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Meditation

Rev. Kenneth Koole

# He Must Increase — John's Self-effacing Confession

*He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled.*

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

The Meditation is the text of the pre-synodical sermon preached by Rev. Koole on June 13, 2005.

*He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John 3:29, 30

**T**his declaration and confession of John the Baptist confronts each of us with a most significant question — what do you live for? For what do you live as a professing Christian? ...as an officebearer? What is the governing emphasis and concern of your life?

How do we look at ourselves

in relationship to Christ and to each other? Is our attitude like that of John the Baptist as expressed here in this passage and text?

What do we live for? Honor? Recognition? And if recognition is denied us, at least the amount we think we deserve, are we angry? Wounded? Bitter! Why should I continue to extend myself if this is all the thanks I get? Does anyone know all the things I do for others as a believer, as a member of the

church, as an officebearer? They do not appreciate me half enough!

Beloved brothers, to our chagrin and shame, is it too often more about 'me,' and the recognition I get or the lack thereof, than I would care to admit? If the honor and recognition goes to others, does it rankle and disturb? Others before self? How can that be!

Or do we consider this as honor enough — I have been counted worthy to be of service to my Lord. To serve Him in any capacity at all is more honor than I deserve. That the Lord should consider taking in marriage the hand of the church wherein I am a member, and that I should be invited to His wedding ceremony and reception at all and have the right to stand with the guests of honor, be it at the door in the last available seat, is more honor than I deserve.

As for recognition by men, what difference does that make! That the Lord has made room for me, knows me by name, counts me as a personal friend, and commends my labors, however feeble and imperfect — is not that all the honor that one needs?

In the end, so it was with John the Baptist, even "when the cheering stopped," as the phrase puts it. Surely this self-effacing spirit should be every believer's motto in whatever capacity he serves in the church.

In the end, brothers, surely it is not so much *what* we live for, but *whom* we live for!

For self? Then we are going to be empty, fruitless, and unhappy.

But for Him? Then we will be energetic, and useful, and find joy in our labor as well.

### **A Remarkable Confession**

The man who spoke these words was John the Baptist. Up until Jesus of Nazareth appeared on the scene, John was the greatest prophet of his day. And if the Scriptures are to be believed (and we can see no reason why they should not be), he was the greatest prophet

of Old Testament times. No less authority than Christ Jesus declared concerning John, "Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John...."

He certainly was the culmination of the Old Testament prophets. The title Scripture itself gives him is "the second Elijah." What Old Testament prophet has greater name recognition than he?

John's ministry, though brief, was brilliant — like a comet blazing across the sky for a short season, and then gone. He was the talk of the day. Even his detractors came to hear him in order to see for themselves what the hullabaloo was all about. He attracted the crowds. A man who not only created a stir, but gained a band of loyal followers as well, a band of disciples who were devoted to him, who viewed him as the very voice of God. John himself was the fulfillment of prophecy. How much more important can a man be in God's kingdom!

And then came this Jesus of Nazareth. And things were never quite the same again. John was eclipsed by one greater and more gifted than himself.

What's more, everyone agreed it was so, and said so publicly. A painful business, would you not agree?

John the Baptist, with gracious words, had introduced this Jesus to the nation — "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." He had spoken of this one as being preferred before him, whose shoe latchet he was not worthy to loose. It was as gracious an introduction as any stranger could hope to receive. And the upshot was that this same Jesus in short order ended up front and center. John the Baptist was yesterday's news.

The crowds thinned out considerably. And even those who came to see what John was still up to were more enamored with this Jesus of Nazareth. Did you hear

the latest about this Nazarene? Now there is a man who can hold you spell bound. There is a man who can put those arrogant leaders of ours in their place. And He even performs miracles of healing. We saw it with our own eyes!

Jesus' name and claims and popularity were on the rise. John's status was diminishing as a result.

John's disciples did not take it very well. They were angry, jealous, and disturbed. This is plain from verse 26. They refer to Jesus as the one to whom John had had the courtesy to bare witness and to introduce to the nation. And how has He repaid you, Rabbi? By stealing your crowds. ("...all men come unto him") and even stealing what is your trademark, ("...the same baptizeth!"). It just isn't right!

They saw Jesus as a rival, one who should be put in His place. Let us start our own church and go our independent way.

From every human perspective one can understand their reaction. Promoting this Jesus at one's own expense? Why should that be!

Promoting Jesus and preaching to enhance one's own reputation, that makes some sense. In fact in our own day, that makes dollars and cents, big dollars — when the hew and cry is all about personality, and charisma, and the ability to fill auditoriums. It is all about megachurches. And megachurches revolve about men's personalities and pulpитеering. What kind of names and numbers a man attracts is the measure of success.

The temptation is not unknown to anyone of us as preachers — preaching for praise, and perhaps as opportunity to display one's own pulpit abilities. It is not unknown.

But promoting Jesus without regard for self in the eyes of men, maybe even that Jesus who offends so many, whose name thins out the crowds, that takes grace. But that is what true discipleship is all about.



The response of John the Baptist is remarkable. John's remarkable confession, as much as the truth that he preached concerning this Jesus, gives evidence of why John is to be numbered with the chief of the prophets. You see this remarkable willingness to step aside and to let another receive all the honor and attention. And then to make it his joy.

You may say, but this was Jesus, and of course one steps aside for Him! It is one thing to say that from a distance of 2000 years. But this Jesus was John's contemporary. They were about the same age, laboring in the same area. Jesus was also born of a woman, as John knew. And now to hear everyone speak well of Him, and scarcely a word about self. And to be happy about that? And even to tell the last of your loyal followers, "Follow Him."

I must admit I am thankful it fell to John to have to be so gracious at that time, and not to me. I am not so sure that I could have been so large. Would you have been?

"He must increase, but I must decrease."

To be sure, these words set before us the theme of the gospel ministry. But certainly they also have a broader application that can be applied to every believer's life.

The believer says, "Christ's name be glorified, be it at my expense." It means He must increase in one's preoccupations and life; and you and I must decrease in our own estimation and preoccupations and life. My life is not to be about my own will, wisdom, and interests, but about His will and interests. It involves a willingness to live for others at the expenditure of self and that in such a way that others who know me come to know Him better.

It means that you will submit to whatever happens to you, even a disease that may incapacitate you. Still you say, "Even this I will use as an occasion to witness of

what He has done for me, and use even such losses as opportunity to speak well of Him."

For every believer the calling is "Let Him increase, and I will decrease for His sake, I and all my pride!"

But especially these words have reference to the gospel ministry and to every officebearer.

Brothers, in whose name are you interested? In whose glory and promotion?

"He must increase." In simplest terms this means that He must grow, His name, His reputation; and I must diminish and not be seeking men's praise.

That Christ must increase does not mean that we think somehow to add glory to Christ's and enable Him to become greater. It is rather difficult, you know, to add glory to the One in whom already all the fullness of the Godhead dwells bodily!

What John has in mind is Christ's stature in the minds and estimation of men, and of believers' in particular.

This does not mean necessarily that the evidence of faithful labor will always mean a growth in Christ's popularity. His popularity as the true Christ may diminish at certain times and in certain areas, as in opposition to truth and faithful preaching. It certainly has at present in the apostatizing church and will continue to do so in wicked society as the end draws nigh. But when it comes to Christ's church and people, Christ's stature and importance must grow in their conscious life and faith. Increasingly believers stand in awe of who He is and what He has accomplished, and they desire to live out of Him and unto Him. Increasingly He and His cause are the focus of their lives in response to the preaching. He dominates their thoughts. That is the goal of and fruit of true preaching. Is it so with you?

At the same time, John had to decrease. For a time his ministry received all the attention, and his

name and even odd appearance were on everyone's lips. He was a Nazarite in part, after all, to draw attention to himself. That attention became the occasion to draw crowds and to confront many with this Jesus' being the promised Messiah. That crowd-drawing time was past. Now he must step aside.

John's point was, do not be looking to me for all the answers anymore. Be looking to this Jesus for such. He alone is able to give you the fuller knowledge of Jehovah God. Follow Him. And when my 'pews' are empty, and all that everyone thinks about is this Christ Jesus, my ministry will be complete.

John says, "It must be." John is not here simply telling his disciples that it is best that they bow to the inevitable (though certainly this is part of what John had in mind). It has all been foreordained by God. This One is going to prevail in the end no matter what, and those who oppose Him will suffer defeat. You oppose Him, you will find yourselves opposing God. This is the One of whom the Scriptures speak. Submit yourselves to Him.

But, more than that, John was saying, "I do not want it any other way. This is what I am committed to. He must grow in honor and reputation amongst God's people. My only purpose is to see that it is so. This must happen, and as long as I have life and breath I will continue to labor to point all to Him, and explain why He alone is worthy of all a man's faith and trust and praise. I give myself to this."

### **Applied to the Business at Hand**

To say this is one thing. To mean it is another. To live this way takes grace. It is the great mark of discipleship and of a faithful officebearer.

This spirit arises out of a proper understanding of things, which understanding faithful officebearers have.

The faithful officebearer understands who Christ Jesus is — the great Bridegroom, for whom God made all things.

He understands who the church is — the bride ordained and chosen by God.

And he understands who he himself in his office is — not the Bridegroom for whom the church has been prepared and called, but the friend of the Bridegroom, a friend holding a special place of honor and trust in the Lord's relationship to His church.

And what does a true friend of a bridegroom do, a groomsman worthy of the name?

He speaks well of the bridegroom — and he does that especially in the ear of the bride. He knows how much the bridegroom loves the bride. He wants the bride to understand just how fortunate and blessed and favored she is to be loved by such a bridegroom. The Lord's friend reminds the bride of all her fiancé's virtues and wisdom, and all the happiness that is to be hers. A friend of the bridegroom cannot praise him highly enough.

And so everything we say to the bride, the church, is to be about the Bridegroom, about the excellencies of this Lord Jesus, and must be said in order to quicken her love and attachment to Him. It is to underscore why He is worthy of her wholehearted commitment and submission and life and love.

How does one go about serving this increase of Christ in the heart and mind of the church? In simplest terms, he preaches the doctrines of grace, salvation all of grace, sovereign, full and free. Grace has to do with beauty. And it is in the doctrines and gospel of grace that the beauty of the Bridegroom is on display. Assaults on the truth invariably have been assaults either on Christ's power or on His faithfulness.

How treacherous beyond words would be a man who claimed to be the bridegroom's

friend and then would begin to suggest that the bride has reason to question the character and faithfulness of the bridegroom. How treacherous beyond words is a man who, claiming to be the friend of Christ Jesus, begins to minimize the superiority and glory and sovereign power and will and wisdom of this Lord, thereby calling into question the very character of the great Bridegroom.

Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God? The only-begotten of the Father? Not really. A bit of an exaggeration. Not God in the full sense of the word; rather, in many respects he is a lot like Him. The old Arian heresy.

It is still around today. They may not be so bold as to come right out and deny Jesus' real divinity, but when they preach, all the emphasis is upon the *humanity* of Christ. Only then can people really identify with Him. Others challenge the record of the virgin birth. We must accommodate a scientific age. And so the Bridegroom of the church is not very God in His power and glory after all.

Treachery!

And Arminianism — lies that call into question His sovereign will and grace, and question the exclusiveness of His love. Conditional covenants, conditional promises, conditional grace and faith. Justification itself these days in Reformed churches is not being preached with a reference to Christ Jesus alone, faith in who He is, and what He has accomplished full and free. Rather it is preached in terms of our faithfulness in life to Him.

In other words it comes down to this, if you are true to Him, He will be true to you. But if you falter and fail Him, He may very well find another, you know. He is not a one-bride man, you know.

The very faithfulness of the Bridegroom in His love and to His vow is questioned. His is a breakable, conditional promise. His faithfulness to His love bond is

questioned.

This is the voice of a friend, a truehearted friend? God forbid!

If we are faithful friends of our Lord, brethren, then we will be set for the defense of the doctrines that enhance the character of the Bridegroom, who is faithful to His promise and has a particular, unchangeable love. And we will reject every doctrine that would slight His character and cause His bride to begin to doubt either His power or faithfulness.

Committed to such, we are committed to the increase of His great name.

But together with a commitment to promoting Christ's name and glory goes a humility with respect to self. And the test of our humility is not simply when this Jesus is preferred before us, but when others are, when fellow officebearers are preferred in some shape or form in the church. Are we willing to decrease even then? Do we rejoice in the gifts and abilities and the use of these others more than in self?

In the life of the church, there can be testing times.

Annual nominations for officebearers — and others' names appear; mine is passed over. How can that be the will of Christ and best for Christ's church?

The election by the congregation takes place, and once again others are selected rather than myself. Surely I deserve more consideration than this, more recognition than they!

And once in office, decisions have to be made on various matters on everything from building projects to discipline, matters of debate. And it seems his advice consistently carries the day rather than mine. Can we live with that? Or does resentment begin to build?

Men and brethren, in the broader assemblies of the church the same reality applies. With regularity issues of controversy are set before the delegates, and differences of judgment and assess-

ment are set forth. And that almost certainly will be true of this synod — with what faces us tomorrow already and then the days that follow as well — sensitive issues that are bound to affect many people's lives, as well as church relationships and the witness of Christ Jesus.

The question that faces us is, with what spirit will we proceed? With what spirit will the deliberations, not to say debates, take place? Will it be with a brotherly consideration and with a high regard for each other? Even for those with whose assessment at various points we may disagree, disagreements voiced with a vigor (which vigor is not outlawed in the assemblies of Christ Jesus, but disregard for and contempt for a brother surely is).

And perhaps the vote will not go your way or mine. What then? What spirit will yet prevail towards each other, towards self?

Men and brethren, the debates and discussion will be carried on in a way pleasing to Christ and to the benefit of the church if we have a humility in regards to self and a high esteem for the brother chosen to serve as well — a recognition that he also has the Spirit of Christ and desires what is best for Christ's name and honor and for the witness and life of Christ's church.

Let me speak from experience based on nearly three decades of labor in our broader assemblies.

What has struck me and gladdened my heart over the years of serving in our broader assemblies both East and West is the esteem that the Lord's groomsman of our denomination have had for each other in our broader assemblies. Assembly after assembly governed not only by a high regard for Christ's Word, but by a high regard for one another's integrity and spiritual character as well, never calling into question that integrity and devotion to a common truth and cause, not even

when there was vigorous discussion, debate, and difference of views. As a result, there has been a willingness to listen to each other and maybe even change one's position.

Yes, I may have been surprised that others have not always seen things my way, but never was there question of the other's integrity and desire to do the Lord's will, never the suspicion that someone was promoting his own agenda or that a regard for one's own reputation was getting in the way.

And if that ever was the case, it has been the rarest of instances and a blip on the screen. Thanks be to God!

When there is this kind of regard for each other one can be 'outvoted,' as they say, and not be fearful for the future of the church, fearing the decision will not carry the blessing of the Lord.

Where that integrity and sincerity in trying to discern the Lord's will rules (and not men trying to impose their own willful ways and personal agendas), one can have the confidence that even if the right decision was not made, the Lord will see to it that it does not do permanent damage to His church and that it will be corrected in time.

Men and brethren, may that spirit prevail in the work we have been given to do, that essential humility with regards to self, that high regard for each other, and a thankfulness to the Lord for others who have gifts and abilities and a heart for the Lord and His church. Then one realizes that things do not always have to go one's own way, for the Lord uses them for a blessing to His church.

Let Him increase; and for His sake I must decrease. Then that others may be preferred before me in this or that matter does not fill me with envy or unhappiness. Just see to it, Lord, that Thy good will is done, and that the church that Thou lovest, and we do too, remains in the way of Thy approval

and does not come under Thy displeasure and wrath.

### **That Which Motivates Christ's True Friends**


The spirit that gives rise to the spirit of a true groomsman is not so difficult to explain. It is a two-fold love, a love for the Bridegroom, and a love for His precious bride.

Let Him increase at our expense. Why? Because of what He has done for me. It is a love fired by what He saved me from, what He still forgives me, what He passed through on Golgotha to make you and me His friends. He befriended us when we were more than ready to deny and betray Him.

We stand with Paul and Peter and all the saints who learned not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Imagine, He still counts me as a friend and embraces me when He finds me at His door of mercy again. Shall we not speak well of this Lord!

And there is a love for the church as well. Loving her we point her away from ourselves and towards the Lord Jesus. "Look, I cannot save you. I cannot deliver and defend you. Only He can."

Like John the Baptist, we baptize with water, but the Bridegroom baptizeth with the Holy Spirit and with fire. His baptism is superior to ours in every way. He is able to cleanse and purge and make whole again. Beloved church, do not look to us. We also need cleansing. Look to Him, and put your hand in His, and let Him lead you home.

Brethren, in the days ahead, may the words and spirit of the Baptist govern our deliberations and decisions. Let our prayer be, not our name promoted and enhanced, but Thine and Thine alone. Then all can be well with our souls and with the churches we love. Amen. 

# PRC Synod Report

## Byron Center, 2005

**O**n Tuesday evening, June 21, 2005, the synod of the PRC adjourned, after having worked carefully and hard for seven days. The ten delegates from each classis joined Byron Center congregation in prayer and worship on Monday evening, where Rev. Kenneth Koole preached a fine sermon on John the Baptist's declaration, "He must increase, but I must decrease." Each day, the delegates joined in prayer and worship before the Lord, seeking His wisdom and blessing for the work they recognize as His.

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma capably led the synod's sessions as president, assisted by the vice-president, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop. The synod's clerks were Rev. Steven Key and Rev. Allen Brummel. The hosts—the Byron Center PRC family—were kind and generous.

The PRC Synod of 2005 will be remembered for many things, but not least for its painful struggles with regard to her relationship to the ERCS, her sister churches in Singapore, and her decision to conclude the foreign mission work in Ghana, West Africa. The work in Ghana will come to an end. Hull, IA, PRC, the calling church for Ghana, and the FMC are mandated to do what is necessary to close the field "in an orderly and brotherly manner and report to Synod 2006." The grounds to close the field are compelling, if not sad, and reflect more on the PRC than on the field. May the Lord of the harvest teach us.

The relationship between the PRC and the Evangelical Reformed

Churches in Singapore (ERCS) is strained. That strain was evident when Mr. Dennis Lee, member of those churches, asked to be examined by the PRC synod with a view to candidacy in the PRC. Synod approved his request, but expressed the prayer that reconciliation would be accomplished by way of the ERCS adopting the biblical view of the permanency of the marriage bond, in order that Mr. Lee could serve in the ministry in the ERCS. Later, synod adopted the recommendation of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches that the relations between the churches continue as is (for the careful wording of and grounds for this motion, consult the official Acts of Synod). However, synod determined that the relationship would be suspended if the ERCS classis in August adopts "the unbiblical position allowing for remarriage after divorce...*which may God graciously forbid...*" (emphasis mine: BG). Then a delegation of three was appointed to travel to Singapore to speak at the special classis meeting, pray with the brothers, and express the PRC's love-motivated concern for this most crucial matter of marriage. Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Carl Haak, and Elder Sid Miedema were appointed to make this trip.

The work was not all painful.

The joy of synod climaxed in the approval of the examinations of the two seminarians. Mr. John Marcus was declared a candidate, eligible for call mid-July. Synod made a provisional declaration for Mr. Dennis Lee's candidacy—if he

becomes a member of the PRC. A festive graduation ceremony was held on Monday evening, when the graduates were presented with their diplomas and congratulated by a church full of thankful members, friends, and the "Trinity Men Singers." The four current seminarians were given good reports by the Theological School Committee. And synod granted student status to two more young men of the churches—Mr. Nathan Dykstra of Hudsonville PRC, and Mr. Cory Griess of Georgetown PRC (a son of our Loveland congregation). The Lord continues to provide capable and godly men for the churches. And a new policy was adopted that would increase the churches' ability to give financial support to the seminary students through private collections.

Not any less joyful was the appointment by synod of Rev. Kenneth Koole to take the chair of Dogmatics and Old Testament Studies in the seminary, replacing Prof. David Engelsma, who has taught since 1988. Rev. Ronald Camenga was elected alternate appointee, and will consider the appointment if Rev. Koole declines. Both men are seasoned preachers and capable theologians. From here, the process of replacement continues with the older professor continuing to teach while the newly appointed man prepares himself for the work. How long this process takes depends in part on the capability to continue of the man being replaced (as synod determines each year), and in part on the new man's abilities to begin



teaching. In connection with appointment of a new professor, a new procedure was adopted for the promotion and tenure of professors. Criteria were adopted for judging the competence of the man when he is "up for reappointment."

Decisions on mission labors included a mandate to work toward the goal of a second missionary in the Philippines; the approval of the works in Northern Ireland, Spokane, WA, and Pittsburgh, PA; broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour on stations near our mission works; and monies for investigating new fields. Synod declared that a calling church may administer the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the mission field under certain circumstances. And synod made a significant decision about the membership status of believers


on the mission field: that they "are not, and need not be members of an instituted church. Ordinarily, as long as the mission continues, they are simply members of the mission." This new direction for mission work will be read with interest and care by the PRC membership—as well as by those "joining" our mission works.

The Committee for Contact with other churches rescheduled an "International Conference" with our brothers from the EPC of Australia for 2006. Synod encouraged the Contact Committee to work with the EPC on "having their students admitted to our seminary and authorized to speak a word of edification" in our churches.

An important new study edition of the creeds called "The Confes-

sions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches," in the works now for many years, was finally approved by synod and will be printed and distributed among the churches at a selling price of nine dollars. May the Lord use this for our development in the knowledge of the biblical faith, especially among our youth!

Synod approved finances for support of emeriti ministers and/or their widows and dependents, for support of the needy churches, and an annual budget for 2006 of \$1,406,700, and \$825 per family per year—a decrease of \$41 per family from 2005.

Next year's synod will meet, if the King is willing and tarries, in Faith PRC, Jenison, MI. May God preserve the Protestant Reformed denomination. 

## The Power and Government of the Church (2)

# The Keys Given by Christ Only to His Bride, Not the State

**I**n this series of articles we are considering some of the principles of Reformed church government. The first article was on the principle that Christ has chosen and qualified certain individuals to represent Him as special officebearers in the church. A second principle of Reformed church government has often been referred to as the autonomy of the instituted church. In this article we begin to consider what is meant by this truth.

By *autonomy* is meant *self-governing*. When we say that an instituted church with properly called and installed elders and deacons is autonomous, we mean that under Christ it governs its own affairs. Christ governs each instituted church through the special officebearers that He has placed within that church, without any other individual or body coming between Him and that church.

Many wrong views of church government involve placing an individual or a body of people between Christ in heaven and His bride as she is manifested in the church institute. Only to His beloved bride has Christ given the

keys of the kingdom, and no individual or body can stand between Christ and His bride, that is, between the Head and His body. Some try to place the state between them; others insert officebearers, who are supposedly of a higher rank than those in the instituted church; still others make ecclesiastical courts to be higher than the consistory. But all of these run contrary to the truth that the keys of the kingdom have been given by Christ only to His bride, the church.

### Attempts by the State to Take the Keys from Christ's Bride

In church history there have been many times in which the State

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Previous article in this series : May 1, 2005, p. 351.



has tried to take the keys of the kingdom away from the church by refusing to let her do the work that God has given to her. In the churches at the time of the Protestant Reformation, the State often took the place that had been formerly occupied by the pope. This happened not only in England but also, to a certain extent, in the Netherlands and other countries of Europe.

There were many who wanted it this way. Unbelievers do not want the church to have the right to exclude them from the sacraments. They would like to be able to live as they please, and still have the right to partake of the sacraments, and thus assure themselves that they are safe from God's wrath. Those holding to false doctrines, such as the Arminians in the Netherlands, did not want the Reformed churches to have the right to discipline them for their errors. They wanted the State to be the final judge in such matters.

Soon after the Synod of Dordrecht (1618-1619), the Reformed churches rapidly declined due, to a great extent, to the State's usurping the authority that was given by Christ to the churches. The problem actually predated the Great Synod, for the churches needed the approval of the States General just to call the synod. It took many years for them to get this approval, which gave time for Arminianism to become deeply entrenched in the churches. Then, after this synod, it was not until shortly after the Secession of 1834, a period of more than two hundred years, that the State again decided to permit a National Synod to convene.

Having experienced in their own history the evil of having the State dominate and control the church, Reformed churches should be on their guard against this ever happening again.

### **The Presbyterian Doctrine Known as the Establishment Principle**

Presbyterians historically have

maintained that the State has no right to the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Yet, at the same time, they have taught that the State has the calling to defend and support one denomination as the "established church" in that nation. This is the position of the original Westminster Standards and continues to be maintained today by those Presbyterians who still hold to these standards.

The original creedal position of the Presbyterians, as found in the Westminster Confession, Chapter 23, Article 3, reads as follows:

The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.

This same idea is found in the writings of George Gillespie, a Presbyterian theologian who was part of the Westminster Assembly and who had great influence in the forming of the Presbyterian creeds. In his work on church government entitled *Aaron's Rod Blossoming*, Gillespie confesses that the church, and not the State, has the authority to preach the gospel and exercise Christian discipline. But then, right after saying this, he goes on to say that the State has the calling to ensure that the church does what she is supposed to do. The church does it, but the State has to make sure she does it. This is really the same idea set forth in the section of the Westminster Confession

quoted above. The paragraph begins by saying that the civil magistrate "cannot assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the powers of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." But then it goes on to say that the magistrate must see to it that the church does this faithfully. Gillespie even went so far as to say that if the church is not doing her job, but rather is preaching false doctrines and disciplining those who are maintaining the truth, then the State has the right and the calling to intervene and set things right. This amounts to saying that there is a sense in which the State does have the calling to exercise the keys of the kingdom, but that the State must carry out this duty indirectly, that is, it must do so through the means of the instituted church.

That the Westminster Confession is in a sense giving to the State the power of the keys of the kingdom is evident from the proof texts that are cited in the Confession in defense of its position. They quote passages such as Deuteronomy 13:5, which says that false prophets are to be put to death, and II Chronicles 34:33, which refers to Josiah's removing all idol worship and making the people serve the Lord their God. What authority was it that was given to Israel to put false prophets to death? What authority was it that Josiah had to remove the false worship and demand that the people serve the Lord their God? This was the authority of the keys of the kingdom. It was authority to remove from the church those who are impenitently walking in sin — the same authority that has always been given and continues to be given only to the church. Israel was the church in the old dispensation, and the authority given to the church in the old dispensation corresponds to the same authority that is given to the church now in the new dispensation, with the exception that the authority to punish with the sword

has now been taken away from the church.

### **The Autonomy of the Church Institute:**

#### **The Keys Given Only to Her**

If the keys of the kingdom have been entrusted to the church, and not the State, then it logically follows that the State does not have the calling to ensure that the keys of the kingdom are being used properly.

It is important for us to see, first of all, that the keys of the kingdom have been entrusted to the church. This is taught in the familiar words of Matthew 16:18,19, which reads:

18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

19 And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

That the keys of the kingdom include church discipline becomes clear two chapters later, in Matthew 18:17, 18, where we read:

17 And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

18 Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.

The keys of the kingdom, which are the preaching of the gospel and Christian discipline, by which the kingdom is really opened to believers and shut against unbelievers, are clearly given to the church, and not the State.

If the church is given the keys to bind and loose, then the State does not have this authority. If Christ confers authority on the

church, so that the church has the authority directly from Him, then no person or institution can come between her and Christ in this area.

Perhaps an example will serve well to illustrate this. The instituted church as a whole is not like a special officebearer within the church. A special officebearer, whether he be a minister, elder, or deacon, receives his authority from Christ not directly, but *through the instituted church*. An instituted church must choose to have the minister, elder, or deacon to labor in her midst. When such a man is installed into office, he confesses that he has been called by Christ, who has spoken through the instituted church. Since he has received authority from Christ not directly, but through the church, the church has the authority to ensure that the special officebearer is faithfully performing his labors. But this is not the relation between the church and the State. The church does not receive her authority from Christ through the State. Christ conferred the keys of the kingdom upon her directly. He did not go through the Roman government to give them to her.

This is what is meant by the autonomy of the instituted church. A body that is autonomous is, by definition, a self-governing body that is not subject to control from the outside. A true instituted church is subject solely to Christ. She governs herself solely according to Christ's laws, submitting herself solely to Christ, without the State or any other body or institute coming between her and Christ, her Husband and Head. It is true, of course, that there are certain laws in the secular sphere issued by the State that such a church must obey — laws concerning the building, the church property, incorporation with the State, etc.

But the church is not in any way subject to the State in the area of the keys of the kingdom. The State has nothing to say about what she may or may not preach, and whom she may or may not discipline. This authority has been given by Christ solely to the instituted church. To deny this is really to deny a fundamental principle of Reformed church government — the principle of the autonomy of the local church.

### **The State Unable; the Church Enabled**

It also should be obvious that the State is not qualified to exercise the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Far and away the majority of the people on this earth are unbelievers, and unbelieving men will almost always be the ones in control of the government of any given nation. Such men are not qualified to determine what constitutes sound preaching and proper exercise of church discipline. Unbelievers always justify the ungodly and condemn the righteous (Isaiah 5:23). If the State is allowed to take this authority upon itself, it will inevitably lead to the promoting of false churches and the persecuting of true ones.

The true church, however, is given not only the authority but also the ability to exercise the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Christ promised His church that He would give to her

the Spirit of Truth, who would guide her into all truth. One must have the Spirit of Truth to determine what is the preaching of the Truth, and who should be disciplined for not walking in the Truth.

Christ has given a very high calling to the instituted churches on this earth. With the confidence of faith we look to Him also to give to us the ability to carry out this calling, that His name alone may receive all the glory and praise.



*A true instituted church is subject solely to Christ.*



# *PRC Synod* 2005











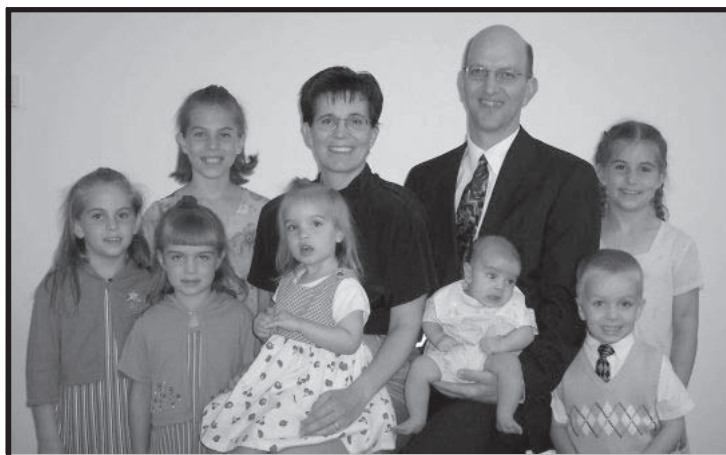
# Graduation 2005

## Seminary Graduates



**Mr. Dennis Lee**

Wife's Name: Foong Ling  
Children: Jason, Benjamin, Jonathan (l. to r.)  
Membership: First Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore  
Internship: Grandville PRC  
College: University of Illinois (BS),  
University of Maryland (MS)  
Contact: 4960 Eisenhower Dr.  
Hudsonville, Michigan 49426  
(616) 669-3409



**Mr. John Marcus**

Wife's Name: Amy  
Children: Rebecca, Anna, Leah, Kristin, Samuel, Matthew, Alyssa (l. to r.)  
Membership: Byron Center PRC  
Internship: First PRC of Holland  
College: Dordt College (BA), University of Michigan (Ph.D)  
Contact: 2519 Hague SW  
Wyoming, Michigan 49519  
(616) 249-0687

## All Around Us

*Rev. Rodney Kleyn*

### ■ What's happening with Euthanasia in the Mother Land?

From Lifesitenews.com, under the title "Dutch Euthanasia Doctors May Now Kill Healthy Adults," we learn the following.

The Royal Dutch Medical Association has concluded, after a three-year investigation, that Dutch doctors ought to be able to kill patients who are not ill but who are judged to be "suffering through living."

The decision contradicts the Dutch Supreme Court that ruled

in 2002 that patients may only request euthanasia if they have a "classifiable physical or mental condition," and not if they are merely "tired of life."

The law, however, does not require a medical condition, but only that a patient must be "suffering hopelessly and unbearably." Pro-life activists have warned that such ambiguous language is an open door for new interpretations that would make the law a license to kill.

The new report says many Dutch doctors believe some cases of "suffering through living" could be judged "unbearable and hopeless."

The argument is that it is too difficult for doctors to classify diseases, and so if the patient is sick ... well, then it's up to the doctor.

Along with this, the doctor's task is redefined. According to Jos Dijkuis, a medical doctor who led the study, "We see a doctor's task is to reduce suffering, therefore we can't exclude these cases in advance."

Another argument for this policy, given by Mira deVries of the Association for Medical and Therapeutic Self-Determination, a pro-suicide group, is that the law exists to protect doctors from prosecution for homicide.

So, they are covered on both ends. The doctor can choose to kill. And the doctor is protected when he kills.

"Thou Shalt Not Kill" (Exodus 20:13).

We may have predicted something like this, but so sin goes.

*Rev. Kleyn is pastor of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*



## ■ What's Happening to Religion in the U.K.?

**M**odern Reformation writer Shane Rosenthal lets us know the answer to this question in a recent article entitled "Losing Their Religion: Religious Decline in the U.K." (Jan/Feb, 2005). Religion and Christianity, he says, are being replaced by "horoscopes" and "spiritualist" movements.

The London Times recently reported that "the end is nigh for religion" in the United Kingdom. Carol Midgley's front page story argued that within 30 years spirituality will eclipse Christianity in England. "More and more people," she writes, "describe themselves as 'spiritual,' fewer as 'religious' and, as they do so, they are turning away from the Christian Church, with its rules and 'self last' philosophy, and looking inwards for the meaning of life."

The article reports that twice as many people polled "believe in a 'spirit force' within than they do an Almighty God without," and that two thirds of young adults in the U.K. (18 to 24-year-olds) have a stronger "belief in their horoscopes than in the Bible." And while twenty years ago, 11% of the population regularly attended church, the figure now in England is a mere 7.9%. Conservative Christians from a number of theological traditions, according to the Times article, "are adamant that New Age spirituality is merely a new form of gnosticism which turns the proper order upside-down by putting human beings in the place of God." However, the data suggests this new trend toward spirituality may "prove more significant than the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century."

The article presents the demise of the village church in the town of Dent as a symbol of the new situation. Once the church was a vibrant part of the community, but "over the years apathy crept in and the congregation declined until it was down to one." Finally, the church building was sold to a meditation group, which refurb-

bished the property. Now, according to the Times, the place is flourishing. Elizabeth Forder, director of the new meditation centre, commented on the differences between Christianity and the new Spirituality: "I was brought up a Christian, but it held no real meaning for me. I would class myself as a universalist, believing that all religions offer the same end. At its simplest, meditation is giving the body and mind a very deep level of rest, freeing us to be ourselves."

Following up on Elizabeth Forder's words, "I was brought up a Christian, but it held no real meaning for me," does our Christianity have meaning to us?

## ■ A Recent Ecumenical Conference in the USA

**M**odern Reformation also reports on an October 2004 conference on ecumenism at Beeson Divinity School in Birmingham, Alabama. The conference focused on a Joint Declaration written by some 16 theologians, entitled "The Princeton Proposal for Christian Unity."

The authors of this document gathered for an open forum discussion with notable Catholic and Protestant theologians, including Father Richard John Neuhaus (editor of *First Things*) and Fuller Seminary president Richard Mouw.

*Modern Reformation* was able to interview both the Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians behind the document. From these interviews, it becomes very clear that Rome is not moving away from her positions of Trent, and that rather it is the Protestant churches and theologians that are going back to Rome.

When asked about the theology of Rome on justification, Carl Braaten, a Lutheran theologian, says, "If we still believed that Roman Catholics are teaching heretical doctrine on justification, there would be no Joint Declaration." When he is asked about Trent and

her anathemas, he replies, "There was no recantation on either side, but they concluded that the way the churches are thinking about justification today, those old condemnations no longer apply."

So, Rome, in this man's opinion, does not teach heresy on justification, and the way (Protestant) churches are thinking about justification today accords with Trent. A definite shift in thinking for a Protestant.

Were the Catholics so ready to move and come towards the Protestant position? Hardly, and hardly necessary. To begin, Father Neuhaus insists on the Pope as the head of any earthly church that may result from ecumenicity. He says,

If you ask, can one conceive of full communion among Christians that does not include the exercise of Petrine ministry clearly grounded in the NT, instituted by our Lord to be a center of strength and guidance for the brethren, then the answer to that is no, because that would be contrary to our Lord's intention. Then if you ask, is there any other existing office in the world, present or past, that could exercise that Petrine ministry other than the bishop of Rome, then I think almost everybody would say no, there's no other believable candidate. So, no, I think whatever you believe we envision will be one in which that ministry will be exercised by the bishop of Rome.

Then, when asked if Trent's anathemas could or would ever be recanted, he responded,

There never will be a recantation of a council statement. See that's a very Protestant way of thinking. You say, okay, how are we going to constitute our fellowship? On the basis of our agreements and disagreements? Catholics understand that it is not doctrinal identity but a continuity of persons and office in the apostolic community that binds us together, and particularly as that is ex-


pressed sacramentally in the eucharist.... You don't go and say, okay, now we're going to repudiate this part of our tradition, and change our anathemas and turn them around in the other direction. No, because that would be against the unity of the church.

The discussion with Reno, a recent convert to Roman Catholicism, especially shows that the shift is towards Rome. He is asked about the possibility of Rome working

with Protestants who, following the Reformational teaching, still believe that justification is the article on which the church stands or falls. His response,

With those people, I just throw my hands up. They need to believe that the Catholic church rules out their position. They have to believe that. So, does that mean the church is infallible? Well, yes. At some level you have to see that

even with the Biblical episode in which Peter does the wrong thing, it comes out right in the end. The teaching office of the church is not trustworthy propositionally, it is trustworthy spiritually. It will not do harm to your soul to let your life be formed by the church's teaching.

It's all the way home — to Rome. That is what Rome expects, and that is what Protestants are doing. 

*Go Ye Into All the World*

*Rev. Jaikishin Mahtani*

## Equipping Our People for Personal Evangelism (3)

**Godly Christian hospitality, a healthy covenant family life, broader study, and fervent prayer**

**I**would like yet to suggest several practical and concrete ways by which we can help equip our people in personal evangelism.

The first is the exercise of godly Christian hospitality. The word translated "hospitality" in the Greek Scriptures literally means "the love of strangers." God's people are commanded to exercise hospitality! This was done in the Old Testament already: "Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Deut. 10:19). Since God has in His mercy drawn us to Himself, we are to have a gracious disposition towards strangers. It is true that we are to exercise hospitality also one to another, as I Peter 4:9 instructs: "Use hospitality one to another

without grudging." However, we must not limit the exercise of hospitality to the communion of saints. As children of our Father in heaven, we must show love and mercy to all men, even to our enemies (Matt. 5:44, 45). This we do out of the love of God, who loved us and saved us in His Son.

The parable of the Good Samaritan recorded in Luke 10:30-37 is a good example of such instruction. We must not ask who is my neighbor, but to whom might I be a neighbor? Whom has God placed on the pathway of my life so that I might show him the love of Christ and bring the mercies of Christ with deeds and with gospel words? From my experience, it is much harder to evangelize when we have not established some kind of rapport. True, we might give out an invitation, or we might even debate a certain point of doctrine in the midst of small conversation here and there, but if there is no trust, care, and love, personal evangelism is impossible. Why should our neighbors or our colleagues listen to what we have to say about the holy gospel when in every other

sphere we show ourselves unfriendly and inhospitable? But if we show a gracious and hospitable and friendly spirit, the door is usually open to some kind of spiritual conversation.

One of the concerns usually raised is that if we encourage such personal evangelism we stand in danger of encouraging our people to compromise with the world. I believe, however, that there is a proper, biblical way in which we must learn to befriend the stranger, even when such a one may not be a Christian. This is different from establishing a friendship, for our friends must be the people of God. We must not use personal evangelism, for example, as an excuse to enter into a romantic relationship with the unbeliever. This is dangerous and this is wrong. We must beware lest we use personal evangelism as a cloak whilst we pine after the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17).

Nevertheless, it is equally wrong to go to the opposite extreme and refuse to do personal evangelism. The call to an anti-

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*Rev. Mahtani was the eastern home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches who has recently taken the call to Bethel PRC.*

*Previous article in this series: May 1, 2005, p. 344.*

thetical life is an intensely spiritual matter. The lines that are drawn must not be physical lines but spiritual lines. We must not live in isolation. We live in this world. God has placed us here for a purpose. We are to be lights in the midst of darkness. We must not use the calling to be antithetical as an excuse not to do personal evangelism.

We must refuse to be "hyper-Calvinist" when it comes to personal evangelism. I firmly believe that our doctrinal stand is in no way hyper-Calvinist. That is oftentimes the false accusation hurled at those who deny the free offer of the gospel. Nevertheless, we must be careful that in our practice we do not put on a hyper-Calvinist attitude and refuse to work with people who come with all kinds of previous baggage. Neither must we be rash in condemning everything and everyone outside of our own denomination. Then we are guilty of making people shy away from the very truth that we claim to treasure and uphold, the truth of God's amazing grace, which humbles the pride of man and teaches us to give glory and gratitude to God alone.

Godly Christian hospitality must extend to strangers, not only to those who are Christian but also to those outside the faith. Again, we must not do this out of any carnal desire to make friends with the world and simply have a good time. We must do this because we know that that is why God has placed us on this earth. In fact, I would say that the only reason — whether at work, school, in the grocery store, or in a restaurant — that God has placed His people in this world is that they might evangelize. This ought to be our motivation. We must walk in love for strangers so that through our faithful testimony others might be won to Christ.

After all, the motivation for all evangelism ought to be love — love for God and love for our neighbor. God has so greatly loved us. He

has given His only begotten Son for our salvation. We deserve not that love. Now, out of gratitude to God, we evangelize. We who know the grace of God must be gracious to our neighbor. We who know His bond of friendship ought to be friendly towards others. God does not show us His grace merely in giving us things. He reveals Himself to us and speaks to us His Word of love and mercy. We too must love our neighbor that way. Not only by showing compassion by acts of kindness, but also by speaking the word of the gospel to our neighbors. Jehovah has shown His great love to sinners and has drawn us to His own house; we, His covenant people, must manifest that great love by drawing sinners, even into our homes.

Does that mean we allow the sinner to come in and corrupt our homes? What if he comes cursing and swearing? Clearly, when we make contact with unbelievers, we must ensure that we do so without fellowshiping with their sin. We must be careful not to allow unbelievers to be an ungodly influence on us and on our children. In that regard, we must make sure that we have a healthy covenant family life if we are to do personal evangelism within our homes. This, as we shall see next, is one of the most powerful ways to do the work of personal evangelism.

We must be sure that the purpose of our contact is to bring them the gospel by a godly witness. When one enters into our home who is either an unbeliever or yet un-Reformed in his thinking, our prayer and our hope is that our covenant life and testimony might be a good influence to him. We do not condone the taking of God's name in vain or any other corrupt act. We let such a one know that if he insists on displaying his sin in our home, he is not welcome back. But we have found that if this is done with love and not with condemnation, the stranger goes away impressed. Such a one is

welcome back, if at least while in our home he behaves! And the door is open to personal evangelism. At other times, such a one does not wish to return, or closes the door to further communication. Then, because he has clearly rejected our hospitality (and only then) we know that we must not "cast our pearls before swine."

The Word of God never returns to Him void. It always performs a twofold work. It draws the elect, but it also hardens the reprobate. This takes place not only under the preaching of the Word, but also through the personal witness of the saints. We must know that, so that we do not always expect and look only for positive fruit. Sometimes God may be pleased to use us to expose error and to show the unbeliever the error of his way. But always we must bring the Word of God with fear and sincerity, refusing either to change the message or present it in a sinful way.

One of the hindrances to personal evangelism is that we (all of us) naturally desire to remain within our own comfort zones. It is easier to have conversations with those of the same background, whether that be faith or culture. It is easier to invite those into our homes with whom we agree and who probably would invite us into their homes. But in personal evangelism we must be willing to put away those selfish thoughts and extend hospitality to those who might disagree with us and who might be very different from us.

There are many peoples in our neighborhoods that are different from us. We do not necessarily have to reach these "nations" by going abroad. Yes, we must do foreign missions too, but we must begin here at home. There are so many nationalities in this country, especially in the larger cities. Several of our congregations are located in or near those cities. It is important that our people be equipped to do personal evangelism.



lism with them by adorning a hospitable spirit.

Officebearers must take the lead in this, since this is one of the qualifications listed in God's Word for an officebearer. Romans 12:13: "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." I Timothy 3:2: "A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach." Our preachers, elders, and deacons must take seriously the calling to love strangers so that we might equip our people to the task.

The church is like a hospital: when visitors come, they must be treated like patients in need of help; the doctors and nurses are the officebearers, and all God's people are volunteer helpers. Together they must exercise much patience (unlike the regular doctor's office, hospital, or clinic, where we patients need to wait and wait patiently for a doctor or nurse). And why so? Because some of the visitors at the church might be elect sheep! They must not be despised or sent away without treatment; they must be received and welcomed and instructed and healed. The only medicine is the Word of God, and the only Physician is Christ, and the only Applicator is the Holy Spirit! But God our Father uses His children to draw His other children, and He does that by instructing us to be lovers of strangers!

Of course, as we exercise this hospitality we must balance that with a godly covenant family life. This is another concrete way to do personal evangelism. We must never forget the command of God to love our spouses and give godly instruction to our children. We must not only have the love of strangers in our hearts but also the love of our own family and especially our covenant children. This aspect of personal evangelism must be remembered. We are a powerful testimony to others by the way we treat our spouses and our children. If we maintain, for example,

the sanctity of marriage as a lifelong bond that cannot be broken except by death, we must make sure that we dedicate time and prayer in maintaining those marriages so that in that way we are personally witnessing to the truth. If we maintain that God establishes His covenant with us and our children unconditionally, then we must raise our children in His fear and discipline them when they walk contrary to His Word. This aspect of the covenant is emphasized in our churches – we bring our children with us to worship, we send them to Christian schools, we promote godliness among our youth, and we are constantly reminded of these obligations in the preaching.

However, it is important to remind our people that this focus on the covenant ought not to be pitted against evangelism. The two are not opposite and contrary callings. We must recognize the unity of both those callings so that we promote a healthy balance. We may not be so busy with evangelism that we neglect our children. Neither must we focus only on our children and say we have no time for missions. We must seek both the preservation and the increase of God's church (Lord's Day 48 on the second petition: Thy kingdom come). We must not bring home all our missionaries so that our pulpits can be filled. Both the building up of our church and the spread of the gospel are callings we must take seriously, and never at the expense of each other. Here is where oftentimes we need prayerfully to seek a good balance.

After all, the father of all believers, Abraham, to whose spiritual seed God promised the covenant, was also made the father of many nations (Gen. 17). The apostle Peter, in Acts 2:39, reminded God's people that the promise was unto them and to their children, but he did not forget to add that that same promise was to those afar off! Both from within our loins and from outside, God is pleased to call as many

as have been ordained to eternal life. Therefore I say that a godly covenant home life, coupled by a godly love for strangers, will serve as an effective tool for personal evangelism. We ought to equip our people to realize the unity of those callings.

This leads us to the next practical and concrete way we can equip our people: it is the way of study: careful, serious, broad, and comprehensive study. We have many good sermons, books, and pamphlets to help equip our people for personal evangelism. However, most of these sermons, books, and pamphlets at the disposal of our people address listeners who are Reformed or at least have some sort of Christian background. It would be good if we could develop some soundly Reformed and biblical messages, tracts, pamphlets, and books that our people could use to present the gospel of grace to non-Christians or non-Reformed contacts.

It is not that such material is unavailable. I am sure that if we search, we will find some excellent material that our people can use. Besides work done by our own ministers, other organizations and other denominations have also produced such material. We could avail ourselves of them. The distinctive positions we hold are missing in those books and pamphlets, but we should not be so afraid that we are unwilling to read and research.

I believe that one of the greatest hindrances to personal evangelism is our own lack of knowledge or our fear of approaching someone of a different background. We realize that we could be embarrassed, or be put on the defensive. The solution is study – broader and careful study of other religions and cults so that we can present the truths of the gospel over against the false teachings of man.

Our churches could equip the saints in this by providing a good library for them. Our churches could help further to equip our people by requesting our profes-

sors to do some writing, keeping in mind those who are outside the faith or are un-Reformed in their thinking. Our churches could also equip our people in personal evangelism by giving their missionaries a sabbatical so that they can be relieved for a season from active mission work and devote themselves to writing such material for the benefit of our people.


Above all, I think preachers and elders can encourage our people to read. Read the Bible, read good, solid, Reformed books, read good magazines — all this to be kept informed so that personal evangelism becomes a joy and not a burden. Study to give good answers in a godly way. Study and be prepared so that we might speak the truth in love.

Finally, of course, we must emphasize prayer: the work and the fruit is the Lord's! We must our-

selves pray, and we must ask the saints to pray! We must pray for the work of evangelism, and we must remember to pray for newcomers, each and every one of them. We must learn to begin the day praying: "Lord, make me ready to speak a word of truth to the neighbor that is put on my path." Jesus said that the harvest is plenteous but the laborers few; He did not tell us that due to this reality we should try all kinds of new methods! Neither must we begin to worry when we see vacant pulpits, or begin to complain that we have too much mission work to do. No! We are to pray! We must look to the Lord of the harvest that He might send forth laborers into His harvest!

We must examine ourselves, seeking to improve, and that is good. But we must not forget to pray! Let us equip our people by

praying for them and asking them to pray for the preaching, to pray for more preachers, to pray for our elders and deacons. Let us urge our young people to consider prayerfully the ministry themselves! When we face difficulties in missions due to lack of money, time, or manpower, and when God's people ask how they should deal with this or that hurdle in personal evangelism, let us never forget to remind them: whatever you do, do not forget to pray!

May God grant us grace to take heed to ourselves and to the flock, also in regard to personal evangelism, through humble prayer. May we take the prayer of the psalmist upon our lips: "God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us; Selah. That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." 

## Contribution

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

# Giving to Foreign Mission Fields

**T**he purpose of this article is to make our Protestant Reformed Churches and members aware of a concern that both the Foreign Mission Committee and the calling churches for the foreign mission fields have. The matter of concern is the giving of financial gifts to those who are the objects of our mission work. Specifically we are concerned about money that is given directly, and without the knowledge of the calling church or mission committee, to those among whom we labor. We are convinced that such giving is detrimental to the cause of for-

eign missions. We feel compelled, therefore, to address this concern by means of an article that all the members of the PRC are able to read.

We wish to make clear from the outset that it is not our purpose to stop or even to put a damper on giving to the cause of foreign missions. We have in the past received many generous financial gifts from our members, as well as from various other individuals who have shown an interest in the foreign mission work of our churches. Such giving is needed for foreign missions, and we are thankful for it. But our concern is with the method of giving. We hope to demonstrate, therefore, what we believe is the proper way to give

monetary gifts to the cause of foreign missions.



It is very understandable that someone who has an interest in foreign missions, and who is in any way acquainted with those among whom we labor (at this time in Ghana and in the Philippines), has a desire to give financial help to these saints.

One of the main reasons for this desire is the economic difference between us and those who live in the countries where we are doing foreign mission work. We notice that they are very poor and that their earthly needs are great. We realize that we, on the other hand, have so much. We are very

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*Rev. Kleyn is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Edgerton, Minnesota.*

much inclined to give money to these saints, and to do so directly. We feel it is only proper and right to try to lift them out of their poverty.

What further compels us to give directly to these needy saints is the fact that we are well able to do so. It is not a hardship for us to give. We can give what would be to them a large amount of money, and we ourselves would probably hardly miss it.

Another factor is that we can feel guilty for not giving. We know from Scripture that we are often admonished to help the poor and needy. We are convinced, therefore, that it is right and proper to give directly and generously to the poor in these foreign lands. This is our way of helping out the mission work. This is our way of seeking first the kingdom of God with the abundance God has given us.

Such giving, thus, is usually done out of good motives and with the best of intentions. One gives out of the desire to heed the command to do good unto all men (Gal. 6:10) and to demonstrate true faith by works of kindness to those who are poor and needy (James 2:14-17).



It is possible, however, that such giving arises out of or is affected by a common misconception today concerning the purpose of mission work.

Many today have the idea that a significant aspect of mission work is to provide for the earthly needs of the poor among whom they labor. Mission work involves such things as building houses and supplementing incomes. One of the main purposes of many missionary endeavors becomes trying to raise the standard of living of the poor.

This is not true mission work. The purpose of mission work is not to provide financial help to the poor around the world, but to preach the gospel. That must be the goal and focus of all that we do. That is the command Christ

gave to His church, as we find it in Mark 16:15 (and also Matt. 28:19-20) — “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” The church is commissioned to preach the Word of Christ, and in this way to provide spiritual food for the people of God. As we do so, God is pleased to use His church as an instrument in His hands for the salvation of His elect.

It is important to keep this always in mind, for it directs us in our financial giving. We do not give in order to try to raise someone’s standard of living. As Christ said, “ye have the poor always with you” (Matt. 26:11). We give, rather, in order to support the work of the preaching of the gospel. Our goal and purpose in missions, and in our financial support of missions, is not to help people materially, but spiritually. The main focus must be the preaching of the gospel. We must be busy with that. And we must, both by word and by practice, teach those to whom we bring God’s Word the same thing, namely, that their focus is to be on the preaching and on their spiritual needs.

This means that financial gifts (even if very small) ought not be given directly to those who are the objects of our mission work. Financial giving is good and necessary. But it should be done in the proper way. All things in the church (and in mission work) must be done decently and in good order (I Cor. 14:40).



We believe that the proper way for financial gifts to be given is that they be given through the calling church and/or the mission committee.

This is proper because these bodies are responsible for the fields. That includes the important fact that it is the calling church that is responsible for providing financial help on the fields, and to do so by way of the work of benevo-

lence. The help of the poor is the official work of the calling church through the missionary.

And not only is it true that the calling church must do this, but it is also the case that the calling church is best equipped to do so. The calling church, through the missionary, is well acquainted with the genuine needs of the saints on the field. It is best able, therefore, to supervise the funds that are going to the field. It is best able to see to it, as much as possible, that the money is distributed wisely, so that only those receive financial help who truly need it.

That this is the proper and orderly way for things to be done is evident from Scripture itself. We learn this from Acts 11:29-30. We read in the previous verses of a famine. As a result of the famine, the saints in Judea were poor and in great need. “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” This passage makes clear that the financial gifts were not sent directly to the poor, but were given to the elders of the church for them to distribute to those who had need.

We make note of the fact, therefore, that even though the purpose and focus of mission work is the preaching of the gospel, this does not mean that there may be absolutely no distribution of money on the mission field. It does not mean that we simply preach the Word without helping those who come to hear it with their earthly needs. We must and we do assist the poor on the field. But this is done through the benevolence work carried out by the missionary on behalf of the calling church. And as the Benevolence Guidelines that the Foreign Mission Committee and the calling churches have adopted point out, we provide such financial help for medical needs, hospital expenses, funeral costs, and le-



gitimate needs of daily bread (see Acts of Synod 2000 and 2001).

When gifts are given directly to the objects of mission work, this important work of benevolence is, in a way, undermined. And then the poor do not receive what they need most of all, namely, “comfortable words from Scripture” (see “Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons” in the Psalter).

The proper way for the poor to be cared for on mission fields is through the work of benevolence. For this reason, financial gifts should not be given directly to anyone on those fields.



There are also certain dangers and problems that can result from giving out money on a foreign mission field.

A major problem is that it detracts from and seriously affects the work of the preaching of the gospel. If the giving out of money is prominent on a mission field, many are tempted to attend simply in hopes of financial gain. They do not all come because of a genuine desire to hear the proclamation of the truth. Instead, they are tempted to look to us as those who will remove them from their earthly poverty. They are tempted to see us as being there to help them materially, and not spiritually.

In addition to this, the temptation arises for them to become discontented with the Lord’s will and way for them. They are tempted to become covetous and to want more and more of this world’s money and goods. They are also

tempted to become jealous and envious of each other, especially if in our giving we show favoritism and respect of persons by giving only to some, or by giving unequal amounts.

Another problem is that incorrect giving undermines an important principle of missions, namely, that those with whom we labor be self-supporting. Through excessive and incorrect giving, the danger arises that they become dependent upon others and do not learn to support themselves as families and as a church.

These problems are not unique to the foreign mission work of our Protestant Reformed Churches. Many others who are involved in foreign missions have written extensively concerning these things. They too have observed the same detrimental effects that handing out money has had to the cause of the gospel on foreign fields.


For example, Glenn Schwartz, the executive director of World Mission Associates in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, points out that providing outside funds undermines and destroys all efforts at establishing churches that are self-supporting, self-governing, and self-propagating. He states that they become, instead, dependent upon those who provide the money, not only as far as financial needs are concerned, but also as regards decision making. (Schwartz has over fifteen articles concerning this at [www.wmausa.org/artmain.htm](http://www.wmausa.org/artmain.htm). This site contains various articles by others as well.)

Another who writes about this

is Glenn Penner, from *The Voice of the Martyrs*, an interdenominational organization in Canada that assists persecuted Christians around the world. In an article entitled “Dependency: When Good Intentions Aren’t Enough,” Penner points out that although intentions are good, outside giving must be avoided because it creates the serious problem of dependency. He lists sixteen negative aspects of outside funding. His list includes the following: that it hinders the expansion of the gospel, that it creates jealousy, that it exports and reinforces a materialistic mentality, and that it bypasses church accountability. (See Penner’s article at [www.farmsinternational.com/dependency.pdf](http://www.farmsinternational.com/dependency.pdf).)



In conclusion, we certainly encourage giving to the cause of foreign missions. We are thankful to the Lord for it. We hope and pray that it will continue. We simply ask that it be done in the proper way. Financial gifts (no matter how small they may be) should not be given directly to anyone on the mission fields. Instead, they should be sent either to the calling church or to the Foreign Mission Committee. In this way, through the grace of God, all things can be done decently and in good order.

God’s blessing will rest upon work that is done properly and well. It is our prayer that He will bless and prosper our work of bringing His blessed gospel of gracious salvation to His elect who are scattered throughout the world. 

## Report of Classis East

May 11, 2005  
Trinity Protestant  
Reformed Church

**C**lassis East met in regular session on Wednesday, May 11, 2005 at the Trinity PRC,

Hudsonville, Michigan. All the churches were represented by two delegates. Rev. J. Slopsema was the chair for this session.

The business of classis was routine; but, as the chairman reminded the delegates, routine does not

mean that the items were not important.


Classical appointments were given to Covenant, Holland, and Hudsonville. Classis West requested pulpit supply for Edmonton for two Sundays in Au-

gust, which classis readily agreed to.

In matters of finance, Covenant PRC requested adjustments of their 2005 subsidy and their 2006 sub-

sidy to correlate with their being without a minister. Classis forwarded these requests to Synod 2005 for its approval. The expenses of classis amounted to \$1,088.24.

Classis will meet next on Wednesday, September 14, 2005 at the Faith PRC.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jon J. Huisken, Stated Clerk 

## News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

### Congregation Activities

**F**or the second consecutive year the Wingham PRC and southwest Ontario were privileged to host the Trinity Men Singers from Trinity PRC of Hudsonville, MI, with wives and a few extras, for a concert of sacred music on Friday, May 6, at nearby Westfield Church. The church was nearly filled, with a good number of visitors attending from the area. Refreshments and fellowship were enjoyed by all following the concert. The next morning a Pancake Breakfast at the Wingham PRC was provided for the congregation and their guests from Trinity. Men from Trinity provided the propane griddle and the pancake flipping skills.

"Let's Get Wise and Memorize" is the theme for a summer Bible memorization program geared for all members of the Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI. Members of Georgetown were urged to consider participating in this 9-week program to hide God's Word in their hearts (Ps. 115:11a) and to be an example to the children of the church that memorizing God's Word is a lifetime pursuit.

The congregation of Georgetown PRC was also given a special opportunity to minister to a 16-year old girl who was in a crisis pregnancy. With approval from the consistory, Georgetown was encouraged to assist this young woman by having an anonymous

Baby Shower. A crib was set up in their fellowship room until mid-May for donations.

The fathers and sons of Grace PRC in Standale, MI enjoyed their annual fishing trip over the Memorial Day weekend (May 26-28) at Lakeview Campground in Ludington, MI.

The Grace Choral Society presented a program entitled "The Gospel Story" after their morning service on Pentecost Sunday, May 15.

The Choral Society of the Kalamazoo, MI PRC invited their congregation to stay after their evening service on May 15 for an evening of singing praises to our heavenly Father.

### Young Adult Activities

**W**e extend a sincere word of thanks to the congregation of Covenant PRC in Wyckoff, NJ for serving as wonderful hosts for their Young Adults' Retreat, held this year at the Spruce Lake Retreat Center in the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania. This year's theme was "Defending Our Faith," with Rev. J. Mahtani speaking first on "A Precious Distinctive Faith to Defend," followed by Rev. W. Bruinsma speaking on "A Dangerous Foe to Defend Against." These two speeches were followed by a third, not really a speech, but rather a discussion by all in attendance, on the subject of "A Victorious Power by Which to Defend." Besides these three speeches, activities centered in good Christian fellowship, with two trips into New York City and a wide range of activities at the camp, including an impressive adventure challenge or obstacle course, which drew con-

siderable attention. Having heard two eyewitness accounts of the retreat (our two sons were there) and having seen some 160 pictures via the Internet, I can safely conclude that it was truly a blessed week of Christian fellowship. One participant summed it up rather well in Wyckoff's bulletin the next week when he said, "It's always amazing to me how PR people from all over North America gather in one spot to fellowship, because of our like faith — pretty cool, really."

### Evangelism Activities

**O**n Friday, May 20, the Evangelism Committee of the Randolph, WI PRC hosted a Spring lecture given by Rev. W. Bruinsma under the theme, "The Cultural Mandate of Genesis 1."

A special evangelism evening was held at Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, MI on May 11. Members of Georgetown were invited to come for an evening to learn more about their calling and privilege to be a witness of the gospel. The evening's theme was "Hide It Under a Bushel, No!" Rev. C. Haak and Rev. R. VanOverloop gave brief talks, and opportunity was given for discussion and questions.

### Mission Activities

**I**n May Prof. H. Hanko, along with his wife, spent several weeks visiting with Missionary Rev. A. Stewart and his wife, as well as the Covenant PR Fellowship in Northern Ireland. By our count, and we may have missed some, Prof. Hanko preached for the Fellowship on three successive Lord's Days. He led two midweek Bible

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

studies on the qualifications of officebearers, and he lectured twice, the first in Limerick on "Tradition," and the second in Ballymena on "The Excellency of the Authorized Version." On June 3 Rev. Stewart also presented a lecture in Porthcawl, South Wales on the subject, "Christ Will Build His Church."

This past Memorial Day weekend the members of the Mission in Pittsburgh sponsored their annual picnic. Rev. R. VanOverloop spoke on "The Christian's Calling in the War against Terrorism."


### Minister Activities

**W**e extend our congratulations to Rev. and Mrs. G. Eriks and their four daughters, who were blessed with the birth of a healthy son and brother, Garret Samuel, on May 15.

On May 15, members of the West Michigan churches were invited to an Open House celebration at Georgetown PRC honoring Rev. W. Bekkering, with his wife Phyllis, for 32 years of service to our churches.

Since our last "News" Rev. G. Eriks declined a call extended to him from First PRC in Edmonton, AB, Canada. They have now extended a call to Rev. W. Bruinsma.

Rev. W. Bruinsma declined the call he received from First PRC in Holland, MI. First has since issued a call to Rev. J. Slopsema to serve as their next pastor.

Rev. G. Eriks has accepted the call he received from the Hudsonville, MI PRC to "come over and help them" as their next pastor. 

## Announcements

### RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The students and the teachers at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School in Grand Rapids, Michigan, express their sympathy to Mr. Thomas Buiter and to Lorelei (8<sup>th</sup> grade) and Kyle (3<sup>rd</sup> grade) in the death of their wife and mother,

**MRS. LAURIE BUITER.**

May they find the peace and comfort that surpasses understanding in the words of Psalm 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints," and in the answer to Lord's Day 1. That this mother with body and soul, both in life and death, was not her own, but belonged unto her faithful Savior Jesus Christ....

Ron Koole, Administrator

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 20, 2005, our parents and grandparents,

**PHILIP and NANCY VAN BAREN**, celebrated their 30<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them as they celebrate this event and thank God for the happy years he has given them. They have been and continue to be a source of covenantal guidance, love, and instruction. We pray that He will continue to bless their life together.

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Lori Van Baren
- ✿ Jeremy and Kathy Ward  
Kole, Chloe, Keagan, Kent
- ✿ Gise Van Baren
- ✿ Joy Van Baren

Chicago Heights, Illinois

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 20, 2005, our parents and grandparents,

**RICHARD and DONNA CAMPBELL**, celebrated their thirtieth wedding anniversary. It is our prayer that God will continue to bless them in their marriage. We are thankful for the Christian example they have shown us and for the godly upbringing they have provided over so many years. "But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children" (Psalm 103:17).

- ✿ Jay and Lora Kalsbeek  
Tristan, Monte, Cedric, Seth
- ✿ Kris and Jaime Campbell  
Austin, Kayla
- ✿ Alicia Campbell
- ✿ Janelle Campbell

Loveland, Colorado

### NOTICE!

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will be hosted by South Holland PRC in South Holland, Illinois on Wednesday, September 7, 2005 at 8:30 A.M. All material for the agenda should be in the hands of the stated clerk by Monday, August 8, 2005. An officebearers' conference is being planned for Tuesday, September 6, on the subject of "Our Denominational Seminary." Delegates or visitors in need of lodging or transportation should notify Mr. Gysbert Van Baren (219-322-9428, or gvanbaren@sbcglobal.net).

Rev. Daniel Kleyn  
Stated Clerk, Classis West

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On July 11, 2005, D.V., our parents,

**FRED and ALBERTA (Windemuller) BOUWKAMP**,

will remember their 65<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. Our thanks are to the Lord for these many years together. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

- ✿ Judy and Frank Triesenberg
- ✿ Fred and JoAnn Bouwkamp
- ✿ David and Char Bouwkamp  
11 grandchildren  
11 great grandchildren

Grand Rapids, Michigan

### WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

In the providence of God, on June 13, 2005,

**CHESTER and BARBARA HUNTER** were blessed with 25 years of marriage. "Except the Lord build the house they labor in vain that build it" (Psalm 127:1a).

We are thankful to God that the Lord built this house and that, by His grace, it stands secure. It is our prayer that they have many more years together.

- ✿ Beth Antoinette Hunter (daughter)
- ✿ Vivian and Chester Hunter, Sr. (parents)

Doon, Iowa

### NOTICE!!

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 2005 at the Faith Protestant Reformed Church, Jenison, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 13, 2005.

Jon J. Huisken,  
Stated Clerk



## WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On June 12, 2005, our parents and grandparents,

**ROBERT and PHYLLIS BRANDS**, celebrated their 35<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We, their children and grandchildren, thank God for their many years together. They have diligently raised and instructed us in the fear of His name, guiding us with much love and patience. We pray that God may continue to bless them in the years to come.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever" (Psalm 136:1).

✿ Rev. Doug and Teresa Kuiper  
Daniel, Sarah, Ryan, Jared

✿ Cheryl Brands  
Cierra

✿ Anita Brands

✿ Jeff and Bethany Winchester

✿ David and Amy Brands

✿ William and Linda Pipe

Travis, Megan

✿ Michael Brands

✿ Brenda Brands

✿ Scott Brands

✿ Lisa Brands

Loveland, Colorado

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Immanuel PRC express their Christian sympathy to Mr. Jake DeSchiffart, and to Mr. and Mrs. Brian and Regina Wierenga and their children in the passing to glory of their wife, mother, and grandmother,

**MRS. TINA DE SCHIFFART.**

May they find comfort in the words of Psalm 23:6, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Rev. Richard Smit, President  
Paul Linker, Clerk

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of the Byron Center PRC express their Christian sympathy to Elder Gary Lubbers and his family in the death of his wife Jan's father,

**MR. TOM DEMPSEY.**

May they be comforted in the knowledge of Psalm 46, "Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth."

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."

Rev. Ron Van Overloop, President  
Mike Elzinga, Clerk

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The faculty and student body of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School express their Christian sympathy to Don and Shelly DeVries, their daughter Abigail (5th grade), and the family in the death of their daughter, sister, and dear loved one,

**KARI DE VRIES.**

May their comfort be from God's Word in Isaiah 49:25, "But thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children."

Ron Koole, Administrator  
Hope Prot. Ref. Chr. School

## RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The consistory and congregation of the Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland express their Christian sympathy to Mr. Michael and Mrs. Eunice VanBaren, Mr. Robert and Mrs. Janet Koontz, Mr. Michael A. and Mrs. Charlene VanBaren, and nieces and nephews, on the passing away of their son, brother, and uncle,

**MR. MARK DOUGLAS VAN BAREN.**

"So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psalm 90:12).

Rev. Allen Brummel, President  
Gysbert VanBaren, Clerk

## NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed consistories are hereby informed that the 2005 synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. John Marcus a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate Marcus will be eligible for a call on or after July 17, 2005.

Mr. Marcus' address is:

2519 Hague SW

Wyoming, Michigan 49519

(616) 249-0687

Don Doezeema,  
Stated Clerk

## 2005 July SUMMER CLASS SERIES

*The Doctrine  
of the Antithesis*  
Prof. Herman Hanko

in Hope Church, Walker  
on Tuesdays, at 7:30 P.M.

July 5: The Idea of the Antithesis

July 12: The Antithesis  
in the Church

July 19: The Antithesis  
in Home and Family

July 26: The Antithesis  
in the World

Sponsored by:  
the Reformed Witness Committee  
Hope Protestant Reformed Church  
1580 Ferndale Ave. SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49544

For tapes of the series,  
contact Wayne Bleyenbergh at:  
[wbbleyen@altelco.net](mailto:wbbleyen@altelco.net)

## Reformed Witness Hour

### Topics for July

Date	Topic	Text
July 3	"Addicted to the Ministry of the Saints"	I Cor. 16:15, 16
July 10	"Using Hospitality One to Another"	I Peter 4:9-11
July 17	"Sheep Separated from the Goats"	Matthew 25:31-46
July 24	"Called from Near and Far"	Acts 2:39
July 31	"Training our Children"	Proverbs 22:6