

# The Standard Bearer

A Reformed semi-monthly magazine

April 1, 2020 • Volume 96 • No. 13

## Father, forgive them

Rev. John Marcus

## The covenant and Dordt Head V: Assurance of final salvation

Prof. Russell Dykstra

## A godly rejoicing in one's youth

Rev. Thomas Miersma

## The excellency and power of Scripture

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## Deliverance promised to God's people

Rev. James Laning



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

#### Postmaster

Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

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#### Subscription price

\$29.00 per year in the US, \$41.00 elsewhere  
esubscription: \$29.00  
esubscription free to current hard copy subscribers.

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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. Announcements should be sent, with the \$10.00 fee, to: RFPA, Attn: *SB* Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (email: [mail@rfpa.org](mailto:mail@rfpa.org)). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Website for RFPA: [www.rfpa.org](http://www.rfpa.org)

Website for PRC: [www.prc.org](http://www.prc.org)

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## Meditation

Rev. John Marcus, a minister of the Word in the Protestant Reformed Churches

# Father, forgive them

**Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.**

**Luke 23:34a**

One of the outstanding features of Jesus' ministry was His willing and wholehearted determination to do His Father's will. Determined to do His Father's will, Jesus "steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem" (Luke 9:51), even though He knew that He would "suffer many things, and be set at nought" (Mark 9:12). Determined to do His Father's will in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, "not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42). When the mob came with Judas to capture Jesus, He did not try to escape; rather, He willingly gave Himself up to them to be tried and condemned.

Similarly, Jesus willingly carried His own cross as far as He was able. No doubt, when the soldiers put hammer and nails to His hands and feet, He willingly submitted Himself to be fastened to the cursed tree. And, when the cross was dropped into its hole, Jesus prayed according to the same will of His Father, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

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What a comfort to know that Jesus was expressing His great desire that the Father would forgive!

To forgive, according to its literal meaning in the Greek means "to dismiss" or "to send away." Forgiveness is a dismissing of a debt such that the debtor is no longer liable for any of it ever again.

Jesus once told of a creditor who forgave a debt of ten thousand talents. Ten thousand talents—the equivalent of thousands of years' worth of wages for a common laborer—could never have been repaid, no matter how hard the debtor had tried. If we ourselves had to make satisfaction for our sins, no matter how hard we tried, we could never pay the debt that was owed. Indeed, we would only daily increase our debt.

Jesus was praying that God would dismiss the debt of sin's guilt and punishment. The guilt of sin makes us liable to the wages of eternal death under God's wrath. The wages of sin is to hear the voice of Christ on the

Judgment Day saying, "Depart from me into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." Forgiveness is the dismissing of that debt and the wrath that is due.

God gives a beautiful picture of sending away the debt of sin on the Day of Atonement celebrated by Old Testament Israel (Lev. 16:21-22). On that day, the high priest would lay his hands upon the head of the goat and symbolically transfer to the goat all the debt of the people's sins. Subsequently, the goat was "dismissed"/"sent" far away into the wilderness bearing that debt of sin, never to be heard from or seen again. John the Baptist connected this picture to the reality when he pointed at Jesus and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away (literally, 'bears away') the sin of the world" (John 1:29). When God forgives us, He sends away forever the debt and punishment of sin.

Forgiveness is thus God's promise never to bring up our sins against us. When God forgives us, He does not allow our sin to separate us from Himself. Instead, He says, Your "sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). Not that God actually forgets anything; but He deliberately chooses not to bring up the guilt and punishment that our sins deserve. "Father, forgive..." is Jesus' prayer that God would not bring up our sins against us in wrath ever again.

What a glorious thing to have the guilt and punishment of sin dismissed!

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For whom was Jesus praying when He said, "Father, forgive them"? He certainly was praying for some who were directly associated with His crucifixion. After all, He made this petition immediately after He was lifted up on the cross. Jesus must therefore be referring to some who did not realize what they were doing as they were crucifying Him ("for they know not what they do").

There are those who imagine that Jesus prayed for all those who were in some way involved in His crucifixion. They take it that Jesus was praying for all the chief priests, all the elders, all who brought false testimony

against Him, Pilate, all who chose Barabbas instead of Jesus, all who demanded that He be crucified, all the soldiers who mocked and spit upon Him, and all who nailed Him to the cross—even Judas Iscariot.

But, Jesus' words, "Father, forgive them" cannot mean that He was praying for all His persecutors head for head. If He had prayed that they all would be forgiven, His prayer that they receive this particular blessing of salvation would have failed for most of them. In fact, Jesus never prayed that all men would receive this particular blessing, or any of the blessings of salvation. In His high-priestly prayer, just before Jesus offered Himself on the cross, He prayed "not for the world" but specifically for those whom the Father had given Him (John 17:9). Jesus must, therefore, have been praying, not for all His persecutors, but for His elect among them, given to Him by the Father.

At the same time, we must not think that Jesus' prayer was only for those responsible for His death back then; His prayer is also for us today. That is evident from the fact that we have the same sinful natures as did Jesus' persecutors. Apart from the grace of God, if we had been in the same circumstances, we would have done just as the Jews and Pilate and the soldiers did.

In addition, we must know that *our sins* sent Jesus to the cross. We might be tempted to think that our sins are not as bad as the sins of those who put Jesus on the cross. However, the truth is, all sin is treachery against God. Every sin we commit says essentially, "We will not have this man rule over us" and "crucify Him." All sin rejects Christ and His authority over us. *Our sins* are the reason that Christ went to the cross. Therefore, His prayer for forgiveness was not only for the elect back then who participated directly in His crucifixion. His prayer was for *all* His elect whose sins put Him on the cross—from every age and in every corner of the world!

That Jesus' prayer was for His elect people is evident as well from the Old Testament Day of Atonement. On that day, the high priest first offered the atoning sacrifice; next, he offered up prayers at the altar of incense; and then, he went into the Holy of Holies. Borne on his breastplate as he made the atoning sacrifice, as he prayed before the altar of incense, and as he went into the holiest, were twelve precious stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel, the chosen people of God. The atoning sacrifice and the prayers for forgiveness at the altar of incense were offered by the priest specifically for God's chosen people. So too, as Jesus offered Himself on the altar of the cross and offered up prayers, His prayer was not for all men, but specifically for His people.

What a comfort to know that Jesus sought this blessing of forgiveness for us and all His elect!

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Wonderfully, God answered Jesus' prayer.

Already at the time of His crucifixion, some of His elect repented and rejoiced in the Father's forgiveness. One of the thieves on the cross, who at first railed upon Jesus, later repented and was assured by Jesus, "to day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Jesus' declaration to the thief implied He had forgiven all the sins the thief had ever committed, including his railing against Jesus as He hung on the cross. The Roman centurion in charge of Jesus' crucifixion repented too and "glorified God saying, Certainly this was a righteous man." The fact that he received this knowledge and glorified God implies that he also received the blessing of forgiveness. And, when Peter preached his sermon on Pentecost some fifty days after Jesus' prayer, many who had been involved in Jesus crucifixion, having slain Him by their wicked hands (cf. Acts 2:23), repented and believed on the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). The elect among Jesus' persecutors were brought to repentance, and in that way experienced the forgiveness Jesus sought for them.

Significantly, Jesus added an explanation to His petition. He not only says, "Father, forgive them," but He also adds, "for they know not what they do." Of course, Jesus was not saying "These men deserve to be forgiven because they are ignorant." Sins of ignorance still deserve damnation and must still be paid for. Ignorance cannot be the ground of forgiveness.

Rather, Jesus adds those words to explain how it is that He was able to make such a request. He is able to petition His Father to forgive even that despicable sin of crucifying Him, because they had not committed the unpardonable sin described in Hebrews 10:29: "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" The elect who had been involved in Jesus' crucifixion had not knowingly killed the Prince of Life. This is why Peter says, "And now, brethren, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:17). These horrible sinners must not wonder whether their sin of crucifying Jesus is beyond forgiveness. Ignorance keeps their horrible sin within the realm of sins that can and will be forgiven to God's elect. God answered Jesus' prayer to forgive His elect persecutors.

The elect who participated in Jesus' crucifixion must

know that there is forgiveness in Jesus Christ, even for that most dreadful of sins. That is why Jesus prayed out loud; He wanted the subjects of His request to be assured of forgiveness in Him. Jesus wanted His elect persecutors to know He had prayed specifically for them.

What glorious news that God answers Jesus' prayer for us too! If Jesus prayed that His Father would forgive such a wicked sin committed by His elect people back then, His prayer "Father, forgive them" must also include the sins that we have committed against Him—all of them, including the horrible ones. Those sins the devil tempts us to believe cannot be forgiven were also included in Jesus prayer.

The reason we can be so sure of our forgiveness is

that Jesus' shameful suffering on the cross was the payment that God demanded for our sins. Jesus experienced God's cursing wrath as He hung upon the tree in our place. At the very same time Jesus was giving His life to satisfy for our sins and sinfulness, He asked God to forgive the sins of His people. As if Jesus had said from the cross, "Father, I am now paying the debt for these dreadful sins of my people; I pray Thee now to dismiss their debt and never again demand its payment."

What a blessing that Jesus desired, and paid for, and now prays for our forgiveness on the basis of His obedience and sacrifice! May we ever look to Him to dismiss the debt of the guilt and punishment we deserve. And, may we live in thankfulness for such forgiveness.



## Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

### The covenant and Dordt (13)

## Head V: Assurance of final salvation

Assurance was a significant doctrine faced at the Synod of Dordt in 1618-19. The *Arminians* insisted no man could have assurance that salvation was his unless he was told: "God loves you and wants to save you." And, said the Arminians, that might not be said to him unless it is true that God loves everyone, Christ died for everyone, and God's desire is to save all.

Assurance is also a significant issue in the doctrine of the covenant. The conditional covenant touts itself as the covenant theology that gives the most assurance. The assurance it gives (so it is said) arises from the conviction that God promises salvation personally to each baptized child. Parents can go home after the baptism service with the assurance, "God spoke to my child, called him by name, and promised him salvation." They reject an unconditional covenant with the elect alone partly because then the promise at baptism is only for the elect, and the parents walk away from baptism with no assurance.

This assurance is pressed upon the baptized child. All his life he is told, "You have the promises of God

spoken to you personally." If that child walks in sin and seems to have no interest in spiritual things, the parents can continue to console themselves with the assurance, "Our child has the promises." The idea then is, there is still hope that he will believe the promises and claim the inheritance. Thus it is maintained, assurance in the covenant is only possible when God's promise is to each and every baptized child.

Here again is the striking similarity between Arminianism and the theology of a conditional covenant. This similarity is not mere coincidence. Fact is, the conditional covenant is Arminianism applied to the covenant of grace. Arminianism holds that God loves all men, wants to save all, and that Christ died for all. The conditional covenant teaches that God establishes His covenant of love with all baptized children, Christ washed them all in His blood, and the Spirit wants to save all the baptized children. And, therefore, because this is so for every baptized child, the parents have assurance.

But assurance of what? It is not the assurance that the child is or will be *saved*. The child will not be saved



unless he *acts*. He must fulfill the condition of faith, and only then will he be saved. In the end, this is no assurance at all. The child who (supposedly) received the promise of salvation personally from God will perish in hell eternally, the promise being of no effect unless he does something to obtain the promise. The parents have no assurance, nor even any hope, if salvation depends on the child fulfilling a condition unto salvation.

If the promoters of the conditional covenant are hoping to find in Head V of the Canons support for their understanding of assurance, they will be sadly mistaken. In fact, in Head V, assurance concerning a baptized child is not something given to parents. Assurance of salvation is given to the believer himself, not to those around him or those in his family.

Now, it is true that one can “have no doubt” about the election and salvation of a fellow saint. A man who lives with his believing wife for many years has no doubt about her salvation. He has observed the work of God’s grace in her for years and would have complete assurance, if she died, that she was in heaven.

Canons I, 17 testifies the same to godly parents, namely that they have “no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children, whom it pleaseth God to call out of this life in their infancy.” Notice, the assurance is tied to election. But the Canons nowhere give parents the right to know that their baptized children are elect. Nor may believers presuppose that, any more than they may presuppose that their children are regenerated. But all Reformed parents know that if the baptized child is not elect, he will never believe. What kind of assurance is it then, if a parent comes away from baptism with the conviction that the child “has the promises of God”? We have previously noted the Canons’ teaching on depravity, namely, that the baptized child is no more inclined to believe than the non-baptized child, since both are born dead in sin. That means the supposed “assurance” given to parents in the conditional covenant is empty.

The Canons give assurance to *believers*. But the Canons do not give it by teaching a conditional election of all, a universal payment of sin, and an offer/prom-

ise of salvation to all men, or to all baptized children. The Canons give the only assurance that is real, namely, assurance based solely on *God*, and on *God’s* saving work. This is the assurance of faith, and therefore is only to the believer. This is the explicit teaching of Canons V, Article 9:

Of this preservation of the elect to salvation, and of their perseverance in the faith, true believers for themselves may and ought to obtain assurance according to the measure of their faith, whereby they arrive at the certain persuasion, that they ever will continue true and living members of the church; and that they experience forgiveness of sins, and will at last inherit eternal life.

Several elements of Article 9 deserve special attention. First, the Canons continue to link every doctrine of salvation to unconditional election (“the preservation of the elect”). Second, the assurance is to the “true believers,” and that, “for themselves.” That is to say, the assurance given is not concerning others, for example, all baptized children. Third, assurance is “according to the measure of faith.” All of us know from personal experience that a strong faith yields a strong assurance, and a weak faith a weak assurance. But without

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That assurance is grounded on God alone comes out especially in Article 8, which begins, “Thus, it is not in consequence of their own merits, or strength...that they do not totally fall from faith and grace, nor...perish.” The article points out that “with respect to themselves, [this] is not only possible, but would undoubtedly happen.” But, “with respect to God, it is utterly impossible.” The article then proceeds to list seven reasons why it is impossible for God’s people to perish.

...since His counsel cannot be changed, nor His promise fail, neither can the call according to His purpose be revoked, nor the merit, intercession and preservation of Christ be rendered ineffectual, nor the sealing of the Holy Spirit be frustrated or obliterated.

Article 10 teaches how this assurance comes to believers. Negatively, it “is not produced by any peculiar revelation contrary to, or independent of the Word of

God.” Rather, it “springs from faith in God’s promises, which He has most abundantly revealed in His Word for our comfort.” At this point, the conditional covenant man might say, “You see, ‘faith in God’s promises’ is what produces assurance.” But here the Canons are not speaking of assurance of *believers* concerning the *salvation* of their *children*. Rather, this assurance is (recall Art. 9) to “true believers for themselves.” And while baptism is a sign and seal of the promises of God, as we have previously seen, these promises signified and sealed are only to believers, not to all baptized children.

Article 10 goes on to teach that our (believers’) assurance derives also “from the testimony of the Holy Spirit, witnessing with our spirit, that we are children and heirs of God, Romans 8:16.” Obviously, this is not a testimony to unbelievers, nor to unbelieving baptized children. It is to believers.

Third, Article 10 maintains that assurance is “from a serious and holy desire to preserve a good conscience, and to perform good works.” Such a “holy desire” is never found in an unbelieving person, be it an adult or a baptized child, but only in a regenerated, believing adult or child.

The point is, this assurance is not remotely like the assurance that the conditional covenant allegedly gives to believing parents at baptism. And in stark contrast to the theology of a conditional covenant, Article 10 speaks of the “solid comfort” given to “the elect of God,” namely, God’s “infallible pledge or earnest of eternal glory.” The conditional covenant has a conditional promise of salvation to all baptized children, which promises are far from infallible. Those “promises” will only be realized if the child fulfills the condition of believing.

In contrast to that, the Canons speak of “infallible pledges.” These infallible pledges of God cannot lie or fail to be realized. Everyone to whom God promises eternal glory receives eternal glory. And at baptism, that infallible pledge is only to the elect child. The reprobate child is promised nothing.

### Salvation not dependent on man

The articles in the second part of Head V reject the Arminian teaching that the believer’s persevering depends on the believer. This is consistent with the rest of the Canons, which insist that no part of salvation depends on man. In that context, rejection of errors Article 1 repudiates the Arminian teaching of a

conditional covenant, namely that “the perseverance of the true believers is...a condition of the new covenant, which (as they declare) man before his decisive election and justification must fulfill through his free will.”

The article’s rejection of the error has two distinct but related parts. First, “the Holy Scripture testifies that this [perseverance] follows out of election,” and then second, it “is given the elect in virtue of the death, the resurrection, and intercession of Christ.” A conditional covenant is not consistent with this teaching that blessings are rooted in election and grounded in the work of Christ.

The covenant theology of the Federal Vision is conditional, and is therefore to be rejected as inconsistent with and contradictory to the Canons. The Federal Vision goes farther, teaching that a baptized child is truly united to Christ and justified, but that this child can fall away from that union with Christ and perish. In Article 3 of the rejection of error of Head V, the Canons explicitly condemn this when it rejects the errors of those

who teach that “true believers and regenerate not only can fall from justifying faith and likewise from grace and salvation wholly and to the end, but indeed often do fall from this and are lost forever.” For, says the Canons, “this conception makes powerless the

grace, justification, regeneration, and continued keeping by Christ.”

The Canons simply will not allow our salvation to hang on the will or activity of man. In this fifth head of doctrine, the Canons add perseverance to the list of saving works that depend on God alone. And assurance of salvation to the end is likewise a gift of God’s grace through faith.

And yet, man is not a stock and a block. It has been pointed out that in this infallible salvation worked by God alone, God does not treat the elect as a block of wood. Article 14 states it again, pointing out that God “preserves, continues, and perfects” His work of grace by the use of means, in which means the believer is active and involved. Specifically, “by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.”

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## All around us

Rev. Audred Spriensma, home missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches

# Sodom and Gomorrah invade Zion

The 2019 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) received the interim report of a committee of ten individuals that was tasked to write a “theology of human sexuality.” This is a committee that was appointed at Synod 2016 “to articulate a foundation-laying biblical theology that pays particular attention to biblical conceptions of gender and sexuality” (*Acts of Synod* 2016, pp. 917-19). A final report is to come before the Synod of the CRC in 2021. The reason for coming to Synod 2019 was that delegates of this past year’s Synod might give feedback for the committee in its ongoing work.

The thirty-four-page document gave “a biblical overview of sexuality, emphasizing that sexuality is a good thing and that churches should be discussing it openly. It also laments the brokenness that surrounds sexuality in our culture and in our churches.” In an article in *The Banner* July/August 2019 entitled “Let’s Talk About Sex,” Professor Jeff Weima, co-chair of the committee, is quoted as saying, “Our primary purpose is to hear from you. We will pay careful attention to what you say.” Delegates spent an hour discussing the report in small groups. In another article in the same issue of *The Banner*, “Council Chair Gives Spectators a Voice,” it was reported that Paul DeVries, chair of the CRC’s Council of Delegates noticed in the audience a group of about 25 protestors. They came dressed in various versions of the rainbow, used to symbolize LGBTQ+pride. The chair took it upon himself to go to them and ask for their input also. He promised to pass their voice on to the authors of the report. (I might add here, how shameful that the symbol of the rainbow picturing to Noah the faithfulness of God to His Word is now used by those who desire to persist in their wickedness, sin, and rebellion against God.)

This report is part of a lengthy study on the issues of sexuality and homosexuality. One can trace it back to 1973 when Synod submitted a report on homosexuality to the churches for study. Synod also adopted a series of statements of pastoral advice to the churches. These have been the CRC position establish by Synod 1973

and affirmed by several subsequent synods. What are those statements?

**“Homosexuality:** a condition of personal identity in which a person is sexually oriented toward persons of the same sex.”

**“Homosexuality:** explicit and overt homosexual practice.”

**“Homosexual:** a person who has erotic attractions for members of the same sex and who may or may not actually engage in homosexuality.”

The 1973 Report on Homosexuality gave pastoral advice that persons who are sexually orientated to others of the same sex may only bear minimal responsibility for their condition. Therefore, “they may not be denied acceptance solely because of their sexual orientation and should be wholeheartedly received by the church and given loving support and encouragement.” Not only is membership in the church commanded, but also “opportunities to serve within the offices and the life of the congregation.” Synod 1973 went on to say that “explicit homosexual practice, however, is incompatible with obedience to the will of God as revealed in Scripture.” A synodical report titled “Pastoral Care for Homosexual Members” is available at [www.crcna.org/SynodResources](http://www.crcna.org/SynodResources).

Challenges against the 1973 Report have continued to rise over the years. The CRC has so far consistently sustained the 1973 position in spite of pressure from within and outside the denomination. The complaints against the new study committee say that it is biased, “composed of those who adhere to the CRC’s position on homosexuality.”

Why report on these issues? First, because the CRC is our mother church. We are concerned for her and the members of those churches. Second, this challenge to the Bible’s teaching regarding sexuality is affecting many denominations, with terrible apostasy and the schism and breakup of the church. Third, we live in a sex-saturated society that promotes all kinds of sexual perversion. Our churches need to be warned of false teaching and ungodly behavior all around us, and need



to be prepared spiritually to do battle with the sin that lies in our own bosom, our sinful nature.

One can say several things. First, why does such a committee, tasked to give a biblical overview of sexuality, need to ask for and open itself up to feedback from a synod or LGBTQ+pride protesters or the general audience of *The Banner* readers? Go to the Scriptures! Is that not one of the hallmarks of the Reformed church? *Sola scriptura!* We do not need the opinions and desires of members of the church or the society around us. Second, why is there the need for a committee to do this new study? The answer given already by one writer in 2011 was that the synodical position was 38 years old! That means that in 2021 the position on homosexuality will be 48 years old! Oh, no! The answer of some as to why we need to have another biblical study on the issue is because of the scientific complexities surrounding sexual orientation. Others state that they have heard all sorts of biblical interpretations across the theological and ideological spectrum. They believe that the church must now evaluate those interpretations critically and confessionally. Those familiar with more recent interpretations regard the CRC's position as automatically obsolete or superseded by the newer models. They ask, "How can we expect our 38-year-old report to respond adequately to all the biblical and theological discussions of nearly forty years? What was once taboo on commercials and television shows is now a major theme. What was once regarded as deviant and a disorder is now considered a sexual variant." In other words, we need an up-to-date response to the culture that we live in. The state and national laws now allow for homosexual marriages. Therefore, the church also must recognize these marriages. Does culture dictate or change what the infallible Scriptures say or what God demands?

Gayla Postma in an article in the July/August issue of *The Banner* entitled, "Times Have Changed," writes:

There was an undercurrent of anxiety as Synod 2021 approaches. This is the synod that will receive the final report of *Committee to Articulate a Foundation-Laying Biblical Theology of Human-sexuality...* Many denominations have discussed homosexuality, and many have divided over the issue. But now it is getting closer to home. The Reformed Church in America is the CRC's closest ecumenical relative. That denomination is exploring whether to stay together, reorganize, or divide. Its ecumenical officer told *The Banner* that delegates at the recent RCA synod were leaning toward that third option.

Roxanne Van Farowe in her article in the July/August issue of *The Banner*, "RCA Ecumenical Visit Highlights Uncertain Future," stated, "The sister denomination of the Christian Reformed Church may be headed toward

a painful split." She also quoted Monica Schaap Pierce of the RCA, who said, "Factions of the denomination disagree on matters of sexuality, missiology, and more." The RCA changed its rules so that, if accepted next year, a simple majority will allow for a split. Previously, a two-thirds majority would have been necessary. Will the CRC be next?

Indeed, there should be a split in the face of such apostasy! That is the spirit of Reformation—a call to repentance, and if a church or denomination continues in the way of sin and evil, "come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing" (II Cor. 6:17)!

But I would also say, by all means, revisit the 1973 Report on Homosexuality. Not because it is "middle-aged," as its opponents claim. Not because it is too restrictive. Revise that report because it is not biblical or confessional. It tries to distinguish between the urge to sin and the sin itself. Is it true that only the act of homosexuality is sin? Is not the inward desire to have sex, men with men and women with women, itself sin? Does not Jesus say that "whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28)? We cannot separate the thought and desire from the action. In Romans 1 we read,

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (Rom. 1:24, 26, 27).

Human depravity is not just a matter of action, but a matter of the thoughts and desires of the heart behind the activity. In the Heidelberg Catechism we are taught "that all uncleanness is accursed of God: and that therefore we must with all our hearts detest the same, and live chastely and temperately, whether in holy wedlock, or in single life" (Q&A 108). God "forbids all unchaste actions, gestures, words, thoughts, desire, and whatever can entice men thereunto" (Q&A 109).

May the church give a clear and sharp warning in the midst of the perversity of our society and sinful sexuality. God created man and woman good and in His image. God gave one woman to the man for life. May God guide His church with His unchanging infallible Word as our guide.



## Search the Scriptures

Rev. Thomas Miersma, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

# A godly rejoicing in one's youth

### Ecclesiastes 11:9, 10

The Word of God now turns our attention from the natural joy of life under the sun and its spiritual implications to a similar reality, the joy and strength of youth.

*Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes* (Eccl. 11:9a).

The Word of God here comes first of all with an exhortation to rejoice, which is perhaps easy to overlook, given the warnings that follow. That calling to rejoice, however, is important. It sets before us the work of God in our human nature, as God made us, and in which we are given to walk in our youth. We grow from childhood into adulthood, with a strength of life and energy that are the natural design of God and a good gift of God in itself. Though this gift is not given to all in the same manner because the afflictions and sorrows that touch the life of man in a fallen world touch children also, yet it is the normal pattern of life in childhood and youth under the sun that is in view.

Youth is a time of discovering the world that God has made and upholds. It is the time to plan and seek out the things of this life, our place and calling. The world that God has made opens itself in opportunities, paths of life to walk, of work and labor. In youth, the eye is young, sees the things of this life with an anticipation that the clouded eye of old age no longer has. Childhood and youth are a gift of God.

The Word of God here addresses this reality of childhood and youth: Rejoice in it. Not rejoice that you are young, but in your youth rejoice in that which God gives and sets before you. “Let thy heart cheer thee,” or “make good thine heart,” with that which is right and fitting to its joy. The text exhorts the young man to do this in the “days of thy youth.” “Walk in the ways of thine heart,” that is, explore your talents, gifts, and interests, follow them with the enthusiasm of youth. The text speaks likewise of walking “in the sight of thine eyes,” which is what Solomon did.

He describes in chapter 1 the works that he did in his strength of youth: “I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: I made me gardens and orchards” (Eccl. 1:4-8). He was engaged in all the labor and activity of life. He says also: “And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour” (Eccl. 1:10).

This activity arises out of the heart, figuratively, just as the physical organ pumps blood throughout the body. Out of the heart are the issues of life, and it is fitting that we enter into the activities of life in our youth and rejoice in them. The joy in the activity itself, of laboring and building, as well as the sense of achievement are its proper fruit and our portion. Solomon says “this was my portion of all my labour” (Eccl. 1:10), for the things that are made do not themselves abide.

The activity and joy in it belong to God’s design of man’s life. Even in the Garden of Eden man was to work, “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15). But sin has also entered the world, and through the Fall that same heart has become corrupt so that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). We are totally depraved by nature, and out of the heart of fallen man issues forth the pollution of sin.

That same heart, figuratively, is thus the spiritual and ethical center of man’s life, the spiritual direction center of our activity. It is also the fountain of sin in our nature and its stain cleaves to all our activity. In the deepest sense, in a regenerated heart, that spiritual center is made new and becomes the fountain of a new life in Christ lived by faith under the Word of God. But we live by faith through the presence of the flesh and indwelling sin. Thus the warning comes:

*...but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment* (Eccl. 11:9b).

It is “thee,” the young man or woman, the sinner, that shall be brought into judgment for their works. The spiritual principle in that calling to rejoice, therefore, is importantly a calling to walk consciously before the

Lord in all that activity of life. In our planning and delight in the creation under the sun and in the joy of youth and its energy and works we are called to “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth...” (Eccl. 12:1).

The fool walking after the folly of his own heart labors in the service of sin and his own lust. God is not in his thoughts. This is not the rejoicing to which the text calls us. Rather, it is a godly joy in the strength of our life in the service of God, which is the rejoicing to be sought and which must shape our walk. Not any desire of heart, but that which genuinely cheers it or makes good the heart, in what is right and fitting before God, is to be the way of our heart in our youthful walk. For that yields the testimony of a good conscience before God.

The same thought is addressed to the son in Proverbs concerning the heart and its activity:

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand not the left: remove thy foot from evil (Prov. 4: 23-27).

We will be brought before God in the hall of judgment; we will stand and give an account. A believing child of God whose sins are covered in the blood of Christ and His righteousness also so labors in the fear of God, knowing that this is not a threat but rather a sobering, life-transforming truth. Serving to keep us from a heedless walk in sin and the way of the world, the Word calls us to a conscious walk after that fear of God in the way of godliness. It calls us to remember the Creator as we walk in His creation. That is the intention of this warning here as is clear from its intended fruit.

*Therefore remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity* (Eccl. 11:10).

Sorrow is that which vexes and angers. It is that which provokes God to anger because of sin. It there-

fore works grief and shame in the heart of one who walks consciously in it before God. Such sorrow works condemnation to one who is heedless, walking in the folly of sin. Out of the heart this sorrow arises, and the calling is to mortify it by putting sin and its sorrow away from our heart, to “keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23a).

Similarly, the text says, “put away evil from thy flesh,” or as we find elsewhere, “flee also youthful lusts” (II Tim. 2:22). The calling is both an internal one and an external one, to put away sin in the heart as well as in our walk, to keep ourselves in soul as well as in body from evil.

The reason given is also to be noted. Childhood and youth belong to the transitory reality and character of life; they “are vanity.” Vanity, not in the sense of empty, but fleeting, a state of life that quickly passes away. This time of life is momentary and eventually we grow older and the infirmities of age come. Just as the purpose of the previous verses was to set before us the contrast between the light and the days of darkness, so the following verses contrast the strength of youth and the infirmity of age for the same purpose. Therefore, remember thy Creator, remember Him *now*, at the time of youth and in the days of thy youth.

**We will be brought before God in the hall of judgment; we will stand and give an account. A believing child of God whose sins are covered in the blood of Christ and His righteousness also so labors in the fear of God, knowing that this is not a threat but rather a sobering, life-transforming truth. Serving to keep us from a heedless walk in sin and the way of the world, the Word calls us to a conscious walk after that fear of God in the way of godliness. It calls us to remember the Creator as we walk in His creation.**



## Search the Scriptures: Bible characters

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# The mission of Tychicus

**All my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord.**

**Colossians 4:7**

As was stated in a previous article (Dec. 1, 2019), the effectiveness of the apostle Paul was aided by a network of individuals who were a support to him in the spread of the gospel. In addition to the equipping of Paul, God also equipped many other “behind-the-scenes” men and women who demonstrated courage, commitment, and faithfulness in establishing, developing, and maintaining the churches of the first century AD.

Tychicus was a man who was given many responsibilities, and who also served as one of the most highly regarded of Paul’s friends. Paul gave him much work to do, and he did this work with faithfulness, having only the interest of the early church in mind. As this article will demonstrate, Tychicus was clearly a man with a mission—a mission not of his own personal desires, but one that had the spread of the gospel in mind. His work alongside Paul reveals his dedication and self-denial in his pursuit of missionary work in the Roman Empire.

A study of the chronology of Paul’s epistles helps give us an advantage in understanding the full breadth of Tychicus’ workload. It is estimated that the apostle Paul traveled more than 17,000 miles during his lifetime, and Tychicus too traveled many miles in his support of the gospel. Likely a Gentile convert of Paul during his three-year stay in Ephesus on the third missionary journey (AD 55-57), Tychicus soon became one of his most reliable companions. In that connection, the chronology demonstrates a possible sequence of events in the life of Tychicus and the many trips that carried him to different Christian communities (cf. map on next page).

The first mention of Tychicus comes in Acts 20:4, where he is listed as a delegate of Asia Minor traveling with Paul and several others to Jerusalem at the conclusion of Paul’s third missionary journey around AD 57. Paul had a desire to go to Rome (Acts 19:21), but the Lord’s will was not for him to go at that time. His

plan was for Paul to return to Jerusalem, particularly to bring the collections from the newly established churches to the poor in Jerusalem. This trip across the Mediterranean Sea to Jerusalem was one of foreboding, for Paul would certainly face Jewish resistance in Judea. Tychicus, along with the other delegates, served as support to Paul as he anticipated the unknown that would soon come next.

At his arrival in Jerusalem, the Jews accused Paul (a Jew himself) of promoting the idea that Jews should forsake their customs (Acts 21:19), for Paul had carried out the great commission in distant lands to many Gentiles. To solidify their claims, the Jews framed Paul for a crime, stating that he had brought Gentiles into the inner court of the temple (Acts 21:29), an act punishable by death. Tychicus, along with his fellow delegate Trophimus (Acts 21:29), would have been one of these Gentiles, and was right in the middle of the chaos that ensued, culminating in prison experiences that finally brought Paul to Rome after he appealed to Caesar around the year AD 60.

The next Tychicus reference is found in Ephesians, one of the prison epistles Paul wrote from Rome during his two-year house arrest in the early 60s (Eph. 6:21). This reference is similar to the one found in Colossians 4:7, revealing that Tychicus is with Paul in Rome. We cannot be certain whether Tychicus was with Paul on the long trip to Rome, which included a two-week shipwreck, but it is clear that he is by Paul’s side in Rome, ready to be the letter-carrier of three of Paul’s prison epistles.

All of these technical details may not seem that important, but they help to piece the puzzle together, leading to the next significant aspect of Tychicus’ mission: to be a letter-carrier. The last chapters of both Ephesians and Colossians indicate that he will deliver these letters. In addition to these two letters, also Paul’s letter to Philemon was carried by Tychicus, for Philemon was a resident of Colossae.

Here is where the mission of Tychicus becomes complex; he is more than a mere letter-carrier, because there are many tasks given to him by Paul. The most compel-



ling of these involves Onesimus, the run-away slave of Philemon. This broken relationship between Onesimus and Philemon is the main subject in the letter to Philemon, but Tychicus plays an important role in the restoration process for Onesimus. In the providence of God, Onesimus' sinful flight had led him to Paul in Rome, where he was converted. The previous article explained the trip of Epaphras to Rome to seek advice on a heresy in Colossae. It is interesting to consider whether Epaphras may have been able to identify the run-away slave Onesimus, for they were both from Colossae.

But this is also where Tychicus comes in. As Paul was preparing Tychicus to deliver to Asia Minor the letters of Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, God was preparing Tychicus to be a spiritual comfort to Onesimus as he needed to return to his master Philemon to seek forgiveness and restoration (Col. 4:9). Onesimus had received the full forgiveness from the Father, yet needed to go back and face Philemon, and Tychicus would have provided spiritual support the entire journey back to Asia Minor. What an important work! Tychicus was providing comfort and assurance to an uneasy runaway slave who soon had to face his master after theft and escape (Phile. 18). The common refrain by the Romans was that "a run-away slave only ran away once," but

Philemon was not your average master; rather, he was a follower of Christ. Therefore, Tychicus had the same hope as Paul: to see this new convert restored by Philemon, Onesimus' brother in Christ (Phile. 16).

Alongside his work of carrying letters and supporting Onesimus on the trip to Asia Minor, Tychicus' many other responsibilities that are part of his mission are cited in Paul's epistles. Much of his work to the churches of Asia Minor during the early 60s involved communication on behalf of Paul, who remained under house arrest, hoping to be released soon (Phil. 2:24). Specifically in regards to the Colossians, Tychicus is instructed by Paul to give them an update on Paul's state and affairs (Col. 4:7), to comfort them (4:8), and to oversee the delivery of the Colossian letter to the nearby city of Laodicea (4:16). In addition, Tychicus was instructed to encourage a young man named Archippus, son of Philemon (Phile. 2), who became the leading pastor in Colossae in the absence of Epaphras (Col. 4:17; Phile. 23).

Space does not permit me to expand on the significance of letter-carriers of New Testament epistles; however, it should be abundantly clear from the case of Tychicus that much was expected of these messengers as they brought particular letters to specific church communities.



And yet the mission of Tychicus continues. Paul's letters to Titus and Timothy indicate more work to be done. Paul had been released from house arrest by Nero around AD 63, given one last opportunity for freedom to contact and revisit many of the church communities he knew so well, and perhaps had even ventured into Spain for new labors (Rom. 15:24). During this time of freedom or earlier, Paul had sent Titus to organize the church on the island of Crete (Titus 1:5; Acts 2:11). This work was so important that it required a time for Paul and Titus to meet for a season at Nicopolis (western Greece) in order that Titus give an update on the work and receive advice from Paul. As Paul made these preparations, he mentions Tychicus as a possible replacement for Titus for the time being (Titus 3:12). Therefore, contact with the Christian community at Crete became another aspect of his mission. It is striking that once again Tychicus is mentioned as being sent to continue the development of the early church. How capable and gifted this man must have been!

The final testimony concerning Tychicus that the Holy Spirit gives to us is at the end of Paul's life. After a few years of freedom during the mid-60s, Paul was once again arrested and brought to Rome, this time accused of being a criminal in the Roman Empire. This imprisonment would be brief and severe, and would certainly lead to his death (II Tim. 4:6). With a changing atmosphere and attitude towards Christianity under the reign of Nero, many began to distance themselves from Paul, even forsaking him (II Tim. 4:10). Yet Tychicus stood by his side to the end, receiving instruction from Paul, as evidenced from his final penned chapter in II Timothy 4:12, "And Tychicus have I sent to Ephesus." This final work would have released Timothy from Ephesus, for Paul so desired to see him, as he mentioned this desire twice (II Tim. 4:9, 21). Therefore, the final task of Tychicus was to go to Asia Minor once again, where it all began, to help in the pastoring of the Ephesian church.

In light of all these details surrounding the minor characters of the New Testament, it is striking to consider the form of training that Tychicus and others received. Thanks be to God for the diligent work in the Protestant Reformed Seminary—a thorough training that involves the well-rounded equipping of young men

for the ministry. Men like Tychicus, however, received training at the feet of Paul, a training that was in a way an extended internship without the formal education that preceded it, and often without the presence of the mentor minister too! Tychicus would have needed to listen carefully to Paul's instruction and then go off by himself, certainly needing to face difficult situations that would arise.

As we testify as churches today to the powerful work of the Spirit in the lives of our young men who take up their place as pastors in our churches, how remarkable was the grace of God in the lives of Tychicus and others like him, who through "on-the-job" training, were used mightily in establishing, developing, and maintaining the

churches of the first century and beyond. As we have examined Tychicus' mission, Paul's description of him in Colossians 4:7 has even more meaning: "beloved brother, and faithful minister and fellow-servant in the Lord." God truly worked a mission in the heart of Tychicus, and his reward is to experience now the full glory of Jesus Christ, the One whose name and work he so faithfully proclaimed.

**As Paul made these preparations, he mentions Tychicus as a possible replacement for Titus for the time being (Titus 3:12). Therefore, contact with the Christian community at Crete became another aspect of his mission. It is striking that once again Tychicus is mentioned as being sent to continue the development of the early church. How capable and gifted this man must have been!**





## I believe

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# How do we know the Bible is the Word of God? (4) The excellency and power of Scripture

Previous article in this series: February 15, 2020, p. 227.

## Introduction

We have been following John Calvin as he teaches us the evidences Scripture carries within itself of its divine origin. Learning these things, says Calvin, we “will be abundantly equipped to restrain the barking of ungodly men; for this is a proof too clear to be open to any subtle objections.”<sup>1</sup> So far in this series we have treated the relation of these evidences to the internal work of the Spirit in our hearts; we have examined the fact that Scripture correctly foretells things no humans could foretell; and we have discussed the astounding unity amidst diversity evidenced in the Scriptures. These evidences are objectively present, and part of the illuminating work of the Spirit is that He opens our eyes to see and acknowledge what is right before us.<sup>2</sup>

## The excellency of Scripture

Tatian was a pagan man born in AD 120. Later in his life he was converted to the Christian faith, becoming a student of the early church father Justin Martyr. When asked why he believed the Bible was the Word of God, he pointed to some of the marks of the divine source of Scripture. “I was led to put faith in these [Scriptures] by the unpretending cast of the language, the inartificial character of the writers, the foreknowledge displayed of future events, and the excellent quality of the precepts.”<sup>3</sup> The last aspect of Scripture Tatian refers to, “the excellent quality of the precepts,” is part of the evidence known as the “excellency of Scripture.” It is the quality of the Bible Calvin refers to when he speaks of “the completely heavenly character of its doctrine,

savoring of nothing earthly.”<sup>4</sup> Calvin says this leads us to conclude that “the teaching of Scripture is from heaven.”<sup>5</sup>

Think of the fact that Scripture’s commands are pure and elevated in comparison with the undignified and even immoral commands of other “holy” books. Think of how they so perfectly, comprehensively, and righteously regulate not merely the outward morality of man but his inner life. Think about how they pierce a man’s soul and heart to the quick.<sup>6</sup> Think also of the doctrines contained in Scripture that are so heavenly and beautiful, and that give a substantial hope that answers perfectly to the misery of this world after the Fall. Think, too, of the doctrine of the Trinity, which is so lovely in comparison to the doctrine of the one-dimensional god of Islam; and showing God is reasonable yet incomprehensible, as God ought to be. Think also of the wonder of how biblical truth combines holiness and mercy, declaring a wondrous God who maintains the dignity of justice and yet loves by bearing that justice Himself. No man or angel could have thought so perfectly of a resurrection hope in which the body crumbles into microscopic pieces and yet arises again, not a different creation but the old made new. And yet, not only the body, but in the end all things made new in Jesus Christ!

Put all of the teaching of Scripture together, and see how it all attaches to itself as one majestic and beautiful whole, and you conclude this “could have been discovered by no sharp-sightedness of reason,”<sup>7</sup> and “Sacred Scripture...clearly is crammed with thoughts that could

1 Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.8.8.

2 I say “part of the illuminating work of the Spirit,” because the Spirit can and most often does illumine as to the divine origin of Scripture without that reader having a cognizant understanding of these evidences. This will be further explained in a later article.

3 *Address to the Greeks*.

4 *Institutes* 1.8.1. The Westminster Confession picks up on this from Calvin in the first chapter, section five, “...the heavenliness of the matter....”

5 *Institutes*, I.7.4.

6 Compare to the teachings of the Koran, the baseness of which is well-documented.

7 Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, vol. 1, George Giger, tr., James T. Dennison, ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1992), 63.

not be humanly conceived.”<sup>8</sup> Every other world religion, including corrupted Christianity, does not have this character.

It is for this reason that the following are the responses of the godly to Scripture: “The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Ps. 19:7-8). “Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them” (Ps. 119:129).

Scripture ascribes excellence to God: “Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent” (Ps. 148:13). We would expect His revelation of Himself and all things He has done to be excellent too. And so it is.

### The power of Scripture

We would also expect Scripture to have an astounding power.<sup>9</sup> We are told in Scripture that God is all powerful. “The Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name” (Jer. 32:18). His voice is described as powerful in Psalm 29:4, “The voice of the LORD is powerful.” And therefore we would expect a book that claims to be from Him and to be His voice to also carry His *power*. Indeed, the Scriptures themselves justify such a thought: “For the word of God is quick, and powerful” (Heb. 4:12).

How many have not testified to Scripture’s power! Scripture is indeed “sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). Calvin, speaking of the most lauded of human writings, says,

But betake yourself from them to this sacred reading [Scripture]. Then, in spite of yourself, so deeply will it affect you, so penetrate your heart, so fix itself in your very marrow, that, compared with its deep impression, such vigor as the orators and philosophers have will nearly vanish. Consequently, it is easy to see that the sacred Scriptures...breathe something divine.<sup>10</sup>

The Scriptures have an *explanatory* power. Think

of how the truth of the Trinity explains the unity in diversity we see in creation. All things are both one and many at the same time in different ways, just as the triune God is. The triune God of fellowship also explains why communion and fellowship are at the heart of all created reality. Additionally, think of the way Scripture explains the universality of sin and misery that we find around us and in ourselves. If Scripture did not tell us of original sin, we would have to assume something like it anyway. What else could truly explain the misery and sin in which man persistently finds himself? Think of how incisively Scripture diagnoses the human problem as this sin, provides the cure, and introduces the only possible Physician. All human beings know the guilt of sin. And try as men might to find an answer for their guilt in drink or money or pleasure, nothing satisfies. Only the scriptural gospel explains a true satisfaction for the guilt of the conscience, and the hope that that guilt cannot steal away from God’s people in Christ. Every other “holy” book and every other religion answers guilt with man’s effort, not God’s grace, and thus never provides true peace.

The Scriptures have power *to confront personally, heal, and direct men’s lives*. How many testify to its power to direct life from a lovely inward compulsion to an outward order. It “calm(s) all the passions of the mind, and fill(s) it with indescribable peace and joy, bringing it into such subjection, that it is compelled under a sweet, yet more powerful influence, to obey the laws of God.”<sup>11</sup> The testimony of former atheist A.S.A. Jones is the testimony of all true believers: “This book was reading me as surely as I was reading it!”<sup>12</sup> Bavinck points out that this witness to the power of Scripture, though it is not given by humanity as a whole, is a witness given by a large body out of the human race, the Christian church.

It is a mighty witness that the church of all ages has borne to scripture as the Word of God.... What really causes us to believe [Scripture] is not the insight of our intellect, nor a decision of our will, but a power that is superior to us, bends our will, illumines our mind, and without [outward] compulsion still effectively takes our thoughts and reflections captive to the obedience of Christ.<sup>13</sup>

When you think of the power of Scripture in men’s

<sup>8</sup> Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.8.2.

<sup>9</sup> The *power* of Scripture is technically classified as an *external* evidence of Scripture’s divine origin, though Scripture itself claims this power. Later Reformed thinkers made the distinction between purely internal and external evidences. Calvin was less strict here.

<sup>10</sup> *Institutes*, 1.8.1. The Westminster Confession picks up on this from Calvin in the first chapter, section five, “...the efficacy of its doctrine...”

<sup>11</sup> B. Pictet as found in Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 270.

<sup>12</sup> [http://jesus-revolution.com/Former\\_Atheist\\_ASA\\_Jones.htm](http://jesus-revolution.com/Former_Atheist_ASA_Jones.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 1, John Bolt, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 591.



lives, think of the “number, constancy, and condition of the martyrs” who sealed this testimony to its power by their blood.<sup>14</sup> All types, classes, races of men, women, and children are represented here. And in such a different manner do they die than martyrs for Islam or any other world religion! These others so often die with bombs or knives or guns in their hands.<sup>15</sup> The martyrs for Christ die powerless (even those in positions of earthly power!), with patience and a calm confidence in the Word. In fact, think of how Christianity has spread by human weakness from the time of the completion of the Scriptures. “Were its teaching not divine, it would hardly have been possible for Scripture to have spread its message across the world in so short a time, in the persons of such weak and unschooled disciples, given both the *absence* of support for its teachings in the world around it and the *presence* of such opposition

from princes and magistrates.”<sup>16</sup> How contrary to Islam and other religions!

It is for this reason that these are the responses to Scripture: “Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies” (Ps. 119:98). “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me” (Ps. 119:50). “And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep” (Acts 7:59-60).

This book is majestic and it is alive! I do not breathe life into it; it breathes life into me! Do you not add your own voice to the testimony of this vast and diverse number proclaiming Scriptures’ excellency and power?

<sup>14</sup> Turretin, *Institutes*, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Read of Mohammed’s immorality and violence and you can see why Islam’s martyrs die as they do. Read of how Joseph Smith died while shooting a gun attempting to kill others.

<sup>16</sup> F. Turretin as quoted in Muller, *PRRD*, 279.



## God’s wondrous works

Rev. James Laning, pastor of Hull Protestant Reformed Church in Hull, Iowa

# Deliverance promised to God’s people

What a comfort to know we are included in God’s covenant! To be in God’s covenant means that God dwells with us, communing with us, making known to us His secret will concerning our salvation. It means also that He promises us that He will fully deliver us and bring us nigh unto Him to dwell with Him forever. The previous article was on God’s covenant as a relationship of friendship. In this article we consider that those who are included in God’s covenant are the recipients of His promise. We consider first that those who are in God’s covenant are promised deliverance in Christ. Next time, Lord willing, we will consider that this promise is unconditional.

### Deliverance promised to both Noah and Abraham

We learn about God’s covenant when we study the places in the Old Testament where we read of God establishing His covenant with someone. Here we consider two

examples: the covenant with Noah and the covenant with Abraham. In both instances God promised deliverance to those with whom He established His covenant. We start by looking at God’s covenant with Noah.

When we read the narrative concerning the Flood, we first come across God telling Noah about the punishment that was to come upon the ungodly: “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth” (Gen. 6:13). God then proceeded to tell Noah to construct an ark and gave him instructions as to how to build it. Then we read that God told Noah that He would do two things:

- 1) Bring a flood of waters to destroy everything that is in the earth;
- 2) Establish His covenant with Noah and preserve him and his family in the ark.

“And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee” (Gen. 6:17-18). It is important to see this connection between God’s covenant and the promised deliverance. God establishes His covenant with a particular people and promises to deliver them in distinction from others.

We see this same connection when we turn to consider God’s covenant with Abraham. Again, God promises deliverance to those in His covenant.

God made His covenant with Abraham and promised to deliver his seed from bondage. God told Abraham that his seed would serve a nation that would afflict them for four hundred years. He also promised Abraham that He would judge that nation, deliver Abraham’s seed, and give them the land of Canaan.

After reading that in the book of Genesis, we turn to the book of Exodus and find Israel groaning under the affliction of the Egyptians. Then we read of God remembering His covenant: “And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Ex. 2:24). God remembers His covenant. He sends Moses to lead His people out of Egypt, just as He had promised:

And the LORD said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey (Ex. 3:7-8a).

The point here is that God promises deliverance to those who are included in His covenant. He does not merely offer deliverance; He promises deliverance. Understanding this is fundamental to understanding God’s covenant.

### **Promise of deliverance fulfilled in Christ**

The deliverance of Noah’s family in the ark and the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt both pointed forward to the deliverance that would come when Christ, our Deliverer, came to rescue us from bondage.

The deliverance that Noah received was obviously not the final deliverance. Though it is true that Noah and his family emerged from the ark and their unbelieving enemies were gone, they still did not have the complete victory. They were still sinners, as became

evident soon afterwards when Noah was found drunk and exposed in his tent and his own son delighted in his sin and told his brothers. The complete deliverance from sin had not yet taken place.

The same can be said about the deliverance from Egypt and the conquest of Canaan. Though God’s people were separated from the Egyptians who cruelly afflicted them, and though they defeated the Canaanites and took the land of Canaan, they again did not have the complete deliverance from sin and death. They did not even have the complete deliverance from the Canaanites. Many of the Canaanites still remained in the land and became thorns in their sides.

The promised deliverance would be fulfilled in the coming of Christ. Indeed, all the covenant promises are fulfilled in Christ.

God made known to Zacharias that his son John would prepare the way for the coming Messiah. Though for a time Zacharias was chastened and was unable to speak because of his unbelief, when God granted him the ability to speak again he praised Jehovah for His mercy and made reference to God’s covenant:

Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people.... That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant; the oath which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life (Luke 1:68-75).

Christ came in fulfillment of God’s covenant promise. He came to deliver us from our sins and to bring us into God’s presence to enjoy fellowship with Him forever.

The covenant promises are fulfilled when Christ comes, atones for our sins, and delivers us. They were fulfilled centrally in Christ’s resurrection, as Paul explained when he preached in one of the synagogues: “And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again” (Acts 13:32-33a).

The resurrection of Christ is the fulfillment of God’s covenant promise. By His resurrection our Lord has overcome death, that He might make us partakers of the righteousness which He had purchased for us by His death. By the power of Christ we are also raised to a new life. In principle we have already received the promised deliverance from sin. We are also comforted knowing that Christ’s resurrection is a sure pledge of

our blessed resurrection on the last day.

Indeed, God's covenant promise has been fulfilled. Yet the full realization of all that God has promised us is still future.

### Comforted knowing God will deliver us

What a comfort we have as we think about God's covenant with us. We rejoice knowing that our Lord has delivered us, just as He had promised. We also go about our daily tasks with joy in our heart as we think on the promised deliverance we will one day receive.

There is a deliverance we will receive at the moment we die. Then we will be forever freed from our sins. Oh, what a deliverance that will be! A passageway unto eternal life free from sin—that is what death is for us. This deliverance our covenant God has promised us.

He has also assured us that our Lord Jesus will come again. We doubt not that He will return, just as God has promised. Our bodies will be raised from the dead and conformed to the glorious, incorruptible body of

our risen Lord. All things will be made new, and we will inherit the earth!

What a comfort we have as we think on these things! The living God has made His everlasting covenant with us! He reveals His will to us. We really walk with Him, talk with Him, and commune with Him each day. He dwells with us. He dwells in us.

Thinking on this, we are patient in our adversities. In all our sorrows, with uplifted head, we look for our Redeemer. The Lord is faithful. Our Deliverer will come for us. Then all of us, God's covenant people, will be together, communing with our Savior: "And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads" (Rev. 22:3-4).

God has made His covenant with us. To us and to our children He has promised this deliverance. Knowing this, we praise Him, hoping and longing for the full deliverance that He has promised.



## Pertaining to the churches in common— Sister churches—Covenant PRC, Northern Ireland

Rev. Angus Stewart, pastor of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland

## Newsletter from Northern Ireland

February 20, 2020

Dear saints in the Protestant Reformed Churches,

Due to the pressure of work—mostly good, beneficial, and rewarding work—it is now six months since my last letter. The bimonthly epistle is now biannual!

### Congregational news

The new church season began in early September with ten catechumens, eight boys and two girls, in three classes: Old Testament Juniors, New Testament Seniors, and Essentials of Reformed Doctrine. The covenant children are doing well.

"Saving Faith: A Biblical and Theological Analysis" is the current subject of our Tuesday morning meetings. So far we have treated the significance, necessity, source, subject, object, bond, and knowledge of faith. Our heavenly Father uses our increased understanding of faith to build up our faith in His Son (Eph. 4:13)!

Our Belgic Confession classes concluded their treatment of Article 35 with six classes on "The Holy Supper of Our Lord Jesus Christ," now in a handy box set entitled, "Who Is to Eat and Drink What?" The subjects addressed are controversial in our day: Open, Close, or Closed Communion?; Paedocommunion?; Private Communion?; Five Issues Regarding the Wine; Leavened or Unleavened Bread?; and The Partaking of Unbelievers and Believers.

Our twelve classes so far on "The Magistrates" (Belgic Confession, Article 36) have especially considered the Bible's teaching against civil rebellion plus Anabaptist political theory, both revolutionary (for example, the Münster rebellion of 1534-1535) and pacifist (for example, the Schleithem Confession of 1527).

Almost 300 of these wide-ranging doctrine classes on 36 of the 37 articles of the Belgic Confession can be listened to free online (<https://cprc.co.uk/belgic-confession-class>). These are among our website's most hit audios.

The last two Lord's Day series were "The Idolatry of Micah and Dan" (seven sermons on Judges 17-18, a deeply unsettling passage) and "Practical Christianity" (13 sermons on James 1), treating especially temptation (vv. 2-17) and regeneration with its calling (vv. 18-27). Currently, I am preaching through the wonderful book of Daniel, with its gripping narratives and fascinating eschatology.

David Crossett was installed as a new deacon (15 September, 2019). The Lord in His mercy continues to provide us with faithful officebearers.

"William Tyndale: English Bible Translator" was the subject of this year's CPRC Reformation Day lecture (25 October, 2019). The day before, the *Ballymena Guardian* carried an advertisement and an article we sent them on this great Reformer who labored diligently so that the ploughboy would know more of the Scriptures than the corrupt priests. Tyndale was eventually betrayed and martyred for the truth of God's Word outside Brussels. The speech was accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=np-7Bxbspl00](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=np-7Bxbspl00)).

Various improvements have been made to our church property. Our overflow car park was levelled with road plainings (crushed tarmac)—a very nice job. The inside of the church building was repainted, and we purchased new tables for congregational tea and sandwiches, etc.

### New CPRC website

Mary continues to make a lot of important improvements to our new and secure website (<http://cprc.co.uk>). She has added "redirects" from all of the 5,000 or so webpages of our old website (apart from the old Sunday bulletins), bringing many more people to the updated and improved version.

On 21 November, Mary added a new statistics plugin. Since then, these are the top ten countries in terms of people on our website: 1) United States, 2) Indonesia, 3) Hong Kong, 4) Singapore, 5) Brazil, 6) China, 7) United Kingdom, 8) South Africa, 9) Germany, and 10) Philippines. Interestingly, four of the sister churches of our communion are in the top 10: USA, Singapore, UK, and the Philippines. Canada used to be number 10 but it has dropped to number 11.

Various factors are involved in a nation's hits and, therefore, its ranking, including a combination of the following: the population of a country (for example, China, USA, and Indonesia have hundreds of millions of people); the number of its professing Christians (for example, there are many in USA, China, South Africa, and the Philippines); its Internet usage (for example, it is very high in Hong Kong and Singapore); its peoples'

knowledge of English (for example, it is the main language in USA, UK, and Singapore, and about half of Hong Kongers speak it); and the number of CPRC translations in the language(s) of a country (for example, we have over 500 articles in Portuguese, the language of Brazil, and a good number in Indonesian, Afrikaans, and German).

At the other end of the scale, we have had three days on which someone from the British Antarctic Territory has had his or her heart warmed by the materials on our website. Someone from the Vatican was on [www.cprc.co.uk](http://www.cprc.co.uk). Perhaps it was the Pope?

Those in the UK can now order excellent RFPA books, our CD and DVD box sets, and free pamphlets, and make payments by bank transfer on the CPRC website. Mary is researching the best way to enable orders (including calculating postage) and receive payments from those in the rest of the world.

The CPRC Sunday services and lectures are now available on a podcast on video and audio. This is not yet the case with our Wednesday night Belgic Confession classes—one of many things to be sorted out in the days ahead.

### Others

Mary's dad, Fred Hanko, went to glory on 28 December, 2019. Her mother, Ruth, had been called home earlier in the year (8 February). They were (and are) wonderful people and are sorely missed. Mary and I joined family and friends for Dad's funeral in Michigan, ably led by Rev. Clay Spronk in Faith PRC (3 January, 2020). Thank you for your prayers and cards. On Sunday, 5 January, I preached twice in Cornerstone PRC—good to see the saints there again—before flying back home from O'Hare Airport the next day.

Rev. Ken Koole kindly preached for the CPRC on 5 January, when we were in Indiana, and 12 January, when we were in the Limerick Reformed Fellowship, for Rev. Martyn McGeown was in Australia speaking in the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Brisbane and at their youth camp.

I delivered two lectures in South Wales: "The Peace Offering" (5 September, 2019) and "William Tyndale: English Bible Translator" (23 January, 2020). It is always good to bring the truth to and fellowship with the saints in Wales.

Since my last letter, we have added 100 translations to our website, including 68 ecumenical creeds in Bulgarian, Haitian Creole, Kazakh, Maori, Mongolian, etc. (<https://cprc.co.uk/languages>). The others are 11 Hungarian; 7 Tamil (our Reformed forms); 7 Spanish (including those by a pastor in Lima, Peru, who is trans-



lating articles on the development of the doctrine of the covenant); 3 German; 3 Russian (the last chapters of *Be Ye Holy*, so that now all of this BRF book is on-line in Russian); and 1 Romanian (*Saved by Grace*, an excellent RFPA book by Prof. R. Cammenga and Rev. R. Hanko).

The CPRC YouTube page has now reached 300,000 hits ([www.youtube.com/cprcni](http://www.youtube.com/cprcni)). Stephen Murray has put a lot of work into this over many years. We are adding the Scripture texts in parentheses after the sermon titles for search engine optimization. So far this has been done for the last 600 videos but there are many more yet to do!

The British Reformed Fellowship (BRF) conference

booking forms are now available ([www.brfconference.weebly.com/booking.html](http://www.brfconference.weebly.com/booking.html)). “Union With Christ” is the theme that will be developed by Prof. David Engelsma and Rev. Andy Lanning in the six main addresses at Castlewellan Castle, Northern Ireland (11-18 July). John William Perkins is to give a special lecture on “Union with the Free Will of Christ in the English Puritans.” Already we have had about 80 confirmed bookings, many more than we have had at this stage for any of the 15 previous BRF conferences. A good number of countries will be represented, and it promises to be an enriching time of Christian teaching and fellowship.

May the Lord be with you all,

Rev. Angus and Mary Stewart

## Report of Classis West of the PRCA

March 4-5, 2020

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches met on March 4-5, 2020, in Peace PRC (Dyer, IN). This was the first time that Classis was held in Peace’s new building, which accommodated the Classis very well. The meeting was capably chaired by Rev. Allen Brummel (Calvary PRC).

After opening devotions and the constituting of Classis, routine reports of the stated clerk, classical committee, and reading sermon committee were read and approved. The church visitors also reported on their work over the last year and the presence of unity, peace, and love prevailing in the churches.

Before Classis was a protest from an individual against a decision made by the previous Classis. The previous Classis had judged that a consistory had erred when the consistory did not seek the concurrence of a neighboring consistory to suspend its minister after Classis had advised suspension. The protestant argued this decision of Classis to be in error and that concurrence of a neighboring consistory was not necessary. After careful deliberation, Classis decided not to sustain the protest.

Classis also dealt with an overture from a consistory who requested that Article 67 of the Church Order be amended by removing the requirement that the churches hold worship services on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. Classis ruled this overture not to be legally before it as the consistory had not demonstrated that it had researched and interacted with past decisions of the PRCA touching this matter.

In closed session, Classis treated an appeal related to the work of a consistory.

Classis also had before it a protest from an individual against aspects of several decisions made by the previous Classis related to a minister’s teaching on providence and sanctification. Classis decided not to sustain the protestant in any of the aspects of his protest, although Classis recognized one matter where it had misrepresented a consistory.

The special committee appointed by the last Classis to assist a congregation, its consistory, and its pastor reported on their labors. Classis voted to approve the work of the committee and thank them for their labors. It also approved making the special committee available to the consistory going forward, if the consistory feels the need for such help.

This consistory also brought before Classis a request to dismiss its pastor from his duties in the congregation according to Article 11 of the Church Order, thus making him eligible for a call elsewhere in the denomination. Classis, with the concurrence of the synodical deputies from Classis East, approved this request, after which the chairman addressed fitting words of encouragement to the pastor and elders present.

In other matters, Classis drew up a schedule to supply the pulpit of First PRC of Edmonton, and it approved the subsidy requests for 2021 for three churches and forwarded them on to Synod for its approval.

Voting took place for various classical functionaries. Rev. Engelsma was reappointed to a three-year term as stated clerk. Rev. J. Langerak was appointed to a three-

year term as assistant stated clerk. Rev. M. DeBoer was reappointed to a three-year term on the Classical Committee. Rev. S. Key was reappointed to a three-year term as a *primus* synodical deputy, and Rev. N. Langerak was reappointed to a three-year term as a *secundus* synodical deputy. Classis appointed Revs. A. Brummel, S. Key, R. Kleyn, and J. Laning as church visitors, with Revs. R. Hanko and D. Lee as alternates.

Ministers delegated to Synod 2020 were Revs. A. Brummel, J. Engelsma, S. Key, R. Kleyn, and J. Laning. Alternates are Revs. R. Barnhill, H. Bleyenbergh, E. Guichelaar, D. Lee, and S. Regnerus. Elders delegated

to Synod 2020 were Glenn Feenstra (Hope Redlands), Brian Gritters (Hull), Jim Lenting (Crete), Jim Regnerus (Doon), and Leon Uittenbogaard (Calvary). Alternates are Kevin Brummel (Crete), Marlin Feenstra (Hope Redlands), Hilgard Goosen (Immanuel), David Griess (Loveland), and Alan Van Bommel (Calvary).

The expenses of this meeting totaled \$13,397.60.

Classis will meet next in Edgerton PRC on September 23, 2020, the Lord willing.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma  
Stated Clerk, Classis West



## News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

### Trivia question

In 2001, when a group of families and individuals met to organize Trinity PRC, what were some of the other possible names for this new congregation? Answer can be found in the church profile segment of this issue. More trivia next time.

### Evangelism activities

The Byron Center Evangelism Committee made plans to have Prayer Day on March 11 be their community outreach service this year. Flyers were made available to use when inviting friends and acquaintances to worship with them. There was a sign-up sheet for bringing cookies/bars to a time of fellowship and welcome with their visitors afterward.

### Denominational activities

The regular meeting of Classis West took place March 3 at Peace PRC in Dyer, IN (cf. the report on pages 313-314). A special meeting of Classis East took place March 17 at Hudsonville, MI PRC.

### Sister-church activities

Seven visitors from Hungary made the trip to Northern

Ireland in March, staying at the manse (parsonage) and worshipping with Covenant PRC.

### Minister activities

From the trio of Revs. M. DeBoer, J. Engelsma, and J. Smidstra, the congregation at Cornerstone PRC in Dyer, IN extended a call to Rev. J. Engelsma to come over and help them.

Kalamazoo, MI PRC formed a new trio consisting of Revs. J. Engelsma, S. Key, and C. Spronk. On March 1 their call was issued to Rev. J. Engelsma.

Rev. H. Bleyenbergh preached his farewell in Providence PRC on March 1 and readied his family for the move to Lacombe, AB to take up his work there.

### Mission activities

The annual Doon PRC/Foreign Mission Committee delegation to the mission field in the Philippines was planned for March. But, due to travel concerns, this trip has been postponed until later this year.

“To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1.

# Church profile—Trinity PRC

In the 1970s the city of Hudsonville, Michigan was experiencing a population growth that also was reflected in the Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church. Hudsonville PRC outgrew its little white building on the southeast corner of VanBuren and School Street, and decided to relocate to a brand new facility on a hill less than a mile away on 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

In the next few years the congregation experienced more steady growth in membership, so a decision was made to establish a daughter congregation in Byron Center, Michigan in order to help alleviate overcrowding in the “new” church building. In 1994 the pews were again full, and Georgetown PRC became the next daughter of Hudsonville. Only 5 years later the “problem” of overcrowding once again prompted the formation of a committee appointed by the Council to investigate yet another daughter congregation in the Hudsonville area.

In February of 2001, 33 families and 18 individuals from the Hudsonville congregation met in the gym of Heritage Christian School, along with a few families from other area PR congregations. By May the group had grown to 41 families. The name Trinity Protestant Reformed Church was chosen and approval was granted to organize by Classis East. Interestingly, some of the other names in the running were Zion, Calvary, and Providence, all of which are now names of PR churches that have come into existence after Trinity’s formation.

The group continued to meet on Sunday for worship in the mornings at Heritage School and in the afternoons at Hudsonville Reformed Church. The Hudsonville Reformed Church was looking for a group to purchase its building after a new facility was completed for its worship services. The building they wished to sell was located on the northwest corner of VanBuren and School streets—the opposite corner from which Hudsonville PRC had moved only a few years earlier!

June 18, 2001, our congregation was organized with Hudsonville’s Pastor B. Gritters leading the ser-

vice. Two months later, on September 12, a combined prayer service was held midweek with Hudsonville and Georgetown PRCs after terrorists flew airplanes into the World Trade Center. It was comforting to gather amid all of the chaos and uncertainty with the mother church and an elder sister congregation to pray to God and sing praises to the One who governs and controls all things.

Later that month our newly formed congregation voted to purchase the Reformed Church building. This was possible because of the generosity of Hudsonville PRC in the form of large financial gift to Trinity as we began as a new congregation. The sanctuary seemed huge. The balcony and back three rows of pews on the main floor were blocked so everyone had to sit together “up front.”

Candidate Rodney Kleyn accepted our call to be our pastor in October of 2002. After labor among the saints of Trinity for seven years, Rev. Kleyn moved to Spokane, WA. Candidate Nathan Decker was the next to become our pastor and lead us in the green pastures of God’s Word. By this time the growth spurt had struck Trinity. The back rows were opened, the balcony was filled to capacity and a monitor was set up in the basement. By 2017 the time had come to expand the facilities. During the summer of 2018 construction was in full swing on a new sanctuary. Because the location of the air exchange units necessitated removal for construction, we were left with no way to cool the building. Hudsonville PRC graciously allowed us on hot and humid Sundays to worship in her sanctuary in the afternoon between her services. A mother never forgets her daughter!

After completion of the construction in September of 2018, the whole congregation was again able to assemble in worship in the new sanctuary. After many years of worshiping in different areas of the building, separated by walls and distance, it was a joyous occasion to worship physically together again! Our new addition included not only a new sanctuary and new bathrooms, but also a much larger narthex area in which members could fellowship after the services.

After Rev. Decker took a call to serve in Grandville PRC, we were overjoyed to have Rev. Bill Langerak “come over and help us” as our next pastor in 2019.

Our congregation is active in Bible study societies, catechism in-



struction of the youth, and evangelism. In 2019, we were privileged, on behalf of the PRC seminary, to host the Dordt 400 conference in our new sanctuary. Synod 2020 plans (D.V.) to meet at Trinity.

Trinity has enjoyed peace and growth under the faithful preaching our pastors have brought Sunday to Sunday. We have also experienced the blessings of affiliation with the Protestant Reformed denomination. She

did not hesitate to provide pulpit supply in our vacancies. Joined together as a denomination, we can send out missionaries to spread God's Word and train men in the seminary to proclaim that Word in the local congregation. Our prayer as a congregation is that God finds us faithful to His calling to preach the Word until the return of Christ Jesus.

## Announcements

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Peace PRC, Dyer, IN express Christian sympathy to Jim and Shirley DeJong, along with their family, in the death of their daughter, **Julie DeJong**. We pray that they may receive comfort from the Word of God in Psalm 116:15: "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints."

Rev. Ryan Barnhill, President  
Joel Houck, Clerk

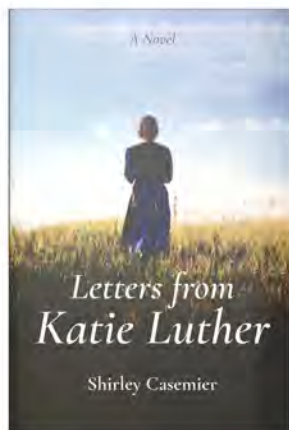
### Teacher needed

**Loveland Protestant Reformed Christian School** (Loveland, CO) will be hiring a full-time elementary teacher for the 2020-2021 school year. All interested applicants should contact the school Administrator BJ Mowery (970) 218.3420 [bmowery@lovelandprcs.org](mailto:bmowery@lovelandprcs.org) or Education Chairman Joe Ophoff (970) 818.6790 [joe@scotthomeinspection.com](mailto:joe@scotthomeinspection.com).

### LETTERS FROM KATIE LUTHER

— A NOVEL —

Written by Shirley Casemier



The story of Katherine Luther, told through her letters and the memories of her best friend, Ave.

As the wife of Martin Luther and mother to six children, Katie learns that Jehovah holds the hand of the believing child of God in the trials of faith and comforts her in every affliction.



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### Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, May 13, 2020 at 8:00 A.M. in Byron Center PRC. Material to be treated at this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk by April 13, 2020.

Gary Boverhof, Stated Clerk

### Reformed Witness Hour

[reformedwitnesshour.org](http://reformedwitnesshour.org)

#### Rev. R. Kleyn

April 5—"Our Savior's Unique Suffering"

Lamentations 1:12

April 12—"Now Is Christ Risen"

I Corinthians 15:20

April 19—"Our Greatest Privilege"

Hebrews 10:19-21

April 26—"Draw Near to God"

Hebrews 10:22