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front cover: *Delegates to Synod (l. to r.):*

David Poortinga, Prof. Gritters, Rev. denHartog, David Ondersma, Harry Langerak, Prof. Dykstra, Timothy Pipe, Rev. Slopesma, Jack Regnerus, Rev. VanOverloop, Prof. Engelsma, Rev. Key, Allen Brummel, George DeJong, Rev. Houck, David Rau, Rev. Smit, Rev. D. Kleyn, Rev. A. Brummel, Rev. Koole, Gary Kaptein, Gys VanBaren, Prof. Cammenga, Rev. R. Miersma

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Meditation

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Hearing the Word of the Spirit

He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 2:29

Introduction



We have in this passage a command of Christ to the church of all ages.

Rev. Bruinsma is Eastern Home Missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, stationed in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

This Meditation is the text (abbreviated for publication) of the pre-synodical sermon preached by Rev. Bruinsma on June 12, 2006.

It is a command that comes to the church as she becomes manifest in the church institute. It is true that this command was given to a particular congregation or church in Asia Minor, the church in Thyatira. But the exhortation we consider is not meant by Christ to be interpreted *only* within its immediate context. This is obvious from the reference in this command to “churches” in general. We are called to hear what the Spirit says to the “churches” – plural. This is why the same exhortation of our text is given to each of the seven churches Christ addresses in Revelation 2 and 3.

Besides, the command given in this passage is also one that Christ used repeatedly during His earthly ministry. I find in the Gospel accounts at least five different occasions when Jesus said, “He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” We can therefore say that we have before us a command of Christ to the church institute today. It is a command that the churches of today must heed. It is a command that comes to the delegates to this year’s synod. You have been given ears to hear. In all your deliberations, “hear what the Spirit saith to the churches.” That must be the guid-

ing rule that governs synod. As you labor, you must be deeply aware of the need to listen to what the Spirit says. That is why we consider this well-known exhortation of God's Word.

As I studied the agenda for this year, I noted that the matters coming before synod are of a routine nature. This can present a danger. One can easily forget about the spiritual nature of the labors, and work through them in a merely routine manner. It is easy, then, to forget that the work here at synod is a work of Christ and that it always touches upon the spiritual welfare of our denomination. There may be routine matters before this year's synod, but these matters affect the preaching of the gospel in our own churches and on the mission fields. In all of those labors we must hear what the Spirit says to the churches. We must not fail to bow before the authority of God's Word and to hear the Spirit of truth, who guides the church. Then your labors will be fruitful in our churches and God will continue to bless us – a blessing we must not take for granted.

A Divine Word

We can, of course, speak of the place and function of the Holy Spirit within the being of God, but that is not the intent of the instruction that Christ gives the church in the Word of God before us. The particular reference here in our text is to the Spirit of Christ. That is not a different Spirit than the Holy Spirit. It is one and the same Spirit, but the Spirit of Christ refers to the Holy Spirit sent out by Jesus Christ to dwell in His church. When Christ ascended into heaven and took His seat at God's right hand, He received the power and authority to send out the Holy Spirit to work in His church. It is that Spirit of Christ, the Holy Spirit sent out by Christ, that speaks to the churches.

We must bear in mind that the work of the Spirit of Christ is twofold.

In the first place, Christ sends forth the Spirit to work in the hearts of individual saints. The moment the Spirit enters our hearts, we who were dead in sins and trespasses are made alive in Christ. Christ through His Spirit regenerates us, re-creates us, renews us. When the Spirit takes up His abode in our hearts He applies to us all the blessings of salvation that Christ earned for us on the cross and in His resurrection.

But that is only one function of the Holy Spirit. There is yet another way the Spirit works. He is sent forth by Christ to dwell in the church as a whole – organically. He does not, mind you, dwell simply in the church as the elect body of Christ gathered from the nations. But, in a real and concrete way, the Spirit is sent forth by Christ to dwell in the church institute in this world. He is sent to live in and to guide the church as she becomes manifest in the church institute. The Spirit speaks to the churches, as we learn in the Word of God before us.

The churches addressed by Christ in Revelation 2 and 3 were individual congregations. They were churches that made up the instituted church of that day – churches found in various cities of Asia Minor. The Spirit lives and works *in the church institute*. No, not in every church institute! Only in those church institutes that hear

and heed what the Spirit says to them! When the Word of God is proclaimed from the pulpit in all its truth, the Spirit is present and working in that church. When the Word of God is taught faithfully in

the catechism room and in Bible societies, the Spirit is present and working in that church. When the church deliberates on the floors of its assemblies, using God's Word as its guide, the Spirit is present and working in that church.

Christ made reference to this function of the Spirit in His discourse with His disciples in the upper room just prior to His death. We read in John 14:16, 17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive...." Christ speaks of the Spirit in the same way later on in this discourse, in John 15:26, 27 and in John 16:13. The Spirit of our text, therefore, is the Spirit of truth sent by Christ to dwell in His church in order to guide that church into the way of truth.

What must we hear from that Spirit? The church in Thyatira was called to hear the instruction and admonitions of Christ that were sent in the letter to that church. The other churches in Asia Minor were likewise called to hear a particular Word. And the church of all ages is called to hear and obey the instruction and admonition of Christ to those churches.

But there is so much more that the Spirit teaches, because the word of the Spirit – what the Spirit says to the churches – is really contained in the entire Scriptures! The Scriptures are precisely what the Spirit says to the churches. Peter teaches us in II Peter 1:20, 21, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The Holy Spirit moved men to record what we have contained in

the Scriptures. The Bible, then, is the word of the Spirit. It is what the Spirit, who is the third person of the Trinity, says to the churches. The Word that He speaks to the churches is therefore a divine Word! It is this Word of God Him-

When the church deliberates on the floors of its assemblies, using God's Word as its guide, the Spirit is present and working in that church.

self that the churches are called to hear. The Scriptures become for us the objective rule for life and doctrine. A man who claims to be led by the Spirit, but who speaks a word apart from the careful exposition of the Scriptures, does not speak what the Spirit says to the churches. What is more, the Spirit does not speak one word through a church institute that does not use the Scriptures to make its decisions. May our delegates remember that, this year, as they sit on synod. Any decision that is made contrary to or in any way contradicts the Spirit's Word is not what the Spirit says to our churches. The authority of synod and of our churches rests solely in what the Spirit says to the churches. And what the Spirit says is found in the objective record of the truth given us in Holy Writ.

It is this Word of God we are commanded to hear!

A Spiritual Ear

To hear what the Spirit says to the churches takes a spiritual ear, an ear that is spiritually capable of hearing. That is what Christ refers to when He says, "He that hath an ear, let him hear." He that has a spiritual ear, an ear capable of hearing and heeding, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

It is clear, given the religious climate of today, that there are not many churches who have that kind of an ear. Many of those who deliberate on the floors of council meetings, church gatherings, general assemblies, synods, or what have you, have not been given by God spiritual ears to hear. It is not only in the wicked world of unbelief outside of the confines of the church institute that people do not have ears to hear. So much of the church world today has become dull of hearing! Listen to what Jesus said in Matthew 13:14, 15 about the

church of His day. Quoting Isaiah, He said, "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at

...the Spirit does not speak one word through a church institute that does not use the Scriptures to make its decisions.

any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them."

The church of Christ's day heard the words of the prophets, they heard the preaching of John the Baptist, they heard the word Christ taught – with their physical ears. But they did not take heed to what they heard. Their spiritual hearing was made dull by God Himself, and as a result these people did not hear what the Spirit said to the churches. In other words, there was no work of God's grace in their hearts! They heard the word externally, with their ears, but their hearts were not renewed.

Paul tells Timothy what will take place in the last days (II Tim. 4:3, 4): "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap unto themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." The ears of so many in the church institutes of today itch! They want to hear something different, something new. They do not want to hear what Christ does for them, so much as what they must go out and do for Christ. They want to hear about an earthly kingdom and about a brotherhood of all men on earth. They allow for other religions and other ways into heaven. They want to hear how man can add to his salvation by means of his own works. People have itching ears that turn away from the truth

and seek out lies about God, Christ, and the condition of man and his need for salvation.

Why? Why are their ears become so dull of hearing? Why do their ears itch? This is God's judgment on church institutes who have refused to hear what the Spirit says to the churches! The Bible teaches us that God Himself gives to men, and therefore to church institutes, such ears that they cannot hear. In the last days God will send one who comes "with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thess. 2:10-12). The prophecy of Isaiah is so true in our day: the ears of many in the church have become dull of hearing.

He that hath ears, let him hear!

Those who have ears to hear are those in whose hearts God has worked by that selfsame Spirit of Christ. Yes, the Spirit tells us what we need to hear objectively in the Word of God, but we will never truly hear with spiritual ears unless that same Spirit also works subjectively in our hearts. Christ, in our text, addresses believers who have come to know and embrace the benefits of salvation in Christ. They have been born again, regenerated by the Spirit, that they may have eyes to see the things of the kingdom of God. And, together with those spiritual eyes, they have been given ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

He that hath an ear, let him hear!

Delegates of synod, Christ is addressing you! You have those ears that have been given to hear. God has worked in your hearts by His grace. As a fellow-laborer in the church with you, I can say that with all confidence. I trust what will take place on the floor of this

synod because I am confident that the Spirit has worked in your hearts the life of our risen Lord. The churches that you represent trust you in the work you do – not because of who you are in yourselves, but because of this one fact: you have ears to hear! By God's grace you are able to hear what the Spirit says to the churches! Be encouraged in your work.

A Constant Reminder

But with this comes the reminder that Christ gives us in His Word: "he that hath an ear, *let him hear* what the Spirit saith unto the churches." The Spirit of truth must guide this synod in all its decisions.

You are going to examine two young men who will, if God wills, enter the ministry of the gospel. These young men must reveal in their answers that they know what the Spirit says to the churches and that they will heed what the Spirit says. This synod will also be examining and evaluating the mission work of our churches. It is a blessing to see the request for organization of two areas of mission labor. You must, now, determine whether these saints are ready to follow after what the Spirit says to the churches. God's Word must guide you in that determination. There are, too, recommendations before synod that will affect the Theological School, contact with

other churches, emeriti ministers, and more.


Routine? Maybe we can consider these matters to be such. But we may not forget that they are the work of the church of Christ. To make God-honoring decisions, you must listen to what the Spirit says to the churches.

All of this may seem obvious enough to us. But when we consider how quickly so many churches of today have departed from the truth, we must be reminded of our calling. We cannot proceed in our own strength and begin to think we will not as a denomination fall into the same spiritual ruin. We may not be so proud as to think that this cannot happen to us. We need to be reminded, constantly reminded, to hear – to listen so very carefully to – what the Spirit says to the churches. That is our prayer for you in this week to come. May the Spirit guide you!

But there is one more reminder that must be given. This reminder does not come to the delegates of synod, but to the members of our churches. Sometimes, after decisions are made by our classes or synods, there are those who complain and criticize. They view suspiciously what has been decided, as if there is some hidden agenda on the part of those who have labored. For the life of me, I cannot understand that. How can a de-

nomination of churches develop positively when everything is looked at negatively?


Our synod meets in this week to come. The delegates are led by the Spirit of truth. This is not to say that a synod cannot err and make a decision that is contrary to the Word of God. This does not mean that we who belong to the office of all believers may not protest decisions that we believe are contrary to the Word of God. But when the synod makes decisions that are in accordance with the Word of God, we must realize something as members of our churches, namely, that these decisions are what the Spirit says to the churches! That is why we consider them settled and binding upon our churches.

When the authority of God's Word is honored in this week, the Spirit will speak to our churches. Instead of criticizing, we rejoice! What a blessing God has given us! Much of Christianity today has become a spiritual wasteland! Look what God has given us! Look at what he has entrusted into our care! That ought to humble us. But it ought also to give us great reason to rejoice. Delegates of synod: guard that truth well! Members of the church of Christ: rejoice! May Christ, the King of the church, guide synod by His Spirit into the truth! Amen. 

Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters

The PRC Synod 2006

 On Monday, June 19 (yesterday, as I write), the 2006 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, meeting in Faith PRC, Jenison, MI, adjourned. Under the capable leadership of the president, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop (Byron Center, MI), synod concluded its

important work in five days. The vice-president was Rev. S. Key (Hull, Iowa); first clerk, Rev. D. Kleyn (Holland, MI); second clerk, Rev. R. Smit (Lacombe, BC).

Many rejoicings

Highlight of the week was the two seminary graduates' sustaining

of a rigorous, public examination. Mr. Andrew Lanning and Mr. Clayton Spronk are now *Candidate* Lanning and *Candidate* Spronk, eligible for call on July 15. Many dozens of observers (perhaps a hundred over two days?) listened to two grueling days of oral examinations that are the final test of

PRC seminarians. Even children helped fill the visitors' seats at Faith PRC to listen to the exams – in dogmatics, church history, church government, Bible knowledge. The exams are interesting, educational, and encouraging to the members of the churches, who see how well future ministers are trained. One advantage of a small denomination with only a few graduates each year is that every student can be examined in this public and lengthy manner on the floor of the denomination's broadest gathering. If the candidates receive and accept a call from a church, the classis of the church into which they are ordained will conduct *another* public examination. Passing synod's examination permits the students to *graduate*. Passing the classical exam permits the students to become *ministers*. Thus, the classis exam is called the *peremptoir*, that is, the final or *decisive* examination. May the Lord make a place for these two men in the churches.

Graduation ceremonies took place Monday evening, June 19, with Prof. R. Decker giving the address, a careful exposition and application of II Timothy 2:19: "Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." May the church's Lord continue to provide capable students and faithful professors for the Protestant Reformed denomination.

Adding to the joy of synod was the approval given to the request of the saints in Northern Ireland to be reorganized as a congregation. Four years ago a painful schism broke up the young church. In the intervening years the Lord prospered the fellowship richly, so that synod could approve their reinstitution as a congregation. The saints are encouraged by the growth the Lord gave (they number eleven families and five individuals), by the financial strength

of the fellowship, by the possibility of building their own sanctuary, and especially by the sweet unity that exists among themselves. A date for organization has been set in August, when many friends of the congregation will be in the UK for the biennial British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) conference. Prof. Hanko, one of the scheduled speakers at the BRF conference, and Rev. A. Stewart, will oversee the organization. The soon-to-be Covenant Protestant Reformed Church informed synod of their plans to call Rev. Stewart to be their pastor. He was ordained as their pastor in 2001, and has labored as missionary pastor since.

Then synod approved also the request from a group of believers in the Philippines to be organized as a Reformed church. The believers have gathered around our missionary, Rev. Audred Spriensma, who has taught and preached to them for the past four years. The group that will be called the *Berean PRC in the Philippines* numbers thirteen families and two individuals. The group will organize on the basis of the *Three Forms of Unity*, agrees with the PRC's *Declaration of Principles*, and has men qualified to serve in the special offices of elder and deacon. Anyone who can see Rev. Spriensma's fine presentation on the Lord's work in the Philippines will not want to miss the opportunity. Synod also approved the recommendation of the Foreign Mission Committee not to call a second missionary to the Philippines at this time.

May the Lord of the church so prosper the PRC's *home* missions, that churches may be organized. May He bless and encourage our home missionaries, Rev. W. Bruinsma and Rev. T. Miersma. The churches expressed appreciation to the missionaries for their work. We may express gratitude to God for good soldiers willing to endure the hardships of missions (cf. II Tim. 2:3). May the Lord grant us many more!

The Theological School Committee of synod also brought good news. They recommended approval of admittance of four new students to the seminary. Synod approved. The students are Mr. Daniel Holstege, admitted as a *diploma pre-licentiate* (plans to be licensed to preach in the PRC); Mr. Martyn McGeown of the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland, *diploma pre-licentiate*; Mr. David Torlach of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia as a *special* student (a program, usually shorter than four years, designed specifically for a student in another denomination); and Rev. Byung Kim of Seoul, South Korea, from the Korean Presbyterian Church (Reformed), with *special* student status.

Also joyful, but in a different way, was synod's approval of Prof. R. Decker's request for emeritation. After forty-one years of faithful labors in the denomination, thirty-three of them as professor of Practical Theology and New Testament in our seminary, Prof. Decker retires from the active ministry. The transition process for the new professor gradually to take up all the duties has been completed in three years. This writer, who is replacing Prof. Decker, only begins to see the weight of responsibility this brother has carried for thirty-three years. In his remarks thanking Prof. Decker for his work, synod's president noted that all the minister delegates at synod except two had been trained by Prof. Decker. May the Lord bless him and his wife, Marilyn, in their retirement.

Some deep sorrows

Cause for great sorrow was the news that the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore voted to dissolve their denomination because of disagreements among them over the teaching of divorce and remarriage. Synod authorized a letter to all the Protestant Reformed congregations informing them of the sad conse-

quence of that dissolution – the sister relation that had existed between the PRC and the ERCS for twenty-one years has also been dissolved. Although two congregations remain there, synod was informed that the *denomination* no longer exists. Expressing the public prayer that “yet, at this late hour, the Lord may open men’s hearts and minds to a right understanding of the truth,” synod authorized her Contact Committee to send a delegation to Singapore “to assess the situation and determine the future of our labors with the saints who desire to remain faithful to the truth.”

Equally difficult for synod was the decision to instruct Classis East to “encourage Covenant (Wyckoff, NJ) to disband and the members of Covenant to move to another PR congregation.” For a number of years, at least since 1994, synod has faced the question of financial support of the small congregation. Synod 2003 expressed that “It is not good stewardship of finances or pastors to continue to support congregations of this size to which God does not give growth.” Each year, Classis East was to give a report about the “continuing viability” of Covenant. Again this year Classis East, following the advice

of her church visitors, recommended continuing the support of Covenant because of “positive developments which warrant continued subsidy.” But synod disagreed with the advice and, on the basis of seven grounds, instructed Classis East to encourage Wyckoff to disband. The grounds include the small size, the limited number of men to serve in the offices, and the lack of growth over their thirty-three years of existence. No decision to disband or discontinue a work is pleasant. May the risen Jesus Christ sustain the saints in Wyckoff.

For the rest...

The full report of all the decisions of synod will be available to all when the printed *Acts* becomes available through our Stated Clerk.

Synod did not adopt the recommendation of the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC) to change the constitution to allow the DMC to create the list of ministers for calling to the mission field. Synod said that the DMC did not take into account former decisions of synod (1976 and 1977) regarding the constitution, and thus that Article 46 of the Church Order had not been followed: “Instructions concerning matters to be considered in major


assemblies shall not be written until the decisions of previous synods touching these matters have been read....”

The retired ministers and their spouses were supported “according to their needs.” Subsidy was granted to six needy churches of the denomination.

The yearbook committee reports that the denomination grew in the past year by forty-four families, about two and a half percent, which has been the average growth rate for the past twenty-five years.

The budget adopted by synod requires each family of the denomination to contribute an average of \$750 for 2007, \$75 less than for 2006.

From two invitations to host Synod 2007, Synod 2006 accepted the offer of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI. This will allow next year’s (the Lord willing) seminary graduate, Mr. Nathan Langerak, to be examined in the sanctuary of his home congregation.

The Protestant Reformed Churches have lived through another year in evil days. May God give the grace of faithfulness to the churches until the Lord returns. May He find faith and godliness among us when He comes. 

Letters

Declaration of Principles

I just wanted to drop you a quick note re your series in the *Standard Bearer* on the Declaration of Principles. I have found them most interesting and edifying and they spurred me on to research the old series you mentioned by H. Hoeksema.

I do have one question you raised that I am hoping you could clarify for me. You make the point in part 4 [March 15, 2006, p. 268] that “the Declaration repudiates the notion that all the children that are baptized are regenerated.”

However, we are constantly taught that the member of the congregation should “look upon” all the covenant children as believers unless and until they prove otherwise. Is not our view and that of Dr. Kuyper a logomachy? If not, where does the material difference lie?

Mark Brooks
Sauk Village, Illinois

RESPONSE:

Dear Mark,

The questions you ask are frequently raised in discussions on the Reformed view of the covenant

child. These are not easy questions.

I do not believe that our difference with Dr. Kuyper is merely a fight over words.

First of all, it is crucially important to remember that the teaching of Abraham Kuyper has to do with the *ground* for infant baptism. He contended that a true baptism conveys a sacramental grace at the moment of baptism by a special act of Christ. That grace can be conferred only to one who has faith. If the sacrament does not confer grace, it is not a

real baptism. Since the church may only administer real baptisms, the church must assume that each of the children brought for baptism is a regenerated child. Dr. Kuyper, however, was not so naïve as to think that all these baptized children were indeed regenerated. He was aware that subsequent history would reveal that many were not. Nonetheless, for the sake of having a ground for administering infant baptism, he held to a presupposed regeneration for each child born to believers. This logical inconsistency is glaring. Many Reformed theologians have pointed out the impossibility of presupposing regeneration when it is plain from Scripture and life that many Esaus are born to believing parents.

The PRC do not teach presupposed regeneration, that is, do not base infant baptism on a presumption that the child is regenerated. As you indicated, the article reflects the teaching of the Declaration of Principles, which states: "We repudiate the teaching...that we may presuppose that all the children that are baptized are regenerated, for we know on the basis of Scripture, as well as in the light of all history and experience, that the contrary is true." Later, the Declaration of Principles gives the *twofold ground* for infant baptism as "the command of God and the fact that according to Scripture He established His covenant in the line of continued generations."

The teaching to which you refer in the PRC is not the *ground* for infant baptism, but has to do with how believing parents view and how they deal with children born in the sphere of the covenant. It arises out of the ground for baptism, namely, that God gathers His church out of the line of continued generations. God gathers His church from the children of believers. Believing parents deny God's covenant if they view their children as unbelievers. It would be tantamount to Abraham refusing to circumcise Isaac. Thus all believing par-

ents are to deal with their children, and to treat them, as believers.

To consider this from another viewpoint, this manner of dealing with children corresponds with how we view fellow members in the church, namely, with the judgment of love taught by the Canons. "With respect to those who make an external profession of faith and live regular lives, we are bound, after the example of the apostle, to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner" (Canons III, IV, 15). Although children have not yet made an explicit confession of faith, yet they are members of the church on this earth, and we are bound "to judge and speak of them in the most favorable manner."

In regard to how to view children of believers, the Protestant Reformed Churches have much in common with Abraham Kuyper. We do not view them as unbelievers.


In actual practice, however, I contend that there is often a significant difference in the working out of the position of the PRC and that of Abraham Kuyper. Presupposed regeneration assumes that the Holy Spirit has regenerated the child. A regenerated child is a saved child. Even if the child begins to manifest ungodliness, the parent may say, "We presume that he is regenerated. It may be that the seed of regeneration lies dormant in the heart of a child for years, but it is there." That leads to false hope when a child begins to rebel against God. On the other hand, it can also lead to bitterness against God if the baptized child dies in rebellion. Parents might become angry with God, who, according to the idea of presupposed regeneration, gave a virtual guarantee that the child was regenerated. Parents wrongly base their hopes on that presupposed regeneration, and blame God when it turns out not to be true.

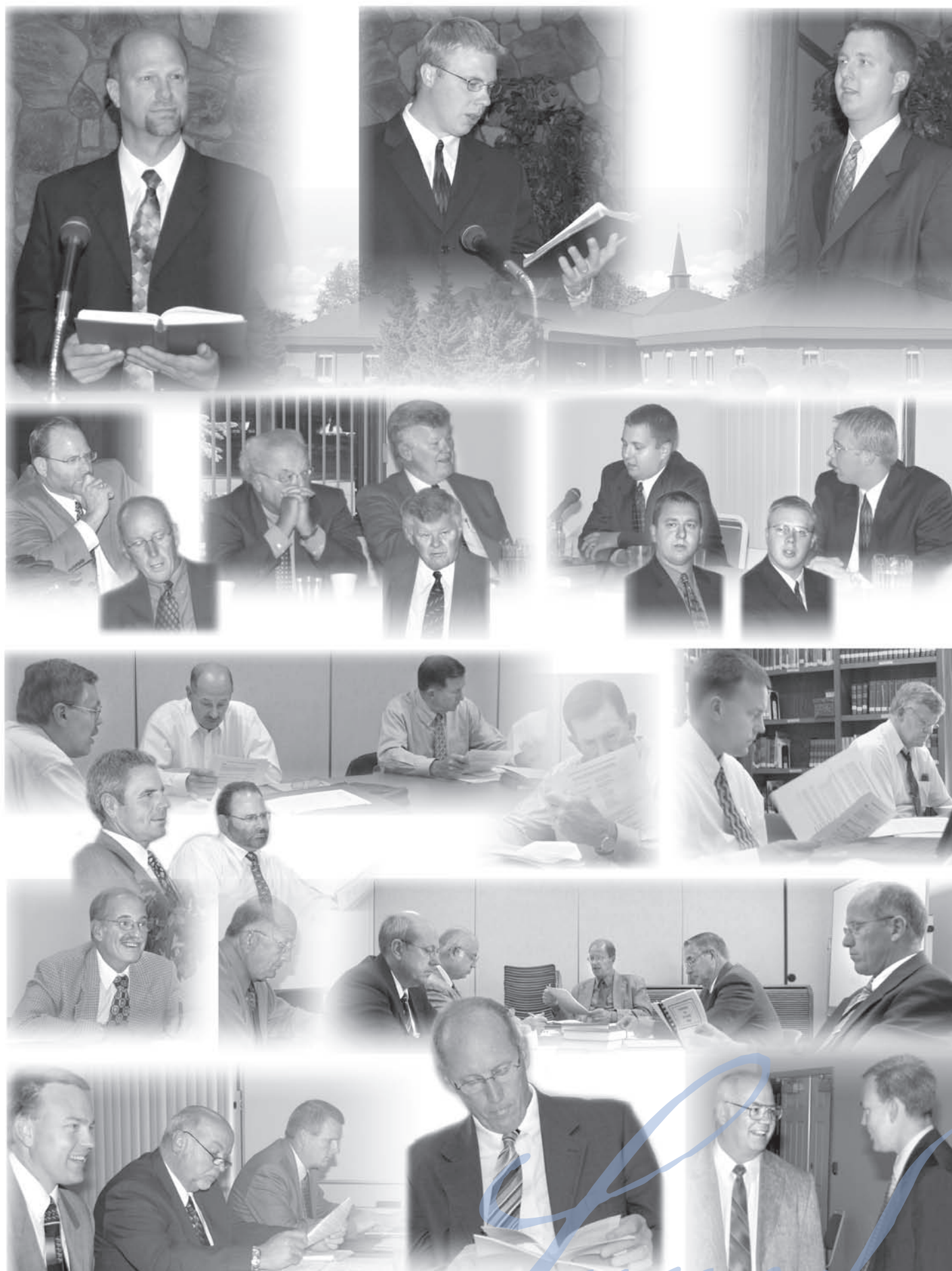
On the other hand, parents in

the Protestant Reformed Churches treat their children as covenant children, as believers. They read the Bible with their children, teach them to pray and to sing praises. They admonish them to repent and obey God. All these activities enjoined upon the child are impossible for the child to do from the heart unless he is regenerated. This is where it might seem as though the PRC hold to the same position as Abraham Kuyper.

But parents do not presume that the Spirit's work of regeneration has taken place in all their children. They do not assume that their children are saved. On the contrary, they call their children to turn from sin. They call them to conversion when their children walk in disobedience. And if one of their children brings upon them this horrible grief, of dying in rebellion against God, none of these parents comes to the minister with the accusation, "You taught us that he was regenerated." Nor do they accuse God. They understand that God's covenant with believers is a covenant of *grace*. God is not obligated to save any of our children. It is an act of infinite mercy and boundless grace when God saves even one of our children.

At the same time, parents know that God is pleased to gather His church from the children of believers. Thus they deal with, teach, admonish, and view their children, as believers. If that sounds as though we hold to presupposed regeneration, then I say once again, that Abraham's Kuyper's doctrine of presupposed regeneration was his basis for baptizing children of believers, not how children of believers are to be treated in their upbringing.

For a more detailed discussion of this, I highly recommend to the readers Rev. Herman Hoeksema's work *Believers and their Seed*, and Prof. David Engelsma's *The Place of Children in the Covenant of God*, both published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association. 



Synod 2006



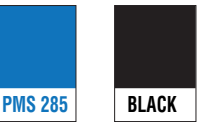
7921 SB 1bpgCollageTemp
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Graduation

Graduation 2006



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Graduation

Graduation 2006

Seminary Graduates



Mr. Andrew Lanning

Wife: Stephanie
Children: Eric, Jessica (l. to r.)
Membership: Hudsonville PRC
Internship: First PRC (GR)
College: Grand Valley State University
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Mr. Clayton Spronk

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Children: Ashley, Courtney, Brandon, Brooke (l. to r.)
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Special Article

Prof. David Engelsma

Deepening Darkness over Reformed Netherlands (1)

With this article, Prof. Engelsma begins a two-part series on the ecclesiastical scene in the Netherlands. The articles are the fruit of informal presentations given a few months ago to Protestant Reformed ministers in the Grand Rapids area. Prof. Engelsma has made a point of keeping abreast of the rapid deterioration in the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The editors, convinced that our readers ought to know about the sad state of affairs in the Netherlands, asked Prof. Engelsma to prepare his presentations for printing in the *Standard Bearer*. He graciously consented to do this. It is possible that more of these articles will be written as occasions for them arise in the future. These articles will not only grieve Reformed believers, they will also serve as a sobering warning and exhortation to all God's people to "stand fast and hold the traditions which ye have been taught" (II Thess. 2:15). —RJD

In the early 1980s, my wife and I spent almost two weeks in the Netherlands. I had arranged to meet individually, during that time, with three prominent Reformed theologians in three different Reformed denominations. In Apeldoorn, I met with Dr. W. van't Spijker of the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands); in Kampen, with Dr.

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

J. Douma of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland (vrijgemaakt)* [Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated")]; in Urk, with Dr. C. Tukker of the *Gereformeerde Bond* in the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (the Reformed Alliance in the Netherlands Reformed [state] Church). At the conclusion of our frank conversations, I asked each of these theologians the same question, "What is the state of the Reformed faith in the Netherlands today?" Each responded in the same way, and with almost the same words: "*Het wordt donker*" ("It becomes dark").

I attempted also to get to the theological department of the Free University in Amsterdam, in order to speak with a theologian of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* (Reformed Churches in the Netherlands, GKN). But the students at the Free, who by that time already had abandoned everything Abraham Kuyper taught, including anti-revolutionary principles, except for his doctrine of common grace, had chosen that day for "*een ruzie*" (literally, a quarrel; in this case a revolution against the authorities of the Free University). The students had shut the Free down in order to show their solidarity with Marxist socialism. Although I pleaded with the ring-leader, who looked like one of the wilder sansculottes, that I had come all the way from the United States to visit the theological faculty, he would not let me pass.

This is the university Kuyper founded on "Reformed principles." The darkness of the churches casts shadows over the schools.

In the past twenty-five years, the darkness has deepened in all the Reformed churches in the Netherlands.

It is the darkness of willful unbelief.

It is the darkness of deliberate departure from the Reformed faith and life of the "Three Forms of Unity," the church order of Dordt, and the Reformed tradition.

It is the doctrinal and ethical darkness of the falling away of the churches in the last days that the apostle foretold in II Thessalonians 2:3: "That day [the day of the coming of Christ] shall not come, except there come a falling away first."

Since this darkness is that of those who claim, or once claimed, to be Reformed, since it is the darkness of churches that are the spiritual mothers of many who read the *Standard Bearer*, and since the other Reformed periodicals in North America, including the magazines of churches that are in sister-church, or other close, relations with the apostate or apostatizing churches in the Netherlands, curiously neglect to inform their readers of the apostasy of the Dutch churches, the *Standard Bearer* informs its readership of the deepening darkness over Reformed Netherlands.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN)

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) are no more. On May 1, 2004, they committed ecclesiastical and spiritual suicide. With the *Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (the Netherlands Reformed Church — the state church of the Netherlands) and a Lutheran church, they formed a new merger-church, the Protestant Church of the Netherlands (PKN). The new church has repudiated "The Three Forms of Unity" as its confessional basis, as well as the church order of Dordt. It is no Reformed church at all, not even in name. On the contrary, it boasts of being a "pluralist church." In the PKN, all beliefs are welcome, including the denial of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith. Even the Reformed faith of "The Three Forms of Unity" is tolerated. The PKN even recognizes "The Three Forms of Unity" as ancient and antiquated symbols of a by-gone faith. But the PKN forbids those who do hold the Reformed faith (and some still claim to hold the Reformed faith) to confess the Reformed faith as the one

and only true faith, or to condemn the many other, conflicting faiths in the church as false.

In the constitution of the PKN is an article approving homosexual relationships and practice.

The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), which joined in the merger that formed the PKN, had their origins in the reforming movement of 1834 known as the "*Afscheiding*" (Secession), under the leadership of H. de Cock, and in the reforming movement of 1886 known as the "*Doleantie*" (Sorrowing), under the leadership of A. Kuyper. Once, these churches were glorious with the light of the Reformed faith and life. For this faith, they were persecuted, and gladly suffered. Over the past half century or so, they fell away from the truth, and thus from Christ. They abandoned predestination; criticized Holy Scripture, beginning with Genesis 1-11; questioned, or allowed their theologians to question, every doctrine of the Christian faith, including the satisfaction of the cross; and conformed their lives to the ungodly world. Now they are no more. They died. Such was their death as true churches of Christ—for this is the nature of apostasy—that they took new form as the whore of antichrist.

Seven congregations—only seven congregations, out of more than eight hundred—of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN) refused to go along into the PKN. They call themselves the Continuing Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

The Christian Reformed Church in North America, determined to maintain relations with the departed GKN, now has ecumenical relations with the apostate PKN.

The Reformed Alliance (the Bond)

Very much involved in the merger that formed the PKN was an organization known as the Reformed Alliance (*Gereformeerde Bond*). The Alliance was a large, structured group within the state

church of the Netherlands, the Netherlands Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*). The Alliance was made up of those in the apostate state church who wanted to be Reformed in doctrine and life, but refused to leave the state church. As leaders of the Alliance were fond of saying, in explanation of their remaining in the corrupt state church, "*Mijn moeder is een hoer, maar zij is mijn moeder*" ("My mother is a whore, but she is my mother"). Rather than to leave the apostate state church, the Alliance formed itself as an "*ecclesiola in ecclesia*" (a "little [true] church within the institution of the large [false] church"). Its purpose was to reform the state church from within. The Alliance justified its remaining in the state church by appealing to the fact that the state church still formally acknowledged "The Three Forms of Unity" as its creeds, although the state church paid absolutely no attention to these creeds whatsoever and, in fact, trampled them underfoot.

In the merger of the state church, the GKN, and the Lutheran church to form the PKN, the Alliance in the end decided to go along. The Alliance is now part of a church that has formally renounced the Reformed confessions as the basis of the church, including the church order of Dordt; that permits both faith and unbelief in its congregations and seminaries; and that explicitly approves homosexuality. The Alliance, which once gave a sound witness to the truth, despite its impossible position within the state church, is now swallowed up in a false church. By decision of the Alliance itself!

In this shameful end of the Alliance, there is a judgment of God. The tactic of trying to live as a small, semi-structured, isolated group within the institution of a departing church is not the biblical and Reformed way of opposing false doctrine and wickedness of life in a denomination of churches. Neither is it the way of maintaining the true

unity of the church. Therefore, it does not work. The result is never the reformation of the unfaithful institution, but always the eventual destruction of the small, faithful group.

One ray of light shines through the darkness of the demise of the Alliance. Some one hundred congregations associated with the Alliance, under the courageous leadership of forty or fifty ministers, refused to join the PKN. They have felt themselves bound in their consciences before God to maintain the Reformed faith on the basis of "The Three Forms of Unity" and to be governed by the church order of Dordt. This new denomination (which claims to be the true continuation of the Netherlands Reformed Church) has taken the name, *Hersteld Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk* (Re-established Netherlands Reformed Church). However, on appeal by the PKN against the use of this name by the faithful remnant, a civil court has just ruled in favor of the PKN.

The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (CGKN)

When Abraham Kuyper in 1892 accomplished the union of his "*Doleantie*" (Sorrowing) churches with the "*Afscheiding*" (Secession) churches, to form the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands (GKN), a few congregations of the "*Afscheiding*" tradition remained outside the union. They were determined to maintain the distinctive doctrinal and church political heritage of the "Secession" of 1834. These congregations have become the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands.

These churches are not to be confused with the Christian Reformed Church in North America. Although their names are similar, the two denominations have no relation to each other. The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have a sister-church relation with the Free Reformed Churches in North America.

The Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands have for a long time countenanced three distinct theological mentalities, and virtually three distinct groups, within the denomination. The right wing is mystical and experiential, concentrating on one's spiritual experiences rather than on sound doctrine and the faith that knows and trusts the sound doctrine of the gospel. The left wing is liberal — always questioning and subtly undermining the doctrine and life of the Reformed faith. The center is made up of what the Dutch call the "middle orthodoxy."

Today, the left wing of the Christian Reformed Churches in the Netherlands has become aggressive and bold. Theologians publish books criticizing Scripture, beginning (as unbelieving criticism of the word of God in the church always does) with Genesis 1-11. It is well-known that higher criticism, that is, unbelief with regard to the inspired word of God, is entrenched in the Christian Reformed seminary at Apeldoorn, and has been for a long time. Already in 1981, a synod of the Reformed Churches in the Netherlands ("liberated") admonished the Christian Reformed Churches for tolerating the higher critical views of Scripture of Prof. B. J. Oosterhof and Prof. J. P. Versteeg. More recently, the prominent Christian Reformed theologian Dr. B. Loonstra has published a spate of books that effectively deny that all Scripture is God-breathed, as Scripture claims to be (II Tim. 3:16).

In demonstration of the truth that false doctrine results in depraved ethics, indeed, probably has depraved ethics as its purpose, the same Dr. B. Loonstra has just published a book approving homosexual relationships and advocating that the Christian Reformed Churches welcome such practicing homosexuals as members of the churches. The title of the book is *Hij heeft een vriend. Homorelaties in de christelijke gemeente* (English

translation: *He has a Friend: Homosexual Relations in the Christian [Reformed] Congregation*). In the book, Loonstra contends that “homosexual relationships in love and faithfulness are lawful” (my translation of the Dutch).


God’s giving of members of the Christian Reformed Churches over to a reprobate mind, as the apostle describes the thinking that approves homosexuality in Romans 1:28, extends beyond the individual theologian. A Christian Reformed consistory in Zwolle has publicized its decision that homosexual members of the congregation who live

together with someone of the same sex are to be recognized as brothers and sisters “in full rights [of church membership].” According to explicit consistorial decision, this includes that these practicing homosexuals may partake of the Lord’s Supper.

There is no discipline. Under pressure, Loonstra deemed it prudent for the time being to “withdraw” his book. This satisfied the opposition. The heretic is not deposed. The consistory at Zwolle was merely advised to “recall” its decision. It was not required to re-

pent of its sin of publicly calling that which God in Romans 1:26-28 calls “vile affections” and “shameful” behavior, godly desire and practice.

If a leading theologian in a Reformed denomination dares to publish his approval of homosexual practice, and has no hesitation to urge his denomination to approve this depravity, and if a consistory is bold publicly to welcome practicing homosexuals to the holy supper of the Lord, the denomination is far gone in its departure from Jesus Christ.

(Next: The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands [“liberated”]) 

Go Ye Into all the World

Rev. Jason Kortering

Evangelism in the Established Church (4) *Practicing Personal Evangelism*

Part C, How to do it

There are many passages of the Bible that shed light on the subject before us: how do I go about sharing the gospel with my neighbor? We will consider a few of them.

We first take a look at Luke 10:30-37. This is the well-known passage in which Jesus answers the question of the lawyer, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus posed another question, “What is written in the law?” The lawyer summarized it correctly: love God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. This young man wanted to justify himself, so he continued, “Who is my neighbor?” In answer to this question, Jesus

told the parable of the Good Samaritan. Obviously, the answer is that my neighbor is anyone whom God places upon my pathway who is in need. We act neighborly when we meet that need.

In the parable, it was the Samaritan who helped the wounded Jew, in distinction from the priest who passed by on the other side. The Samaritans were despised by the Jews, including this lawyer, but he was the one who acted neighborly in caring for the Jew by anointing his wounds and paying his expenses. By this, Jesus explained to the lawyer what the keeping of the law is all about. It is the act of loving the neighbor, any neighbor, by showing mercy to him in his hour of need. This may be a physical or a spiritual need.

The application for personal witnessing is obvious. What greater need does our neighbor have than salvation? The proof of our keeping the law of love is our personal

witnessing to those who cross our pathway who are not Christians. We meet his needs by bringing the good news of salvation to him. We don’t judge who he is. We don’t put forth the effort because we think we will be successful. We simply meet his needs as we have opportunity when we encounter him on the pathway of life.

Paul’s methodology of bringing the gospel, as recorded in I Thessalonians 1:7-12, is helpful. Since there is a close relationship between preaching the gospel and personal witnessing, we can learn from this passage. According to Acts 17, Paul persisted in bringing the gospel to the Thessalonians, even after he suffered persecution from many in the community. This opposition did not cause Paul to go “soft on the gospel.” He tells us that he continued to bring the gospel, “not as pleasing men” (v. 4); “neither at any time used we flattering words,

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Previous article in this series: April 15, 2006, p. 333.

as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness" (v. 5); "nor of men sought we glory" (v. 6). Paul did not change the message to make it less offensive when he dealt with this opposition. Notice what he says about the method or approach he used. "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children" (v. 7). He was urgent and sincere: "Being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear to us" (v. 8). More than anything, Paul confirmed the gospel with his own godly living, "Ye are witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblameable we behaved ourselves among you that believe" (vv. 10-12).

Obviously, the first application of this passage is to the preaching of the gospel, whether on the mission field or in the established church. Yet, we can learn something from this passage for personal witnessing as well. We must be strongly convicted of the message of the gospel and never compromise it just to make it more acceptable to people. We must care for the souls of those with whom we share the gospel, even to the point of personal sacrifice. A harsh, confrontational, and judgmental approach only closes doors; we must also be gentle and sensitive to people's present beliefs or values. This applies particularly to our approach. If they reject the gospel eventually, then we have to respond accordingly. Our walk and our talk must harmonize if we are to be effective.

One more passage is I Corinthians 9:19-23. In this letter to the Corinthians, Paul reminds them that he made himself servant to all. To the Jews, he became a Jew, to those without law as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ) that he might gain them that are without law. To the weak, he became as

weak, to gain them. He said he was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some. And this he did for the gospel's sake, that he might be partaker thereof with them. This is the classic passage that speaks especially of cross-cultural mission work. Paul, the great missionary, understood what it meant to be all things to all people without compromising the gospel. Sensitivity is evident in his writing this letter; he learned that from all his experiences.

Paul, the great missionary, understood what it meant to be all things to all people without compromising the gospel.

The same things are important when we do personal evangelism with a non-Christian, who more than likely comes from a culture quite different from our own covenant life. We must take time to study his culture and religion, learn where we have similarities that might form bridges for conversation (as Paul did in Athens, Acts 17). Harshly judging him as wrong is not the right approach. Rather, we have to be as much like him as we can be without compromise. This is the challenge for all of us when we do personal evangelism. The goal is to "gain him" for Christ.

As we look more specifically at proper methodology, we can discard quickly a few wrong methods. We reject *Confrontational Evangelism*, or, as it is sometimes called, *Decisionism Evangelism*. This is the popular approach of those who hold to Arminian theology. It has come to expression in the "Four Spiritual Laws," which, we are told, if used properly can convert a person in a few minutes. The goal is to persuade people to accept Christ as their own Savior. A person is assured of everlasting life by saying "yes" at the right moment. It is sealed by a brief prayer. Sadly, this builds egos for the people sharing the gospel and leaves the so-called convert deceived.

Another approach for personal

evangelism is called *Accommodation Evangelism*. The goal here is to remove from the gospel message everything that might offend and include everything that makes it attractive. You are familiar with this approach in the megachurches. Just come the way you are, get a cup of coffee, listen to some rock group, and perhaps listen to a well-trained entertainer who knows how to popularize Christian issues. On a more personal level, this is done by reducing

the gospel to some comic book, by assuring people that there is truth in all religions, we just have to find the common ground among them. This approach is used by sports heroes who autograph baseballs on Sunday afternoon.

Then there is the *Salesmanship Evangelism*. The gospel is a product that is for sale, and you can use every form of advertising and salesmanship to persuade a person to become a Christian, just as you would to sell a used car. Slick ads, clever techniques, a Bible set forth in modern jargon, make up the components of the next sale, persuading people to buy into Christianity.

The Bible makes clear that God's method of saving souls is the *sowing of seeds*. Jesus sets this forth in Matthew 13:3-9 and 18-23 in the well-known parable of the sower. The Word of God, like seed, is sown and falls on different kinds of hearers. Paul uses the same language of sowing in I Corinthians 3:6-9: "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase." The first application of this is to the preaching of the gospel. Under the preaching, the same method applies to personal witnessing. When we talk to others about the truth of God's Word and use God's Word in our evangelism, the Word of God is set forth, and as a seed it is sown in the hearts of the hearer according to God's will

and purpose. This idea allows us to go slowly in our personal evangelism. Seeds sown take time to germinate and grow. We can begin sowing in the hearts of children. In God's own time it will bear fruit. We can use the help of others, books, literature, Bible study groups, and ultimately the Word preached itself.

From the perspective of sowing seeds, our personal evangelism can be done in two ways, by means of *Contact Evangelism* or by *Friendship Evangelism*. The difference between these two methods is the occasion for sharing. By contact evangelism we refer to the sudden, one-time opportunity that we have to be in the presence of another person whom God has caused to cross paths with us. How do we witness to such a person? By friendship evangelism we have the advantage of repeated opportunities of contact, and we can build upon them actually to establish a certain form of friendship that gives its own opportunities for sharing the gospel. Both of these methods are useful and under God's blessing will bear fruit in the heart and life of the person who receives the Word of God.

When we use *Contact Evangelism*, the points of contact vary a great deal. It may be as casual as standing in line for check-out at the shopping center. It might be at a business convention when you chat with someone over a cup of coffee. Opportunity can jump out at you when you distribute religious material in the neighborhood of your church. It might be when you are hospitalized and another person is in the same room as you are. You get the idea. These are momentary opportunities, when we can sow the seed of the Word of God in someone's life. You may never see the person again. Your pathways cross for this moment. Jesus calls you to be the Good Samaritan in the life of this person. Somehow you are alert and aware that there must be some opportunity to

let this person know you are a Christian and that your faith makes a difference in your life and that you desire the same for him or her.

You can appreciate the concept of sowing seeds, for that is what you do. You sow a thought, an act of kindness, a word of encouragement, share some hope in what seems defeat. All these efforts speak loudly to people. You may never know what effect they had on them because you may never see them again. Yet, many people testify that they were influenced by just such a word from a Christian in such a casual moment.

What can we do in such a situation? Obviously, I have to be brief here, but let me give you something to ponder and, hopefully, to put into practice in your own way. Try to turn a conversation towards spiritual truth. This is most easy if you work at it and practice it. You can adore God for the beautiful weather in the presence of others. You can put a Christian perspective on the day's events, especially if it attracts attention. You can ask a person if he is a Christian, and take off from there. You can ask questions and gain knowledge, so that you can address a specific Christian truth that is very precious to you. It is very helpful to carry a tract that you can give to someone. The subject must deal with Christianity and the simple gospel message. You should be able to express in a few words why you are a Christian and that you have a burden for this person, if he demonstrates that he is not saved. You might inquire whether this person has any interest in learning the Christian faith, which is of course the Reformed faith. It is helpful to be able to recommend to him or her a book to read for further study, or you can always refer them to the Internet and your church's web page, which has loads of good material. You might exchange addresses for further contact. I still carry with me

business cards, a habit I formed in Singapore, where everyone has them and exchanges them.

Then we also have *Friendship Evangelism*. Here we must exercise Christian caution, as friendship can quickly be used wrongfully. The idea here is to befriend someone whom you see often, with a view to getting closer to him and to influence his life in a Christian manner. This can be someone as close as a fellow member of the church who is struggling with some doctrine or practice of the church. Hopefully such a one is not an unbeliever, but rather a hurting Christian. It is always best to practice speaking about our faith to those who are closest to us on a daily basis. We speak about the gospel and its meaning and application within our Christian homes. We reach out to others in the church, and school setting. As we do this we feel comfortable talking about

This is most easy if you work at it and practice it.

our faith and it becomes natural to do this with non-Christians who cross our pathway frequently. Think of your neighbor who lives next door to

you. Think of your fellow worker on the job or fellow students in the university. Maybe you meet someone repeatedly in some sports situation, business meetings, clubhouse, social event, or whatever.

How can we reach out to such people and sow the seeds of the Word of God? It may be that you start out as we mentioned above. In this situation you have the advantage of follow up because you may be able to see each other again and build on past contact. The most important thing to keep in mind is that action speaks louder than words. This is critical because the more you see of each other the more you may see faults and bad habits and even sins. If we are going to sow the seeds of Scripture, we must put forth every effort that our life testifies we are Christians and that we walk the talk, as they say. This


is the point of I Peter 3:15, 16, where we are exhorted to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts and be ready to explain to others the reason for our hope. Because the goal is repeated contact, we must engage in pleasant conversation. No one wants to talk repeatedly with a grouch or a pious critic who makes them feel uncomfortable. You have to prepare the soil by making yourself attractive as a Christian and projecting yourself in such a way that this person is envious of your life as a Christian. Our faith and practice is restrictive but liberating in a good sense of the word. We must try to take an interest in the neighbor's life. We can do things together that allow us to interact, without compromising our faith. You figure it out; there are opportunities galore. The idea is

If we are going to sow the seeds of Scripture, we must put forth every effort that our life testifies we are Christians....

that casual conversation may lead to more serious interest and hopefully to a more systematic discussion of some aspect of Christian faith and life. You must not rush this process, it may take years, but you are available and interested in the personal life of this neighbor.

Many converted Christians have mentioned that a one-on-one Bible Study was most helpful. When you have built up some trust in each other and some sort of friendship, you can suggest that the person come along to a Bible Study in the church or some public meeting that is a bit casual and not as formal as a worship service. Taking them along to church is the golden gate for which we all strive. Notice I didn't say invite them to church, but take them along. Make arrangements to sit with

them and to help them through the service, as it is very difficult for someone to worship for the first time in his life. If this goes well, the person is ready for a pre-membership class taught by the pastor or elders.

Two things are important to emphasize in this connection. Teaching is the key to sowing seeds and making disciples. The Word of God is the textbook, and the Holy Spirit the author of life. We are the agents, and must humbly serve God in this capacity, praying with all diligence. Secondly, this is a process of learning and, like sowing seeds, there are no shortcuts. The seed needs moisture and warmth to germinate. It needs sunshine and rain to grow. And it takes a whole season to ripen and harvest. The seed of the Word is the same, and we must be like the Christian farmer who waits long and patiently for the harvest, which comes through the early and latter rain (James 5:7). 

All Around Us

Rev. Gise VanBaren

■ "Yes, Jackie, God Is 'Sexist'"

Frequently e-mails are sent questioning certain doctrinal positions stated in pamphlets that appear on the prca.org web site. Some object to certain statements in the pamphlets. Others ridicule some doctrinal positions that are taught. (Though others do express agreement.) One short note of interest was the following:

Subject:
Article on roles in marriage
Hey,

I was wondering do you believe that a wife should really submit to her husband? Does the bible actually say that God wanted women to have a lesser role than men? Or was it a role put on to the women based on the way the

society was back then. If not then does that mean God is or was sexist?

I answered the letter via e-mail—but the answer bounced back. The e-mail address was no longer valid. The writer evidently had no wish to receive an answer.

The questions presented have often been raised. They demand answers. I doubt if "Jackie" receives or reads the *Standard Bearer*, but if she does, perhaps she will understand better the scriptural position after reading this answer. At any rate, this is occasion to reflect on some of the objections often raised against proper "roles in marriage."

The questioner asks what I really believe on this issue. What I believe ought not to be the question. The question is: what does the Bible say to this issue? The Bible uses at least two words: the wife must "submit" to and "obey"

her husband. Ephesians 5:22 states: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." Ephesians 5:24 insists: "Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing." Colossians 3:18 says, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord." And in I Peter 3:6 we read of Sarah, the wife of Abraham, who "obeyed" Abraham and called him "lord." She is presented as a proper example for Christian wives.

But is this something true only for the early New Testament church? Or might one say that it is true only as a consequence of the fall of Adam into sin—but now the work of Christ on the cross has removed this "curse"?

Genesis 2 presents God's account of His work in creation. Adam was formed from the dust of the ground. Eve was made from

Rev. VanBaren is a minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Adam's rib. God had said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet (fit) for him." It was on the basis of this creation that Scripture declares in I Timothy 2:11-13, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve."

There are several remarks that must be made in this connection. "Obedience" and "submission" do not mean or imply that a husband may demand anything of his wife. Surely he may not demand of her that which is wrong, that is, contrary to God's Word. Scripture itself teaches that in Acts 5:29. When it is a question of obeying God or the contrary word of man, one must obey God. In the creation of Eve, God made a "help meet (fit)" for him. That implies that each complements the other. Together they can carry out the commands God gave—including to be fruitful and multiply.

It is also true that God prescribes the manner of the rule and authority of the husband. We read in Ephesians 5:22-23, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body." The apostle continues in verses 25 and 28, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.... So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." Notice that Scripture here does not state that man is to rule over but to love his wife. It is the kind of love that Christ has shown to His church. He gave His life for the church. So ought man to rule his wife. He cannot show such love—then treat her as a slave. He cannot demand of her those things that are contrary to God's commands.

Does this teaching make God to be "sexist," either then when this Scripture was written, or now today? That is an interesting question. In my Webster's Unabridged (older edition) Dictionary, the word sexist is not found. In recent dictionaries one does find definitions for sexist. It is: "Discrimination based on gender, especially against women; (2) attitudes, conditions, or behaviors that promote stereotyping of social roles based on gender."

"Sexist" appears to be used only in a pejorative sense. It is "sexist" to insist that the husband is to be head in the home. It is "sexist" to teach that normally the man goes to the workplace while the woman maintains the home. It is "sexist" when Scripture insists that the woman is to keep silence in the church.

If all of this is part of "sexism," then God is indeed "sexist." The Christian, however, does not see this role of women to be bad or evil. God created the differences between man and woman. He did not create woman in a "lesser role," though many today would say so – if Genesis 2 is true.

God created woman capable of bearing children. Though there is indeed the pain of childbearing, yet what a wonder that is! Not even the most knowledgeable of scientists can come anywhere close to duplicating this wonder. More wonderful still is the fact that God gathers His people, born of women, in the line of generations. The godly mother has the distinct privilege of bearing and training children in the truths of God's Word. She is decidedly privileged to be instrumental in preparing them for their place in everlasting glory. One woman, Mary, had that greatest of all honors, that she conceived and gave birth to the Christ-child.

Some speak of the "lesser role" for women. Only one who rejects the testimony of the Word of God would say that. She has a most

blessed role in marriage – in many ways more blessed than that of her husband. Truly she is a help meet for him. She has as well his love – for he would give his life for her. And she has the honor of raising covenant seed who in turn will be godly mothers and faithful husbands. What "role" could be more honorable than that?

Can anyone imagine a Christian husband in the day of his death saying, "I have one major regret in my life: that I did not obtain more earthly goods for my family and did not spend more time in the office for them"?

And the Christian wife: "I rejoiced greatly that I found my children walking in truth, as we have received commandment from the Father" (II John 1:4).

■ In Memoriam

Yesterday (at the time of the writing of this article) was Memorial Day. It is a day set aside by our government to commemorate the sad fact that many young men of this country died in warfare "in defense of our freedom." We are saddened by that loss of life. The Christian surely looks forward to the time when "war shall be no more." But that takes place only when Christ returns on the clouds of heaven. Present wars serve to remind us that the signs of Christ's soon return are seen.

We hear, almost unendingly, statistics concerning the death of soldiers in Iraq. It is reported that last April there were 64 servicemen killed there (a total then of 2,399 through April since the war began). Those are sad, even frightening, statistics. Here in Michigan the flag is ordered by the governor to be lowered for a day each time a Michigander is killed.

Without meaning to minimize the terrible fact of war and death of so many young men, we find it striking that there are other statistics that never gain such prominence on news today. In 2005 there were 16,972 deaths on our high-

ways directly related to drunken drivers. That's 1,414 for the month of April. These deaths were direct consequences of violating the laws concerning driving while drunk. The number of servicemen killed in April is miniscule in comparison to that.

That brings up another set of statistics more shocking still: the killing of the unborn, not by "terrorists," but by Americans. The abortionists, "good" Americans all, killed approximately 1,293,000 babies before birth in 2005. That would be approximately 107,750 per month. Imagine the outcry in our land if 2/3 of our armed forces were killed in one month in Iraq!! Awful though the death of the soldiers is, it represents only a very, very small number compared to those slain in our own land. Many deplore the death of young men in the army – for they did not get the opportunity to live a "full life." Yet most of those aborted babes did not make it out of the womb alive.

When God's command is broken (thou shalt not kill), soon life becomes disposable. The weak and infirm and those with deformities are simply disposed of. It becomes a matter of "choice" – not even of the individual involved, but of another party. The *Daily Mail* (a British newspaper found on the Internet) of May 28, 2006 had a shocking report about some of the reasons for abortions in the British Isles:

**Babies aborted
for not being perfect**

The ethical storm over abortions has been renewed as it emerged that terminations are being carried out for minor, treatable birth defects.

Late terminations have been performed in recent years because the babies had club feet, official figures show.

Other babies were destroyed because they had webbed fingers or extra digits.

Such defects can often be cor-

rected with a simple operation or physiotherapy.

The revelation sparked fears that abortion is increasingly being used to satisfy couples' desire for the 'perfect' baby.

A leading doctor said people were right to be 'totally shocked' that abortions were being carried out for such conditions.

Campaigners warned we are turning into a society that can no longer tolerate imperfection. Doctors were recently told they can now screen IVF embryos to try to weed out inherited cancers.

Ethical groups fear parents are opting for abortions because they are not told of the support and help available if they continued with the pregnancy.

Details of the terminations emerged as new figures revealed an alarming rise in the use of an abortion pill that has been linked to 10 deaths.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that between 1996 and 2004, 20 babies were aborted after 20 weeks because they had a club foot.

It is one of the most common birth defects in Britain, affecting one in 1,000 babies each year. That means around 600 to 700 babies are born annually in the UK with the problem, which causes the feet to point downwards and in severe cases can cause a limp.

However, it can be corrected without surgery using splints, plaster casts and boots. Naomi Davis, a leading paediatrician at Manchester Children's Hospital who specializes in correcting club feet, said: 'I think it is reasonable to be totally shocked that abortion is being offered for this.'

'It is entirely treatable. I can only think it is lack of information.'

Figures also show that four babies were aborted since 1996 because they were found to have webbed fingers or extra digits, which can be sorted out with simple surgery.

Remarkable pictures recently have revealed how at just 23 weeks a baby in the womb appears to smile, yawn and flinch in pain.

In 2004 it emerged a baby was aborted at 28 weeks after scans showed it had a cleft palate. Curate Joanna Jepson tried to ensure criminal charges were brought against the two doctors involved but the authorities last year decided against prosecution.

She however vowed to continue in her fight to make terminations illegal after 24 weeks and to ensure cleft palates were not included within the term 'serious handicap' and used to justify late abortions.

Ms Jepson reacted angrily to news of the club foot abortions.

'The law was not designed for this,' she said. 'Actions like these are fostering a disposable attitude to human life and I'm extremely concerned it is going on.'

'I am appalled that the medical profession is allowing or even suggesting abortions for these conditions.'

Sue Banton, founder of the group Steps for parents of children with foot disorders, said last year one couple decided to terminate a pregnancy at 25 weeks after discovering their baby would have a section of foot missing.

'We gave them other families to talk to, but they just didn't want to know,' she said. 'It is terrible.'

'I know lots of perfectly nice people with this condition and you just can't imagine them not being here.'

But, sadly, most abortions are performed simply as a matter of "birth control." The "accident" of conception of an unwanted baby can be taken care of by a simple surgical procedure (or by taking a pill). No wonder that euthanasia soon follows in a society – and soon after that, a society that will decide who will live and who will die. All this points to the increasingly difficult times in which we live. May God grant faithfulness to His church in these evil days.



Report of Classis East

May 10, 2006
Byron Center
Protestant Reformed Church

Classis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 10, 2006 at the Byron Center PRC. The churches were all represented by two delegates. Rev. Nathan


Brummel chaired this session of classis.

The business of classis was routine and its time in session was short. As was mentioned at the meeting, this is evidence of the peace and harmony that currently exist in the congregations of Classis East.

Classis received the report of

the Stated Clerk. Classical appointments were given to Covenant and Kalamazoo. Expenses of classis amounted to \$1,297.60.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 13, 2006 at the Southwest PRC.

Respectfully submitted,
Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk 

News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Congregation Activities

Our First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI is sponsoring a summer workshop series for the members of their congregation on Personal Witnessing. Ten sessions, begun on June 7, have been planned for the summer. The members of First who are taking part in the workshop are using the book "Tell The Truth," by Will Metzger, as their guide. Each class follows the same format. First the whole group discusses a part or section of the book, led by Rev. J. Slopsema, pastor at First. Then the group breaks up into smaller sections to practice what they learned that evening and to encourage each other. First's goal in all of this is to become more effective in personal witnessing.

This summer the Junior Fellowship Society of the Hudsonville, MI PRC worked on a continuation of their church's "In Your Heart" summer Bible memory program. As before, everyone in the congregation is encouraged to participate, from toddler to retiree. Hudsonville members could choose either

what was described as an easy memory challenge, by learning selected verses from Colossians 1 & 3, Ephesians 6, or Psalm 139, or a more difficult memory program, by committing to memory any two chapters from those mentioned above. The real reward in all of this was the great blessing of the Word in the hearts of the members of the church.

The renovations approved at a recent congregational meeting at the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI are starting to take shape. The new roof on their annex is finished, with new carpet and doors to follow. Their new stair-lift will be installed soon.

The Covenant Ladies Circle of First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada sponsored a morning of fellowship for the ladies of their own congregation and neighboring Immanuel PRC in Lacombe on May 31. Coffee was provided at 10:00 A.M., followed at 10:30 by a meditation entitled "Ruth: A Faithful Servant in God's Kingdom," presented by Rev. J. Marcus, pastor at First. Lunch followed.

The Choral Society of Grace PRC in Standale, MI presented a program of sacred music shortly after their morning worship service on May 21.

Catechism students of the Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL invited their parents and other interested members of the congregation to their annual end-of-year program and dinner beginning at 5:00 P.M. on May 22. The catechumens sang, played the piano, and recited passages from Scripture and our confessions. One young man from their Essentials class gave a speech meant to encourage the students and their parents. This activity was followed, at around 6:00, by a dinner of pizza, ice cream, and doughnuts.

The combined choirs of our Doon and Hull, Iowa PRCs presented a concert of praise to our heavenly Father in the auditorium of the Edgerton, MN PRC Sunday afternoon, May 28.

The deacons of Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI once again this spring sponsored their annual Spring Food & Gift Certificate Drive for the needy within their own congregation. Members of Georgetown were invited to drop off their food donations in their church kitchen, or place gift certificates in their collection plates any time between May 28 and June 18.

A special congregational meeting was held at the Trinity PRC in

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

Hudsonville, MI on May 15 to consider a proposal concerning renovations to their Fellowship Building to accommodate the Hudsonville PR Preschool. There would be no cost involved in this for Trinity. They simply were approving the modifications to their building, while the cost would be born by the Preschool. The proposal passed.

After the evening service of May 21, the congregation of the Peace PRC in Lansing, IL was invited to stay and enjoy an evening of song presented by their Choral Society. Along with the numbers presented by the choir, the Young People's Society also held a singspiration. A collection was taken for this year's Young People's Convention.

Spring means cleanup time in many of our churches. Congregations routinely get together to clean up the inside and outside of their church property. Such was the case at the Wingham, Ontario, PRC on May 24. Everyone who was able was invited to come out and

help to clean the church. Members simply had to bring a bucket, a rag, and lots of elbow grease.

Evangelism Activities

Monday, May 15, the Evangelism Society of Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids invited their congregation to participate in a "Door-to-Door Project." Plans called for the volunteers to meet at Grand Rapids Christian High School in the early evening and then proceed to place information regarding Southeast on doors in the neighborhood.

The Evangelism Committee of Bethel PRC in Roselle, IL organized an outreach to their neighborhood to make known the Reformed faith. Some fifteen members came out to help, which included several children. Bethel distributed over a hundred packets that included three messages on CD that explained the gospel, the atonement, and the resurrection of Christ. Also included were flyers inviting neighbors to Bethel's upcoming Ascension and Pentecost services.


Mission Activities

On his furlough, missionary Rev. A. Spriensma planned to give several audio-visual presentations of the work of our churches in the Philippines. Plans were to make a presentation in Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, Indiana on May 28; at the AIM Conference at Eastside Christian School in Grand Rapids, MI on June 17; at Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, MI on June 18; and in Northwest Iowa on June 25.

Minister Activities

Seminarian Nathan Langerak, having just completed his third year in our seminary, will begin his six-month internship under Rev. K. Koole and the Grandville, MI PRC beginning on July 1, D.V.

Rev. R. Kleyen declined the call extended to him from the Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. J. Slopsema declined the call extended to him from the Kalamazoo, MI PRC to serve as their next pastor. 

Announcements

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 11, 2006, our parents, **BOB and KATHY KNOTT**, celebrated 30 years of marriage. We rejoice with them on reaching this milestone, and we give thanks to God for His love and mercy throughout the years. We have been truly blessed by parents who brought us up in the fear of the Lord and who have been an example of what marriage founded in Christ truly is, and we pray that God will continue to bless them in the years to come. "Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" (Psalm 30:4).

- ✿ Jennifer Knott
- ✿ Katie Knott
- ✿ Aaron and Melinda Knott
- Annaliese

Grand Rapids, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With praise and thanksgiving to God, on August 10, 2006, our parents and grandparents, **HENRY and MARY KIPPERS**, celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. God has been the center of their home through celebrations and sorrows. We give praise to God for giving them the past 40 years and pray that He continue to be with them and bless them in the years to come. "He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellence of Jacob whom He loved. Selah" (Psalm 47:4).

- ✿ Robert & Carolyn Kippers
- Eric, Gregory, Ryan, Amy
- ✿ Robert & Patricia McEwen
- ✿ Brian & Elaine Onderwater
- Naomi
- ✿ Charlene Connelly
- Chondra, Liam, Jordyn

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 5, 2006, our parents and grandparents, **AUGUST and MARGARET JEAN HOLLEMA**, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary. We give thanks for the covenant instruction, care, and love they have always shown us. We thank God for giving them these years together, and pray that He will continue to bless and preserve them in the upcoming years. "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another and shall declare thy mighty acts" (Psalm 145:3, 4).

- ✿ Daniel and Diane DeRooy
- Christopher
- ✿ David and Esther Hollema
- Alexander, Zachary

Oakland, New Jersey

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The students, faculty, and staff of Covenant Christian High School extend their Christian sympathy to Mr. and Mrs. Gary Noorman and their family, and to the grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins of

PAUL NOORMAN,

whom God took home to be with his Savior in glory. We pray that God will give you comfort and peace during this difficult time. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan extend their Christian sympathy to elder John Cleveland, his wife, Carolyn, and their children in the death of John's mother,

MRS. JUNE CLEVELAND.

May they find comfort in the words of 1 Thessalonians 4:14: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

Rev. James Laning, President
Harry Langerak, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Faith Protestant Reformed Church express their deepest sympathy to Robert and Dorothy Noorman, Rick and Sue Noorman, Keith and Sara Noorman, Michael and Jamie Noorman, and Steve and Denise Uittenbogaard in the passing away of their grandson, nephew, and cousin,

PAUL NOORMAN,

son of Gary and Joyce Noorman.

May the God of all comfort sustain the family in their sorrow. "The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deuteronomy 33:27a).

Richard Flikkema, Clerk

NOTICE!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 13, 2006 in Southwest Protestant Reformed Church, Grandville, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 14, 2006.

Jon J. Huiskens,
Stated Clerk

NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by Hull PRC in Hull, Iowa, on Wednesday, September 6, 2006, at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 7, 2006. An officebearers' conference will be held on Tuesday, September 5, the Lord willing, on the subject of "The Holy Spirit: True and Co-eternal God." Delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation should notify Hull's clerk, Mr. Don VerMeer, by phone (712) 725-2505, or by e-mail (donver@siebring.com).

Rev. Richard J. Smit,
Stated Clerk of Classis West

OFFICEBEARERS' CONFERENCE

CLASSIS WEST OF THE
PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES
Hull, IA - Tuesday, September 5, 2006

The Holy Spirit: True and Co-eternal God

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, Even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.

John 15:26

9:00 A.M. KEYNOTE ADDRESS

"I Believe in The Holy Ghost": The Church's Confession Regarding the Holy Spirit

Rev. Richard Smit, Pastor of Immanuel PRC, Lacombe, AB

10:30 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.

"Worshiped and Glorified": The Divinity of the Holy Spirit and its Implications for Faith and Life

Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani, Pastor of Bethel PRC, Roselle, IL

12:00 P.M. - Lunch served in the fellowship hall

1:00 P.M. - 2:30 P.M.

"Who Spake by the Prophets": The Work of the Holy Spirit in Salvation and Its Implications for Officebearers

Rev. David Overway, Pastor of Doon PRC, Doon, IL

2:45 P.M. - 4:15 P.M.

"Grieve Not the Spirit": Sins Against the Holy Spirit

Rev. Douglas Kuiper, Pastor of Randolph PRC, Randolph, WI

* All past and present officebearers,
as well as all interested people, are invited to attend.

* After the noon meal,
a freewill offering will be taken to defray expenses.

NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed consistories are hereby informed that the 2006 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Andrew Lanning and Mr. Clayton Spronk candidates for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. They will be eligible for a call on or after July 15, 2006. (Cf. p. 420 for contact information.)

Don Doezeema, Stated Clerk

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 22 our parents,
FRANK and ESTHER BLOCK,
celebrated 45 years of marriage.
We praise God for their godly ex-
ample and faithfulness to Him, and
pray His continued blessing on
them in the years to come. "I will
sing of the mercies of the Lord for
ever: with my mouth will I make
known my faithfulness to all gen-
erations" (Psalm 89:1).

- ✿ Peter and Vicki DeKryger
Brandon, Sam, Kate
- ✿ Tony and Lori Hamstra
Camryn, Lynden
- ✿ Tim and Robin Block
Nolan, Nathan, Paige, Tyler

Grandville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

We are grateful to the Lord for
granting our parents, grandparents,
and great-grandparents,

**DAVE and SUSAN (Kars)
ZYLSTRA**,

55 years of marriage. Their anni-
versary will be celebrated on July
13, 2006, D.V.

Romans 12:12, "Rejoicing in
hope; patient in tribulation; continu-
ing instant in prayer."

- ✿ John and Hilda Zylstra
- ✿ Peter Zylstra (in glory)
- ✿ Martin and Adeline Zylstra
- ✿ Herman and Geraldine Klaassens
- ✿ Clayton and Jacqueline DeGroot
- ✿ Arlene Schmidt
- ✿ Edward and Patricia Huizing
- ✿ Rick and Marsha Span
- ✿ Timothy and Jill Zylstra
- ✿ Joe and Valerie vanGelderens
- ✿ Peter and Rhoda Hendricks
73 grandchildren
22 great-grandchildren

Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congrega-
tion of Kalamazoo Protestant Re-
formed Church express their heart-
felt sympathy to Clarence and
Joanne Vlietstra and to their chil-
dren John & Cheryl Vlietstra, and
Doug Vlietstra on the passing away
of their mother and grandmother,

MRS. JOSEPHINE BALKEMA.

May they be comforted and receive
knowledge with the Word of God
found in Psalm 90: 12. "So teach
us to number our days, that we may
apply our hearts unto wisdom."

Ken Feenstra, vice-president
Tom Kiel, clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation
of the Hull PRC express their Chris-
tian sympathy to Dena Blankes-
poor and to Mr. And Mrs. Alvin
Kooiker and their family in the
death of Dena's sister,

GENEVA HUISMAN.

We find our comfort in the
words of Psalm 40:16, "Let all those
that seek thee rejoice and be glad
in thee, let such as love thy salva-
tion say continually, the Lord be
magnified."

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation
of the Hull PRC extend their Chris-
tian sympathy to Elroy and Chalice
Altena due to the passing of Elroy's
brother,

AUBERY ALTENA.

We are comforted by God's
Word in Psalm 119:76, "Let I pray
thee, thy merciful kindness be for
my comfort, according to thy word
unto thy servant."

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

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Men's Society of Hope
PRC of Walker, MI express their
Christian sympathy to the family in
the death of

PETER PETROELJE.

Peter was a long-time member
of the society and served as its
leader at times. It is the prayer of
the Men's Society that the family
be comforted with the words of
Scripture in Psalm 16:15, "Precious
in the sight of the Lord is the death
of his saints."

John Buiter, President
Neal Meyer, Secretary

Reformed Witness Hour

Topics for July

Date	Topic	Text
July 2	"Building With Sword and Trowel"	Nehemiah 4
July 9	"Ought Ye Not to Walk in the Fear of God?"	Nehemiah 5
July 16	"O God, Strengthen My Hands"	Nehemiah 6
July 23	"Putting Things in Order"	Nehemiah 7
July 30	"The Power of the Pulpit"	Nehemiah 8