



THE **STANDARD BEARER**

*A Reformed
Semi-Monthly
Magazine*



Rev. Thomas Miersma and family
Home Missionary of the PRC

*Vol. 71, No. 16
May 15, 1995*

CONTENTS:

May 15, 1995



THE
STANDARD
BEARER

ISSN 0362-4692

Semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August.
Published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc.,
4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418. Second Class
Postage Paid at Grandville, Michigan.

Postmaster: Send address changes to the Standard Bearer,
P.O. Box 603, Grandville, MI 49468-0603.

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

Editor: Prof. David J. Engelsma
Secretary: Prof. Robert D. Decker
Managing Editor: Mr. Don Doezema

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma, Rev. Ronald Cammenga, Prof. Robert
Decker, Rev. Arie den Hartog, Rev. Russell Dykstra, Rev. Barry
Gritters, Rev. Carl Haak, Rev. Jason Kortering, Rev. Cornelius
Hanko, Prof. Herman Hanko, Rev. John Heys, Rev. Dale
Kuiper, Mr. James Lanting, Mrs. MaryBeth Lubbers, Rev.
Jaikishin Mahtani, Rev. Thomas Miersma, Rev. Charles
Terpstra, Rev. Gise VanBaren, Rev. Ronald VanOverloop, Mr.
Benjamin Wigger, Rev. Bernard Woudenberg.

EDITORIAL OFFICE

The Standard Bearer
4949 Ivanrest
Grandville, MI 49418
BUSINESS OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
Don Doezema
P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI
49468-0603
PH: (616) 531-1490
(616) 538-1778
FAX: (616) 531-3033

CHURCH NEWS EDITOR

Mr. Ben Wigger
6597 40th Ave.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
NEW ZEALAND OFFICE
The Standard Bearer
c/o B. VanHerik
66 Fraser St.
Wainuiomata, New Zealand
NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
c/o Mr. Jonathan McAuley
164 Church Rd., Glenwherry
Ballymena, Co. Antrim BT42 3EL
Northern Ireland

EDITORIAL POLICY

Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own
articles. Contributions of general interest from our readers and
questions for The Reader Asks department are welcome.
Contributions will be limited to approximately 300 words and
must be neatly written or typewritten, and must be signed. Copy
deadlines are the first and fifteenth of the month. All
communications relative to the contents should be sent to the
editorial office.

REPRINT POLICY

Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting of articles in our
magazine by other publications, provided: a) that such reprinted
articles are reproduced in full; b) that proper acknowledgment
is made; c) that a copy of the periodical in which such reprint
appears is sent to our editorial office.

SUBSCRIPTION POLICY

Subscription price: \$12.00 per year in the U.S., \$15.00
elsewhere. Unless a definite request for discontinuance is
received, it is assumed that the subscriber wishes the
subscription to continue, and he will be billed for renewal. If you
have a change of address, please notify the Business Office as
early as possible in order to avoid the inconvenience of
interrupted delivery. Include your Zip or Postal Code.

ADVERTISING POLICY

The Standard Bearer does not accept commercial advertising
of any kind. Announcements of church and school events,
anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be
placed for a \$10.00 fee. These should be sent to the Business
Office and should be accompanied by the \$10.00 fee. Deadline
for announcements is at least one month prior to publication
date.

BOUND VOLUMES

The Business Office will accept standing orders for bound
copies of the current volume. Such orders are filled as soon as
possible after completion of a volume year.

16mm microfilm, 35mm microfilm and 105mm microfiche, and
article copies are available through University Microfilms
International.

Meditation — Rev. John A. Heys	
Purifying Ourselves in Hope	387
Editorial — Prof. David J. Engelsma	
A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism	
4. Matthew 24	389
Letters	391
Guest Articles	
Trinity PRC Hosts Reformed Evangelism Conference	
<i>Mr. Ben Hopkins</i>	391
Sending the Reformed Truth to the Ends of the Earth	
<i>Rev. Russell J. Dykstra</i>	394
Domestic Mission Committee Report	
<i>Mr. Don Doezema</i>	395
Our Work in the San Luis Valley	
<i>Rev. Thomas Miersma</i>	400
The Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand	
— Ten Years Old	
<i>Rev. Rodney G. Miersma</i>	402
All Around Us — Prof. Robert D. Decker	404
Apples of Gold	405
News From Seminary Hill — Prof. David J. Engelsma	406
News From Our Churches — Mr. Benjamin Wigger	407

Editorially speaking ...

This gives advance notice of a conference on "Reformed Church Government" to be held in the Grand Rapids area in September of this year. The dates are Thursday and Friday, the 21st and 22nd. The site will be Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI.

The conference will be sponsored by the Theological School Committee of the PRC subject to the approval of synod.

Three of the speakers will be the faculty of the PR Seminary. Prof. Robert Decker will speak on "The Biblical Basis of Reformed Church Government"; Prof. Herman Hanko, on "The Autonomy of the Local Church"; and Prof. David Engelsma, on "The Authority of the Major Assemblies."

The fourth speaker will be Dr. Morton H. Smith, theologian in the Presbyterian Church in America. A founding member and for many years Stated Clerk of the PCA, Dr. Smith teaches Systematic and Biblical Theology at the Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Greenville, SC. His subject at the conference will be "The Hodge-Thornwell Debate over Church Polity in the 1800's."

The conference is intended for the interested public, particularly Reformed and Presbyterian men and women. Advertising brochures and details concerning registration will be available soon. For more information, write the PR Seminary at 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

The truth of church government, including the practice of it, is a vital aspect of the biblical doctrine of the church. It is a burning issue widely in the sphere of the Reformed churches today. It has been a critically important matter to the PRC throughout their history.

The exploration of the topic can be profitable to many. There will be opportunity for questions and discussion.

There will also be the pleasure of the fellowship. The registration fee will include several meals, including a banquet on Friday evening.

You are invited.

— DJE

Purifying Ourselves in Hope

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

I John 3:3

To appreciate this truth in regard to our hope, we do well to bear in mind that to hope, basically, is desiring with expectation. So often we use that word merely as meaning to desire to have something happen. We hope to have the sun shine and the rain to stop. We hope to have surgery help us stay alive in good health. However, correctly, as in the Webster Dictionary, the word hope means to desire with confident expectation.

When then, in the text quoted above, we read that every believer has hope of his purification, we understand it to mean that he not only desires it but also expects it, as God's gift to His elect. The born-again, believing children of God do not simply desire salvation. They hope for it in the sense that they expect it to come, as the fulfillment of God's promise.

What is more, in the verse immediately preceding the text quoted above, we read: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

For to hope is much more than to desire purification and glory. We

hope to have Christ return, in the sense that we are absolutely sure that He will come with the fullness of our salvation. The apostle John does not here merely express our desire. The desire is in our hope; but it is in us because we expect to be purified completely and everlastingly when Christ returns.

Take note of the fact that John begins this chapter with this truth: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." Now being called the sons of God means that we are called into being as such sons of God. Our hope is our expectation of enjoying that blessedness. We expect to be like Christ Jesus, who rose up out of the death into which the sinful Jews brought Him.

Now the glory of our bodies, as well as of our souls, which Christ promises us will not come upon us until Christ returns and bestows that promised glory upon us. That which the child of God hopes for, then, is to enjoy the fulfillment of what God has promised us. That promise came the day that Adam and Eve fell into spiritual death. That day God promised to make His elect hate Satan. That is why we, according to the text above, have hope of that which God promised. God promised to fallen Adam and Eve that they would hate Satan. He promised to put enmity in the hearts of His elect. That is why we have, in the text above, that truth concerning our salvation. We have "desire with expectation" to love God, as His elect; and we have

that already in this present life, from the day we are born again spiritually. Enmity against Satan means love towards God. Adam and Eve lost that; but they were promised the return of it.

Now then, that we have this hope and purify ourselves does not mean that God saves us because we begin to hope to have salvation. We want that salvation only because He has already begun it in us. Before God has begun it in us, we cannot want it. Rather, we continue to want what Satan promised us. We see that so clearly in the world today. The Sabbath day reveals that by what the unbelievers do. But on every day of the week they manifest the hatred of God, taking His name in vain, striving in many ways to break every one of His commandments.

We do well, therefore, to take note of what John wrote in the first verse of this chapter. He wrote: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew Him not." Likewise in Psalm 23:1 we read: "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." God begins salvation in us before we can want it.

We can purify ourselves only because God gives us the grace to do so. And we must hold on tightly to

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

that truth. The whole false doctrine of Arminianism reveals impurity, rather than the purity of which our God here speaks through John. We can purify ourselves only because God has begun purity in us. That we purify ourselves means that God has caused our hearts and minds to enjoy the purity which He gives us through His Son. We have that in the first promise of God, found in Genesis 3:15. After Adam and Eve had turned away from God and followed Satan's advice that they become gods, God came with the promise to put enmity in His elect against Satan. In Genesis 3:8-11 He preached the first sermon to Adam and Eve concerning their salvation. Adam and Eve had not said one word against Satan. Adam blamed Eve; and Eve blamed Satan. Neither one confessed sin before God. They blamed Satan; but they did not fall on their knees in sadness and grief for their ungodly sin. They tried to defend themselves by accusing Satan.

Adam and Eve revealed absolutely no desire or hope for salvation. They tried to get away from their guilt by blaming Satan. They revealed no sorrow over their sins. They only desired physical protection. There was no prayer for restoration of purification. They did not try to purify themselves. That they could not do, because they had died spiritually, while still strongly alive physically.

Adam and Eve revealed the desire to be saved from the punishment which they deserved; but they manifested absolutely no protection from Satan and his evil. The sad thing is that in many churches today salvation is presented merely as deliverance from punishment, rather than from the love of sin. Satan is still today working in mankind, getting people to want escape from punishment, but not from the love and joy of performing sinful deeds.

We do well to note that every man with hope, that is, with expectation of freedom from sin — not merely from punishment — is one

whom God has already caused to desire deliverance from sin, and to delight in ability and desire to do what pleases Him, as our God. For God sent His Son to earn salvation for us. In that mother promise, presented in Genesis 3:15, God does not there promise only deliverance from punishment. He promises first of all deliverance from Satan and sin. And every one who today has that hope will purify himself, in the sense of fighting against his old man of sin.

That purification is the desire and expectation of becoming lovers of God; and those who desire it will begin to serve Him in love. That will reveal what God has begun in them. After making them righteous by His Son, God also works love in their hearts. He causes them to desire to purify themselves and to stop their old man of sin from his wickedness.

That desire and attempt to walk in holiness manifests that God began salvation in us. After our physical death we will have a perfect spiritual life; and in the new Jerusalem we will walk everlastingly and constantly in love toward God. God makes His elect hate Satan and sin, and He causes them to love Himself and to enjoy walking in love toward Himself.

Let us take note of the fact that we are here taught that we do purify ourselves after God has worked that hope in us. We are not saved merely from the punishment which we deserve. We are saved so that we can and do fight the good fight of faith, in that we purify ourselves; that is, our new man in Christ purifies us, causing us to walk in thankfulness to God for our salvation.

Now that statement "even as he is pure" can refer to every man who loves God. All those who by God's grace hope for salvation have a new and pure man, who loves God and strives to serve Him. When we are born again, we receive a new spiritual life that is pure. Regeneration does bring us into a new, pure spiritual life. Yes, we still have our old

man of sin. But what God said to Satan, when he caused Adam and Eve to fall into sin, was that He would put enmity in His elect, and against Satan and sin.

However, the statement "he is pure" refers to Christ Jesus, our Savior. We, by God's grace, become as holy as Christ Jesus our Savior is. We become members of His body, the holy church. As we sing from *Psalter* number 383:1,

All that I am I owe to Thee,
Thy wisdom, Lord, hath
fashioned me.

And in Matthew 28:1 and 2 we find this blessed truth that Christ was risen, and had come out of His tomb, before the stone of that sepulchre had been opened to Mary Magdalene and the other women who came to the sepulchre. Christ's body did not need that stone to be rolled away to let Him out of the sepulchre. It was a resurrection body, a body more wonderful even than Adam and Eve had when they were created.

Take hold, then, of that comforting truth. We shall have bodies like the one our Savior has now in heaven. Go back to Psalm 139:14, on which that verse of *Psalter* number 383:1 is based. There we read: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well."

Yes, our souls know right well what a wonder God has wrought for us through His Son, who came in our flesh. That means that we are thankful for this work of salvation, not simply because we receive such wonderful bodies, but because we will, with body as well as soul, be purified by our Savior when He returns to establish His kingdom of heaven, and when our hope, our desire with expectation, is completed. We will see our purification of ourselves as God's work in us and for us. And we will praise God from whom all these blessings flow. We will see our purifying of ourselves as due to God's power and grace.

□

A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism

4. Matthew 24

Postmillennialism in the Reformed churches teaches the saints to expect an earthly victory in the future before the coming of Christ. The majority of the human race will be converted to Christ and added to the church. The world will be "Christianized." Christians will govern all nations, controlling all aspects of national life. Christians will dominate whatever ungodly remain, punishing them for misbehavior and compelling them to obey the laws of God.

There will be no great departure from the faith by Christian churches and professing Christians in the future.

There will be no Antichrist and antichristian world-kingdom in the future.

There will be no great persecution, or tribulation, of the true church in the future.

To this, the Reformed student of the Bible reacts with astonishment. His astonishment is due partly to his awareness of ongoing developments in history in both the church and the world.

No great falling away in the sphere of the church? What about the enormous departure in the early post-apostolic and medieval church that resulted in the false church of Roman Catholicism? What about the dreadful apostasy in Protestantism that began soon after the Reformation and that continues at this very moment? Theological modernism has already destroyed multitudes in the mainline churches and eats like a cancer in churches that have yet

the name of orthodoxy. The lie of Arminianism dominates much of fundamentalism and evangelicalism. The false gospel of the charismatic movement seduces many others.

No gathering of the nations under one diabolical head by the spirit of autonomous, deified man? What then is the meaning of the relentless rejection in the West of every vestige of Christian influence in national life? How is it to be explained that the "Christian nations" systematically repudiate the authority of the sovereign God as expressed in His law, not only in Scripture but also, and even, *in nature*, and decree instead man's own will in bold defiance of the will of God? Why the official, national banishment of God and His law from the schools? Why the official, national legislating of the murder of millions of unborn? Why the official, national approval of homosexuality?

If there is to be no union of the nations as the kingdom of Antichrist, why is there the definite coming together of all the nations on earth, East and West, "Christian" and non-Christian, on the basis of their common insistence that man and his happiness are the main thing, indeed, the only thing?

Is this not the spirit of Antichrist? Is this not the spirit of the man who will oppose and exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped (II Thess. 2:4)? Is this not the forming of the world-kingdom the number of whose name will be 666 — the number of man independent of God — and which

will be a gigantic blasphemy against God, Christ, the church, and the saints (Rev. 13)?

No coming of worldwide, intense persecution, when we can already sense, in the "Christian West," that the increasingly antichristian state will turn on those who call abortion murder, who condemn homosexuality as perversion, who cannot yield to feminism in church or family, who confess, in short, that Jesus is Lord?

The postmillennialist will disdain this as "newspaper exegesis." The fact is, nevertheless, that the Christian can and must see the signs in history of the Lord's coming. Christ Himself commands and commends this (Matt. 16:3; Matt. 24). The apostle of Christ made the signs of apostasy and of Antichrist the guard against foolish expectation of the day of Christ at any moment (II Thess. 2:1-3).

The happy predictions of postmillennialism for the church in the world are overthrown by 2,000 years of history.

Postmillennialism's denial of apostasy, antichrist, and persecution is refuted by historical events.

Amillennialism, on the other hand, rings true to history, past and present. To refer only to this one vital element in the controversy, the true church has always been and is today the remnant according to the election of grace. When and where has the true church ever been the majority? It was the remnant in apostolic times; it was the remnant at the time of the Reformation; it is the

remnant today. Why, even in Israel/Judah, it was the remnant.

Awareness of developments in the world in light of the prophecy of the Holy Scriptures is not, however, the main reason for the astonishment of the Reformed Christian at the dream-world of postmillennialism. His amazement at postmillennialism's rosy forecast of the earthly future is mainly due to the contrary testimony of the Bible.

What of the apostles' prediction of departure from the faith in the last days in II Thessalonians 2:3; II Timothy 3, 4; II Peter 2; and I John 2:18, 19?

What of the apostle's warning of a coming Antichrist in II Thessalonians 2?

What of the apostle's alerting the saints to an impending tribulation as an element of those things that must shortly come to pass before the coming of the Lord, in the book of Revelation, e.g., 3:10; 6:9-11; 7:9-17; 11:1-12; 12:17; 13; 14:9-13; 15:2; 16; 17; 19:2, 19-21; and 20:4, 7-10?

The answer given by the postmillennialist, particularly the "Christian Reconstructionist" (such as Gary DeMar, who asked for this biblical defense of amillennialism), to all of these astonished questions by the Reformed Christian is that all of the prophecies of apostasy, Antichrist, and tribulation have already been completely fulfilled. They are *past* events. The church of A. D. 1995 does not need to concern herself with them. Nothing of them is yet future. All was fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70.

Postmillennialist Gary DeMar writes, "It is unbiblical to use the term 'Antichrist' for a present-day or future political ruler. The proper context is theological and pre-A. D. 70" (*Last Days Madness*, p. 204).

The same author has written that the church must "recognize that the Great Tribulation is a past event." For "the tribulation had reference to the Jews, the people of Judea." It was "the destruction of Jerusalem" (*Last Days*, pp. 119, 110).

The exegetical basis of "Chris-

tian Reconstruction's" grand vision of a "Christianized" world — the victory of the gospel in history — is largely the interpretation of Matthew 24 by J. Marcellus Kik. The Presbyterian's interpretation of Jesus' eschatological discourse has been reprinted in a book titled, *An Eschatology of Victory* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 1971), pp. 53-173.

Kik explains the chapter in such a way that verses 4-31 refer exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome in A. D. 70. Nothing in these verses refers at all to Jesus' second coming and the events that immediately precede His coming. The abomination of desolation in verse 15 refers only to the desecration of the temple by the "idolatrous ensigns" of the invading Roman army (p. 104). The "great tribulation" of verse 21 refers only to the suffering of the Jews at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem. The false Christs and false prophets of verse 24 refer only to the pretender-Messiahs and false teachers among the Jews at that time.

The "coming of the Son of man" in verses 27 and 30 is not the visible, bodily return of Christ, but His revelation in the preaching of the gospel by the apostles. The gathering of the elect by the angels in verse 31 is the spiritual saving of the elect through the gospel. "Angels" are human preachers.

The preliminary signs in the heavens of verse 29 are not the literal darkening of the sun and moon, prior to Jesus' second coming, but the going out of the figurative light of the Jews as a nation in A. D. 70. "The sun of Judaism has been darkened" (p. 128). The shaking of the powers of the heavens in verse 29 "refers to Satan and his angels" (p. 133).

The basis for this understanding of Matthew 24:4-31 according to Kik and his "Christian Reconstruction" disciples is Jesus' word in verse 34: "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Kik explains this word as meaning, very simply, that

every single prophecy of Christ in verses 4-31 was fulfilled, exhaustively, in the lifetime of the generation that was alive at the time of Jesus' instruction. All was exhaustively fulfilled in A. D. 70 in the destruction of Jerusalem. Nothing foretold in verses 4-31 pertains to the second coming.

The key to Matthew Twenty-four is verse 34.... Every thing mentioned in the previous verses were (*sic*) to be fulfilled before the contemporary generation would pass away.... The first thirty-four verses of Matthew 24, along with verse 35 . . . deal with the destruction of Jerusalem (pp. 59, 60, 67).

Gary DeMar agrees:

The events rehearsed in the Olivet Discourse are signs leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in A. D. 70. These chapters have nothing to do with when Jesus will return at the final judgment. There are no observable signs leading up to His bodily return (*Last Days*, p. 151).

This interpretation of Matthew 24 is basic to the postmillennial denial of apostasy, Antichrist, and great tribulation for the church in the future. For in the light of this explanation of Matthew 24, the postmillennialist goes through the entire New Testament rigorously applying all prediction of such things to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Fundamental to this interpretation of Matthew 24 is Kik's explanation of verse 34, the "key" to the chapter. If Kik is wrong here, his whole postmillennial conception of the earthly future collapses like a house of cards.

"This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled."

Does Christ teach that every last particular in the preceding verses was fulfilled exhaustively in A. D. 70?

We shall see. □

— DJE

■ God's Patience with Theologians

First, let me tell you how much I'm enjoying my subscription to the *Standard Bearer*. To one who has newly revived his interest in the Reformed faith, your journal is a constant source of encouragement and help.

I am puzzled by the editorial in the April 1, 1995 issue, "A Defense of (Reformed) Amillennialism," and I have a few questions.

First, although I understand the distinction between the various millennialisms, I'm not sure I now understand the amillennial position on the millennium itself. One paragraph states, "Coming is a 'golden age.' It will last at least for a thousand years, perhaps a hundred thousand years."

I always thought amillennialism taught that there would be no millennium at all. Now I see that there will indeed be one, only the length of time is not yet determined. Is this correct?

My second question concerns the citation from Dr. Gary North. He raises an issue that really puzzles me:

It is always the task of Trinitarian theologians to discover what is biblically correct. When a theologian has concluded that a particular view is correct, he should seek to make his discovery a test of orthodoxy — if not in his own era, if that is premature, then someday."

This frightens me. Is Gary North really saying that biblical truth, indeed orthodoxy itself, should be determined by theologians? Isn't this what got us into this mess in the first place? Are there no eternal verities not subject to the whims of theologians?

Dr. Paul Tillich tells a story that is relevant here. He reports that a student once asked him, "Dr. Tillich, we all know that psychiatrists do not like their patients to come to them claiming to have some special knowledge of psychiatry. It just complicates the whole process. Do

you think this is how God feels when the theologians come to Him?" Tillich's answer, reportedly, was, "I suppose so."

I wonder if God does not sometimes lose His patience with the theologians.

Jeffrey Needle
Chula Vista, CA

Response:

You misunderstood. The lines you quote from the editorial are describing the views of the postmillennialists. *They* teach that a golden age is coming.

You are correct: "amillennialism (teaches) that there (will) be no millennium at all," that is, no literal thousand years.

The only, and sure, standard of sound doctrine is Holy Scripture.

Does God lose patience with the theologians?

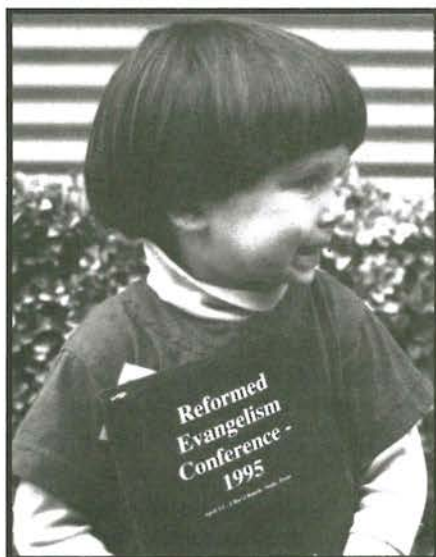
He is longsuffering toward all His children.

You may very well be right: especially toward His theologian-children. □

— Ed.

Mr. Ben Hopkins

Trinity PRC Hosts Reformed Evangelism Conference



The J-Bar-J Ranch, in Sealy, Texas, was the site of the 1995 Reformed Evangelism Conference,

Mr. Hopkins is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Houston, Texas.

Monday, April 3 to Wednesday, April 5, sponsored by Trinity Protestant Reformed Church of Houston, Texas.

There were 164 registered participants, most of whom were from the PRC. There were as well a dozen or more visitors. They came from places ranging from Washington



Mission Conference participants

State to Southern California, Michigan to North Carolina. Two representatives came from our mission in Alamosa, Colorado. Some showed up from Grace Communion Church of Jasper, Texas, 150 miles north of Houston, with whom Trinity has been in contact. Others, informed of the conference by announcements and interviews on KHCB, the local Christian radio station, came from as far away as Angleton, Texas (70 miles), and from as close as Sealy. Three of the visitors were from Trinity's Christian Sindhi group, which is an outreach to the Hindu community in Houston.

They all came eager to hear and learn about the vital evangelistic spirit that is an outgrowth of uncompromising biblical principles based on a solid Reformed tradition.

It was truly a family conference. Ages ranged from 6 weeks to 80 years. One family had four generations in attendance. There were 39 children under the age of 12, and

two dozen young people aged 13 to 18.

The general theme of evangelism was neatly broken down into three parts: Denominational Evangelism, Congregational Evangelism, and Personal Evangelism.



Conference speakers:

Rev. VanOverloop, Rev. Haak, Rev. Mahtani, Prof. Engelsma

The daily schedule started with an hour of devotions before breakfast. Following that, the adults went to the Wagon Master Meeting Hall for announcements and the day's main message, and the children went to the Town Hall Meeting Room with Rev. Haak.

Monday's theme, "Denominational Evangelism," was presented by Prof. David J. Engelsma, who explained that the proper denominational role was a subsidiary one, albeit necessary. Churches' denominational affiliation authenticates their legitimacy as bonafide parts of the Body of Christ, but the job of "doing" evangelism and missions is the

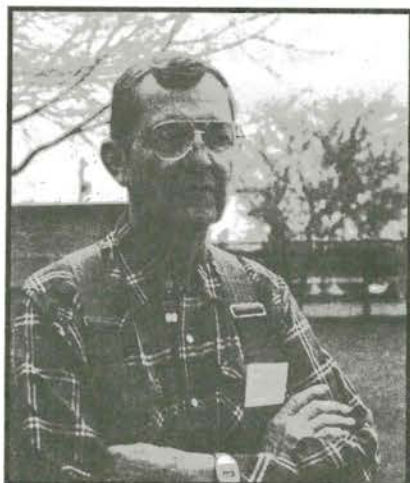
job only of the congregation. Failure to follow this principle results in "boardism," where the leadership and guidance of field activities falls into the hands of a few individuals. This is a potent breeding ground for bureaucracies, isolating missions from the congregations, making it possible, even likely, that their goals become at cross purposes.

While all this was going on, Rev. Haak was giving lessons to the children, explaining about evangelism. God intends His children to be light in His world. That light is not as bright as it could be, at times, because we are ashamed, or afraid, or apathetic. That shouldn't interfere with our doing good works for the glory of God.

The second morning session, after a time for fellowship and refreshment, was, for the children, a time for games and crafts under the capable direction of Trudi Hopkins and Crysta Brummel. Quite a few of the young people provided valuable help, too.

The adults' second session was for small-group discussion of the speech. Each group (led by a seminary-trained individual) appointed a secretary/spokesman to record the main points of the discussion and report the same to the assembled group just before lunch.

The food was delicious, high points being Monday's supper of



Conference director, Joel Sugg

barbecue beef and pork, and Tuesday's chicken-fried steak. Wednesday's grilled chicken over rice was another favorite.

Monday's afternoon activities included a bus tour of the scenic Texas countryside (April is the perfect season to see the beautiful wild flowers). Several adventurous groups drove to the other side of Houston to view the San Jacinto (pronounced ja-sin'-to) Battleground (where Sam Houston defeated Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna and won Texas' independence). They just beat the rush-hour traffic on their return trip.

Back at the camp, those who chose to stay, slept, talked, or played basketball and volleyball. A Sindhi Indian visitor and his team brought a beautiful Appaloosa, so all the kids (at heart) could do a little horseback riding.

On Monday evening, Allen Brummel gave a slide presentation titled "An Intern In Singapore," detailing some of his activities there during his six-month internship last year.

That was followed by an inspirational and insightful message from Rev. VanOverloop entitled "The Gospel of Grace." His explanation of grace broke down into five points, which corresponded (surprisingly enough) to the Five Heads of Doctrine of the Canons of Dordt.

Tuesday's morning talk featured Rev. VanOverloop's comments on "Congregational Evangelism." Just as Prof. Engelsma's "Denominational Evangelism" material pointed to the next day's subject, so Rev. VanOverloop's material emphasized congregational support of what is an individual's job. Evangelism is a side-effect of the church's main calling: the glorification of God, and the feeding of the flock. Congregational evangelism activities support and organize individual efforts (Mission Committees, Evangelism Committees, follow-up programs, and the like).

Rev. Haak's talk to the children concerned the church at Antioch,



Adult discussion group

where the followers of the Way were first called Christians. He used Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 32 ("But why art thou called a Christian?") to explain the significance of that name.

Tuesday's rain did not eliminate the outdoor activities, it just modified them. No one seemed bored or at a loss for things to do. The puddles on the volleyball court didn't discourage everyone; they seemed, rather, to attract a special kind of volleyball player.

That evening, Allen Brummel gave a second slide show, this time about the part of his internship that brought him to the rural parts of Myanmar (formerly Burma), and the devastating effects of idolatrous Buddhism.

Tuesday's activities were rounded out by Prof. D. Engelsma speaking on the subject, "Men Called to Repentance." The Hebrew word translated "repent" is also the one translated as "turn away" or "return." Man's duty to repent has definite effects on his life.

Wednesday was the last day of the conference, and another rainy day, at least in the morning. Rev. Mahtani spoke to the adults about "Personal Evangelism." His main point was that personal evangelism flows from the faithful preaching of the Word. That Word in the heart of the believer comes out in his life. We have to recognize it for what it is, and get rid of little excuses and fears to help it be more effective. We of all people on earth have a reason to witness and speak of the blessed hope and glorious God that is ours.

Rev. Haak's message for the children concerned Joseph as an ex-

ample of a true witness. Joseph humbled his sinful pride, was aware of God's presence, had courage to stand his ground, had a genuine love for his neighbor, and possessed a patient trust in God. The children loved Rev. Haak's talks.

After lunch, when we were saying good-byes to each other, the leftover cookies were auctioned off in bag lots to help defray conference expenses. But that light moment didn't dampen the general sadness at departing that drifted through the camp as suitcases and cars were packed for the journey home.

According to the Conference Evaluation forms turned in by the people, the material presented by the speakers, the informal discussions, and the presence of people from a wide range of backgrounds, gave a new appreciation for both the importance and the possibilities of evangelism. The people were unanimous in their willingness to attend another such conference.

We are thankful for the extraordinary response by the participants to our preparations for the conference, but their response and our preparation count for only a small part of the conference's success. God's hand was clearly in our midst.

Trinity Protestant Reformed Church is located at 214 Barker-Clodine Road, Houston, Texas, 77094. Telephone (713) 492-6172. All of the messages are available on cassette tapes, and can be ordered from that address.

Everyone is welcome to attend Trinity's worship services held each Lord's day at 9:30 A.M. and 6:00 P.M.

□

Sending the Reformed Truth to the Ends of the Earth

The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) is privileged to labor in the work specifically commanded by the Lord before His ascension, namely, going into all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. The FMC members are appointed by Synod from the Protestant Reformed Churches in northwest Iowa and Minnesota, and commissioned to bring the truth to those who in their generations have not belonged to the covenant. Thus the FMC seeks constantly to establish a foreign field where the gospel has not been received in the generations of the people.

On the surface, it might seem that there is virtually no work left for the FMC, for no countries exist where the gospel has not been preached. In addition, various mission reports give (usually grossly exaggerated) statistics about mass conversions and the total number of Christians in any given country. But still today many pagan peoples continue to live in the idolatry that their tribes have practiced for hundreds of years. To such people the FMC endeavors to bring the Word of God.

The work of foreign missions has a number of features which make it distinct from domestic mission work. The most obvious is that most of the people to whom we must bring the gospel live a great distance

from North America. We cannot readily visit small groups of people who contact us for help. Rarely can we contact them by telephone or fax. Thus the nature of foreign mission work demands much correspondence.

To facilitate this, the FMC has a corresponding secretary, Don VerMeer, an elder from the Hull congregation, who has put all our recent correspondence on file in his computer. Don handles almost all the initial correspondence with contacts, and develops the communication by sending appropriate reading material to the correspondents. The ministers also take part in the work. They correspond with those who have shown a greater interest and understanding of the truth.

This brings up another notable feature of the foreign mission work, namely that it proceeds very slowly. This is due, partly, to the fact that ministers, already busy in their own congregations, must take the time to correspond with their contacts. In addition, the letters to remote areas, or to countries far away, can take weeks to arrive, and some never make it.

Because the people we seek are far removed and thus largely inaccessible to us, the FMC has been airing radio messages of 15 minutes on two stations in Africa. Rev. Moore produces the messages which are broadcast every Sunday. Since these messages can only be understood by English speaking people, they are, admittedly, of limited value. On the other hand, some of the countries

covered by the broadcasts are former British colonies where the use of English is common. Besides, the knowledge of the English language is growing every day, also in Africa. We do receive regular responses to the radio broadcasts, which letters are answered and the contact developed (if possible) by the corresponding secretary.

The FMC also receives new correspondence from a surprising array of sources, including local evangelism committees, pastors, the seminary of the PRC, the Reformed Witness Hour, and even a recent contact from the British Reformed Fellowship in which Missionary Hanko is active. We do appreciate the efforts of various groups sending the FMC the names of people with whom the FMC can profitably communicate.

Such efforts have resulted in a wide variety of contacts. One such is a native pastor in the Philippines who has become convicted of the Reformed truth and desires closer association with us. Some are students in Ghana seeking materials to read. Recently I received an interesting telephone call and follow-up letter from a man in Kenya. He and a small group of believers have forsaken the Roman Catholic beliefs, said he, largely because of some Protestant Reformed pamphlets they had discovered. The group meets regularly to study the Bible, and he expressed the great desire that we send a missionary to lead them further in the truth. You can see immediately the difficulty of trying to

Rev. Dykstra is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa, and secretary of the Foreign Mission Committee.

work with such people separated by thousands of miles. The FMC obviously cannot send a delegation, nor simply stop in to see them on our way to a classical appointment, for example. Thus, efficient and meaningful correspondence becomes all the more important.

The majority of the FMC's activities in the last year have been directed toward Ghana, a former British colony, now a country of some twelve million, located on Africa's west coast. Regular readers of the *Standard Bearer* know that the FMC has had contacts in Ghana for many years, and that in the last four years two separate visits have been made there. The last visit, of six weeks duration, was made at the end of 1994. A more complete report by Rev. Moore appeared in the March 1, 1995 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. This last visit indicated that the gospel of sovereign grace had born its fruit from the first visit and subsequent correspondence. Some contacts had definitely "cooled" towards the Prot-

estant Reformed Churches. But others were excited to have us return, and gave the delegates extensive opportunity to speak and preach. The delegation returned with much enthusiasm for the work in Ghana.

The FMC shares that enthusiasm, and is convinced that God is opening the door to labor in Ghana with full-time missionaries. Many fruitful contacts have developed over the years, especially in the last few years, and a number have requested help. Besides, the FMC has other practical reasons for being optimistic about the work in Ghana. The government in Ghana is one big plus. The fact that it is stable and has good control in the country makes Ghana a safe place to labor. Also, the government is not anti-missionary in its policy. A second factor is the Ghanaian culture. The Ghanaians' lives and culture are not inimical to the covenant. They live in families, with the father as head. In addition, the attitude of Ghanaians toward white missionaries is most

favorable. They do not have the animosity of many whose ancestors were taken from Africa as slaves. They respect whites in general, and many have expressed a willingness both to help us and to learn from us.

With this in mind, the FMC is proposing to the Synod of 1995 that another visit be made to Ghana this year or early next year to further the work and reaffirm the evaluation of the last two delegations. The hope is that a missionary can be called after the Synod of 1996, and that missionary work can begin in Ghana in earnest.

The FMC covets the prayers of all those who love the Reformed faith and desire it to be spread to the ends of the earth. May it be the particular prayer of the Protestant Reformed Churches that God soon grant the Churches an established foreign mission field once again, if not in Ghana, then in a different place of His choosing. □

Mr. Don Doezema

Domestic Mission Committee Report

San Luis Valley

May 21, 1994 Rev. Tom Miersma and his family drove onto the Elbert Gesink farm near Alamosa in southern Colorado. The tent camper they pulled from Alberta, Canada would serve as a kind of home-away-from-home there while Edmonton's pastor took his turn serving the mission group in the SanLuis Valley for a couple of weeks on behalf of

Loveland Church and the Mission Committee. Little did he think, at the time, that before the year was out he would be back, not as a visiting minister but as home missionary stationed initially in this valley.

Rev. Miersma's first impression of the SanLuis Valley Mission was cautiously favorable. "It would appear," he wrote in his report to Loveland and the Mission Committee a year ago, "if one may judge from such a short stay, that we have a viable core group of young families.... There is good potential for internal growth in the number of

young children, though this will take time. There is outside interest in the group which might improve if there were a full-time missionary." He added, however, that he "would not expect rapid, large growth on this potential field but slow growth within and without over a number of years."

Something of the mission group's own perspective of things appeared in a paragraph prepared by Dr. and Mrs. Roy Slice, members of the mission, for the Sunday bulletin of May 29, 1994. It read as follows: "The Protestant Reformed

Mr. Doezema is secretary of the Domestic Mission Committee.



*Missionary pastor Tom Miersma
(interior Homelake Chapel)*

Churches are a denomination begun in the 1920s presently consisting of 26 churches in the U.S. and Canada. We acknowledge that God is the Author of the Bible (though He used men), thus we use a translation rather than a paraphrase. So we also believe that the Bible is true, both for modern men as well as when it was initially given. The Bible teaches that God is sovereign, and all things occur according to His eternal decree. Man is unable to save himself; God acts first to provide faith to believers. The Bible also teaches that man is responsible for his sinful condition. Christians strive to be obedient to God's Law out of thankfulness, and so must not live in a way that is indistinguishable from the unbeliever. True religion is conducted as prescribed by God and is not invented by man nor man-centered. Since almost all churches in the world now deny the above in doctrine or in practice, we are committed to forming a church in the SanLuis Valley out of obedience to God and for our children."

(As an aside, we could mention that, more recently, the core group decided to support the work of our churches by adopting a budget of \$50 per family per week. That

money will be used to pay for the place of worship, some advertising, and other related costs, with the balance being forwarded to the Synodical Treasurer as contributions to the domestic mission fund!)

The first several calls for home missionary were declined. The ministers of Classis West who continued to provide preaching for the mission group noted the disappointment with which the news of these declines was received in Alamosa. It happened that Rev. Dykstra was in the valley on the Sunday when Rev. denHartog's decline had to be announced. Himself convinced of the necessity of having a missionary there soon, Rev. Dykstra was moved by the obvious discouragement in the group to warn in his written report that, "after Synod decides to call a home missionary, and Loveland begins calling, it seems that the matter is being taken care of, and it is easy for us all to forget to pray for a missionary." (Perhaps we could extend that concern a bit by suggesting that, after a missionary is in place and the calling church and Mission Committee establish good routines for oversight of the labor performed, it is easy for us all to forget to pray, fervently, for God's blessing on the work.)

It was surely an answer to prayer that the next call, to Rev. Tom Miersma, was accepted. Within a couple of months our home missionary and his family were occupying a rented house in the SanLuis Valley. And in the few short months that have passed since then, the Mission Committee has had good reason to express its appreciation for the zeal with which Rev. Miersma has evidently thrown himself into the work.

With input from members of the group, Rev. Miersma has begun to prepare written material for use in outreach among those who have little in the way of theological foundations. And he is paying attention to format. It happens that Rev. Miersma's undergraduate work included a major, not only in philoso-

phy, but also in art; and, prior to his years in the seminary, he worked for several different publishers. That kind of background, and the affordability today of home computers and desktop publishing programs, make a happy combination for developing means of outreach which are enhanced by eye-appeal.

Desktop publishing is only one aspect of what Rev. Miersma refers to as "a whole new realm of technology (which) has developed, with new means for distributing God's Word and the Reformed faith." It would be possible, he continues, to "set up a data base of pamphlets and other material in a dedicated computer/file server/bulletin board type format on Internet which would be accessible to anyone interested in the material on a worldwide basis." At our missionary's suggestion, the Mission Committee is even now investigating the possible use of Internet as a means of distribution. (Yes, there are indeed several men on the Mission Committee who do know something about Internetting, Onlining, Downloading, and CD-ROMming.)

And the tent camper has not been forgotten. That's because it is Rev. Miersma's business to look beyond the valley. Though his work is to begin in the SanLuis Valley, and the mission group there must be the main focus of his work initially, he must also be "available to work elsewhere for longer or shorter periods of time," with a view to helping the calling church and the Mission Committee "cultivate and develop many contacts in different areas of home missions" (Acts 19:4, Art. 15, p. 16). Hence the potential role of the home-away-from-home in the work of our missionary. The tent trailer, says Rev. Miersma, "makes it possible to take my family with me, and out of which I can readily function both on preaching assignments and field work." He figures that "the cost of driving plus camping fees is considerably less than airfare and motel expenses; we are able also to cook most of our own food."

But what about school for his boys? Wouldn't our missionary have to restrict his investigative work to the summer months, or else plan to leave his family behind? On the contrary. "Because we homeschool," writes Rev. Miersma, "my ability to travel and labor with my family is not affected by the formal school year. We have found that our children are able to do some of their school work also in the car and trailer. This gives us a great deal of flexibility for the work we are doing, and this flexibility should not be overlooked when it comes to working new fields. As we took our trailer to Classis West and camped in the snow for two days, I can testify that it is workable even under these conditions.... The trailer was designed for Canadian weather and includes a propane heater."

Our home missionary has shown himself to be one who is ready to take the lead with respect to pursuing contacts. He says concerning various contacts of his own in the northwest that it might "be possible to organize a kind of itinerant preaching loop over a period of weeks ... to develop also potential new fields of labor." And he adds that "such a trip could be planned and done in other areas, and in the southern USA also in the winter. Whether there is warrant for such a trip at present is not my immediate concern but to present the concept of what could be done if it is desirable."

It's apparent therefore that Rev. Miersma is mindful of the broader calling of our home mission work. But not to the detriment of the work in southern Colorado. That's clear not only from reports of his energetic labor in the valley, but also from his suggesting that, "by coordinating field labor with vacation time it would be possible to reduce also the amount of time I am absent from the SanLuis Valley." (Working vacations. How's that, for putting the work of the church first?)

Our missionary is energetic, innovative, and self-sacrificing. And

the calling church, under the capable leadership of Rev. VanBaren, has taken good hold of every aspect of the labor. Loveland has established the kind of working relationship with the missionary and the Mission Committee which bodes well for the future. All in all, we are becoming more and more persuaded that Synod acted wisely in approving the calling of a missionary not limited to one small area. Through this means the Mission Committee will be better able to carry out its mandate to "find fields and recommend them to our churches" (Mission Committee Constitution, IV, B).

Northern Ireland

"The past year has again gone very well. The interest in our work continues to grow both here in Northern Ireland and throughout the rest of the United Kingdom. Now that the initial excitement has worn off it is a little easier to assess the work that is being done and the Fellowship itself. We are thankful to say that in both cases the blessing of God is abundantly evident."

So writes Rev. Hanko at the beginning of his second annual report to the calling church and the Mission Committee. Perusing the monthly reports of the past year we find ample evidence that what Rev. Hanko testifies concerning the blessing of God is true. And we find in those sources no indication that the

wearing off of the initial excitement has done anything to dampen the zeal with which our missionary in Northern Ireland has carried out his work. A spot check reveals: monthly Bible studies on the book of Revelation, for which he prepares carefully worked-out study outlines. No fewer than 18 widely advertised public speeches and lectures in Northern Ireland. Three half-day conferences in England and Wales. A bi-weekly one-page study-sheet sent to nearly 500 addresses throughout the U.K. Written responses to over 300 letters. A speech for the Philosophy and Religion departmental group of the Christian Union at Queen's University. A public debate on common grace with a minister of a Reformed Presbyterian Church in Belfast.

And the members of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship would no doubt affirm that that's only a beginning. In fact, the emissaries who went to Northern Ireland on behalf of Hudsonville Church and the Mission Committee report that "more than a few times positive remarks were made about the hard work and long hours put in by our missionary." Nor did the members of the CRF forget to mention their appreciation for the missionary's godly wife, "for her example of charity and selfless hospitality."

And the appreciation is no doubt mutual. For Rev. Hanko has as much reason to be glad for the work



Missionary pastor Ron Hanko and family



Jonathan and Margaret McAuley and family

of the members of the CRF as they do for his. They continue to share the load as they are able, taking care of such things as taping the sermons, tending the bookstore, keeping financial records, and distributing tapes and literature. The testimony of Rev. Hanko is that "this saves me a tremendous amount of time and work."

Another time-saver, by the way, is a piece of equipment recently acquired by the CRF — a digital duplicator. Prior to the purchase of this machine, Rev. Hanko was using a tired photo-copier for producing the bi-weekly newsletters. That was expensive ... and tediously slow. When downtime for repairs added to the frustration, Hudsonville decided that something had to be done. It happens that digital duplicators are made for the kind of work the CRF is doing. High volume work. Fast. Cheap. Rev. Hanko was ecstatic. Saves him, he says, about six hours of time for every issue.

On Hudsonville's recommendation, the Mission Committee paid \$1,500 toward the purchase of that machine. But that was only a third of the cost. The remainder was picked up by Hudsonville, through special collections. That's the kind of oversight of the field which Hudsonville has given to the field from the beginning. Not only are they alert to needs, they also contribute generously to the cost of fill-

ing them. Within just the past half year they have purchased a heavy-duty washer and dryer for the Hankos, paid for the sending of Rev. Gritters to visit the field in January, sent gifts for the Hankos with the delegation to Northern Ireland, decided to take monthly collections for the support of the work in Northern Ireland, and agreed to pay the airfare for seminarian Kuiper when he goes to Northern Ireland to preach for the CRF during the weeks of Rev. Hanko's furlough. Hudsonville earns the gratitude of the denomination for their supervision of this field.

The decision to send a delegation to the field was a joint one, on the part of the calling church and the Mission Committee. Our intention is that, each year, a member of Hudsonville's Council and a member of the Mission Committee visit the field in order to 1) inquire into the physical and spiritual well-being of the missionary and his family; 2) discuss with the missionary his work, the spiritual condition of the CRF, and his goals for the future; 3) evaluate the preaching; and 4) visit the members of the core group to encourage them in the work. It happened that, this year, the delegate from both bodies was a minister: Rev. Gritters, pastor of Hudsonville, and Rev. Spriensma, member of the Mission Committee. And their visit was very much appreciated by the members of the

CRF. Shortly after the return of the delegation, both bodies on this end received a thank you letter from Northern Ireland, with 44 signatures attached. The one to Hudsonville read, in part, "We the members and families of the Covenant Reformed Fellowship wish to thank you for releasing and sending Rev. Gritters to visit us and to help us with the work we are doing. Not only did he and Rev. Spriensma visit all the families of the Fellowship, and meet and speak with the men about the work of the Fellowship, but they were able to give much help and encouragement to all of us in many other ways as well. We especially appreciated the help and advice they gave us with regard to the matter of organization. We are already following up on their advice and will keep you informed as we proceed."

In connection with this matter of organization, the delegates noted in their report that it was their conviction that "there are men (in the CRF) qualified for serving in office. The members themselves express willingness to submit to whoever might be elected. In addition, the CRF has drawn up a Constitution (a 'church order'), copies of which have been made available for our examination. All of this points to a maturity among them, an ability to work together, and a good potential for a church." Apparently there was a consensus that the process of organization should begin this year, so



Brian and Edna Crossett and family

that the request may be finalized by the time of Synod 1996.

Hardly, however, are the goals of the CRF only or primarily inward looking. Speaking of their goals to the delegates from the States, Rev. Hanko noted that it is their desire to be instrumental in the establishment of other churches in the United



Joanna and Sarah Clarke

Kingdom which call their own pastors, and are able to band together and support each other. To that end, good contacts have been made in the Portadown area in Northern Ireland and in the Wrexham area in the northeast of Wales, not far from the English border and from the large cities of Liverpool and Manchester. Cooperation with the British Reformed Fellowship has proven to be very beneficial in promoting these contacts.

It was the British Reformed Fellowship, you will remember, which sponsored the Family Conference in Galashiels, Scotland, at which Profs. Engelsma and Hanko spoke last summer. The testimony of our missionary was that the conference was a great blessing to all who attended (about 120, all told). He writes, "Many at the Conference were hearing the doctrines of grace presented clearly for the first time, and both they and others, almost without exception, were convinced of these pre-

cious truths. Even those who were better acquainted with the teaching of the PRC on common grace and the offer of the gospel went away strengthened in their beliefs. The addresses delivered at the Conference and the two sermons preached at the Lord's day worship services were outstanding, and the professors should be commended for the way in which they represented the PRC to those present."

One final benefit of the visit of the delegates to Northern Ireland earlier this year is that they were able, on the basis of personal observation and discussions with the parties involved, to return with several specific recommendations for different emphases in the conduct of the work — recommendations which have, since then, been approved both by the consistory of the calling church and the Mission Committee. Our experience, therefore, is that annual visits of this nature are definitely worth the effort and expense involved.

For the immediate future the Hankos are looking forward with eager anticipation to a five-week furlough (a bi-annual affair) this summer. Rev. Hanko is scheduled to attend a half-day conference in Wrexham, sponsored by the British Reformed Fellowship, on June 24 and 25. And then on June 29 the family will go to Belfast for a flight to New York. While he's in Grand Rapids Rev. Hanko will of course meet with the Mission Committee and Hudsonville's Council. But Hudsonville has been busy making plans to make sure that there will

be other things to occupy our missionary's time while he's in the States. Rev. Hanko's vacation time was in fact increased from three to five weeks, on the years of his furlough, exactly in order that he might have time, on the home front, to promote the field. Hudsonville will probably therefore have him hustling from Michigan to Illinois to Iowa and who knows where else while he's here. We're confident however that this will be something that our missionary to Northern Ireland will enjoy doing. And we surely look forward to seeing him and hearing about his work during the two years since he left us for the United Kingdom.

Radio

Way back in 1965 Synod adopted a "New Policy" for missions which included a reference to how radio should fit into the scheme of things. According to that policy, special radio broadcasts should be developed "to serve in the preparation and discovery of a field or potential field of labor."

Over the years, that was never implemented. Until now. At least, at long last we are beginning to make some progress in implementing it. In the absence of a "radio pastor," the most daunting aspect of the task is the preparation of the messages themselves. Revs. Bruinsma, Haak, and VanOverloop have committed themselves to producing them. Rev. Bruinsma has begun preparing messages on the doctrine of Scripture



Mission Committee in session

and its authority. Rev. VanOverloop will follow with several sermons on the doctrine of the church and what it requires of us practically. Rev. Haak will in turn provide several on the doctrine of the covenant and its implication for marriage and the family. The three ministers plan to stress our Protestant Reformed distinctives as well as the Reformed faith in all of their sermons.

But that's only the beginning. One of our sub-committees has been working diligently on developing openings and closings, and coordinating the music and the advertisement of literature with the particular messages given. They have, too, explored various means of produc-

ing the master tapes. At the time of this writing they are looking seriously into the possibility of buying equipment to do the work ourselves.

We have adopted a name for our broadcast: "The Word of Truth." It will however be some time before the first message is aired. We have learned, especially over the last couple of years, that this is no small undertaking. We commend First Church's Radio Committee for what they have managed to do for so many years in the broadcast of the Reformed Witness Hour.



As we reflect on another year we recognize that our efforts have

been feeble. Feeble, not only as that characterizes all the work of men, but feeble when considered in the light of the magnitude and gravity of the task. We echo the lament of Rev. Hanko, in one of his monthly reports, that limitations of time and resources can be so restrictive. The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. Nevertheless, we have seen during the past year many evidences of God's blessing on those little efforts. We thank the Lord for them, and for the opportunity which we have of being involved, as Mission Committee, in the great task of preaching the gospel to the nations. Having confidence that the work is His, we look to the future with optimism. □

Rev. Thomas Miersma

Our Work in the San Luis Valley

The San Luis Valley is one of the largest alpine valleys in the world. Located at seven thousand feet in southwestern Colorado, it is surrounded by mountains. While its climate is that of the southeastern desert in the U.S.A., it has deep sources of water underground, waters which once formed a lake after the Flood and which have since sunk below the surface. Through the valley flows the beginnings of the Rio Grande River as it makes its way southward to the Mexican border. It is a thinly populated area whose primary occupation is agriculture by means of irrigation from deep artesian wells and the river. The main

cities in the valley are Alamosa and Monte Vista, cities of about seven and five thousand people, respectively. It is here that the Lord has given us an open door to preach the gospel.

Several years ago a number of families in the valley who had come to the truth of God's Word and the Reformed faith by their reading and study came into contact with our Loveland congregation. They were dissatisfied with the preaching available to them in the area and sought Loveland's help in laboring toward the formation of a Protestant Reformed Church. Through the labors of Rev. R. Cammenga, the Loveland congregation, the Mission Committee, and our ministers, particularly of Classis West, they received pulpit supply and assistance. While

some of the families initially involved have fallen away, the core group has endured and grown spiritually through that pulpit supply. For some time they have had regular worship services, using reading sermons when a minister was unavailable. The Lord has also now answered their desire for a missionary of our churches to labor among them.

In December my family and I arrived on the field after a warm welcome and installation as home missionary in Loveland. We began our work on Christmas day with the commemoration of our Lord's birth with much thanksgiving, and that work continues as we seek to bring the Word of God in the valley. Mission work involves many changes from the regular work of the minis-

Rev. Miersma is home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches.



*Homelake Chapel
(dining hall at extreme left)*

try, so that one must grow and develop in doing the work which the Lord has given to us. While there are many nominally Christian churches in the area, they are largely of the Arminian Baptist type or of an apostate liberal type. Spiritual and doctrinal ignorance prevails in the valley. This problem is compounded by scriptural ignorance and a diversity of corrupted Bible versions which promote error and obscure the truth of the gospel. The work in the valley therefore presents many challenges as we seek to bring a clear, distinctive, Reformed witness in the valley.

Catechism classes and Bible study are an important part of the preaching and labor we have undertaken. Most of the children in the core group are young, as are my own children, and in the beginning stages of catechism instruction. They form a solid future for the families here as they grow up in the truth of the gospel. The Bible study which currently meets every other week, in part due to the need for babysitters, is also composed of couples with younger children. The services have been well attended, with a steady stream of visitors not only from our churches but also from the community. We have at present five families, including my own, with several older widows, which form the core group. Three other couples are also attending the Bible study.

Laboring without church buildings and places for meeting is always difficult, but the Lord has provided also in this respect with what

is needful for the work. The San Luis Valley Mission of the PRC meets for worship in a chapel located at the Colorado State Veterans Center just outside of Monte Vista at Homelake. The chapel which is only occasionally used by other church groups is ideal for the purposes of our public worship. As many of the families stay for lunch between services, there is also an old dining hall we may use as well.

Setting up a mission field and beginning the labor takes time. Books and pamphlets need to be sought and acquired, advertising needs to be planned, workable means for catechism and Bible study explored. The beginning in the San Luis Valley is small; the rural environment and scattered population will make reaching new contacts difficult. But it is from such small beginnings that many of our churches have formed. In today's post-Christian society in North America it is with such groups that are relatively small in number that we will find ourselves more and more being called to work. As God continues

to gather and preserve a remnant that love the gospel, that labor will flourish. But as the love of many waxes cold in the times in which we live we must look not simply to numbers of individuals in our mission work but to that work in generations, as God preserves a remnant for His Name and gathers them.

In a post-Christian society, with many nominal Christians such as we find in the San Luis Valley, the distinctiveness of the gospel has been lost. An Arminian, man-centered humanism has taken the place of the true gospel of Christ. There are many who walk in ignorance of the fact that what they know as the "Christian" faith is in fact not Christian at all. This presents a different set of challenges to the work of missions than laboring among those who are familiar with the Reformed or Presbyterian heritage and doctrine. It presents a very different set of challenges from those confronting the saints in Singapore where many have never heard the gospel. Not only must the truth of the gospel be preached, but a false gospel which is not the gospel must be unlearned, corrected, and rejected.

Because of the multiplying of corrupt translations of the Bible, paraphrases are common on the mission field in North America. These paraphrases rewrite God's Word according to man's wisdom and interpretation. This too presents a challenge to our mission work, both in the San Luis Valley and in North



Catechism class

America. Tracts and pamphlets can no longer simply cite texts and give verse references. The Bible the reader possesses may itself be so corrupted that such citations lead astray from the truth or obscure the truth. We seek to show, ground, and prove the truth of our doctrine which we preach out of a high regard for God's Word. But that regard has been lost among those round about us. As we labor in the San Luis Val-

ley we will have to develop new materials for the work we face today in bringing the gospel. For the same reason many of our older pamphlets, excellent in themselves, as those written by Rev. H. Hoeksema, may also have to be revised and expanded by our evangelism committees if they are to continue to be useful for our work. Texts which are cited must now be quoted in full or footnoted in full to show that what

we teach is God's Word and not the wisdom of men. A knowledge of God's Word among those who name themselves "Christian" cannot be taken for granted as it once was. And woe be unto us if these things must be said of our own members. The spiritual, doctrinal, and scriptural ignorance confronting us in our mission work is a warning, lest we also lose the heritage which God has given us. □

Guest Article

Rev. Rodney Miersma

The Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand -Ten Years Old-

Greetings from your sister church in New Zealand! As seen in the title of this article, our little church has reached the milestone of its tenth anniversary. In the May 1, 1985 issue of the *Standard Bearer* there appeared an article announcing the organization of the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand and giving the history that led up to that event. Ten years have now gone by. Looking back over those years we can confess with Samuel, "Hitherto hath the LORD helped us." Knowing that our God is a faithful God, both willing and able to help us, we continue to look upon Him to be with us in the future, our "stone of help," our "Ebenezer."

Since few of you have any direct contact with this church you may wonder what has taken place

during the last ten years. Let me try to fill in some of the details.

We must first state what took place at the beginning. On March 17, 1985, some ten years after Prof. H.C. Hoeksema and Rev. C. Hanko first visited New Zealand, the faithful group of believers were organized into a church of Jesus Christ. Wanting to be both Protestant and Reformed this new church not only called herself Protestant Reformed, but also adopted the Reformed Standards as held by the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. We confess and hold dear the Three Forms of Unity, the *Heidelberg Catechism*, the *Belgic Confession of Faith*, and the *Canons of Dordrecht*, as well as all the other minor confessions as they appear in the back of *The Psalter*. *The Psalter*, incidentally, is used in our worship services exclusively. And furthermore, following the rich Reformed tradition, the church chose to be governed by the *Church Order of Dordrecht*.

From this it can be easily seen

that we are very much like you — so much, in fact, that if it were not for the many miles of water between us we would be one with you organizationally. Since organizational unity was not possible, the new church sought and obtained sister-church relationship with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America at the 1986 Synod. Synod also agreed to ask the churches to take collections for the young sister, which would make it possible for her to call and have her own minister. Early in 1987 the Macedonian call for help was sent to the undersigned. After accepting the call and waiting for the New Zealand government to give permission for immigration, the undersigned and his family moved to New Zealand in January of 1988. Installation services, officiated by Rev. J.A. Heys, took place in February. The undersigned still serves as her pastor, having been here now for just over seven years.

Turning to the membership and life of the church, we go back to its

Rev. Miersma is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of New Zealand.

beginning. On that memorable day in 1985 five families, comprising eighteen souls, brought their membership papers forward to become charter members of the new church. Today the membership consists of seven families, nineteen souls altogether. Although we celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly we have had the privilege of administering the sacrament of baptism to but three. Two of our number the Lord has taken to glory where they are now part of the church triumphant. Seven of our young people have made confession of faith. Sadly, four of them upon marrying left our fellowship, two to leave for foreign lands. However, on a happier note, two of our young people have recently announced their engagement to each other with plans to marry later this year.

In addition to our ecclesiastical fellowship with the PRC we have continuing contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. This contact has proved to be a blessing to us, and the brethren in Australia have expressed the same with respect to us. This contact has led to our sending our pastor as observer to their Presbytery (Synod) meetings, and to his speaking at one of their annual Easter camps and preaching in two of their churches in Tasmania for a period of three months. Thus the bond is warm and continues to grow. With the Evangelical Reformed Churches in Singapore we are also trying to establish closer contact.

Every church, individually and in federal union with churches of like faith, has the calling not only to preach to the saints within the church but also to bring the gospel message to those around her, even to the ends of the earth. Being a small church with the desire to grow not only spiritually but also numerically we are keenly aware of that calling and are trying to fulfill Christ's mandate to the church as given in Matthew 28:19, 20. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Fa-

ther, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen." To do this we follow the principle of mission work as set forth by Christ just before His ascension. In Acts 1:8 we read, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." That being our guide we have begun and concentrated our efforts in the immediate vicinity of the church, working further out as the Lord leads us and gives us opportunity. To bring some organization to our efforts an Evangelism Society was established under the auspices of the Session. It is through this society that we carry out most of our efforts.

Our most recent effort, begun in May 1994, has been the publishing of a monthly leaflet called the *Reformed Banner*. Five hundred of these are distributed in the area of the church each month to addresses that have not received it before. Each one contains an insert telling about our church and an invitation to be placed on our mailing list. Included also is the opportunity to subscribe to the *Standard Bearer* at an introductory offer of half price. This leaflet also is advertised periodically in a Christian weekly paper distributed nationally, and with each weekly advertisement of our worship services in the religious section of Wellington's *Evening Post*. This has proved fruitful in that many have asked to receive the *Reformed Banner* regularly. Several *Standard Bearer* subscriptions have also resulted. However, more important is the fact that we have had a number of phone calls inquiring about the church and also a number visiting our worship services.

In addition, we continue to do what we have always done. We maintain a good stock of pamphlets and booklets which are advertised

and distributed nationally. Our bookshop stocks all of the RFPA publications as well as other books published by various organization in the Protestant Reformed Churches. The society also maintains a tape library and sponsors lectures. These efforts may appear small when placed alongside the efforts of larger churches, but considering our smallness it represents quite a commitment for each of our members, both in terms of time and resources. We pray that God may continue to bless these efforts. Even though up to this point they have not resulted in numerical growth, the testimony of the members is that they certainly have grown themselves spiritually. And that, of course, is the first and primary purpose of the preaching of the gospel, the edification and preservation of the local church.

As a Session (consistory) and as a congregation we appreciate all of your prayers which you bring to the throne of God's grace in our behalf. We need your prayers; for, just as in any church in this world, we too are plagued with difficulties from time to time. We also use this means to thank you for your continued support in the way of your offerings. Your gifts of love provide the means which are necessary for us to continue the ministry of God's Word here in New Zealand.

As we soldier on we remember the Word of God which was addressed to us on the day of our organization and summarized in the May 1, 1985 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. I quote, "The undersigned preached on Ephesians 2:20-22, emphasizing that they as an instituted church of Jesus Christ were a visible manifestation of the church invisible, the spiritual habitation of the living God as He dwells with His covenant people in Jesus Christ through the Spirit. Their strength, therefore, could only be found in the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ as its chief cornerstone, that is, in the Word of God as recorded and preached by the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ

Himself being that Word, the revelation of the God of our salvation. The small flock was instructed that as a church this was the Word that they were commanded of God to preach, and that too, in all its pu-

riety. In addition, the officebearers which were to be elected during that service were duty bound to carry out that mandate as officebearers of Christ."

Through this means we hope

that you have become better acquainted with your sister here in New Zealand and thus will be able better to relate to us and pray for us. □

All Around Us

■ "IF NOT ... OUR PREACHING AND FAITH ARE VAIN!"

So writes the inspired apostle Paul to the church in Corinth (I Cor. 15:14, 17). Some in Corinth were saying, "... there is no resurrection from the dead" (v. 12). To these, to those who believed in Corinth, and to all of us and the church of all ages the apostle states flatly, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain ... ye are yet in your sins" (vv. 14 and 17).

From time to time in previous issues we have reported on the so-called Jesus Seminar, a group of liberal scholars who have been discussing and debating Jesus' words and deeds biannually the past decade. This group (nearly forty in number) met last March to discuss the resurrection of Jesus. They concluded, "that Jesus probably did not rise bodily from the dead, but that the 'resurrection tradition' that developed in the first-century church was an effort to promote the vitality of Jesus' message."

According to various theories expressed at the meeting, Jesus' followers mistakenly went to the wrong tomb and thought their teacher had risen, female disciples mistook their subjective grief experiences for actual post-death appearances, and early church leaders spread resurrection stories to counteract their own guilt — Peter for

having denied Jesus three times, Paul for having persecuted believers. Discussions of Jewish apocalypticism were also a prominent feature at the meeting.

"The execution of Jesus caused a crisis in the circle of the disciples," said German University of Göttingen theologian Gerd Leudemann. He called New Testament resurrection accounts "historically worthless" and "the product of imagination and fantasy." Reports have it that the scholars did not support a swoon theory. They did not argue that the disciples stole Jesus' body, nor did they portray Jesus as delusional. The Jesus Seminar will hold its last formal meeting in October. After that a Paul Seminar will begin. After what these scholars have done with Jesus' words and deeds, it isn't difficult to predict that when they have finished with Paul there will be precious little of the New Testament left. We wonder why, after they have denied the resurrection of Jesus, they are going to bother with Paul.

The Christian faith stands or it falls on the resurrection. If Christ be not raised, the church's preaching and faith are vain. They are empty, devoid of truth, fruitless, without effect, to no purpose, according to the literal meaning of the Greek in verse 14. The Holy Spirit uses a synonym in verse 17 which means devoid of force, truth, success, or result. So crucial to the faith is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead! Not only is our preaching and faith vain, we are yet in our sins, we have no comfort with respect to our believing loved ones who have died for "they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are per-

ished." If Jesus did not rise from the dead, our hope is limited too this life and we are of all men most miserable (v. 19).

Imagine, for a moment, going to church on Easter Sunday morning and hearing the preacher say, "Jesus probably did not rise bodily from the dead! His disciples went to the wrong tomb. Those women mistook subjective grief experiences for actual post-resurrection appearances. The disciples and early church leaders spread resurrection stories to counteract their own guilt and to promote the vitality of Jesus' message." Why go to church? Why believe in Jesus? Why suffer for His sake? If there be no resurrection there simply is no Christian faith.

Thank God for telling us all about Jesus' cross and resurrection and for giving us and all of His children in the nations the grace to believe it! Thank God for faithful preachers who with the apostle proclaim, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.... Behold I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed ... O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ... But thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (vv. 20-58).

If I could not read this and similar passages of Holy Scripture at

Prof. Decker is professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

committal services in the cemetery and if I could not preach this blessed gospel, I would resign from the office of the ministry and never preach again!

Christianity Today

■ WOMEN IN CHURCH OFFICE ... AGAIN!

In spite of our having reported on this issue so many times already, we do so again. It is news, it is big news, and it is all around us. Classis Wisconsin has overtured the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) Board of Trustees to rule, "that delegates from Classis Grand Rapids East be given the privilege of the floor, but be denied the privilege of voting on all matters before synod until such time as Classis Grand Rapids East complies with the decisions of synod on this matter." In other words,

Classis Wisconsin wants the vote taken from Classis Grand Rapids East until and unless they urge member churches to rid themselves of female elders. Presumably Classis Wisconsin wants the churches of Grand Rapids East who currently have women elders to comply with the urging.

As reported earlier in these columns there are other overtures coming to the CRC synod demanding that individual congregations who have already ordained women as elders be disciplined. At the same time, there are at least seven overtures coming from classes urging synod to open all offices to women or to allow greater latitude to local churches on the question. "Greater latitude" means if a church wants women in office it ought to be allowed to have them. If a church wishes to retain the status quo that is fine too.

As we noted a month ago, the CRC is a house divided against itself on this question and "a house divided against itself..." (Luke 11:17).

*The Banner
Christian Renewal
REC News Exchange*

■ CALVIN GETS NEW PRESIDENT

Gaylen Byker, a Hudsonville, MI native, is the unanimous choice of the thirty-one member Board of Trustees of Calvin College to become the next president of that school. Byker currently is vice-president of Offshore Energy Development Corporation in Houston. He will succeed Anthony Diekema, who plans to retire August 31. Diekema has been president of the college for some twenty years.

Christianity Today □

Apples of Gold

A Godly Mother

A special gift that God prepared for me —
'Twas given me 'ere I saw the light of day.
This gift was someone specially prepared
To guide my footsteps in His holy way.

Day after day, she cared for me and taught
Not just the skills I'd need for daily living;
She taught me first of all to seek His face —
In joy and sorrow, working, playing, giving.

She held before me God's own Word, that it
Could be a light upon my pathway ever,
She helped me learn to sing Jehovah's praise
And told me of that love that naught could sever.

She taught me to confess my sins and seek
To flee from evil thoughts and words and deeds,
To follow righteousness, stand firmly in the faith,
Turn from the wrong, and follow where He leads.

*Thelma Westra
Faith PRC, Jenison, Michigan*

Protestant Reformed Seminary

Robert D. Decker

Professor of Practical Theology and New Testament

David J. Engelsma, Rector

Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament

Herman C. Hanko

4949 Ivanrest Avenue
Grandville, Michigan 49418
Phone: (616) 531-1490

By the time that this report appears, classes will be finished for the semester at the Protestant Reformed Seminary. Students will be taking and professors will be marking final examinations.

The exceptions are the seniors, Allen Brummel and Douglas Kuiper. They will be preparing for their oral examination by synod in June. Passing their synodical examination, they will graduate in a public ceremony at the Hull PRC, Hull, IA, the evening of June 19. Shortly thereafter, they will be eligible for calls in the PRC. Both will be busy this summer. Mr. Brummel will fill the vacant pulpit of the Edgerton, MN congregation. Mr. Kuiper will lead the services of the Northern Ireland mission while the missionary is on furlough in the States.

Ten of the eleven seminarians were involved in practice preaching during the second semester. Most Monday mornings, from 8:30 until almost noon, were taken up with students preaching on assigned texts (including the Heidelberg Catechism) and with critique by students and professors.

Third-year seminarian Richard Smit will be serving his internship in Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids under the supervision of Southeast's pastor and consistory. The internship begins on July 1 and continues to the end of the year.

The faculty has licensed third-year seminarian Henry DeJong to speak a word of edification in the worship services of the churches. Mr. DeJong will be doing an internship later this year in one of the churches in Western Michigan.

Last month, Rev. Bassam Madany was a guest lecturer at the Seminary. He gave two academic lectures on the Reformed church's mission to Islam. Before his retirement, Rev. Madany was radio minister to the Arabic speaking peoples on the Christian Reformed "Back to God Hour." His lectures were solid and helpful. We intend to publish these lectures.

The Spring, 1995 issue of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal* has been published. This issue contains articles on common grace, cross-cultural missions, and the history of the church's doctrine of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, as well as reviews of several significant books. Copies are available on request from the Seminary.

All of us at the Seminary are delighted with the new addition to the building. The library has already been moved into the new quarters. We express our thanks to the churches for this support and promotion of our work. We also thank the friends outside the churches who contributed liberally to the addition. We invite all to stop by for a tour of the facilities.

God bless this work of the churches by giving able, devoted ministers of the gospel of His grace in Christ!

Cordially in Christ,
For the faculty,

Prof. David J. Engelsma

Evangelism Activities

The Peace PRC of Lynwood, IL sponsored their annual Spring Lecture on April 21 at the Illiana Christian High School. Rev. C. Haak, pastor of the Bethel PRC in Itasca, IL, spoke on the topic, "Personal Evangelism: A Desire for the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls."

The Extension Committee of the Lynden, WA PRC also scheduled a Spring Lecture. On March 31, Professor H. Hanks, of our Seminary, spoke on the subject, "The Church: A Spiritual Institution."

Congregational Activities

The Council of the Southwest PRC in Grandville, MI recently decided to do away with their piano fund and instead take the amount that was in there and transfer it to their church library.

On March 28, the Adult Bible Societies of the Peace PRC in Lynwood, IL, and the South Holland, IL PRC met together at Illiana Christian High School to study a special topic, "Angels: Good and Evil."

From bulletins of March and April we can let you know that the building of the new church home for the Peace PRC appears to be moving along at a nice pace. The ground was prepared for pouring the footings, followed by the foundation walls two days later. On two days the next week, fill was put around the foundation, followed soon after with the plumbing work. And I think we are safe in assuming that even more has been done since that time. We will keep you updated.

During the time of our celebration of the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, many of our

churches' choirs give their annual spring concerts. This was the case again this year, with at least three choirs giving concerts around the 16th of April: the Hudsonville, MI PRC's choir, the choir of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI, and our Loveland, CO PRC's choir.

The Ladies' Society of the Hull, IA PRC served as host for this year's Spring Ladies' League meeting. The theme for this year's meeting was "Affluence and Its Effect on Home and Church," based on Colossians 3:2.

School Activities

The Hope PR Christian School in Walker, MI presented their All-School program entitled, "All Nature Praises God," on April 20 at the Beverly Christian Reformed Church Independent.

Young Adult Activities

Once again this year the Young Adult Society of the Loveland, CO PRC sponsored what has become an annual Young Adults Spring Retreat. This fifth annual retreat was held the 26th, 27th, and 28th of March at the Covenant Heights Conference Center in beautiful Estes Park, CO. Rev. G. VanBaren, pastor at Loveland, and Rev. S. Key, pastor at the Randolph, WI PRC were this year's speakers. Each addressed the group of young adults on the central theme, "Discerning God's Will in Our Lives." Rev. VanBaren's speech was entitled, "God Has a Wonderful Plan for Your Life," and Rev. Key addressed the group on "The Rewards of Searching out God's Will." Included with the two speeches were two debates and one discussion group and numerous indoor and outdoor activities, including skiing before, during, and after the retreat, as well as snowshoeing. This year saw 53 young adults, a record number, attend the three-day retreat,

which despite being advertised as a spring retreat saw snow fall every day. We can also mention here that during the retreat 13 young adults were involved in a serious van accident while returning from snowshoeing. The van was badly damaged when it left the high mountain road they were traveling; but thankfully, by God's grace, there were no serious injuries.

If you would like a tape of the two speeches given at this year's retreat, you can obtain a copy for \$3.00 by writing the Loveland PRC at 709 E. 57th St., Loveland, CO 80538.

Minister Activities

After graduating from our Seminary last spring, Mr. Chris Connors and Mr. David Higgs have now completed further studies and internships and successfully sustained examinations in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. Both have received and accepted calls. Mr. Connors was ordained as pastor of the Launceston congregation on March 24, and Mr. Higgs was ordained as pastor of the Brisbane congregation on April 22.

Rev. C. Terpstra, pastor of the South Holland, IL PRC declined the call he was extended to serve as pastor of the Edgerton, MN PRC.

First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI has formed a trio from which they called Rev. Bruinsma. The other ministers on the trio were Rev. J. Slopsma and C. Terpstra.

Food for Thought

"Not why but what?"

"Searching out the reason for our trials is not usually so profitable as asking what we may learn from them. God does not always explain His actions to us; but, 'who teacheth like him?' "

Job 36:22 □

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

P.O. Box 603
Grandville, MI 49468-0603

SECOND CLASS
Postage Paid at
Grandville, Michigan

ANNOUNCEMENTS

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Adult Bible Society of the South Holland Protestant Reformed Church expresses its sincere sympathy to Thressa Haak in the death and passing on to glory of her husband,

BARNEY HAAK,

a long-time member, elder, and faithful Bible Society attender, on February 16. Our prayer is that she may be comforted in the knowledge that in life and in death we are not our own but belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ. "...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13).

Rev. Charles Terpstra, President
Bert Worries, Jr., Secretary

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council of the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church, on behalf of the congregation, expresses its Christian sympathy to the Steve VanDyke family in the passing of their father,

HERMAN VAN DYKE.

May they be comforted by the truth that "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14).

Rev. Steven Key, President
Berwyn Huizenga, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Council and congregation of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church wishes to express sympathy to Rev. R. Dykstra and his family in the death of his grandfather,

DONALD DYKSTRA.

May they and all saints be comforted with the word of I Corinthians 15:55-57: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin: and the strenght of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Edwin VanGinkel, Clerk

REMINDER:

The archives of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as they are preserved in the Protestant Reformed Seminary, still have no copy of the 1953 *Acts of Synod of the PRC*. Anyone able and willing to donate (or sell) that volume, for this cause, is urged to contact the seminary. We have appreciated very much the other volumes which have already been given, and note that additional copies of those of earlier years ('40s, '50s, and '60s) can still be put to good use at the seminary:

4949 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418
tel. (616) 531-1490

CALL TO SYNOD!!

Synod 1994 appointed Hull Protestant Reformed Church, Hull, IA the calling church for the 1995 Synod.

The Consistory hereby notifies our churches that the 1995 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America will convene, the Lord willing, on Tuesday, June 13, 1995 at 9:00 a.m. in the Hull Protestant Reformed Church, Hull, IA.

The Pre-Synodical Service will be held on Monday evening, June 12, at 7:30 p.m. Rev. R. VanOverloop, president of the 1994 Synod, will preach the sermon. Synodical delegates are requested to meet with the Consistory before the service.

Delegates in need of lodging should contact Egbert Gritters. Phone: (712) 439-2194.

Consistory of
Hull Protestant Reformed Church
Egbert Gritters, Clerk.

NOTICE!!

With thankfulness to God, the faculty of the Protestant Reformed Seminary inform the churches that they have licensed Seminarian Henry DeJong to speak a word of edification in the meetings for public worship. The scheduling of Mr. DeJong's speaking in the worship services will be done by the Seminary.

For the faculty,
Prof. David J. Engelsma,
Rector