

THE *September 15, 2000* STANDARD BEARER

A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

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Tell the Righteous: It Is Well

"Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him."

Isaiah 3: 10,11

The Protestant Reformed Churches have recently commemorated their 75th anniversary. In 1924 the synod of the Christian Reformed Church determined that the Bible taught that God has a favorable attitude toward every human in all the world. It was said that this general favor or grace of God stands over against the saving grace of God which is given only to the elect. The proof given to substantiate the teaching of this common grace of God consisted primarily of references to the good gifts which God gives all men in the realm of creation. These good gifts of God are said to be an expression of God's favor to all who receive them, regardless of

whether the recipient is righteous or wicked. It was said that the appearance of good gifts from God indicates an attitude of favor or grace for all who receive those gifts, regardless of whether the recipients are elect or reprobate, regardless of how the recipients walk and live (whether they are righteous or unrighteous). It was concluded that the presence of good things indicates an attitude of love. Conversely, the presence of bad things indicates an attitude of hatred and anger.



The situation of the faithful people of God in Isaiah 3 was that they experienced all sorts of bad things. God was punishing Israel for their collective sins. Israel, as a whole, had forsaken God in order

to serve various idols. God was sending all sorts of problems upon the nation. This included famine (v. 1) and the removal of all capable leadership and all skilled craftsmen (vv. 2, 3). Instead, the foolish were in the positions of leadership (v. 4), which resulted in even greater problems for the nation.

In the midst of these adversities, life was very difficult for those who remained faithful and righteous. The faithful remnant had a very difficult time serving the Lord God of Israel correctly because the temple was either closed completely or in the hands of wicked priests.

To top it off, the prophet Isaiah proclaims that God will bring the judgment of national captivity. The whole nation would be defeated in battle and taken into captivity. When the few and faithful righteous heard from the prophet of

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The Standard Bearer (ISSN 0362-4692) is a semi-monthly, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association, Inc., 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville, MI 49418.

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

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SUBSCRIPTION PRICE

\$17.00 per year in the U.S., US\$20.00 elsewhere.

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

Website for RFFA: www.iserv.net/~rfpa
Website for PRC: www.prca.org

God that judgment and woe was going to come, along with destruction and ruin, then they said, "What is the use of trying to do what is right?" They, along with the wicked, were experiencing only trouble and adversity, with more and greater yet to come.

The godly people looked at the bad things which were happening to them and they concluded that God no longer cared for them. They thought that God had forgotten them. They felt that there was no use in their striving to be obedient, no use in bringing sacrifices and offerings as commanded, and no use in doing what was right. All their efforts to do what was right did not change anything in the nation. Nor did it cause God to stop sending troubles. If the presence of good things indicated divine favor, then all these bad things they were experiencing must be evidences of divine anger. And nothing they could do changed that.

In this setting God sends the prophet Isaiah with an additional message. The words "Say ye" indicate that God is commissioning His prophet.

God sends His prophet first to the righteous and then to the wicked. In doing this, God wants His people to know that He is not looking at everyone alike. Rather, God shows that He makes a distinction between the righteous and the wicked.

God tells His prophets, "While you are proclaiming judgment to the nation as a whole, also seek out My people, the righteous, and tell them, 'It is well.'" That which God commands His prophet to say to the righteous is just one word: "Well" or, literally, "good." (Note: the italicized words in the KJV are not in the original, so there was only one word Isaiah was to speak to the righteous.) The righteous are the ones who need to be told that all is well. Communicate with them that God sees and knows, and that He can and does distinguish

between them and the wicked. He distinguishes even though it seems that He does not. God wants the righteous to know that, though everything seems bad, all is well, and He does care for them very much.



Who are the righteous whom Isaiah had to seek out and to whom He had to speak?

In the most simple terms, the righteous are those who are right in God's sight. The righteous are sinners who confess and repent of their sins, who look for forgiveness and righteousness in Jesus Christ, and who strive, in gratitude, to walk in the right way.

More specifically, the righteous are, first, those who find themselves, as the elect of God, to be the recipients of Christ's righteousness. By nature everyone is a descendant of Adam and has lost all the original righteousness with which he was created. Therefore, for any human to be righteous, he must be graciously given the righteousness which Christ earned in His perfect life, suffering, and death. Those who have received the gift of Christ's righteousness have all their sins forgiven them and are declared, by God, to be so perfect that it is as if they never did any wrong and as such have the right to dwell in heaven with God forever. Practically speaking, the righteous are sinners who are completely forgiven by God of all their sins, and instead are seen by God as perfectly righteous in Jesus Christ. The perfect righteousness of Jesus has been imputed to them, that is, reckoned to their account.

The righteous know that God sees them as righteous. Through the gift of faith they believe in God and in Christ. And the presence of faith in them assures them that God looks at them only as united to Jesus. Christ's righteousness is their righteousness.

By Christ's Spirit God imparts

Christ's righteousness to them. The consciousness of Christ's righteousness, first, makes them see themselves in Christ, as righteous for Christ's sake alone. Second, they strive, in gratitude, to walk in righteousness, that is, to do what is right. Although they are not perfect, they do have a beginning of the new obedience. The righteous are always sorry for their sins, and they frequently confess their sins. In gratitude they strive to do that which will honor and glorify their God. That is the righteous.

Are you righteous? Only by the grace of God!



To the righteous, God commissions His prophets and His ministers to say, "Well."

Christ's righteousness has secured for God's people the favor of God always. As a result, everything that God does for them is because of the righteousness of Christ. They are well. Their well-being is a solid, undeniable fact, in spite of all the calamities they may experience. The righteous can and must still be told that all is well, that all things are working together for their good (Rom. 8:28). The righteous are not to look at the *things* around them, nor to look inside themselves asking how they *feel*. Rather, the righteous are told to look at God's love for them in Christ. They are to listen only to what God says. They are to see themselves and the circumstances of their life only as God sees them.

Notice that there is no qualifier on the "Well." It is well always. It is well for them in prosperity and in poverty and adversity, in health and in sickness. It is well not just sometimes, but any time and all the time. It is well for them from the moment of their conception unto all eternity as they live with God in glory. There is no exception. They may have to carry a child to the grave. They

may have to experience all kinds of pain. They may die "early." But everything remains an absolute, unqualified *good* for them.

The declaration of this good is not an opinion or a well-educated guess of man. Rather it is the authoritative judgment of the Lord, Jehovah of Hosts. When God says "Well," and the devil and all his hosts say "Not well," whom are you going to believe? Faith remains, unshaken, in the Creator, though every creature contradict Him. It may not seem as if it is well, but it is well, because God says so. Isaiah is told to tell the righteous that, even though it may look evil and may feel terrible, it is well. The authority of God and of His Word is greater than anything they may see or feel. On God's authority it is well. That is what gives peace!



In addition to the righteous there are others in the world. To these others — the wicked — God also has a word to be said. It is a most serious and urgent word of warning. To the wicked it must be said, "Ill."

The wicked are descendants of Adam just like the righteous. They live and walk in wickedness. Whereas those sinners who are righteous seek to be identified with Christ, the wicked hold on to their condemnation in Adam and refuse to see any personal need for Christ. The truth of their sinfulness and their need for Jesus is presented to them, but they respond by denying their need for the gift of Christ's righteousness. They remain in the sinfulness which is theirs in Adam and in their own sins. And they walk in continued wickedness.

To these wicked it must be said, "Ill," or "evil." Just as there is no qualifier to the "Well," so there is no qualifier to the message of "Ill." It is always ill. No matter

how good they may feel about themselves. No matter how much praise men may give them, it is ill. No favor or grace, but only ill, wrath, and judgment. While everything works together for good for the righteous, so everything works together for evil for the wicked. For them it is ill in prosperity and in adversity. It is evil in the fat years as well as in the lean years. It is ill in health and in sickness. They cannot judge God's attitude by the things they receive. The things are good. But the things received are not indicative of the attitude of God which is behind the good gifts they receive. This passage of God's Word informs us of the attitude of God which is behind it. So does Proverbs 3:33. It is ill for the wicked in their life, in their death, in judgment, in their condemnation, and in unending hell.

Divine authority says, "It is ill." This message is not appealing to the flesh of any prophet or minister of God. But on the basis of divine authority this message of ill must be brought to the wicked. Also, out of genuine concern for the spiritual and eternal well-being of the wicked they are to be urgently told, "Woe! Watch out! Repent or you perish!" They are warned not to judge God's attitude by things or they will be falsely convinced that all is well. All is not well! It is only ill unless you repent and come to Christ. Christ is the only way to be freed from ill and judgment and condemnation. For a continued walk in wickedness, there is only one message. *Ill*. When God says, It is not good but evil, then it is evil, very evil. Woe! Woe! Woe! It will only go from bad to worse to the worst. The wicked will go to hell where there is only weeping and gnashing of teeth.



That the message to the righteous is "Well" and that the message to the wicked is "Ill" is most

fitting. It is not strange that this is what God wants to be said to them. Consider the last part of each verse. Concerning the righteous, they shall eat the fruit of their doings. And as far as the wicked are concerned, the reward of his hands shall be given to him.

The wicked receive the reward or result of everything they have done in their life. They were wicked, and so they shall be judged. God does not take someone who is righteous and give him evil. Nor does God take someone who walks in continued sin and tell him he is going to heaven. God is not arbitrary. Even from the perspective of this earth, that which someone receives (good or evil) is easily understandable. Why would God say to the wicked, "I have some general grace for you now, but not in hell"?

Look at the hands of the wicked. Their hands are wicked, full of evil. So are their eyes, their minds, and their ears. Wickedness is in their soul and it is how they live. God says, "If this is the nature of your hands, then you will receive the appropriate reward." The reward of eternity is in perfect harmony with the way they lived. They will not be able to say in the judgment day, "I was good. Why am I in hell?" Their hands indicate that they were not good. They did not try to do what was right in God's sight. And in the judgment day they will not have problems with their receiving hell. In perfect fairness with how they lived in wickedness, they will receive woe.

The righteous will receive the fruit of their doings. The doings of the righteous are, first, that they hold tightly to the cross of Jesus Christ. They repent and confess their sinfulness and their sins. They ask for forgiveness. They look at themselves as they are in Christ. They strive to do what is right out of gratitude.

The righteous need to be told this. In the days of Isaiah, the cir-

cumstances which surrounded the righteous made them think that all was ill for them. As a result they were saying, "What is the use of doing any good? Why do I still have to do God's will? We are going into captivity anyway. Why keep trying?" Then God commissions Isaiah to bring the following message to the righteous. "It is well. God loves the repenting sinners who hold to His Son. God is wise. Nothing is a mistake. He will work it out. You keep doing what God wants you to do. And you will receive the fruit of your doings."


Grace makes the righteous what they are, that is, righteous. And grace is what enables them to do what they must, that is, walk in the good works which God has

commanded them to walk in. And grace is the reward they will receive. It is called the reward of grace. The righteous are warned not to follow their natural inclinations in the midst of a calamity-filled life and to say, "What's the use of doing what I must do?" Instead they are to keep striving. They are to obey God in marriage, in parenting, in work, and in play. God, in His wonderful grace, assures them that they will be rewarded for doing the right. The righteous will eat the fruit of their doings.

The righteous eat the fruit of their doings now and in eternity. The fruit which they enjoy now is peace of soul. If they do not do what is right, then they cannot have peace. But if they strive to

do what is right and cling to Jesus, then they can look up to God and enjoy His peace. And they will eat the fruit of their doings forever and ever.



O ye righteous, in the authority of God I declare to you, "It is well. It is really well. God is a God of particular grace. Thank Him. Thank Him today and every day you live." And to the wicked I must declare, on the basis of the same divine authority, "It is ill for you now and it will be ill for you in eternity, unless you repent. Look to Christ for your righteousness, not to yourself. Repent or perish." 

Editorial

"Reformed in ... the Fundamental Truths" (3)

The two preceding editorials in this brief series summarized two extraordinarily significant articles that appeared in the April 2000 issue of the *Calvin Theological Journal* (CTJ). The articles recalled and reconsidered the controversy in the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) over common grace. This controversy resulted in that church's adoption of three points of common grace in 1924 and in the formation of the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC) shortly thereafter.

The first article, by Christian Reformed seminary professor John Bolt, examines the history surrounding the synodical decision of 1924, particularly the deposition of Rev. Herman Hoeksema. The sec-

ond article, by Christian Reformed theologian Dr. Raymond A. Blacketer, critiques the doctrine of the well-meant offer of salvation. This doctrine is the more important part of the teaching of the first point of common grace.

It remains in this editorial to reflect on the two articles in the CTJ.

In the nature of the case, the PRC need say little in response to the articles. Probably we *should* say little, lest our enemies seize the occasion to accuse us of an unholy spirit of self-vindication. Men of standing in the CRC affirm, and demonstrate, that the beginning of the PRC was the unjust deposition of faithful ministers and consistories and that the well-meant

offer of salvation—the doctrinal issue in the common grace controversy of 1924—is the Arminian explanation of the call of the gospel.

Now let men from the other Reformed and Presbyterian churches, many of whom have consciously followed the lead of the CRC both as regards their unfavorable view of the existence of the PRC and as regards their enthusiastic adoption of the well-meant offer, comment on the articles in the CTJ.

Nevertheless, a few, brief comments from the quarter of the PRC may be forgiven us, indeed must be expected.

Vindicating Hoeksema

The articles vindicate Herman

Hoeksema. They vindicate his behavior in the history leading up to his deposition, his recording of this history, and his theology, at least insofar as he repudiated the well-meant offer and confessed that God's grace in the preaching of the gospel is particular.

This, of course, is not at all the main significance of the articles. In a way, such vindication of Hoeksema is unimportant. He is dead. Christ has justified and rewarded him by grace alone, according to his works, including his suffering for Christ's sake. Still, I rejoice that theologians of stature in the CRC publicly judge well of him before the church world. The act of deposing him was a heavy blow. That he felt the blow keenly is evident from his pained reference in his history, *The Protestant Reformed Churches in America*, to the fact that the letter from Classis Grand Rapids East informing him of his deposition addressed him as "Mr. Hoeksema." Hoeksema did not want to be separated from the CRC. Unlike ministers in the later history of the CRC, he was not looking for the opportunity to leave. The result of his deposition was that he became a pariah in the Reformed churches—isolated, ignored, slandered.

Looking back on my own contact with him in my seminary training, I am grieved that such a sound, gifted Reformed theologian had only one student the first two years and only two, the third year. He met his students in a cubbyhole in the basement of First Church in Grand Rapids—a twentieth century "den and cave of the earth" (Heb. 11:38).

Along the same lines, the articles in the *CTJ* are of some encouragement to the PRC. Contrary to the hitherto accepted view, their origin was not willful schism, but unrighteous deposition of faithful ministers and consistories for the sake of the Reformed faith. Contrary to the widely held notion that doctrinally they are hyper-Calvin-

ists, their theology is, in fact, that of the Reformed confessions, particularly as regards the call of the gospel.

The articles echo the testimony of the Christian Reformed synod of 1924 to the soundness of Henry Danhof and Herman Hoeksema: "Reformed in respect to the fundamental truths as they are formulated in the Confessions." Not only do the articles echo the testimony, they also extend it to the very issue that divided the synod from the two ministers: the well-meant offer of the gospel.

Confronting Reformed Churches with the Issue of the Offer

Bringing the issue of the well-meant offer before the CRC, indeed before the entire English-speaking Reformed church world, is the real importance of the two articles in the *CTJ*. Vindication of Herman Hoeksema is of no fundamental importance. The PRC do not need encouragement from men to maintain the grand truths of sovereign, particular grace, welcome as the encouragement may be. But promotion of the truth that God's grace in the gospel of Christ is sovereign and particular, that is, that God's grace is truly grace, is of fundamental importance.

Both articles promote the gospel of grace. Dr. Bolt's article does this by showing that Hoeksema's expulsion from the CRC may not be dismissed as the discipline of a hard-headed schismatic. Rather, it was unjust ecclesiastical punishment of an honorable defense especially of particular grace in the preaching of the gospel. Blacketer's article promotes the truth of grace by its devastating indictment of the well-meant offer as the Arminian doctrine of the gospel-call.

Thus the two articles confront, not only the CRC but also many other Reformed and Presbyterian churches with the calling to re-examine the well-meant offer. For many Reformed and Presbyterian

churches have embraced the well-meant offer as Reformed orthodoxy. A number of them have done so under the influence of the CRC. Out of this re-examination of the well-meant offer great good can come, if God will bless the study with the Spirit of truth. There could be the purification of the confession of the churches from the foreign, corrupting element of a love of God in Christ for every human and a desire of God to save every human. There would then be solid advancement of genuine ecumenicity among Reformed and Presbyterian churches.

Clarifying the Issue

Dr. Blacketer's article does real service to the promotion of the truth by clarifying the issues regarding the well-meant offer. The well-meant offer teaches, *and practices*, a love of God in Christ for all to whom the gospel comes, a love that sincerely desires the salvation of every one of them. No longer can Reformed theologians misrepresent opposition to the offer as unwillingness to *preach* to all and to *summon* all to repentance and faith.

The well-meant offer confuses a distinction concerning the will of God that is basic both in Scripture and in the Reformed tradition: the will of God's decree and the will of God's command. By making God's command, "Believe on Christ!" inherently an expression of God's gracious wish, or loving desire, to save all to whom the command comes, the well-meant offer confuses the command with the decree. Thus, the well-meant offer negates the decree of predestination according to which God graciously wishes and lovingly desires the salvation only of some who hear the gospel.

The well-meant offer assumes that the fathers of Dordt meant by the "serious call" of the gospel the same thing as did the Arminians. But if this were so, the delegates at Dordt contradicted in their explanation of the "serious call" every-

thing they taught elsewhere in the Canons concerning the particular, sovereign grace of God. Besides, the Arminians' own confession concerning the call, which Blacketer quotes, shows plainly enough that they understood very well that the Reformed conception of the external call excluded any desire of God for the salvation of the reprobate. In this connection, Blacketer lays to rest (finally, I hope) the superficial notion that the term "offer," which is used of the call both by the Canons of Dordt and by the Westminster Confession of Faith, had for Reformed orthodoxy in the seventeenth century the same meaning that it has for Billy Graham in the twentieth century.

Blacketer points out that the well-meant offer of Christ and salvation necessarily is grounded in the atonement. He asks, repeatedly, "How can that which is not *actually* acquired or intended for the reprobate be offered to them with the desire that they accept it? In other words, how can Christ be offered *to* the reprobate, when in fact he has not been offered *for* them?" The history of dogma supports Blacketer's insight. Committed as they were to the well-meant offer, the Marrowmen of Scotland *had* to preach universal atonement, saying to every man, "Christ is dead for you." It was inevitable that Christian Reformed theologian Harold Dekker would argue from the well-meant offer to universal atonement.

Blacketer notes also that, as Hoeksema had suggested earlier, the well-meant offer found ready acceptance in the CRC through the covenant doctrine of William Heyns. For many years, Heyns had taught Christian Reformed seminarians that God is gracious to all children of believing parents. In the wider Reformed community today, the well-meant offer is closely linked to a doctrine of the covenant that refuses to apply election and reprobation to the physical children of godly parents, but rather insists

that God on His part is gracious to them all, graciously promises salvation to them all, and lovingly desires the salvation of them all. Universal, resistible grace in the sphere of the covenant leads to universal, resistible grace in the widest sphere of the preaching of the gospel.

In the light of these clarifications, the articles in the *CTJ* call Reformed churches to discuss the issue of the well-meant offer. The articles are not the polemic of the PRC. They are scholarly articles by reputable Christian Reformed theologians. Will the Reformed churches take note, and will they take up the discussion?

Calling to Ecumenicity

There is also the ecumenical purpose of the articles. Dr. Bolt gives expression to this in his opening lines:

The journal committee believed that it was an appropriate time to revisit the Synod of 1924 and its pronouncements in a fraternal spirit of ecumenical goodwill with respect to our brothers and sisters in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

This, more than anything else, warms my heart. For the first time in 75 years, there is a call from the side of the CRC to ecumenical discussion, in a brotherly and friendly spirit, not by ignoring common grace, especially the well-meant offer, not by disparaging the issue as unimportant and therefore unworthy of consideration, but by a full, frank discussion of the well-meant offer in the light of Scripture, the confessions, and the Reformed tradition.


At this point, the call comes, not from the CRC but only from certain members of the CRC. The CRC should act. She should take the advice of her theologians and invite the PRC to discuss the three points of common grace, beginning with the little, but basic, point of the first point: the well-meant of-

fer. The PRC would, I think, accept with eagerness. We should. Throughout our history, we have hoped for this. We have officially requested it more than once.

Later developments in the CRC should not deter us. There have been such developments, especially developments of a practical nature, e.g., her decisions on divorce and remarriage; her innovations regarding worship; and her acceptance of theistic evolution. But let us start with the doctrine of common grace. Who can say where the Spirit of truth and unity may lead us?

If the CRC fails to act (though she certainly is aware of her own theological journal), the synod of the PRC should once again address the CRC, in a friendly spirit calling her to discuss with her spiritual and ecclesiastical daughter, who is not unloving, the issue of common grace, on account of which mother ungraciously put her daughter out of her house and has disowned her these 75 years. The PRC should appeal to the articles in the *CTJ*.

As so often, Herman Hoeksema showed us the way. He did this in a speech to a gathering of Protestant Reformed and Christian Reformed ministers in Grand Rapids in 1939. The speech was published in English translation under the title, "The Reunion of the Christian Reformed and Protestant Reformed Churches." Because the speech bears on the ecumenical overture of the two articles in the *CTJ*, because it is helpful concerning the motive and method of ecumenicity in general, and because it is not widely known or readily available, we will publish the speech in several installments in the *Standard Bearer*, beginning with the next issue.

And we eagerly await John Bolt's article on the third point of common grace in the November 2000 issue of the *CTJ*. 

— DJE

■ Worship According to the Man on the Street

A neighbor of my mother-in-law recently handed me the *Standard Bearer* issues, May 1 and 15, 2000. I read and digested your editorials entitled, "Shall We Please God or (Certain Kinds of) People or, The Regulative Principle of Worship."

My initial response may seem rather remote. Your beliefs regarding worship remind me of Stophorst, Netherlands. Stophorst is a place where nothing has changed over the years. Consequently, Stophorst is a tourist attraction, a quaint place to visit, an oddity.

The Stophorst Reformed Churches have quite a bit to offer theologically, even though they are imbalanced in the areas of the sovereignty of God and evangelism, but they are not gaining a hearing at large, because they've missed out on true Reformed worship by not connecting with society. They are like a salt shaker that is full of the flavoring of salt that benefits only their own.

Many of us who know lament the fact that in the area of our roots only a tiny percentage of people attend worship and that, morally, the Netherlands has sunk to depths beyond the United States. Amazingly, not many people ask the question, "Why?" From having such a strong Reformed faith years ago, why does the Netherlands need missionaries to bring it back to a position of Christian influence? The answer is simple:

1. theologically, many church leaders have become universalists ... no longer under the authority of the Word of God;

2. the worship style and music, over the years, has not changed; therefore, they fail to make sense to the man on the

street, and "church" or "the Gospel message" has become a museum piece (relic) of the past.

I invite you to study the teachings of John Calvin as they relate to worship. The implications are incredible and far reaching. In understanding and applying what his biblical insight is, perhaps you'll not be so harsh on "progressive worship." Progressive worship in America is more "Reformed" than what is taking place in Stophorst churches and probably in the churches affected by the *Standard Bearer*.

If you'd like to discuss this matter further, I'd be delighted to meet with you and share thoughts on this crucial subject.

(Rev.) Charles Doornbos
Middleville, MI

P.S.

Consider the following quotation from Calvin:

The Lord has in his sacred oracles faithfully embraced and clearly expressed both the whole sum of true righteousness, and all aspects of the worship of his majesty, and whatever was necessary to salvation; therefore, in these the master alone is to be heard. But because he did not will in outward discipline and ceremonies to prescribe in detail what we ought to do (because he foresaw that this depended upon the state of the times, and he did not deem one form suitable for all ages), here we must take refuge in those general rules which he has given, that whatever the necessity of the church will require for order and decorum should be tested against these. Lastly, because he has taught nothing specifically, and because these things are not necessary to salvation, and for the upbuilding of the church ought to be variously accommodated to the customs of each nation and age, it will be fitting (as the advantage

of the church will require) to change and abrogate traditional practices and to establish new ones. Indeed, I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause. But love will best judge what may hurt or edify; and if we let love be our guide, all will be safe.

— John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.10.30.

RESPONSE

This letter is especially welcome.

It boldly confronts us with the issue in worship today: conform worship to the Word of God, or conform it to the tastes of the "man on the street." In a commendably naked way, it puts the pressure on us: conform worship to the world, or be regarded as (and called!) a relic and an oddity — a quaint Stophorst on the face of the earth.

How many churches, I wonder, are able to stand up to this pressure?

Our response — the response of the Protestant Reformed Churches — is that we choose to conform our worship, specifically our music, to the Word of God. We do so because the Spirit of Christ works obedience in us to the second commandment of the law of God: Worship God only in the way that He has commanded in His Word (Heid. Cat., Q. 96).

We are willing to pay the price of being an oddity.

At the same time, we on our part have a message for the man on the street, a message concerning worship. It is even stronger and more urgent than the warning to us, "Conform to the world, or become a quaint Stophorst." Our admonition is this: Submitting to God by believing on Christ, worship God as we do, that is, in the way that He has commanded in His Word, or perish!

— Ed.

P.S.

Regarding the citation from Calvin.

Calvin taught that the manner of the church's public worship of God is regulated by God in Scripture. Therefore, the manner of the New Testament church's worship of God is unchangeably the same always and everywhere. Calvin expresses this plainly enough in the chapter of the *Institutes* appealed to in Rev. Doornbos' letter.

He [God] alone (when we seek the way to worship him aright and fitly) has authority over our souls, him we ought to obey, and upon his will we ought to wait (4.10.8).

We are not to seek from men [whether on the street or in their seeker-friendly, mega-churches — DJE] the doctrine of the true worship of God, for the Lord has faithfully and fully instructed us how he is to be worshiped (4.10.8).

Many marvel why the Lord so sharply threatens to astound the people who worshiped him with the commands of men (Isa. 29:13, 14) and declares that he is vainly worshiped by the precepts of men (Matt. 15:9). But if they were to weigh what it is to depend upon God's bidding alone in matters of religion (that is, on account of heavenly wisdom), they would at the same time see that the Lord has strong reasons to abominate such perverse rites, which are performed for him according to the willfulness of human nature. For even though those who obey such laws in the worship of God have some semblance of humility in this obedience of theirs, they are nevertheless not at all humble in God's sight, since they prescribe for him these same laws which they observe (4.10.24).

In the section quoted by Rev. Doornbos, Calvin is speaking of rules of church order: "all the laws by which the order of the church is shaped" (4.10.27). Calvin explicitly distinguishes these rules, which make up what Calvin calls "a well-ordered constitution" of the church, from God's command-

ments prescribing how He is to be worshiped: "But in these observances one thing must be guarded against. They are not to be considered necessary for salvation and thus bind consciences by scruples; nor are they to be associated with the worship of God, and piety thus be lodged in them" (4.10.27).

Calvin himself informs us what he has in mind: rules as to the times of public worship, the times of the administration of the Lord's Supper, posture in prayer, and the like (4.10.29). The quotation itself specifies matters of "*outward discipline and ceremonies*," in distinction from "the whole sum of true righteousness, and all aspects of the worship of his majesty."

In these matters of "*outward discipline and ceremonies*," the rulers of the church have liberty to accommodate "the state of the times" and "the customs of each nation and age." But even in this carefully restricted area of church life, Calvin, typically, warns against rash innovation: "I admit that we ought not to charge into innovation rashly, suddenly, for insufficient cause" (4.10.30).

■ More on Instrumental Accompaniment in Worship

I respond to the letter by Renwick B. Adams, "Twanging Hearts" (*Standard Bearer*, July, 2000). Adams' concern is a distinction made by the editor in the article, "Shall We Please God...?" (*SB*, May 15, 2000), a distinction which he regards as erroneous in its application to musical accompaniment.

Adams writes, "Your classification of instrumental music as an attending 'circumstance' of worship where the church has liberty, rather than as an element of worship regulated by express commandment of Scripture, is erroneous."

The distinction at issue may be reduced for the purpose of brevity to a distinction between an act of

worship regulated by God and an attending circumstance. The irony of Adams' letter is that the author unwittingly demonstrates and establishes the point in his very disagreement with instrumental accompaniment as an attendant circumstance that it is an attendant circumstance.

Adams points out that "instrumental accompaniment was introduced into the Old Covenant worship by (and only by) the express command of God." Having pointed out that this accompaniment was required under David in connection with the institution of temple worship, he adds, "It would have been sinful for David to introduce musical instruments into the worship of the tabernacle without the command of God...."

Now concerning this there is first of all no genuine disagreement. The music and also the singing of the Old Testament church were given to the Levites and regulated by God's Word. The Old Testament church, as Adams himself indicates, was "... dependent on mediating Levites with their instruments making a sound during the burnt offering." However, exactly because of this, music was not an attendant circumstance in the Old Testament, neither was it simply, "instrumental accompaniment." It was in fact a commanded act of worship and an official element of worship. In the Old Testament, New Testament Christian liberty had not come into force; the church was under the tutors and governors of the Law.

Moreover, as Adams points out indirectly, this use of music in the Old Testament has a symbolic-typical function which is fulfilled in the New Testament. He writes, "Paul commands that while singing we are also to be 'making melody' in our hearts (Eph. 5:19). A very literal rendering of the original phrase is 'plucking on the strings of your heart.' We must accompany our voices with twanging hearts, so to speak." No one disagrees on

this point either. What it demonstrates, however, is that music in the Old Testament worship was in fact an act of worship, having a symbolic-typical significance, of the worship of the heart, which is fulfilled in the New Testament and is now realized in the singing and worship of God's people in the priesthood of all believers.

Two conclusions ought properly to be drawn from this however. First, that instrumental music as an act of worship, or official element of worship in the New Testament church is not to be done. By an act of worship we have in view elements introduced into the worship service which are *in themselves* elements of public worship or *in themselves* have some special symbolic significance. Introducing choirs, special numbers, special musical interludes in their own place in the service as a performance, or a devotional cantata such as those written by Bach, as elements of the worship service, violate the principle that the whole congregation must worship from the heart. Secondly, however, what the argument actually demonstrates is that Old Testament passages about music, where music was not mere accompaniment but an act of worship having symbolic-typical significance, are totally irrelevant to the subject of an attendant circumstance, which is not an act of worship but merely serves to assist worship. Music in the worship service which is used to assist the musically unlearned and aid the congregation in singing together is not *itself* an act of worship nor does it have a symbolic-typical significance. It in no way sets aside or hinders the calling to worship God from the heart. Moreover, background music which is used to promote a reverent atmosphere prior to the official worship service and after it, as well as during the taking of the offering and which serves to cover the sounds of people entering pews, dropping coins, etc., is likewise not

an act of worship. These are attendant circumstances.

Adams' second argument also unwittingly demonstrates the same point. He writes, "Also, your justification of the 'optional' position ('if only the instrument serves the singing of the congregation') is the same argument the Romanists use to justify incense and candles accompanying prayer. Calvin's logic in linking and rejecting these two 'aids' to worship is impeccable." The fact is that this argument mixes two different things or uses of the word "aids" and sets up a straw man. Calvin's objection to the Roman use of candles as an "aid" to prayer was not an objection to the use of candles as an attendant circumstance in worship in illuminating the church building prior to the electric light bulb. The Roman church uses candles as a symbolic-typical picture of the prayers being offered by the worshiper. This is particularly true as these candles are ordinarily lighted in front of images with bowing and genuflection. What Rome means by "aids" to prayer and to which the Reformers objected was not an "attendant circumstance" but a symbolic-typical act of worship. These "aids" are part of what Rome calls "sacramentals."

Similarly, the Eastern Orthodox churches use incense. The altar in their churches is hidden behind a screen called an iconostasis, with holy images of the saints on it. The mass is to be shrouded in mystery. In performing it the priest symbolically enters the temple. In connection with this the priest burns incense in a censor before the door just as did the priests of the Old Testament. He also walks around the congregation with the censor, clanking it as a symbolic-typical act of worship to sanctify the congregation to participate in the holy mystery of the mass about to be performed. It is an act of worship in these churches. It is not an "attendant circumstance." To attempt to draw an analogy from the

Reformer's logic and objection to this use of incense to musical accompaniment is to set up a straw man. The parallel to musical accompaniment in the use of incense would be to use it to freshen a stale odor, to remove a sour smell in a church building which would detract from public worship. That is, to use it as an air freshener to make the place of worship more pleasant.

The fact is that this argument of Adams really serves to illustrate that there is a very real difference between an "attendant circumstance" as the term is intended and what is in fact an act of worship. It also illustrates that the point made concerning music, "if the instrument serves the singing of the congregation," is a valid one since it has *no spiritual significance in itself*. It is justified in the light of the principles of Christian liberty in the New Testament.

Rev. Thomas Miersma
Home Missionary, PRC

■ Blessings of Childlessness

I appreciated the fine article entitled "Childlessness," by the Rev. Daniel Kleyn, which appeared in the May 1, 2000 issue of the *Standard Bearer*. In addition to the reasons mentioned by Rev. Kleyn why the Lord in His wisdom chooses not to give children to some couples in the church, let me suggest one more: perhaps it is to enable them to minister more effectively to other childless couples in the church.

However all this may be, childless couples can be and in many instances have been a rich blessing to their fellow saints in God's church.

(Prof.) Robert D. Decker
Protestant Reformed Seminary



Teaching Our Children to See the Treasures

Treasures. We have them. No, not gold or rubies or pearls, though we might actually own some of those things. No, our treasure is spiritual in nature. We know this is and ought to be the case: "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). But here is the problem — we by nature are not spiritual. We are spiritually dead. By nature all we see are the gold and rubies and pearls. That new man within us has to fight the old man tooth and nail just to get a glimpse of the spiritual treasures. This is a battle we must help our children to be engaged in from their earliest years. Our calling as parents is to teach our children to see the real, spiritual treasures, and to seek and covet those treasures. That is our task.

As stated above, there is a problem with this. This old man that is present in us as parents, so that we are blind to these treasures, is present also in our children. This makes for a formidable task! The world and the devil would have us remain blind to these things. Babylon in all her riches, her purple and scarlet, her precious stones and pearls, would have us pant after her and her goods with all our strength and might. She has deceived the whole world into be-

ing engaged in this endeavor. Come, buy my treasures! Houses, clothes, cars, and more — they will make you happy! That looks so good to us, too.

We need earthly goods to carry out the task God has set before us. And He provides for those needs, often over and above what we really need. But we ought not covet more. This ought not be the focus of all our work and time and energy. "No, Johnny, it is not necessary to own one of those. How will it help you in your calling before God? It will probably hinder more than help." Our children need to know the proper place of earthly goods.

But even more importantly, they need to see the spiritual treasures. They need to see that the place that these treasures occupy is so far above the place of earthly goods, that there is no comparison. How do we teach that? First, by showing them the true, transient nature of the riches that Babylon so blatantly dangles before our eyes. And secondly, by showing them the glorious, everlasting beauty of the treasures of the kingdom of heaven.

See the riches "where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matt. 6:19)? To set our hearts on these is to be bitterly deceived, for they vanish in a breath. No diamonds on your fingers? No rubies at your throat? No matter. "The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord" (Ps. 33:5). Diamonds shim-

mer across the snow each frigid, sunny, winter morn. A glorious, glowing red ruby sets beyond the horizon each clear and cloudless eve. Diamonds set in gold and rubies set in crowns can hardly match these gems that all may own. And there is little difference between them. A little time, that's all. They melt or they are lost, and they are gone. "Do not be deceived, Susan. We may enjoy earthly riches for a short time, but then they are gone. With the rising and the setting of the sun, they are gone!"

"But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20). Heavenly treasures are spiritual. They require spiritual eyes to be seen and a spiritual heart to be loved. God must give our children these eyes and this heart. But He also uses parents to pry those eyes open, to direct their gaze, and to instruct by word and example the object of their love. And exactly what are the treasures we ought to teach our children to see and to covet? Behold!

Behold the glorious treasure of wisdom (Prov. 8):

"Come, children, there is a treasure more precious than gold or silver or rubies (vv. 10, 11), and when you seek it early, it is certain that you will find it (v. 17). That treasure is wisdom. What is wisdom? It is the fear of the Lord. That is where you begin if you want to understand wisdom — the fear of the Lord. And what is it to fear the Lord? It is to hate evil. It is to hate pride and arrogance, the

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evil way, and a mouth that says evil things (v. 13). It is to love that which is right and good. See that mountain over there? Wisdom was brought forth before it existed (v. 25). See the clouds? See the fields? See the oceans? Wisdom was there before all these came to be (vv. 26-30). It was by wisdom that they were created! You see, it is Jesus Christ our Lord, He is wisdom. Wisdom says, 'Now therefore hear-ken unto me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep my ways' (v. 32)."

Behold the treasure of truth:

"Come, children, hear what else wisdom has to say: 'For my mouth shall speak truth' (Prov. 8:7). To know the grace of God in truth (Col. 1:6) — what a treasure! The wisdom of God through the Spirit guides the church into all truth (John 16:13). We must love that truth. The creeds, the doc-trines of particular grace, and un-conditional salvation, all these are our treasure to love, to keep, and to guard. Oh how the devil would snatch this treasure from us! He begins with enticing little lies that would loosen our grip, then adds greater deception, and the treasure is lost. Do not let this happen, chil-dren. Keep it and guard it as you love your very life, for it is your life!"

Behold the treasure of righ-teousness:

"Come, children, look at this flower. The petals are beautiful. They look and feel like velvet. Look closely now — they even sparkle in the sunshine! Scripture talks about flowers. 'Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these' (Matt. 6:29). If God gives such wonderful clothes to a flower that is here one day and wilts the next, how much more won't He give us the clothes we need? We ought not worry about what we will wear. But even more importantly, He gives us heavenly, spiritual clothes. They're wedding clothes, dazzling white robes of righteousness. Christ died to give us those clothes, to cover our sins. The robe of righteousness is our treasure!"


Behold the treasure of the Word:

"Come, children, see this bread. Touch it. Taste it. It nour-ishes and feeds our bodies. To a hungry person this bread is a trea-sure. But after we eat this bread, a little while later we are hungry again. It is not a lasting treasure. Jesus said, 'I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger' (John 6:35). His words are spiritual food for us. When we know those words are true and we believe them, it is as if we 'eat' the

Word. We are spiritually eating this Bread. What a glorious feast! A lasting treasure!"

Behold the treasure of hope:

"Come, children, see this rock. Put your hand on it and lean against it. I cannot tell you exactly what kind of rock it is, but I can tell you that the substance of it is solid, heavy, and hard. It can't be moved. And just as sure as this rock is here in its place, so sure is our hope. 'Now faith is the sub-stance of things hoped for, the evi-dence of things not seen' (Heb. 11:1). That Jesus comes for us at the end of the world, to gather us to Himself and bring us to heaven, is as sure as you can see and feel this rock. What a treasure is our hope. What a sure, immovable treasure!"

There are more treasures than these that we can show our chil-dren. Infinitely more! But they all amount to *one* Treasure. It is Christ. "Whom have I in heaven but thee?" (Ps. 73:25). He is all we long for, He is all we live for. He is our Husband. We are His Bride. "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27). We own no greater treasure. 

The Nature of the Diaconate (2)

An Office of Administrative Service

Rev. Kuiper is pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church of Byron Center, Michi-gan.

In writing on the nature of the diaconate, we are explaining how the characteristics of an of-fice in the church of Jesus Christ apply to the diaconate. We defined an office as "a position given by God to men, in the sphere of the

covenant, in which He authorizes them to serve Him in that sphere." The characteristic of office which we have already examined is that of authority. Deacons have au-thority.

Authority implies service. Au-

thority is never simply glitter and glamour, merely a respectable position, devoid of any responsibility. A father has the title and privileges of father, but must also perform the duties of fatherhood. A policeman does not merely possess the title of "officer" or "sergeant," but exercises this authority by working. Likewise the officebearer in the church has authority to *serve*. The diaconate, then, is an office of service.



At least eight different Greek words are translated "servant" (or "service," or "serve") in the New Testament. By far the most common is *doulos*, which means "slave." This word emphasizes the relation of the servant to his master — the servant is not free but owned, bound to the service of his master in every way. A second word is *diakonos*, "servant." It emphasizes the official nature of the work which a servant does — official work of service to the master by executing his will, or administering his rule. In fact, this word *diakonos* is more often translated "minister" than "servant."

These two words give us a general idea about what service is. Service is first of all work. A servant does not sit, but busies himself with his work. If he does not, he is not serving! Second, service is work which is done for a master. One is not serving if he works for himself. A licensed contractor who owns his own construction business, though he is busy in the work of building a house, does not *serve*, for he is his own boss. His hired employee, however, being busy in the same work, *serves*. He works to please not himself, but his master, knowing that he is responsible to his master and will be judged by his master. Third, one specific kind of service is called administration. An administrator is a servant who is given a specific mandate from his master, which mandate must be fulfilled exactly,

particularly, and completely. In the way of fulfilling this mandate exactly, the administrator is nothing else but a means by which the master carries out his work. This kind of service differs from service generally, in that many servants are given commands to do some activity, or accomplish some goal, but left to their discretion as to how specifically to accomplish that goal. They work for their master, but have freedom how to work. An administrator is given no freedom in these matters.



The service of an ecclesiastical officebearer is particularly that of administration. The officebearer must serve God and Christ by administering God's Word and Christ's rule to the congregation.

That officebearers must serve God is clear enough. God has called pastors, elders, and deacons to office and has authorized them to function in His name. The need to serve is implied in the fact that they hold office. Rev. K. Sietsma writes in his book *The Idea of Office* that

office means that someone does not rule by virtue of his own authority but that he has authority and the right to exercise an office *in the service of God* and therefore in the service of his fellows according to God's command. Whoever assumes power for his own, rather than for God's sake, loses sight of the essential service character of office.*

How quickly we can forget that the officebearer serves not himself, not the people, but God! Or, to rephrase it more accurately, that his service of the people is really service of God! When pastors, elders, and deacons think they serve themselves, they become tyrants, impose their own rule, and make decisions based on their whims. Church government becomes political. When pastors, elders, and

deacons think that they serve only the people, they find themselves in the impossible position of trying to cater to everyone's requests. And when the people think that the officebearers must serve them, they become political in choosing officebearers (ignoring God's qualifications, selecting men who will best help their agenda), and they think that they are free to obey or disobey, to listen or not to listen, according as the officebearers have done what they want or do not want. Let us beware of these dangers! They are abuses of office, for which officebearers will be held accountable and be judged.

Officebearers serve God above all. They must be busy in His work, seeking His glory. They must serve in the consciousness that they will stand in judgment before Him, and give account for the souls of the people (Heb. 13:17) as well as for how they have handled those souls.

But now notice: their work is *administrative* work — work which God does officially through them! It is the work of serving the church by teaching, by ruling, and by showing mercy! And this is not work which God simply commits to their charge with the command: "Go out and serve My church," as a builder might tell his servants, "Here is the blueprint; there is the building site; go build a house," leaving them to do it in their way and at their time. Rather, God calls them to office, and gives them this task: "Bring My Word to My people! Teach it to them, rule them by it, show them My mercy in light of it." Officebearers are not free to do another work than that which God commanded, or to accomplish the goal God desires in a different way than that which God commanded; they must bring God's Word to God's people in feeding

* K. Sietsma, *The Idea of Office*, tr. Henry VanderGoot (Jordan Station, ON: Paideia Press, 1985), page 58.

them, ruling them, and administering the mercies of Christ to them. In that way, God builds His house through the officebearers!



That all this is true of the special offices of the church is clear both from the example of Jesus' service and from several instances of the use of the word *diakonos* in the New Testament.

Jesus served the church by giving His life for it: "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). And again: "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). Note that the words "minister" and "serve" are both verb forms of the noun *diakonos*.

Jesus' service to the church, however, was not something He did merely for His own sake. Though His service was willing and voluntary, the decision to come into the flesh to serve was not ultimately His. How He should serve was not something He was free to decide. Rather, His service was commanded and commissioned! God sent Him not merely as servant, but as administrator, with a specific mandate: not merely a general mandate to save His people, but a specific mandate to die for them, and teach them about salvation and the kingdom of heaven (John 12:49). Should Jesus have turned aside from this mandate, He would have ceased at that moment to serve God and the church. And in the way of carrying out His mandate, it was not merely Jesus that saved the church, but God who did it through Jesus!

Jesus was not merely servant, but administrator, because He was the Mediator, the promised prophet, priest, and king, the chief officebearer in the covenant and church of God. Of this He was always conscious. He taught the people that He was the Christ, the fulfillment of the Old Testament

prophecies of the Messiah. He told them that He came not to do His will, but the will of His Father which was in heaven (John 4:34; 5:19-47; 6:38-40). He reminded them that those who despised Him despised not Him, but His Father which had sent Him (Luke 10:16). In all these ways and more Jesus showed that He was on earth to serve God first, and that His service of God was that of administering the blessings of God upon the righteous and the judgment of God upon the wicked.

Because Jesus served God by administering God's blessings to His people, so pastors, elders, and deacons, given authority by Christ Himself to perform His work, must serve in the same way. The apostles were to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4). To Paul was committed the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18ff.). Timothy was a minister of Jesus Christ (I Tim. 4:6). So in our day pastors serve God by administering the Word of God, preaching it to the church. Elders serve God by administering the rule of Christ to the church. Deacons serve God by administering the mercies of Christ to the church.

And every child of God must serve God by serving others. We all *can* and *may* and *must* do this, because we are all partakers of Christ's anointing. So the noun *diakonos* and its related verb *diakoneo* (serve) and related noun *diakonia* (service) are used in the New Testament with reference to the work Christians must do. Women served Christ by ministering to His needs (Matt. 8:15, 27:55; Luke 10:40). Christian discipleship is service (John 12:26). We must minister to others of the gifts we have received (I Pet. 4:10, 11).



Having examined general uses of the words *diakonos*, *diakonia*, and *diakoneo*, we must now see that they are used also in a specific

sense to refer to the office of deacons and to the service which the church performs for the poor and needy through her diaconate. In a particular way, the office of the diaconate is an office of service and administration!

The word *diakonos* is used in Philippians 1:1 and I Timothy 3:8, 12 to refer to one holding the office of deacon. By now you have no doubt noticed that our English word "deacon" comes from the Greek *diakonos*. Even our English terms then — deacon, diaconate, diaconal — convey this same idea of service. Deacons are servants!

The word also refers to the church's work of caring for the poor. The "daily ministration" and serving tables (Acts 6:1, 2) refers to this work. In response to the prophecy of a great dearth, the disciples "determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea" (Acts 11:29; "relief" is *diakonia*). Paul tells the church of Rome (Rom. 15:25ff.) that he goes to Jerusalem to "minister unto the saints," by which he does not refer to the ministry of the word, but of money for the relief of their poverty. The words "ministering," "administered," "administration," and "ministration" are used in II Corinthians 8 (vv. 4, 19, 20) and 9 (vv. 1, 12, 13) to refer to the work of bringing relief to the poor saints. The diaconate, therefore, is an office of service, and particularly of administration of the mercies of Christ.

Briefly we can spell out the implications of this fact for deacons.

In the first place, as soon as the deacon is installed — no, already when he accepts nomination for office! — he must be willing and ready to serve. Being in the diaconate does not mean, primarily, that one has a greater voice in how the church affairs are run; or that now one is able to see for himself that the church monies are spent wisely. It means serving God, by caring for the poor! And the deacon, or man nominated to

the diaconate, must want to do that. If you do not want to do this, do not accept nomination!

In the second place, he must remind himself of this fact whenever he prepares to make a benevolence call, or when he is ready to discuss a benevolence need at the deacons' meeting. And it must govern and guide him as he determines whether the need is genuine, and how much to give. He must remember that he is serving God in

this matter. Even more, it must make him realize the importance of bringing the Word of God, not only money, to the family who has need.

Thirdly, it requires him to understand that he must be Christ-like in all of his conduct. He must deny himself, not considering the requests of the poor to be "bothersome," and their phone calls to him to be "intrusions" on his family time, but sympathetic and ready to help. He must in every aspect of

his life live as the Word of God requires him to (I Tim. 3:8ff.).

Lastly, it requires of him diligent study of the Word of God in his own life, and much prayer, for faithful servants of God must speak oft with their Lord, to seek His guidance and the knowledge of His will.

Deacons, remember: above all else, you are servants of God! And you serve the church for His sake.



News From Our Churches

Mr. Benjamin Wigger

Minister Activities

On the evening of August 7 the congregation of the Randolph, WI PRC met to call a pastor. From a trio of the Revs. Ken Koole, Wayne Bekkering, and Doug Kuiper, they extended a call to Rev. Doug Kuiper. He will give his answer on September 17.

Rev. Arie denHartog declined the call he had been extended by the Hope PRC in Walker, MI to serve as minister-on-loan to our sister churches in Singapore. Since that decline, Hope has formed a new trio of the Revs. Wilbur Bruinsma, Carl Haak, and Ken Koole, from which they will soon extend a call.

We extend our congratulations to Rev. Mitch and Grace Dick who were blessed on July 9 with the birth of a son, Paul Samuel.

Congregation Activities

In a recent bulletin from the South Holland, IL PRC we read that the Cornerstone PRC, presently meeting in the Scheub Community Center in Schererville, IN, has chosen an architect and are in the process of approving prelimi-

nary plans for their future church building.

A recent bulletin from the Southeast PRC in Grand Rapids, MI reminded me that the nice warm temperatures of summer will ultimately give way to the cold and snow of a Michigan winter. This summer they decided it was time to replace, not one, not two, but three furnaces in their church.

The consistory of the Grace PRC in Standale, MI decided to sponsor a three-month trial period of Sunday-night Discussion Groups for their congregation this summer. The idea was to test the response of the members of Grace for the summer and then decide whether to continue the program into the fall and winter.

On Sunday, July 30, Jack and Judie Feenstra, presently serving our sister churches in Singapore, gave a talk concerning their work to the congregation of the First PRC in Grand Rapids, MI.

We also note that the congregation of the Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada scheduled their annual church picnic for August 7. And since this is the year we celebrate the 75 years God has given our churches, they also extended a special invitation to the

members of the First PRC in Edmonton to join them in celebration.

Mission Activities

Rev. Rodney Miersma, pastor of the Immanuel PRC, and Rev. Richard Smit, pastor of the Doon, IA PRC, left in early August for about a two-week visit to the Philippines. They will be returning, the Lord willing, on August 12. Their plans were to visit contacts in Manila, Daet, Bacolod, and Cagayan de Oro to investigate their potential for becoming a full-time mission field for our churches.

Rev. Richard Moore, our churches' missionary to Ghana, writes that there were eighteen young people at their Bible Study for Young Adults on August 18. As you can imagine, this makes for a very good study of the Scriptures in the fellowship of other young adults. The Saturday catechism class also continues to be well attended and remains a blessing.

The mission in Ghana has been given permission to proceed with the purchase of property in Ashaley Botwe by the ruling bodies in the United States — the council of the Hull, IA PRC and the Foreign Mission Committee. As of this

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

writing in late August, Rev. Moore is working hard to get the paperwork done on the property and to obtain permits for building.


School Activities

The new school year will have begun, the Lord willing, for all our children by the time you read this.

The summer edition of the "Re-

flector," published by the staff of the PR Christian School in South Holland, IL, arrived the other day and it had on its pages an article by Rev. Gerrit Vos. His love for children and for Christian instruction comes out in the meditation written fifty years ago for the *Standard Bearer* about the godly mother Hannah, who wanted the best edu-

cation possible for her son Samuel. I would like to end this issue with "Food for Thought" from that article.

Rev. Vos writes, "Now I would like you to take away the historical cloak which clothes this incident, and see the wonderful worth of Christian education: they teach the child how to answer the Lord when He calleth!" 

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With thankfulness to God on September 19, the Lord willing, our parents,

GLENN and BETTY KOTMAN, will celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary. We rejoice with them for the years that God has given to them. We thank them for leading and guiding us in the truths of God's Word. It is our prayer that the Lord will continue to bless and keep them in their marriage. "O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever" (Psalm 136:1).

- ❖ Matt and Jodee VanOverloop
- ❖ Jeff
- ❖ Brian

Hudsonville, Michigan

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The Christian Fellowship Society of Hull PRC express their sincere Christian sympathy to David and Susan King in the death of their daughter,

CRYSTAL SUE KING.

Our prayers are that you may be comforted with the words of our Lord in Isaiah 40:11, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

Loren Gritters, President
Rebecca DeJong, Secretary

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 22, 2000, our parents,

GLEN and TWYLA GRIESS, celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary.

We thank God for their faithfulness to each other and dedication to God and the church. May our Lord continue to bless them and keep them in their marriage. "For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him" (Psalm 103:11).

- ❖ Jason, Jessica, and Kaitlyn
Scratchfield
- ❖ Sarah Griess
- ❖ Luke Griess
- ❖ Elizabeth Griess
- ❖ Ashley Griess

Loveland, Colorado

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church express their heartfelt Christian sympathy to fellow member John Flikkema in the death of his wife,

MRS. GRACE FLIKKEMA.

"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness" (Psalm 17:15).

Rev. Nathan Brummel, Pres.
Rick Worries, Clerk

RESOLUTION OF SYMPATHY

The council and congregation of Cornerstone Protestant Reformed Church express their heartfelt Christian sympathy to Keith and Mary Vooy's and children in the death of their mother, mother-in-law, and grandmother,

MRS. GRACE FLIKKEMA.

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23:6).

Rev. Nathan Brummel, Pres.
Rick Worries, Clerk

REMINDER:

With this issue, Volume 76 comes to a close. Bound volumes can be purchased for \$20.00 each (plus postage). Or, if you bring or send to the SB business office soon your own loose issues for binding, you can obtain the bound volume for just \$12.00. (The latter service can be provided if we have your copies by October 15.)

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 23, 2000, our parents and grandparents,

ALBERT and JEAN BUITER, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We are thankful for the example of their Christian life and for their teaching us the fear of Jehovah. We thank the Lord for them and pray He will give them many more years together. "Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in His holy name" (Psalm 33:20, 21).

- ❖ Dave and Cheryl Dotson
Joshua, Jordanna, Jimmy
- ❖ Albert Wayne Buiter, in glory
- ❖ Karen Buiter

South Holland, Illinois

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On September 15 our beloved parents and grandparents,

PETE and PHYLLIS MIEDEMA, will celebrate their 40th wedding anniversary. We thank our heavenly Father for the years He has given them together. We are grateful for their godly instruction, love, and guidance given unto us. We pray that God will continue to use them and bless them with many more years together.

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

- ❖ Rick Miedema (in glory)
- ❖ Joel and Joy DeGroot
Jeffrey and Cassandra
- ❖ Brad and Ruth Brower
Austin, Brendan, and Alexzandria
- ❖ Dave and Julie Miedema
Rick and Mitchell

Hudsonville, Michigan

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

On August 6, 2000, our parents,

**PHILIP and BARBARA
DYKSTRA**,

celebrated 35 years of marriage. We, their children and grandchildren, rejoice with them and are thankful to God for the years He has given them together and for the years of godly instruction they have given us. Our prayers are that God will bless the rest of their years together.

"Praise ye the Lord. Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed" (Psalm 112:1, 2).

- ❖ Calvin and Kristin Dykstra
Lydia, Abigail
- ❖ Bill and Karen Langerak
Jared, Justin, Katrina, Jason
- ❖ Randy and Heather Dykstra
Caleb, Carter, Travis
- ❖ Mark and Vicki Cnossen
Jeremy, Ashley
- ❖ Dan and Jean Bylsma
Brittany
- ❖ Terry and Tracy Dykstra
Collin
- ❖ Jordan Dykstra

Hudsonville, Michigan

REMINDER:

The annual meeting of the RFPA will be held in Faith PRC on September 21 at 8 P.M. Rev. James Laning will speak on the topic: "Studying to Answer Rather Than Studying Destruction." Hope to see our subscribers from the west Michigan area in attendance.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

With joy, on August 4, 2000, our parents,

**EVERETT and AUDREY
VAN VOORTHUYSEN**,

celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful to God for the many blessings He has shown them throughout their marriage. We are thankful to them for their godly example to us and for many years of faithful instruction and unconditional love. Our prayer is that our Lord will keep them ever in His care and bless their marriage for many years to come. "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us, and has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour" (Ephesians 5:2).

- ❖ Karen Koot
- ❖ Ken and Gail Kamps
- ❖ Ron and Laura
Van Voorthuysen
- ❖ Ron and Barb Schut
15 Grandchildren

Redlands, California

NOTICE!!!

Each issue of the *Standard Bearer* is available on cassette tape for those who are blind, or who for some other reason would like to be able to listen to a reading of the *SB*. This is an excellent ministry of the Evangelism Society of the Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. The reader is Ken Rietema of Southeast Church. Anyone desiring this service regularly should write:

Southeast PRC
1535 Cambridge Ave. S.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49506.