

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed Semi-Monthly Magazine • October 1, 2010

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God's Dealings with Naomi

So they two went until they came to Bethlehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Bethlehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi? And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

Ruth 1:19-21

Every child of God faces a myriad of trials throughout his life, each of them varying in length and degree. Sometimes those trials seem so unbearable, we sinfully wonder if we can even go on with life.

In order to encourage us, God gives us examples of saints who experienced severe trials together with God's sustaining grace. Job experienced all kinds of losses. David had to run for his life from King Saul. Later his own son Absalom tried to kill him. The prophet Elijah was so discouraged he asked God to take his life.

Rev. Marcus is pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Naomi is but one more example of a child of God who experienced affliction. She and Elimelech left the fellowship of the church for what seemed like greener pastures. Apparently they wanted to protect their wealth, and Moab appeared to be the best place to do it. In that they put their material cares above the kingdom of God, their decision was sinful.

For their sin, God chastised them severely. First He took away Naomi's husband, Elimelech, only to follow that by depriving her of her two sons as well. Only those who have lost a spouse and children can begin to comprehend the emotional pain involved in those losses. However, we all can perhaps imagine the heaviness of Naomi's heart as she contemplated God's dealings with her.

When Naomi came to the realization that she must return to Bethlehem, what might have been a joyous return under other circumstances was in fact full of bitterness. Bethlehem no doubt reminded Naomi of what she once had and therefore what she had lost. Even Ruth's decision to accompany Naomi did not seem to lessen Naomi's heaviness.

When they finally arrived in Bethlehem, everybody

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started talking. “Is this Naomi?” they asked. A certain excitement spread through the town. At the same time, there was a recognition that this was not the Naomi they knew before. Her situation had changed so dramatically, the people could hardly believe it was Naomi. Maybe her appearance betrayed the years of hardship in Moab. So bitter had been Naomi’s experience, she responded to the people, “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.” The name Naomi comes from the Hebrew word that means “pleasantness.” Naomi says, essentially, “That’s not I; my situation is anything but pleasant.” Instead, she wanted the people to call her “Mara,” because Mara means “bitterness.” As if to say, “That’s what my name is now, because that is my experience.”



“The Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me.” Naomi had become distressed and even bewildered because of her trials. The anguish of her situation had crushed her. It seemed nobody else could feel the weight of her burden.

She explains herself in the next verse: “I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” This was exactly the opposite of what Naomi and Elimelech had planned. Moab was supposed to be a way to preserve their wealth; instead, it swallowed up all that Naomi counted dear.

Though Naomi’s exact circumstances will never be repeated, her trials are not unique. Things don’t always go according to plan in our own lives either. Some plan for a stable job and early retirement, only to find themselves without work at all. Others plan for marriage at twenty, only to find themselves still single in their middle years. Some plan to have a large family, and yet remain childless. Some who plan to be married into their twilight years find that God has suddenly taken their dear spouse away. Trials are the lot of God’s people in this valley of tears.

Significantly, Naomi saw God’s controlling hand in her trials: “The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.”

To be sure, Naomi did not know all the reasons for the hardship God had sent. But she did recognize at least one reason why God was dealing with her: “the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me” (Ruth 1:21b). Through His dealings, God testified against Naomi. His testimony was such that she recognized that she and Elimelech should never have left Bethlehem to settle among the unbelieving Moabites. They had been more concerned with earthly riches than with heavenly. The harsh reality of God’s testimony had brought her to recognize her sin.

Of course, affliction is not always the result of specific sins (cf. John 9:1-3). Nevertheless, afflictions should prompt us to examine ourselves, since our afflictions may be signaling the presence of idols in our lives. And if our troubles cause us to see any particular sin, we must repent and humble ourselves before God on account of it.

But God in His great wisdom had more in mind than merely bringing Naomi to repentance! An even deeper reason for God’s dealings with Naomi was that God wanted to bring Naomi back to Bethlehem. How fitting that Bethlehem means literally “House of Bread.” As long as Naomi remained in Moab, she would continue

to starve spiritually. God wanted her where she could once again receive spiritual nourishment among His people. This, all by itself, shows the merciful hand of God in Naomi’s life.

Wonderfully, God’s plan also included Ruth, the Moabite.

Humanly speaking, Ruth would never have gone to live in Bethlehem if not for her connection with Naomi. But God wanted Ruth to experience the blessedness of communion in the church.

Even more amazing were the plans that God had for Ruth. In God’s providence, Ruth would become the great grandmother of King David (cf. Ruth 4:21-22). Even more amazing is the fact that from David’s loins would come the King of kings, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Naomi could never have imagined a more glorious outcome to all her afflictions. But God had it planned even before the famine tempted Elimelech to leave Bethlehem.

*Trials are the lot
of God’s people
in this valley of tears.*



If only Naomi had recognized God's glorious plan behind her affliction, maybe she would not have asked the people to call her Mara. If only she understood God's inscrutable wisdom, she would have been comforted in her trials, even if she did not know where God's wisdom would lead. Not only did God desire the salvation of Naomi and Ruth personally, but in His wisdom God would also deal with Naomi for the salvation of all His people. Her way was for her good, and for the good of the church.


The same glorious truth applies to God's dealings with us. He is so wise and so mighty that no situation can prevent Him from bringing good out of it. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28). We may not be able to see the reasons for our afflictions at the time, but God's ways are higher than our ways. Even though we may not realize it, He is doing wonderful things for us personally and for the church as a whole.

What a comfort that is for us in the midst of our afflictions! God doesn't make mistakes. He is the Almighty and All-wise God. Scripture abounds with examples of

those who faced afflictions and saw great good come out of them. We especially see God's mighty and wise working in the afflictions of Jesus Christ. Though He was afflicted unto death, God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name above every name. Through His affliction, Jesus paid for all the sins of every one of His people.

That being the case, we can be sure that our afflictions are not meant as a penalty for our sins. Even though God afflicted Naomi, He sent that affliction in love for her. So it is with us; God chastises us as our loving heavenly Father. "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:13-14). In the midst of afflictions, we must know that God is dealing with us as His children.

Naomi's afflictions and their outcome are not an isolated event in the history of the world. Just as God brought good to her through her afflictions, God will do so for all of His people.

Though we all face afflictions in this valley of tears, God's long arm of providence reaches us, working through those afflictions to bring good out of them. He did it for Naomi and He will do it for us. May God grant us to see His loving hand in our lives. 

EDITORIAL

PROF. BARRETT GRITTERS

A Pastoral Warning to Students in Christian Colleges

Dear Reformed Christian Young People,

When you attend public or state universities, I trust that you are prepared for a hostile reception and an assault on your Christian faith and life. The antichristian vehemence may be hurtful, but it is not surprising.

You expect different from a Christian college.

If you do, or hope to, attend a Christian college, you may be thankful for what Christianity, even Reformed Christianity, and Christian morals there are in the institution you choose. I speak from experience, both personally and as a father. My own education was in both secular and Christian (Reformed) institutions of higher learning. I preferred by far to be in the Christian institution. And of my four

sons who have graduated from college, two attended a Christian college and two a state university. All four got a quality education. But the two who attended the Christian college were grateful not only for the quality education, but also for the Christianity that was present.

At the same time, cautions—strong and sharp—must be issued to you who attend Christian col-

leges. As you know, just because an institution has the *name* Christian does not mean that all it teaches *is* Christian. In fact, the *name* Christian may tempt you to suppose that what is taught is always truly Christian. It is not. I write that also from personal experience.

Other concerns

My particular warning here is not against the error of *evolutionism*, although the Christian universities are full of evolutionism and its related evils—and both the roots and fruits (the causes and consequences) of evolutionism are deadly. Promote six-day creationism and you will find that although the campus may fund your club, you will be scorned, even if not to your face. The most recent *World* magazine (September 11, 2010) analyzes America's Christian colleges regarding their stance on creationism. You may read for yourself which ones not only will not teach young earth creationism, but openly espouse evolutionism.

My particular warning is not, either, against *egalitarianism*—the doctrine of *equal rights*, especially for women, in society and in the church—although you must be warned that also egalitarianism is rampant in many of the colleges. A generation ago when I attended a Christian college, the most popular philosophy professor on campus, now a world-renowned church leader, boldly proclaimed that Christ's resurrection accomplished two very important works: it both liberated women

and instituted civil disobedience. I was relieved the genial professor didn't sense how stunned I was. (My guilty silence still troubles me.) But can you imagine? Nothing about Jesus' victory over sin and death, or His breaking of the devil's power, or His earning for the elect the spiritual blessings of salvation, centered in the forgiveness of sins. But this: liberating women and permitting civil disobedience! According to this respected teacher, Christ's resurrection liberated women because women in the Old Testament were not permitted to be legal witnesses of anything; yet Christ purposely arranged that they would be the first legal witnesses of this most important event. By this, women were liberated...of course, now to serve in church office! And civil disobedience?

Christ broke the magistrate's seal on His tomb, which now gives us permission to engage in civil disobedience. If any other students objected to this absurdity—really wickedness—no one dared admit it. This was 30 years ago. Equal rights has been promoted for a long time, and still is. But that's not my warning.

Nor is my warning about the *moral* evils that have infected some of the Christian colleges in North America—especially the permissiveness regarding homosexuality, another great evil in the colleges and churches. Some Christian colleges have special days of recognition for homosexuals on campus. The college chaplain leads a service calling for understanding, and the homosexual lobbyists hold hands on the lawn. But that warning can be sounded again another time.

The greater threat

I warn against something I judge to be worse, and far more dangerous for Christian youth. I refer not to an *issue*, but to a *way of thinking*, a way of thinking about Christianity, the church, and God's kingdom and purposes in the world. I refer to a way of thinking that completely forms a young person's hope for the future, his or her vision of what to expect in the world, his understanding of the church's calling today, his sense of personal responsibility in society, and his view of God's purposes in creation. Although warnings against the other evils I mentioned are necessary, and

*A Reminder!
College Students,
remember to ask for
your free subscription
to the Standard Bearer
while you are in college.
And please e-mail me at
gritters@prca.org
if you would like to
tell me your experiences
at Christian colleges
that might be worth
writing about.*

necessary to sound repeatedly, the warning against this evil is *urgent*.

It is specially urgent because very few have sounded the alarm regarding the new thinking in Christian circles.

I refer to the teaching in Christian colleges that puts God's church in the background and God's kingdom (whatever now they mean by that) in the foreground. God's salvation of souls and His preservation of His truth are less important; promoting God's *kingdom* (whatever now they mean by that) is more important. Maintaining doctrine in the church is set aside for promoting the *kingdom by the church* (however that may happen). Orthodoxy ("straight doctrine") is traded for orthopraxy ("straight or correct actions"). Confessing *truth* is less important (perhaps unimportant, if you would judge by its neglect) than *doing* good and maintaining justice in the kingdom (with their definition of the kingdom). In fact, when this view fully has its way, confessing and defending truth may well be a detriment to the church's *real* calling.

Because there is a certain jargon that becomes a part of every movement, you should be able to recognize their catchphrases. Common lingo includes *Kingdom Building*, *Community Development*, *Social Justice*, *Urban Ministry*, *Extending the Lordship of Christ*, and a multitude of combinations referring to *culture*: *Renewing Culture*, *Redeeming Culture*, *Transforming Culture*. The college student will listen carefully for these buzzwords that are aspects of what is

sometimes called a *Reformational Worldview*—another phrase that should alert you.

Church or kingdom?

But chiefly keep your ears open for references to *God's kingdom*. The new thinking makes God's kingdom a kingdom of *this* world. It is the Christianization of this world in poli-

Buzzwords:

- *Kingdom Building*
- *Community Development*
- *Social Justice*
- *Urban Ministry*
- *Extending the Lordship of Christ*
- *Renewing Culture*
- *Redeeming Culture*
- *Transforming Culture*
- *Reformational Worldview*

tics, economics, and entertainment. It contends that God's kingdom must come in "every sphere of human life," in the state, in politics, in society. It advances through business and industry, arts and entertainment, and especially through developing communities, renewing cities, and eliminating poverty, unemployment, injustice, pollution, and waste.

According to one denomination, all this will establish God's kingdom "over all creation" and "in our present age." The hope is *here* and *now*. Here: the earthly creation! And now: this present age! The believer's hope is not directed to heaven, where the dead saints have gone to be with Christ. His hope is not the resurrection of the body, made like Christ's. It's not the visible second coming of Jesus Christ, or the new heavens and earth in which righteousness dwells after the second coming. The hope of this new view is *Christian* politics, *Christian* businesses, *Christian* societies, and a *Christian* entertainment industry. Here and now.

To attain this "kingdom building" hope, church members must be busy in many things, but the emphasis is on the City, with a capital "C." And the City of God is not the church. The City of God is what you see (or hope to see) out there in the mayor's or governor's office, the institute for economic development, the universities, grocery stores, hospitals, banks, and sports stadiums.

I could explain more if I had more room this time, but I trust that every student who has spent time at a Christian college recognizes this mentality, its lingo, and what it promotes.

But this is not God's kingdom according to the historic Reformed faith and the Scriptures. I pray that you are aware of this, are able to recognize the error of the thinking, and if the occasion is proper, can give a defense of the Reformed view.

The church is God's kingdom

(I'll explain that more next time). We promote the kingdom by promoting the *church*. That's not to say that the Christian is not interested in politics, business, education, even sports; or even that if his life's vocation or avocation is in any of these areas, that he's not interested in governing these spheres, according to his ability, by biblical principles. Of course he is. But this is to say that he must not suppose that a society or world that has been permeated by Christians *is* God's kingdom, that the church's task is to make the world Christian, or that his hope (a *certain* expectation and *longing*!) is on a Christianized society here and now. Next time I hope to show that from the Scriptures, from the confessions, and from church history.

Consequences

You understand the effects on a Christian's conduct (to say nothing of the *church's* conduct!) when he adopts this view.

First, he will think less of church membership than of his earthly citizenship. The church herself will diminish in importance and the "kingdom" will increase. This view even holds that the church—the precious, blood-bought body of Jesus Christ!—is merely one of *many* tools that God uses to establish His kingdom. And logic says that once a tool has built what the tool was designed to build, the tool may be set aside. Besides, the church may not even be the most important tool to establish the kingdom. So when teams go out to "develop cit-

ies," a preacher of the gospel may be involved, but only right alongside of other, just as important, people, like social scientists, agricultural experts, and Christians who can ad-

*We promote
the kingdom
by promoting
the church.*

vice on how to build and maintain a medical system. My warning, you understand, does not mean that Christians should not be social scientists, advise poor communities on good agricultural practices, or even accompany a missionary to give medical treatment to converts. My warning, at least in this paragraph, is to say: "*Do not suppose that these build God's kingdom! His kingdom is the church!*"

Second, the effect of this mindset will be to downplay truth and orthodoxy. Of course orthopraxy is important! The Christian faith has always spoken of godliness that flows out of truth, of faith that "works by love." But the new orthopraxy politely (and sometimes impolitely) disparages orthodoxy because promoting orthodoxy causes friction among Christians, divides Christian communities. It always has. Jesus Christ, who is the Truth with a capital "T," promised that it would. But the new "king-

dom builders" suppose that doctrinal battles are energy-wasters that hinder Christians from working together for the "common good," and that if all Christians could work together on the social projects, God's kingdom would be established far sooner. So, lower the doctrinal walls that divide, unite the churches into one or enable them to work together, and make progress on the important matters. Kingdom. Not church. Kingdom.

Third, the effect of this thinking will be to dim the believer's hope for heaven, for the second, bodily appearance of Jesus Christ to judge the world and redeem the church. The hopes for those who have this view are not up, but down.

"A Pastoral Warning" may sound soft. It is not. It is a strong warning. It is a call to beware of gravest danger! It is a call to arms. Defend yourselves and your children.

My warning does not call anyone to reject any Christian college. It calls God's people to be discerning. It also calls God's people to seek *the* kingdom, love *the* kingdom, promote *the* kingdom, by being faithful members in the church of Christ, live godly in all spheres of life, and pray fervently, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

Next time I will point out how this new thinking defends itself, even as being Reformed, but how it isn't; and what Reformed Christians—college students and others—can do to maintain the traditional and biblical view of the kingdom and the Christian's calling in the world. ☞

Welcome to the *Standard Bearer*, Volume 87!

This October 1 issue begins the 87th year that the Lord permits us to publish our magazine, dedicated to promoting and defending the Reformed faith of the Scriptures.

If you are reading this, you are probably an *SB* subscriber. We are thankful for your subscription, not because writers like to be read, but because it shows your interest in the Reformed faith, the rich faith of our fathers, “once delivered unto the saints,” as that faith is laid out in the Reformed and Presbyterian creeds.

As editors, we pray that *many more* may be finding profit from the articles, which range widely from strictly theological to historical and practical, but all of which are expositions and defense of the truth of Scripture. *More* subscribers? That is one of our goals. With a relatively low subscription price, and gift subscriptions at half the normal rate, would you consider giving a gift for a friend, relative, child, or sibling who does not subscribe? The *SB* can be read on the Internet (go to rfpa.org) without charge, but we (at least I do) think that serious readers benefit more from a paper in their hands on a quiet evening. Away from the fan of the computer and the distractions of what else is there, sit quietly under your reading light and meditate deeply on the word. Is that just my generation thinking, or reality?

If you, our readers, have suggestions for the magazine, please send them in. Write letters. They are good for the magazine. We can’t always print what is sent, but we try.

Read and discuss the content of the magazine also with your children—young adults and married children. Gaining the next generation as readers depends on what they learn and hear from us as older adults. The pressures to be busy with things other than reading are great.

We have confidence in God that we can produce what the annual staff meeting planned this past June. The three editors have been reelected. Each writes a third of the editorials. After three years at the helm, I return the formal duties of “lead” editor to Prof. Dykstra. Over twenty-five other men and women contribute—all without any financial compensation, but with the greater

reward of God’s testimony to them—to produce the *Standard Bearer* every two weeks.

Very few changes for the coming year are in store. A few writers will be bowing out...for now. We always hope to get writers back after they have a break. Mrs. Jan Miersma will be leaving the pages in order to devote her time to the Christian school in Lacombe. Rev. Ron Hanko and Rev. Audred Spriensma will be back sometime, too, the Lord willing. We thank these writers for their work. All the other writers remain the same, except that we have added Mr. Don Doezeema as writer for “Search the Scriptures.” Mr. Doezeema, the *SB*’s long-time managing editor, is an experienced and published writer. His three-volume set on New Testament history is testimony to his ability, as all teachers who have used this valuable material know. He will be sharing this rubric with Rev. Tom Miersma. We are also looking forward to a few meditations from our brothers in Australia. Two ministers of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, with whom the PRC has established corresponding relations, have expressed willingness to write.

A few writers will be shifting gears. Rev. D. Kleyn, missionary in the Philippines, will also write in the mission rubric “Go Ye Into All the World.” Rev. D. Kuiper will continue his “Ministering to the Saints” rubric, but will begin to explain the work of the elder. Prof. R. Cammenga has been writing exposition of the Church Order of the PRC for many years—23 to be precise. In this volume he will come to a conclusion of that important work. Anyone who has questions on the church order, and has access to the Internet, would do well to check out these articles; search under “Church Order.” Prof. Cammenga will now write in his area of expertise, “Taking Heed to the Doctrine.”

This all in Volume 87. A final note, though, about Volume 86. Ordinarily the last issue of the volume-year (September 15) includes an index for the whole volume. This year it did not. An index has been prepared, but this time as a separate document that will be made part of the bound volume that is prepared. And those of you who

do not order a bound volume, and would like still to have an index, will be able to obtain one for Volume 86 without charge, either by downloading it from the Internet (www.rfpa.org), or by writing the RFPA business office at 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428.

May the *Standard Bearer* be a part of our making and of God answering the prayer of Psalm 68:

*God shall arise and by His might
Put all His enemies to flight
With shame and consternation....
For when Jehovah shall appear,
He shall consume, afar and near,
All those that evil cherish.
As smoke before His dreadful ire,
As wax is molten by the fire,
So shall the wicked perish.*

*But let the righteous, blessed of yore,
Joy in their God as ne'er before,
Faith's victory achieving.
Their joy shall then unbounded be
Who see God's face eternally,
Their heart's desire receiving.
Exalt, exalt the Name of God;
Sing ye His royal fame abroad
With fervent exultation;
Cast up a highway smooth and wide
That through the deserts He may ride,
Jehovah, our salvation.*

We are "For the cause of God and truth."

BG 

SEMINARY NEWS

News from the Seminary: Saturday, September 4, 2010

It's Saturday morning, Labor Day weekend. Next Tuesday, the third week of school begins here on "the hill" (our beautiful setting, where we're surrounded by bucks and doe and their now-still-spotted fawns, and wild turkeys). The third week already! Classes began earlier than normal this year—on August 24, two weeks before Labor Day, because the calendar required this for a fifteen-week semester before the winter holiday break and the interim.

So on August 23 the students and professors gathered for opening chapel, for giving out assignments, and to offer Christian greetings to students old and new. At the chapel, Prof. Gritters, rector, spoke on the vital qualification of "blamelessness" for a minister, pointing out that in the various lists of qualifications in the New Testament,

blamelessness stands at the top. A reputation of holiness—not intelligence or aptitude to teach or patience, but blamelessness—is of first importance. The seminary has great interest in holding before the students the academic, but also the spiritual requirements of a Minister of the Word and Sacraments.

Opening day is always special for the first-year students. This year we welcomed two who were admitted

by Synod 2010 as diploma pre-licentiates, that is, students seeking to graduate with a diploma and the right to preach in the PRC. Joshua Engelsma, a son of our Hope PRC in



Joshua Engelsma

Francesco De Lucia

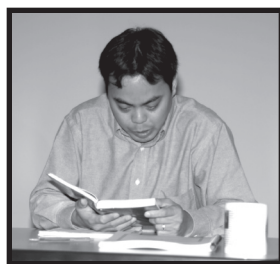


Walker, Michigan, is married to Courtney and has one child. Francesco De Lucia (for most of us non-Italian speakers, pronounced Fran-CHES-co Day-loo-CHEE-a) is a member of our sister church in Northern Ireland. Originally from Naples, Italy, Francesco moved to Northern Ireland

a few years ago to join the Covenant PRC in Ballymena. Now, with the recommendation of the consistory in Northern Ireland, the brother prepares himself with a desire, submitting always to the will of God, to return to Italy to be a pastor or missionary. A special welcome to both of these new students!

The first-year students always have heavy loads, including the beginning preaching course called homiletics, hermeneutics (the proper method of interpreting Scripture), Church History, Hebrew and Greek, and, of course, two courses in Dogmatics. What the first-year students do not do yet is preach before both students and faculty. That trial awaits the second year, after the men have received the necessary tools to construct a good sermon. In the first year, the students do make a sermon with the assistance of the professor and present it in a more casual setting to their fellow students and the one professor—trial enough for the first year.

Vernon Ibe, our student from the Berean PRC in the Philippines, spent the summer back home. He spoke a word of edification for the congregation in Manila and the saints



Vernon Ibe

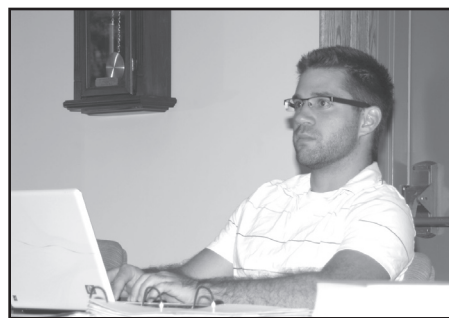
north in Gabaldon, led catechism classes, made two new sermons—in effect, a mini internship. Vernon and his wife, Melody, have one child. God willing, he will graduate in 2012.

In the second year, where the workload is even heavier, are two students:



Karl Dykstra

Karl Dykstra and Eric Guichelaar. Brother Dykstra's membership is in Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids. Karl is married to Megan and has two daughters. Brother Guichelaar is a son of our Wingham, Ontario congregation and attends Hudsonville PRC. Eric



Erik Guichelaar

rooms with Francesco and a pre-seminary student (where Rev. Martin McGeown stayed during his years of study). We have no third-year students.

Our fourth-year students, as always, are absent for their internship. But all of them have local internships, so we hope to see them once in a while. They were able to attend the annual fall picnic, and perhaps will appear on our "Brats Fridays"? "Brats," by the way, are bratwurst, provided by the profs and grilled by whoever has fourth hour open. Enjoyable, relaxed fellowship between students and profs at the end of each week.

Nathan Decker, from our Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, interns under Rev. K. Koole in Grandville PRC. Nathan and his wife Jessica are expecting their first child. Brian Huizinga and



Nathan and Jessica Decker

his wife Michelle are members of Grandville PRC and have three young children. Brian interns under Rev. W. Langerak in the Southeast PRC. Jonathan Mahtani, of Georgetown PRC, is married to Keri. They have two young boys and are expecting a third child. Jonathan interns in First PRC with Rev. J. Slopsema. Since synod approved the internship program over 15 years ago, the



*Brian and Michelle Huizinga
Anna, Calvin, Jacob*



*Jon and Keri Mahtani
Levi, Shane*

warm thanks to the pastors, consistories, and congregations, who give of themselves to receive an intern. The blessings, we trust, go both ways.

It may be of interest to you for me to describe for you a normal day in the life of a seminary student—at least during the time that we observe them. Seminary has four class-hours, all in the morning. The first begins at 7:50 (sometimes we have a “zero-hour” for a language course that begins at 6:50; picture a student reciting Greek before 7 A.M.). The second runs from 8:50 to 9:45. Then we have a short break for student-led singing, Scripture reading, and prayer in the assembly room, followed by a brief coffee break. Two more class periods run until noon. At any given hour, all the professors may be teaching. Sometimes one of them has an open period for preparation. While the students carry a load of about 16 or 17 hours per semester, the professors teach anywhere between 10 and 15—a relatively heavy load for a graduate school, which seminary is. After eating a sack lunch (or a quickly ordered Jets pizza) together, many of the students spend the afternoon in the library, where each has a private study carrel. And though the seminary is available for use in the evenings, most of the men use their studies at home to finish the next day’s assignments and work on long-range projects. If history is any gauge, lights often burn till the early hours of the morning.

The professors often get to school by 6 A.M., always to meet the smiling faces of our long-time and much-

churches have given a strong testimony to the great blessing of this extended training in a real congregation, under a seasoned pastor and consistory. We express our

appreciated registrar and secretary—Mr. and Mrs. Doezeema—who have already disarmed the alarm system. After teaching and lunch, we work in our offices adjacent to the library, and spend evenings in our studies at home. Saturdays we prepare class lectures, write, prepare to preach, and often do what church building committees do for parsonages....

That we have eight students this year does not diminish the constant need for more men who aspire to the ministry. The Theological School Committee will likely remind the churches again of some statistics: how many men will seek emeritation in the next ten years or so, and

how many students are needed to replace them if we will fill our pulpits. That says nothing about our current vacancies,



Prof. Russell Dykstra

mostly in Classis East. We trust that the churches in both classes pray fervently that the Lord will provide many men—their own sons—able and faithful men, who receive the God-given strength to bear and exercise the first, and very heavy, “key of the kingdom.” And what will we have of kingdom blessings without the keys to enter?

Please pray for us, as we daily pray for and love you, the people of God.

Prof. Barrett Gritters,
Rector



Prof. Barrett Gritters

Why Two Foreign Missionaries?

Our Protestant Reformed Churches are doing something new in missions. For the first time in our history, we have two missionaries on the same foreign mission field—two men working side by side.

This came about through Synod 2008's decision to approve calling two missionaries for the Philippines. Since then two men have accepted separate calls and have been sent by the churches to take up the work. Those two men are now working together as foreign missionaries in the Philippines.

Jesus Christ is sovereign in this. It is He who led our churches to decide to call two men to this field. It is He who provided the men. And it is He who saw to it that these men were set apart for this work at practically the same time (January and April of 2009). We confess and acknowledge His hand in all of this. He is good, and wise.

But someone may still ask, Why two?

This question is perhaps especially on the minds of those who do not have a pastor at this time—who, as it were, must be without for the sake of having two men on a foreign mission field. They wonder, Is it really necessary to have two foreign missionaries? Is there enough work to keep them busy? And why call and send two men to a foreign field when we have a shortage of ministers and a good number of vacant churches?

The Scriptures are not silent on this matter. When Christ called twelve disciples, He from the very outset sent them forth “by two and two” (Mark 6:7). The church in Antioch did the same when she called and sent out Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13:1-3). And Paul continued doing this, taking Silas with him on his second journey,

and often having with him not just one fellow laborer but a “company” (the word used in Acts 13 and 21).

In writing on this subject, I do so from a missionary's perspective. My viewpoint is that of one who is involved in doing the work “two by two.” Although we have been on the field together for less than ten months, I see already the many practical benefits of doing the work in this way. It is these practical benefits that I plan to discuss.



One of the main benefits of having two missionaries in the Philippines is seen in connection with the amount of work the Lord has given.

When Synod 2008 adopted the proposal to call two missionaries, the two grounds for this decision focused on this very thing. Those grounds were as follows (Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 61):

- (a) According to the testimony of both the FMC and the calling church, there is sufficient work for two missionaries in the Philippines.
- (b) With two missionaries in the Philippines, one man can focus on the labors with the BPRCP in the city of Manila, whilst the second man can focus on minister training, pursuing and developing contacts, etc. in the broader region of the Philippines.

The King of the church has indeed given us plenty to do. There is first of all the labor within the Berean Protestant Reformed Church of the Philippines. This keeps one of the missionaries (Rev. Smit) busy, as he attends to all the regular work of a pastor within that congregation. There are also three other groups or churches we work with, all of whom are interested in biblical (Reformed) truth. We (usually Rev. Kleyn) visit each of these either once or twice a month. We preach and teach the precious truths of the Reformed faith, making use especially of the Heidelberg Catechism. The missionaries are involved in instructing

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

the existing pastors and officebearers in these churches. We also give occasional lectures. In addition to all this, the Lord has put us in touch with many others who are seriously interested in the truth.

Our missionaries have much to do. There ought to be no fear that there is insufficient work and that the missionaries are idle. It is clear that Christ has given us an open door in the Philippines (Rev. 3:8).

To do this work justice, we need two missionaries. If all this work were left to one man, the work (and perhaps the man himself) would suffer. We could hardly expect the work to go forward and progress toward the establishment, the Lord willing, of more Reformed churches.

It is indeed a blessing that God in His providence and wisdom has provided two missionaries for this work.



In addition to the *amount* of work, another significant benefit in having two missionaries is the *nature* of the work.

In missions, a missionary frequently faces situations that are unusual. He must often deal with matters he has not faced before. Some examples: organizing new congregations, working toward forming a denomination, seeking to establish sister-church relations, and equipping men for the gospel ministry.

Some of these things arise because we are working in a foreign land and a different culture. But they also arise because the groups and churches are new to the Reformed faith. Many are new to the doctrines themselves, and to how that truth applies to Christian life. Many are especially new to the principles of Reformed church government, and the proper application of these to the church.

In addition to this, a foreign missionary does not have the consistory of his calling church, or the Foreign Mission Committee, close at hand. These men are half way around the world. It is true that we are able to stay in touch with these bodies. In fact, modern means of communication make this very simple and inexpensive. But that is not the same as having the elders of the calling church on the field itself, observing what you are observing, facing what you are facing, experiencing with you the work and its many challenges.

For these reasons, two missionaries are necessary. They need to be able to consult regularly, even on a day-to-day basis. This is more than simply a matter of preference or expedience. It is really a biblical must. It is the application

of the principle set forth in Proverbs 11:14, that “in the multitude of counselors there is safety.”

As missionaries, we have done this, and greatly benefited from it. We consult each other frequently throughout the week. We are able to help each other immensely in the work, especially because we are both directly involved in it. I believe it would be difficult to do the work of foreign missions, and to do it well, without this.



Finally, there is the important matter of companionship—for the missionaries themselves, and for their families. This ought not be overlooked as another benefit of sending men two by two, for the work to which the Lord calls foreign missionaries takes them far away from their families and friends.

They are of course able to establish new friendships (as any minister does when he accepts a call to a new place of labor). And this we have done. In fact, I would be remiss if I did not mention that God has placed us among fellow saints in the Philippines who are hospitable and friendly. They demonstrate their love in countless ways. We love them in Christ and thank the Lord for them.

But at the same time, as foreign missionaries we are living in a foreign land. We live in a country where, for the most part, a different language is spoken. We live in a different culture. We face a different climate. We experience daily a different way of life. We face many unique experiences and challenges.


On account of these things, our missionary families are important to each other. We are able to assist each other in various ways. We are able to share experiences. We are able to encourage each other. Our wives are able to visit, run errands together, help with the children, and compare notes on their lives and work here.

As mentioned earlier, the apostle Paul was not alone as a missionary either. Many accompanied him in his travels and were at his side during the routine as well as the difficult times of his work. Companionship was important and necessary for him as well.

In the past months we have experienced firsthand not only the benefits but also the necessity of this companionship. And we have also experienced the Lord's blessing in His putting together here in the Philippines two missionaries and their families who have a good relationship with each other, and are able to work well together.



All of this leads me to express sincere thanks to God for leading our churches to call and send two men to the Philippines. But I also express my sincere gratitude to our churches for their willingness to do so. I am convinced it was the proper and wise thing to do. It is my personal conviction that, if possible, foreign mission work should always be done two by two.

May God bless the churches for being willing to take two men out of our established congregations so that the work of foreign missions might be done in obedience to Christ's command to preach His gospel to all the world. 

ALL AROUND US

REV. NATHAN LANGERAK

The Neal Punt Case

Punted

In a sad, appalling, but entirely predictable story, the Christian Reformed Church's (CRC) Synod 2010 rejected the appeal of emeritus CRC minister Rev. Neal Punt against the decision of Classis Holland upholding the rank Arminian teachings of prominent CRC minister Rev. Leonard J. Vander Zee, director of the editorial department for Faith Alive Christian Resources (FARC).

This is not the first time the issue of the extent of Christ's atonement has come up for debate in the CRC. The appeal of Rev. Neal Punt raises the history of Harold Dekker, who taught that God loved all men with a redemptive love and that the atonement of Christ was inherently universal. The most that the CRC Synod of 1967 could bring itself to say about the clearly Arminian Dekker was "that Synod admonish Professor Dekker for the ambiguous and abstract way in which he has expressed himself in his writing on the love of God and the atonement."¹

It is not the appearance of the issue again that is notable. With a miserable decision like that, the issue was bound to come up again, and it did.

Rather, the Punt case is worth noting because of the significant increase in the acceptance of the error of universal atonement evident in the handling of the case.

¹ For this and other references to the Dekker case, I point the reader to rfpa.org and the *Standard Bearer* archives Vol. 44, No. 1ff., in which the editor analyzes the case.

Rev. Langerak is pastor of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois.

In his latest book, *Christ, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper*, Rev. Vander Zee blatantly teaches universal atonement. According to the Punt appeal, among his many erroneous statements Vander Zee wrote:

Christ's birth, life, baptism, death, resurrection and ascension was (sic) accomplished on behalf of everyone, everywhere.

God's act of atoning work in Christ includes all people. What God has done in Christ embraces absolutely everyone.

An Arminian through and through, Vander Zee also teaches the freedom of the human will and the falling away of the saints:

While God's act of salvation in Christ, the second Adam, includes all of the first Adam's descendants, this does not mean that all will be saved.... God, who respects human freedom, apparently allows for the possibility that some of Adam's sons and daughters who are included in Christ may turn their backs on the truth and reality of what God has done.

Importantly, Rev. Vander Zee also teaches that universal atonement is "fundamental to understanding the sacraments" and that universal atonement is "the core of the gospel message of the church."

About these quotes Rev. Punt said:

Neither Vander Zee, nor Classis Holland, nor Synod

argued that Vander Zee merely misspoke himself or that I have in any way misquoted them. The quotes say what they say.

Vander Zee's quotes clearly teach Arminianism—universal atonement, the falling away of saints, the freedom of man's will to frustrate and to overcome the will of God—and this Arminianism is “the core” of the church's message to the world in word and sacraments.

Rev. Punt objected to this rank Arminianism.

According to an addendum to his appeal, before taking the case to Classis Holland, Rev. Punt personally contacted Rev. Vander Zee to discuss the objectionable material. Rebuffed, he contacted the officers of the board of FARC. Refused, he took the matter to the council of South Bend CRC. He appealed the consistory's decision to take no action to Classis Holland. Classis Holland rejected the appeal of Rev. Punt and exonerated Rev. Vander Zee of all the charges.

Finally, Rev. Punt appealed the decision of Classis Holland to the 2010 CRC Synod. On page 803 of the 2010 *CRC Acts of Synod* is the following decision regarding his appeal:

II. Response to Personal Appeal 1

A. *Materials*: Personal Appeal 1 (materials distributed to advisory committee members)

B. Recommendation

That synod not sustain Personal Appeal 1.

Grounds:

1. Nothing new or substantive was alleged against the process or the decision of Classis Holland.
2. Classis Holland has done due diligence in this matter.

—*Adopted*

This is all that Synod 2010 had to say about the appeal of a member against an active and influential minister in the CRC who teaches universal atonement in clear violation of the creeds. About that decision Rev. Punt received this report from an official at the synod:

The advisory committee brought very little to the floor of synod and there was very little discussion before synod adopted the advisory committee recommendation. The

committee did not present any of the quotes from your material to the floor of synod.

Standing at the line of scrimmage, facing yet another vigorous and clear challenge to the truth of Scripture and the Reformed creeds, the synod punted.

They punted Punt.

A notable decision

There are a number of notable points about this sad, but predictable decision.

First, this decision is a travesty. If it were not such a serious issue and such a sad decision, we would call it a joke. On the first day of synod, with hardly any debate, with only a few simple lines, the synod unceremoniously booted to the sidelines a man's appeal regarding denials of the foundation of the Reformed faith.

Involved in the travesty was some strange church polity.

The synod said: “Nothing new or substantive was alleged against the process or the decision of Classis Holland.” The synod ought to know that an appeal to a broader assembly is not supposed to add new things. To require an appellant to bring something new is not fair to the narrower assembly in its original decision on the case. It is not fair to the broader assembly to ask it to treat a wholly new or substantively new case under guise of an appeal.

Even granting that the delegates did not receive the documents, this part of the decision should have stunk badly enough for them to question the advice before they voted.

Wouldn't someone—anyone—ask: what is the case, what was the decision of Classis Holland, and what was the process that was followed in the case?

Apparently no one did.

Having read in the *Acts* that the materials of what is called “Personal Appeal 1” were “distributed to the advisory committee members,” I asked Rev. Punt whether his appeal was distributed also to the delegates of Synod 2010. His response:

I am told there were 17 members on the Advisory Committee. They had copies of the appeal just as I sent you. However, the other delegates saw nothing of the appeal. They saw only the brief report that is found on page 803 in the 2010 *Acts of Synod*.

Following the long standing, but deplorable, practice of the CRC that no personal appeals are printed in the agenda, or apparently distributed to the delegates, the delegates had no opportunity to make an informed decision on the appeal. The synod simply voted blindly on the recommendation of the committee of pre-advice.

Imagine, if you can, a criminal court-case in which the lawyer and the judge disappear into the chambers and reappear a few moments later saying that the police did due diligence in such and such a case and the man accused of murder is not guilty. Then the willing jury of stooges dutifully disappears into the jury room and returns a verdict of not guilty. The case is never heard, the facts are not disclosed, no arguments are made. The jury simply votes on the recommendation of the judge that the man is not guilty.

That is called a kangaroo court.

It is a travesty of justice!

The seventeen members of committee eight that treated the appeal—several women among them—and the delegates of CRC Synod 2010 that voted for this decision made a mockery of the seriousness of the charges, the appeal process itself, the sacred right of a Reformed man to protest and appeal, and the duty of every officebearer to uphold the teachings of the creeds.

The way that the case was handled is a travesty of justice perpetrated at the highest level of Reformed church government on an issue that stands at the heart of Reformed theology. The CRC, with its loud cries for social justice, evidently has justice for every bum, derelict, and foreigner in the world, but has none for a man—a member of the church—who protests the doctrinal errors of a prominent minister in the CRC that are contrary to the very foundations of the Reformed faith as embodied in the three forms of unity, especially the Canons of Dordt.

Third, the actual decision by the CRC on the appeal of Rev. Neal Punt is significant. The synod decided that “Classis Holland has done due diligence in this matter.”

By this decision the CRC rejected the appeal of Rev. Punt and exonerated the heretic Vander Zee and his blatant Arminianism. The CRC is officially on record as espousing the error of universal atonement. In fact, universal atonement is, according to Vander Zee, the “core” of the church’s message to the world.

Latent in ‘24

The decision to exonerate the Arminian Vander Zee should surprise no one. This is true particularly for those who hold to the well-meant gospel offer, but still recoil at the thought of universal atonement. Although the Punt case raises the history of the Dekker case, the groundwork for the Punt decision was not laid in the Dekker case of the 1960s. The groundwork for the Punt decision was laid in 1924, when a synod of the CRC adopted the well-meant gospel offer as part of the three points of common grace.

This intimate connection between common grace and universal atonement is constantly denied by the proponents of common grace who still reject universal atonement. A rather recent example of this was R. Scott Clark’s 2004 *Table Talk* article entitled “For God So Loved the World” ([http://](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/god-so-loved-world-clark/)

www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/god-so-loved-world-clark/). In that article Clark says,

To many, the topics of common grace and atonement would seem to be mutually exclusive, as if we should either hold to common grace or to definite atonement, but not to both. There are, however, good biblical and theological reasons for holding both the Reformed doctrines of common grace and definite atonement.

Indeed, that common grace implies universal atonement has been the charge against common grace from the beginning. It is mutually exclusive of the Reformed faith embodied in the three forms of unity, particularly the doctrines of grace, and especially the doctrine of particular atonement. Common grace excludes particular grace; particular grace excludes common grace.

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of universal atonement.*

In attempting the impossible—to harmonize common grace and particular atonement—Clark dishonestly revises the three points of common grace. In his revision the second point of common grace teaches that “God providentially restrains evil.”

Providence was not the issue, and, besides, common grace never said God providentially restrains evil. There never would have been a problem if that was all common grace said. The issue was grace and, specifically, the *Holy Spirit’s* restraint of sin in the hearts of the reprobate ungodly, so that they are not totally depraved, but are able to do good in God’s sight.

Clark says, too, that common grace teaches that “in His providence, God gives many wonderful gifts to humanity.”

The Protestant Reformed Churches have pointed out ad nauseam that the issue with common grace is not whether God is the provider for all men, or whether He sends to all men good things, or whether this is controlled by providence. God does good to all; He gives to all life, breath, and all things; and this is controlled by His providence. The issue with common grace is God’s attitude in doing good to all men. Does He do that with a favorable attitude toward all men? Are those good things the evidence of His favorable attitude toward them? Are those good things themselves grace?

But most interesting in Clark’s article denying that common grace and particular atonement are mutually exclusive is his deafening silence on one of the main issues of 1924, the well-meant gospel offer.

The first point of 1924 grounded the teaching of God’s general grace toward all mankind in a supposedly creedal teaching of the well-meant gospel offer. That false doctrine directly relates common grace, redemption, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. The decision on the Punt appeal must be seen as the deadly, but inevitable, fruit of the well-meant gospel offer the CRC adopted in 1924.

The error of universal atonement was latent in the

well-meant gospel offer of 1924. It simply needed to be brought out. Harold Dekker did this in the late 1960s. The well-meant gospel offer was the justification he used to teach God’s universal redemptive love and inher-

ently universal atonement. As Dekker said, if Christ did not accomplish the atonement for all men, then the well-meant gospel offer is a “farce.”

He was right.

The question when dealing with common grace always is this: what is the legal ground for God’s supposed favorable attitude—grace—toward the reprobate ungodly, and, further, what is the legal ground for God’s offer of salvation to all in the preaching of the gospel? If salvation is not available, how can God offer it?

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A Few Serious Questions

The CRC went on record as approving the heresy that Christ died for all men, the error that was decisively rejected by Dordt in language that is offensively clear to all universalists: “That Christ by the blood of the cross... should effectually redeem...all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation and given him by the Father” (Canons 2.8).

In light of this decision, there are a few serious questions.

When will Reformed churches that either have adopted or allowed the teaching and preaching of the well-meant gospel offer see that that doctrine demands universal atonement, leads to universal atonement, and will inevitably yield to the error of universal atonement?

Furthermore, when will Reformed church members of those churches protest the teaching of that false doctrine, demand the discipline of those who teach it, or, being rejected, finally leave those churches that teach that heresy?



Father's Authority in the Christian Home (1)

Father's authority in the Christian home is of greatest importance. God Himself has clothed parents with a sacred office to rule over their children, to guide their development and protect them from temptation and evil, and to instruct them in the way that they should go. Children need to be admonished and disciplined when they sin. They need often to be corrected. Especially fathers must nurture their children from childhood on in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Their authority must be exercised in the name of the Lord. Children must be taught obedience and respect for this authority. The failure to exercise and maintain this authority will have very serious consequences for the children. It will cause them to grow up confused, uncontrolled, and disobedient. Because of the sinful nature with which our children are born, the failure to teach and maintain respect for the God-given authority of parents will result in rebellion and wickedness later in the lives of these children.

The tragic biblical example of a home where the father was woefully weak is the example of Eli the priest of the Lord. Though Eli was a prophet of the Lord who was called to warn the people of God about sin and its consequences, he failed to do this in his own home. The result was that his own sons, Hophni and Phinehas, grew up to be wicked, rebellious, immoral, and grossly irreverent. This happened in the sphere of the covenant, in the home of one who was called to be a leader in Israel.

The establishing and maintaining of authority in the Christian family belongs first of all to the father. This is part of God's order for the Christian home, which God established first in creation. Scripture repeatedly admonishes especially the father in this regard. When there is in children disrespect for authority, this can often be traced to negligent fathering. The Christian wife and mother

must also, however, respect and support the authority of her husband. When the wife is herself rebellious and not submissive to the authority of her husband, she will be a poor example and have detrimental influence on her children. The mother normally cares for the children in the home for many hours every day when the father is absent. During this time she must serve her husband as a covenant mother in the nurture and discipline of the children.

In the law of God children are significantly commanded to honor both father and mother. There is no difference in regards to the honor and obedience that children owe to both their parents. The husband must support his wife in the exercise of discipline in the home. He may not leave the responsibility of raising the children solely to the mother. He may not imagine and act as though his role in the family is only to do his part in the procreation of children and to go to work every day to gain sufficient financial resources necessary to support his family. The father's daily occupation, as important as it is, may not be the chief and only concern of his life. The husband who does not take on the responsibility of exercising godly authority in his family will make it very difficult for his wife. There are godly wives who have irresponsible husbands, and these wives really struggle to control the children and guide their development. In special cases where God has taken a father out of this life, the Lord gives special grace to godly mothers who must do the work of parenting alone, though this is difficult for single mothers.

Father must exercise authority in behalf of God in his home. He must teach his children the fear of God and what is right in the sight of God. There are two very significant passages in Scripture that instruct Christian fathers: Ephesians 6:1-4 and Colossians 3:20, 21. In Ephesians 6:1 the inspired apostle of the Lord exhorts children to obey their parents, adding immediately, "for this is right." This is absolutely right.

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

Parents, especially fathers, must teach their children what is right and what is wrong in the sight of the Lord. Father has no choice in this matter. He has the solemn obligation to do this. God is the only absolute authority. He is the foundation of all authority in the world. "For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:1, 2). Though this passage was written to teach Christians to be subject to civil government, the principles that it teaches must also govern the Christian home and the father's responsibility in it.

Fathers must teach their children that God is sovereign. God exercises His sovereignty in all the universe. He does so in almighty power, in wisdom, and righteousness, for His own glory and according to His own good pleasure. This God must be feared and obeyed with loving reverence and humility. In the exercise of his authority in the Christian home, the father must teach his children these great principles. He does not exercise his authority in the home according to his own whim and fancy but for the sake of establishing God's authority in the lives of his children. Father must teach his children what is right before God, what is therefore absolutely right. The Word of God must always be obeyed, even when this is difficult and even though it is beyond or contrary to our own human understanding. Ever since the fall, the world, under the instigation of the devil, lives in enmity and rebellion against God. Children are born with this rebellion in their hearts. This rebellion is perpetuated in the home, and strengthens and increases there, because of the influence of ungodly fathers.

In contrast to this, godly fathers must teach their children obedience and godly fear and reverence before God. Father must give daily instruction by the Word of God to his children. He must also do this by the daily example of his own life before God and before his children. There is little hope of teaching children obedience

and the fear of God when father himself is disobedient, ungodly, worldly, and even immoral in his own life and corrupt in his daily business practices. Even if he tries to keep his sinful behavior secret from his children, they will soon discern his hypocrisy, and it will be difficult for them to honor and respect him as the Word of God requires. They will often follow him in his ungodliness and worldliness. This is unavoidable, and this will be the judgment of God. God visits the sins of fathers on the children unto the third and fourth generation.

Children must be taught obedience to God in love. They must learn and experience the love of God from the love of their human father and genuine concern he has for them. Love and discipline for the Lord's sake are not opposites. Those who imagine that love is tolerance, softness, and permissiveness will find that they are grievously mistaken.

Father also may not behave as a cruel tyrant or dictator in his home. Love must be the motive for obedience to God, and father

must teach this to his children. But also love must be the motive and perspective for the father's correction and discipline of his children. They must be disciplined in such a way that they know and experience the personal warmth and affection and comfort of this love as a reality.

Insisting on obedience to God is not something cruel or harsh. It is love. It is good in the highest sense. When children learn obedience by the grace of God in their hearts, when they learn this from their God-given fathers, they will enjoy the love and favor of God. When father does not teach his children the authority of God in their lives, they will reap the fearful judgment of God. Where there is rebellion, trouble will continue to grow and increase as long as the children are disobedient and rebellious. And without repentance they will end in their everlasting just and holy judgment. Fathers must teach their children the great seriousness of sin and rebellion against God and warn them about the lie of the devil that disobedience leads to freedom and success in their lives.

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this can often be traced
to negligent fathering.*

Children are naturally dependent on their parents. They need to receive their food and protection from their parents. They need to be nurtured, taught, and instructed and guided in their daily lives. They are weak and helpless and lack knowledge and understanding as children. To observe this complete dependence in little children is a thing that is almost fearful for parents. Even though they are born with totally depraved sinful natures, there is within them a natural awareness of their own helplessness and dependence. They are fearful of the many threats and enemies there are in this world, and they will flee to their parents for protection. In the days of their childhood they will often almost worship their parents and boast of them to other children their age.

We believe that covenant children are generally regenerated at birth. Therefore they soon have the beginning of spiritual understanding by the Spirit of God in them. They have the beginning of spiritual understanding of their own helplessness and weakness and of their dependence on their parents. Their only comfort is that God is their heavenly Father and that their earthly father is their protector and spiritual leader in God's behalf. This is a great advantage for the work of covenant parents. The childlike character of children is the occasion and time for their instruction and nurture and molding for later life. For this reason the inspired writer of Proverbs says such

things as "Train up a child in the way that he should go: and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22: 6). In another place the inspired writer of Proverbs says "train up a child while there is hope." The hope for such training is in the days of childhood and youth. There is sufficient time, in the providence of God, for the training

of the child when he can best be molded and influenced by his parents for the whole of his later life. But the days will also come quickly when they are more hardened in their way of sin and when it is often too late to expect changes.

A child who is left on his own, without parental discipline, will seldom learn submission to authority in his life and will grow up to be hardened in the ways of sin and rebellion. The world is full of examples of juvenile delinquency, most of which must be attributed to poor parenting. This is the reason

for much of the crime and violence of the world's society. On the other hand, when children learn obedience to the God-ordained authority of their parents in their homes, this will benefit them greatly in later life. They will more easily learn obedience in many other spheres of their life on earth, such as in school, as citizens of the state, in the place of employment, and especially as members of the church of Jesus Christ. Those who learn this will by the grace of God be greatly blessed.

... to be continued. 

*Those who imagine
that love is tolerance,
softness, and
permissiveness
will find that
they are grievously
mistaken.*

REPORT OF CLASSIS EAST

September 8, 2010
Byron Center PRC

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, September 8, 2010 at the Byron Center PRC. Each

church was represented by two delegates; Rev. R. Van Overloop presided over this session.

This meeting of classis was short, but serious. Three churches requested the approval of classis for the increase of censure for one of its members. One consistory re-


quested approval for the erasure of a baptized member. Discussions regarding these cases were held in closed session.

Classis received requests for pulpit supply from Cornerstone, Holland, Hope, Trinity, and Wingham. A schedule was adopted for these churches. A reminder to the churches that help may be on the way was the presence at classis of our three senior seminarians who are

now doing internships in local churches.

The expenses of classis amounted to \$33.00. Classis will meet next on Wednesday, January 12, 2011 at the Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, MI.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

REPORT OF CLASSIS WEST

Classis West met in regular session on September 1, 2010. The Hull PRC of Hull, IA hosted this session, and Rev. N. Langerak capably chaired it.

A highlight of this meeting was the presence of the delegates of the newly organized congregation of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD.

Faith PRC of Jenison, MI had overtured Synod 2010 to reorganize the denomination from two to three classes. In light of the effect this would have on the whole denomination, synod referred this matter to Classis West for its judgment. Not convinced of the need for a third classis at this time, Classis West expressed its disapproval of this overture, responding to some of Faith's grounds by noting that 1) it has not been proven that synod presently suffers from a lack of objectivity as a result of having only two classes; 2) the disparity in the size of the two present classes would not be helped by the proposed restructuring; 3) the effect of this restructuring could be the weakening of a classis; and 4) such restructuring would leave the churches of the new Classis West isolated from the rest of the denomination.

Classis approved the request of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, to solicit collections from the churches in the classis for its building fund.

Cornelius Hanko, the handicapped adult son of Rev. R. Hanko (pastor of Lynden PRC), requires continuous care at a mental health facility. Currently he is in a facility in Spokane, WA, a great distance from his family. Convinced that Neal would be best off in Michigan, near extended family, but needing financial assistance to implement this, Lynden PRC asked the denomination

through Classis to approve supporting Neal at the Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Center in the Grand Rapids area, at an approximate cost of \$80,000 per year. Convinced of the rationale behind it, Classis approved this request, noting that it is the responsibility of the church to provide proper support for its ministers, and that Rev. R. Hanko and Lynden are not able to bear this responsibility alone. Synod 2011 must give final approval to this matter. Classis West further recommends to synod that it establish a special fund to cover the cost of this care, rather than taking the support from an existing denominational fund.

In closed session, Classis treated a brother's appeal regarding his discipline. The brother was not upheld. Also, two consistories sought the advice of Classis regarding discipline matters. Both explained to Classis the nature of the sins of these members, and explained the work they had done with the members. Classis advised one of them to proceed to the next step of censure, but did not permit the other consistory to do so at this time.

Classis approved a schedule of classical appointments for Edgerton PRC, and approved helping Classis East supply Cornerstone's pulpit for six weeks over the course of the next six months.

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$8,943.37.

The next regularly scheduled meeting of Classis will be held March 2, 2011, in the new facilities of the Protestant Reformed Church of South Holland, IL.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper
Stated Clerk, Classis West 

Congregation Activities

Summer coming to a close also means that many of our congregations have now also brought their yearly Sunday Schools to a close as well. We pray that the lessons taught were as big a blessing to our children as they were to the teachers and parents who taught them. To celebrate their last day of Sunday School, the children of the Lynden, WA PRC invited all their fellow church members to a sing-along at 12:00, after their shortened lesson from 11:30 to noon on Sunday morning, August 29. Singspiration-goers were encouraged to sit next to their favorite little person. This year Lynden's Beginners learned a great deal about the inspiration of Scripture, the Fall, and our need for a Savior. The Elementary children studied the positive and negative requirements of the Ten Commandments and also memorized the Books of the Bible. The Junior High students wrapped up a unit on Parables.

The Sunday School of the Hope PRC in Redlands, CA wrapped up their school year on Saturday, August 28, with a pool party. The outing was limited to Sunday School children and their parents. Swimming began in late afternoon, with dinner following.

This past summer the congregation of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI took part in

what now has become their annual Bible Memory project. This summer's reciting was done under the theme, "Following in Christ's Footsteps." To encourage those involved, the committee organizing the summer-long event placed brightly colored footprints across the back wall of their narthex. For every ten verses of God's Word memorized, one footprint went up on the wall. All the verses were pooled together so that this project truly became a group effort. How far could they get in the journey? Georgetown's last Sunday for reciting was August 29, with those involved reciting all or part of Malachi 3:6-18.

On Tuesday evening, August 24, the congregation of the Wingham, Ontario PRC held a farewell evening for Rev. and Mrs. DeVries. There was a short program followed by coffee and refreshments. The DeVrieses expected to load their belongings Thursday and Friday, August 26 and 27, with help from Wingham's congregation, and a few people from Kalamazoo, with departure for Kalamazoo, MI set for Saturday morning.

Rev. M. DeVries was installed as the tenth pastor of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC on Sunday morning, August 29. Prof. R. Cammenga conducted the service, preaching from Numbers 20 on a sermon entitled, "The Fall of Moses." Rev. DeVries preached his inaugural sermon that evening, preaching from Ephesians 6, under the theme, "The Army Exhorted to Pray."

The Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA had a need for some articles of furniture for their sanctuary. In response to that need, the

Consistory of the Lynden, WA PRC offered to donate to them the baptismal font, pulpit, and communion table that were used in Lynden's old church building and which were currently in storage.

On August 23, First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI held a special congregational meeting, at which they approved a proposal to repave their parking lots and driveways and to improve the lighting in their lower parking lot. We assume the work was done already that same week, since the next Sunday's bulletin at First contained an apology from their Building Committee for the inconvenience of not being able to use the parking lot that day since it needed another day to harden before driving on it. Parking was available across the street.

Evangelism Activities

The Evangelism Committee of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada is advertising their church on SHINE FM radio with ads running four times a day until October 15. With this two-month effort Edmonton was looking to hear any feedback from members who hear the ads, and they also reminded the congregation to be prepared to welcome any visitors who might attend in response to the ads.

The Evangelism Committee of the Loveland, CO PRC developed a business card for their church that could be passed out to friends, neighbors, and other contacts that Loveland's members may come across in their daily walk and con-

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

version. A box full of the cards was on the table in the back of their narthex. Congregation members were encouraged to grab a few and pass them out.

The Evangelism Committee of the Hudsonville, MI PRC, with the approval of their Consistory, have placed in their pew racks laminated cards with the order of worship on them for visitors. Although the order of worship is on the back of their bulletin, visitors may not see it or get a bulletin, so the EC thought it would be helpful to have this information available for visitors.

Mission Activities

Our missionaries in the Philippines have started a Metro Manila Ministers Monthly Monday Meeting. They had their initial meeting with two pastors and an aspiring student on Monday, August 23. They will meet to study Dogmatics twice a month in the church building of Christian Faith Ministries in Batasan Hills. Taking turns on their respective Mondays, Rev. Smit will teach Introduction to Dogmatics and then Anthropology, and Rev. Kleyn will teach Theology. This is with a view to these men sitting for an examination sometime in

the future. We pray that it may be God's will so to bless the work that these men and their congregations can join with the Berean PRC in establishing a denomination in the Philippines.

Minister Activities

First PRC in Holland, MI extended a call to Candidate Daniel Holstege to become their next pastor. On Sunday, September 12, Candidate Holstege accepted that call.

The Hope PRC in Walker, MI voted to extend a call to Rev. C. Haak to serve as their next pastor.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Wedding Anniversary

■ With great joy and thankfulness to God, we celebrated the 60th wedding anniversary of

**EVERETT and AUDREY
VAN VOORTHUYSEN,**

on August 4, 2010.

We have truly been blessed by their godly example and continued guidance and love for the Lord. Our prayer is that our heavenly Father will sustain and bless them, that they may always know His loving arms. "But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31).

- ❖ Gary and Karen Parham
- ❖ Ken and Gail Kamps
- ❖ Ron and Laura VanVoorthuysen
- ❖ Ron and Barb Schut
 - 15 grandchildren
 - 14 great-grandchildren

Redlands, California

Bound Volumes

■ The *Standard Bearer*, volume 86, is ready for binding. If you would like your own issues bound, please deliver them to the **RFPA office** before the end of October. For additional orders, call Paula at (616) 457-5970.

Loveland Reformation Lecture

■ On October 29, at 7:30 P.M., Rev. Key will be giving a lecture on the subject: "Restoring the Foundation for Christian Piety." Location: Loveland PRC, 709 E. 57th St., Loveland, Colorado.

Wedding Anniversary

■ On October 10, 2010, the Lord willing, our parents,

**DONALD and BETH
GRASMAN,**

will celebrate their 35th wedding anniversary. With gratitude to God we have witnessed their years of faithfulness to each other and are so reminded of God's perfect covenant faithfulness both to us and to all of God's people. Our prayer for them is that they may together be drawn closer to their faithful Savior and ever praise His name.

"While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being" (Psalm 146:2).

❖ Vance and Susann Grasman

Jenison, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

■ With thankfulness to God, we rejoiced with our parents and grandparents,

ALBERT and JEAN BUITER, as they celebrated 50 years of marriage on September 23, 2010. We have been greatly blessed by their guidance and instruction over these 50 years. We pray that the Lord will continue to bless their future years and keep them in his care. "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever; with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ❖ David and Cheryl Dotson
 - Joshua and Bonnie Dotson
 - Jori Dotson
 - Jimmy Dotson
- ❖ Albert Wayne Buitier (in glory)
- ❖ Karen Buitier

Beecher, Illinois

Reformed Witness Hour

**October 2010
Topic**

Date

October 3
October 10

"Economic Imbalance"
"The Gospel Preached to All Nations"

Text

Revelation 6:5, 6
Matthew 24:14

Wedding Anniversary

- With thankfulness to God, we rejoice with our parents,
RANDY and LINDY LOOYENGA,
as they celebrate their 30th wedding anniversary, on October 17, 2010. As their children we rejoice with them and are thankful to God for giving them the many years with which He has blessed them. We are thankful to our parents for all their love and support given to us through the many years, and raising us up in the fear of the Lord's name. It is our sincere prayer that the Lord may continue to bless them in their marriage for many years to come! "For the LORD is good: his mercy is everlasting: and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).
- ❖ Brent and Brittany Looyenga
Calvin, Zachary, Alexis
 - ❖ Jared and Jeanine Looyenga
Caleb and Evan
 - ❖ Matt and Kristin Jabaay

Wyoming, Michigan

Wedding Anniversary

- On September 5, 2010, our parents,
**JOHN and VALERIE
VAN BAREN,**
celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We thank God for the years He has given them and for their faithful, godly example to us. We pray that the Lord will bless and guide them in the years to come and continue to grant us this faithful example of Christ and the church. "Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:13, 14).
- ❖ Mitchell and Jennifer Zuverink
Avery
 - ❖ Jordan and Alyssa Van Baren
Evan
 - ❖ Jason and Jill Kregel
 - ❖ Jared Van Baren

Hudsonville, Michigan

Southwest Protestant Reformed Church presents

www.talkfederalvision.com

"Federal Vision, Unconditional Covenant, & the Reformation's Gospel of Grace"



2010 Reformation Day Lecture by Prof. David Engelsma

October 29
2010

First Christian Reformed Church
2450 85th St SW
Byron Center, MI 49315

7:30PM

THIS CONTROVERSY CONCERNS THE QUESTION:
**IS THE COVENANT OF GRACE
CONDITIONAL OR UNCONDITIONAL?**

THE 2010 REFORMATION DAY LECTURE WILL ADDRESS THE COVENANT~ROOT OF THE FEDERAL VISION, demonstrate the relation between the doctrine of an unconditional covenant and the Reformation's gospel of grace, and point out the calling of Reformed and Presbyterian believers and their children with regard to the federal vision.