

# The Standard Bearer

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# Grow in Grace and in the Knowledge

“But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.”

II Peter 3:18

Peter has emphasized, in this his second epistle, the importance of correct knowledge for these new Christians. He has spoken repeatedly of the importance of rightly grasping the truth through a careful study of the Scriptures. Grace and peace is multiplied through knowledge (1:2). All things that pertain to life and godliness are given through the knowledge of God (1:3). Consider the place of the knowledge of God in 1:8, 12, 19-21. The saints are guarded against error by knowledge of Old Testament history (chapter 2) and by remembering what they were taught by the apostles (3:2, 3).

This balanced grasp of the truth equips the Christian for any danger. Right knowledge of grace and of our Lord Jesus Christ and His promises protects us from being “led away with the error of the wicked” and provides strength

lest you “fall from your own steadfastness” (3:17). And because there is nothing new under the sun (every false doctrine and errant practice has taken place before), knowledge of the truth as it developed in the history of the church shows us how errors are answered by the church in the past.

As we begin a new year we are reminded to do what we can in order to grow. We ought never rest on what we already know, but “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The desire to grow is increased when there is a fervent love for Him. When we love Him, then we want to know Him more and more, better and better.



What does it mean to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus?

To “grow” is to increase, to augment, or to cause to grow. The ability to grow implies the presence of life. The lack of growth indicates either the lack of life or poor health. Even as the physically dead cannot grow, so it is true of the spiritually dead. They cannot grow spiritually. But the Christian has been given spiritual life. God first implanted life in seed form, and then He caused that seed to begin to grow. Within the seed there is the possibility

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

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#### 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@rfa.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 Mr. Samuel Watterson  
11, The Laurels  
Briarfield, Castletroy  
Co. Limerick, Ireland

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of growth and development and maturation.

The young Christians to whom Peter is writing had been given the gift of spiritual life. The gift of this spiritual life came in regeneration. And this seed-life germinated and sprouted in their consciousness, for they had “obtained like precious faith” (1:1). They were “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (1:4). They were able to “add to” their faith (1:5), and to “make [their] calling and election sure” (1:10).

Peter admonishes them to grow. “Grow in grace.” The concept grace usually refers to the favorable attitude of God for the undeserving. It can also refer to the virtues that God’s grace gives. This is the way it is used in the text. God’s powerful and undeserved attitude of favor for the elect always gives. Its chief and central gift is free salvation from the punishment of every sin and all sinfulness, and it gives the bestowal of righteousness by imputation and impartation. Under the umbrella of THE gift of salvation, grace gives many other gifts. It gives faith, justification, love, hope, humility, consecration, contentment, and such like. Every good virtue in one who is a recipient of grace is a gift of grace.

When Peter admonishes us to “grow in grace,” he means that we are to develop and strengthen these virtues. Grow in the awareness of them and strive constantly to develop them in our lives. Another way of saying this is that we are called to reflect Jesus more and more, better and better. More and more reveal Him and His love, His joy, His peace, His gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. Grow in faith, namely, grow in our knowledge of the teaching of Scripture, that is, with more constancy and firmness hold them for truth, not staggering at God’s promises. To grow in the gift of justification is to rest more fully and completely in the finished work of Jesus. To grow in hope is to look increasingly for the glorious appearing of Jesus. To grow in the grace of love is to dwell more and more on His love for us, in order that our love may extend to more and more of our deeds and words and thoughts. Ultimately, to grow in grace is to increase our glorying in the Lord.

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glorying in the Lord.*



How do we grow in grace?

In general, He who gave us grace must give us more of it. The manner in which we receive grace is through prayer and the means of grace. Beautifully and powerfully our Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that God will give His grace and Spirit only to those who sincerely and continually ask for them of Him (Lord’s Day 45). Also, the Spirit uses chiefly the means of the preaching (with the sacraments) to give grace. That is why we must not forsake the preaching of the pure doctrines of the gospel. Attend the faithful preaching of God’s Word, and do so with a sincere heart. Grow in grace by searching the Scriptures more and more diligently.

Specifically, we grow in grace when we grow in “the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.” This

knowledge is first an intellectual understanding of God’s revelation concerning Jesus. We are to study and learn the topsoil of the truth (the history of His birth, life, and death, His parables and miracles, etc.), but also we must get below the surface and into the depths. We are to see more clearly the truths of Scripture in their organic whole,

with the knowledge of God in Christ at the center. It is seeing more and more the truths of union with Christ, of God’s sovereign purposes and control of all, His absolutely perfect wisdom, immutable faithfulness, holy justice, and eternal love.

Knowledge is commendable, but we have to remember that knowledge of the truth all by itself “puffeth up.” Knowledge is beneficial only when it is accompanied with love of God and the neighbor (I Cor. 8:1-3). Another way of saying it is to say that this knowledge must be spiritual—more than just intellectual. Knowledge that is merely intellectual will always lead to pride. But a right grasp of the truth that God has revealed about Jesus and grace and salvation always leads to humility. Then knowledge is a matter of the heart as well as of the mind. Such knowledge comforts and edifies both oneself and others.

The object of this knowledge is to be like “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Believers are to “grow up in

him in all things" (Eph. 4:15). This is the only growth that is true growth. Know more of His person: God's appointed Christ, the true and eternal Savior (Jesus). Know more of His work: His perfect life, His constant loving submission to the will of His Father, His atoning death, justifying resurrection, continual intercession, royal advocacy. Know His teachings, His works, His parables, and His miracles.

Right knowledge of the Savior and Lord makes one long to know Him even better. He who drinks after Jesus will thirst for more of Him, as the hart pants after water. Jesus satisfies as nothing else can. At the same time, to taste Him makes us want to taste Him more and more without ever being too full.



True knowledge of Jesus Christ leads to glorying in Him and in God. Forever! Hence our text ends: "To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen."

"Glory" is objectively the manifestation of God's goodness—of His virtues. This glory is revealed in all the works and ordinances of God, but most highly in Jesus Christ. The church as a whole, and each believer, sees by faith this glory in Jesus. It is by Him and for Him that all

things were made. He is perfect surety of the covenant. He humbled Himself so deeply. He drank all the cup of God's wrath. He burst the bonds of death, the grave, and hell. He ascended, leading captivity as a captive. To Him the angels sing a new song of glory (Rev. 5:9-14; 19:6). And every pious heart in the church responds by glorying in the Lord.

"Both now and for ever." The right and wonderful knowledge of the Savior and Lord will not let us keep silent. We do not wait until we get to heaven to sing of His glory. Already now, in this present time, we desire to proclaim His glory, and to do so in every sphere of life. The activity of giving glory to God and to Christ is to characterize every believer on this earth. Realize that man is always glorying. If we are not glorying in the Lord Jesus, then we are either glorying in self or thinking incorrectly of Him. Right knowledge of Jesus not only leads to humility, but also leads to glorying in the Lord.

And we will glory in the Lord forever (literally, the eternal day). We are never to cease in giving Him praise. The glory of the cross and the great luster of God and His grace may never be dimmed nor eclipsed. He is to be praised for as long as His throne endures—forever! 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

## Jehovah Against the Shepherds (1)\*

\* This editorial is the (revised) 2010 graduation message of the Protestant Reformed Seminary, more a sermon than a speech. It appears only now in February because other editorials took precedence this fall and winter. May the message, heard by a goodly number last June, also be of use to the churches and the SB community at large. In this new year, please commit us at the seminary to God in prayer.

*Graduates, members of the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, Theological School Committee, members of the PRC, family and friends of the graduates, and those who have traveled from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland and from Limerick in the Republic of Ireland...*

The Protestant Reformed seminary aims to train pastors, that is, shepherds. Indeed, we train men to be

scholars; and to be theologians, who love the truth of God in Christ; and to be preachers. But we aim especially to make them pastors, and to use all their scholarship and facility in theology to serve God's flock.

These graduates—scholars, theologians, and would-be-preachers—desire to be pastors, shepherds, of God's sheep.

This is why the PRC require their seminary professors themselves to be pastors of considerable

experience. It takes a pastor to train pastors.

If you look at the seminary curriculum, you will see that it is robust in its offerings in *practical* theology. We require a full range of courses that enable a man to *practice* theology. You may also know that *all* the courses—even those not strictly designed to teach the practice of the ministry—are taught with the ministry in view. Dogmatics, Church History, Exegesis, Old and New Testament history—all are taught to prepare men to be pastors.

We may be very thankful for the denominational (our *church-run*) seminary that trains men to be shepherds, and for a Synod and a Theological School Committee that understand that. And we may be thankful for God's provision of these aspiring shepherds.

For God uses shepherds for the good of the sheep—including our children and grandchildren. Everyone who has had a faithful pastor knows what a blessing a good pastor is to the people of God.

And that's precisely why it's so ominous that God through Ezekiel said (and at times still today says), "I am against the shepherds."

That is a sobering message for a seminary graduation. So sobering that for a time I considered it impossible to use as a graduation text. A happy occasion such as this, for an indictment of shepherds, which these men aspire to be?

Yet this evil day is not the time to be shy. When there are so many faithless shepherds, this is not the time to be worried about offending sensitivities. When else would

such a message be appropriate in the churches?

Besides, Scripture here offers a marvelous opportunity to be positive. God's message "against the shepherds" opens up to another. It not only promises the people's deliverance, it also leads to God's promise of the Faithful Shepherd.

So I have as my theme tonight (for I am really preaching on Ezekiel 34), "Jehovah Against the Shepherds."

### Against the Unfaithful Shepherds

A prophet in Babylon, Ezekiel is sitting with other captives about ten years after he was carried away. Five years after his capture, Ezekiel was called to the prophetic office. He prophesied terrible judgments upon Judah for her impenitence. Then God called him to a long period of silence, terrible silence for the people. If anyone has ever given you the silent treatment, you know how terrible silence is. No word from God. The prophet will not speak. "You heard God's word already. Now judgment will come. God is finished speaking."

Judgment did come. Under the hot displeasure of God, Jerusalem fell. Babylon humbled her, carried captive almost all the people, and took as spoils what was left of their possessions.

Now the penitent remnant come to the prophet. The elders and others congregate to hear God's word. This time Ezekiel has a message of hope: Jerusalem will be restored; God's people will return to their land; God will be good again to His people.

The goodness will come, however, only through the work of faithful shepherds. And faithful shepherds will be provided only after the unfaithful shepherds are removed.



The judgment of the shepherds needs to be seen against the background of the national wickedness. Judah had been adulterous—men had defiled their neighbor's wife (33:26). They were covetous and greedy; they were interested in possessions and homes, playthings and leisure. They involved themselves with "abominations," disgusting and revolting behavior. They trusted in their own strength for their deliverance, depending "upon their own sword" (33:26). And because they were pompous "the pomp of their strength" would cease (33:28).

What made it worse is that they had appeared to be religious, but were hypocrites. Even now, some of this remnant reporting to Ezekiel the final fall of Jerusalem were hypocrites. In the last part of Ezekiel 33 God warned His prophet that some were listening to him, appearing to be excited to hear a good sermon from him, even inviting their neighbors to hear his orations. But they were ignoring the heart of his message to repent in humility.

We would call them connoisseurs of good sermons. If they had recording equipment, they would have had a collection of sermons. If they had libraries, they would have had a wall full of Ezekiel's works. But they were idolaters, lovers of self more than lovers of God and their neighbor. They

loved concerts of good music, fine wine, soft clothing. But they did not love their neighbor, or help the poor. In fact, they became fat from their poor neighbors. And if they would have been rebuked for their failures, their response would have been a dismissive, proud silence, or a response that their neighbors were weak, or unbelieving, and therefore unworthy of their attention.

God judged the wickedness of that people.

But if the people were evil, the shepherds were worse. And the shepherds are on the foreground here (vv. 3-6).

They fed themselves and failed to feed the sheep. They ate the fat and clothed themselves with the wool, but did not care for the sheep. They did not strengthen the diseased nor heal the sick. They did not bind up the broken, restore those who were driven away, or seek out those who were lost. With cruelty and force they ruled them.

So the sheep scattered, wandered through the high hills, and became prey to the beasts. Their backs were torn with the claws of the bear and their throats were slashed by the lion's fangs.

A modern description of this reality would be of men seeking the pastorate for their own advantage. Or, having originally sought it with purer motivations, they now use it for their own advancement, to the great hurt of God's flock. They do not seek the welfare of the people, but their own. If they do think of the flock, they pay attention to those who can do them service and advance their cause.

They have no interest (beyond the merely superficial) in the wandering sheep. They are too busy to pay attention to the children of the lesser known or less influential families, or to do the dirty work of healing the broken marriage of the young couple who have no connections to the church. Their interest in seeking out the lost in missions and evangelism—either of the house of Judah or others—comes in a distant second. They could not imagine themselves saying to an Agrippa: "I would to God that you were a Christian as I am."

How they attempt to minister to the flock, then, is not so much by the word as a tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit, but by force and threat. These proud shepherds are not shy to intimidate, to assume an air of condescension and a tone of superiority. It probably amazes them how anyone could allow sin to get him in such a tangled mess—by which they show clearly that they know nothing by experience of the mercy of God to themselves.

Therefore, God is against the shepherds!

"Woe to them. Prophecy against them. Bring charges. Indict them. Pronounce a sentence upon them. I am against the shepherds."

It is hard to imagine a more terrible reality than God saying to you, "I am against you."

God will depose the unfaithful shepherds. "I will cause them to cease from feeding the flock" (v. 10). And then God will judge them for the loss of the sheep, for the souls of those who perished on account of their shepherds' selfish conduct. Punished for their own sins, they will also be punished for the sins of those they led into sin.

I imagine a scene in the judgment day: The wicked preachers standing together, answering for the sheep who perished under their care. The shepherds who had led the flock into sin, connived at their sins, or simply failed to seek them out, so that they became meat for the beasts. What will the Judge say?

Remember, the evil shepherds are to be blamed for the sins of Israel and Judah. These shepherds not only failed to check the wickedness of those under their care, they also took the lead in the heathenish abominations.

The people themselves, it is true, were judged for their own sins. And an aspect of this judgment is that Judah got the kind of shepherds that they deserved. So the church today, if there is trouble, must examine herself before she points the finger at unfaithful shepherds.

Nevertheless, Ezekiel here lays the blame for Judah's trouble at the feet of the leaders. They led the people—by their own despicable examples of wickedness. One after another "departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin." God said through Jeremiah, an older contemporary of Ezekiel, "I have seen folly in the prophets...they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err...they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers" (23:13, 14; emphasis added).

What will it be to fall into the hands of an angry God because you were an unfaithful shepherd? Woe to the shepherds!

... to be concluded. 

## The Nature of the Office of Elder (2)

## The Rule of Christ

**T**hat the office of elder is the office of rule in Christ's church we demonstrated from Scripture and the Reformed confessions in our last article. The church needs this office, for she is made up of human beings, who need rule, and are sinners, who by nature oppose order and right.

The question that now begs to be answered is this: exactly *who* rules in the church? Do the elders rule in the church on their own? Does a body of mere men rule the church? Or does another? The answer is that the rule of the office of elder is the rule of Jesus Christ, the King of the church.

### Christ is present with His church in her offices.

Making possible the rule of Christ through the office of elder is the fact that Christ is present with His church in her offices.

Christ promised to be present with the church throughout the new dispensation: "And lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20b). He is not present with us bodily, for He is in heaven in His human nature; rather, He is present in His Godhead and in His Spirit, whom He poured out on the day of Pentecost.

As one visible evidence of His presence, Christ gave His church officebearers. The "you" of Matthew 28:20 refers to the church, as represented by the apostles. Romans 12:6-8, I Corinthians 12:28, and Ephesians 4:11ff. also teach that officebearers are Christ's gifts to the church. That Christ is still present with His church through her offices yet today is clear from two consider-

ations: first, Christ has not removed these offices from the church; second, in faithful churches He continues to fill these offices with godly believers.

How do officebearers particularly manifest the presence of Christ? Not in their *persons*, but in their *work*. It is true that officebearers, in their persons, are called to be examples of faith and godliness. Yet God requires every Christian to be such; and in their person, officebearers are no different from the rest of the church—sinful humans, made saints by grace. But the *work* that officebearers do—teaching, ruling, administering Christ's mercies—is the work of the exalted Christ in and for His church. Through the faithful pastor, Christ teaches; through faithful elders, Christ rules; and through faithful deacons, Christ administers His mercies.

That Christ works through officebearers is the teaching of Scripture.

When He said to Peter, "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 16:19), and promised that the proper use of those keys on earth would be honored in the day of judgment, He did not mean that Peter now had the necessary gifts to work in the church *apart from* Jesus Christ; rather, Christ meant that He would work through Peter and the other apostles.

Referring to the church's officebearers, and with particular application to the office of elder, Paul tells the Thessalonian saints "to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord" (I Thess. 5:12). "Over you in the Lord" indicates that these function in the authority of Jesus Christ.

So it was also in the Old Testament. When Moses appointed judges over Israel, he reminded them that "the judgment is God's" (Deut. 1:17). Later, following Moses' example, Jehoshaphat said the same thing: "Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in judgment" (II Chron. 19:6).

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*Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin.*

*Previous article in this series: November 15, 2010, p. 83.*

That Jehovah was present with these judges in judgment did not mean merely that He equipped them to do their work, although that was implied; but even more, it meant that the work was Jehovah's, and He was performing it through them.

Let us be clear what we mean when we say that Christ works in His church through officebearers.

The "church" in which He works is the spiritual body of Christ as manifested in true churches—instituted churches in various localities, which strive to be faithful to Him. Christ does not work today in every organization that calls itself a church; nor does He work through every person who claims to be a preacher, elder, or deacon. But where His true church is manifested (see Belgic Confession, Art. 29), and where that institute has a body of godly, believing, and qualified men filling its offices (see Tit. 1:5-9 and I Tim. 3), Christ is present and works.

Through the work of such men, Christ manifests Himself as the only Mediator and Savior of His church. By their work He strengthens us in our faith; He assures us that we are regenerated, justified, and sanctified; He causes us to grow in our hope for glory; and He guides us in all our spiritual pilgrimage. When in the preaching the minister, on the basis of Scripture, brings our own sins to light, or when in the work of discipline the elders judge us according to the Scriptures to be walking in sin, *Christ* judges us through them. When in the preaching of the gospel the minister declares that every sin of every penitent child of God is forgiven for Christ's sake, or in the work of discipline the elders receive us as penitent, *Christ* does so through them. And when the minister sets forth the law as a rule of gratitude, or the elders or deacons point us to our calling to obey the law, *Christ* directs our way through them.

### **Christ rules the church through her elders, as they do the work of their office.**

Because Christ is present with His church in the offices, and through them works in His church, He rules the church through the office of elder. Christ manifests His rule in the church in every work that the elders perform in harmony with their office.

The authority of the office of elder is limited to matters that concern the spiritual welfare of the people, or that bear directly on the welfare of the church as a whole.

Historically, Reformed churches have expressed their understanding of this in their church order. Article 30 of the Church Order of Dordrecht (the ancestor of our own Protestant Reformed Church Order) reads in part: "In these assemblies only ecclesiastical matters shall be dealt with and that in an ecclesiastical manner."<sup>1</sup> As to what constitutes "ecclesiastical matters," VanDellen and Monsma write:

...the domain over which the instituted Church of Christ has authority is not general, but limited. It is limited to that which concerns the preaching of the Gospel, the administration of the Sacraments, the calling and ordination to office, the exercise of discipline, the promotion of a consecrated scriptural Church communion, and kindred matters.<sup>2</sup>

By such a reminder, the church is warned against intruding into any and every matter under the sun, including political matters, private matters between two members, and other temporal affairs.

Faithful elders will desire to do only that which accords with the calling of their office. They will desire this so that they can assert their authority with confidence that Christ is indeed working through them, and so that the people clearly realize their need to obey and be subject to the elders.

Having emphasized that elders must not overstep the bounds of their office, we note that the authority of the elders in the church is broad.

It includes *legislating*. Here, of course, the elders must remember that the basic rules necessary for life in the church have already been made, not by men, but by God. These rules are found in the Scriptures.

Some would say that, because the law of God is found in the Scriptures, the elders really may make no rules at all. The rules that govern the church have all been made.

With this we do not completely agree. It is true that

<sup>1</sup> Richard R. DeRidder, *Translation of ECCLESIASTICAL MANUAL including the decisions of the Netherlands Synods and other significant matters relating to the government of the churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Calvin Theological Seminary, 1982), p. 166.

<sup>2</sup> Idzerd VanDellen and Martin Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1941), p. 135.

the elders may make no rules that bind the consciences of God's people. Nor may they make rules that in effect micromanage the details of the lives of God's people. We cringe to hear of consistories that prohibit their members to use tobacco or alcohol, to own a television, or to have "open internet" (DSL) in their own homes and private lives. Certainly elders must warn against the abuse and sinful use of all such; but they may not prohibit such.

Still, the elders may make decisions that govern the lives of God's people. When they do so, these must be based on the law of love. In other words, they must be applications of biblical principles. And these must seek the welfare and order of the congregation as a whole.

Reformed churches have already made such decisions. Some are found in our Church Order. Others are found in the "local regulations" or "standing rules" of each consistory.

Having defended the right of the elders to *legislate* (make decisions pertaining to the congregation as a whole, decisions that are based on Scripture), we point out that the main aspect of the work of the elders will be not legislating, but *administering* or *enforcing* the law of God. This is the work of judging, biblical support for which we have already noted (Deut. 1:17; II Chron. 19:6).

We live in an age of tolerance, in which people despise the notion of judging others. Yet Christ called the elders to do precisely this. They are not to judge the hearts of confessing believers; but they are to judge the outward speech, actions, and all conduct of the lives of the members of the congregation, determining whether or not these are in conformity with God's law.

The elders see to this work in many ways. Christian discipline certainly is one way, but it is not the only way. When reviewing the membership roll to evaluate whether any member is neglecting the means of grace; on family visitation; when treating the request of anyone for baptism for their child, confession of faith, or the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper; and also in other ways, the elders pass judgment on the conduct of the members.

Then, the work of the elders in ruling is also to feed, nourish, protect, and defend the people of God—in other words, everything involved in being a shepherd. We

readily think of the *pastor* as a shepherd, but we must remember that the *elders* are shepherds too. In Scripture, kings in the Old Testament are called shepherds—Isaiah 56:11, Ezekiel 34, Zechariah 10:3. And Acts 20:28 and I Peter 5:2-4 use this terminology explicitly with reference to the office of elder.

So the nature of the elders' rule is to feed the people, protect them, encourage and comfort them. This explains the calling of the elders to visit, and watch over, the congregation.

Our point in mentioning these broad aspects of the elders' work is to say that, when the elders do this, Christ rules the church through them! For Christ is the Shepherd of His flock, the King of His church.

### **The calling to honor this office.**

Following from the reality that Christ rules in the church through the elders is the calling that God lays on the congregation to honor the office of elder, and those who hold that office.

This calling is found in various places in Scripture. We read in I Thessalonians 5:12-13: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake." And I Timothy 5:17: "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Concretely, by remembering these men, following their faith, and obeying and submitting to them (Heb. 13:7, 17), the members of the church show that they honor the office of elder.

Reasons *not* to honor this office, or the men who fill it, might cross our minds. The office is one of rule; sinful men, prone to pride and self-seeking, do not like to be ruled. And as regards the men who hold the office, they are sinners, like us.

But the reason that God gives for requiring us to honor elders in His church has to do, not with the men as such, but with their work, and with the fact that Christ Himself works through them: "esteem them very highly in love *for their work's sake*" (I Thess. 5:13).

Do you honor your elders?

Have you prayed for them lately?

Are you grateful to God for His rule of you through them? 

# Comfort in Temptation

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

I Corinthians 10:13

**A**s young people, you face temptations every day, and every day you respond differently to those temptations. Sometimes we can be proud and think that we are not affected by a certain temptation nearly as much as other people are. We show this pride by focusing on the sins of others and praising ourselves for our piety. God has a word for us in verse 12: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”

In other instances we know our weakness and we don't know how we can be faithful, so we reason: “Why try to resist the temptation? We will just give in to the temptation and we'll ask for forgiveness later. Even the Israelites, who had special miracles and wonders from God, could not stand. So, how can I?” At yet other times our response is that of despair. We become overwhelmed with all that is going on in our life and we conclude that the only resort is to take our life by suicide. That can be a real and frightening response to the trials and temptations of life. We need to get help immediately when we experience such feelings, and we need to take seriously those who tell us that they feel that the pressures of life are just too great and are tempted to commit suicide.

I Corinthians 10:13 gives us comfort and hope in the face of temptation. Paul assures us that our confidence is not in our strength but in God's faithfulness. God is faithful! He will uphold all His children in their tempta-

tions. That is our confidence with regard to all the situations of life. God will never cause you to be tempted above that you are able! God will always give you a way out of temptation. This way out is by means of faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is your confidence and hope in the midst of temptation.

The word that is translated temptation can refer to either a temptation or a trial. There are important differences between trials and temptations. First, there is a difference with regard to their origins. Temptations come from Satan, according to James 1:13: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man.” Trials come from God, as I Peter 4:12, 13 teach. Second, the motivation is different. Temptations are motivated by hatred for God, while trials are motivated by God's great love for His people. Third, the content differs between trials and temptations. Temptations contain the lie, whereas trials consist of the truth. Fourth, the purpose and goal of trials and temptations are the opposite of one another. Temptations are aimed to destroy, while trials are designed to build up and to strengthen. Finally, temptations come upon all men, but trials come only on God's children.

Even though there is such a striking difference between the two, there is an important relationship between trials and temptations. For God's people, the same situation that is a trial is also a temptation. You can be tempted by the devil to cheat on a paper, but that temptation is also a test or trial that God is leading you through. Will you be faithful or not? You might have something bad happen to you or someone you love through a trial in which God is testing you, but that same situation the devil uses as a temptation to reject God's goodness and faithfulness, even to deny God.

God is sovereign over both the trials and the temptations. God gives Satan the power to tempt, and God dic-

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*Rev. Brummel is pastor of the Heritage Protestant Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota.*

tates the limits of the temptation. The case of Job demonstrates this, as God gave to Satan authority to tempt Job; but Satan was not allowed at first to do anything to Job. Later God allowed Satan to touch Job, but not to take his life. This is a great comfort to us personally, as it shows us that God sovereignly uses all trials and temptations to accomplish His holy end of glorifying His name and preparing us for heaven.

Here in I Corinthians 10:13 the passage uses the word temptation to refer to what we described above as temptation. The devil tempts us to sin, making use of the wicked world and our sinful flesh. Satan comes against us with all his hatred for God and those who represent God. He comes to the saints as a roaring lion, knowing that his days are numbered on earth. The peer pressure, psychology, philosophy, gambling, movies, entertainment, and lusts of this world are all enlisted against us. Our personal sins, which daily plague us, are used against us.

In the midst of these powerful temptations, we need comfort. We do not rise up in pride above one another. Each of us has fallen into serious sins that would shame us if they were exposed before our friends and family. You know that you are weak. You know how hard you try to fight sin, and then find yourself going right back to it. You cannot rely on your own strength! In the face of temptation there is one comfort—God is faithful!

What does it mean to you that God is faithful? God's faithfulness points to the fact that God is unchangeable within Himself. His names testify to this. He is the "I am that I am." He is the one who claims in Malachi 3:6, "I am Jehovah, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." God is faithful to us even when we sin. We are fickle and sinful, as were the Israelites whom the apostle talks about in the first verses of I Corinthians 10. Daily we deny our faithful God. We murmur against God who feeds us, clothes us, and blesses us with all that we have. Just as He continued to love and show compassion to His remnant in Israel even as they proved themselves over and over to be unworthy, He shows His

faithfulness to us as members of His covenant people even though we are covenant breakers.

As young people we think that the temptations we face are unique and that no one else is able to understand us. Our parents do not understand us; our teachers don't; nor do our pastors. No one can imagine how difficult our situation is. When God sends us through difficult ways we are inclined to pity ourselves and to crawl into our own shells, rejecting all offers of assistance from others. God corrects us here with His powerful Word: All are common to man! That is, none is unique. Every temptation that you have ever faced has been faced by others. Your parents and teachers and pastors experienced these same temptations when

they were younger. But, even in the case of a unique situation, where no parent or teacher or pastor can directly relate, you have Someone who can—Jesus Christ. He was tempted in every respect like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). God knows how you feel. God knows your situation. God is with you and will preserve you.

Even stronger, God promises that He "will not suffer you to be tempted more than you are able." God knows exactly what each of us is able to bear. He knows that you can carry nothing on your own.

He knows that only a small temptation or trial will cause you to fall. All your trials are carefully crafted by God and tailored to match the strength of your faith. In this way, each of us is individually prepared for his place in God's kingdom. God requires more out of some, but He also gives them more grace to bear it. At times we may feel as though that which God requires of us is far more than we are able to bear, but God assures us that He will not give us too much. God is not a liar! You can never say that the temptation was too great, it required too much of you, therefore you gave in to the sin. Never may you blame God for your falling into sin. When you fall, it is your fault because you did not look to God for strength!

That God can give us this assurance proves that God

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is sovereign over all temptation. God has Satan, the wicked world, and our flesh under His control. God ordains that all temptation is for the salvation of His church and His glory. God purifies His children by fire. We see the tremendous power of sin and are brought to abhor it more and more. God brings us to a humble reliance on Him. Psalm 37:24 states: "Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand." The third article of the fifth head of the Canons of Dordt encourages us:

By reason of these remains of indwelling sin, and the temptations of sin and of the world, those who are converted could not persevere in a state of grace, if left to their own strength. But God is faithful, who having conferred grace, mercifully confirms, and powerfully preserves them therein, even to the end.

God gives us a gracious assurance here that He will be faithful to us in our need. "God will provide an escape." The Word of God is the only escape from temptation. Knowing the Word of God and applying it to our individual needs and situations is required. This is what you are learning now at home, in school, and in catechism. You need to learn how to apply the Word of God to your life. It is of highest importance that you apply yourself to these studies for God's sake.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God. He is the one through whom we experience the way of escape. He was tempted by the devil with powerful temptations according

to His human nature. Christ overcame the temptations by means of the Scriptures, as recorded in Matthew 4. Each time He quoted from the book of Deuteronomy, which set before Israel the need to live as a separate people. And now, we are in Christ. That means that Christ overcomes temptation now through His children. He gives us strength. When we are victorious it is because Christ is victorious. When we fall into sin, it is because we did not look to God. We did not turn to His Word. We tried to stand in our own strength and we stumbled and fell, as will always happen.

The purpose of this way of escape is so that "we will be able to bear it." God gives us a burden to carry that is too heavy for us. He knows that we can't carry it by ourselves. The only way we can carry it is by the power of Jesus Christ. You will be able to bear it! Through times of despair and depression and darkness, God provides a light of hope. Abraham offered up Isaac. Joseph overcame the temptation to fornicate, by the strength God gave him. Daniel and his three friends were faithful and did not bow the knee to idolatry. God will also give each of us the strength we need to resist temptation.

There will be times when we do fall into temptation. We will be burned by our sins. God will give us grace to bear the consequences of our fall. And God will use your failures to humble your sinful pride and to teach you that you cannot walk without Him. Cling to Him and His Word! 

## A Clash of Individual Liberty

**D**rastic changes are taking place all around us in society today. Although the mainstream "Christian" churches in Western civilization departed from doctrinal orthodoxy generations ago, most of society still, until more recently, followed the outward

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*Mr. VanEngen, a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa, is a practicing attorney.*

practices of Judeo-Christian principles. For instance, stores and businesses were closed on Sundays. Adultery and homosexuality were looked down upon by the majority of society.

Society even incorporated these practices into its laws. Laws prohibited adultery and homosexuality and provided criminal sanctions for violations. State and municipal laws prohibited businesses from operating on

Sunday. The killing of unborn children through “abortion” was prohibited by the laws of the state.

Over the last few decades, these laws have been repealed or struck down one at a time. Each time, the argument has been that these laws limited the freedoms of those with differing religious beliefs or viewpoints. Those advocating the repeal of these laws tout the change as an expansion of individual liberty.

We may be tempted to think that these changes in the law do not affect us. After all, we do not engage in those behaviors. We may view those behaviors as sins that are now allowed to be practiced openly, but do these changes really affect us? In this article, we will look at a couple of examples of how the changing nature of laws do affect us.

While many laws originally prohibited behavior we view as sin, the tide has now turned. Now our ability to hold to the values that were behind those laws is threatened by the laws of the state. The problem is that the behaviors that were once taboo often become protected rights, and those who oppose those sins now find themselves to be in violation of the law. All of this is done in the name of preserving “individual liberties,” but as we will see, there is a point in every situation where the extension of one person’s liberty comes at the expense of his neighbor’s liberty.

Despite all the rhetoric we hear about individual liberties, the fact remains that at some point, all our rights and liberties are constrained by those of our neighbor. To illustrate the point, it has been said that “your right to swing your fist stops at the next guy’s face.” You have the right to swing your fist whichever way you want, but if it hits someone else, you have violated his right not to be struck. The right to swing one’s fist is not absolute, but is limited by the rights of those around him. Individual rights under the laws of western civilization are not absolute, but must be balanced. This need to balance interests is often overlooked in the public debate about “individual liberties.” We will now look at a couple of examples of how these changes in the law inhibit the liberty of believers to exercise their faith.

The recent expansion in rights of homosexuals has been the subject of several articles under this rubric. In years past, homosexual activity was outlawed by the laws of many jurisdictions. Homosexual activity could

be punished as a crime until the United States Supreme Court ruled in 2003 that homosexual activity was a privacy issue in which the government had no right to intervene.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, some jurisdictions began granting rights to homosexuals as a class of people, such as the right to marry.<sup>2</sup> The argument is that the underlying reason for denying homosexuals rights such as marriage is a religious belief that homosexuality is wrong. To deny homosexuals their rights, it is argued, is to impose those religious beliefs on them, contrary to federal and state constitutions that prohibit the state from imposing a set of religious beliefs on any group or class of citizens.<sup>3</sup>

This shift in the law to recognize homosexual relationships as a legitimate institution in society presents problems for believers. Can a believer continue to act as a county recorder or registrar in a state where they may be required by law to issue a marriage license to a homosexual couple? The believer’s right to hold his religious beliefs while continuing in this occupation is restricted by the homosexual’s “right” to marry.

Believers with government jobs are not the only ones affected by changes in laws that protect sin as “individual rights.” This is largely due to the laws against discrimination. In the context of the movement for homosexual rights, proponents of such rights argue that the changing of the law in regard to treatment of homosexuals is exactly like the changes that occurred as rights were recognized for black Americans. Many even point out that some claimed religious justification for discrimination against blacks, and draw the parallel to opposition against homosexuals. Just as an employer, landlord, or businessman could be sued for discriminating against someone based on race, they could also be sued for refusing to hire, rent to, or transact business with a homosexual. Already in 1996, the United States Supreme Court struck down a law that would have protected landlords who refused to rent to homosexuals on the basis that they found homosexuality morally offensive.<sup>4</sup> Many states have

<sup>1</sup> · *Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 U.S. 558 (2003).

<sup>2</sup> · Massachusetts became the first state to recognize homosexual “marriage” on November 18, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> · See, e.g., *Varnum v. Brien*, 763 N.W. 2d 862 (Iowa 2009), in which the court noted that although religious reasons were not stated in support of opposition to gay marriage, they were the real reasons behind Iowa’s prohibition on gay marriage.

<sup>4</sup> · *Romer v. Evans*, 517 U.S. 620 (1996).

laws prohibiting discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation.

While the debate over homosexual rights encompasses many issues, other individual “rights” or “liberties” also interfere with our right to the free exercise of religion. Take, for example, the struggle over the “right of conscience” in the medical profession. In 1965, the United States Supreme Court ruled that a state could not ban the use of contraceptives.<sup>5</sup> In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that a woman had the right to abort her unborn child.<sup>6</sup> In both cases, the Court stated that the state could not interfere because it was a privacy issue, just as the Court stated 30 years later regarding homosexuality. The issue then arose whether health care providers could refuse to assist patients in exercising these “rights,” or whether pharmacists could refuse to distribute birth control or abortion pills. The ability of health care providers to refuse to participate is known as the “right of conscience.”

Many states enacted rules protecting the right of conscience after the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision. However, different state licensing boards have issued various rules, some protecting the right of conscience, while others have threatened the licensure of health professionals who do not offer “legal” medical services to their patients, even if it violates their religious beliefs. The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology issued an ethics opinion in 2007 entitled “The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine,” which stated “...conscientious refusals should be limited if they constitute an imposition of religious or moral beliefs on patients...”<sup>7</sup> This same rule was again considered and reaffirmed in November of 2010. Violations of such ethics rules can result in a loss of board certification, which would mean that the doctor would be unable to maintain privileges to practice in most

hospitals. If this is the situation already now, we can only imagine the effects of greater government intrusion into health care as the recent health care reform legislation is implemented.

As the law continues to move towards protecting “rights” that run contrary to our beliefs, it will become harder and harder to live in the world around us. It appears that this encroachment on our ability to live out our beliefs will continue to affect individual believers first, rather than the church institute. For instance, some states adopting homosexual marriage have specifically stated that churches may refuse to perform homosexual weddings.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, as these “rights” are expanded, the law will encroach more and more upon the liberty of the true church.

It is important from a legal standpoint that our beliefs are stated clearly. Obviously the primary reason for this is that the truth be maintained and the witness of the church not be diminished. But the unity and clarity of our beliefs also assists when relying on the Constitutional protections of the free exercise of religion. Our Lord has placed us in a country

where the laws have allowed the truth to be faithfully proclaimed for many years, and those same laws may still afford protection for some time. Right of conscience-type claims are also much easier to defend if one can point to the clear teachings of his church. Ultimately, this same black-and-white clarity may gain us unwanted attention and persecution from those who preach “tolerance” for sin.

But even as we see the rights of those opposed to the truth encroaching further and further on our ability to exercise our faith, we know that we need not fear. We do not need to rely on the laws of our land to defend us. All things happen according to the will of our Lord, and the victory is His. 

*We do not need  
to rely on the laws  
of our land  
to defend us.*

<sup>5</sup> · *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965).

<sup>6</sup> · *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).

<sup>7</sup> · American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Committee Opinion number 385, *The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine* (November 2007).

<sup>8</sup> · *Varnum v. Brien*, 763 N.W.2d 862 (Iowa 2009).

## In the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord

The above title is a phrase found in Ephesians 6:4. This passage is one of the many in Scripture that speak of our calling as parents. It follows after the special admonition to children to obey their parents in the Lord. How thankful we are that the Lord gives us so much instruction in these important areas of Christian living.

The key words in the above quoted phrase are “in the Lord” or “of the Lord.” The idea is that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One who guides us entirely both as parents and as children. We are the Lord’s by His wonderful grace. He has chosen us to be His covenant people. He has redeemed us with His own precious blood by His sacrifice for us on the cross. No greater love can be conceived of than the love whereby Christ gave Himself for us. He has also given to us His Spirit. We are the Lord’s people. He has made us His own. He has redeemed us in order that we might serve Him and glorify His name as members of His church.

Children must obey their parents in the Lord. They must honor them and respect the authority that the Lord Himself has given to their parents, to rule over them, and to guide them in their lives. Honor for rulers and respect for authority is little known in our lawless and rebellious age. Our covenant children, who are the Lord’s, must from earliest childhood be taught honor and respect. Our children must be taught how tremendous is the truth of being the Lord’s children, and what this truth means for their daily lives. The kind of obedience required of them

in their lives would be impossible if they were not in the Lord. The obedience and honor that children must show for their parents must flow out of an attitude of profound gratitude to the Lord for saving them.

The fact that our children were baptized as infants is the sign that “even as they are without their knowledge partakers of the condemnation in Adam, so are they again received unto grace in Christ.”<sup>1</sup> We baptize our children as infants because we believe that

they, as well as the adult, are included in the covenant and church of God; and since redemption from sin by the blood of Christ, and the Holy Ghost, the author of faith, is promised to them no less than to the adult; they must therefore by baptism, as a sign of the covenant, be also admitted into the Christian church, and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers.<sup>2</sup>

What an excellent statement to guide us in instructing our children. All of this can be summarized in that we and our covenant children by the marvelous sovereign grace of the Lord belong to Him and to His church. How thankful we must always be for this!

Children are to obey their parents “in the Lord.” The obedience that is required of them is far greater than what might be taught even by worldly parents and by child psychologists. Indeed, there is natural advantage, a worldly advantage, for children who in a merely human way learn from their childhood to obey their parents. But our covenant children have to be taught in their homes to obey in the Lord. This is a much higher honor and obedience than any taught by the world. It is an obe-

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

*Previous editorial in this series: November 15, 2010, p. 89.*

<sup>1</sup> The form for baptism found in the back of the Psalter on page 55.

<sup>2</sup> The teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism on infant baptism in Lord’s Day 27.

dience in the highest sense to the supreme Lord of all, the One who created us and loved us, who redeemed us for Himself, and who is sovereign over our whole life. The obedience that the Lord requires of His children must come from the heart and be spiritual in its character, for only such is true obedience to the Lord.

Parents must teach their children the truth of the Word of God. Children must be taught to know and to confess and to live by this doctrine of the Lord. They are to be warned against the vain philosophies of men. They are to be taught not to live according to the inclinations of their own sinful natures. Parents are also to demonstrate their faith in the Lord, their humility before Him, their life unto Him, their hope in Him, and their own comfort and joy in the Lord. They must show the reality of this in their own lives.

The great requirement of children is obedience to the Lord. The Bible makes it very plain that this is the great requirement of the children of God, obedience to God. Obedience is what the Lord requires of them. There can be no substitute for this. No man will experience the blessing of the Lord except in the way of faith and obedience to the Lord. Even the Son of God, according to Hebrews 5, had to learn obedience. He had to learn this through suffering for our sins under the wrath of God.

Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save from death, and was heard in that he feared; though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:7-9).

What an amazing testimony concerning the suffering of Jesus and how great was the matter of obedience to His heavenly Father in this suffering.

For our covenant children who belong to the Lord, Jesus was also a great example in His childhood. The inspired writer Luke tells us that Jesus in His childhood was subject unto His parents (Luke 2:51). This is striking. The parents of Jesus, Mary the biological mother of Jesus, and Joseph the foster father of Jesus, were both sinful, even as all parents are who proceed from the fallen race of Adam. We wonder how they went about instructing and disciplining Jesus knowing that He was

the Son of God. Jesus, from infancy on, was the Holy Child, never having any sin, not even in His mind and heart, as He grew up to full manhood. And yet it was the will of God that Jesus be subject to His parents. Never did He disobey them.

Ephesians 6, and also the parallel passage in Colossians 3, make plain that children are to be taught to honor and to obey both their father and mother. They must do this realizing that God Himself has given to their parents an office of authority unto which they must be subject for the Lord's sake. This is right in the sight of God. This is the way the Lord Himself ordained that it should be. The words used in the admonition to children are the same ones used for the honor and obedience that man owes to God. The meaning is not, of course, that parents stand on the same plain as the Lord, but that parents are worthy of honor for the Lord's sake. So serious is the command for children to obey their parents that in Old Testament times, if a child was continuously disobedient and rebellious, he was to be brought to the elders of Israel and stoned to death (Deut. 21:18-21).

According to the words of Colossians 3, children are to obey their parents in all things. The only exception to this absolute rule is when obedience to parents would clearly violate one of the commandments of the Lord God. Children are to obey their parents even though this may at times be difficult, when such obedience goes contrary to their sinful nature, and when this obedience requires of them to live in a way that will make them the object of shame and ridicule by the world.

Children are to have the same honor for both father and mother in the Lord. Children are not to despise their mother because they do not have the same fear of her. Mother is worthy of the same honor, and when children despise her or disregard her instruction, they bring upon themselves great shame and the judgment of God. It is significant, however, that when the passages in Ephesians and Colossians speak of the nurture and admonition of the children, only the father is mentioned. The idea is not that the mother does not also have an important role and calling in the nurture and admonition of children in the home. The emphasis in Scripture is, rather, on the fact that nurturing and admonishing children is especially the responsibility of fathers. The father must take the lead.

Sometimes a fathers might imagine that the task of rearing the children can be left wholly to his godly wife, the mother of his children. But this is wrong. According to Scripture, the chief responsibility for doing this great work in the covenant home belongs to the father. He must be concerned about this. He must take personal interest in his children. He must take the time and put forth the effort that is necessary to nurture his children. Some fathers are grievously negligent in this area, to the great detriment of their Christian families. They may not excuse themselves by saying that they are so very busy earning enough financial resources to provide for all the needs of the family.

It is true that our children need food and a home and clothing and many other things in this life. When our children become school age there must be money to pay Christian school tuition. Great sacrifices have to be made, because maintaining Christian schools, especially in our modern day, is expensive. But in the midst of all this we as fathers must be sure to maintain the right biblical perspective. Most often the greatest danger in our times, especially in America, is that fathers are so concerned about all kinds of material luxuries, sports and recreation equipment, cars, electronic gadgetry, and other things that they make themselves too busy to have the loving, patient concern for their children to instruct them in the far more important things in their lives as they are growing up. We imagine that a father's love is measured by all the gifts he showers on his children. This is quite easy to do, and we get pleasure ourselves from this. But sometimes it would be better if the children had fewer material things. Remember the warnings of the Word of God of dangers of materialism and worldliness and covetousness. We can easily teach our children these sins by the abundance of material things we imagine they must have.

Fathers are to bring up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. In order to do this they must show their children that they themselves are "in the Lord."

They must show themselves to be truly god-fearing men. An important part of the instruction of our children is our instructing them in sound doctrine. This is almost unheard of in our day, even in some Reformed churches. (We will return to this in our next article.) We want to conclude this article by emphasizing the great and urgent calling of fathers to watch their own personal relationship to the Lord. Take heed unto yourselves for the sake also of your children. Fathers must nurture their children, not only by daily instruction, but by a life of godliness, demonstrating by the example of their own lives what it means to fear and love the Lord and to be devoted to Him and His Word.

The instruction that covenant fathers must give to their children is the truth and law of the Lord. It is a thing most grievous when a father himself is ungodly in his lifestyle and behavior, if he is himself an immoral man or a drunkard, and then he tries to instruct his children in the fear and love of the Lord. It is horrendous when a father, rather than teaching his children the fear of the Lord, teaches them wickedness and ungodliness by his own behavior in his marriage and in the home where his children are growing up watching him. He will not be able to hide from his children a life of immorality and corruption in the world. And the Lord will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. His children will

know, probably more than anyone else, the true character of their father.

We as men need to pray earnestly every day that God will give us the grace to live a life of obedience in the fear of God before our children in order to be an example for them to follow.

We plan to continue this subject in our next article the Lord willing. 

*Fathers must  
nurture their children,  
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but by a life  
of godliness, ....*

# Travail

**T**ravail is unique in every respect. For one, as any woman who has experienced it can testify, travail is dreaded due to its pain and uncertainty, but also anticipated with hope due to its purpose, to give birth. Fear takes hold on a woman in travail (Ps. 48:6). “She has sorrow because her hour is come,” Jesus declared, “but as soon as she is delivered she remembers no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world” (John 16:21).

Travail is the main biblical term for childbirth. In Scripture a number of words in the original languages are translated travail. Individually each emphasizes a different aspect of travail, and collectively they give a more complete description of this mysterious, complex event. Some, like our word “labor,” accentuate the distressing, grueling toil and strength-sapping exertion it requires, which sometimes even takes the mother’s life, as it did for Rachel, “who travailed and had hard labor” with Benjamin (Gen. 35:16). Others stress the intense, stabbing waves of pain, or pangs, that overwhelm a woman in travail (Jer. 22:23). One word literally means to twist or writhe, and refers to the source of pain, the body-wrenching, increasingly-violent convulsions that clamp down vise-like within the mother in travail. Yet another word emphasizes that travail is a process of bearing a child that begins with conception and works inexorably toward its final goal, which is the birth of one’s own beloved flesh and blood (John 16:21).

Although the travail of women is unique, Scripture uses the vivid term to refer to a number of spiritual realities. One of them is to represent the general toil of man his entire life upon the earth. “All his days are sorrows,” the wise man says, “and his travail grief. I have seen the travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised in it” (Eccl. 2:23; 3:10). Another reality pictured as travail is rather surprising, the sinfulness of man. The wicked, with whom God is angry every day, travails in iniquity, giving birth to falsehood conceived in the womb of his mind (Ps. 7:14). He travails in pain all his days (Job 15:20), which

God gives him to gather and heap up, while, ironically, his riches perish by evil travail (Eccl. 2:26; 5:14). And as the severe, inevitable judgments of God, pangs and sorrows take hold on him as a woman in travail (Is. 13:8).

A more glorious application in Scripture of the word travail is to the church. First, from the perspective of its salvation. Israel under bondage in Egypt was in travail, being vexed with pains and sorrows, waiting to be delivered (Ex. 18:8; Num. 20:15). When taken captive to Babylon, she went as a woman in travail to be redeemed from her enemies (Mic. 4:10). Secondly, the church travailed to give birth to the Christ as her own flesh and by whom she is delivered. The church is a glorious woman, clothed with the sun, the moon under her feet, and crowned with twelve stars, who throughout the Old Testament was travailing in birth and pained to be delivered of the Christ-child conceived in her womb by the mother-promise (Rev. 12:2). How fitting, then, that when this child is born His work requires the travail of His own soul (Is. 53:11), and that in His death He is compassed about with travail (Is. 53:11).

Christ is now returning from heaven by means of travail. The process has begun. Certainly, inexorably, with great fear, pain, and sorrow, yet even greater anticipation and hope, He comes. He is being formed spiritually within the womb of our hearts (Gal. 4:19) through His ambassadors, who labor night and day in travail preaching the gospel (I Thess. 2:9; 3:8). Thus He commands, “Be in pain and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail” (Mic. 4:10). And He comes bodily. He is coming even through the travail of the creation. Fearful, for this travail brings destruction on the unrepentant that they shall not escape, though claiming peace and safety (I Thess. 5:3). But the church anticipates it with hope. The creation shares in this hope. The brute creation, which was made subject to vanity, has earnest expectation because it shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. So relentlessly, painfully, with wrenching, increasingly intense, powerful convulsions within, the whole creation groans in travail until now (Rom. 8:19-22). Do you hear it? With travail He comes. 

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

*Welcome to a Reformed Church: A Guide for Pilgrims*, by Daniel R. Hyde, 178 pages, paper. Published by Reformation Trust of Ligonier Ministries. Retail price is \$12. Reviewed by Rev. J. Kortering.

First of all, we say a word about the author. He serves as pastor of the Oceanside United Reformed Church in Carlsbad/Oceanside, CA. He earned his Master of Divinity degree from Westminster West and his Master of Theology degree from Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, MI.

His qualification to write this book is not limited to his formal theological studies. He became a Christian in high school. During his senior year he had the radio tuned to a Christian radio station in Los Angeles County: KKLA. On came a show that began, curiously, with the sound of hoof beats. Then came the introduction: "Welcome to the White Horse Inn." He asked his father, "Dad, who are these guys?" From that point he began his pilgrimage to learn about the Reformed faith and about Reformed churches. From this experience, he writes.

This book fills a great need within the family of Reformed churches. In his introduction, he carefully identifies the place of Reformed churches among others:

While there are variations from one Reformed church to another, what I hope to communicate to you in this basic welcome to the Reformed churches as a whole can be summarized in three points. First, *Reformed churches are Christian churches*. They are Christian churches because they believe the Bible is the Word of God, that there is only one God who exists eternally as a Trinity, and that Jesus Christ our Savior is both God and man. Reformed churches hold these beliefs in common with all Christians in all times and places. In the words of Vincent of Lerins (d. 45), "We hold that faith which has been believed everywhere always by all." Second, *Reformed churches are Protestant churches* along with Lutheran churches because they reject the claims of the pope to be the head of the church, acknowledging instead that Jesus Christ is the Head of *His* church, and that He rules and

governs His church by His Word and His Spirit, not by the dictates of men. Third, *Reformed churches are just that—Reformed churches*. They are a subset of Protestant churches in that they believe sinful humans are saved by grace alone, from eternity past to eternity future, and that we experience this grace of God earned for us by Christ alone when the Holy Spirit uses certain means that God has appointed in the church: the preaching of the Word of God, which is the Bible, and the celebration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

As God is working to draw into these churches many that were not born there, this book is of great value. This relates to the mission of the church among the heathen. They must be shown the true gospel, which is the Reformed faith. It is also useful for believers who faithfully witness to others outside the church. In the book Rev. Hyde focuses mainly upon America and Europe, which are full of churches that have departed from the faith. If God is working among them at all, individuals will ask the same questions about the Reformed faith because they struggle with the faith where they are. They are on a pilgrimage worked in their heart by the Holy Spirit. Many questions arise out of teachings and practices of churches that contradict the Bible. This relates to many who claim to be Reformed as well. This is ably demonstrated in Collin Hansen's book, *Young, Restless, Reformed*. Many of these young, restless, and Reformed do not understand what is truly Reformed. We thank God for providing good tools to be used for this work. *Welcome to a Reformed Church* is one of these tools. Let me explain why.

First, the subject matter of the book addresses every issue that is pertinent for one to understand what a Reformed church is. He accomplishes this by the nine chapters of the book. I will list them here. 1. Roots: Our History; 2. Confessions: Doctrinal Foundations; 3. Scripture: The Final Authority; 4. Covenant: God's Story; 5. Justification: Grace Alone, Faith Alone, Christ Alone; 6. Sanctification: The Christian Life; 7. Church: Distinguishing Marks; 8. Worship: Of God, by God, for God; and 9. Preaching and Sacraments: Means of Grace. In summary form, he focuses on what Reformed churches believe, how they live, and how they worship. The book sets forth the fundamental truths common

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*Rev. Kortering is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.*

to all Reformed churches. In addition he provides two appendixes: first, by means of question and answer he addresses many specific questions that people raise about Reformed churches, and second, he provides a very brief bibliography of Reformed writings to help the inquirer grow in greater measure in all the areas covered briefly in the book.

Second, in setting forth this important material, he uses good Reformed methodology. It is refreshing to read a book that breathes a sincere and heartfelt love for God and Jesus Christ His Son. This is demonstrated by a reverent treatment of the work of the Holy Spirit in writing the sacred Scripture, and the work of the same Holy Spirit in the life of the church by producing Reformed confessions. As he develops the nine subjects listed above, he does so by thorough reference to both Scripture and the creeds. Every Reformed believer recalls how Scripture and the confessions convicted his own conscience. We appreciate an author who uses these compelling tools to persuade youthful seekers and immature believers. We may believe the Holy Spirit will use this book, with its correct methodology, to work a love for and a deeper understanding of the truth of God's Word. The end result is a believer who is well grounded in the truth. His conclusions, for the most part, are our conclusions.

Third, he recognizes the need to confront error. He does this repeatedly as he deals with the teaching and practices of a Reformed church. He speaks of the importance of history and how the early Christian church faced the errors concerning God, Jesus Christ and His divinity, and the work of the Holy Spirit. These controversies led to the writing of the first ecumenical creeds of the early church. The horrible errors of the Roman Catholic Church were exposed in the Reformation, and the precious Reformed creeds were written. More particularly, the post-Reformation error of Arminianism crept into the Reformed churches and had to be exposed, and the truth of God's sovereignty had to be upheld. This ended with the great creeds, the Canons of Dort and the Westminster Standards. Reformed churches insist that the creeds be defended and upheld.

The author mentions how he takes seriously his own signature on the Formula of Subscription, which binds every Reformed pastor to uphold and defend the Word of God as

articulated in the Reformed confessions. The importance of this today is rooted in the fact that our arch-enemy knows that the quickest way to destroy the Reformed churches is through apostasy. False doctrine within the church eats like a cancer. Refusal to discipline erroneous teachers allows error to spread like wildfire through the church.

Though the author extols the doctrine of justification by faith and not works, it is surprising to me that he does not mention the divisive issue of Federal Vision, which threatens Reformed churches today. Admittedly, it is not the purpose of the book to detail all error, yet I think it would be helpful for him to use his obvious skill in pointedly summarizing error to say something about this present-day threat, just as he exposes the wrongs of contemporary worship. It seems to me this would bring into focus an important issue.

Finally, because he correctly views each one of us, Christians and churches, as being on a pilgrimage, the perspective is that no one has reached perfection. An additional use of this book may be to assess the progress we are making towards becoming the Christians and churches God calls us to be. Scripture and the Reformed confessions are the standard of measurement. It is amazing how God leads each one of us on his own pilgrimage. This contributes to our spiritual level of understanding, which leads to maturity in the Reformed faith.

This is obvious for each of us personally, but it is no less significant as churches. Differences among Reformed churches often relate to the pilgrimage upon which God has led them in their travel. Just think of such diverse pilgrimages as the churches in Australia and Africa compared to those in the USA and Europe. Each Reformed church has its own history and thus has its own contribution to make as they relate to the Reformed churches in common. This history contributes "distinctives" within each church. Some of these may be judged by Scripture and the creeds as error. Others may be judged as faithful to both the Bible and creeds and ought not be an occasion for division but rather for discussion and learning. An example from the book itself is his definition of covenant (he quotes Ursinus' definition favorably as a mutual contract or agreement) and his affirmation of the covenant of works. There are differences within the Reformed churches on this, and it would be helpful to have a meaningful discussion on the basis of Scripture and the creeds.

In conclusion, there is one basic assumption that this book has. It is that every member of a Reformed church has a keen interest in others outside his own church. Many times God merges our pathway with someone who is searching for answers and asks of us the same question, "Dad, who are those guys" (Reformed teachers)? Other times, we exercise our duty to care for our neighbors and

initiate outreach to them. Either way, this book is now available for us to use. It provides a good summary of what Reformed churches are all about. Be sure that when you use it, you do not simply hand it to someone to read. Show enough care to suggest that you sit down and discuss each chapter together. That will benefit the most. 

## SPECIAL ARTICLE

## LOVELAND PR HIGH SCHOOL

On Monday night, January 3, 2011, God answered the prayers of many parents in Loveland, CO. By faith the Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School Society voted to start a high school beginning in 2011-2012. This would complete our school's humble beginnings forty-nine years ago, when we started with seven students in grades 1-5.

The possibility of our having a high school in Loveland was explored already in the early 1980s, when we added the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. In the 1990s, the Board conducted feasibility studies and surveyed the school society membership, in order to gain their input and gauge the level of support for a high school. The concept was explored further during the 2002-2003 school year. These studies indicated that it was still too early to begin, due to the financial strain and the academic needs of a high school.

Then in September 2009 an interested group of parents approached the school board to express their desire that provision be made also for a high school education for their children. With the board's approval, a high school committee was formed. They started their labors, motivated by the knowledge that in five short years the student enrollment in our elementary school is projected to increase, D.V., from 57 to 101, thus nearly doubling.

We have appreciated the support of the church in this undertaking—especially that of our undershepherd, who has guided a similar process twice before, first in Randolph, WI, then in Hull, IA.

The committee's work is best described by the board's cover letter for the society meeting. This was written by the High School Committee, consisting of Craig Poortinga (chairman), David Stains, John Moore, Jason Scritchfield, and Rod Griess. We quote:

The High School Committee, under the supervision

of the school board, has reached the point in its labors in which we must present to the society the results of our many months of hard work. The committee has been busy since the beginning of the summer laboring to establish a feasible way to add the three remaining grades to our school. In doing this, consideration has been given to many things, including: location, student base, class structure, teacher structure, and the financial impact this will have on the society and church here in Loveland. One amazing thing we as a committee have seen again and again is how the Lord opens doors and makes His way known.

The motive behind this work is quite simple: we all have a biblical calling to teach and instruct the covenant children of our church in the fear of the Lord. Our baptismal vows, as parents and witnesses, spur us on to support the precious, God-given gift of our Christian school. The Lord has blessed our church and school with much growth these past few years. This growth necessitates adding a teacher and room for the 2011-2012 school year (regardless of whether we add a 10<sup>th</sup> grade or not) and an additional teacher again in another two or three years. With the growth coming in at the lower grades of our school, we see the ability to finalize our school's instruction in the 10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades as well.

How has the Lord opened doors? 1) Location: the church is moving forward with the concept of an addition that will supply not only the needed classrooms, but also a computer room, library, etc.... The growth in the past years in the way of births and new families provides the student base needed. 2) Financially: The Covenant Christian Foundation in New Jersey has given us commitment of \$150,000 in support of the addition of grades 10-12 for our school. 3) Lord willing, the next open door will be the blessing of an experienced P.R. teacher to assist us in the teaching of our children (we wait on Him for this).

When this committee started, we hoped for input from the society and opened ourselves up for that. Support was shown by many, in ways of encouragement and

points to consider, as we looked into this possibility. We received one letter with good and valid points to consider, and a visit from one set of parents who pointed us to the text in Zechariah 4:10, "For who hath despised the day of small things?" In relating this text to the beginnings of a high school here in Loveland, the point was made that, as the Jews after the captivity went about the work of rebuilding the temple for the worship of God, so must we continue on with our calling to teach and instruct our children in the fear of the Lord. A small and humbling start in a high school is not a small thing ("day") to be despised.

The committee and school board realize that there is much more work to do and things to change for this step to be in order. Things like rules and regulations that apply more to higher grades. Constitution changes, new curriculum, and schedules fit for the higher grades as well. Work that we believe can be done before the beginning of a 10<sup>th</sup> grade in 2011-2012. The point we have reached in our work is this: do we have the support of the society to move forward with this work? That is what we, as a board and committee, seek. The information presented in this 18-page packet will be explained at length in the society meeting. If you have any questions prior, please do not

hesitate to contact a committee member. It is our prayer that the information in this packet and the meeting on January 3, 2011, set before the society the many manifold, covenant blessings of God and our calling to give proper answers to these blessings.

At that meeting, at which there was near record attendance, the floor was opened for discussion after the committee's Power-Point presentation on the concept, tuition, budgets, and curriculum of the proposed high school. Then came *the* moment: the Board President, Steve Ezinga, called for a vote on the motions and grounds (from the Church Order, the Baptism Form, and Scripture) to start a high school. The Society resoundingly approved.

This approval now adds a blessed burden to the work of the church, board, committee, and administrator, Jason Kalsbeek. To help lighten the load, members of the congregation have offered their services to the school board to teach classes for which God has given them the gifts.

God's grace has blessed our work thus far. We pray He will continue to do so. *Soli Deo Gloria!*

Loveland Prot. Ref. Christian School Board 

## NEWS FROM OUR CHURCHES

## MR. BENJAMIN WIGGER

### Evangelism Activities

On Sunday, January 9, Rev. R. Kleyn, pastor of the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, began a commitment to speak on the Reformed Witness Hour for several months. During the time that Rev. Kleyn is on the radio, Covenant of Grace will be sponsoring additional broadcasts of the RWH in Spokane on the FM network of ACN at 5 P.M. on Sundays, 106.5, but also broadcast in the Tri-cities, Walla Walla, Wenatchee, Moses Lake, and Yakima. This broadcast began

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

already on January 2, and Rev. Kleyn received a phone call the following Monday from a listener. The RWH is also broadcast locally on Sundays on KQNT 590 at 9 A.M. and KTW 630 at 9:30 A.M.

The Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD, decided to discontinue the Domestic Mission Committee-sponsored broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour over radio station KWSN 1230 AM at the end of 2010. This decision was made after Heritage, first through the efforts of their missionary pastor, Rev. A. Brummel, and then, after their organization, through the efforts of their pastor, Rev. A. Brummel, tried over a period of three years to build a listening audience. Regrettably, at this time those efforts have not resulted

in a listening audience, so Heritage faced the question of whether it was worth their support to continue to fund a local RWH program when one can hear the same program via another station in the area. So for now Heritage will continue to work with the Reformed Witness Committee, which is a joint evangelism committee of the area PR churches, to sponsor the RWH already broadcast in Pipestone MN over KLOH 1050 AM at 8 A.M. on Sunday mornings or KDCR Sioux Center, IA 88.5 FM at 5:00 P.M. Sunday afternoons. However, if in the future Heritage finds that there is local interest, they could possibly once again sponsor the RWH on a radio station in Sioux Falls.

The Evangelism Committee of First PRC in Holland, MI has decided once again to lead a chapel service at the Holland Rescue Mission in 2011. First will lead chapel services the fourth Thursday of every odd month in 2011, starting, D.V., on January 27, then again in March, May, July, September, and November.

The congregation of First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI was asked to join their Evangelism Committee on December 20 as they went caroling to a local neighborhood to introduce First Church and to invite neighbors to worship with them on Christmas Day. All ages were welcomed to join the Evangelism Committee, and they were reminded to come bundled up with hats, gloves, and boots. Hot cocoa and goodies were promised afterwards at church.

The Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC continues to be busy in many different areas of outreach. Among items they are currently working on is the organization of their church pamphlets and books. They also continue with efforts to add some of that literature to the libraries of the Fox Lake and Waupun prisons. They are also in the process of setting up an account on sermonaudio.com, a website where people can search for sermons either by the name of the preacher or by topic. Randolph will be posting their sermons on that website, as many of our PR churches currently do.

### **Mission Activities**

The congregation of the Berean

PRC in Manila, the Philippines decided to take a break from their study of the parables of Jesus to watch, via DVD, the lectures that Prof. D. Engelsma and Prof. H. Hanko gave at the British Reformed Fellowship Conference in Wales last year. The first lecture that they watched, on January 4, featured Prof. Engelsma on the topic, "Reformed Life and World View," which was followed on January 11 by Prof. Hanko on the topic, "The Organic Development of Sin." The Berean congregation plans to view all the lectures in the set, DV.

Dear beloved congregation in our Lord Jesus Christ,

With much thanksgiving to our God, we, the Consistories of the Berean PRC in the Philippines and the First Reformed Church of Bulacan, jointly announce to our respective congregations today, December 26, that we desire to work and will be working together towards the establishment of a federation of PR churches in the future and with the Lord's blessings.

So begins a letter in the December 26 bulletin of the Berean PRC. The letter goes on to say that the consistory expects this goal to take many, many months of work. There are many details that will take time to work out, including having both congregations getting to know each other, and the guidance of both consistories in the details and obligations of a federation of churches. The consistories covet the prayers of their congregations, and we add here our prayers as well, as they work together towards this important and

necessary goal of a federation of self-governing and self-supporting Filipino PR Churches. In this work let us all commit our way unto Jehovah (Ps. 37:5).

### **Young People's Activities**

The young people of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA hosted a Christmas singspiration on Sunday, December 26, after their evening worship service. The singspiration was a fundraiser for this year's Young People's Convention. The young people of the Calvary PRC in Hull, IA were invited to a fun night of pizza, bowling, foosball, and games at the Dordt Sub on Monday evening, January 3.

### **Congregation Activities**

Two of our congregations enjoyed programs given by their choral societies over the recent holiday season. The Peace PRC Choral Society in Lansing, IL presented their program on December 19, and the choral society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC gave their program on December 26.

### **Minister Activities**

Rev. C. Spronk declined the call he received to serve as the next pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC.

The congregation of the Hope PRC in Walker, MI extended a call to Rev. C. Spronk to serve as their next pastor.

On Sunday, January 2, the Wingham, Ontario PRC voted to extend a call to Rev. Marcus to serve as their next pastor. ☺

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Teacher Needed

■ Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI is accepting applications for 2 full-time teaching positions for the 2011-2012 school year. Applicants should be certified for Secondary Education and interested in teaching in one or more of the following subject areas: Mathematics, Spanish, Social Studies, Bible, Church History, and Mechanical Drawing. Applications can be obtained by contacting Rick Noorman at 616-453-5048 or ricknoorman@gmail.com or Jeff Terpstra at 616-735-0775 or jeffterpstra@gmail.com.

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The members of the Men's and Ladies' Society of First PRC of Holland, MI mourn the loss of fellow member

#### CLARENCE KAMSTRA,

and express heartfelt sympathy to his wife, Wilma, and her family at his passing into glory. May we who are left behind be comforted with the words, "Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:54b).

Al Elzinga, President  
Audrey Starrett, Secretary

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The members of the Men's and Ladies' Society of First PRC, Holland, MI mourn the recent loss of fellow member

#### ROGER BERENDS,

and express sincere Christian sympathy to his family in their loss. "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).

Al Elzinga, President  
Audrey Starrett, Secretary

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The members of the Women's Wednesday Morning Bible Study of Southwest PRC express Christian sympathy to Mrs. Jayne Bodbyl and Mrs. Michelle Bodbyl in the death of their father-in-law and grandfather,

#### MR. JOHN BODBYL.

"Nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psalm 73:23, 24).

Rev. A. den Hartog, President  
Evonne Kreuzer, Secretary

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The council and congregation of First PRC of Holland MI extend Christian sympathy to Mrs. Wilma Kamstra and family in the loss of their beloved husband, father, and grandfather,

#### MR. CLARENCE KAMSTRA,

on December 26, 2010. May the Lord comfort them with the blessed assurance and hope of the resurrection and return of Christ in the last day. "Blessed be God, even the father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of mercies, and the God of all comfort" (II Corinthians 1:3).

Rev. Daniel Holstege, President  
Darle Wassink, Asst. Clerk

### Seminary

■ All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Stefan Engelsma (Phone: 616-662-9363). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 21, 2011, D.V.

Student Aid Committee  
Stefan Engelsma, Secretary

### Classis West

■ Classis West of the PRC will convene on March 2, 2011, 8:30 A.M., at the Protestant Reformed Church of Crete, IL.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Stated Clerk

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of Hull PRC express their sympathy to Mrs. Bernice VanMaanen in the death of her husband,

#### BERT VAN MAANEN.

Our sympathy goes out also to Mr. Tom VanMaanen, Mr. and Mrs. Harold VanMaanen, and Mrs. Margaret Hoekstra in the death of their brother, and to Mr. and Mrs. Ted Hoekstra, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoekstra, and Mrs. Florence Brunsting in the death of their brother-in-law.

May our Father in heaven comfort them by His Word, "Return to thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living" (Psalm 116:7-9).

Rev. Laning, President  
Gerald Brummel, clerk of records

### Resolution of Sympathy

■ The Council and congregation of the Calvary PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Roger Buys, Mr. and Mrs. Alvin Bylsma, Mr. and Mrs. Evert VanMaanen, and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Hoksbergen and families in the passing away of their father, grandfather, and brother,

#### MR. BERT VAN MAANEN.

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 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 to all them also that love his appearing" (II Timothy 4:7, 8).

Rev. Cory Griess, President  
Marv VanDenTop, Clerk of Records

## Reformed Witness Hour February 2011

Date	Topic	Text
February 6	"The Christian View of Children"	Psalm 127:3
February 13	"True Love"	I Corinthians 13:4-8
February 20	"Raising Our Children"	Ephesians 6:4
February 27	"Children, Obey Your Parents"	Ephesians 6:1-3