

# The Standard Bearer

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A prayer for God to remember  
His word

Rev. John Marcus

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Total depravity: Children  
incapable of fulfilling a condition

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## Meditation

Rev. John Marcus, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta

# A prayer for God to remember His word

**Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.**

**Psalms 119:49**

The psalmist prays, “Remember the word unto *thy servant*” because he sees himself as God’s friend-servant saved by grace. The psalmist is not a servant against his will; God has made him a willing servant. Not surprisingly, he identifies himself as God’s servant thirteen times throughout the psalm, the only title he uses more than once. How good it is for us to see ourselves as God’s friend-servants.

Adam was God’s friend-servant and God was his Friend-Sovereign in the garden. Adam fell from that position and instead became the servant of sin and Satan. Now, by nature, we are all servants of sin and under the devil’s power. But, God’s faithful Servant, Jesus Christ, kept the law in perfect love to God. He was willing to bear our sin and be afflicted even unto death, and thus to purchase for us the privilege of being God’s friend-servants.

Now, in thankfulness that God has made us His servants, we pray to Him. Thankfulness causes the psalmist to pray, “O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes” (v. 5). Thankfulness causes him to pray, “I will praise thee with uprightness of heart” (v. 7). Thankfulness makes him confess, “Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors” (v. 24). Thankfulness for God’s gracious salvation moves him to pray, “Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end” (v. 33).

In thankfulness, we will also call upon Him in time of affliction, as the psalmist does in this section of the Psalm: “Remember the word unto thy servant.” When God gives us to see that He has fulfilled His promises toward us, we will pray to Him, confidently expecting that He will continue to keep His word to us even in time of affliction. That prayer will be spurred on by our remembrance of God’s faithfulness. At the same time that remembrance will be a source of great comfort.

his prayer to God in the midst of affliction. That theme comes up throughout the psalm; for example, in verse 50: “This is my comfort in my affliction.” For various reasons, he found himself in distress. For one, the proud had scorned him for confessing his trust in God. His affliction is a result of living antithetically in the world. Verse 53 records his horror as the wicked forsook God’s law. On the one hand, his horror represents his vehement zeal for the glory of God, for which reason the wicked hate and afflict him. On the other hand, his horror expresses indignation against the wicked for their hatred and affliction against the righteous. Affliction is our portion in this valley of tears.

Affliction will drive the hypocrite away from God. But the wonderful thing about affliction in the lives of God’s people is that God uses that very affliction to bring us closer to Him in earnest prayer. If everything went smoothly in life, we would forget we need God every moment. Affliction drives us to God in prayer.

In affliction, we learn to pray like the psalmist, “Remember *the word* unto thy servant.” He goes on to describe that word as that “upon which thou hast caused me to hope” (v. 49). So important is this hope in the word that the psalmist expresses the thought multiple times throughout the psalm (vv. 43, 49, 74, 81, 114, 116, 147). What word is the object of our hope? It is the word according to which God quickens us (vv. 25, 50, 107), the word according to which God strengthens us (v. 28), the word according to which God has dealt well with us (v. 65), the word that is forever settled in the heavens (v. 89), and the word that gives light and understanding to the simple (v. 130). That word of hope is nothing less than the word of the gospel. Ultimately, the word is Jesus Christ Himself, who is God and who was in the beginning. The word is God’s promise to save us to the uttermost in and through Jesus Christ.

That word is what we pray for God to remember. Not that God ever forgets; He does not need us to remind Him of His word and of His counsel that stands forever. But our prayer for God to remember asks Him to think upon and act upon His word. We want God to think upon His promises of old and to act upon them.

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The prayer, which the psalmist puts in our mouths, is

In thankfulness for salvation already received, we pray that God would perfect His salvation in us according to His unchangeable promise. God will certainly accomplish what He promised; He does not depend upon us to save. But, we still pray for His salvation, knowing that God Himself has worked that prayer in us and uses it as a means by which He accomplishes His word of promise.

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Of course, affliction alone would never drive us to ask God to remember His word of promise. In our affliction, God works in us a *remembrance* of His judgments and His glorious name (vv. 52, 55). As He gives us to *remember Him*, we pray that He would *remember* His word to *us*.

By nature, we never would pray for God to remember His word of promise. By nature, we would only forsake and rebel against God and His law. The only way we would pray for the perfecting of our salvation is if God Himself has worked that prayer in us. The psalmist confesses that when he says, “thou hast *caused* me to hope” (v. 49). We do not come to hope in God’s Word through our own wisdom; God *causes* us to have a confident expectation and trust in His promises. And, when He causes us to hope, our prayers cannot but be earnest prayers.

The first thing God made the psalmist remember is God’s judgments: “I remembered thy judgments of old” (v. 52). God’s judgments are His acts of governing. From the moment God created the heavens and the earth, He has been governing all things according to His sovereign rule.

The psalmist remembers God’s execution of justice upon the wicked in days gone by, in which judgments God destroyed the wicked who oppressed His people. And he remembers God’s judgments in chastising and correcting us. God knows exactly what we need to bring us to Himself. He brings us low and then raises us up again. God faithfully governs all things in order to bring us good.

Remembrance of God’s judgments of old leads him to pray that God would remember His word.

The second thing God brought the psalmist to remember is Jehovah’s name: “I have remembered thy name, O LORD” (v. 55). Jehovah’s name is the sum total of all His revelation to us. His name includes His revelation of Himself as the sovereign Ruler in creation and history as well as His revelation in Scripture.

But nowhere is Jehovah’s name so wonderfully revealed as in Jesus Christ. God shows us His glorious perfections in Jesus Christ. Christ is the revelation of

God who shows us He is merciful and gracious and long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth. Christ is the revelation of God who keeps mercy for thousands of generations, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin. Christ is the revelation of God’s perfect justice satisfied on our behalf on the cross.

The more God gives us to know Him as our faithful covenant God, the more we will trust Him in all our circumstances and for all our needs. And, in that trust, we will call upon Him to remember His word of promise.

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This knowledge of God is a source of great comfort: “This is my comfort in my affliction” (v. 50). This word of God’s promise, which word cannot be separated from the faithful God, gives comfort in affliction.

This comfort is not for everyone. It is not for the wicked, who forsake God’s law (v. 53), and who scorn us and God in proud contempt (v. 51). This comfort is for us who have the life of Christ given to us: “for thy word hath quickened me” (v. 50). As we have the life of Christ, the word becomes to us a savor of life unto life so that we are comforted by that word. We are comforted in that quickening knowing that the work God has begun He always brings to completion.

Not only do we receive comfort in affliction from God’s quickening, but we also do from the fact that God has manifested and continues to manifest His judgments. God’s hand governed all things for the good of His people in the past. He will surely do the same for me in present and future circumstances. So, we comfort ourselves with the psalmist: “I have remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself” (v. 52).

And having that comfort, we continue in the race God has set before us. Afflictions remain and bring difficulties along the way. But we know that our faithful Father leads us. That is why the psalmist speaks of the house of pilgrimage in verse 54. Even though we are exiles, away from our permanent home, God is with us. Even though the difficulties remain, the service of God is still a joy. In derision and persecution, we rejoice not in those things *per se*; but we rejoice that we are God’s friend-servants given the privilege of keeping His precepts.

In thankfulness, we continue in the blessed way of God’s precepts because He has quickened us and made us His servants. In thankfulness, we look to God in prayer asking Him to remember His word of promise, upon which He Himself has caused us to hope.



## Editorial

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

### The covenant and Dordt (10)

## Total depravity: Children incapable of fulfilling a condition

The Canons' positive treatment of the Reformed doctrine of total depravity is straightforward and relatively brief. And yet, all nine articles of the Rejection of Errors condemn errors of the Remonstrants connected with total depravity. The reason for this is simple. The Canons set forth the Reformed truth over against the specific teaching of the Remonstrants. However, the Reformed doctrine of total depravity was explicitly set forth in the existing confessions, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Belgic Confession of Faith. The Remonstrants did not write what they really believed about fallen man. If they had, they would obviously contradict the confessions; it would indicate that their theology was not Reformed. Accordingly, their "third point," on fallen man's condition, though meandering, is something with which Reformed believers could agree, though most would want to state it clearer.

For this reason, the Canons could easily summarize the confessional teaching of total depravity. But the section on errors described and rejected many of the errors that the Remonstrants *taught*—errors that contradicted the truth of total depravity. These errors maintained that fallen man's will is not dead, but quite able to will and chose the good, even salvation, though it might need some assisting grace. For this reason also, the Synod of Dordt answered the Remonstrants' third and fourth points in one section. The Canons unite Head III ("Of the corruption of man") and Head IV ("His conversion to God") into one head to demonstrate the contradiction in the Remonstrants' teaching, namely, that a totally depraved, spiritually dead sinner can somehow get saved by a *resistible* grace (as they taught it).

The Canons' doctrine of total depravity is fully in harmony with the other Reformed confessions. It maintains that man (Adam), though created good, by his sin brought "on himself blindness of mind, horrible darkness, vanity and perverseness of judgment, became wicked, rebellious, and obdurate in heart and will, and impure in his affections" (Art. 1). And the effect of the Fall was not only on our first parents. Rather, "man after the

fall begat children in his own likeness...by the propagation of a vicious nature" (Art. 2). As a result, "all men are conceived in sin, and by nature children of wrath, incapable of saving good, prone to evil, dead in sin, and in bondage thereto, and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they are neither able nor willing to return to God, to reform the depravity of their nature, nor to dispose themselves to reformation" (Art. 3).

Having established the total inability of man to save himself, the Canons carefully lead to the conclusion that only sovereign, saving grace can and will save man. "Glimmerings of natural light" never bring man to a "saving knowledge of God and true conversion" (Art. 4). Neither does the law. For while the law "discovers the greatness of sin" and even convicts of sin, it never "points out the remedy nor imparts the strength to extricate him from ruin" (Art. 5). In the Rejection of Errors, the Canons repeat the truth that the unregenerate man is really and utterly "dead in sin, [and] destitute of all powers unto spiritual good" (Art. 4).

This is the state of every child born into this world, also every child born to believing parents and baptized. There is no difference in this regard between a child born to unbelieving parents and a child of believers. Apart from the work of regeneration, every child is "utterly dead in sin." Every imagination of the thoughts of his heart is only evil continually (Gen. 6:5, quoted by the Canons in Rejection of Errors, Art. 4.)

Believing parents cannot know whether their child is elect or reprobate. If he is reprobate, the Holy Spirit has not worked and will not work faith in the child. The parents will teach every child to pray and to sing the Psalms. They will help the child memorize Bible verses and catechism questions. They will instruct every child concerning God, His Son Jesus Christ, the sinfulness of man, and how God sent His Son into the world to redeem lost sinners. They will teach the great salvation earned for God's beloved people in the cross of Christ and that they are saved only by faith in Jesus. They will direct their child to this Jesus.



What will be the effect of all this instruction? If their child is reprobate, he hates God and hates his neighbor. He will, therefore, hate all the instruction about God. Whether the parents talk of God's great love, His power, or His holiness and justice, the child will hate God. The more he learns of this God, the more conscious he becomes that he hates Him. All the catechism classes, all the years of instruction in home and in Christian school, all the sermons only harden his heart. This is the work of the Spirit. The Spirit softens the hard heart of the elect and gives faith in Christ and love for God. The same Spirit hardens the spiritual heart of the reprobate. This is Paul's word concerning the effect, the power, of preaching: "For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?" (II Cor. 2:15, 16). The same will be the effect of preaching and all the instruction to the reprobate child in the covenant. It is a savor of death unto death.

The only hope for anyone, be it a child born into a home of unbelief, or a baptized child born to believing parents, is the work of the Holy Spirit. He alone gives life and faith!

The Arminian had a theological problem. Pretending to believe that all men are born totally depraved and dead in sin, they yet taught that Christ died for all and salvation is offered to all on the condition of faith. But how can the dead sinner respond to this supposedly gracious offer of salvation? For some, the solution was that fallen man has power of free will, at least enough power to accept the offer. Others said that God gives all men common grace that enables them to accept or reject the offer. The Canons reject all these attempts. In the Rejection of Errors, Article 5 specifically rejects the term common grace:

Error 5: Who teach: That the corrupt and natural man can so well use the common grace (by which they understand the light of nature), or the gifts still left him after the fall, that he can gradually gain by their good use a greater, namely, the evangelical or saving grace and salvation itself. And that in this way God on His part shows Himself ready to reveal Christ unto all men, since He applies to all sufficiently and efficiently the means necessary to conversion.

Rejection: For the experience of all ages and the Scriptures do both testify that this is untrue. "He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his ordinances, they have not known

them" (Ps. 147:19, 20). "Who in the generations gone by suffered all the nations to walk in their own ways" (Acts 14:16). And: "And they [Paul and his companions] having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia, and when they were come over against Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit suffered them not" (Acts 16:6, 7).

Present-day conditional covenant theology has the very same problem as the Arminians. Conditional covenant theology maintains that God promises salvation to every baptized child. They go beyond the Arminians who taught that God "shows himself ready to reveal Christ to all." Rather, in the conditional covenant, God claims the baptized child as His own, established an eternal covenant of grace with the child, and promises eternal life on the condition that the child believes. It is not an empty promise. But the problem is that the child is born dead in sin and cannot "accept" the promise.

Their solution? God gives a certain grace to every baptized child. For Christian Reformed Church (CRC) theologian William Heyns, this is God's common grace. This is fully in harmony with the first point of common grace adopted by the CRC in 1924. The well-meant offer of the gospel is given as evidence of God's grace to all men. And Heyns insisted that this grace is not merely external, a gracious attitude, or an external influence, for that is Pelagian grace. On that point he was correct.

Klaas Schilder, nonetheless, rejected Heyns' theology of a subjective grace. He taught only an external grace. Such grace is obviously ineffectual, so other Liberated theologians in Schilder's day and since have insisted that there *is* a subjective grace operating in each covenant child. That God gives *grace* to all baptized children, along with the promise of salvation in Christ—if they believe—is the only way that conditional covenant theology can be consistent. A sincere promise that God claims that child as His own, makes His eternal covenant with him, a promise of forgiveness and eternal life, all that to the covenant child dead in sin who *cannot* accept the promise, is foolishness. There must be some receptivity, some ability to respond! So one must either deny that the child is totally depraved and dead in sin, or teach a grace that lifts him up to be able to respond.

The problem is, neither of these is Reformed as defined by the Canons of Dordrecht. Every child born into this world is "utterly dead in sin." And the Canons also reject the notion of a common grace that enables the baptized child gradually to gain saving grace, that is, to be saved.

The Canons' doctrine of total depravity condemns the theology of a conditional covenant.

On the other hand, the unconditional covenant gov-

erned by election is perfectly in harmony with the Canons also on this point. At baptism, God's promises are to the elect alone. All the beautiful promises laid out in the Baptism Form are genuine promises to those chosen in Christ in eternity. And God's promises never fail. In the elect, baptized child born dead in sin, the Spirit plants the seed of eternal life and works faith. The godly instruction of believing parents, teachers, and ministers, though rejected by the old man of sin in the child,

is received and embraced by the believing, renewed heart. This instruction feeds the soul of the child, nourishes and strengthens the child to grow up into spiritual adulthood, "a man of God, perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II. Tim. 4:17). God realizes every promise that He speaks. That is the only hope for the totally depraved child, utterly dead in sin. He cannot fill any condition. And thanks be to God, that is not required of him.



## I believe

Rev. Cory Griess, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan

# How do we know the Bible is the Word of God? (3) Beautiful agreement of all the parts

Previous article in this series: January 1, 2020, p. 157.

## The Reformation and Scripture's authority

The Roman Catholic Church answered (and still answers) the question in our title (How do we know the Bible is the Word of God?) this way: "Because the Roman Catholic Church says so." According to Rome's false teaching, the Bible is *church*-authenticated. The church has all power and authority, even to determine what is and is not the Word of God. So that even if the church declared Dr. Seuss' *Green Eggs and Ham* to be the Bible, we would have to believe it.<sup>1</sup> The Reformers rightly cried foul, recognizing the authority of the Bible is above that of the church. The Word of God is the supreme authority as the voice of Christ in the church. The Bible authenticates the church, the church does not authenticate the Bible.<sup>2</sup>

This begged the question though: If we do not know the Bible is God's Word on the basis of the authority of the church, *how do we know* it is God's Word? The Reformers answered by going back to the church fathers (as they did regularly), building again on their teaching of the self-authenticating nature of the Bible (it shows itself to be authentic). The early church fathers had to answer the question, How do we know the Bible is the

Word of God? as they pressed the claims of Christ upon the people of the pagan empire in which they lived. They, and the Reformers after them, said that if the Bible is the Word of God, it will be able to show that it is without our help. And they saw that indeed the Scriptures do so.

Why did the church fathers and the Reformers trust that the Bible would show itself to be the Word of God, by itself? The Scriptures are *revelation*. And they understood that any and all revelation of God is going to carry the marks of God upon it, simply by virtue of the fact that it has its origin from Him. My daughters made homemade cards for my wife and me for Christmas. None of the three cards were signed by name. However, each card had the distinctive "marks" of its author all over it. From the attributes of the cards themselves we could tell who made each one. So too, the revelation of God, *all* the revelation of God, bears the "marks" of God. This is true of God's *general* revelation.<sup>3</sup> You look at a beautiful sunset or a microscopic cell, and you see that this revelation of God carries the fingerprints of God upon it. This is also true of God's *special* revelation. The Bible, as the revelation of God, carries the attributes of the God who is revealing Himself therein.

## Diversity in Unity

One of the fingerprints of God found all over both

1 Thus the Apocrypha, in spite of its major problems, has authority to Roman Catholics because the church has declared it to be the Word of God.

2 Belgic Confession, Article 5. The Confession does state that the fact that the church recognizes the sixty-six books of the Bible as the Word of God is weighty to us. Nonetheless, it is not the deciding factor.

3 As the Scriptures themselves point out in Romans 1 and Psalm 19.

His *general* and *special* revelation is an otherwise inexplicable amount of diversity in unity. In God's general revelation, one can see this on a large scale in an ecosystem on the earth, or on a small scale in the way 37 trillion cells work together in one human body. God Himself is a diversity in unity. He is three persons in one being. He is also omnipotent and can produce such otherwise impossible unity amidst such diversity in His creative work. In fact, when you read in Scripture that He is omnipotent and a unity in diversity, you might even *expect* that when He reveals Himself in creation, the very *way* He reveals Himself would reflect this. It might be (and is!) what you expect to find in the very way He reveals Himself in Scripture too.

In the previous two articles in this series, we focused on Calvin's writings on the divine origin of Scripture. Returning to his work again, we find that he points us to this otherwise inexplicable diversity amidst such diversity as one of the evidences of the divine origin of the Bible.<sup>4</sup> The title of this article is taken from a statement of Calvin in the *Institutes*, "What wonderful confirmation ensues when, with keener study, we ponder the economy of the divine wisdom, so well ordered and disposed; the completely heavenly character of its doctrine, savoring of nothing earthly; *the beautiful agreement of all the parts with one another.*"<sup>5</sup>

Think of all the parts! There are sixty-six books in the Bible written from three separate continents, in cities, countryside, prison, palaces; written in three different languages: Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek; written in multiple genres of literature: history, law, poetry, proverb, prophecy, letter, vision; written by forty different authors, many from very different walks of life: fishermen, kings, peasants, poets, statesmen, herdsman, a military general, a cupbearer, a doctor, a tax collector; and *all written over a period of 1,500 years.*

And yet, amidst all of these parts there is an astounding unity that is inexplicable apart from divine omnipotence. Across all this diversity of parts there is a unity in the one grand *story of redemption*. Apart from God superintending the process, how could 40 different authors living over a period of 1,500 years, write one story of such a complex nature that it spans from the origin of the world to the end of the world, speaks of one God, with one way of salvation, centered on one Man who is

God in the flesh, with everything before Him and after Him pointing to Him in the forms of types, symbols, prophecies, and fulfillments. Furthermore, the Bible has one clear purpose that presses itself through the entire canon: that God might bring one people together to Himself as a bride for His Son, all to the praise of the glory of His covenanting grace. And God accomplished all this through some authors who never even read everything that the other authors contributed to the canon at the time of their own writing!

There is a unity of *doctrine* amid all this diversity of parts. Who God is, the many facets of sin and its consequences, who Christ is, what salvation is—these doctrines are communicated clearly and consistently from beginning to end in the Bible. Likewise, the covenant of God is presented as one covenant throughout the whole of the Scriptures, with more aspects of that covenant being unfolded as the book progresses. Put forty believers even living at the same time in a room together and see if they agree *entirely* on things doctrinal. However, Paul and Peter, James and John, agree in doctrine not only with each other as contemporaries but also with Isaiah and Jeremiah who wrote hundreds of years prior to them.

There is a unity of *structure* in all these diverse parts of the Bible. The Old Testament and New Testament go together. If you read the Old Testament you see that the story is not finished yet. And when you read the New Testament, you see that this is the only way what was said in the Old Testament could come to completion. There is a unity of structure with respect to the beginning and end of the Bible. The book of Genesis speaks of creation; the book of Revelation, new creation. The book of Genesis speaks of a garden with the tree of life; the book of Revelation brings us to a greater garden, where the tree of life returns double. Everything foretold, promised, and foreshadowed at the beginning comes to completion at the end.

What do you do with this? How does one explain that this happened over a period of 1,500 years? There is no other book like this. The other supposed "holy" books like the Quran or the Book of Mormon have no attributes like this. The only logical conclusion is that there has been an omnipotent mind, who Himself knows intimately unity in diversity, superintending the process of the delivery of this book to us.

In creation science it is common to argue against evolution by pointing out the irreducible complexity of an aspect of the creation. The argument is in a form that simply states: the world we see is too complex and yet too unified for it to have evolved. An intelligent, omnipotent mind must have designed it and brought it to pass.

4 Calvin and the other Reformers often called these attributes of Scripture *indicia*, a Latin word meaning "indicators," evidences or marks of God's divinity coming through in the very way He revealed Himself.

5 *Institutes* 1.8.1. The Westminster Confession picks this up from Calvin in the first chapter, section 5, "...the consent of all its parts..."



This argument applies not only with regard to general revelation, but also with regard to special revelation. The Scriptures are just too complex and yet too unified to have occurred either randomly, or even to have

occurred by the oversight of the finite mind or minds of men. The most logical explanation is that the Bible was designed and brought to pass by God Himself, an omnipotent God, who is Himself a unity in diversity.



## Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Brian Huizinga, newly appointed professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

### As to our good works (4)

## The nature of good works as good

Previous article in this series: November 15, 2019, p. 90.

### Good

We have been looking at the nature of the believer's good works as *works*, but now turn our attention to the nature of those works as *good*. Scripture denominates some of our works "good." While Matthew 5:16 is representative of those biblical passages that speak of the good works of elect believers *in general*, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven," Acts 9:36 *specifically* identifies one individual believer who did good works, "Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did." The figure of choice in Scripture for the Holy Spirit in speaking of these good works is "fruit" (Ps. 1:3; Matt. 3:10; John 15:1-8); and the prayer of every pastor for the congregation is that the members be "fruitful in every good work" (Col. 1:10).

The biblical adjective *good* is applied to something that is excellent in quality, beautiful in character, and useful for its intended ends. In the physical realm of the earthly creation a *bad* fruit is an orange that fell from the tree and is darkened, mushy, rotten within, and useless for eating or selling. However, a *good* fruit is a ripe orange that is bright in color, shapely in appearance, wholesome in substance, sweet in taste, and profitable for the seller. The sinful works of the flesh are *bad* or *evil* because they are spiritually and morally corrupt in character, they contribute to the misery and destruction of the doer of the deed and those affected by it, and

they are a contradiction of God's expressed will. Scripture calls a believer's work "good" because in principle that work possesses a beautiful spiritual character and is well adapted to certain ends.<sup>1</sup>

But what exactly makes a work *good*? What accounts for the fact that some works are not merely good to the human observer in his limited capacity for observation and fallible assessment, but good according to the judgment of God so that Scripture teaches that a woman like Tabitha was full of works that were good?

### Source

The source or origin of a work is determinative for the work's good character. If a work is good, it is good only because it originated from a good source. Lord's Day 33 of the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that a work is a good work if it passes three tests. First, as to its source, it must "proceed from a true faith." Second, as to its standard, it must be "performed according to the law of God." Third, as to its aim, it must be done "to His [God's] glory." The first test is the fundamental and determinative test because, if a work proceeds from a good source, then it will be good in principle, and in its initial conception it will necessarily spring forth from the motive of love for God and the desire for God's glory. If a work does not proceed from a good source, it will never be done according to God's law or for God's

<sup>1</sup> In a future article, when we examine the function of good works, we will explain that although some of our works are "good," not one of them is yet "perfect," without sin.

glory. That the source or origin of a work is the most important factor in determining whether it is good is the teaching of our Lord who preached that “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good...” (Luke 6:45).

If good is determined by the inner source from which the work springs, then good is not a matter of the outward appearance. Satan himself can be taken for an angel of light if all one considers is his profile picture. Anyone can make himself and his works *look* good. There may be a teacher in the church who appears to be the sincerest of all believers and meek as a lamb, who evidently loves God and the congregation for whom he labors as he passionately preaches grace, and who wraps up every sermon and speech with a petition that God’s name be glorified. If anyone’s works appear good, surely his do. But he is a wolf. So hungry for self-advancement and the praise of men is he that on Sunday his conscience allows him to stand in the pulpit and preach “Lord, Lord!” though he does not honor the Lord in his heart. During the week he has no scruples about devouring widows’ houses and offending little ones if it furthers his aspirations for power and pleasure. According to Jesus, the false prophet who comes in sheep’s clothing but is inwardly a ravening wolf (Matt. 7:15) epitomizes the truth that fruit can only be good if its source is good (Matt. 7:16-19). Since we can know a tree by its fruits (Matt. 7:20), that is, since we can know the nature of a teacher by the works he produces, it is only a matter of time before the “sheep,” through his disorderly walk and false doctrine, reveals to men the wicked wolfish nature that God beheld all along.

Preaching during the zenith of religious hypocrisy in Caiaphas’ Jerusalem, Jesus Christ repeatedly taught that good is not determined by outward appearance but by the spiritual source. Even as it is true that it is not the things without that enter a man and defile him (Mark 7:18), but that which is within and proceeds from the heart of man (Mark 7:21), so also it is not that which is without—not even a man’s Christian upbringing, familiarity with Scripture, pious-sounding words, and impressive actions—that makes a man’s works good, but the nature of his heart.

## Wonder

Since every sinner has a corrupt heart as the source of all of his working, nothing less than a wonder of grace is necessary for a sinner to produce good works. Scripture passes a devastating judgment upon our race: “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is

none that doeth good. The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy, there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Ps. 14:1-3). If not one doer of good can be found, then how can there be a Tabitha “full of good works?” Can a thorn bring forth a grape, a thistle a fig, corrupt fountains sweet waters? No. Can a spiritually dead God-denier bring forth the fruit of good works? No.

The sinner must become a new creation in union with Christ (“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...,” II Cor. 5:17). The sinner must be created in Christ Jesus as the workmanship of the Divine Workman (“For ye are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works...,” Eph. 2:10). While a spiritually dead God-denier cannot bring forth the fruit of good works because the internal spiritual source of his heart is totally depraved, a spiritually dead God-denier can *be made to* bring forth the fruit of good works. Jesus taught that a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit, but He did not teach that a bad tree cannot be made to bring forth good fruit (Matt. 7:18). With men, bringing good out of corruption is impossible, but with God all things are possible (Matt. 19:26).

In order for the sinner to have a new and holy heart as the pure source from which good works can spring, nothing less than a spiritual *re*-creation in Christ Jesus is necessary. The sinner must be created, not again as a natural man in Adam or in his mother’s womb, but as a new heavenly man of heavenly glory in Christ Jesus. To create, which is what God did in the beginning, is the stupendous wonder-work of making something out of nothing—to bring something into existence that was not there before. To create in Christ Jesus is even more astonishing because it is the wonder-work of the Divine Workman in taking the already existing totally depraved sinner and bringing something spiritual into existence where its antithesis formerly thrived—a holy heart of heavenly, spiritual life where carnal rebellion and hatred for God did dwell.

Before any sinner can be “created in Christ Jesus unto good works,” he or she must have been chosen by God in Christ Jesus in God’s eternal decree of predestination, a fundamental element of which decree is that God not only appointed the individual to salvation but ordained each good work that the elected son or daughter will ever perform. The ultimate source of a good work, therefore, is the sovereign will of the predestinating God. “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). No

election, no good works. As we confess in Canons of Dort, I.9,

...but men are chosen to faith and to the obedience of faith, holiness, etc. Therefore election is the fountain of every saving good, from which proceed faith, holiness, and the other gifts of salvation, and finally eternal life itself, as its fruits and effects, according to that of the apostle: "He hath chosen us (not because we were, but) that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love" (Eph. 1:4).

Moreover, the necessary judicial basis and only possibility for an individual's spiritual creation in Christ Jesus is redemption through Christ Jesus crucified and risen from the dead. Christ Jesus must go to the cross carrying the guilt of the individual's sins and sinfulness, and must pay for those sins. He must also obtain for the sinner the judicial right to the wonder-work of recreation in which Christ's own glorious, heavenly, immortal, resurrection life is implanted. Unredeemed slaves of sin and death have no right to a glorious spiritual creation and must be cast away in punishment. Creation must be "in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:10), "in whom we have redemption through his blood..." (Eph. 1:7). No cross, no good works.

Finally, the sinner as he lives in this earthly creation in his depraved nature must actually be created. This act of being "created in Christ Jesus" is the sinner's salvation. In this he plays no role. No more than Adam participated in the creation of himself out of the dust of the earth, no more does the sinner participate in his spiritual creation. In the work of creation that is salvation, the person who is the Spirit of Christ Jesus comes into the stony-cold and obstinate heart of the elect sinner and breathes into him the vital spiritual warmth of the vigorous resurrection life of Christ Jesus. The moment Christ's Spirit enters, Christ establishes an unbreakable, saving union between Himself and the sinner so that the sinner is for time and eternity organically one with Christ Jesus. The moment Christ's Spirit possesses the sinner and makes the heart of the sinner His eternal dwelling place, the sinner becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus (II Cor. 5:17). Old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new! Into the heart is planted a new thing, a new root of new heavenly life, a gift called faith! By faith the new creature not only is one with Christ but will be brought to the conscious

knowledge and enjoyment of Christ Jesus and will trust in Christ Jesus as He is proclaimed in the holy gospel. As this new, regenerated, believing creature lives by faith in the Word, knowing God as the God of his salvation, he lives a new life in all good works. He sees new things, speaks new words, and walks new paths. He has been created in Christ Jesus, not *by* the good works he now does, and not *because* of the good works he now does, but *unto* good works which are always the fruit of his salvation. Exactly because these works are performed from the source of a true faith, they are performed in the consciousness that they are not perfect, having passed through the corrupt flesh of the old man, and therefore, they are acceptable to God only on the merits of Jesus Christ. Created in Christ Jesus, the new man finds all his life and sufficiency in Christ Jesus.

No creation, no good works. No union with Christ, no good works. No indwelling of the Holy Spirit, no good works. No faith as root, no good works as fruit. Created in Christ Jesus unto good works the believer can, must, will, and does walk in all those good works before ordained of God.

Created in Christ Jesus, the believer is God's workmanship (may we say wonder-workmanship?). Tabitha was God's workmanship in Joppa. She was certainly God's workmanship after being brought back from the dead by a resurrection in the upper room of Joppa. But even before that resurrection, Tabitha was God's workmanship as a "disciple" created in Christ Jesus unto the good works of supplying the poor and needy widows with coats and garments. Except a woman be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, she cannot do good works. But on the other hand, if a woman be created in Christ Jesus unto good works, she cannot but do good works. It is a remarkable demonstration of both the supernatural power and saving grace of God the Divine Workman that ought ever to provoke us to a sense of holy wonder that there should be even one Tabitha on this earth who is "full of good works."

**The moment Christ's Spirit possesses the sinner and makes the heart of the sinner His eternal dwelling place, the sinner becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus (II Cor. 5:17). Old things are passed away! Behold, all things are become new!**



## A word fitly spoken

Rev. Joseph Holstege, pastor of Zion Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan

### Ear

The old adage says there is a reason we were created with only one mouth, but with two ears. The biblical description of the ear would confirm the wisdom of this clever observation. The ear is more than an oddly shaped appendage of flesh and cartilage such as the one Peter smote off the head of Malchus (John 18:10). God planted the ear in the skull of man just as a gardener might plant a patch of delicate tulips in the earth (Ps. 94:9). If we are amazed by the intricate design of the seeing eye, we should be as impressed by the hearing ear, since the Lord has made even both of them (Prov. 20:12). The Creator fused together tiny vibrating bones with nerve endings and canals to transmit all sorts of sounds and noises to our brains. The ears of Samuel brought him the sound of bleating sheep, about which he questioned King Saul after the incomplete battle with Amalek (I Sam. 15:14). The ears of a modern man are more accustomed to the humming of appliances, the chatter of radios, and the honking of horns. But the most important function of the ear is its ability to pick up words. If the mouth is equipped for tasting meat, Job observes, “Doth not the ear try words?” (Job 12:11).

The great blessedness of the believing member of the church is that he has ears to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 2:7; 2:11; 2:17; 2:29; 3:6; 3:13; 3:22). Now, just as the tip of Aaron’s right ear had to be sprinkled with the blood of a ram before he could function as a priest (Ex. 29:20), so the ear which hears the Spirit must first be cleansed by the blood of Christ. Just as Jesus put his fingers in the ears of a deaf man so that “straightway his ears were opened” (Mark 7:35), so the Spirit of Jesus opens our ears by the power of divine grace. And when those ears are opened, they become the means to the believer’s greatest delight. He hears the voice of his God!

He hears the voice of God speaking His commandments, and with a newfound love for that law he “gives ear” (Ex. 15:26). He now has the ear of the wise, which he uses to seek knowledge (Prov. 18:15). He stands with all creation bowing before the word of the Maker who says, “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the

LORD hath spoken...” (Is. 1:2). What is most delightful to him is when he hears the voice of Jesus revealing the mysteries of the kingdom. Jesus not only told His disciples to let His sayings sink down into their ears (Luke 9:44), but He also reminded them how blessed their ears are, “for they hear” (Matt. 13:16).

In light of the wonderful words they hear, the ears of the believer can never be full. If he ever imagines he has heard it all, the child of God should look forward to a coming day when his ears will be glorified. The first thing he will hear on that day is the trump of God summoning him to rise from his long slumber in the grave (I Thess. 4:16). But then he will see and hear what he could only sense through a glass darkly during his long earthly sojourn. “As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” (I Cor. 2:9).

And it is not only the new ears of the believer that make him blessed, but it is the fact that the ears of God are open to his cry (Ps. 34:15). Oh yes, God has ears too! And the ears of God are not like the ears of idols who “have ears, but they hear not” (Ps. 115:6). The ears of God are hearing ears! “He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?” (Ps. 94:9). In fact, the ear of the Lord is so adept at hearing He even hears the mournful breathing of His children in deep affliction (Lam. 3:56). The ear of God has become incarnate in His Son Jesus Christ who declares, “The Lord God hath opened mine ear” (Is. 50:5). In the blessed ears of Jesus came the sound of mocking and rejection. They were ears sprinkled with red blood when a crown of thorns was pressed on His scalp. The ears of Jesus were wrapped about with a napkin when His body was laid in the tomb. But the ears of Jesus heard again, for in the resurrection God declared once again, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased!” Knowing he has such a sympathetic ear in heaven, the believer may sing with gusto, “Bow down thy ear, O Lord, and hear, For I am poor and great my need!” (Psalter 233, stanza 1; Ps. 86:1).

But if the ears of the Lord are open to the righteous,



His face is against them that do evil (I Pet. 3:12). The word of God that makes believing ears blessed is a word that makes unbelieving ears heavy and fat (Is. 6:10). The apostle warns of those who will have itching ears, who only seek teachers who will scratch that itch (II Tim. 4:3). These do not cry in the ears of the LORD for deliverance, they only weep in His ears because He does not give them flesh to eat (Num. 11:18). They make idols that are just like themselves, having ears which cannot hear (Ps. 115:8). Do not even bother speaking in the ears of a fool, “for he will despise the wisdom of thy

words” (Prov. 23:9). If there is anything that highlights the blessedness of hearing ears, it is the horror of these ears of unbelief! In response to such deafness, God will “do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle” (I Sam. 3:11).

So give thanks, O believer, for your ears! And use them! Call upon the Lord in the day of your trouble and affliction, for “behold, the Lord’s hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear” (Is. 59:1).



## God’s wondrous works

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

# God’s will revealed to His friends

The next few articles in this rubric will be on God’s covenant. Lord willing, some of the subjects to be considered will be:

- God’s covenant is a relationship of friendship and communion that involves God revealing to us His secret will concerning our salvation.
- The covenant communion that we have with God is rooted in the communion that the triune God has within Himself.
- Jesus is the Mediator of the new covenant who confirmed the covenant by His death.
- The one covenant people are the elect in Christ. Just as election is unconditional, so God’s covenant is unconditional.
- The making of a covenant involves the swearing of an oath.
- The covenant is a marriage relationship after which our earthly marriages are patterned.
- God’s promises are to Jesus Christ and in Christ we inherit all things.

We begin by considering God’s covenant as friendship. This covenant communion involves God revealing to us mysteries that are not made known to others.

## Proof that God’s covenant is a relationship of friendship

Scripture tells us what God’s covenant is. Though we do not find a statement that says “God’s covenant is...,” we

can clearly deduce from Scripture what it means when God says, “with thee I will establish my covenant.” Here are just a few ways that we can prove that God’s covenant is a relationship of friendship.

1. If we take, for example, Noah and Abraham, two individuals with whom God established His covenant, we see that both of them were friends of God. Scripture tells us that Noah walked with God as His friend (Gen. 6:9), and we read that Abraham was called “the friend of God” (James 2:23). Quite early in Old Testament history we read that the ones with whom God established His covenant were His friends.

2. There is a phrase that God repeatedly uses when speaking about His covenant. He says, “They shall be my people, and I will be their God.” That phrase, or one very similar to it, is found repeatedly in the Word of God (for example, Jer. 24:7; 32:38; Ezek. 11:20; Zech. 8:8). It indicates that there is a very close communion between God and His covenant people. They are *His* people and He is *their* God.

3. The intimate relationship between God and His people is referred to as *marriage*. A very clear proof of this can be found in the prophecy of Ezekiel:

Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine (Ezek. 16:8).

Here God speaks of entering into a covenant with His people. He swears an oath and enters a covenant with them and they become His. We think here of the everlasting marriage that exists between Christ and the church. This is a beautiful marriage in which two are united not in a business partnership, as though the covenant were a contract, but in a relationship of intimate fellowship. Their fellowship is that of a husband and wife in which the bride says, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine” (Song of Solomon 6:3).

4. As husband and wife, God and His covenant people dwell together. This was illustrated in the Old Testament by the tabernacle and temple. It was shown more clearly when the Word was made flesh and dwelt (or “tabernacled”) among us (John 1:14). The covenant people are the one people who have Christ in their midst dwelling among them. This makes it very evident that the covenant relationship is a close friendship.

5. God’s covenant people are the *children* of God. Their relationship with God is the close, family fellowship of the everlasting Father with His children. They bear their Father’s image. They know Him, love Him, revere Him, and walk with Him as His friends.

These are just a few of the ways that we can show from Scripture that God’s covenant with His people in Christ is a relationship of friendship. In this article let us consider one of them in a bit more detail. I am referring now to how covenant communion involves God revealing to His friends His secret will. We see that as we look at what God said to Noah and to Abraham.

### God revealing His will to Noah and to Abraham

God said to Noah, “With thee will I establish my covenant,” and then He made known to Noah what He was going to do. It was to Noah and not to others that God made known His will. Not that Noah would have kept this revelation to himself. The point here is that covenant communion involves God revealing His will to those with whom He establishes His covenant. As a recipient of this gracious revelation, Noah knew that God loved him. He “found grace in the eyes of the LORD,” and he walked with God as His friend.

The same is true of Abraham. God loved Abraham, communed with him, and spoke with him about what was going to happen.

As to what God told Noah and Abraham, there is much similarity. He spoke to both of them about the destruction of the impenitent and His gracious salvation of them and of all those who are in Christ.

To both of them He spoke of His coming judgment. He told Noah about the flood that He would bring upon the earth. To Abraham God spoke about the de-

struction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the smoke of which Abraham himself would see (Gen. 19:28). God also told him about His future judgments upon the wicked nation that would afflict Abraham’s seed, and upon the Canaanites whose land Abraham’s seed would inherit.

The just God who punishes the ungodly also promised deliverance to Noah and to Abraham. He assured them that they and their generations would be blessed. During the flood Noah and his family would be preserved in the ark. After the flood we read that God blessed Noah and his sons. Abraham was told that his seed would be a stranger in a land that was not theirs. They would serve them and be afflicted for four hundred years. God’s judgment would come upon that nation, and afterwards the children of Abraham would come out with much substance.

To both Noah and Abraham He promised blessings that would be purchased by Christ. After the flood Noah sacrificed and God “smelled a sweet savour” (Gen. 8:21). Noah’s sacrifice pointed to the coming sacrifice of our Lord.

Then God spoke of His everlasting covenant with Noah and with all the earth, the covenant whose blessings would be purchased by that coming sacrifice of our Savior to which Noah’s sacrifice pointed. The blessings God promised Abraham would also be purchased by our Lord. God told Abraham that it was *in his Seed* that all the nations would be blessed (Gen. 22:18), and Galatians 3:16 tells us that Abraham’s one Seed is Jesus Christ.

God’s one, everlasting covenant of grace was established both with Noah and with Abraham. In both instances we see how God revealed His will to His friends. He spoke to them in distinction from others and assured them that they and their seed would be blessed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### God’s will revealed to His covenant people today

God’s covenant is particular. The revelation of His will is particular. God in and through Jesus Christ continues to make known to some His will concerning their salvation.

We sing of this in the Psalms: “The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant” (Ps. 25:14).

God shows His covenant to us, His friends. He graciously reveals unto us His secret will.

This particular revelation only to God’s covenant people is a strong proof that the covenant is a relationship of friendship. Jesus brought out this connection between particular revelation and friendship in what He said to His disciples:

Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you (John 15:15).

Jesus spoke of this on more than one occasion. When His disciples asked Him why He spoke in parables, He responded: “Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given” (Matt. 13:11b).

When praying to God our Lord said: “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes” (Matt. 11:25b).

Then He added: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the

Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matt. 11:27).

We, Christ’s disciples, have been taught by our Lord that His gracious revelation is particular. Our heavenly Father communes with us, telling us about His coming judgment and assuring us that we are safe in our Lord Jesus Christ. The proclamation of this gospel works in us faith. We trust in our God and come to Him for all that we need as we sojourn here below.

It is this fellowship of friends that characterizes God’s covenant.

May we glorify and praise Him as we walk with Him and fellowship with Him, just as our fathers Noah and Abraham did so many years ago.



## Pertaining to the churches in common— Contact Committee

Rev. Kenneth Koole, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

# Report on our contacts (2)

In our previous article, written to bring the reader up to date on our work as Contact Committee (CC), we focused on our contacts with churches with whom we stand in formal ecclesiastical relationships, sister churches or in a corresponding relationship.

In this article we report on contacts we have with churches and groups with whom we have no formal relationship as yet, some of recent vintage, a couple of others of longer duration, but groups of believers that have reached out to us either to explore the possibility of establishing formal relations someday or for assistance in development in doctrinal truth.

And we repeat, we make this report not simply so you can be informed about those with whom our churches are in contact, but to remind ourselves of two things. First, of the importance of remembering that, as Protestant Reformed Churches, we are a part of Christ’s church universal (though we and our contacts are ever so small), a church universal to which and for which we have a calling. We have not been given God’s truth and our institutions and resources simply to keep to ourselves. And second, we write to remind ourselves of our calling to pray for those with whom the Lord has put us

into contact. The Holy Spirit Himself through the apostolic Word makes this incumbent upon us, as pointed out last article, especially as apostasy engulfs the whole of Christendom in these last days.

A contact of highest interest to the PRC CC has been the BERG of Giessen, Germany (*Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde*—Confessing Protestant Reformed Congregation). We have been in contact with this small Reformed group for some 15 years now. Reference to contact with a group in Giessen, Germany first appears in the 2006 *Acts of Synod*. At that time, they were a small fellowship. They are now a congregation of some 50 members, a group of believers that owes a great deal to the faithful Reformed, confessional instruction of Dr. Jurgen Klautke.

Who they are, what their origin is, what they have had to endure for the Reformed faith, as well as their distinctives in doctrine and practice can be found in past *Acts of Synod*. Of significance is the rejection the BERG (with its little seminary) had to endure from financial supporters once the BERG informed these supporters that they were having contact with the PRCA and find-

ing themselves in agreement with our stand for an *unconditional* covenant, theology in line with Bavinck and H. Hoeksema. These supporters were affiliated with the Liberated Churches in the Netherlands. For their contact with us and their stand on this covenantal view they paid a heavy price. Their little seminary was nearly destroyed. With assistance by men from the PRC and the help of our Faith congregation (Jenison, MI), that little seminary survived and continues its good, confessionally sound work today.

Suffice it to say at this point, that, despite some positions of a practical nature that have needed to be thoroughly discussed and assessed before we could talk about establishing formal relations, the BERG is committed to the doctrines of faith and life as set forth by the Heidelberg Catechism. It is their primary creed, and as our church visitors' "question manual" indicates, when that confession is faithfully maintained and explained, there is "no doctrine [biblical, Reformed, and necessary for faith and life] left untreated" (Q. 2). Though the BERG has not formally subscribed to the Canons of Dordt nor the Belgic Confession, the officebearers inform us that they are in fundamental agreement with the Calvinism (doctrines of sovereign grace) set forth in the Canons as well as what is confessed in the Belgic Confession.

This past year two of our ministers, Revs. C. Griess and C. Spronk traveled to Germany. Elder Peter VanDerSchaaf, with his excellent command of German, accompanied them. The men of the BERG strongly desire some kind of formal relationship with the PRCA. Their smallness, their isolation, and their finding fundamental agreement only with the PRCA in areas of the doctrines of grace and the antithetical life point them in our direction. As they put it, they really would not feel at home with anyone else in the whole ecclesiastical world at this point. Discussion with our delegation centered on the possibility of a formal relationship in the future, and what more needed or could be done.

Our delegates preached for the BERG (via a translator) and gave some speeches. They also traveled some 175 miles north to Osnabruck to meet with members and officebearers of another small, developing Reformed congregation, called the BEG (*Bekennende Evangelisch Gemeinde—The Confessing Protestant Congregation*). The BERG and the BEG, with its young pastor who studied under Dr. Klautke, have been working towards a formal relationship. The BERG introduced the PRC to the BEG about two years ago, with a delegation visiting them at that time. For both delegations interesting discussions and wonderful fellowship took place during their few days in Osnabruck.

Following the recent visit, one of their elders wrote

a Christmas letter to a number of us in the States, in which he stated:

As I also mentioned during your stay [as representatives of the PRCA], it was so encouraging to talk with you, to learn about your congregations, to see how the Lord has blessed the way you and your [denomination] is following HIM. There were a lot of good conversations and advice; you are on an exemplary way. Together with my fellow elders, Reinhard and Stefan, and also with [Pastor] Ludwig, we came to this same assessment.

In this respect we are also blessed in our congregation that we as elders lead by agreement [with each other]. However, as you may have realized, we are still on a journey towards a clear Reformed church in terms that all members share this view 100%. Each of our members has a different background and none of them comes from a Reformed tradition. There are a lot of new [teachings] for each of them. Nevertheless, I think, we are getting there, but it takes time.

Take note of the brother's sincere appreciation and joy for contact with knowledgeable men of like-minded faith.

And how important the brother's points are for our contact with such officebearers and the congregations. Take note! They see where we are at as churches, whose Reformed maturity they covet and desire to emulate. But they do not have the advantage of centuries of Reformed pedigree and background. They are laboring with members being newly introduced to the Reformed distinctives, so much new to digest. Patience must be practiced. They, as wise-hearted elders, know that. These believers have been entrusted to their care to bring along the way. The brother's comments come as a plea for us to understand that and not to dismiss them.

The question is, do we understand that? Do we?

The CC is convinced the Lord of His church has put these congregations and saints in Germany in our path for a reason. And woe unto us if we do not put at their disposal every resource with which the Lord has so abundantly blessed us. I say again, what has been entrusted to us has been given not simply for ourselves, but for the benefit of Christ's church universal.

For some reason the history and incident of II Kings 7:8, 9 comes to mind. Read it for profit at your convenience.

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We also remain in contact with a small denomination in Namibia that recently approved the addition of a congregation in South Africa. It was a contact initiated some eight years ago. Since then a number of visits have been made by our delegations to explore what we have in common and what differences there are. The original band of five small churches in Namibia broke



with the Reformed Church of South Africa (GKSA), a denomination that has sister relations with the CRC and reflects the apostasy of the CRC in many ways.

It has been three years since a delegation from our churches has visited southwest Africa to explore the feasibility of some formal relationship with those churches. Now that the careful work of adding a new congregation to their denomination has been completed, those churches have extended an invitation to send a delegation to discuss further the possibility of closer, formal relations. Synod 2019 was so informed and approved our sending a delegation. Plans are for the delegation to visit in late August, early September of this year.

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Of growing interest has been recent contact taking place in South Korea. It is a contact that was initiated by three ministers of Presbyterian Churches in South Korea who enrolled in Calvin Seminary to obtain doctorates, but who with their families worshiped in our churches while pursuing their studies, one in First (GR), the others, who followed, in Southeast. One of the men, Dr. Sungho Lee, is a professor in the Kosin Presbyterian Theological Seminary of South Korea. The result of these men coming to know our preaching, doctrine, and the life of our members was an invitation to send a delegation of the PRC to South Korea. This occurred in 2017. Prof. R. Cammenga and Rev. W. Langerak gave addresses at a conference marking the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Canons of Dordt, and then spent a week presenting to various groups who the PRCA is and what we maintain theologically.

The result of that visit is another invitation by these ministers (this time under the auspices of the seminary where Dr. Lee teaches) for our men to return, requesting that Prof. Cammenga give his lectures on John Calvin and his *Institutes* (in essence, the Interim course the professor has taught at our seminary). They also have an invitation to speak at the Hapdong Theological Seminary of Korea (also Presbyterian). Opportunities will be given (insisted upon!) to address other church groups associated with these ministers as well.

Let no one imagine the delegates will simply be on a sight-seeing tour, though sites will be visited. They will return to the States spent, but convinced, as they were last visit, that it was time and energy well spent.

Because these are invitations prompted by individual ministers and not from a denomination, this work is not the official work of the CC, though we stay informed. It involves Councils (first Southeast and now Trinity PRC) expressing a willingness to authorize their minister to visit South Korea to pursue these contacts. The Theological School Committee gave its permission to Prof.

Cammenga to participate in the contact and visit South Korea along with Rev. W. Langerak in mid-July.

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Another contact that has recently appeared on our radar is contact with Presbyterian churches in Mexico. Again, this is not a contact with which the CC is directly involved. But it is a significant contact, about which we stay informed and should be of greatest interest to our members. It is a contact being supervised and nurtured by First Church (GR), initiated by a member who recently joined their congregation, a man who grew up in a Presbyterian congregation in Mexico City, Doner Bartolon, and who is currently enrolled in our seminary.

Visits by Revs. C. Griess, R. Kley, and Prof. Cammenga have already taken place the past two years, and another is scheduled for sometime this summer. The invitations have come from ministers and their elders who were informed about us by brother Bartolon, and who desired to learn more about us. At the center of the visits has been a seminary named John Calvin Theological Seminary, located in Mexico City. It is a seminary supported by the Independent Presbyterian Church. The ministers with whom our men are having contact have concerns about errors that threaten its long-standing Calvinist heritage. An error looming large is “Reformationalism.” It is something we would label as “neo-Calvinism,” putting more and more emphasis on Christ’s church addressing social concerns and focusing on social improvements at the expense of the purity of the gospel and the centrality of preaching. The ministers who initiated contact with us do not want their congregations and denominations to be infected with the leaven of such an error.

Along with other topics, our men have been given opportunity to address the error. Adherents of the error have been present at the presentations, as was expected, resulting in much discussion. But, as well, our men have had opportunities to address various congregations, to introduce ourselves as PRC, and also to preach in various locations, in some instances quite a distance from Mexico City. One such contact has been with men within the National Presbyterian Church of Mexico. The reception has been for the most part favorable, and the desire of many, especially of the ministers with whom the contact began, has been to hear from our men again. Hence, the repeated invitations. And reason for remembrance and prayer.

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We would be remiss not to mention on-going contact with Rev. Titus and his congregation in Myanmar, under the auspices of Hope PRC, Walker, or the contact that continues with pastor Paul Raj and his congregation in

Vellore, India, under the auspices of Georgetown PRC.

Contact of our churches with Rev. Titus and the congregation in Myanmar has been long standing. The stalwart faithfulness of Rev. Titus to Reformed truth and gospel is well known to many of us. Our Hope congregation continues to send delegations to Myanmar on a regular basis in the interests of doctrinal and church political instruction. The small congregation continues to make a faithful witness and stay in contact with many pastors scattered throughout Myanmar.

Georgetown continues to minister as it can to the needs of Paul Raj and his congregation in south India, with its orphanage. Regular visits have been made over the years by various of our preachers and members to teach and encourage. Rev. Haak, along with others, have just returned from a visit to Vellore, bringing the gospel and traveling with Pastor Paul Raj to the various contacts he has in the Vellore area. Rev. W. Bruinsma, with some accompanying him, is also just completing a visit. A faithful witness continues to be made in that part of India and the church of Christ continues to be gathered.

The CC stays informed about these labors and approves financial assistance from funds designated by our synod for these labors. So, though we as a com-

mittee representing our denomination do not in every instance have a formal contact with some of these ‘contacts,’ congregations do keep us informed of their work, and they do receive some denominational assistance. It can be said these are groups and churches in contact with our churches, one and all.

So many contacts across the face of the globe laid across our path. And laid by whom? Churches and groups newer to the Reformed, biblical faith than our own churches, churches filled with believers. Who do you suppose is speaking to us through them? And what do you think He expects from us with our rich heritage, which is nothing else than His heritage entrusted to our care? For use for whom? Those bought with the same precious blood that we and ours have been, and indwelt by the same Spirit. All one has to do is talk with these saints to come to the conclusion that this is who and whose they are.

“Lord give us the wisdom to know how to proceed and to be of benefit to Thy body, manifested worldwide,” is our prayer. A church universal upon whom the end of the age has come. Only One has the power and wisdom to direct us in the way we should go.

Have you read II Kings 7:8, 9ff. yet? Please do so.



## Ministering to the saints

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

## The elders' work of oversight (1) Overseeing the congregation's worship

The last two articles in this rubric demonstrated from Scripture and the Reformed Confessions that the elders' work has three basic aspects: rule and oversight, being pastor and shepherd, and teaching. Future articles will develop the aspects of the work at length.

The first of these three, the elders' work of oversight, is itself broad. It includes the oversight of the congregation's worship and congregational life, of the spiritual lives of the members of the congregation, and of all of the officebearers. The first in this list, the elders oversight of the congregation's worship, is the topic of this article.

These articles devoted to the elders' work of oversight have two goals. The first is to encourage faithful elders to diligence in this aspect of their work. The second is to motivate believers to appreciate and to submit to the oversight of our elders. Through faithful elders, laboring diligently in the church of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior Himself oversees and cares for us.

### Warrant

That the elders do and must oversee the congregation's worship has warrant from Scripture, from the Church

Order, from the liturgical forms, and from history. Although no article of the Church Order specifically states this in so many words, the Church Order clearly implies that such is the duty of the elders.<sup>1</sup> First, Article 15 says that “no one shall be permitted to preach or to administer the sacraments in another church without the consent of the consistory of that church,” indicating that the consistory is the body that gives permission to a person to lead the worship services. Second, Article 23 says that the elders are called “to take heed that the ministers...faithfully discharge their office.” The minister’s discharge of his office includes, although it is not limited to, his leading the worship service, preaching, and administration of the sacraments. Third, Articles 56-64 set forth regulations regarding the administration of the sacraments, and Articles 67-70 set forth principles regarding public worship. Although the minister *implements* these principles, the elders must *ensure* that they are implemented.

The “Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons” indicates that the calling of elders is, in part, “to prevent, as much as possible, the sacraments from being profaned,” and “to have regard unto the doctrine...of the ministers of the Word, to the end that all things may be directed to the edification of the church; and that no strange doctrine be taught.”<sup>2</sup> Clearly, this relates to the public worship services.

Scripture also does not set forth this aspect of the elders’ work in so many words and in a particular verse. However, Scripture teaches that the elders must oversee Christ’s church (Acts 20:28, I Pet. 5:1-3). These verses undergird the elders’ calling to watch over the spiritual lives of every member of the flock, but they also undergird their calling to oversee the worship of the church. It is in the worship of the church that the entire flock comes together to be fed.

In addition, Scripture gives principles regarding the proper worship of the church. In I Corinthians 11-14 the Holy Spirit instructs us regarding proper partaking

of the Lord’s Supper and proper conduct in the worship services. The passage ends with the injunction: “Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40). Also I Timothy 2—in fact, much of the epistle—regards how the church must conduct itself in worship, and how the minister is to conduct himself in the church. The address in I Corinthians is to the church as a whole, and in I Timothy is to the pastor of the church. The verses do not state in so many words that the elders are to ensure obedience and to oversee the worship services. However, this idea is implied. The elders are the body of men whom God calls to ensure that all things in the church are done decently and in order.

Such oversight of the worship was historically understood to be the calling of the elders. The work of the elders of the cities in Old Testament Israel was in part to ensure that the people kept the law of God. A significant part of this law regards worship. And one role of the elders in the synagogues was to oversee the worship, to ensure that all was done rightly and in order.<sup>3</sup>

### Necessity

The church of Christ needs her elders to carry out this oversight. One reason for this is that God’s will and Word govern our worship. If the church’s worship

were merely a matter of the church coming together to praise God in some vague and undetermined way, and if God were pleased with such worship, the calling of the elders in this regard would be less necessary. But God specifies how the church of Christ is to worship Him.

Principally He does so in the second commandment. In addition, many Old Testament laws found in Exodus and Leviticus taught

Israel how rightly to worship God. In Christ’s death and resurrection these ceremonial laws have been abolished, but the principle of holy worship remains in the New Testament. Christ’s church is to worship God in the beauty of holiness (Ps. 29:2; 96:9), in fear and reverence, bowing to Him (Ps. 95:6; 99:5, 9; 132:7), and in spirit and in truth (John 4:24, Phil. 3:3).

That God has revealed how He is to be worshiped is

**In addition, the elders must oversee worship because our sinful natures, against which we fight daily, are quick to pervert the right worship of God. Illustrations abound. In the Old Testament, Aaron made a golden calf and Jereboam instituted the worship of golden calves. The Pharisaical form of worship ignored the depth of one’s sins and emphasized a self-righteousness. The church in Corinth abused worship.**

1 All the following quotes are from “Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches,” in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 378-404.

2 “Form for Ordination of Elders and Deacons,” in *The Confessions and the Church Order*, 290.

3 See “The History of the Office of Elder (2) During and After the Babylonian Captivity,” in *Standard Bearer* (May 1, 2012), 354-55.

itself good reason for the elders to take the oversight of worship. The law of God must be upheld!

In addition, the elders must oversee worship because our sinful natures, against which we fight daily, are quick to pervert the right worship of God. Illustrations abound. In the Old Testament, Aaron made a golden calf and Jereboam instituted the worship of golden calves. The Pharisaical form of worship ignored the depth of one's sins and emphasized a self-righteousness. The church in Corinth abused worship. The church's worship degenerated soon after the death of the apostles and the generation following them, and reached a new low in the Middle Ages. What the Reformation restored to the churches—a right worship, in addition to other aspects of a lost heritage—is constantly in danger of being lost again.

The elders must oversee the church's worship. Sinners will pattern our worship according to God's will, and will aim our worship to His glory, only if Christ

works in and through us. He uses the elders as means to that end.

### **Manner**

Specifically, how do the elders carry out this aspect of their work? Certainly, their oversight of the worship must not just be a custom or habit. That the elders enter and leave the worship service as a body, perhaps sit together as a body, shake the minister's hand after the service, and have their monthly consistory meetings, all signify that they have the oversight of the worship service. But none of these actions in themselves is *oversight*. Proper oversight involves asking appropriate questions, making correct evaluations, and taking appropriate steps to ensure that the worship service is pleasing to God. Examples are supplied, but these are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

#### *Asking appropriate questions*

1. What do Church Order Articles 55-69 require regarding public worship? Why do they require what they do? Are these requirements being faithfully implemented in our congregation's worship?
2. What are the various elements that God requires in the worship service? Why does He require these; what is their specific purpose or function in the worship service? Are these being faithfully implemented in our congregation's worship?
3. Does the pastor lead the worship in a way that edifies the congregation and tends to God's glory? (A later article will be devoted to the oversight of the preaching.)
4. Are the members of the congregation present for the worship services as often as they can be? Do they understand the importance and necessity of worship? And do they worship God with a sincere heart?

#### *Making evaluations*

To answer the above questions, particularly the last question in each category, is to make evaluations. Each elder must face these questions himself, but the final evaluation is that of the consistory, that is, of the elders as a body. The entire consistory determines whether the worship of the congregation is pleasing to God. The entire consistory determines whether the worship service includes all that God requires, and excludes everything He does not require. And the entire consistory evaluates whether the members of the congregation, as best the consistory can observe, are worshiping God with a sincere heart.

To say "as best the consistory can observe" is to recognize that no individual elder, and no consistory as a body, knows the heart and secret motives of any particular individual. The consistory makes the evaluations that it does on the basis of its knowledge of the people of God, and on the basis of outward criteria.

#### *Taking appropriate steps*

If the elders' evaluation indicates that the church does not limit herself in worship to the use of those elements that God commanded, or that the demeanor and attitude of the members regarding worship is not proper, or that the minister is not leading the worship in an edifying way, the elders must take appropriate steps to address the problem. The purpose of this article is not to say what those steps are; it is to remind the elders that they must not ignore the problem but must address it.

Elders, take the oversight of the worship of the congregation! For the good of the church and the glory of God! Because this worship centers in the preaching and in the administration of the sacraments, the next article will give particular attention to the elders oversight of the preaching and sacraments.





## News from our churches

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

### Trivia question

This question was sent in by a reader. It goes back a ways, perhaps to the late 1930s or early 1940s. It is trivia, but it is also a riddle. See what you can do with it! What congregation in our denomination once made a trio consisting of three “non-persons?” A hint about the congregation: it is found in a State of the U.S. where no other PRC churches are found. And a hint about the trio: You need to put your knowledge of the Dutch language to use. If you translate the English version of the trio’s last names into Dutch you have found the answer. Answer later in this column.

### Minister activities

At the time of this printing Rev. G. Eriks was considering the call from Cornerstone PRC. Rev. Erik Guichelaar had declined the call from Kalamazoo, MI PRC. Kalamazoo’s new trio was Rev. R. Barnhill, Rev. J. Engelsma, and Rev. C. Spronk. On January 26, Rev. Barnhill received this call.

Rev. R. Van Overloop was led by God to decline the call from the newly established Unity PRC in Michigan. God led Rev. H. Bleyenbergh, pastor at Providence PRC in Hudsonville, MI to accept the call extended to him from Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, AB, Canada. The answers to these calls always cause disappointment for some and put smiles on the faces of others. May God grant peace to all in the clear indication of His will.

### Congregational activities

The First PRC of Edmonton, AB issued a call to all its congregation’s painters! The task was to paint the church basement, in anticipation of laying new carpet in the main room and vinyl plank in the kitchen and bathrooms. Mudding, sanding, and removing baseboards was to begin on January 16 and 17 at 7

P.M. Painting was to begin on Monday, January 20 and continue throughout the week, with morning and afternoon shifts available. All were encouraged to bring their own painting items, with babysitting provided. Hopefully all went as planned and that good fellowship was enjoyed by the artists who contributed!

### Young peoples’ activities

The new Unity PRC announced that their young people’s first fundraiser for the 2020 Convention would be a Chili Cook-Off Dinner with a Service Auction on Friday, January 31, 2020 at Adams Christian School. A dinner of chili, hot dogs, chips, and desserts was served from 6-7:30 P.M. followed by an auction of service work volunteered by the young people. They were looking for the best chili cook in the congregation! Sounds like a delicious way to spend a cool winter evening, with good food and opportunity to contribute to a worthy cause!

### Trivia answer

The congregation that made the trio is found yet today in Edgerton, MN. The three ministers were De Wolf (the wolf), Vis (fish), and Vos (fox). Thanks to Prof. Herman Hanko for supplying this trivia question. It was good to hear from him again! Prof. Hanko was the first pastor I remember in Doon as a young boy. At his age he still types a delightful email containing stories of his days in Doon before moving on to our seminary. Prof. Decker followed on his heels, another young man I enjoy greeting from time to time. More trivia next time. Readers, feel free to send your questions!

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

## Church profile—Hope PRC of Walker, MI

*Thanks to Mr. Cal Kalsbeek for putting this information together for us.*

The beginning of Hope’s existence as a congregation goes back to 1916. If it hadn’t been for a 1914 decision

of the Michigan State Highway Department, Hope might never have come into existence. At that time the farmers located in the hook-like bend in the Grand River had access to the Christian Reformed Church across the river only by means of the state-maintained

ferry. The state's decision to abandon the ferry in 1914 left the believers in the bend with two options, travel long distances by means of horse-drawn carriages or establish a church in the river's bend. They chose the latter, and began by contacting the CRC Home Missionary, John R. Brink. Under his faithful care they began worshiping in the home (and sometimes under the big tree in the front yard) of Mr. Richard Newhouse where seven families organized as Hope Christian Reformed Church in 1916.

After limping along for five and a half years without a pastor of their own (mostly because they did not feel they could afford one), the congregation decided to call a minister. Their second call was extended to the then Candidate George M. Ophoff who accepted the call, was examined by Classis, and installed as pastor of Hope Christian Reformed Church in January of 1922. Three years later, in January of 1925, Rev. Ophoff was still pastor of Hope, but not of Hope CRC. The CRC Classis deposed Rev. Ophoff and his consistory for refusing to declare "...unequivocally whether he is in full agreement, yes or no, with the three points of the synod of Kalamazoo." Consequently, those faithful to the truth of particular grace lost their church building and parsonage (plus the outhouse), nearly half of their members, and even the \$500.00 the congregation had managed to accumulate. After their deposition, they joined with the churches of Rev. H. Hoeksema and Rev. H. Danhof and became part of the Protestant Christian Reformed Churches. Upon the rejection of their appeal to the CRC Synod of 1926, they adopted the name Hope PRC.

But Hope's continuation as a congregation hung in the balance due to the lack of membership. During this time, they even considered the possibility of consolidation with Hudsonville PRC. In August of 1926 by the narrowest of margins (one vote), they decided to continue as a congregation. The following years (1926-1945) led to very little growth with the number of families ranging between 7 and 17. Two building projects turned that around: one by the State of Michigan and the other by the members of Hope. First, in God's providence the

same Michigan State Highway Department that served the beginning of Hope by its discontinuation of the Ferry across the Grand River, now contributed to Hope's survival by constructing the Wilson Avenue Bridge in the early 1930s; thus providing ready access to Hope from people living in the Grandville/Jenison area. Second, Hope's members recognized the need for their own Christian school to best honor the vows they took at the baptism of their children. Consequently, they built Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School and opened its doors to students in 1947. The effect this had on Hope Church's growth is evident from the statistics: 17 families in 1945 to 40 families in 1953.

The 1953 split in the Protestant Reformed Churches resulted in the loss of 15 families. However, a significant amount of growth in subsequent years led to the formation of three daughter congregations: Faith in 1973, Grandville in 1983, and Grace in 1995. In addition to experiencing the joys of giving birth to these congregations was God's blessing in calling eight of Hope's sons to serve in the Gospel ministry: Prof. David Engelsma, Rev. Kenneth Koole, Rev. Ronald Hanko, Prof. Russell Dykstra, Prof. Douglas Kuiper, Rev. William Langerak, Rev. Nathan Langerak, and Rev. Joshua Engelsma.

Further, over the years the Lord has given Hope the privilege of serving in many areas of gospel outreach. In addition to the continuous activity of Hope's Reformed Witness Committee, Hope served as the calling church of denominational labors in Houston, Texas (Rev. R. Harbach, 1974-1977), Victoria, British Columbia (Rev. Harbach, 1977-1979), Lansing, Michigan (Rev. Houck, 1979-1982), Singapore (Rev. J. Kortering, 1992-2002



and Rev. A. denHartog, 2002-2005), and Myanmar (Rev. Titus, 2006-present).

Space limitations (we have already exceeded the 700 words graciously allotted by our *SB* news editor) require that we here conclude our profile of Hope PRC. For the interested reader the complete history of Hope is recorded in the book *A Spiritual House Preserved: A Cen-*

*tury in the River's Bend*, (available at [rfpa.org](http://rfpa.org)) which includes a detailed history, profiles of the twelve pastors that have faithfully served us, our busy society life, consistory minutes of interest, oral history accounts, and much more.

*From the News Editor: Keep those profiles coming!*

## Announcements

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Loveland PRC, Loveland, Colorado express Christian sympathy to Ray and Joy Schwarz and their daughters, Joe and Audra Ophoff and their children, Luke and Erin Griess and their children, and Jake and Jessica Schwarz in the death of their mother, grandmother and great-grandmother, **Adriana Ophoff**. "Then they that feared the LORD spoke often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him" (Malachi 3:16-17).

Rev. Steven Key, President  
Eric Solanyk, Clerk

### Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Peace PRC on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Peace's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

### Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2020-2021 academic year should make application at the March 19, 2020 meeting of the Theological School Committee.

A testimonial from the prospective student's Consistory that he is a member in full communion, sound in faith, and upright in walk, and exhibits the qualities and personality necessary for a gospel minister; a certificate of health from a reputable physician; and a college transcript must accompany the application. Before entering the seminary, all students must have earned a bachelor's degree and met all of the course requirements for entrance to the seminary. These entrance requirements are listed in the seminary catalog available from the school or on the Seminary's website ([prcts.org](http://prcts.org)).

All applicants must appear before the Theological School Committee for interview before admission is granted. In the event that a student cannot appear at the March 19 meeting, notification of this fact, along with a suggested interview date, must be given to the secretary of the Theological School Committee before this meeting.

All correspondence should be directed to the  
Theological School Committee  
4949 Ivanrest Avenue SW  
Wyoming, MI 49418

Bob Drnek,  
Secretary

### Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2020-2021 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1-5 minus grade 4. Please contact Gord Tolsma at [gr.tolsma@gmail.com](mailto:gr.tolsma@gmail.com) / 780-777-5780.

### Teacher needed

Hope PR Christian School (Walker, MI) is accepting applications for a full-time elementary teacher, a full-time junior high teacher, and a part-time choir director. If interested, please contact administrator Ron Koole ([rkoole@hopeprschool.org](mailto:rkoole@hopeprschool.org) 616-453-9717) or Education Committee Chairman Tim Bomers ([tim.bomers@speedwrench.com](mailto:tim.bomers@speedwrench.com) 616-262-2384).

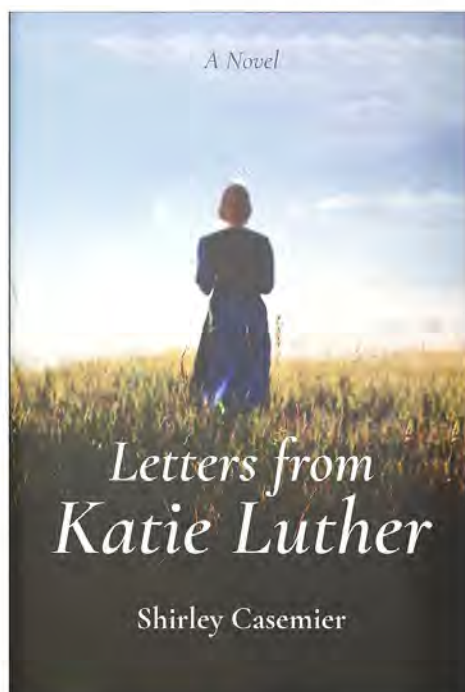


## Announcements continued

# 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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