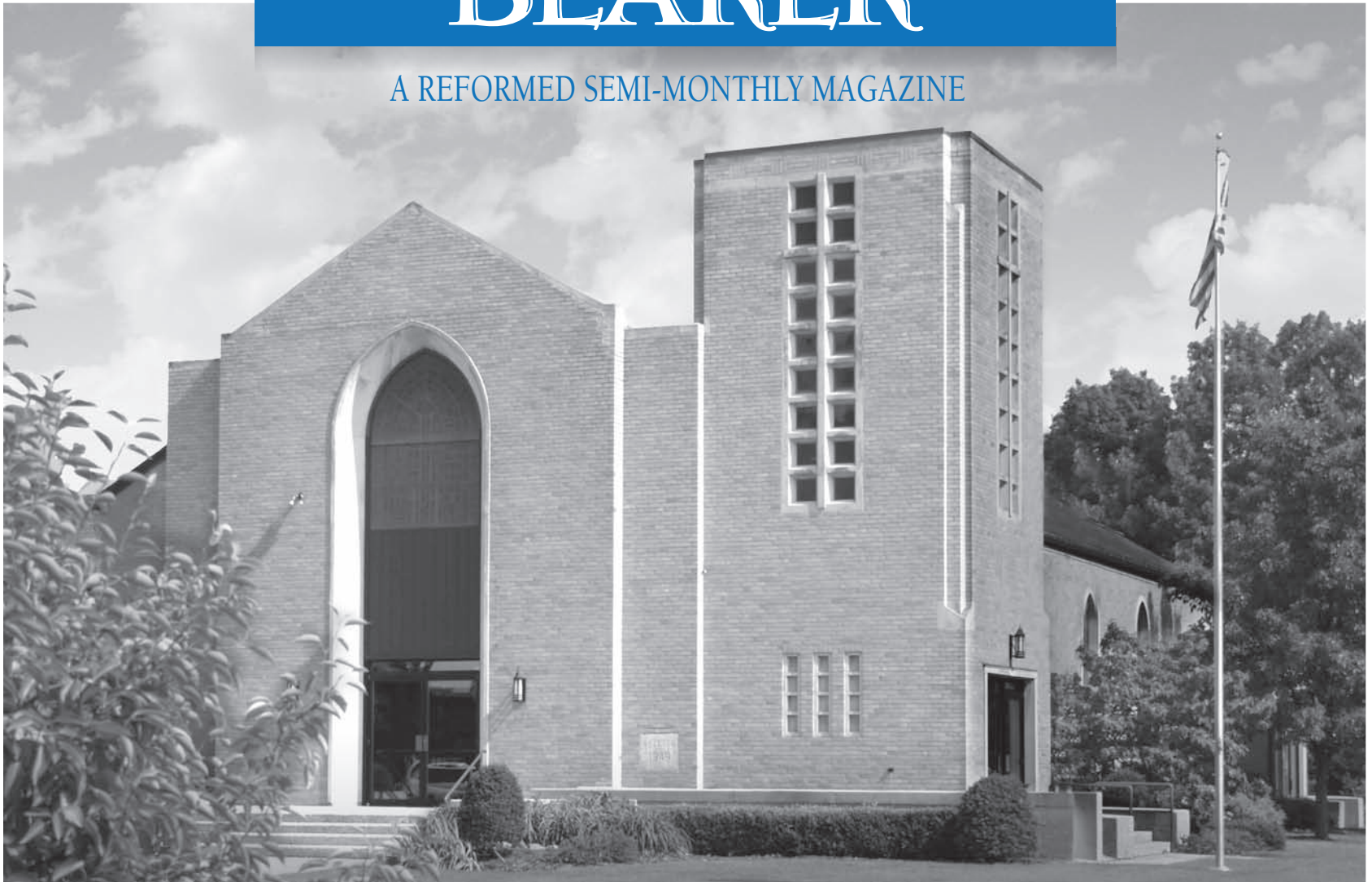


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PRC **SYNOD 2007** *highlights*



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front cover: Delegates to Synod (l. to r.):
 Sid Miedema, Harry Langerak, Rev. VanOverloop, Peter VanDerSchaaf,
 James VanOverloop, Fred Tolsma, Rev. R. Miersma, Ron VanVoorthuysen, Rev. Key,
 Rev. Slopsema, Prof. Dykstra, Rev. R. Kleyn, Prof. Engelsma, Gysbert VanBaren,
 George DeJong, Rev. D.J. Kuiper, James Regnerus,
 Rev. A. Brummel, Rev. Koole, Prof. Gritters, Gary Kaptein,
 Prof. Cammenga, Rev. Smit, Rev. Haak.

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Meditation

Rev. Ron VanOverloop

Keeping the Unity of the Spirit

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love: endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."

Ephesians 4: 1-3

The Ephesian Christians experienced tremendous changes in their lives. They had been without God, without

Christ, and without hope. They had been dead in their sins. Spiritually they were under the influence of the spirit that works in the children of disobedience. Each individual was only selfishly fulfilling the desires of his own flesh and mind. They were all children of wrath (2:2, 3).

Then God miraculously, out of the richness of His mercy and the greatness of His love, gave them spiritual life in Christ. Through the gift of faith they experienced what it is to be saved by grace. They also experienced a unity and peace with Jewish Christians that was unprecedented. For the first time it was made known that Gentile Christians were (and are) of the same body as Jewish Christians

and equally partakers of the promises in Christ (2:8-22).

Now Paul wants them to see that they ought no longer walk as the unbelieving Gentiles walk, but they are to walk worthy of the divine call that brought them out of darkness and into God's marvelous light.



The inspired apostle is concerned to show the saints in Ephesus that they ought first adorn the doctrines of sovereign, particular, gracious salvation with an urgent concern for the unity of the body of Christ (4:1-16). They are to "keep" the unity of the Spirit, i.e., to guard or preserve it. They are not told to make the unity, but only to guard

Rev. VanOverloop is pastor of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

This Meditation is the text of the pre-synodical sermon preached by Rev. VanOverloop on June 11, 2007.

something that already exists. They are urged to preserve this unity at all personal costs and to be diligent to manifest it.

What is this “unity of the Spirit”? It is a unity that has its origin in the Spirit. It is produced by the Holy Spirit, not by man, nor by the efforts of the human spirit of friendliness. Second, this unity is a living, organic unity that arises from within—in the spirit of man. This unity is not first external and imposed from without. The Holy Spirit creates a unity by giving to all of the elect the same spiritual life. Instead of a mechanical unity, it is a spiritual and internal unity. Third, this unity is experienced only by those in whom the Spirit dwells and whom He enlightens. When Peter saw the evidence of the Spirit within Cornelius, then he could not deny the existence of the unity—and that in spite of the fact that they were of different nationalities—one ceremonially clean and the other ceremonially unclean. The presence of the Spirit in two people enables them to have true fellowship with each other, for He and His work are the only basis of real fellowship.

The Spirit-given unity consists of “the bond of peace.” The unity that the Spirit gives to all the members of Christ’s body means that they have an essential peace with each other. A relationship of harmony joins every member most closely with all the other members. The bond or tie that binds believers together is peace (just as love is the bond in Colossians 3:14). While strife brings disunity, peace promotes and perpetuates unity.

Concerning this unity, the Ephesian Christians are told they must “endeavor” to keep or guard it. They are asked to put forth every effort and to do so with diligence. Interestingly, the root of the word that is translated “endeavor” has the idea of haste. The Ephesian believers were to hurry about the task of preserving the unity of the Spirit. They were to show great

concern that this unity be manifested and preserved.



How is the unity of the Spirit to be kept?

Some would say that churches and denominations should forsake all differences in order to be joined ecumenically with other churches and denominations. Others would say that the truth is to be maintained at all costs, even if the manner in which it is maintained causes unnecessary hurts, and divisions result.

What the apostle is inspired to say about how the unity of the Spirit is kept may surprise us. We are to develop and maintain an inner disposition concerning, not others, but ourselves. “Lowliness” is humility of one’s mind (it is not external or visible), which is the opposite of a desire to assert oneself. Humility is true greatness. It is one of the chief marks of godliness and of Christianity. It is a deep awareness of God’s great glory and of our own littleness because of our sin and sinfulness. It is self-effacing and unselfish. Paul exhibited lowliness when he declared himself to be “less than the least of all saints” (3:8). Along with lowliness, every sincere Christian is to develop “meekness.” The Spirit gives the fruit of meekness (Gal. 5:22, 23), and this inner gentleness must be developed. As the Savior was meek (Matt. 11:29), so all of His disciples are to have the willingness to suffer wrongs done to them. It is the inner strength that accommodates another’s weakness.

The apostle adds the important word “all.” That it is to be with “all” lowliness and meekness indicates that this inner disposition that is so necessary for guarding and preserving the unity of the Spirit must be exercised at all times and in every situation without exception. We are not to exercise ourselves in humility sometimes, but always.

This essential, inner disposition of humility is to manifest itself in the activity of suffering long and

forbearing one another in love. “Longsuffering” is to hold oneself in control, over against a giving in to passions and desires. Only with sincere humility and meekness can we endure those in the body of Christ who irritate us. We are to be ever mindful of how our God suffers long with us. The virtue of “forbearing” calls us to exercise self-restraint while we bear with others who have been bought with Christ’s precious blood. When we forget the unity of Christ’s body and its importance, then we criticize insensitively and we retaliate selfishly. Instead we are to bear with each other because we have a greater concern for the Spirit’s unity. We are to bear with them instead of dismissing them or being contemptuous toward them. We may criticize and correct one another, but the manner in which this is done is always to be in obvious humility and love.

Positively, God calls us to develop and exercise “love” for those in whom the Spirit is working the life of Jesus Christ. We are to know the other members of the body as God knows them (not as we see them). Loving one another we delight in the bond Jesus’ blood created in us. Thus we are to be very interested in and concerned about each other’s spiritual well-being.



Why are we to put forth so much effort in guarding and preserving the unity of the Spirit?

First, because this is a part of the “vocation wherewith ye are called.” The Christian is a Christian, not because it is something he decided to take up or to do, but because he has been called (“vocation”) into it. Each and every Christian has been called graciously, irresistibly, and efficaciously by God’s Spirit, translating him out of spiritual darkness into God’s marvelous light. This call separates the elect from the world, and moves them into the position of being saved (Rom. 8:29). The Ephesian

Christians consciously experienced this call, for they knew what it was to be saved by grace through faith (2:8). They had been brought from being without Christ and without God in the world into a beautiful and enjoyable relationship with Him (2:12, 13). They knew themselves to be of the household of God, heirs and partakers of the promises in Christ (2:19; 3:6).


Having been so called, they are now asked to “walk worthy” of the calling. All who have been called of God unto salvation in Christ are to live their lives in a way which is worthy of, suitable to, their salvation. God called them to be holy and without blame (1:4), to be children of God (1:5), and of the household of faith (2:19). Those who are so called are so to walk. Christians are to adorn the teachings of the Christian faith with a life that will cause observers to admire and desire those teachings (Titus 2:1, 5b, 8b, 10b, 14).

A worthy walk is greatly con-

cerned about the unity of the body of Christ. That is the intent of the inspired “therefore” with which this verse, this chapter, and this half of the epistle begins. The teachings of the first three chapters have a logical conclusion in the life of the believer. And the first conclusion is the unity of Christ’s body and the need to maintain and manifest this unity (4:2-16). The truth of the unity of Christ’s body received emphasis in the teachings presented in the first three chapters. Election unites the saints at Ephesus to Christ and to each other (1:4, 5). Redemption unto adoption puts each in the one family of God (1:5, 6). We are all members of Christ’s body, filling Him (1:23). We are quickened together, raised together, and we sit together (2:5, 6). We are saved by the same grace (2:8). Christ is the peace of believing Jew and Gentile, making both one (2:13-22). They are fellow-heirs and of the same body (3:6). It is God’s glorious purpose to unite all things in Christ (1:10).

The grand design of God in saving unto Himself a people in Christ is that “we all come in the unity of the faith, ... unto a perfect (complete) man”; “the whole body fitly joined together” (4:13-16).

The importance and urgency of the worthy walk of keeping the unity of the Spirit is found in the fact that Paul “beseeches.” Later he will exhort and command, but now he entreats and urgently implores us to see the necessity of this worthy walk. To add to his plea, Paul declares himself a “prisoner of the Lord.” This was Paul’s lot because he was a willing slave of Christ, loyal to Him and to His body. Salvation by grace delivers us from enslavement to Satan, and makes us spiritual prisoners of Christ—not our own but His. In this we delight. We show this willingness to serve Him by desiring only that which would please Him.

Walk worthy then. Endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace! 

Editor’s Note

Readers of the *Standard Bearer* are well aware that since October of 2004 the position of editor has been shared by three men—Rev. K. Koole and Profs. Gritters and Dykstra. In this arrangement, we consult often and share the responsibility of writing editorials. We editors have found the load of work to be manageable and have found that the arrangement works

well for us. Prof. Dykstra was the one who took oversight of some of the duties that require one head, especially proofreading and answering of correspondence. These latter duties will be shifted as of this issue to Prof. Gritters. This is not a significant change for the readers of the *SB*. The only significance is for those who decide

to write a letter to the magazine in response to an article. We welcome these letters, only reminding our readers that the letters are to be limited to 300 words and be in response to an article, not a letter in the *SB*. Future letters to the editor should be addressed to Prof. B. Gritters. (The address is found in the masthead.)

—RJD 

Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters

Synod 2007, Trinity PRC, Hudsonville

With thankful and humble hearts, the Protestant Reformed Churches and her friends may reflect on God’s

goodness to her through the meeting of her annual synod.

Under the able leadership of veteran president Rev. J. Slopsema

(pastor of First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI), and witnessed by many visitors, Synod 2007 finished her work in five full days. The family

of Trinity PRC (Hudsonville, MI) served as gracious hosts.

Synods make decisions. And because all decisions are “by majority vote” according to the Church Order (Art. 31), Synod is a deliberative assembly. That is, all decisions are made after deliberation—careful discussion and (sometimes) debate. The delegates listen carefully to the reasoning of the brothers, comparing it with many things: the principles of Scripture, the Reformed confessions, the Church Order, and PRC precedent. Then, when each delegate votes according to his conscience, the decisions become “settled and binding” in the denomination. This is the “ecclesiastical manner” (Church Order, Art. 30) in which business is conducted. It is Reformed church government.

To see it in action makes one grateful, especially when the decisions are by large majorities, as almost all of them were, and when by them the churches “hold fast to the traditions” (II Thess. 2:15).

(More details of synod’s decisions can be read on the PRCA’s website (www.prc.org)), or in the 2007 *Acts of Synod*, available soon. If you are not a member of the PRCA, write the Stated Clerk for a copy of the *Acts*. 4949 Ivanrest, Grandville, MI, 49418.)

Minister Training

By one momentous vote (*all* of them are momentous that involve the office of the ministry), synod declared Mr. Nathan Langerak a candidate for the ministry of the Word and sacraments in the PRC. Mr. Langerak successfully sustained the rigorous three days (parts of three days) of public examination to graduate from the PRC Theological School. He will be eligible for a call July 14. At the graduation exercises, Prof. R. Dykstra stirringly exhorted the new candidate, his colleagues, and himself, to minister the Word in the meekness and power of Moses (Numbers 12). Candidate Langerak plans to lead the worship of the newly-forming daughter congrega-

tion of Hull, Iowa, PRC for a short time this summer. May the Great Bishop provide the brother a special place of service in His kingdom.

Synod also noted with joy the good progress of the other six seminary students, and approved the admission of four new students. Three men from the PRC were admitted as new students seeking candidacy in the PRC (diploma pre-licentiate): Mr. Nathan Decker, son of Faith PRC and of James and Nancy Decker; Mr. Brian Huizinga, son of Grandville PRC and of Carol (and the late Daniel) Huizinga; and Mr. Jonathan Mahtani, member of Georgetown PRC and son of Rev. Jai and Esther Mahtani. Then, under the classification “special student,” Mr. Vernon Ibe from the newly organized Berean PRC in the Philippines was admitted to the seminary. He and his wife plan to arrive in the States soon. The Lord willing, there will be ten students in the seminary this fall.

When the Lord provides so many and such well qualified students for the churches, we ought to reflect carefully on one of the grounds used by the Domestic Mission Committee for their recommendation to call a third domestic missionary. Especially the word “require.” The DMC said: “The PRC are being given, by the gracious provision of the King of the church, manpower that soon will *require* places of labor beyond the pulpits of our existing churches.” Synod made this statement its own. Read it again.

O, King of the church, open doors for the PRC to broadcast Thy Word. Prepare places for each student, in local congregations and mission fields. And bless the students and professors, that men may be trained well to serve Thee by faithful ministry of Thy Word.

In connection with the work of the seminary, synod noted with thanks that Prof. David Engelsma is willing to teach for one more full year before asking for emeritation (he will be 69, the Lord willing, before he seeks it next June). He will

teach some courses, and work on writing projects in which he will “expound the Holy Scriptures” and “vindicate sound doctrine against heresy and error,” as the Church Order puts it in Article 18. And synod reappointed Prof. Barrett Gritters for another three years, which appointment he thankfully accepted. At the end of these three years, permanent tenure will be considered.

Looking Without: Missions

Aside from the training of men for the ministry, the bulk of the “work of the churches in common” was missions.

Synod happily approved calling another PRC “home missionary” to be stationed in Sioux Falls, SD. A Bible study group in Sioux Falls asked the Domestic Mission Committee (with encouragement of the three PRCs in the area—Doon, Edgerton, and Hull) for assistance in starting a mission work. The Mission Committee made preparations for mission work, and recommended to synod that a missionary be called for the work. Before giving approval to calling a missionary, synod approved the DMC’s *approach* in preparing for mission labors in Sioux Falls. This was significant for at least two reasons: First, the PRC again began a mission work without a “Macedonian call” from non-Protestant Reformed folk: “Come over and help us.” Second, the work begins with a core group of PRC members who live in the vicinity. After synod endorsed this approach, synod approved calling a missionary and appointed Edgerton, MN, PRC as the calling church. Yesterday, June 19, the DMC met to make a slate of nominees for missionary.

The assembly took note of the PRC mission works in Spokane, WA (Rev. T. Miersma) and in Pittsburgh, PA (Rev. W. Bruinsma, assisted this summer by seminarian Cory Griess). She commended and thanked publicly the missionaries. A slight change was made in the

DMC Constitution to put the DMC in the lead, rather than the calling church, in making the initial slate of nominees for calling a missionary. This harmonizes the DMC's Constitution and the FMC's. The calling church still forms the trio, elects the missionary, and extends the call. The change was not made lightly. Good reminders were given both of the autonomy of the local congregation and the importance of church federation: "The missionary work of the churches is regulated by the general synod in a mission order" (Church Order, Art. 51).

In Foreign Missions, synod heard encouraging reports of the continued activities in the Philippines. The Spriensmas were heartily thanked for their faithful labors. Synod reminded the FMC to bring recommendations next year regarding the relationship between the PRCA and the Berean PRC in the Philippines. Can there be a sister relationship as the PRC have with the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland? This is the work of the Contact Committee. That's next.

Looking Without:

Contact with Other Churches

In keeping with the PRC's will to be outward looking as well as inward looking, synod treated the recommendations of her Contact Committee (CC). The PRC "believe...that it is their sacred duty to manifest the true unity and catholicity of the church on earth in as far as that is possible, not only in their denominational fellowship but also in conjunction with all churches which have obtained like precious faith with us, both domestic and foreign." According to this conviction, synod's mandate to her Committee for Contact is to "labor toward the establishment of official relationships with other denominations...." (Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches).

Synod spent a good deal of time on this business of the catholic Christ.

A highlight of synod was the re-establishment of sister relations with the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland. Mr. Ivan Reid, a deacon in the CPRC, gave synod good reports of this healthy sister in the UK. Synod noted that, although there are differences between sisters, the differences are non-essential, as synod declared more than once.

The relation between the PRCA and the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore was discussed at length. Synod approved the Contact Committee's communications with Covenant ERCS. The interested reader will want to peruse the full Acts and its supplements for more of this story.

The Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia has had long contact with the PRCA. Synod encouraged her Contact Committee to try to reschedule a conference with these brothers so that our relationship with them can be strengthened.

But these familiar names were not the only ones about which the CC reported. The PRC are busy with contacts in Germany. Committee members are making plans to visit Germany and the Beken nende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde (Confessing Evangelical-Reformed Congregation) of Geissen. After Germany, DV, the delegation will travel to Russia to make personal visits with members of Evangelical Reformed Church Unions of Russia and Uzbekistan. One man is translating Protestant Reformed literature into Russian. Another, in Croatia, the Reformed creeds into the language of his people. "Like precious faith. In as far as possible. Manifest true unity. Both domestic and foreign."

Synod gave direction for the use of money designated for support of foreign causes. There are funds for support of foreign seminary students. Money is available for special projects in Myanmar (dig out your maps) and for assisting the PRC of Myanmar.

The Church Order

Synod treated two significant overtures to add to the Church Order. The overtures, to add procedures regarding the discipline of baptized but non-confessing members, came with the approval of Classis West. After lengthy discussion, synod did not make a decision on the overtures. Instead, a special study committee was appointed to "examine and review the overtures... and bring recommendations to Synod 2008. Ground: This matter is weighty, pertaining to one of the marks of the true church." Synod appointed two ministers, two elders, and one seminary professor to the committee. What is Reformed history on the matter of discipline of non-confessing members? Is "erasure" excommunication? How mature was the rebel who was "excommunicated" in Deuteronomy 21? Must there be a difference between the discipline of mature and immature members? If so, what? The special committee has work to do. The overture itself did much of the work. Synod is asking for more.

Other

Many other decisions were made. A budget was adopted that asks for \$823 per family in the denomination to support the work of the churches together. This is more than last year by almost 10%, but \$43 less than the budget of 2005.

Financial provision was made for retired ministers. Synod budgeted money for the Reformed Witness Hour, for the support of seminary students, and for the needy churches.

She also answered objections to a painful decision she made last year about the disbanding of one of the congregations. And agreed with some of the objections, without overturning the decision.

May the decisions of this broadest assembly of the churches please Him whose church we are.

Next year's synod will convene on Tuesday, June 10, 2008, in Hope PRC, Walker, MI, if the Lord wills.



PRC SYNOD 2007 *highlights*



Trinity PRC, Hudsonville, Michigan





Wednesday



Thursday



Friday

STUDY TO SHEW THYSELF APPROVED UNTO GOD, A WORKMAN THAT NEEDETH NOT TO BE ASHAMED RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD OF TRUTH.

Seminary Graduate:

Mr. Nathan Langerak

Wife: Carrie
Children: Sadie, Caleb
Membership: Trinity PRC
Internship: Grandville PRC
College: Grand Valley State University
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Before one segment of candidate Langerak's public examination at synod, the quotation here was read to give the delegates a little sense of history with regard to student examinations at major assemblies in Reformed churches. In the early days of the Secession churches (post-1834), three Dutch classes combined to examine students for the ministry of the Word. This is a description of that examination, which description could be classified (it was said at synod) under the heading: "It could be worse."

"...VanderWerp's examination for the ministry took place in a combined meeting of the classes of Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe, held in Leeuwarden. On Wednesday, March 20, 1844, and days following, twelve candidates presented themselves. Not only their knowledge but also their endurance would

be put to the test. On Thursday the candidates were given texts on which they were to hand in a written sermon the next day. Friday morning the examinations continued. From nine a.m. to two p.m. the examination in languages took place, after which followed biblical exegesis and Bible history, which lasted for eight hours. The day being far spent, the delegates decided to meet through the night. After a short intermission they resumed at ten p.m. and examined the candidates regarding dogmatics until 6 o'clock in the morning. Then followed the examination in church history and geography of the Holy Land, after which they gave personal testimonies of their inner calling to the ministry." From Janet Sjaarda Sheeres' Son of Secession: Douwe J. Vander Werp (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006) pp. 75, 76.

Letters

Expressive Scripture Reading

I am enjoying your bimonthly magazine, the *Standard Bearer*, and look forward to more thought-provoking articles. I would like to zero in on the article "The Scripture Reading" (April 15, 2007), by Rev. Daniel Kleyn, not to be critical, but to add a dimension not expressed in the article.

I refer to the "way" the Bible is read by many preachers, at least those of my acquaintance (and none are PRCs because there is no PR church close at hand).

I find that, of the many preachers whom I hear, many of them read very badly, rushing over commas, and putting commas where there should be none, and a failure to inflect the meaning, perhaps because they have read the passage so many times that the excitement is gone. I do recall one preacher, though, who was different, who

made even the Creed sound like he was reading it for the first time.

I know that there are many passages that are difficult to read with any excitement, but if the important words were stressed, as they would do their own words in the sermon, their Bible reading would take on a new dimension.

I am thinking of John the Baptist. Was he as excited about seeing Christ as I believe I would have been if I were there? John 1:29, 30: "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and said, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me." I think of John being unable to control his excitement as he said those words.

I also think of Ruth's marvelous confession, Ruth 1:15-18: "And

she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law. And Ruth said, Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me. When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her." Can this be read without a tear in the eye, or a crack in the voice?

Or are PR preachers different? I don't know, but I write this as an avenue that ought to be explored. Perhaps Rev. Kleyn could elaborate.

Joseph VanBeek
Tillsonburg, Ontario, Canada

Response:


I appreciate the comments you make concerning the way in which the Bible ought to be read. Your observations are correct. The Word of God needs to be read well, and proper attention should be given to this by every minister of the gospel (as well as by anyone else who is called upon to read the Bible aloud, such as elders, heads of households, society presidents, and so on).

Such reading of the Scriptures

involves having proper emphasis and expression. Mistakes must also be avoided. On the other hand, one should also maintain and convey due respect for God Himself as he reads the Bible. I would caution against being overly dramatic, for this could detract from the power of the Word itself.

As far as the training of Protestant Reformed ministers goes, the professors in our seminary point out the importance of reading Scripture

well, specifically in connection with practice preaching. The students are instructed to prepare carefully also for this part of the public worship of God. And while I believe this part of the training has borne good fruit, yet there is, I am sure, room for improvement.

It is good therefore that we be reminded of the importance of reading God's Word well. Of all that is ever read aloud, the Word of God deserves to be read the best. 

Marking the Bulwarks of Zion

Prof. Herman Hanko

Modern Heresies:

Federal Vision Theology (1)

Introduction

The church of the new dispensation, in its struggles to defend the truth of God's Word, has had to defend one doctrine above all others, for it is the one doctrine that, more than any other, is subject to the unrelenting attacks of wicked men under the direction of Satan. This one truth is the doctrine of the absolute sovereignty of God, particularly in the work of salvation.

The truth of sovereign and particular grace was attacked by Pelagius and defended by Augustine. Rome sank into doctrinal and moral anarchy because it chose to follow Pelagius rather than Augustine. Although the Reformers of the sixteenth century were unanimous in their defense of this truth, they were constantly being attacked by those who denied it: the Anabaptists against Luther and Bolsec and Pighius against Calvin. Dordt met and drew up the Can-

ons against the Arminians, who wanted nothing of God's sovereign and particular grace. Westminster had its own struggles against Amyraldianism. The Marrow men intended to introduce a subtle form of Amyraldianism into Scottish Presbyterianism, and the battle of the leaders of the *Afscheiding* against the apostasy of the State Church was a battle in defense of sovereign grace. 1924 and the beginnings of our own Protestant Reformed Churches are rooted in a denial of sovereign and particular grace by the well-known doctrines of common grace. And history demonstrates that not only is the truth of God's sovereignty maintained throughout the ages only by way of struggle and spiritual warfare, but also that those who consistently maintained the truth of sovereign grace have been relatively few in number. Even churches that maintained this great truth of God's Word have done so only for short periods of time.

Although the threats against the doctrinal purity of the confessions of Presbyterian and Reformed churches in the twenty-first century are many, one of the most danger-

ous threats is the heresy of what is called the Federal Vision. Much has been written on this subject. In searching the web for material on it, I discovered thousands of places that treated it. Many articles have been written in the *Standard Bearer* on this subject as well. It seems, therefore, to be a bit superfluous to write about it again. Nevertheless, a brief summary of the heresy will serve its own purpose.

Its Name and Origin

Various names are given to this heresy. The most common name is the Federal Vision. This name indicates especially that it is closely connected with federal theology, that is, the doctrine of the covenant. Another name is the Auburn Ave. Theology, a name given to the heresy because a Presbyterian church in Louisiana on Auburn Ave. is the capitol of this heretical thought.

The origin of it seems to be the confluence of two lines of thinking that came together to form its chief features. The one line of thinking is the doctrine of justification by faith and works. Within conservative circles, this doctrine was first proposed by Norman Shepherd

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when he was professor in Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The struggle between Shepherd's supporters and critics over this doctrine went on for many years. The battle took place in the late Seventies and early Eighties. It finally ended in the resignation of Norman Shepherd from Westminster. The irony was that his views were never officially condemned, and Westminster remains today a center for the propagation of the heresy.

The other line of thinking is, surprisingly enough, the theology of Dr. Klaas Schilder and his view of a conditional covenant. Schilder taught these views throughout his ministry, although the idea of a conditional covenant was held more widely in the British Isles and on Europe's continent for many years.

The idea of a conditional covenant is an inevitable consequence of an erroneous view of the covenant that many held from the time of the Reformation. The covenant of grace, in keeping with the notion of a covenant of works, was a pact or agreement between God and man that depended for its adoption and maintenance on a number of promises, conditions, and threats. Schilder taught this view in his ministry in the Netherlands. Prof. William Heyns taught it earlier than Schilder in Calvin College and Seminary.

The view of a conditional covenant included the idea that all the children who were baptized were included in the covenant and received the promise of God that they would be saved—but on condition that they would, in the future, accept the provisions of the covenant.

I noted above that the heresy of the Federal Vision was the "confluence" of these two lines of thought. That is not quite true. The idea of a conditional covenant is older; the "federal vision" of more recent origin. The intrinsic relation between the two is definite and emphatic. To hold consistently to a conditional covenant must inevitably result in a doctrine of a conditional salvation. The Federal Vision theology carries out that conditional salvation idea to its extreme.


Some of the chief defenders of this view, besides Norman Shepherd, were Steve Wilkins, a Presbyterian minister, and Steve Schlissel and Doug Wilson, two ministers in basically independent churches. Other historically Reformed and conservative churches have struggled with men who have embraced the Federal Vision teachings.

Almost every major Reformed and Presbyterian denomination has either approved of the heresy or refused to condemn it (an indirect form of approval). More than one denomination struggled long with

the doctrine. Although some pastors openly taught it, they were not disciplined. So far as I know, only one conservative denomination emphatically and unambiguously condemned it.

Federal Vision is beyond any doubt the gravest threat to confessional truth in general and to the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in salvation in particular that the churches have seen in many years. Innumerable modifications of the truth of sovereign grace have been introduced into the church since Dordt and Westminster, but there has always been something subtle and surreptitious about these heresies. Here, in the Federal Vision, we and the church world are confronted with an open, blatant, and unambiguous attack against that one truth of sovereign grace, in the defense of which so many in the past have suffered and died.

The attack is not camouflaged. It is, without apology, a rejection of what Luther called the doctrine of the standing or falling of the church. It is a reiteration of what the Roman Catholic Church taught for centuries and from which heresy the Reformation delivered us. It is a repudiation of the confessional heritage of the church. It is a bold and frontal attack on the salvation of the people of God.

... to be concluded. 

Editor's Note: Not Anabaptist, But Reformed

With this issue, the *Standard Bearer* begins running the translation of a seventy-two page pamphlet written in the Dutch by the Reverends Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema. The title in Dutch is *Niet Doopersch Maar Gereformeerd*. It bears no date, but it was almost certainly printed in 1923. The Reverends Danhof and Hoeksema were at that time respected ministers in the Christian Reformed Church.

The title indicates the authors' conviction that the rejection of common grace is Reformed. Ministers within their denomination had charged them with being Anabaptist. In particular, the well-known Rev. Jan Karl Van Baalen had written a pamphlet in 1922 on this issue entitled *The Denial of Common Grace: Reformed or Anabaptistic?* (*De Loochening der Gemeene Gratie: Gereformeerd of Doopersch?*). Rev. Van Baalen's answer to this question

was—definitely Anabaptistic.

The Revs. Danhof and Hoeksema penned their pamphlet in response to Rev. Van Baalen. As their introduction indicates, this pamphlet is not their complete testimony concerning the evils of common grace. They note that "the positive development of our view is yet to come." That other (coming) work was the book *Sin and Grace* (*Van Zonde en Genade*), recently translated and published by

the Reformed Free Publishing Association.

Why print this pamphlet?

The question must be faced, What is the profit of the *SB* printing a translation of such a work, written in a different era of the church, for a different denomination (CRC), and with a specific purpose, namely, to refute another pamphlet?


Several reasons can be enumerated for why the editors and staff of the *SB* consider this endeavor to be of sufficient value to translate and print the work. First, there is historical value for members both of the Christian Reformed Church and the Protestant Reformed Churches. This pamphlet sheds light on a particularly crucial period of our church history—the period leading up to the events of 1924. The PRC consider this important for obvious reasons—it is their beginning. As for the CRC, it

is rather surprising how frequently the writers and theologians of the CRC—still today—describe 1924 as a very significant event in their denomination. Much of the historical record of those events remains only in the Dutch language. The translation of this work of two key players adds to the body of material accessible to the English reader, and thus sheds light on the ecclesiastical history of the 1920s.

Secondly, the dramatic events of 1924, like all historical events, had a context. Significant events can be evaluated properly only if the context is known. The conflicts of 1924 occurred in the context of the Janssen case. The (CRC) synodical and classical decisions of 1924 are the aftermath of the Janssen affair in many respects. This pamphlet of Danhof and Hoeksema demonstrates the doctrinal connection that exists between the Janssen affair and the contro-

versy over common grace, which led to the deposition of the authors and Rev. George M. Ophoff in 1925.

Finally, the pamphlet is worth reading because it answers an old charge that is leveled against the PRC yet today. The charge is that a denial of common grace makes the PRC guilty of world-flight, ala the Anabaptists. This is a slander. As Danhof and Hoeksema write in the introduction below, “The charge of Anabaptism must not be thrown any longer. In the last few years people have been much too eager to fling this mud.... [I]t is time to put an end to this superficial criticism.” The pamphlet indicates that the Anabaptist, world-flight mentality has been rejected by the PRC from the start.

Our thanks to Mr. Daniel Holstege, a second-year student in the seminary of the PRC, for his work in translating this significant pamphlet. —RJD 

Translated Treasures

Not Anabaptist, But Reformed

Provisional Response to Rev. J. K. Van Baalen Concerning the Denial of Common Grace

By Rev. H. Danhof and Rev. H. Hoeksema

A Word to Our Churches¹

The conflict in our churches is gradually focusing on the subject of grace, and especially on what bears the name “common grace” among us.

This has been expected for a long time already.

The controversy in our midst has actually focused on this point already for a long time, and we do not hesitate now to add that, in principle, the struggle of the last few years has always concerned this matter. On the one hand, there was a group which more and more emphasized the importance of the

doctrine of common grace. They were very enthusiastic about it. They called it one of the most important doctrines of the Reformed faith. For them this doctrine was a Boaz [pillar] in God’s temple. And for them the discussion of common grace is the order of the day. It has become quite common to discuss it.

The history of this struggle spans years.

Rev. J. Groen² wanted emphatically to place this doctrine on the foreground for the defense of unionism and the right of women to vote. It was in the name of common grace that our men were ad-

vised to join the [labor] unions. And it was in the name of this same doctrine that our women were urged to go to the polls and to help improve the world. The group that wrote in the former *Christian Journal* under the leadership of Prof. Van Andel³ emphasized common

1. “Our churches” refers to the Christian Reformed Churches. See the editor’s note above.

2. Rev. Johannes Groen was the minister in Eastern Avenue CRC prior to Herman Hoeksema.

3. Henry J. Van Andel was a professor in Calvin College teaching Dutch and literature.

grace to maintain a broad worldview, to give entrance into the world and allow freer movement in it. Whoever questioned this was quickly branded an Anabaptist. Thus a way of thinking has gradually crept into our circles that is enthusiastic about common grace and that either forgets or denies the antithesis, the opposition between God's people and the world. That way of thinking is really bent, though perhaps unconsciously, on making us identify ourselves with the world and go into the world.

We have warned against this from the beginning. We have protested against this application of common grace with word and pen. We have also examined this doctrine, especially as it was developed by Dr. A. Kuyper. We have come to the conclusion that, not only is conformity with the world due to a wrong application of the doctrine, but the doctrine itself is contrary to our Reformed confessions and Scripture, and therefore it must be rejected. And we have spoken out with all boldness concerning this.

It is then no wonder that the conflict among us broke out over this point.

This disagreement over common grace, however, did not immediately show itself when the battle over the instruction of Dr. Janssen started.⁴ When the doctor was attacked because of his instruction, he insisted that his attackers had to contend with the matter of common grace. He accused everyone who opposed him of not standing correctly on the subject of common grace. He vowed, too, to show the connection that existed, according to him, between his instruction and common grace, but up until now Dr. Janssen has failed to show this connection. It has gradually become our conviction that this connection most certainly exists. At first we really thought that Dr. Janssen's shifting of the main point was nothing more than an

attempt to distract attention from the real issue and to fix it on something else. But we changed our minds and concluded that Dr. Janssen's view of Scripture can in principle be defended from the point of view of common grace. We therefore agree with the contention of the brethren who attack us and who defend Janssen that the controversy among us concerns the doctrine of common grace.

Therefore, we also want to fight this to the very end.

The Janssen affair as such has been settled. The fact that his teaching was not in agreement with the view of the churches, with the confessions, or with Scripture became sufficiently clear at Synod.

The Synod came to a unanimous verdict.

Not easily will one persuade our churches again to give a place at our school to Dr. Janssen, who not even once took the opportunity to defend his own view.

But concerning the principle itself, we are still not certain [that it will not cause trouble].

It is our firm conviction that if our churches do not examine the subject of common grace as developed by Dr. Kuyper; if they remain under the impression that this view is at bottom Reformed and in agreement with our confessions, then the few have won. The teaching that has now been condemned in Dr. Janssen, and that is most certainly connected with the view of common grace, shall yet again lift up its head and assert itself.

Principles work through.

That is how the doctrine of common grace worked through [in the Netherlands]. At first a strong maintenance of the antithesis kept the balance more or less in equilibrium. But as soon as Kuyper died, and the younger generation in the Netherlands lifted up their heads and cried for something new, something different, something that could allow them to live more

freely in the world and adapt themselves to the existing forms of society, the antithesis was forgotten, and they embraced the notion of common grace in order to build an entire worldview on it. The result is world conformity in almost every respect.

They want culture! They want art! They want cooperation with the world. They want to go to the dance, opera, and theatre. They no longer desire anything sound. Doctrinal preaching must make way for topical preaching. In a word, they have gone out into the world.

As it is in the Netherlands, so also it is here.

There are those in the Netherlands and also here who say: This conformity to the world comes from a wrong view of common grace. Dr. Grosheide spoke that way a couple years ago in Leeuwarden. There are more like him in the Netherlands. There are also those like him among us. There are those among us who say that they do not agree with Kuyper's view of common grace, but nevertheless do believe in common grace. These brethren are still obligated to tell us what actually is their view of common grace.

There are also those among us who, in spite of the troublesome fruits which this doctrine is already beginning to produce, still promote common grace to the utmost of their power. These include Rev. Groen, who for several years already has been pushing God's people into the world that they might identify themselves with that world, as for example in the [labor] unions; the editors of *Religion and Culture*, with Prof. Van Andel leading, who calls this doctrine a Boaz of the Reformed view; and Dr. Janssen, who defends his modern view of Scripture with this doctrine and labels all those who attack him Anabaptists, even in his latest brochure. These include also our "cultured people," which really only means that they bathe themselves as they should, look af-

ter their teeth, and start the day decently clothed!

Now it is quite noteworthy that they who are in this corner must not expect much encouragement from our Reformed confessions. They do not speak readily about principles, unless it should be the principle of common grace. It is also noteworthy that, in connection with this matter, the doctrine of free election is pushed into the background and that of free will into the foreground. The main thrust of the Reformed confessions is forgotten and disregarded. It is weakened to such an extent that one can scarcely find it anymore. But this common grace, about which our confessions do not actually speak, and which our fathers certainly did not take into account, is exalted to a fundamental doctrine of our confessions.

Well then, it is our conviction that not a wrong view of common grace underlies all of this, but that the doctrine of common grace itself is at root false and un-Reformed.

We believe we must fight for this conviction, and we feel obliged before God and our churches to do so unto the end. In this regard we want to point out that neither Dr. Janssen nor Rev. Van Baalen started this fight. Long before these brethren wrote, we had warned against the danger of the worldview that draws on common grace.

One of us wrote about this matter almost four years ago. At that time no one had a problem with our articles. And when Dr. Janssen was confronted, and the doctor thought he had to attack us on the matter of common grace, we promised to present a series of articles. However, the Publication Committee [of the *Banner*] prevented this from happening. Nevertheless, we still intended forthwith to do this by way of a pamphlet, as soon as our busy labors would permit and the proper time should come.

We were busy writing when

the critique of Rev. Van Baalen appeared. The brother attacks us regarding something we wrote a long time ago. His pamphlet has met with much approval. Our church papers have recommended it, even though it clearly is, in effect, a defense of Dr. Janssen. Dr. Beets⁵ has nothing but praise for it. Rev. Keegstra is captivated by it. Rev. K. W. Fortuin again issued a call to action, although he himself does not appear inclined to take action. Dr. Kuizenga of Holland laughs up his sleeve. Indeed, we may congratulate Rev. Van Baalen for writing a pamphlet that is received so favorably. Concerning both form and content, it is praised, and no criticism has been leveled against it.


Now at first we did not plan immediately to disrupt this flow of praise. We thought that we would, for the time being, quietly continue to work on our own pamphlet, which eventually would see the light of day. We intended to devote a few pages in it to Rev. Van Baalen's work. However, when we examined his pamphlet a little closer, we found so much that, in our opinion, could not sustain a thorough critique. Thus we considered it best that a separate pamphlet be devoted to a review of the writing of Rev. Van Baalen.

Moreover, we thought that it was also time to put an end to the often unfair and hollow criticism that is leveled at us by word and pen. The charge of Anabaptism must not be thrown any longer. In the last few years people have been much too eager to fling this mud. And just how eagerly Rev. Van Baalen does this is evident from the almost desperate attempt which he makes in his pamphlet to prove his contention. If one needs to twist and turn that much in order to prove that two brethren are Anabaptistic, when they themselves say that they are disgusted with Anabaptism, then it almost becomes absurd. But the matter is getting serious. Therefore it is time

to put an end to this superficial criticism.

Finally, we also thought that it was irresponsible to let his pamphlet enter the churches unchallenged. Our church papers have recommended the pamphlet. They have not leveled any criticism. The pamphlet is indeed a defense of Dr. Janssen and Rev. Bultema.⁶ It is a slap in the face of our whole Church. We just get back from Synod, where Dr. Janssen was condemned, and then, behold, our church papers recommend a work that, effectively, defends Dr. Janssen. We do not understand this attitude. Dr. Beets and Rev. Keegstra should have known better. This was another reason why we were pressed to publish this part of our work first.

Therefore, the reader must be aware that the positive development of our view is yet to come.

This pamphlet does not intend to do anything but reply to Rev. Van Baalen's criticism. The brother has done bad work. He has evidently imagined the matter to be a bit simpler than it is. That is our judgment. And in the following pages we hope to show the grounds for this judgment. 

4. Dr. Ralph Janssen was Professor of Old Testament in Calvin Theological Seminary 1902-1906 and 1914-1922. He was removed from office by the synod of 1922 due to his errant views on Scripture. Both Herman Hoeksema and Henry Danhof were members of the committee appointed to investigate Janssen's views. For more information see Herman Hanko, *For Thy Truth's Sake* (Grandville, Michigan: Reformed Free Publishing Association, 2000), pages 30 ff.

5. Henry Beets was the editor of the *Banner* from 1903 to 1928.

6. Rev. Harry Bultema was condemned by the synod of 1918 and subsequently deposed for his premillennial views.

Restoration of Excommunicated Persons

“Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated desires to become reconciled to the church in the way of repentance, it shall be announced to the congregation, either before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, or at some other opportune time, in order that (in as far as no one can mention anything against him to the contrary) he may with profession of his conversion be publicly reinstated, according to the form for that purpose.”

Church Order, Article 78.

Introduction

Article 78 deals with the restoration of those who have been excommunicated from the church. Articles 76 and 77 dealt with excommunication, setting forth the reasons and procedure for excommunication. Those articles viewed excommunication as the “extreme remedy.” Always the purpose of excommunication is the repentance and recovery of the sinner who is excommunicated. Both the consistory and the congregation desire this and pray for it. At times, God answers those prayers by bringing the sinner who has been excommunicated to repentance. Not only does He bring him to repentance, but He also works in him the desire to be reconciled to the church and restored to his membership in the church. This is the concern of Article 78. Article 78 deals with the happy circumstance of positive

fruit on the true church’s faithful exercise of Christian discipline.

Just as the impenitent sinner was dealt with in an orderly way at the time that he was excommunicated from the church, so is the restoration of one who has been excommunicated to take place in an orderly way. Involved in that orderly way in which the excommunicated but now repentant sinner is to be received again into the church are certain fundamental biblical principles. Those principles underlie the procedure that is outlined in Article 78. Those principles must be highlighted, and of those principles the church must be cognizant as she effects the restoration of repentant sinners.

Article 78 has a long and illustrious history. Our Article 78 was Article 71 in the Church Order that was drafted by the Synod of the Hague (Netherlands) in 1586. Ever since that time—for well over 400 years—this article has been incorporated into the various church orders of the Dutch Reformed churches. Our Article 78 was taken over from the English translation of the Church Order that was adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1920. This English translation of the Church Order of Dordrecht was adopted by the Protestant Reformed Synod of 1944.

Restoration of Those Excommunicated

Article 78 does not concern itself with the restoration of those who have been erased as baptized members of the church. The churches are presently considering a proposed procedure, both for erasure and for readmittance of those

who have been erased. Although this is not spelled out in the Church Order, the principles that underlie restoration of those who have been excommunicated as set forth in Article 78 would also apply to the restoration of those who have been publicly erased.

Neither does Article 78 deal with readmitting those who resigned their church membership *while under discipline*, but before they were actually excommunicated. Once again, the principles that underlie this article would come into play in that situation. In such a case, confession of sin would necessarily be made, first before the consistory and then publicly in the congregation. In that way the wayward member would be restored to church membership. At the same time, the discipline that he was under at the time that he withdrew his membership would be lifted.

Article 78 does not either address itself to the situation of someone who was unjustly excommunicated. Such excommunication is possible. The biblical safeguards against this that are incorporated into the Church Order make it very unlikely. But it is possible that consistories and broader assemblies err. It is possible that someone is wrongfully excommunicated from the church. Martin Luther, after all, was unjustly excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. In such a case, the consistory responsible for such unjust excommunication would publicly acknowledge this fact. Such a member’s reinstatement would be accomplished by the consistory’s publicly repealing the unjust excommunication.

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None of these is the concern of Article 78. The concern of Article 78 is specifically with someone who has been excommunicated, officially and formally, by the church. The "Form of Excommunication" was read over him. For some time, perhaps even for years, this individual has been cut off from the church and from the use of the means of grace in the church. After a length of time, he has at last come to repentance over his sins. He has been brought to see the justice of his excommunication. And he has turned from the sins that were the occasion for his excommunication.

Additionally, this person has expressed to the consistory that excommunicated him the desire to be reconciled to the church. Article 78 makes specific mention of this: "Whenever anyone who has been excommunicated *desires to become reconciled to the church....*" It is not only family members, loved ones, and former church members who desire this individual's reconciliation and restoration. But the individual himself must express this desire and take the initiative in seeking reconciliation. *He* makes it known to the pastor and to the elders that it is *his* heart's desire once again to be a member of the church. What then? What procedure should a consistory follow in accomplishing the reconciliation of one who has been excommunicated? That is the concern of Article 78.

When Restoration May Take Place

Article 78 speaks of the restoration of those who have been excommunicated "in the way of repentance" (*boetvaardigheid*, Dutch) and "with profession of his conversion" (*bekeering*, Dutch). The excommunicated who may be restored to membership in the church are those who give clear evidence of "repentance" and "conversion." These are not two different things. Repentance expresses the negative idea, that the sinner is sorry for his sins. Conversion includes repen-

tance, but conversion also conveys the positive idea that not only does one turn from his sins, he also goes in the right way. The two belong together, and both must be evident in the life of one who desires restoration to the church.

Implied in the article is the fact that this repentance and conversion are evident. The congregation is not merely being informed that this is so. But it has had time and opportunity to witness the sinner's repentance and conversion. For some time, he has undoubtedly been attending the worship services. The change in his life has been apparent, not just to the elders and not just to close family members, but to the congregation generally. In light of his evident repentance, the consistory is now prepared to proceed to his formal restoration to the congregation.

The procedure outlined by Article 78 concerns the excommunicated sinner's restoration *to the congregation*. Presupposed is that the excommunicated sinner has made his peace with the consistory. Long before any announcement to the congregation, the consistory has taken up the excommunicated person's expressed desire to be restored as a member of the church. The consistory has had opportunity to verify his professed repentance and conversion. And the consistory has received his confession of sin, judging it to be genuine. The consistory makes announcement to the congregation because it has already taken the decision to proceed to the restoration of the one who had been excommunicated. The announcement made to the congregation by the consistory is done in the confidence that the congregation is going to concur in the consistory's decision to receive this individual as a member once again.

The Announcement to the Congregation

Article 78 stipulates that the way in which an excommunicated person is restored to membership

in the church is that "it shall be announced to the congregation." An announcement must be made to the congregation regarding the consistory's decision to reconcile an excommunicated sinner. The announcement must take place before reconciliation formally occurs. The announcement is not the reconciliation, but informs the congregation of the consistory's intention, at some future date, to accomplish the sinner's reconciliation.

The purpose of the announcement is not merely to inform the congregation. Rather, the purpose of the announcement is to gain the approbation of the congregation. Just as the approbation of the congregation was necessary for excommunication to take place (Article 77), so the tacit approval of the congregation is necessary for the reconciliation of those who have been excommunicated. That this is the purpose of the public announcement in the congregation, Article 78 itself makes plain. According to the article, the purpose of the announcement is that "no one can mention anything against him to the contrary" before his formal reconciliation takes place. This, clearly, indicates the necessity of congregational approbation before a consistory would proceed to restoration.

It is possible that a member has questions regarding the restoration of the one who formerly had been excommunicated. The public announcement provides that member the opportunity to come to the consistory with his questions. It is even possible that a member opposes the restoration. In that case, he must present the consistory with *written* grounds on account of which he believes the excommunication ought not to be lifted. The consistory must evaluate the objections and grounds of this member before proceeding with the restoration of the excommunicated person. If the consistory judges the member's grounds to be invalid, it may then proceed with the resto-

ration. If, however, the member serves notice to the consistory that he intends to appeal to the classis the consistory's decision to proceed in spite of his objections, the consistory is wise to put the public restoration of the excommunicated sinner in abeyance until the broader assembly has adjudicated the matter.

Public Restoration of Membership

The restoration of those who have been previously excommunicated is to take place in a public worship service of the congregation, with the use of the "Form of Readmitting Excommunicated Persons." (That form can be found in the back of the Psalter.)

Article 78 speaks of this restoration being accomplished in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is specifically mentioned because formal discipline of the impenitent

sinner began with suspension from the Lord's Supper. At the same time, this is one of the most painful aspects of excommunication, that the excommunicated sinner is denied the privilege to sit down at the Lord's Supper. Restoration to church membership includes the great blessing of once again being permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper! Although this privilege of church membership is specifically mentioned in Article 78, *all* the privileges of church membership are restored to the excommunicated sinner who has been reconciled to the church. Once more, he is a member of the instituted church, and all the rights and benefits of membership are his to enjoy.

At the time of the public restoration of one who has been excommunicated, as has been noted, the "Form of Readmitting Excommunicated Persons" is read. This is a

beautiful form, with which many in the church are unfamiliar. That is undoubtedly due to the infrequency with which it is used. But everyone ought to take the time to read through this form. I recommend that to all of you. It is a unique form inasmuch as it is divided into two parts, each part to be read separately, the last part at the time of the sinner's formal restoration to the church.

The form ends with a prayer, as do almost all of our liturgical forms. But it seems to me that this is a special prayer. It is a special prayer inasmuch as, for a long time, the members of the church have been praying *for* the sinner. Now, finally and thankfully, they are able to pray *with* the sinner. What a wonderful thing! What a goodness and grace of God! What a joy in heaven among the angels! And what a joy in the church on earth!



Search the Scriptures

Rev. Ronald Hanko

The Prophecy of Malachi Covenant Faithfulness and Unfaithfulness (17)

The Sixth Disputation, Chapters 3:13-4:3 (continued)

16. *Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*

As God had shown Elijah that there is always a remnant, when Elijah thought

he was the only one left who feared God, so He speaks of that remnant here also through Malachi. That there was such a remnant in the closing days of the Old Testament suggests that there will be a remnant also in the last days before Christ's return, when the church is scattered and it seems as though there is no longer faith upon the earth (Luke. 18:8).

The word "then" has the force of "but" or "in contrast," for the character and attitude of those who are described in this and the following verse is spiritually the opposite of those described in the previous verses. As one commentator

suggests, however, the word also implies that these faithful deliberately and consciously spoke to one another as a witness against the scepticism and unbelief of the majority.

It is well worth noting that twice in the verse the faithful are described as those who feared the LORD. It was in this especially that they were different from the rest. Surely the whole nation, with few exceptions, claimed to know and honor God, but what was lacking was the awe and reverence that comes from a real spiritual and personal knowledge—what is so often referred to in Scripture as "fear."

Rev. Hanko is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Lynden, Washington.

Previous article in this series: May 15, 2005, p. 374.

Among those who make a show of religion and piety and who claim to love and serve God, this is what is most often missing. This lack of fear becomes evident, as it did with the majority of the Jews, in a lack also of carefulness in worship, in quickness to doubt God and even to accuse Him of evil, and in a refusal to pay any heed to what He says. If there is one thing, therefore, that is obviously missing in the prayers, the worship, the obedience of church members today, it is this fear.

This fear is not a terror of God—not a slavish or guilty fear—but a fear that knows from experience both the majesty of God and His lovingkindness, and while trembling before Him nevertheless fears to be separated or alienated from Him. It is a fear that produces holiness of life, reverence, true piety, and a deep consciousness of the amazing love of God.

The faithful are also described as those who thought upon His name. That, too, indicates that they knew His majesty and glory and could not possibly join with the ungodly in speaking evil of Him and of His works. God's name, of course, includes not only the titles by which He is addressed but, as the Westminster Larger Catechism points out, everything by which He reveals Himself, His attributes, works, ordinances, and Word. These faithful few knew His name and did not misinterpret His dealings with Judah. Nor will anyone who knows His name—really knows it—ever think wrongly of Him, whatever his outward circumstances may be.

That these faithful spoke often to one another is in contrast to the speech of the ungodly, who were questioning among themselves all that God had revealed of Himself. Though the passage does not tell us what they said, there can be no doubt that they spoke, as God's people always do, of His covenant faithfulness, of His unchangeableness as the only reason for

Judah's continued existence, of their own sins and of the sins of the nation, which deserved all of and more than the judgments God had sent, and of their desire to be faithful to God and to keep His law.

That God hears their speech is of great comfort, for the world and the false church will not hear. No matter what the faithful church says of God, the world turns a deaf ear and the apostate church mocks. But God hears and remembers and counts their words of great value.

There are two possible explanations of the "book of remembrance" to which Malachi refers. The first says that this book of remembrance was a book that the people themselves wrote recording their desire to be faithful to God and to keep His covenant.

In that case Nehemiah 9 and 10 may very well record the substance of all that they said to one another and refer to this book, for Nehemiah was a contemporary of Malachi, as we have seen. Not only do those chapters record Nehemiah's prayer on behalf of the people, but at the end of the chapter the word of God speaks of a written covenant that was made by those of the leaders and people who were still faithful. It is an attractive idea and not impossible that the book of remembrance of which Malachi speaks is the same as the written and signed covenant of which we read in Nehemiah 9:38-10:39. The book of remembrance, then, would be a written covenant of the same sort as that which was drawn up in the days of Josiah (II Kings 23:3).

The other interpretation is that the book is the book of life or the "books" of judgment mentioned in Daniel 7:10 and Revelation 20:12, or some other book written by God Himself, perhaps a figurative book in which God remembered the fear and obedience of the remnant.

This book cannot, however, be the book of life, since that "book" was written before the foundations of the world and will never have anything added to it. Nor is it

written as God's response to the obedience of His people, but according to the eternal good pleasure of His own will.

That it is a book of judgment in which the obedience of His people is recorded is possible, and so is the similar idea that it is simply a figurative way of saying, "Jehovah remembers." This is Calvin's explanation and the explanation we prefer. Calvin says:

Our Prophet wished to show, that God *attended*; and hence he uses three forms of speaking. One word would have been enough, but he adds two more; and this is particularly emphatical, that there was a *book of remembrance written*. His purpose then was by this multiplicity of words to give greater encouragement to the faithful, that they might be convinced that their reward would be certain as soon as they devoted themselves to God, for God would not be blind to their piety.¹

17. *And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.*

That the book of remembrance just described is the book in which God records the faithfulness of His people is clear from this verse, for this verse describes the reason for the writing and keeping of that book. It is that they may be God's in the day when He makes up His jewels and that they may be spared in the judgment. That it is a book, though not a literal book, shows that they are God's possession (the word "jewels" is literally "possession") and shows that they are His dear children.

The day referred to is evidently the day of judgment, since the

1. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, trans. John Owen, vol. 5, *Zechariah and Malachi*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950, p. 603.

prophet speaks of the faithful being spared. It is the day so often referred to in Scripture as the “day of the LORD.” But what a wonderfully comforting description of that day is given! For God’s own it is the day that He makes up His possession and takes His people as His own, that is, takes them into His presence and into His heavenly house to live with Him there forever. It is the day in which the tabernacle of God is with men and He dwells with them and is their God (Rev. 21:3).

That they are His possession must be taken in the sense of something very valuable and especially prized. From that point of view the KJV, by its translation “jewels,” exactly catches the sense of the word. And so once again God uses the name Jehovah of hosts to speak both of their place as His covenant people and of the fact that among all the “hosts” of which He is Lord, they are most valued.

That God makes up His possession in that day refers to His taking His people as His own, but also to the fact that “in that great day of final adjustment ... God shall make up His own peculiar people from the assembled millions of the earth.”² He will finally gather them in one in Christ for the greater glory of His great name (Eph. 1:10).

That does not imply that they are not His here and now. They most certainly are His by election, by the blood of atonement, and by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. But the Word of God clearly refers to the day when God’s covenant with His people will be lifted up to a new and greater level of blessedness. Then they will be His in ways that can only now be imagined.

In that day, too, God will spare them from wrath and judgment. When the ungodly and impenitent are sent away into everlasting fire, His people shall receive eternal life. When the wicked are banished from God’s presence, His people shall see His face. The judgments that fall on the world will not fall on them.

That is true not because of anything in them, but because of the work of the Messenger of the covenant. The Lord remembers them for His sake and for the sake of His work in them. They are His possession by right of purchase and price paid. They are a valuable possession because He is in them by His Spirit. They are spared because He was not spared (Rom. 8:32). They are God’s because the Messenger is God’s messenger and His work God’s own redemptive work.

18. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not.


This concluding verse of chapter 3 (though not the concluding verse of the section) answers the evil slanders of those who suggested that there was no profit in serving God and no difference between God’s people and the heathen. God teaches them that, though that difference may not always be evident in this life, it will be evident in the day of judgment. “Then” refers back to the day of verse 17, the day of judgment, but suggests also that *now* it “does not yet appear what we shall be.” Now we cannot always clearly see ourselves as the righteous, nor can the ungodly, who sneer at the claims of God’s people and accuse

them of thinking they are better than others when they refer to themselves as God’s children.

Now, both because of our sinfulness and because the work of grace is unfinished, there is not always a clear distinction between those who are righteous and those who are wicked. Now, because God’s work of grace begins in the heart and because there are many hypocrites, we cannot always tell who serves Jehovah and who does not serve Him. But it will not always be so. As Calvin says:

Ye shall see how much the good differ from the evil; God indeed spares the wicked, but he will at length rise to judgment, and come armed suddenly upon them, and then ye shall know that all the deeds of men are noticed by him, and that wickedness shall not go unpunished, though God for a time delays his vengeance.³

Then, too, as the Belgic Confession says:

...the faithful and elect shall be crowned with glory and honor; and the Son of God will confess their names before God His Father, and His elect angels; all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; and their cause, which is now condemned by many judges and magistrates as heretical and impious, will be known to be the cause of the Son of God. And for a gracious reward, the Lord will cause them to possess such a glory as never entered into the heart of man to conceive (Art. 37). 

2. T.V. Moore, *A Commentary on Haggai and Malachi*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974, p. 167.

3. John Calvin, *Commentaries on Zechariah and Malachi*, p. 612.

Report of Classis East

May 9, 2007
Classis East met in a very brief session on Wednesday, May 9, 2007 at the Grace PRC. Reports were heard from the Stated Clerk

and the Classical Committee. One matter of discipline was discussed in closed session. Expenses of this classis amounted to \$532.79.

Classis will meet next at the

First PRC, Grand Rapids, on Wednesday, September 12, 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk 

Congregation Activities

Members of the Immanuel Ladies Guild of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada invited all the ladies of their congregation, as well as the ladies of neighboring First PRC in Edmonton, to a Spring Lecture on May 10 at the Immanuel PRC. Coffee was served at 10:00 A.M., followed by the lecture, based on Joshua 24:15 and Philippians 2:2, presented by Immanuel's pastor, Rev. R. Smit, at 10:30. The morning came to a close with lunch and a time of fellowship for the ladies.

On Thursday evening, May 31, an organizational meeting was held in the fellowship hall of the Hull, Iowa PRC for all confessing members of the Hull PRC interested in becoming charter members of the Hull daughter congregation. There was a time for questions, followed by a time to sign up to be a charter member. Plans called for this all to be concluded so that a "request to organize" could be brought to the Hull PRC Council at their June 4 meeting. We are happy to report that at their meeting on that Monday evening, the Council did give approval to a request for organization from their daughter congregation. This request, with its approval, will now be forwarded to the September meeting of Classis West asking for its approval according to Article 38 of the Church Order. The formal request, signed by thirty-eight families and nine individuals, was approved with three grounds. 1) Among those who are requesting organization, there are a sufficient number of men qualified to serve as elders and deacons. 2) There is a sufficient number of families to support a new congrega-

tion. 3) This daughter congregation, being predominantly members from Hull PRC, will provide relief to their congregation, which relief is necessary because of their current size. If this request is approved by Classis and the synodical deputies, organization will likely take place some time in October, D.V. Charter members of the daughter church from the Hull PRC were also encouraged to write down their suggestions, including supporting reasons, if desired, for a possible name for their new church. These suggestions were to be collected for a few weeks, followed by a decision later this summer.

The consistory of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI continues to discuss with Rev. J. Kortering proposals for how they can be of assistance to the mission in Velore, India, led by Paul Raj. Rev. Kortering has been corresponding with the brother, but at present Paul Raj's situation is somewhat unsettled. Georgetown is working toward an informational meeting for their congregation with Rev. Kortering on Sunday evening, July 1. A committee from their consistory is also meeting with a committee from the consistory of the Byron Center, MI PRC, as they too are interested in some type of assistance to this endeavor.

In connection with this possible long-term support of the work in India, the Byron Center congregation took a collection recently to help fund a fact-finding trip to India planned for later this month by two of their congregation's members.

The consistory of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada called a special congregational meeting for May 30 at their church for the purpose of treating several proposals related to the sale of 1.7

acres of their property to the Genesis PR School Society, and it appears from subsequent bulletins from Immanuel, that for the most part these proposals, with some amendments, were approved.

The Covenant Ladies Circle of the First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada invited everyone from their congregation, as well as members from Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, to their annual Ice Cream Social and Pie Baking Auction held Saturday, June 2.

Young People/Young Adult Activities

The Young People/Young Adults of Lynden, WA PRC were invited to play volleyball this summer. An "informal league" was formed with young people and young adults from the neighboring OCRC and other local churches.

The 2007 Young People's Convention, hosted by the Grandville, MI PRC, will be held at Beulah Beach in Vermillion, Ohio, August 13-17. The theme is "Living Sacrifices of Thankfulness," taken from Romans 12:1, 2. You can find more information on the Internet at www.prcconvention.com.

Mission Activities

Seminarian Cory Griess, along with his wife, Lael, is working in Pittsburgh, PA for two months this summer. Mr. Griess has finished his second year in our seminary and is interested in the work of missions. It is the intention of our professors and Theological School Committee to give Mr. Griess an opportunity to become involved with the work Rev. W. Bruinsma is doing in Pittsburgh and in the surrounding areas.

Rev. A. Stewart, pastor of the Covenant PRC in Ballymena, N.I., accompanied by his wife, Mary, and Seminarian Martyn Mc Geown,

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

traveled to South Wales on June 8. Rev. Stewart gave a lecture entitled, "The Psalms versus Common Grace."

Rev. A. Spriensma and Rev. R. VanOverloop went to the Philippines in late May to visit with the newly established Berean PR Church. This was an emissary visit to encourage the saints there and


to make recommendations to Synod 2007 concerning how we can further help them.

Minister Activities

Rev. J. Slopsema declined the call to serve as the next pastor of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL. Peace has since extended a call to come over and help them to Can-

didate Clayton Spronk.

Rev. R. VanOverloop declined the call extended to him to serve as our denomination's next missionary to the Philippines.

With joy the faculty of our Seminary informed the churches that they have licensed Mr. Cory Griess to speak a word of edification in our churches. 

Announcements


WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On April 18, 2007, our parents and grandparents,

**JOHN and ARLENE
VANDER WOUDE,**

celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary.


We, their children and grandchildren, give thanks to our heavenly Father for the blessing of these covenant parents. Over the course of our lives, they have been an example of a true marriage rooted in Christ. Throughout blessings and trials, they have always demonstrated their faith and eternal hope in God. We pray that God may continue to bless them in their marriage in the years to come. They have, indeed, experienced Lamentations 3:22, 23: "It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

 Rod and Sandy Kooiman

Bill, Lynne, Jon, Randy

 Jim VanderWoude

(with our Lord in glory)

 Tom and Linda VanderWoude

Nathan, Lisa

 Bill and Joan Hofman

Katie, Jeff, Jill, Michelle

Jenison, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With praise to our heavenly Father, we celebrated the 50th wedding anniversary of our parents and grandparents,


DR. DWIGHT and LOIS MONSMA,

on June 1, 2007. We thank God for His care over them and pray for His continued blessings upon them in the years to come.

Psalm 121:5: "The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand."

 Dirk and Carol Monsma

Emily, Eric

 Daniel and Carol Monsma

Natalie, Andrea, Lydia,

Joseph, Madelyn

 David and Kimberly Monsma

Jeremy, Jonathan,

Nicholaus, Nathan

 Lisabeth and Steve Kerkstra

Gabrielle, Bradley

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 24, 2007, our parents and grandparents,

RALPH and CINDY VANDERVEEN,


celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary.

We give thanks to God for them and for blessing their marriage these 30 years. We are thankful for the covenant home we were raised in and the God-fearing instruction they gave us. It is our prayer that God will grant them many more years together.

I John 4:16, "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him."

 Mike and Corrie VanderVeen

Zachary

 Brad and Paula Kuiper

Lucas, Tyler

 Brad and Cheri VanderVeen

 Brett VanderVeen

 Derek VanderVeen

Hudsonville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of Edgerton PRC wish to express Christian sympathy to the Brands families following the passing of their sister and aunt,

ELBERTA HOP.

May they find comfort in God's word, Psalm 91:1, 2: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most high shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the LORD, he is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust."

Rev. Dennis Lee, President

James VerHey, Clerk

NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed consistories are hereby informed that the 2007 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Nathan Langerak a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Langerak will be eligible for a call on or after July 14, 2007.

Mr. Langerak's address is:

8129 48th Ave.

Hudsonville, MI 49426

Phone: (616) 291-6712

E-mail: natelangerak@aol.com

Don Doezeema,

Stated Clerk

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will convene at the Lynden PRC in Lynden, WA, on Wednesday, September 5, 2007, at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 6, 2007. Delegates or visitors who will need lodging or transportation should notify Lynden's clerk, Mr. Henry Buiter (360-966-1171).

Rev. Richard J. Smit, Stated Clerk

NOTICE

Annual Meeting of the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Thursday, September 27, 7:30 P.M., at Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 9, 2007, our parents and grandparents,

HAROLD and WINNIE TOLSMA, celebrated their 35th wedding anniversary. We, as their children and grandchildren, thank our heavenly Father for providing us with parents who gave us covenant instruction and who were godly examples. We pray that God continue to bless their marriage and their lives together in the years ahead.

"For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations" (Psalm 100:5).

✿ John and Lorinda Tolsma

Aliyah

✿ Edward and Mandy Tolsma

Luke, Andrew

✿ David and Esther Hollema

Alexander, Zachary, Madison

✿ Frank Tolsma

and fiancée Laurel Lotterman

✿ Jenna Tolsma

Loveland, Colorado

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Hull PRC extends their sincere Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Bruce Korver and their family, as well as to Mrs. Henrietta Gritters following the passing of Joan Korver's mother and Henrietta's sister,

ELBERTA HOP.

May they be comforted by God's Word in Psalm 62:1: "Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation."

Rev. Steven Key, President
Ike Uittenbogaard, Asst. Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Southeast PRC express their Christian sympathy to George Slopsema in the death of George's sister, and to Brent Snippe and his family in the death of Brent's Grandmother:

ELLEEN F. SNIPPE.

May George and his family, and Brent Snippe and his family find their comfort in God's word in Psalms 116: 12-15 "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD. I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people. Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of saints."

Rev. William Langerak, Pres.
Ron Kooienga, Assistant Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Doon Adult Bible Society expresses their Christian sympathy to fellow members, James and Brenda Regnerus, following the death of Brenda's father,

MR. EGBERT GRITTERS.

May they be comforted by God's Word in Psalm 74:26: "My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, my portion for ever."

Rev. David Overway, President
Mary VanDenTop, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thanksgiving to God, on July 13, 2007 our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents,

MR. and MRS. RONALD BAUMAN, will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful for the years that our faithful Father has given them together, and pray that God will continue to bless them in the years to come. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people: That ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

✿ Keith and Peggy

Kelli and Alex

Ethan, Nathan and Aaron

Jason

Jamie and Joe

Joshua

Anthony

✿ Ron and Barb

Brandon

✿ Laura and Greg

Brad

✿ Scott and Shirley

Brittney, Briana (in glory)

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The steering committee and fellow saints of the PRC Pittsburgh Fellowship express their Christian sympathy to the Brown family in the death of their husband and father,

MR. EDWIN BROWN.

May they find their comfort in Christ's word in John 14:2-3: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also."

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, President
Keith Bauman, Assistant Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With joy in our hearts and gratitude to our heavenly Father, we join our parents in celebrating their wedding anniversary. On June 17, 2007

**REV. WILBUR and MARY
BRUINSMA**

celebrated 30 years of marriage together. Throughout those years the Lord has truly been faithful. We, their children, wish to express our thankfulness for their years of godly example and instruction both in the home and for our churches. May God continue to bless them in the years to come. Psalm 13:6, "I will sing unto the Lord, because he hath dealt bountifully with me."

✿ Brad and Trisha Bruinsma

Kari, Skyler, Emma

✿ Ryan and Heather Mowery

Tori, Ian, Trenton

✿ Edward and Mandy Tolsma

Luke, Andrew

✿ Megan

✿ Lydia

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

NOTICE!

The board of Eastside Christian School, Grand Rapids, Michigan anticipates the retirement of Miss Agatha Lubbers, as administrator, in the summer of 2008. Persons from the Protestant Reformed community interested in her position may direct their inquiries to Mr. Dan Monsma at (616) 293-4120.

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Peace PRC extend their sincere, heartfelt Christian sympathy to Peter and Janice Poortenga and the Todd & Valerie Terpstra family in the death of their mother, grandmother, and great grandmother,

MRS. JULIA BLANKESPOOR.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Garry Eriks, Vice President
Bruce Verburg, Clerk

NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 12, 2007 at the First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 12, 2007.

Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

July 2007/Standard Bearer/431

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RESOLUTION OF JOY

June 20, 2007 marked the 60th wedding anniversary of

BILL and RUTH SWART.

Their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren join their relatives and friends in thanking the sovereign and gracious God for the gift of a long marriage in the Lord. We are especially thankful for the godly instruction and example given. May the heavenly Father continue to bless their marriage and may He fulfill His promise of continued care during the remainder of their pilgrimage.

"Children's children are the crown of old men; and the glory of children are their fathers" (Proverbs 17:6).

✿ Sue and Rev. Ron VanOverloop

✿ Linda and Calvin Kalsbeek

✿ Judy and H. Jay Kuiper

21 grandchildren,

32 great grandchildren

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Doon Adult Bible Society express their Christian sympathy to fellow members Vern and Mary Postma, following the death of Vern's mother,

MRS. KATIE POSTMA.

May they be comforted by God's Word in Psalm 23:4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Rev. David Overway, President
Mary VanDenTop, Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Doon PRC wish to extend their Christian sympathy to fellow deacon Vern Postma and his wife in the death of his mother,

KATIE POSTMA.

May they find comfort in the words of Christ found in Matthew 5:4: "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted."

Rev. David Overway, President
Jim Hoogendoorn, Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God, we rejoice with our parents,

CLARE and ANNE PRINCE,

who celebrated 65 years of marriage on June 19, 2007. "Those who His gracious covenant keep, the Lord will ever bless; Their children's children shall rejoice to see His righteousness" (Psalm #278:5).

✿ Chet and Sharon Haveman

Joel and Janna Huiskens

Trevor, Mitchell, Kelly, Emily

Michael and Heidi Haveman

Ethan, Darcie

✿ Doug and Mary Jane Prince

Hilary

Jenison, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

Friends and fellows saints in the Protestant Reformed Churches express their Christian sympathies to Joel and Stasia Sugg in the death of Joel's mother, affectionately known to family and friends as

MIMI.

She died at the age of 99 on June 7, 2007. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1&2).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The congregation and council of the Hull PRC wish to extend their sincere Christian sympathy to Joyce Kooiker and her family following the passing of their son and brother,

WAYNE KOOIKER.

May they be comforted by God's Word in Psalm 73:24: "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory."

Rev. Steven Key, President
Ike Uittenbogaard, Asst. Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Kalamazoo PRC wish to express their Christian sympathy to Tom and Marcia Kiel and their children in the death of Marcia's brother,

MR. MARK CAMP.

May we find strength and comfort from God's Word, "Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him" (Romans 6:8, 9).

Rev. Audred Spriensma, President
Melvin VanDyk, Clerk

NOTICE

Visit the RFPa website (www.rfpa.org) to view and print the current and past issues of the *Standard Bearer*. The past issues are searchable and provide a valuable source of information.

Reformed Witness Hour

July 2007

Date

Topic

Text

July 1

"Losing in Order to Win"

Philippians 3:8

July 8

"True Followers of Christ"

Mark 8:34

July 15

"Search and Know"

Psalm 139:23, 24

July 22

"Wrestling the Powers of Darkness"

Ephesians 6:11, 12

July 29

"Straying Sheep"

Isaiah 53:6