

# THE STANDARD BEARER

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Volume 86 ◆ Number 1

# The Man Who Is Truly Blessed

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.*

Psalm 1.

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

Psalm 1 reminds us of the great antithesis between the righteous and the ungodly, something we are prone to forget. Between these groups there is no middle ground; we are either one or the other. The Psalm reminds us of the antithesis by describing the man who is truly blessed and contrasting him with the wicked.

The man who is truly blessed is not like the wicked. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1). Notice the progression described in this verse: he begins by walking with the wicked, then stands in the way with them, and finally ends up sitting with them. He begins by passively listening to wicked counsel and ends up scorning God and His Word. At each

step the man becomes more and more familiar with the wicked and their lifestyle.

The blessed man, and the blessed woman too, do not want to walk in the counsel of the ungodly. The ungodly are those who live contrary to God and His laws. In line with their hatred of God, the ungodly give evil counsel. They tell us that vice is virtue. They say sin is just "a little fun" that won't hurt anybody, and so on.

The blessed man therefore will say with Job, "the counsel of the wicked is far from me" (Job 21:16). He doesn't want to be exposed to ungodly counsel in any way, shape, or form. Therefore he will not go anywhere with the ungodly to fellowship with them. He will avoid ungodly music, ungodly movies, ungodly literature, and every other source of ungodly counsel.

The blessed man will avoid

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evil counsel because he knows it leads to the next step: standing in the way of sinners. The way of sinners is their sinful lifestyle. If we allow ourselves to be constantly bombarded with wicked messages from all sorts of media and so-called friends, the next step is that we begin to indulge in the lifestyle of the wicked. We begin to believe the lie of the devil that life is about serving ourselves (and really then serving the devil) instead of serving God.

From standing in the way of sinners, it's only one more step to sitting in the seat of the scorner. Scorners mock all that is holy and will not bear to be corrected. Indeed, they boast in their wickedness. They make an open profession of godlessness, saying in their heart, "There is no God," even though they know deep down that the truth is otherwise.

The man who is truly blessed will want to avoid, as one avoids the plague, this downward spiral into sin.

At the same time, he will also apply himself to a life of piety.

"His delight is in the law of the LORD" (Ps. 1:2). The law of the LORD includes all of God's instruction to us, including His commandments. Instead of downward, the law of the LORD leads the godly man upward in godliness. This upward progression begins with delight in the heart. The child of God rejoices in God's law because it reveals all we need to know for our salvation.

It stands to reason that such a delight in God's law will cause the blessed man to meditate upon that law day and night. He mulls it over in his mind and talks to himself about God's law. He praises God for His wonderful works. He doesn't just do that once a week when he goes to church. Rather, he meditates upon that law day and night. He

reads it diligently and considers it seriously.

The result of delighting and meditating upon God's law is that the blessed man will bear the fruit of a godly walk: "he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper" (Ps. 1:3). He will love God and his neighbor. He helps in the causes of Christ's kingdom. He seeks peace in the church. He brings forth the fruit of good works in every area of his life, whether as an officebearer, a spouse, a parent, a child, a student, or a laborer.

Needless to say, none of us perfectly matches this description of the blessed man. Indeed, many of us have tasted the bitter fruit of a downward spiral into sin. Neither have we delighted in God's law or born the fruit of good works as we would like. Because of this, some might question whether it is proper to call ourselves blessed. But, in spite of our shortcomings, we are blessed. That's because true blessedness is not necessarily perfect blessedness. And, though we don't see these things manifested perfectly in our lives, we do see the characteristics of a blessed man in ourselves.



How did we become truly blessed? By God's grace. That's implied by the psalmist when he says, "And he shall be like a tree planted" (Ps. 1:3). Just as a tree does not plant itself, we did not make ourselves blessed. God planted us by rivers of water in order to make sure we would be constantly nourished. He nourishes us by His Holy Spirit, who is like a well of water springing up within us.

But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I

shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life (John 4:14).

The Holy Spirit, who regenerated us, also "waters" us so that we grow and bear fruit. More and more we delight in God's law and meditate upon it and bear the fruit of good works.

The basis of this gracious work of God in us is the work of Jesus Christ. He is the man truly blessed of God, having the Spirit without measure. He did not walk in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stand in the way of sinners, nor sit in the seat of the scornful. Instead, He delighted in God's law and meditated on it day and night. As the faithful servant of Jehovah, He fulfilled all righteousness and gave Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins. In His way, Jesus prospered and continues to prosper, accomplishing salvation for His people. Isaiah prophesies about this victory:

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand (Is. 53:10).

On the basis of that work for us, Christ also works in us. That's how the psalmist can say, "The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous." Jehovah dwells with and in the righteous ones. The Good Shepherd knows us and cares for us and leads us.



That God knows us means that we are blessed now and that our destiny is the perfect blessedness in heaven. The blessedness of which the psalmist speaks is not some superficial, fleeting emotion based on temporary things. Rather, it is a firm and lasting joy based on the possession of a spiritual inheritance.

In light of the fact that we have these spiritual riches, whatsoever we do shall prosper (cf. Ps. 1:3). That is to say, whenever we walk the way of righteousness, God will prosper us. Whatever we do in faith, according to God's will and for His glory, it will prosper. God will use it for our spiritual good and for His glory.

Of course, the ungodly are not so. They do not possess happiness in the least. They may laugh and play and try to live life to the fullest. They may have all

kinds of money, or toys, or what have you. But in reality their life is empty and vain. Even while they live they stand exposed to God's utter rejection. Everything they do will not prosper; it will work for their evil.

On the judgment day, the ungodly will be manifest when God blows upon them with the wind of His judgment. Then the vain chaff will be swept away and burned. They will not be gathered together with the righteous in heaven. Rather, they will be

cast into hell to experience the fullness of the curse.

But the righteous man, the one who is truly blessed, will be gathered into heaven, into the congregation of the righteous. Then our perfect blessedness will be manifested. There we will no longer have to worry about mixing with the ungodly. There, our delight will be to glorify our God day and night. That man is truly blessed who has the life of Jesus Christ. Blessed now and blessed for ever.



## Editorial Comments

### The *Standard Bearer* is 86

The October 1 issue is the beginning of the new volume year. This year is the *Standard Bearer's* 86th.

First of all, we express our heartfelt gratitude to Rev. Jason Kortering, Minister Emeritus (who asked to be relieved of his writing duties), for his many years of regular contributions to the magazine. Since his early years in the ministry, which began in 1960, Rev. Kortering put pen to paper faithfully. The older readers will remember his early meditations, and his insightful articles to young people in the "Strength of Youth." For over 45 years the *Standard Bearer* audience profited from his work in the Word. "We are bound to thank God...for you, as it is meet...."

The staff granted Rev. W. Langerak's request to be relieved of "Bring the Books," so that he could continue with "A Word Fitly Spoken," a rubric with a writer the *SB* did not want to lose. Mrs. Sue Looyenga and Mr. Charles Terpstra will take over "Bring the Books," carrying out

our intention to review and obtain reviews of a wide variety of books that will be profitable for Reformed Christians.

The staff also has asked Rev. J. Laning to write brief articles explaining the basic doctrines of the Christian faith. His first appears in this issue under the rubric title "God's Wonderful Works." These one-page articles intend to offer the meat of the Scriptures at a level all can reach, not just the theologians.

For the rest, the magazine will march forward in the cause of Christ, in full dependence on Him. We will continue to publish meditations, editorials, doctrine, news and commentary from the world and church world, Bible study, word studies, history, explanation of the creeds, book reviews, missions studies, Christian perspectives on science, and more.

For 85 years the *Standard Bearer* has aimed at a distinctively Reformed promotion and defense of the Christian faith, faithful to the Scriptures and the creeds, to the honor of God. As we begin

our 86th year, may the Lord give strength to continue, faithful to His cause and truth.

### Anonymous Letters

I do not read anonymous letters. I receive very few, but my practice is what I have advised others for many years: If the letter is not signed, don't read it. I recently received an unsigned letter and put it immediately into the kitchen trash bin before I read the first sentence. A Christian should not read a letter from someone who would not identify himself (herself), a letter that cannot receive a response, a letter that may be filled with misunderstandings or hurtful accusations. I have known people very hurt by anonymous letters. Even if some anonymous-letter-writers have good motivations, their motivations do not justify a wrong method. Speaking the truth in love is speaking openly, willingly giving to the one spoken to the opportunity to respond. Don't write anonymous letters. Don't read them, either.

Prof. B. Gritters





# Synod 2009's decisions regarding Article 21 of the Church Order (1)

**B**y this time, most members of the Protestant Reformed Churches have read the decisions taken at the extended session of the 2009 Synod. Each consistory was provided with the decisions and given opportunity to make them available to the members. Others, interested in the case, have also likely read the decisions. Some have not seen the decisions. But all good members of the church are always interested in careful understanding of synod's decisions. For them I present the following description of the decisions, as one who worked many hours over two months on the committee formulating the advice and agrees with the decisions.

But that I agree with the decisions is not most important. More important is that the many misunderstandings of the decisions be cleared up. Because of the emotion and personal nature of the case, there have been misrepresentations of the decisions from both sides that disagreed with the decisions. Whether these wrong portrayals of the decisions were deliberate or not, the Lord can and will determine. These have been hurtful to the cause of the church and schools.

But at least a few who attended synod and spoke with me afterwards have testified that their misunderstandings have been cleared up and their great misgivings removed. One who thought the churches were weakening their support of the schools was

relieved to know differently after he listened at synod. Another, who had been concerned that the assemblies were doing injustice to the minister, was pleased when he saw and heard synod's conclusions.

## The History

First, Synod 2009 adopted a summary of the history of the case. This almost-six-page summary describes the case from its inception in a PRC in 2006 through the decisions of Synod 2008. The importance of this history is that it shows the concrete case out of which the issues have arisen: A minister withdrew his children from two different good Christian schools, with criticisms of the schools, and homeschooled his children. The actions occasioned serious disturbances in the congregation and, because unity could not be restored, not because he homeschooled, the congregation experienced the painful release of their minister under Article 11 of the Church Order.

Objections were brought, both by those who supported the minister's homeschooling and by those who believed the consistory should have *required* the minister to use the existing Christian schools. The case evolved as protests and appeals came to Classis East and synod, beginning in September 2007, and ending in August 2009.

The particular circumstances were important. At the heart of

the case, however, was the proper understanding of Article 21 of the Church Order.

Synod 2009 received from eleven men protests, appeals, and an overture regarding the matter. The overture asked that synod change the wording of the Church Order to include "home schools" in Article 21. Synod did not treat each protest individually and separately, but treated the main issues of the protests and appeals by adopting eleven main recommendations. It is very important for full understanding that the decisions of synod themselves be read in their entirety, but the following takes one through the decisions step by step.

For the largest perspective, two things must be kept in mind. First, the case dealt primarily with officebearers. Although the decisions refer to, and apply Article 21 to, all the members of the church, the primary focus is on the officebearer. Second, it must be known that synod adopted positions vigorously *supporting* good Christian schools, and recommending *against* home schools *when these good Christian schools are available*. Synod made her decisions over against some who wanted to make homeschooling an equally good option for covenant parents; and over against others who wanted to make the good Christian schools themselves the "demand of the covenant" and "required by Scripture." To understand synod's decisions, both of these

perspectives, pulling in opposite directions, must be kept in mind. The reader may note that the decisions alternate between addressing each of these improper perspectives.

### The Decisions

First, synod adopted a position as to the meaning of Church Order Article 21 (recommendation #1.). Some had contended that when Article 21 refers to “good Christian schools” we may understand *home schools* also. Synod disagreed. The “schools” of Article 21 are “the Christian day schools in which parents have their children instructed by others on their behalf.” The reasons for this decision were: 1) this is plain from the language of Article 21; 2) this was the understanding of Article 21 in Reformed churches historically; and 3) this position is a biblical position, because the Christian day schools arise out of biblical and confessional principles. At some length, synod showed the biblical and confessional nature of the Christian school. (This biblical and confessional defense of the Christian schools explains why synod also rejected an overture to change Article 21 to include “home schools.” See below.)

After synod maintained that Article 21 refers to good Christian schools and not home schools, synod wanted to avoid an error on the other side. Two protests wanted synod to say that the covenant *demand*s the good Christian schools. Synod carefully distinguished between the *demand* of the covenant and *how that demand is carried out*. The “demand of the covenant” referred to in Article 21 is the covenant *instruction* that parents must give. The precise *manner* in which covenant instruction is given (the good Christian school or homeschooling) is not specified by Scripture. (That was recommendation #2.)

Nevertheless, this does not

mean that the Christian schools must not be supported and promoted as vigorously as possible, as the next decision shows. In recommendation #3, synod said that every consistory must uphold Article 21 “by word and by example.” This decision was taken because some believed that a consistory member could *promote* the Christian schools properly without *using* them himself, or that not *all* the consistory members need be “on board” with the Christian schools in order for the consistory to support them. Synod explained that Article 21 calls all elders and ministers: 1) to see to it that there are good Christian schools, 2) to instruct parents to use them and admonish them if they do not (although there may be exceptions), and 3) to use these schools themselves unless there are “special circumstances judged by his consistory to be valid.” The grounds for these included the necessity of officebearers being examples to the congregation.

Thus far, synod’s decisions already (on the one hand) vigorously *promote* the good Christian schools (#1, 3); but (on the other hand) do not take the position that the Church Order *demand*s them (#2). Synod’s recommendation #4 addressed the matter of Christian liberty. Synod supported the position of Classis East that “homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty.” One aspect of the teaching of “Christian liberty” is that “the believer may do what God’s law does not forbid, and refrain from whatever God’s law does not require.” Freedom is given to Christians to decide in “matters not legislated by the law of God.” The *manner* in which a parent teaches his children is a matter of Christian liberty. So synod declared: “Although the Christian day schools of Article 21 are rooted in and are proper applications of biblical principles, they

are not the only legitimate way of instructing children according to the demands of the covenant.” In some instances homeschooling is the best option.

But recommendation #4 may not be read apart from #5.

Synod declared (in recommendation #5) that Classis East was *wrong* when it used the doctrine of Christian liberty *in the particular case of a minister*. Why? Because the specific case involved an *officebearer*. And an officebearer’s conduct is *limited* by his obligations to the Church Order. Gradually zeroing in on the particular case, synod gave lengthy explanation of the *limits* to the *exercise* of one’s liberty. First, there are limits to the exercise of a *believer’s* Christian liberty, as I Corinthians 6 and 10 teach. Second, the Church Order restricts the exercise of Christian liberty for church members. Third, the regulations of the Church Order apply in more ways to the officebearers, who willingly bind themselves to these regulations. Fourth, one of these areas is the promotion of the Christian schools.

### Conscience

In recommendation #5, reference was made to a man’s conscience. If a man’s conscience calls him to do one thing, how can a Church Order require him to do another? Synod explained that the church has the right to adopt regulations that limit the exercise of a man’s liberty, even in areas that some would consider matters of conscience. And those unable to live by those regulations may not be able to serve as officebearers. Some examples may help. One man’s conscience may not permit him to preach the Heidelberg Catechism, as the Church Order requires in Article 68. This man may be orthodox. No one will question his Christianity. He may have all the gifts of the ministry. But he

cannot be a minister in the PRC (and other Reformed denominations), because the churches have agreed that the ministers will preach from the Catechism. Or: another man's conscience may not permit him to conduct worship services on special days. Because the Church Order in Article 67 requires this in the PRC, that man cannot serve as a minister in the PRC. Likewise, if a man's conscience does not permit him to use the good Christian schools, the church does not bind his conscience in that matter. The church does not discipline him. But "his position of conscience may make it impossible for him to serve in a special office in the church."

Members of the church may learn something very important here. Not all regulations in the Church Order are based on explicit scriptural passages. But no church member may conclude that he is not, therefore, required to abide by them. Church members agree to abide by the Church Order. Officebearers in special ways are obligated to uphold and promote it. Their acceptance of an office means that they promise to do so. Let me give just one other example. The church requires that a man be trained in

the denominationally approved seminary before he may be a minister. (Indeed, the church has spelled out an exception to this and how that exception is carried out in the Church Order, Article 8.) Also, the prospective minister must take a specified number of courses, earn a minimum GPA, and pass muster at another classical gathering. But no man may say that his conscience convicts him that he is qualified to be a minister without "jumping through these hoops." All church members understand that there are certain standards that her officebearers will comply with, even if they are not spelled out explicitly in Scripture.


#### The Particular Case

Then, before moving on to some various objections, synod gave careful attention to the particular case. Because homeschooling is a matter of Christian liberty, and because *some* circumstances may make it permissible and even advisable for an officebearer to homeschool his children, what about *this particular case*? What about the reasons that were given to homeschool, in those circumstances, in 2006?

In recommendation #6, synod applied all of the above to the

particular case, and decided that the minister's "reasons for removing his children from the good Protestant Reformed schools to homeschool them made it impossible for him effectively to carry out his obligation" in his congregation "with regard to Article 21...."

Two grounds were given: First, no unique needs were revealed that made it inadvisable for the minister to use the schools available to him. Second, the minister made clear that he withdrew his children from the schools because they had serious weaknesses. In synod's deliberations, it became clear that this second ground—the minister's criticisms of the schools—was by far the weightiest. "This made it impossible for him believably to promote in his congregation those schools that were not good enough for his children."

(Next time: "Other Objections" treated: Did Classis overstep its bounds in dealing with what belonged to a local consistory? Did the ecclesiastical assemblies improperly involve themselves with a parental matter? Did the churches improperly add to the requirements for serving in church office? Summary and comment.) 

Graduation Speech

Prof. Ronald Cammenga

## Separated Unto the Gospel of God (1)

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

*This is the first installment of the text of the address given on the occasion of the graduation of Mr. Cory Griess and Dr. David Torlach from the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary on June 11, 2009 in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church of Hudsonville, Michigan.*

**B**eloved graduates, esteemed colleagues, members of the Theological School Committee, delegates of synod, brothers and sisters in

Christ: The epistle to the Romans is a monument in the New Testament Scriptures.

What the prophecy of Isaiah is to the Old Testament, Romans



is to the New Testament. It occupies a central place in the New Testament canon. It is the crown jewel of the New Testament.

The epistle to the Romans has always held this important place in the estimation of the church. I need only remind you of the importance a right understanding of this epistle had at the time of the Reformation. One commentator has written:

The Reformation was undoubtedly the work of the Epistle to the Romans...and the probability is that every great spiritual revival in the church will be connected as effect and cause with a deeper understanding of this book (Frederick L. Godet, "Introduction," *Commentary on the Romans*, vol. 1, p. 1).

Martin Luther wrote:

The epistle to the Romans is the true masterpiece of the New Testament and the very purest gospel, which is well worth and deserving that a Christian man should not only learn it by heart, word for word, but also that he should daily deal with it as the daily bread of men's souls. It can never be too much or too well read or studied, and the more it is handled the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes.

John Calvin wrote:

When anyone understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole Scripture.

This epistle was written by Paul to the church that was at Rome.

Rome was the capital city of the entire empire, the city of the Caesars. In this large, pagan city there was a true church of Jesus Christ. At the very heart of heathen culture and life, God had planted His church.

Fundamentally, of course, that is always the position of

the church; always the church is called to exist in the Rome of this world.

The apostle's purpose in writing the epistle was to set before the believers at Rome the fundamental doctrines of salvation. He intended to give them an overview of Christian doctrine. He wrote a summary of all the important truths of the faith. His purpose was to set forth "the gospel of God."

That is the striking expression that the apostle uses in Romans 1:1: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." The gospel is "the gospel of God." Unto this gospel and the preaching of this gospel, the apostle Paul had been separated. What was true of the apostle Paul is true of every minister of the gospel. This is true of you brothers who graduate from the Protestant Reformed Seminary tonight. Your years of training and your completion of the course of study in the Seminary belong to your separation unto the gospel of God. The significance of your graduation tonight is that the faculty and the Theological School Committee bear testimony to our conviction that you have been separated unto the gospel of God.

### The Gospel of God

The gospel is the gospel of God. That the gospel is the gospel of God indicates several things. It indicates, first of all, the *source* of the gospel. The gospel has its source in God; the origin of the gospel is in God. The gospel is God's gospel because He conceived it in eternity in His sovereign and free counsel. He realized it in time in the person and work of His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the One who raises

up and sends the preachers of this gospel. And He is the One who uses the preaching of the gospel to save lost sinners. From beginning to end, the gospel is God's gospel.

That the gospel is God's gospel also indicates the *authority* of the gospel and the *trustworthiness* of the gospel. You and I are called to believe the gospel as the only way out of the misery, the sin, and the death into which we have plunged ourselves. Ultimately the ground for believing the gospel is that the gospel is God's gospel. Behind the gospel stands the authority of God Himself, whose the gospel is.

That the gospel is God's gospel also emphasizes that the gospel *concerns* God. The gospel does not only come from God; the gospel does not only come with the authority of God; but the gospel proclaims God. The gospel proclaims who God is, His greatness and His glory, as

the only God, the sovereign God, the God of infinite perfection. The gospel proclaims what God has done, what God is doing, and what God promises yet to

do. This, in the end, is the purpose of the preaching of the gospel: that men might know God. Every sermon must have this as its aim. We must make our sermons and we must preach our sermons with this great goal in view, that our hearers will know God, whom to know is life eternal (John 17:3).

We have the gospel of God *in the sacred Scriptures*. The apostle points this out in the verse that immediately follows his description of the gospel as "the gospel of God." Of this gospel He says in Romans 1:2, "Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures." There is the most powerful proof here for the divine inspiration of the

*Behind the gospel stands the authority of God Himself, whose the gospel is.*



Bible. Notice that the apostle speaks of "His" prophets, that is, God's prophets. They were God's prophets inasmuch as they were God's instruments to proclaim His Word. And he says "holy" Scriptures. They are "holy" Scriptures because they partake of the holiness of God their author.

The important point that must be emphasized is that the gospel cannot and may not be separated from Holy Scripture. We have the gospel of God *in* the Scriptures. God does not any longer speak the gospel directly as He once did in the Garden of Eden or at various times throughout the Old Testament. But God has breathed forth the infallibly inspired Scriptures, so that those Scriptures are the announcement of the gospel to the church today. To undermine, therefore, the trustworthiness, the infallibility, and authority of the Bible at any point is to attack and to deny the gospel.

But what is the *content* of the gospel that Paul preached and that is set forth in Holy Scripture? Paul summarizes the gospel of God unto which He had been separated in verses 3 and 4:

Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.

The content of the gospel is God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The gospel concerns who Jesus is. He is a real man, of the seed of David according to the flesh. But also and at the same time He is the Son of God. The gospel concerns what this Jesus has done: born, suffered, died, and risen from the dead. The apostle mentions in the text the central importance of two great events: Jesus' incarnation and resurrec-

tion from the dead. These two events are the beginning and the end, the bookends, of Jesus' saving work, His life and ministry on earth. It begins with His incarnation and birth. It climaxes in His resurrection from the dead.

That Christ is the content of the gospel comes out later in this same chapter. In verse 9 the apostle says, "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of *his Son*, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers." And again in verse 16: "For I am not ashamed of *the gospel of Christ*: for it is the power of God unto salvation...."

That Christ is the central message of the gospel is indicated by the word "gospel." That word means "good news." The gospel of God is the good news of God. That good news is throughout Scripture the good news of what God has done in Jesus Christ. The gospel of Christ *is* the gospel of God.

In the passage, the apostle lays special emphasis on Christ's resurrection. He does that for good reason. The resurrection is conclusive evidence of the truth of all that Jesus taught and the validation of all His work. It is that, first, because He arose from the dead by His own power. That is the proof that He is the Son of God. No mere man has power over death. Jesus, as the Son of God, has conquered death. There is no greater testimony to Jesus' deity than His resurrection from the dead. And, secondly, he emphasizes Christ's resurrection from the dead because the resurrection was the seal of God on the atoning work of His cross. That God raised Jesus from the dead proves, proves before all the world, that by His death He satisfied fully the righteousness of

God. If even one sin of one child of God had remained unpaid, God would never have raised Jesus from the dead. He would still be in the grave today, for the wages of sin is death. But God raised Him from the dead, and in His resurrection from the dead we have the assurance that the guilt of our sins has been taken away.

This is the gospel!

The blessed good news of the gospel!

What this comes down to is grace. The gospel of God is the gospel of *grace*. The apostle does not say that in so many words in this text, but that is clearly the truth that he teaches. The gospel is the gospel of grace inasmuch as it proclaims that salvation is alto-

gether the work of God alone. From beginning to end, it is the work of God. God in eternity has determined a people and ordained their salvation. God sent Jesus Christ. As the Son of God, Christ did God's

work on behalf of God's purpose and for God's glory. Calvary was the accomplishment of God's will. And God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Salvation is God's work entirely. Nothing of this great salvation is the work of man. Nothing.

The gospel is also the gospel of grace because it proclaims the unworthiness of those who are saved and their inability to save themselves. Any preaching that purports to be the preaching of the gospel that proclaims man's ability to save himself or to contribute to his salvation in any way, by that very fact shows itself not to be the gospel of God. The gospel is *not* the gospel of man, not in any respect; it is most emphatically the gospel of God.

... to be continued.



*The gospel of God is the gospel of grace.*

## The Creation of the Heavens & the Earth

# The Wondrous Act of Creation

**O**ur God, the true God, is the Creator of all things. The Creator spoke the word, "Let there be light," and immediately light came into existence where there had been no light. The calling into existence of things that before were not—that is what is meant by creation.

### Creation out of Nothing

Most scientists of this world refuse to believe this. They reject the idea that all that we see around us was created out of nothing. Although they may speak of this present universe beginning with a "Big Bang," the explosion of which they speak is not the same as a creation *out of nothing*. The Big Bang theory begins with something, not nothing. It really teaches that first there was something, and then that something exploded. It is, after all, inconceivable that "nothing" could have exploded. It would have to have been "something" first.

By beginning with "something," the Big Bang theory really implies that this creation may have always existed. A universe, it is thought, can collapse to a single point (called the Big Crunch), and then explode into a new universe. In the mind of some who hold to such a theory, this back-and-forth of Big Crunch, followed by Big Bang, followed by Big Crunch, etc., may be unending. It may never have had a beginning, and perhaps it will never end.

Scripture, however, states clearly that the entire creation did have a beginning. It began when God called all things into existence.

God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. (Rom. 4:17b).

Light did not exist. It was one of those "things which be not." Then God called it into existence by the power of His words, "let there be light." Such is the wondrous way that light came to be.

### An Act of a Personal God Whose Counsel Stands

God does not need His creatures. He would not be incomplete without us. It is for His pleasure that He created all things. It was not an act of necessity, but a free act of His will:

...for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:11b).


A personal God, who creates for His pleasure, is far different from the impersonal force that many worship as their god. There are many who are like Albert Einstein. They look out at the creation and stand in awe of some impersonal force that they think they see behind it. "Veneration for this force, beyond anything that we can comprehend, is my religion," he is reported to have said.<sup>1</sup> Yet such a religion

is vain. Jehovah is not an impersonal force. He is a personal Being who by an act of His will brought the whole of the creation into existence.

By an act of His will He created, and His counsel always stands. That His counsel stands means that He always accomplishes His good pleasure. God said, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear," *and it was so*. The Almighty accomplished His will when He created. He stated His desire, and what He desired immediately took place.

He accomplished His will then, and He has been accomplishing His will ever since. Notice the relationship between these two texts that are both found in Psalm 33:

For he spake, and it was done (v. 9a).  
The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever (v. 11a).

There are many who say they confess the former (God accomplished His will when He created), but who refuse to confess the latter (God always accomplishes His will throughout history). Yet Scripture puts these two truths together. They are inseparable. To sing Psalm 33 with sincerity is to praise God for His wondrous act of creation, while confessing Him to be the only one whose counsel standeth forever. 

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Walter Isaacson's, *Einstein: His Life and Universe* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2007), 384-385.

# Teaching Our Children

## Reformed Witness Hour

A distinctively Reformed radio ministry,  
proclaiming the truth of the  
sovereignty of God.

In the past weeks, many of us have again witnessed the opening of Christian schools, and many of us have returned to the active, daily teaching of our children. As people of God, we believe that it is our calling to bring up our children. And, as the Lord gives us the ability and provides for us, it is our calling to establish our own Christian schools for them.

What are the reasons for this? There are especially three reasons.

The first is that the Scriptures teach that it is our calling as parents to instruct our children in the way of the Lord. Specifically, it is the calling of fathers to do this. Isaiah 38:19: "the father to the children shall make known thy truth." Genesis 18:19: "For I know him (that is, Abraham), that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD." Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, ...bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Everywhere the Scriptures make plain that it is the calling of a believing father, with the aid of his believing wife, to bring up his children in the way of the Lord. It is not the calling of the state in public education. It is not the calling of the church in parochial education. But it is the calling of the parents.

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And the instruction includes all that makes the child a child: physically, emotionally, spiritually, educationally. The parent is entrusted with and is responsible for the entire nurture of his children.

The second reason that we provide Christian schools is that we believe, from the Word of God, that it is our calling to instruct our children in a distinctive way, that is, in God's truth as we are given by grace to believe it. It is not our calling to provide simply a bland, lukewarm, you-decide-for-yourself type of education. It is not our calling merely to present options for our children, from which they may choose what pleases them. But it is our calling to bring up our children in the truth of the Word of God *as we believe it*. That truth must be applied to every sphere of knowledge. The light of the Word of God, the Reformed and biblical faith, must be brought to bear on every area of knowledge. To expose error, yes. But much more. God's truth must be brought to bear upon every area of knowledge in order that His glory may be woven into everything that our children learn, in order that they might adore and glorify Him and serve Him in this world as His children.

This must not be done artificially. We do not simply take the truth of God's Word and tape it on the outside of subjects. This truth must be woven into the very core and heart of the subject. Indeed, *one does not know anything about a subject unless he knows*

how it stands in relationship to the truth of God.

Our third reason for providing our own Christian schools is that it is our calling, as parents, to instruct our children so that they are equipped to serve God. It is our calling that we bring up our children so that when they leave our homes they are able to live to His glory. They must be instructed and taught how to live as God's children in this world, how to live as believing fathers, believing mothers, in the work place, in the church. Whose duty is that? You say, "Well, I thought that was the duty of the minister." No. That is *your* duty, as a father, to bring them up so that they think God's thoughts after Him and are equipped to serve Him in every area of life.

These are the reasons that lie behind a Christian school's existence, namely, it is our calling to instruct our children; it is our calling to instruct them in a distinctive manner; it is our calling to instruct them so they are equipped to serve God. These reasons must not become mere platitudes. They must be living realities and commitments of our heart.

So we look this coming year with expectation to the task of Christian education. The Christian looks with expectation towards Christian teachers. He prays that the Christian teacher may be equipped by God to bring sound instruction through thoughtful preparation. We look for teachers who put their heart into their work and believe that every class counts, teachers who



are men and women of consistent and godly example. We pray for Christian school teachers, because Christian school teachers must say to their students: "Do as I do." We pray also that we have good communication with our teachers, and that we show our teachers our support and love for them.

We have expectations also for the students who attend Christian schools. Those expectations are that they be diligent, that they take this obligation seriously, that they see the great privilege that is theirs, that they apply their talents, that they use their time. Our prayer for them is that they show courtesy to and love for one another, and kindness and respect and obedience to those who are in authority over them.

And we have expectations in this coming year for us as parents. If you have the privilege of sending your child to a Christian school, then your obligation toward and involvement with the school is not finished when the children leave your door and head for school and you pay your tuition. It must be a loving commitment, a prayerful involvement, a daily involvement. You must show your children, through your life before them, that this is of great concern to you.

The Word of God that equips our hearts and prepares them for this coming year with respect to Christian education is found in Psalm 34:11-14. Here, in these verses, we find all the things that we have been talking about so far today. Psalm 34 is a prayer of David. In verses 11-14 we read the following:

Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD. What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

This psalm was written by a very humble David. David at this time was in the cave of Adullam. He had just feigned himself mad before Achish the king of Gath. Now he is alone and deserted in the cave of Adullam. In that situation he turns his thoughts to the children of God's covenant. That is not really so striking, because when a child of God has been humbled low and crushed in pride, then his mind and heart become very concerned about spiritual things and about spiritual responsibilities. It is the exalted and prosperous Christian who is seldom mindful of children. It is the humbled child of God who is mindful of the children of the church.

David says to the children of the covenant: "Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD." There is a great sense of urgency there. Do you possess that as a parent? Come, ye children! Harken unto me! Urgency.

Why was David so urgent? He was urgent, first of all, because of his personal experience. David knew the seriousness of sin. He knew the consequences of sin. He knew the difficulties of godliness in this world. He knew the schemes and plots of the evil one, the devil. He was one who had personally experienced the Christian life. He had gone through the struggles. He had seen his sins and weaknesses. And out of that he has a sense of urgency for his children.

Still more, David possesses urgency because he loves the children of God's covenant. He loves them with the love of God. Do not say you love your children if you are not concerned about what your children are taught. Do not say you love your children if you are not concerned whether or not they are being equipped. Love for a child will mean that you are very diligent for their education.

Still more. David's urgency

is based on his desire for God's glory. He wants God to be glorified in the lives of the children coming up in the kingdom and covenant of God. He is not so concerned that they be wealthy and honored and successful in earthly terms. But he desires that God be glorified in them.

For these reasons David was urgent. He says, "I will teach you the fear of the LORD." He wants to make the children God-fearing. The fear of the Lord is not a bad thing. It refers to holy reverence, to a loving awe. It is the knowledge, first of all, of the majesty of God and of His sovereignty. But then, secondly, it is the knowledge of one's own littleness before God. And then it is to be overwhelmed that this God, so great, has been gracious to me. So a godly fear is simply this: that God's smile is your greatest desire and God's frown is your greatest dread. This is what David wants to instill in the children of the covenant.

He does not want to instill in them how they are going to improve the world, how they are going to advance social causes. No, these are not his concerns. This is not his object. But his resolve and object is to teach them to fear God in this world—in their work, in their home, in their school—that they might show forth the virtues of the sovereign God. His goal was that they be led to worship God, that they be led to adore God, that they be led to resolve to place their trust in God alone. That is the object of Christian education.

David goes on to say that his instruction, having this great object, will be concrete and pointed instruction in godliness. Read verses 12 through 14:

What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil,



and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

David there is speaking of the fact that the fear of God will be shown in a thankful Christian life. Having been saved by grace, we find that the burden of our hearts is to ask the question: "How shall I thank Him? How shall I thank Him in all of my life?" Then David becomes very specific. He says, We shall thank God, first of all, with a bridled tongue. "Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile." In Romans 3 we learn that the first evidence of depravity is found in the tongue. "The poison of asps is under their lips" (v. 13). But so also the evidence of the fear of God is found in the tongue. And the object of education is to give specific instruction as to how to use the tongue to the glory of God. Jesus taught that what comes out of the mouth reveals what is in our heart. So the instruction will be to keep our tongues from speaking guile, that is, deceit and falsehood, and

to teach our children to speak honestly and charitably.


Still more. The goal of education will be holy actions. David says, "Depart from evil and do good." That is referring to the antithetical life of the believer. This, too, is a great goal in Christian education. Antithetical simply means separation of the believer from the evil world and dedication of the believer to the service of God, to the performance of that which is good.

So the goal of a Christian education is that the child be equipped to bring forth holy actions in this world, that the child be equipped to be pleasing to God and to have his eye upon God in this world.

Finally, the goal of this education will be peace-making. David says, "Seek peace and pursue it." What good is all the education of a child if he ends up fighting and squabbling and filled with pettiness and selfishness? No, the goal of education will be peace-making. And that all fits. If the child is taught to fear the Lord, if the child is taught to see the glory

of God in all things, if the child is taught to bridle his tongue and to bring forth holy actions in his life, then the result will be peace-making. He will seek peace and will pursue it. The peace of God will descend upon his life and upon his home. And in that peace of God he will flourish and prosper.

David, then, is resolved to teach the joy and blessedness of being a child of God, founded upon the truth of God's Word. That must be our resolve. We must teach our children the joy and blessedness of being a child of God, and our instruction must be founded upon the wonderful truth of God's Word as expressed in the Reformed faith.

Are you resolved to bring this instruction to your children? Are you resolved to sacrifice for it? Look to God and remember: all the instruction that we give to our children is powerless unless God, from the very first to the last, blesses it. He has promised His blessing. In that confidence, let us go forward to teach our children the fear of the Lord. 

*Strength of Youth*

*Rev. Martin VanderWal*

## Laziness

**L**azy! Not a good word to hear. You immediately react against such an accusation if you are convinced it is not true. And you are immediately filled with shame if it is true. Laziness makes you think about work. You know fellow workers or fel-

low students who are lazy. Either they are late to their jobs or classes or their work is done sloppily if done at all. You see in their characters a lack of motivation or a simple inability to be motivated at all. They are the kinds of people you don't want to see on your team. You wonder how they can hold down their jobs or how they can pass any classes. You tend to despise laziness, even if you find it in yourself.

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Laziness is especially bad when it characterizes young people. Part of the strength of youth is an eagerness and zeal for different activities. Youth is a time of vigor applied to all kinds of different pursuits. You expect to find in young people a higher sense of adventure and excitement than in older people. But to find laziness in a young person can be cause for despair: if he

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is this way now, what will he be like when he is older?!



Now think of laziness applied to spiritual matters. What is spiritual laziness? Take what you have read in the opening paragraph and apply it to spiritual things. Spiritual laziness can be found in the midst of all kinds of ambition and zeal for other things. You might throw yourself into your work or into your school activities so that you have no energy left over for spiritual exercises. Or you might put off spiritual exercises until this or that other work is finished, with the result that you never have time for them.

This spiritual laziness is found in people who are regenerated and believe. They have an aptitude for spiritual things. They are not complete strangers to the kingdom of God and its truths. But they have little interest in them.

This spiritual laziness is different from a lack of faith or a weak faith. You must think of lack of faith or a weak faith as present in someone who desires a stronger faith. In a deep trial he understands his need to be strong and endure with patience in that trial. But spiritual laziness is an awful contentment with poor spirituality. One who is spiritually lazy knows his lack of desire or zeal for spiritual things but has no desire for improvement. He is just fine the way he is. He is in the kingdom. Why do anything more? Why go any further? Why develop? Why grow?



What are the symptoms of this spiritual laziness? One symptom is neglect of personal devotions and time spent in prayer. You only rarely do devotions on your own. Or, if you do them, it is more out of a sense of guilt than anything else. Or spiritual laziness

is practicing devotions in a superficial way, so that you merely put in your time, to say that you have done them. Devotions are given little or no place. Spiritual laziness!

Another symptom of spiritual laziness is lack of preparation for catechism and Bible study in Young People's Society. Another indicator is unwillingness to participate in any discussion about the Bible, about doctrine, or about spiritual life. Yet another sign of spiritual laziness is a passing by of opportunities to witness and testify to the truth of God's Word. An opening presents itself, you are able to seize that opportunity to speak of the truth, and you feel in your heart an obligation to the truth, but you let the opportunity pass on by.

Are you spiritually lazy? Do you wonder whether or not your generation is spiritually lazy? Ask your parents and grandparents. Ask them about yourself.

Ask them about your generation in comparison with their generation. Or even ask them to compare your generation with generations before them. Talk among yourselves, asking the same questions.



What are the causes of spiritual laziness? One cause can be spiritual immaturity. A child receives a great deal of instruction in spiritual things. He is well taught by his parents in the home, by his minister and elders in the catechism classes, and by his teachers in the Christian school. But there comes a time in his spiritual development and progress when all these things taught must bear their fruit. Properly, the child should become spiritually active, should develop his own spiritual life, and should

thus be able to think and speak about the truth willingly and voluntarily. He should be able to take his place spiritually in the communion of the saints and make his particular contribution to the body. One who is spiritually lazy, however, refuses to take up that responsibility. He will evade that responsibility or refuse it altogether.

Another cause of spiritual laziness may be fear. This fear is most often applied to circumstances in conversation. Perhaps those circumstances are formal, as in a catechism class or Young People's Society meeting. Perhaps they are informal, as in a conversation with peers or parents that turns to spiritual things.

One fears ridicule for appearing knowledgeable or even interested in spiritual things. Perhaps he has seen and heard others suffering such ridicule for speaking and participating. Since

even speaking about spiritual things is so discouraged by that ridicule or its possibility, why even bother learning or growing in the truth? There may also be fear of being wrong, committing some kind of doctrinal error, or speaking some kind of heresy. A spiritually lazy person will use that fear to release himself from the obligation to grow and develop. He will convince himself that it is far better only to listen and nod than actually to think and grow.

The dangers of this spiritual laziness are great. Spiritual laziness will not allow the child of God to develop properly and mature as a Reformed believer. Such a young man will not grow up into a proper husband or father and will be unable to lead his household in spiritual things. Though such a man is unquali-

*Spiritual laziness can be found in the midst of all kinds of ambition and zeal for other things.*

fied for the office of elder or deacon, sometimes he will still be nominated and elected. He will be incapable of properly executing the duties of the office. Under his care a congregation and individual members cannot prosper and may even suffer harm. Such a young woman will not be able properly to give her children the spiritual care that they need. She will not be able to have a productive place in the church as a spiritual organism. The rest of the members will have to carry her along, or, worse, her presence would be detrimental to the vitality of the congregation. "He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand" (Prov. 10:4).

Widespread spiritual laziness in a whole generation spells trouble for the congregation and even the denomination. How does apostasy begin in a congregation or denomination? It does not begin with open expressions of hatred and contempt for the truth of God's Word and holiness prescribed in that Word. It does not start with a minister who begins preaching and teaching doctrines that are man-centered. Nor does it begin with a coldness toward the truth. Apostasy begins with spiritual laziness. One who is spiritually lazy lacks appreciation for the truth and takes the truth for granted. Under God's judgment, spiritual laziness contains a germ that grows and develops into the full-blown apostasy that you now see in so many churches.




What can you do about spiritual laziness? The best thing you can do about spiritual laziness is to be spiritual! Dedicate your time and effort to spiritual growth in your personal devotions, spending the necessary time in the Word of God and in prayer. When you read, concentrate and meditate on what

you have before you. When you pray, give yourself thoughtfully to that holy exercise. Learn to pour out your heart before the Lord. Do not bring before the Lord standard words of praise and supplication in the well-worn phrases that fit in your mouth without thinking, but bring different perfections, works, and matters of thanksgiving. Shape those words according to your present circumstances and what you have read in Scripture or thought about that day. Bring before the Lord your specific needs, which change with your circumstances. Lay before the Lord supplications for your fellow saints and other young people that you know. Mention their specific needs. When praying for forgiveness, mention specific sins that you have committed, from your actions to your inmost desires.

Another way to be spiritually zealous is to attend to your church life. Find joy and gladness in coming to church (Ps. 122:1). Come to church prepared to listen and learn about God and His truth. Give your complete attention to the preaching, without letting your mind wander. Remember material from the sermon. Remember different points that are striking to you, things that have a practical bearing on your life. If you hear something that is not immediately clear to you, remember it to study it further or think about it again later. Fight spiritual laziness in your societies and catechism classes. Do not be afraid to speak up. You can minimize fear by preparing well. Study the passage ahead of time. Read a commentary on the passage. Write some notes that you can use in the discussion. When it comes time to discuss, do not be afraid of being mocked. (Mockery is bound to come from those who are spiritually lazy.) Take a proper

part in these discussions. Sometimes the best contributions to a catechism or society discussion is a good question rather than a good answer. If you fear being viewed as heretical, remember that the only way to be truly in error or a heretic is to persist stubbornly in your view even when you have been corrected. Speak humbly, and be open to correction.

Another way to conquer spiritual laziness is to take note of spiritual profit. Any attempt you make to develop spiritually is sure to be rewarded by God's grace. There is immediate profit in spiritual strength and vitality. The truth and reality of God's grace and love become more apparent to you. The truth becomes more precious to you as it becomes a stronger source of security and a richer, deeper comfort. There is profit in being a blessing to your fellow catechumens and young people. They are simply encouraged by your example in the same way of growth. You find it easier to talk with one another about spiritual things, spending more time together in that blessed realm. Your parents, minister, and elders are greatly encouraged in their work when they see the Lord's blessing upon their labors with you. The older generations of the church see in you the Lord's remembrance of His covenant mercies and are satisfied to see their beloved church in the hands of the next generation. "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Prov. 13:4).

Let that profit encourage you. Let it encourage you to spend more time in the Word of God and in learning about its truth. Let it encourage you to give more effort to spiritual exercises both with God in prayer, and with fellow saints in true, spiritual fellowship and communion. 



# Heaven (1)

**I**n the beginning God created the heaven (Gen. 1:1). Actually, He created three (II Cor. 12:2). He fashioned two physical heavens called firmament (Gen. 1:8)—the first, an inner atmosphere or sky (Deut. 33:26), and the second, a vast outer space. No chaotic wreckage from a big bang, they are the glorious artistry of the Lord's fingers, which carefully measured and spread them out the second day (Job 9:8; Is. 40:12). The heavens praise God, declare His righteousness, and continually tower over earth as an irrefutable witness to His glory and handiwork (Ps. 89:5; 50:6; 19:1). They are also important pedagogues, especially concerning the third heaven, a spiritual space called Paradise or the heaven of heavens (II Cor. 12:4; Neh. 9:6), i.e., the archetypal, superlative heaven.

Able tutors are these physical heavens in the school of wisdom (Ps. 19:1-3). They teach that, as to its quality, heaven is transcendent to everything earthly. Its place is higher and glory far above (Eph. 4:10; Job 22: 12). Its space is immeasurable, its inhabitants innumerable (Heb. 11:12). Its substance is better and more enduring (Heb. 10:34). Its darkness is absolute (Ex. 10:21), yet its light brightens the world (Gen. 1:15). And its life is everlasting (John 6:51). Even more so is the transcendence of its Creator, who makes heaven His holy habitation (Ps. 19:6). The Lord measures it with a span, numbers its creatures, and calls them by name (Ps. 147:4). He travels its length (Ps. 19:6), fills its immensity (Jer. 23:24), but it cannot contain Him (I Kings 8:27). Though His mercy is as high as heaven is above the earth, His glory is higher still (Ps. 103:11; 148:13).

Yet, wonderfully near is heaven. Even with feet firmly planted on earth, one can breathe its life, see its light, feel its warmth, hear its testimony, and enjoy its blessings. Though in heaven, God is not very far from us (Acts 17:27). From heaven He speaks often to men (Mark 3:17). In an instant, His heavenly hosts can appear (Luke 2:13-15). Through windows in heaven, the Lord pours out precious things from His treasure—rain, snow, dew, bread, even mercy and truth (Mal. 3:10; Deut. 28:12; 33:13; Ps. 57:3). But from those same windows, He also

sends judgment. Heaven hears, witnesses, and records the iniquity of men, whose sins reach up unto it (Ex. 17:14; Deut. 4:26; Rev. 18:5). In righteousness the Lord looks down under the whole heaven and tries the children of men (Job 28:24; Ps. 85:11; 11:4). He hears their blasphemy against Him, His home, and them that dwell in heaven (Rev. 13:6). Especially, the Lord hears the cries of His own oppressed children. He rides upon the heaven to their aid (Deut. 33:26), sees their hands lifted up toward Him, smells the sweet savor of their heavenly conversation, and delivers them (Neh. 9:27; I Kings 8:22; 8:30; Phil. 3:20). So, from heaven His voice thunders down and He sends darkness, tempest, flood, hail, fire and brimstone (II Sam. 22:14).

Although very near, there is a thick veil and impassible gulf fixed between heaven and earth (Heb. 9:3; Luke 16:26). It is the dark shroud of man's flesh, foolishness, sin, and guilt under the law (Rom. 1:23; Eph. 2:14-15). It is the deep chasm between mortality and immortality, corruption and incorruption, natural and spiritual, dishonor and glory (I Cor. 15:43ff.). Thus, one can stare a lifetime into space, soar through the clouds, and launch a thousand rockets, but never see heaven (John 3:3). He can have righteousness like the Pharisees, own the whole world, and be greatest among men, but never enter heaven (Matt. 18:1; 19:23). In fact, no man has ascended up to heaven, for flesh and blood cannot live there (John 3:13).

To see heaven a man must be born from above. To enter, he must become as a little child. To receive its blessings, feel its power, bear its image, and enjoy its life, a man must be changed, heaven must come down, the gulf bridged, and veil rent. So from the windows of heaven, God has sent His Son, who is Lord above all (I Cor. 15:47-51; John 3:31). The stairway to heaven, passage to the Father, and heavenly bread of life, He blesses us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places (John 1:51; 6:33; 14:6; Eph. 1:3). Jesus has not only come down, but by His own blood broken down the partition and entered through the veil, having obtained eternal redemption, and again passed into the heavens to appear now in the presence of God for us (Heb. 4:14; 9:24).

... to be continued. 

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## Teaching Piety and Practical Godliness in the Covenant Home (2)

**H**ome is the place where children grow up together and must learn to live with each other in true godliness. Often there are both boys and girls growing up together. There are different ages and different stages of development that children go through. There are many different experiences, both joys and sorrow, trials and difficulties, as well as by the grace of God success and progress and developments.

Our children are conceived and born in sin. They are sinners just like their parents. Though they can bring great joy they can also bring great sorrow, disappointment, and even grief to their parents. How all of this is dealt with in the covenant home will affect the godliness of the children.

Even covenant homes and families can be greatly distressed and divided by sibling rivalry and strife. This must not be allowed to continue as a norm or as an inevitable part of family living. Children must be admonished to repent of the sins of pride, self-seeking, and strife that are the cause of this sibling rivalry. They must in their daily lives in their covenant homes be taught the virtues of godly humility, forbearance, mercy, and forgive-

ness. Children must be taught true concern, respect, and honor of their own brothers and sisters in the home. The evils of pride and selfishness, meanness and cruelty must be uprooted from their lives. Children in the home must learn not to care only for the things of themselves but also for the things of others. The evils of demanding always to be the center of attention and always wanting to be first in everything must be dealt with as sins that must be repented of. Parents must be examples of godly virtue in their every behavior. We must show our children that we are humble and ready to sacrifice ourselves for others, and not be proud and self-seeking and demanding and unloving.

True godliness for our children requires instruction concerning morality, purity, and holiness in their daily lives. We live in a horribly immoral world. This dreadful immorality must be severely condemned with the Word of God. Our children must be taught to be separate from every form of this immorality, in their speech, in their behavior, and even in their dress. Who will deny that the world is becoming worse and worse. Immorality for the world is the source of much of its entertainment and is the reason for much of its laughter. Modern-day inventions give the world greater potential to enter into our homes and corrupt our families.

Parents especially are responsible for teaching children to have

a godly and biblical perspective regarding sexual morality. If they do not instruct their children in this area, their children will learn from the world and be corrupted by the world. If parents themselves are reading books and magazines that are immoral, or watching television programs with immoral scenes and consider these to be legitimate forms of entertainment, we can be sure that the hearts of their children will be corrupted right in their own covenant home. In our modern time we must carefully supervise the use of the Internet and other electronic devices in our home, being fully aware of the potential evil these pose for our homes. We must teach our children in all their behavior, and even in their dress, to be modest and pure. In many cases the mothers and fathers of the world are guilty of encouraging the unholy excitement of immodesty in the dress of their own children. It is part of the worldly pride they take in their children.

In our covenant homes we must teach our children to honor highly the sanctity and beauty of marriage. Our own marriages must be a pattern for our children to follow. Father and mother must show their children from day to day how they honor, respect, and serve one another in marriage in the role God has given them. The example of the love and faithfulness of father and mother to each other in marriage will have a very great influence on the children as they grow up

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*Previous article in this series: September 15, 2009, p. 495.*

in our families. It will do much to create an atmosphere of security, personal warmth, peace, and happiness in the covenant home.


Right attitudes regarding material possessions and the possessions of the neighbor are an important part of true godliness in the covenant home. Fathers and mothers must be honest and upright in their daily lives and in all of their business dealings. Obedience to the law of God is finally more important than making lots of money. Covetousness and greed are among the most frequently condemned sins in the Word of God. These sins are often condemned at the same time and with the same severity as the sins of uncleanness and fornication. Materialism often robs the

*The example of the love and faithfulness of father and mother to each other in marriage will have a very great influence on the children as they grow up in our families*

covenant home of true spirituality. Greed and envy and jealousy are condemned by the eighth commandment. Our children see the possessions of the children of other families and imagine that they must have the same toys, clothes, sports equipment, and, later in life, cars and expensive recreational equipment. This becomes a consuming passion for them. The biggest danger in most American homes is not that they suffer for not having enough but rather that the abundance most of us have in life causes us to glory in mere things and boast in ourselves. The Lord often warned Israel against this in their lives.

The ninth commandment requires truthfulness and sincerity. It forbids slander, evil speaking, and harsh judgment of the neighbor. Gossip is a dreadful and

destructive evil in the world's society. Children often learn such behavior in their homes and families. Dinner-table conversations often involve gossip and slander and evil speaking concerning the neighbor. Parents who constantly engage in this evil will find that their children will do the same, beginning even when they are still small children.

Let us talk about the law of God with our children in our covenant homes from morning till evening. Let us write the precepts of the Lord on the walls and posts of our homes and bind them as signs on our hands, guiding all the labors of our hands. Let us make the precepts of the law of God the ornaments of grace on our foreheads, which make us truly glorious and beautiful unto the Lord our God. So may our homes be truly covenantal, spiritual, and radically different from the world. Then our homes and families will be blessed of God, which is a greater good than anything in this world. 

*Ministering to the Saints*

*Rev. Douglas Kuiper*

## *Women Assisting the Deacons (1)*

# *The Biblical Rationale*

**B**efore concluding our detailed examination of the office of deacon, we must yet delve into the matter of women assisting the deacons. Historically, such women were called deaconesses, or said to hold “the office of widow.” Regardless of the terminology, we

desire to investigate the matter of women assisting the deacons.

The reader should know from the outset that the following articles will not advocate opening the office of deacon to women; nor will these articles evaluate the practice, all too common in Christian churches today, of admitting women to the office of deacon. Of this practice, our evaluation can be simple: Scripture, and therefore God, does not permit women to serve as deacons. The times in which we live—different

times and different culture from that of the early New Testament church, we are told—do not call for nor justify admitting women to the office of deacon. Rather, God Himself, whose mind does not change, and whose Word written two thousand years ago still means the same today, requires that only men fill the office of deacon. Notice: “Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife...” (I Tim. 3:12). No woman can be a husband. Not only this, but remember that the same in-

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spired apostle Paul had said to Timothy, with regard specifically to the woman's place in the *instituted church*, "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12).

As this prohibition of women serving in the office of deacon is clear enough, it is not our purpose to develop that point here.<sup>1</sup>

The issue now is whether women—certain, qualified women—may ably and profitably serve to assist the deacons in the work of their office in certain instances. The thesis that I will develop in this series of articles is that certain qualified women can and may so serve.

### A Purposeful Investigation

Why a detailed study of this matter?

First, it relates to the office of deacon, which is my primary concern in these articles.

Second, it forces us to come to grips with *all* the scriptural data regarding women in relationship to the office of mercy. To say that women may not hold the office of deacon is to adhere to the Scriptures on that point; but to end the matter there is to ignore other relevant teachings of Scripture.

The church of Jesus Christ is as wrong to be ignorant of the God-prescribed way in which women may help the deacons, as she is wrong to allow women to be deacons. Perhaps it is easier for the faithfully Reformed church that would exclude wom-

en from the special offices, not to implement the God-prescribed way of letting women help. To let women help the deacons might appear to some to be a compromise, a weakening, an opening of the door, letting the camel stick its nose in the tent. In fact, when the faithfully Reformed church knows that she properly does what God allows her to do, and is concerned not to do what God does not allow her to do, she need not be ashamed, tentative, or concerned about how others will view her.

Third, such a study will take us once again through a survey of church history, which is always beneficial for the church. Our survey of church history will demonstrate that the early New Testament church allowed women to assist the deacons; that within a few centuries this practice degenerated; that at the time of the Reformation, a conscious effort was made to reform the church in this aspect as well; and that since the Reformation, the church has deformed again in this respect. From this historical survey we will conclude that the Reformed church today ought to stand firm in her opposition to women *being* deacons, but at the same time understand the biblical basis for having women *help* the deacons, and implement the practice that the early Christian church and the church of the Reformation time implemented.

Finally, such an investigation forces us to evaluate our own practice.

As a denomination, the Protestant Reformed Churches have taken no official stand regarding women helpers to the deacons. I could state that more broadly: while some early Reformed synods did speak in favor of women assisting the deacons, the Reformed churches as a whole have never required the churches to have women helpers for the deacons. It is simply a fact that the

Church Order of Dordrecht, 1618-1619, is silent about this matter. This silence is not the same as prohibition. But the point is that, as a *denomination*, we have no official guidelines or requirements regarding women helping the deacons.

One does find a form of this practice in individual congregations however. Many have a "Helping Hands" committee, which might be under the supervision of the diaconate. It is my understanding that the original purpose of the "Ladies' Aid Society" in Reformed churches was to help the needy in the church. And, when necessity has required it, the wife of a deacon has helped. Practically speaking, in individual congregations some women do assist the deacons.

So let us evaluate our practice. Let us know the reason for it—do the deacons and the women understand the biblical warrant for this, or are they helping for wrong reasons? Do the deacons implement the women's assistance properly or improperly? Are the right kind of women solicited to help? Are women assistants used frequently enough, or are certain needs of members in the congregation not being supplied, because the deacons as men are unable to supply them, and they do not seek the help of women?

To be faithfully Reformed is to be always reforming. Granted, the issue I am raising is not an essential matter of doctrine or worship; and while it does relate to church government (the office of deacon), even then it is not a matter of grave importance. But it is a matter of practical importance. Let the deacons involve women, as needed, in the work of mercy. And if deacons are not doing so, let them examine how they can.

With that in mind, let us examine the biblical rationale for women assisting the deacons.

<sup>1</sup> The reader interested in reading what Protestant Reformed writers have written in opposition to women serving in the office of deacon can refer to my article "The Qualifications of Deacons (3) Male Recipients of God's Grace" (*Standard Bearer*, vol. 77, p. 355, May 1, 2001 issue); and to pertinent essays in the book *Far Above Rubies: Today's Virtuous Woman*, edited by Herman Hanko (Jenison, MI: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 1992).



## I Timothy 5:9-10

In this passage, the inspired apostle Paul instructs Timothy, the young pastor of the church at Ephesus, regarding taking widows into the “number”:

Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.

Significantly for our purposes, verse 11 continues, “But the younger widows refuse....” Paul is clearly making a distinction between older and younger widows. The older ones may be taken into the number; the younger ones, under age 60, may not.

What is this “number”? What is permitted widows of 60 years old and older that is denied younger widows? The English words “be taken into the number” all translate one Greek verb that means to be enrolled, or registered. What is this list, or registry, on which may appear the names of older, but not younger, widows?

As Scripture does not tell us specifically, various explanations have been given.

One explanation that cannot be correct is that such older widows, but not the younger, are entitled to benevolent help from the church. This appears to have been Luther’s explanation:

An old woman of fifty years can feed herself by her own effort. If she is sixty, we should take her in.... That Paul is speaking about the widow whom the church must feed appears clearly from what follows (v. 16): “If any believing woman has relatives who are widows...let the church not be burdened.”<sup>1</sup>

If correct, this means that younger widows are not eligible for benevolent help from the church. Luther’s attempt to appeal to verse 16 to prove that the church should not feed widows under 60 fails. Speaking to the matter of providing for widows, verse 16 says that the families of widows should help them in their need, so that the church “may relieve them that are widows indeed.” Verse 16 does not mean that only widows indeed, over age 60, are eligible for assistance from the church. If a widow is a widow indeed, yet not 60, the church must take care of her.

Nor does the apostle have in mind the office of deaconess, if by that is meant an official and special office in the church on a par with that of pastor, elder, or deacon. We will argue that the text does refer to a *position* women hold, but that position does not have the nature of a special *office*. The Bible verses to which I referred in my introductory remarks indicate that the apostle cannot here be referring to a special office.

Applying the rule that Scripture interprets itself, we rule out these two explanations.

A plausible interpretation of the text, then, is that it describes those women who are permitted to hold a certain position of service to the church, in which they devote themselves to helping those in need. This work of mercy is really the work that is entrusted to the deacons; but as

I Timothy 5:9 as found in *Luther's Works on CD-ROM, vol. 28: 1 Corinthians 7, 1 Corinthians 15, Lectures on 1 Timothy*, edited by H. T. Lehmann (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1973). No page number is available.

the deacons are men who ought not help women in certain situations, and as the deacons are men with families who must also earn their living and cannot give the degree of care that some in the church need, certain widows are enrolled to do that work.

This interpretation would explain why the qualifications for this position are what they are. Not just any widow of 60 years of age, but only those who have shown themselves in their life

to be kind and merciful to those in need may be enrolled.

This was Calvin’s view. Acknowledging that these widows received support from the church, he indicates that they did so in return for a service that they also provided. One reason why the widows of 60 years old may be enrolled is that:

they consecrated themselves to the ministry of the Church, which would have been altogether intolerable, if there were still a likelihood of their being married. They were received on the condition that the Church should relieve their poverty, and that, on their part, they should be employed in ministering to the poor, as far as the state of their health allowed. Thus there was a mutual obligation between them and the church.<sup>2</sup>

And this, our historical survey will show, became the explanation of Reformed churches generally.

So understood, we have one passage that clearly teaches that certain qualified women may ably

*The church of Jesus Christ is as wrong to be ignorant of the God-prescribed way in which women may help the deacons, as she is wrong to allow women to be deacons.*

<sup>1</sup>. Quoted from his comments on

<sup>2</sup>. Calvin, John, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, transl. Rev. William Pringle (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 128.



and profitably serve to assist the deacons in the work of their office.

### I Timothy 3:11

A second passage that would serve the same purpose is I Timothy 3:11: "Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things."

Not all are convinced that this passage gives the qualifications of deacons' wives. Clearly it speaks of women: the Greek word translated "wives" is the common Greek word for women. Clearly it speaks of women who are somehow connected with the diaconate, for the verse is imbedded in the passage of Scripture that most clearly sets forth the qualifications for deacons. Clearly it speaks of women who

are not themselves deacons; reading verse 8 ("Likewise must the deacons be grave") and verse 12 ("Let the deacons be"), it is clear that deacons are referred to, so that in verse 11 ("Even so must their wives") the apostle speaks of others.

Does the passage speak of deacons' wives, or of those women who are connected with the office of deacon because they assist the church?

I remain of the opinion, expressed previously,<sup>1</sup> that this passage does speak specifically of deacons' wives. But I also remain of the opinion, expressed previously in this series, that Scripture gives qualifications regarding the wives of deacons because at times


<sup>1</sup> *Standard Bearer*, vol. 78, p. 130, December 15, 2001 issue.

their wives must help them in their work.

In other words, we find two passages in Scripture that authorize the deacons to avail themselves of the assistance of certain women in the church, when needed.

Those women may be of two different sorts—widows over sixty, or deacons' wives.

But in either instance, these must be women who possess spiritual qualifications—women who are discreet, faithful in all things, and compassionate.

With this biblical rationale, we will proceed in our next article to a historical survey of how the church properly, and improperly, permitted women to assist in the work of mercy. 

## Bring the books...



Rev. William Langerak



*Called to Serve: Essays for Elders and Deacons*, ed. Michael Brown. Reformed Fellowship (2007). ISBN 978-0979367748. 274 pp. \$15.00. Softcover. Reviewed by Rev. Douglas Kuiper.

**P**rotestant Reformed Churches in America do little to give our elders and deacons formal, systematic training for their office. Perhaps in the monthly officebearer meetings, some time is spent discussing articles of the Church Order or other relevant material. Occasionally a congregation sponsors a conference or lecture pertaining to the subject. The delegates to Classis West make every effort to gather once or twice a year for a conference. But nothing formal and systematic is done to train men to be

elders and deacons. Each is left to read and prepare for his work himself.

One of the essayists contributing to this book, Nelson D. Kloosterman, makes the plea that in his churches, the URCNA, this be done: "We conclude this essay on office bearers and church government with an appeal for, and defense of, formally preparing men to serve as elders or deacons" (186). I am convinced the same would be of great benefit for the PRCA.

So long as such is not done, the book here reviewed is a must read for officebearers, whether currently serving or elected but not yet installed. Even if such is done, this book might well be one of the required readings. The book is also highly recommended for those who desire the office of elder or deacon. My recommendation is not a condoning of every statement in the book. Rather, it

is a recognition that officebearers will benefit from reading this book with discernment.

Twelve men, all ordained ministers in the United Reformed Churches in North America, contribute to this book. In order, the chapter titles are:

1. Rulers and Servants: The Nature of and Qualifications for the Offices of Elder and Deacon.
2. The Duties and Tasks of the Elder and Deacon.
3. The Office Bearer's Life.
4. Our Reformed Heritage I: Early Reformation to the Synod of Dort.
5. Our Reformed Heritage II: Synod of Dort to the Present Day.
6. Why the Elder Needs to Know, Love and Defend Reformed Doctrine.
7. What Every Elder Should Know About Infant Baptism.
8. Should We Allow Baptists to Join a Reformed Church?
9. Calvin on the Eucharist.
10. Table Manners: Whom We Welcome to the Lord's Supper.
11. What Our Service Should Look Like.

12. Office Bearers and Church Government.
13. Surviving Tuesday Night: The Rules and Order of a Meeting.
14. The Fruit of Righteousness and Peace: On Church Discipline.
15. Shepherding the Flock Through Family Visitation.
16. Loving Mercy: Practical Reflections on the Ministry of Mercy.


Because the book is written by URC ministers, the reader is not surprised that the URC Church Order is quoted or explained in various chapters; that chapters 4-5 present the history of Reformed Churches, as leading to the establishment of the URC; and that chapters 8 and 10 are written in the context of disagreement in the URC on the subjects treated in the chapters. None of this detracts from the benefits of this book for the PRC officebearer or prospective officebearer.

To highlight points made in various chapters, I note that in chapter 3, Ralph Pontier emphasizes the need for the officebearer to be godly in his personal life,

family life, and relation with others. To grow in such, he encourages the officebearer to discipline himself to read and study. In light of the anti-confessional age in which we live, Cornelis Venema, in chapter 6, sets forth succinctly the nature and function of the Reformed confessions, and four contemporary challenges to sound doctrine (let the officebearers know the spirit of the age!). In chapter 11, Michael Horton explains the various essential elements of Reformed worship. Nelson Kloosterman, in chapter 12, not only defends the function of the Church Order, but gives good practical advice regarding how to apply it to situations the officebearer will face. Similarly, not only do chapters 14-15 set forth the benefits and necessity of church discipline and family visitation, but good practical advice is given in these areas. Chapter 16 is the only chapter devoted to the work of the deacons, but the practical wisdom set forth in it is

worth the price of the book.

The "Plan and Study Guide for Officer Training Course" found in Appendix A gives an overview of a ten-week-long course, which our churches could profitably follow in implementing more formal, systematic training for the office. Appendix C, entitled "Building a Basic Elder's Library," will help the officebearer know what to read. Bearing in mind that my audience consists of PRC officebearers, I would revise this list by adding some of our own materials to it, and by taking off the list some titles that I think are not deserving of a place—but by far most of the titles on the list are worthy of our reading.

Those interested can purchase the book from the publisher's website at [www.reformedfellowship.net](http://www.reformedfellowship.net), or from [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com). Perhaps after reading the book, other officebearers will also see the benefit of more systematic, formal instruction in this area. 

## Report of Classis West

September 1, 2, 2009

**C**lassis West met in regular session on September 1 and 2, 2009, in the new sanctuary of the Randolph PRC.

On the agenda were nine protests. Six of them protested the decision of the May Classis instructing a consistory and a special committee of Classis to labor pastorally with its minister, directing him to seek release from the ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order. The other three protests regarded other related matters. Classis did not sustain any of these protests.

Also on the agenda was the request of a minister to be declared emeritus for health rea-

sons. Classis did not treat this request because the matter was not finished at the level of Bethel's consistory.

Three churches came to Classis with special requests. Bethel PRC requested permission to call another minister, and requested additional subsidy to make it possible for her to support a second minister. Lynden PRC requested a reduction in synodical assessments, due to the loss of over 10% of her families during this calendar year. And Calvary PRC, having heard the good news that Candidate Cory Griess accepted her call to be her first pastor, asked that a special meeting of Classis West be scheduled to examine Mr. Griess with a view

to his ordination. All these requests were granted. The special classis is scheduled for October 21, hosted by Calvary PRC with a call to worship to be scheduled for October 20 so that Candidate Griess can preach a specimen sermon to the Classis.

Immanuel PRC and Bethel PRC were both given classical appointments per their request.

The total expenses of this Classis amounted to \$11,244.36.

The next regular meeting of Classis is scheduled for March 3, 2010, in Loveland, CO.

May God bless the decisions of Classis for the welfare of the churches.

Rev. Douglas Kuiper,  
Stated Clerk 

### Minister Activities

**T**he Lord led Candidate Cory Griess to accept the call to Calvary PRC in Hull, IA. We rejoice that our heavenly Father has provided Calvary with its first pastor, after nearly two years of vacancy, and that the Lord has also provided a place for Mr. Griess. Mr. Griess will be examined at a special meeting of Clasis West on October 21. We also add our prayers for the Lord's rich blessing upon the Griess family and the Calvary congregation in the days and years ahead.

Pastor-elect Griess' acceptance of the call to Calvary also means that he has declined the calls to the Byron Center, MI PRC, the First PRC of Holland, MI, and the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada. Immanuel subsequently extended a call to Rev. Thomas Miersma.

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma declined the call he received to become the next pastor of the Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI.

### School News

**T**rinity Christian High School, our newest Protestant Reformed high school, in Hull, Iowa, celebrated an important milestone on August 24, with a convocation and dedication service celebrating covenant secondary education in Trinity's newly constructed facility. Rev. Allen Brummel spoke on the theme, "Planted by the Rivers of Water," based on Psalm 1:3.

Classes at the Hull, Iowa PR Christian School began on August 25. The school day began with a convocation service in the Hull PRC auditorium. Rev. Andrew Lanning, from the Faith PRC in

Jenison, MI, spoke to the students and faculty that morning.

The Northwest Iowa PR Christian School (Doon, IA) began its 43rd year of covenant education on August 25. Convocation services were held that afternoon at the Doon PRC. Rev. Allen Brummel spoke on Psalm 25:4, 5—"God's School of Grace."

All the members of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada were invited to attend the opening convocation for Genesis PR Christian School, which will mark the commencement of their third year of operation. Rev. Dale Kuiper spoke to the students, teachers, parents, and supporters of Genesis on Monday morning, August 31, at Immanuel. The theme text for Genesis for this year is, "So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Ps. 90:12).

All confessing members of Immanuel were also invited to attend an organizational meeting for a Parent-Teacher Association for Genesis PR School. The Lord willing, this first meeting was to be held September 8.

This summer Faith Christian School in Randolph, WI sponsored their fourth annual Faith Christian School Classic on August 1, an event that features three different runs: a 10K, 5K, and 1-mile fun run/walk. In case you are interested in possible participation in the fifth annual classic next year, record times are around 40 minutes for the 10K, 18 minutes for the 5K, and 6 minutes for the 1-mile run/walk. Proceeds raised went for Faith's building fund.

### Mission Activities

**W**e are thankful and happy to report that all the permanent visa applications of our missionary pastor to the Berean PRC

in Manila, the Philippines, Rev. Richard Smit and his family, have been approved by the Bureau of Immigration.

The council of the Doon, IA PRC, the calling church for our denomination's work in the Philippines, recently began an organized effort of regular contact between their congregation and the Smit family in the Philippines. Plans are to have one family contact the Smits, either by mail or e-mail, every two weeks. When the Kleyns go to the field later this year, D.V., they will also be included.

The Steering Committee of the Heritage PR Fellowship in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, with the approval of the Edgerton, MN PRC consistory, signed a one-year lease, beginning July 1, for office space at Dr. Baer's Town Professional Building at 3321 E. 26th St. in Sioux Falls. Rev. Brummel's study will be moved into the office in order to free up living space in the parsonage and to give the Fellowship a more visible presence in town.

### Evangelism Activities

**T**he Evangelism Committee of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL began a 4-month trial of making audio of their Sunday sermons available on their web site, [www.peaceprc.org](http://www.peaceprc.org). You can listen either by downloading the sermons, or by directly streaming the audio through an Internet connection.

### Congregation Activities

**T**his past summer, members of Life Group, a group of young ladies in the Hudsonville, MI PRC, were once again busy with monthly Bible studies and projects meant to benefit others in their congregation. Activities included a trip to a nearby second-hand outlet store, "Love in the name of Christ," where

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

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money raised goes to help needy in the community; having supper with the seniors in Hudsonville's congregation; and making salsa for those same seniors.

The consistory of the South Holland, IL PRC approved starting a Junior Adult Bible Study for confessing members up to the age of about 35 for singles, or a

combined age of 70 for couples. An organizational meeting was planned for September 15, with the first Bible study to be held, the Lord willing, on October 6. 

## Announcements

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On October 19, 2009, our parents,

**WILLIAM AND ARDITH OOMKES**, will celebrate 50 years of marriage. It is with heartfelt appreciation and gratitude that we thank God for the guidance and instruction given us through them. We pray that God will continue to bless and keep them and that their marriage may be a reflection of the perfect marriage between Christ and His bride, the church.

Psalm 89:1: "I will sing of the mercies of the LORD for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations."

- ❖ Gary & Sheryl Zandstra  
Amanda, Tiffany, Hannah,  
Josiah, Mikayla
- ❖ Steve & Joan VanderZiel  
Andy, Amy, Melissa, Kelly, Kyle
- ❖ Jim & Mary Brander  
Kendra, Josh, Cassie, Toby
- ❖ Mark & Amy Oomkes  
Taylor, Lisa
- ❖ Arjen & Jodi Vreugdenhil  
Ethan

Byron Center, Michigan

### NOTICE!!!

With the September 15 issue of the *Standard Bearer*, volume year 85 is finished. If you would like your issues bound, please deliver them to the **RFPA office** before the end of October. For additional orders, call Paula at 616-457-5970.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Hope Heralds express their sincere Christian sympathy to longtime member, Mark Feenstra, and his wife Bethany in the death of their infant daughter,

#### SARITA JOY.

May the family find comfort in the words of Psalm 46: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" and in the words of the hymn, Day by Day:

Day by Day and with each passing moment, strength I find to meet my trials here; Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment, I've no cause for worry or for fear. He whose heart is kind beyond all measure gives unto each day what He deems best, Lovingly its part of pain and pleasure, Mingling toil with peace and rest. Every day the Lord Himself is near me, with a special mercy for each hour; All my cares He fain would bear and cheer me, He whose name is counselor and power. The protection of His child and treasure is a charge that on Himself He laid, As thy days, thy strength shall be in measure, this the pledge to me He made.

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express Christian sympathy to Pastor Carl Haak and his wife, Mary, in the recent death of their granddaughter

#### SARITA JOY FEENSTRA.

We pray that God may comfort her grieving parents and all the Haak and Feenstra family. Jesus, who loves the covenant children, says in John 17:24, "I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may also behold my glory which thou hast given me."

Jerry Kuiper, Clerk

## Reformed Witness Hour

Date	October 2009 Topic	Text
	<b>In Praise of Sovereign Grace</b>	
October 4	"Total Depravity"	John 15:4
October 11	"Unconditional Election"	John 6:37
October 18	"Limited Atonement"	John 10:15
October 25	"Irresistible Grace"	John 6:44