returned to Africa and spent the next 27 years in active service, increasingly expanding and developing new fields in other areas and to other tribes, but spending the majority of his time thoroughly teaching and establishing the Bechuanas in the Scriptures. In 1870 he retired from his labors after one of his sons took over his work. His wife died the next year, but God would allow Moffat to outlive many of his own children and Livingstone as well. He died in 1883 at the age of 88 years. At the time of his death *The London Times* wrote: "Moffat's name will be remembered as long as the South African Church endures, and his example will remain with us as a stimulus to others, and as an abiding proof of what a Christian missionary can be and can do."

We see the wonderful work of God's grace through human messengers. Robert Moffat, born in poverty, without a formal education, did not seem destined for much of a future. We do not despise the day of small things. God was pleased to use Robert Moffat to bring the gospel to His people in South Africa, calling them out of darkness into His glorious light. To the Dark Continent came a great light! We are small in numbers, limited in resources and opportunities, yet have been entrusted with a glorious gospel. God is pleased to use your individual witness for His glory, as well as that of our churches and sister churches in America, Canada, and throughout the world, as He gathers His church by His Word and Spirit. ☞

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

May 11, 2011

Southwest

Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 2011, at the Southwest PRC. Each church was represented by two delegates. Rev. M. DeVries was the chairman for this session. Rev. Martin VanderWal rejoined Classis East as the new pastor of the Wingham PRC.

The business of classis was routine. Classis heard reports from the Stated Clerk and the Classical Committee. Requests for pulpit supply were granted for Trinity and Cornerstone. A request from Wingham PRC for

financial support for the moving expenses of their pastor was presented. Wingham requested help in the amount of \$3,500, which was half of the \$7,000 total cost. This request was approved and forwarded to the Synodical Finance Committee for action.

A letter of thanks was received from Wingham for the help of classis during their vacancy.

Expenses for this session amounted to \$159.44.

Classis will meet next on September 14, 2011 at the Hope PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk ☞

Congregation Activities

As many of our readers are aware, Prof. D. Engelsma, retired pastor and professor in our churches, spent about six weeks in the vacant Hope PRC in Redlands, CA from early May through mid June. In addition to filling their pulpit each Lord's Day, Prof. Engelsma was also able to provide some other service to Hope. He spoke to Hope's "Church History" class on "A Brief History of the Schism of 1953 in the PRC." He joined Hope's Reading Club in their discussion of *Bound to Join*, a book written by Prof. Engelsma. And he gave a Spring Lecture on behalf of Hope's Evangelism Committee on June 8 entitled, "Earthquakes, Tsunamis, and other Human Suffering—Because God Exists and Is Both Good and Almighty."

Under the direction of the Consistory, the Activities Committee of Calvary PRC in Hull, IA organized a summer reading program. Calvary will be reading *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, by Tedd Trip. Plans indicated that those interested will have opportunity to gather together three evenings this summer for group discussion held in a nearby park or other such like location. Calvary was encouraged to get their reading glasses cleaned, their fridge stocked with lemonade, and the hammock strung, all with a view to some great summer reading time.

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

Three of our congregations challenged their members to join a Summer Bible Memory Program and be amazed as God gives the ability to "hide His word in your heart." The Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI began their program on June 12, under the theme, "The Golden Chain of Salvation." The Evangelism Committee of Grace PRC in Standale, MI offered a Bible Memory Contest open to all members, with the first recitation beginning June 19. And the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL sponsored a Bible Memory Program for everyone, under the theme, "The Lively Tulip," with a choice of two levels of memorization, one verse or several verses each week. Their program began June 19 and will run through August 14, D.V.

The Hope PRC in Walker, MI sponsored a Summer Bible Study, open to all the members of their congregation, meeting on Sunday evenings throughout the summer. Hope members planning to attend were encouraged to read through the entire book of I Peter and be ready to discuss the main theme of the book. After a discussion of the book in general, plans called for a start of Bible discussion at I Peter 1:1.

The Choral Society of the Crete PRC in Crete, IL presented a spring concert on Sunday evening, June 12.

Once again this summer the adult members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI were able to attend Adult Sunday School. The program began June 5 and lasted eight weeks,

meeting after the Sunday morning service. Topics this year included: the History of the KJV, You and Your Psalter, Helping Youth Determine their Calling, and "Reflections on Domestic Missions."

An invitation was extended to the members of the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD to fellowship with members of the Doon, IA PRC on May 30, for a combined potluck dinner with a bonfire following, and again on June 11 at a combined church picnic with the congregation of the Edgerton, MN PRC.

This summer the girls of the Hudsonville, MI PRC had opportunity to spend time together in Life Group or Living in Faithful Encouragement. Five dates were scheduled from June through August, with the first meeting on June 14, when the young ladies had plans to spend a couple of hours picking, and we assume also eating, strawberries.

Young People's Activities

There is nothing quite like a summer barbecue with friends and family! On Victoria Day, May 23, the Young People's Society of First PRC in Edmonton, AB Canada invited their entire congregation to enjoy just that at their church. The barbecue began in the late afternoon and served as a fund-raiser for this summer's upcoming Young People's Convention.

The young people of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI hosted their annual Softball Tournament on Saturday, May 28 at Whistlestop Park in Byron Center. Once again

it was a day for some great softball and fellowship.

Evangelism Activities

The Council, upon the recommendation of the Evangelism Committee of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI, has decided to stop airing their Sunday services on the local radio station WFUR. The primary reason for this decision was that Georgetown has seen a dramatic increase in the usage of their real time audio via the Internet and the use of sermonaudio.com, where Georgetown's services are posted for download. The web page and sermonaudio are where Georgetown will now focus their

broadcast efforts in the future. Since these efforts began on sermonaudio.com, sermons have been downloaded 1,628 times, about 500 a month so far. 854 were to mobile phones. Last month's sermons (May) were downloaded in 37 different states and 19 different countries.

School Activities

The Randolph Association for PR Secondary Education sponsored a lecture held in Randolph, WI PRC on May 20. The lecture was entitled "The Establishing of PR Christian Schools: Why Bother?" Speaker was Mr. Jon Huiskens. Mr. Huiskens, an elder in Georgetown PRC, has for many years taught a class on the "Practices and Principles of

Reformed Education" for our Protestant Reformed Christian school teachers.

Minister Activities

Rev. C. Haak declined the calls he had received to serve as pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC and Trinity PRC in Hudsonville.

Rev. G. Eriks declined the call to serve as the next pastor of the Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN.

Prof. D. Engelsma declined the call he had received from the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. N. Langerak received the call to serve as pastor of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI. ☺

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Doon PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mrs. Marlene Van Den Top and her children, Katie and Chad, in the death of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. WINNIE FISHER.

May they be comforted with the Word, "Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore, will I deliver him; I will set him on high because he hath known my name" (Psalm 91:14).

Rev. David Overway, President
Alan Van Bemmelen, Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Grandville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Bill Joostens and their families in the death of his mother,

MRS. EPKE JOOSTENS.

"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:8).

Rev. Kenneth Koole, President
Tom Bodbyl, Asst. clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Randolph PRC mourn the loss of a sister in Christ,

WINIFRED FISHER.

We express our sympathy to our fellow saints, Barb Fisher, Eugene and Kathy Braaksma, Al and Joyce Fischer, and Jeremy and Michelle Mulder in the death of their mother and grandmother. May God comfort them in their sorrow by His Word and Spirit, which testify that the dead in Christ shall live forever in the soul, and rise again in the body, as well as by His promise that all things work together for good for those who love Him. "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen" (II Corinthians 4:17, 18a).

Rev. Doug Kuiper, President
Jack Regnerus, Vice-president

Classis East

■ Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 2011 at the Hope PRC, Walker, MI. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 12, 2011.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness to our God, we rejoice with

DAVID and SUSAN ZYLSTRA

as they celebrate their 60th wedding anniversary on July 13, 2011. We thank our heavenly Father for the many years of covenant instruction and for the godly example they set for us. "For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14).

☼ John and Hilda Zylstra

☼ Peter Zylstra (in glory)

☼ Marty and Adeline Zylstra

☼ Herman and Geri Klaassens

☼ Clayton and Jackie deGroot

☼ John and Arlene Goutbeck

☼ Edward and Patricia Huizing

☼ Rick and Marsha Span

☼ Tim and Jill Zylstra

☼ Joe and Valerie van Gelderen

☼ Rhoda Hendricks

77 grandchildren

63 great-grandchildren

Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

Wedding Anniversary

■ We thank our heavenly Father who, in His great mercy, has been faithful to His covenant promise to keep our parents,

ARVIN and ROSE BLEYENBERG, in His care as they commemorate 50 years of marriage on July 21. We are thankful to God for their godly example in rearing us up to fear Him in all our lives. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will sustain and bless them, that they may always know His loving arms. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

- ✿ Ivan Bleyenbergh
- ✿ Gerard and Lila Vaca Guzman
Daniel, Carmen, Nicole
- ✿ Leann (in glory)
- ✿ Rick and Sharon Corson
Kyle and Lyndsey Corson,
Kody, Kayla, Kalyssa
- ✿ Kevin and Arlys Vink
Monica, Travis, Mitchell
- ✿ Verlyn and Jennifer Bleyenbergh
Jamie, Ava, Rush
- ✿ Todd and Vonda Kaptein
Ema
- ✿ David and Sara Bleyenbergh
Leah, Nicholas
- ✿ Mark and Kristin Bleyenbergh
Brooke, Britney, Olivia
- ✿ Rodney and Heather Bleyenbergh
Logan, Tyson, Carter, Parker
Edgerton, Minnesota

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hope PRC in Walker express their Christian sympathy to Deacon Michael Rau and his wife and children in the death of his father-in-law,

MR. GUSTAVE STREYLE.

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

Tom DeVries, Vice-President
Joel Minderhoud, Clerk

Classis West

■ Classis West will convene Wednesday, September 7, at 8:30 A.M., hosted by the Peace PRC of Lansing, IL. All material for the agenda must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than Monday, August 8. Delegates should be aware that an officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, September 6.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,
Stated Clerk

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Ladies Society of Hudsonville PRC wish to express Christian sympathy to fellow member Brenda Hoekstra following the passing of her mother,

MRS. ARLENE PLASIER.

May Brenda and her family find comfort in God's word in John 11:25: "Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Pat Lanning, Secretary

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hudsonville PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder Ed Hoekstra and Brenda and their family in the death of Brenda's mother,

MRS. ARLENE PLAISIER,

and to Elder Doug DeBoer and Beth and their family in the death of Doug's father,

MR. EUGENE DEBOER.

We pray that our Lord may comfort them with His word in Isaiah 43:2: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."

Rev. Garrett Eriks President
Ralph Vander Veen, Clerk

Annual Meeting

■ The RFPA Annual Meeting will be held on September 22, 2011, at 7:30 P.M. at Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan. Come and hear about the RFPA's work in the last year as well as an address by Prof. David Engelsma, who will speak on the Declaration of Principles in connection with the Declaration's 60th anniversary. All are invited and encouraged to attend.

Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hope PRC in Redlands, CA express their sincere sympathy to Mr. Tim Gaastra in the death of his beloved father, and to Mr. & Mrs. Ed Gritters and Mr. & Mrs. Otto Gaastra and their families in the loss of a dear brother and uncle,

MR. RAY GAASTRA.

In the Lord is found comfort as expressed by the psalmist, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.... Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23: 1, 4).

Wayne Buiters, Vice-All
Peter Smit, Clerk

Notification of Candidacy

■ All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2011 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Nathan Decker, Mr. Brian Huizinga, and Mr. Jonathan Mahtani candidates for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. The candidates will be eligible for a call on or after July 16, 2011. Contact information can be found on page 423 of this issue.

Don Doezeema, Stated Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour July 2011

Date	Topic	Text
July 3	"Freedom"	Romans 8:2
July 10	"Arise, Go, Cry Against It"	Jonah 1:1, 2
July 17	"The Prophet Who Ran Away"	Jonah 1:3
July 24	"The God Who Would Not Let Go"	Jonah 1:4-17
July 31	"Prayer from a Whale's Belly"	Jonah 2