

The Standard Bearer

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Hope: Jehovah's anchor of the soul

Rev. Dennis Lee

Lament for schism

Prof. Barrett Gritters

Around the world: Church and state

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Set free to serve

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Watch your mouth!

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Editorial office

Prof. Russell Dykstra
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
dykstra@prca.org

Business office

Mr. Alex Kalsbeek
1894 Georgetown Center Dr
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
alexkalsbeek@rfpa.org

Church news editor

Mr. Perry Van Egdom
2324 Fir Ave
Doon, IA 51235
vanegdoms@gmail.com

United Kingdom office

c/o Mrs. Alison Graham
27 Woodside Road
Ballymena, BT42 4HX
Northern Ireland
alisongraham2006@hotmail.co.uk

Contents

Meditation

- 243 Hope: Jehovah's anchor of the soul
Rev. Dennis Lee

Editor's note

Editorial

- 245 Lament for schism
Prof. Barrett Gritters

All around us

- 248 Around the world: Church and state
Rev. David Noorman

Pillar and ground of truth

- 250 The Council of Constantinople (AD 381)
Canons two and three
Prof. Douglas Kuiper

A word fitly spoken

- 251 Cross
Rev. Joseph Holstege

When thou sittest in thine house

- 253 Set free to serve
Mrs. Margaret Laning

Strength of youth

- 255 Watch your mouth! (1)
Rev. Joshua Engelsma

All Thy works shall praise Thee

- 258 Information flow—The Creator's signature
Dr. Nathan Lanning

Pertaining to the churches in common... PR Theological School

- 259 News from the seminary
Prof. Ronald Cammenga

News from our churches

- 263 Church profile—Faith PRC, Jenison, MI
Mr. Perry Van Egdom



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Meditation

Rev. Dennis Lee, pastor of Bethel Protestant Reformed Church in Roselle, Illinois

Hope: Jehovah's anchor of the soul

Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

Hebrews 6:19-20

Are you struggling amid the storms of life—storms and trials that are so strong and fiery that they cause deep distress and threaten to overwhelm your sinking soul? Such strong storms and fiery trials are not “strange” for the pilgrim on his earthly sojourn (cf. I Pet. 4:12). When fellow pilgrim and inspired writer of Hebrews speaks of “an anchor for the soul,” he directs our attention to God’s gracious solution and way for us to deal with our struggles in those storms and trials. He does that by bringing up the figure of a ship and its anchor.

Ships are vessels for travel on the seas and oceans. When they are on a voyage, they have a destination and are traveling towards it. And while on their travels, they encounter challenges and dangers that threaten their safe arrival at a harbor.

This earthly reality pictures well our spiritual reality as pilgrims. Like earthly ships that are on a voyage, we are like ships journeying on the storm-tossed sea of life. Like earthly ships that have a destination, we have a destination—heaven! And along our way to heaven, we encounter dangers that distress us and would threaten our safe arrival in heaven.

This comparison between earthly ships and our spiritual life as pilgrims is brought to a pointed focus by way of the anchor. For we have much need of an anchor for our souls! What do earthly anchors do for ships? Going down from the ship into the sea, they keep the ship from being dashed by the waves that crash near the shore. They do so by virtue of what they are. An anchor is a very heavy piece of metal (commonly iron) with many hooks. These hooks, together with the heavy weight of the anchor, serve to secure a ship at its location, preventing it from drifting into dangerous waters. Thus, anchors guarantee the ship’s safety by

keeping it secure. Similarly, Jehovah’s anchor for the soul gives us safety and security!

But unlike the earthly anchor, Jehovah’s anchor for the soul is different in two important ways. Unlike earthly anchors that go *down* into the sea, Jehovah’s anchor for our souls goes *up* into heaven! And unlike earthly anchors that cannot be seen once they go into the sea, Jehovah’s anchor for our souls is that “which entereth into that within the veil.” It opens up the way for us to enter into the glory of heaven one day, and presently enables us to behold heaven and our ascended Savior and Christ by a true and living faith! What great comfort and assurance this brings to our souls when we are in distress and real danger! Dear reader, have you not experienced this? And was not this comfort and assurance experienced by dying Stephen when he beheld his ascended Savior at God’s right hand (cf. Acts 7:55)?

For this anchor is “both sure and steadfast” (v. 19). We understand this when we call to mind what this anchor is. Hope is the anchor of the soul! To be sure, this hope is not the ‘hope’ of the world. When we ‘hope’ for something with this earthly ‘hope,’ we long and yearn for it, but there is no certainty that we will obtain it. But the hope that the inspired writer speaks of, which is true, heavenly hope, is different. Unlike the hope of this world, Christian hope has nothing to do with this world; for it is the longing for our complete glorification in heaven itself. Unlike the hope of this world, our hope is certain. And unlike the hope of this world, our hope is born of the Spirit of God in our hearts.

So, why is this hope “both sure and steadfast”? We give three reasons.

First, hope is sure and steadfast because its ground and foundation is the already accomplished work of Jesus Christ our Savior: the work of His cross! Nothing can change this wonderful, historical accomplishment of Jesus for us! This is why the apostle Paul waxes so confident in the fact that nothing—absolutely nothing—will separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus (cf. Rom. 8:35-39)!

Second, hope is sure and steadfast because its object

is Jesus (v. 20). For let us not forget that Jesus means “Jehovah salvation” and that He is so named because “he shall save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). He will save! He will save us from our sins! He will because God who promised it is all faithful and all powerful to keep His promises! We shall be saved by Jesus! “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:8).

Third, our hope is sure and steadfast because of its guaranteed end and victory. In Jesus Christ, we believers are *absolutely* safe and secure! This wonderful truth comes out especially from the fact that Jesus is our “forerunner” (v. 20). This is a special word in the original, being used only here in the Bible and being rich in meaning. The word may be applied as a ship-ping term, used for a special ship that goes ahead of a larger ship. When there was a sandbar and the tide or water-level was too low for a large ship to dock in the harbor, a small ship—called a “forerunner”—would take the anchor of that large ship and go towards the harbor. When it arrived at the harbor, it would—on behalf of the large ship—drop its anchor. In so doing, this “forerunner” ship assured the large ship of its safety. For when the tide and water-level were high enough, the large ship would approach the harbor to dock in its final place and position in safety. Thus, this forerunner ship served as a *pledge* for that larger ship’s place and safety in the harbor. In a similar way, our Lord’s once-for-all entrance into heaven serves as a *pledge* for all believers of our blessed end and safe arrival in heaven. By His blessed death on the cross, Jesus Christ our Forerunner has rent the veil of the temple, destroyed the barrier of sin for us, and entered into the real holy of holies, even heaven, for us! He is our pledge in heaven!

It is this sure and steadfast hope of our eternal glorification and safe arrival in heaven that gives us the peace, confidence, and joy we need as we journey through life with all its fierce storms. It does so in three ways.

First, this hope causes us to look *up*. It causes us to look up in the midst of all our sorrows and trials. Dear reader, are you in distress? Are your troubles overwhelming you? What are you looking at and allowing your attention to be fixed on? When in the midst of trial and trouble, we all are inclined to look down and be discouraged, or to look horizontally and focus only on our problems. Hope causes us to gaze in the right direction—not down, but *up*! Up—to where our eyes of faith are called to be fixed—heaven! Up—towards heaven where our ascended Savior and King sits and reigns at God’s

right hand! Up—where Christ and all the unspeakable joys and glories of our salvation are found, which will be ours in fullness and perfection one day!

Second, hope lifts *us* up! It lifts up our drooping and sinking spirits when we feel down in the midst of earthly storms and trials. Are you feeling distressed and downcast by your earthly circumstances? Be lifted up by looking up towards heaven and beholding your glorious Savior and all the joyous glories that are surely yours through Him!

Therefore, third and finally, after we have beheld and been assured of heaven, hope *calms* and *stills* our turbulent, restless souls amid the storms of life. Those storms may be all around us and may have completely engulfed us—nationally, ecclesiastically, and personally. They may be raging ever so fiercely and very really threaten to overwhelm us. But he who has the grace of Jehovah’s anchor operating in his heart experiences inexplicable peace, unshakable confidence, and unspeakable joy in the midst of them all. For he knows that no matter how numerous and fierce those storms are, the joys and glories of heaven are safely his because of Christ Jesus!

This wonderful effect of hope calming us and stilling the storms raging within our souls is much like what the psalmist triumphantly sings of in Psalm 46 when he looked up and beheld his God. This is beautifully versified in Psalter 126, stanzas 1 and 5.

God is our refuge and our strength,
Our ever present aid,
And, therefore, though the earth remove,
We will not be afraid;
Though hills amidst the seas be cast,
Though foaming waters roar,
Yea, though the mighty billows shake
The mountains on the shore.

Be still and know that I am God,
O’er all exalted high;
The subject nations of the earth
My Name shall magnify.
The Lord of Hosts is *on our side,*
Our safety to secure;
The God of Jacob is *for us*
A refuge strong and sure.

Such is the blessedness of hope that so efficaciously calms and stills our souls in the midst of our present distresses and storms of life. What a blessed anchor of the soul Jehovah our faithful covenant Father has provided for all His dear children! Let us, in thankfulness and by faith, use it. Let us so rely upon this anchor and find much-sought relief and comfort for our souls in time of need.

Editor's notes

The 'editorial' in this issue is not what had been planned. Unexpected circumstances sometimes require change of plans. A schism in the church is such a circumstance. In place of editorial is lament. We are familiar with the book of Lamentations. Many psalms are laments also. These expressions of grief are models for the people of God, proper expressions of sorrow in times of trouble.

Laments often follow a pattern. Study the Psalms of lament to see that pattern. Readers will also recognize the biblical and confessional language used to form this lament. The church has her vocabulary and expressions, formed largely by Scripture, her confessions, and her

songbook. 'Chapter and verse' are sometimes given, but not in every instance so as not to distract from the prayer. Simple numbers designate songs from the Psalter.

Please pray the prayer and make the lament. Godly laments confess fault and plead mercy. We express the prayer that confessing faults, first to God, and then one to another—all in the name of Christ—God will bless with *healing* (James 5:16). The fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

Not all readers of the magazine are members of the PRCA. We ask you, who are our friends, to make this prayer with us, and for us.



Editorial

Prof. Barrett Gritters, professor of Practical Theology in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

Lament for schism

How does the PRC grieve, Father!

For almost 100 years Thy grace and mercy have kept these churches. In great weakness, but in the unity of the truth and the bond of peace, we have labored in the name of Jesus Christ.

Now, we sit in distress. Distress deeper than most of us have known before.

Brothers and sisters have gone out from us. Lovers have departed. Friendships are wounded. Families broken. Churches damaged. What has been so precious to us and which we have taken too for granted—unity and fellowship in the truth of our Lord Jesus—has been fractured.

When oft we trod the hallowed way
To Zion, praising God on high
With throngs who kept the holy day. (114)

How can we express the grief, Lord? In the night our weeping is sore. Sleep flees from us. Startled awake in the night watches, we wet our beds with tears. "My son!" "My sister!" "My parents!" "Our congregation!" In the daytime, tears run down our cheeks. How can we work? Our sighs are many, our hearts faint.

Bitter tears of lamentation
Are my food by night and day;
In my deep humiliation... (416)

Our burden is heavy. Our way is crooked. The valley is death's shadow. Adversity is upon us. Mourning and lamentation are our lot as they have not been for many years, even generations.

O why art Thou hiding the light of Thy face,
Forgetting our burden of grief and disgrace?
Our soul is bowed down, yea, we cleave to the dust... (123)

Our lament is for Thy church, Lord, and Thy name in the church. Some of our sorrows are for the bonds that are earthly—for our families. We weep for our kinsmen according to the flesh. Our heart's desire and prayer to Thee, O God, is that they might be saved, preserved, restored, for the sake of Thy name in the church. Our sorrow and grief arise out of our love for Christ, and for the members of His body and bride. For His name and works. We weep for the hurt to Thy Beloved.

O Zion fair, God's holy hill,
Wherein our God delights to dwell,
Let my right hand forget her skill
If I forget to love thee well.
If I do not remember thee,
Then let our tongues from utterance cease,
If any earthly joy to me
Be dear as Zion's joy and peace. (379)

This burden is laid upon us from *Thy* hand. Enable us to confess, O good God, that affliction and grief come from heaven. *Thou* hast made our way crooked; how can we make it straight? Ours is a day of adversity according to *Thy* sovereign good pleasure. *Thou* hast caused grief. *Thou* hast increased our mourning.

For sin. For *our* sin. And let it never be, Father, that first we turn our thoughts to the faults of others. Forbid it that we consider ourselves anything other than chief of sinners. We deserve the affliction. Thus, in our grieving cry we do not look *out*—at men and their hands; but *up*—at *Thy* hand. And into *Thy* face. We see the frown of *Thy* countenance. We are humbled.

Not deeply enough.

Our transgressions we confess
Grief and guilt our souls oppress.
We have sinned against *Thy* grace
And provoked Thee to *Thy* face.
We confess *Thy* judgment just.
Speechless... . (140)

O LORD, we have heard thy speech, and are afraid: O LORD, revive thy work in the midst of the years, in the midst of the years make known; in wrath remember mercy (Hab. 3:2).

Heavy is our tribulation,
Sore our punishment has been;
Broken by *Thy* indignation,
We are troubled by our sin.

With our burden of transgression
Heavy laden, overborne,
Humbled low we make confession,
For our folly now we mourn.

Weak and wounded, we implore Thee...
All our trouble Thou dost know. (102)

How dare we to plead mercy? We know that Thou art a God who delights in mercy. In the multitude of *Thy* mercies, hear.

To God my earnest voice I raise,
To God my voice imploring prays;
Before His face my grief I show
And tell my trouble and my woe. (387)

Lord, hear us when we pray,
While now in trouble's day
We seek *Thy* face.
To answer, Lord, is Thine;
Thou only art divine,
Most bright *Thy* glories shine,
O God of grace. (235)

In the mercies of Jesus Christ *alone*, receive us. In *Him*, forgive. Not because of *one* work we perform or *one* sigh we breathe. To receive good of *Thy* hand, we come with *empty* hands. For favor we beseech Thee. Gracious favor. In Christ alone we plead. What do we *now* have, Lord, that we have not received? And what can we plead that may still come because of *us*? On *Thy* grace we rest our plea.

From our sins O hide *Thy* face,
Blot them out in boundless *grace*. (140)

For what wickedness in us or in the churches is *Thy* hand correcting us? What violations of *Thy* perfect commandments art Thou exposing?

Search us, O God, and know our hearts.

Expose what idolatry exists among us, what other gods we have before Thee. Lay bare any unspiritual, formal worship, in which we drew near with our lips but were far from Thee in heart.

Show us where we have dishonored *Thy* name and *Thy* truth. Ah, the truth, Lord! Have we been presumptuous about the truth? Have we taken for granted that we have the truth? Have we not loved the truth as it is in Jesus Christ? Has our holding of truth been ‘according to godliness’? Have we dishonored His Spirit, the Spirit of truth?

Make us know how we have done our own pleasure on the Sabbath. How have we failed to love Thee with all our heart and mind and soul and strength!

Where has been our pride that disgraces grace? Make that clear so that we repent with deepest repentance.

Try us and know our thoughts.

Lord, we do not love Thee as we ought, but we show that by our lack of love for our neighbor. Have we been publicans who salute only those who salute us, and love only those who love us? Have we cursed those who curse us rather than blessed them? Have we hated those who hate us instead of showing good to them? Have we manifested ourselves to be *Thy* children, Father?

And see if there be any wicked way in us.

We are wealthy, Father, in earthly things. But have we recognized ourselves as only stewards of *Thy* possessions? Have we esteemed earthly wealth greater riches than the reproach of Jesus Christ? We dwell in luxurious houses (Haggai 1), in our summer homes and winter homes, our houses of ivory and gold (Amos 3). Oh, we know, that every creature is good, and nothing to be refused; but have we sanctified these all with *Thy* Word and prayer? Have we run every man to his own

house and possessions, and not sought first to build Thy house? Have we considered our ways and first labored to build Thy house that Thy name be glorified? We have laid up many treasures on earth. Where, Lord, have been our hearts?

And the ninth commandment.... We have taught our children not to bear false witness against any, nor falsify anyone's words. To be no backbiter, nor slanderer. Not to judge, nor join in condemning any man rashly, or unheard. Lies and deceit—proper works of the devil, all of them—we confess bring down Thy heavy wrath. Lord, have we, in judgment and all other dealings, loved the truth, spoken it uprightly and confessed it? Show us where we have failed to defend and promote, as much as we were able, the honor and good character of our neighbor. Show us where we have judged rashly. With what unjust judgments have we judged, or what unfair measures have we meted that now... ?

Our darkness hideth not from thee.

Finally, we confess that inclinations and thoughts (and they are not small) have risen in our hearts contrary to all of Thy commandments. We have not hated all sin with our whole heart and delighted in all righteousness.

Lord, by these commandments may we learn more and more to know our sinful nature, and thus become the more earnest in seeking the remission of sin and righteousness in Christ; likewise, that we constantly endeavor and pray for the grace of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may become more and more conformable to the image of Thy Son.

Grace us with true and deep repentance. Turn us, and we shall be turned. Give us a godly sorrow that works repentance unto salvation. May the unction of Thy Spirit give us indignation at our own sins, zeal to confess them, a heart to humble ourselves. Free us from the sorrow that is worldly, so natural to us.

And when we pray from the cross of Christ....

Hear, thou, in heaven, and forgive.

From the heavens, even from Thy dwelling place, hear our prayer and supplications, and maintain our cause, and forgive Thy people which have sinned against Thee. Hear Thou from Thy dwelling place, even from heaven; and when Thou hearest, forgive (II Chron. 6).

Against us sin has battled hard;
For help we look to Thee and pray. (166)

Rise, help, and redeem us, Thy mercy we trust. (123)

O God, the God that saveth me,
Remove my guilty stains... (144)

In Thy abounding love blot out
All my iniquity;
O wash me wholly from my guilt
And make me clean within,
For my transgressions I confess,
I ever see my sin. (143)

Heal...and restore comforts...to Thy mourners (Is. 57:18)

Then *heal*, we pray, our congregations, consistories, homes, families, husbands, wives, boys, girls, young, old, weak, strong. Heal and restore what we have damaged. In a special way, show the lambs our humbled hearts. Restore comfort to the mourners.

Turn us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old (Lam. 5:21).

Thou who hast sent me many griefs
Wilt yet my soul restore,
And out of sorrow's lowest depths
Wilt bring me forth once more. (192)

Yes, Thy way is in the sea, O Lord. Thy footsteps are not known. Strange and troubling ways. But we know that Thou leddest Thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron...and so will lead us by the hand of Him to whom these pointed (Ps. 77). Then, what appears to these eyes of the flesh to be so wrong will be for our profit.

We shall yet praise Thee....

For the help of Thy countenance, which is the health of ours.

And for Thy faithfulness, O God,
Our praise shall never cease.

Thou Holy One of Israel,
To Thee sweet songs we raise;
The soul Thou hast redeemed from death
Shall give Thee joyful praise. (192)

Their tears of grief, like early rain,
Sweet springs of joy shall fill;
With strength renewed thy journey safe
To Zion's holy hill. (225)

Now, Lord, we know not what we should pray for as we ought. Help our infirmities. Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, make intercession for us with groanings that we cannot utter. O the depth of the riches both of Thy wisdom and knowledge! How unsearchable are Thy judgments, and Thy ways past finding out! But of Thee, and through Thee, and to Thee, be all things: to whom be glory forever.

Amen.



All around us

Rev. David Noorman, pastor of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan

Around the world: Church and state

Canada: Ontario church elders facing large fines

A report from *The Christian Post* gives an example of civil governments using their authority in relation to the church in a seemingly unprecedented way.¹ The circumstances, of course, are unique, but it gives Christians in North America pause when we see the long arm of the law going where it has not gone before, at least not in recent memory.

The example arises out of a violation committed by Trinity Bible Chapel of Waterloo, Ontario by virtue of holding a worship service on December 27, 2020. The particular law violated was the “Reopening Ontario Act” (ROA), which restricts both indoor and outdoor gatherings to ten people. The penalty for violating the ROA is a large fine, \$10,000. All this sounds familiar to us, no matter where we live. Businesses, schools, and churches alike are working to understand and interpret shape-shifting restrictions, and trying to live, work, and worship in accord with the laws established by the powers that be. Violations are happening all around us and fines are rendered accordingly. Trinity Bible Chapel is just one example of many.

By bringing this to the attention of the readers of the *Standard Bearer*, I do not intend to enter into the matter of the legitimacy of the law, or the propriety (or lack thereof) of violating it or abiding by it. Instead, I want to draw attention to the observation of the elders of Trinity Bible Chapel:

Officers from the Waterloo Region Police Service (WRPS) showed up at each of our homes last night at roughly 8 P.M. and gave us each a summons to court. While other pastors in Ontario have faced similar charges under the ROA for holding church services, *to our knowledge this is the first time that each and every member of an entire elders board has been charged for gathering a church to worship.*²

It would not be a surprise if a church, as an institution, were fined for a violation of restrictions like these. That

has occurred with many organizations and businesses for violations of various public-health restrictions. But in this case in Ontario, each of the six individual elders was assessed a \$10,000 fine. Would the same tactic be used for the governing board of a business, so that each receives a fine for similar violations? The elders state, “It appears the WRPS is trying to make an example of us.”³

The reach of the law is getting longer in these last days. As Christians, we have every expectation that as the Day of the Lord comes, the aim of civil government will have a special focus on the church, and not for her benefit. Still, the Word of the Lord will endure to the end: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake” (I Pet. 2:13). Accordingly, the urgency of the biblical exhortation to pray for our earthly rulers is impressed upon us more than ever (I Tim. 2:1-4).

Australia: New law requires priests to break the “seal of confession”

Several articles in a September issue of *Christian News* report on a new law in Australia that requires Roman Catholic priests to break the “seal of confession” to fulfill the mandate to report suspected child abuse.⁴ In the Roman Catholic Church, confession or penance is regarded as a sacrament; the idea of the “seal” of confession is that the priest may not breach the confidentiality of confession under any circumstances.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop in Tasmania said that priests are “unable” to comply with the law. The Archbishop’s reasoning is thoroughly Roman Catholic, as we might expect. The refusal is grounded not in the Word of God, but in the word of the Pope: “the Pope made it very clear there can be no exceptions to the inviolability of the seal of confession.”⁵

Although the law in Australia is new, similar laws are already in place in the United States. All fifty states have laws regarding the mandatory reporting of sus-

¹ <https://www.christianpost.com/news/ontario-church-elders-charged-with-exceeding-worship-limits.html>.

² <https://trinitybiblechapel.ca/press-release>. Emphasis added.

³ <https://trinitybiblechapel.ca/press-release>.

⁴ “Priests ‘cannot comply’ with laws that break seal of confession, Tasmania’s archbishop says.” *Christian News*, September 28, 2020.

⁵ *Christian News*, September 28, 2020.

pected child abuse and neglect, and as of April 2019, twenty-eight states include members of the clergy as mandated reporters.⁶ Reformed ministers and church councils should be aware of these laws and regularly review them.

It can be tempting to question the wisdom of such laws: Is the Roman Catholic Archbishop right when he says, “This will deny priests the opportunity to encourage offenders to report themselves to police”?⁷ In other words, will anyone caught in such a sin dare speak to their pastor when the law requires the pastor to report it to the authorities? I dare not speak to the effect that this law might have on one who has committed the sin of abusing a child. However, I speak with confidence to the chief concern of a repentant child of God who has committed such a sin.

By the grace of God, the penitent sinner’s chief concern, and his minister’s chief concern, is not finding an escape from the temporal punishment of the civil government. His chief concern is that the sin is provoking to God and met with His wrath. His chief interest is in the gospel of Jesus Christ, whereby there is a way of escape from the dreadful punishment of God’s just wrath and liberty from bondage to such sins. The repentant child of God then shows the sincerity of his repentance by his patient submission to the consequences of his sin.

Consider Jesus as pastor to the penitent malefactor who was crucified alongside our Lord. The malefactor pled, “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). He did not ask for relief from the temporal punishment of death by crucifixion, and, although Jesus could have granted just that, He did not. Rather, Jesus assured him in the midst of the malefactor’s just temporal punishment, “Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Jesus assured him of salvation from *God’s* judgment, and encouraged him not with earthly hope, but with the certain hope of paradise. This particular malefactor would enter into that glory through the judgment of his own cross (his death), and on the basis of his Savior’s cross (his righteousness). It is striking to observe that in this case God used temporal judgment to impress upon the penitent malefactor the seriousness of sin and the need for Jehovah’s salvation in Jesus Christ.

Contrary to the Roman Catholic refusal to comply, we ought to comply and acknowledge these laws as good. In essence, the state declares, “The evil of child abuse must be met with judgment. In order for us to fulfill our calling to punish evil-doers, you must report

suspected child abuse.” This is indeed the government’s God-given responsibility. The church would rejoice without hesitation if the same approach were followed with other sins that are not judged and punished but ignored or celebrated in the world. Earthly rulers are ministers of God as much as pastors, elders, and deacons are, though in a different capacity. When they do their work as God has commanded (whether they acknowledge Him or not), they must be watching for evil and be ready to judge and punish with the power God has given them. Our calling is to be subject to them in this God-given responsibility. “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same” (Rom. 13:4).

India: Religious nationalism

The two reports cited above are examples of small but significant ways in which civil government has the capability to touch the lives of God’s people, for good or for evil. In the Western world, we may be thankful that any encroachment upon our religious liberty and outright persecution takes place on a small scale, while also acknowledging more difficult days are ahead. A look around to other nations gives us a glimpse of what may soon come.

One country in which Christians face severe persecution is India, where we have friends both in Vellore (the south) and in Kolkata (the north). India ranks tenth on the “2021 World Watch List” of Open Doors USA, which ranks the fifty countries with the worst persecution of Christians.⁸ The list not only ranks the severity and scope of the persecution, but identifies the sources of persecution. In some cases, the source is “Islamic oppression,” or “organized crime and corruption,” while in other cases the source is directly connected to civil government, such as “dictatorial paranoia” or “religious nationalism.”

Religious nationalism in India shows its teeth toward all religions outside of Hinduism, not just Christianity, but a special report by *The Voice of the Martyrs* draws a clear line from India’s re-elected Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, to recent events of severe persecution of Christians.⁹ Prime Minister Modi is affiliated with a Hindu-nationalist group that believes “all true Indians are Hindus, regardless of what they call themselves

6 <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/manda.pdf>.

7 *Christian News*, September 28, 2020.

8 <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list>.

9 “Radical Hindu Reality in India: Five Christians Murdered in Two Months.” *The Voice of the Martyrs: Special Report*, December 2020.

or believe.”¹⁰ With a government holding to such an ideology, Christians and churches face an uphill battle toward being recognized and protected by the government, and can be treated with official and unofficial hostility for resisting the national movement toward Hinduism. Emboldened by the government, mobs and extremists (and perhaps some “lewd fellows of the baser sort”) carry out this agenda against Christians, first with threats and then with all forms of violence and murder.

10 *The Voice of the Martyrs: Special Report*, December 2020.

While we may be rightly concerned about the imminent encroachment of civil government upon our religious liberty, reports of severe persecution in countries like India should awaken us to gratitude for the liberty we still have. It should also remind us that a “fiery trial” for God’s church is a *present* reality, being endured now by the one, holy, catholic church (I Pet. 4:12). We may not be surprised, nor think it strange when it comes upon us, “But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (I Pet. 4:13).



Pillar and ground of truth

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

The Council of Constantinople (AD 381): Canons two and three

Previous article in this series: January 15, 2021, p. 130.

The main doctrinal issue that the Council of Constantinople addressed was that of the Trinity, including the question as to how Christ is truly God and man, and whether the Holy Spirit is truly God. In our last article we noted the decisions of the Council regarding this issue, and the creed that the Council produced.

Most ecclesiastical assemblies that treat doctrinal issues also deal with other matters that pertain to the welfare of the churches. The Second Ecumenical Council was no exception. In this article we note two other decisions that the Council made. Our next article will conclude our treatment of the Council of Constantinople by examining some of the other decisions.

Bishops, mind your own affairs!

The Council’s second notable decision was to prohibit bishops from leaving their geographic area of authority to minister in churches in other regions. Part of that decision reads: “Let not bishops go beyond their dioceses for ordination or any other ecclesiastical ministrations, unless they be invited.”¹ The decision

applied the prohibition in specific detail, stating that the authority of the bishop of Alexandria was limited to Egypt, the bishop of Asia to Asia, of Pontus to Pontus, and of Thracia to Thracia. This decision also said that the synod of each province was to administer the affairs of its own province.

The general principle here expressed is that each bishop was to know the area of his authority and respect the authority of bishops in other areas.

Why did the Council make this rule? One specific reason is that the Bishop of Antioch (Meletius) had just come to Constantinople to ordain a bishop (Gregory) there. The wording of the rule suggests, however, that the problem was more widespread.

It is sound advice today and always: each of us must know the area in which God has called us to work. “Area” can refer to a geographic area, or to the specific congregation in which we labor, or to the kind of work to which we are called. Devoting ourselves to our work, we must leave others to work in the areas to which God has called them. Several articles of our Church Order apply this principle to officebearers in Reformed churches. Article 7 states that the minister is to be stationed in a particular place; by implication, he is to stay in his place and work in the congregation that called him. Article 15 forbids one to preach indiscriminately but, more to the point, the article forbids

1 “Canons” as found in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, vol. 14: *The Seven Ecumenical Councils*, ed. Philip Schaff (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988 reprint), 176.

anyone to preach or administer sacraments “without the consent of the consistory of that church.” One who preaches in a church that has not called him must not intrude but be permitted to preach. And Article 84 reminds ministers, as well as churches and elders and deacons, that they are not to lord it over other churches, ministers, elders, or deacons; that is, the authority of all officebearers is equal, none greater, and none less.

The Bishop of Constantinople is number two

The third canon (decision) of the Council reads: “The Bishop of Constantinople, however, shall have the prerogative of honor after the Bishop of Rome; because Constantinople is New Rome.”²

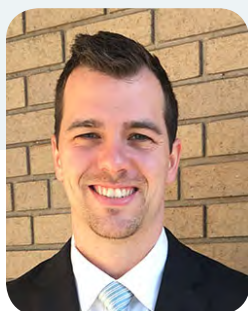
In the third and fourth centuries, five cities had risen to such prominence that the bishops of those cities were viewed as more prominent than the bishops of other cities. The five most prominent cities were Rome,

Constantinople, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Alexandria. These were called patriarchs.

This third canon indicates that by 381 an order of priority was emerging even among these five cities. The bishop of Rome was coming to be considered the highest of the five! The first bishop of Rome to assert himself forcefully as the highest of the bishops (Innocent I) would not become pope for twenty more years, but the idea that the bishop of Rome was the highest was already popularly accepted.

In which order, then, did the bishops of the other four patriarchs stand after the bishop of Rome? This decision spoke to that question: the bishop of Constantinople was number two. The reason was that Constantinople is “New Rome.” Constantine had moved the capital of the empire from Rome to Constantinople about fifty years earlier. By virtue of being the capital city, the bishop of that city is the second highest bishop. This decision reflected the close relationship between the church and the empire.

² “Canons,” 178.



A word fitly spoken

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

Cross

It is universally recognized as the symbol of Christendom. If you walk through the arched doorway of a gothic cathedral, you will see a version of it in gold, encrusted with jewels, prominently displayed on the back wall. If you visit a military cemetery, you will see thousands of them in neat, white rows, casting shadows over manicured green grass. It dangles from silver chains or leather loops on the necks of men, women, and children all over the world. It marks arms, wrists, and ankles with the black ink of the tattoo. It is embossed in the leather binding of many Bibles, and graces the wood paneling of many pulpits.

The modern ubiquity of the cross is striking in light of its bloody past as an instrument of cruel torture and death. There was a time when the sight of the cross inspired fear and revulsion rather than faith. In what would have been recent history at the time Jesus walked the earth, six thousand screaming rebels were fixed to

their own crosses, where they perished along the Appian way, the main highway into Rome.¹ But even in Jerusalem it was not impossible that fathers and mothers would have had to explain to their little children why there was a man hanging from pierced hands and feet on a wooden post in the ground just outside the city gates. Death by the cross was purposely a public matter.

In the KJV the word *cross* only appears twenty-eight times. Out of the twenty-eight, eleven are in the climactic portions of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. There we find the very human Lord, having endured beatings and scourging, unable to bear the heavy wooden beam any further down the path toward Golgotha. Rather than sully their own backs with such a shameful piece

¹ The Spartacus slave revolt was put down by the Romans in the year 71 BC.

of wood, the Roman soldiers laid “hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian...and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus” (Luke 23:26; Matt. 27:32; Mark 15:21). By nine o’clock that morning the bloodied figure of Christ was lifted upright to hang between heaven and earth, while his enemies stared at His naked body and the soldiers divided His garments.

Then the mockery began in earnest. “Look at the fool who said he could destroy our great temple and build it again in three days!” “If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross!” (Matt. 27:40). Others found the fuel of their contempt in the title Pilate attached to the cross bearing the words, “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews,” (John 19:19). “Oh, he is a King, is he? He styles himself a Savior?” Well, “he saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him” (Matt. 27:42). Hard words they must have been for mother Mary to hear as she, with two other women named Mary, “stood by the cross of Jesus” (John 19:25). No doubt this was the sword old Simeon said would pass through Mary’s soul when Jesus was still a child in her arms. The thoughts of many hearts were certainly revealed by the wicked hands that crucified and slew the Son of God (Luke 2:35; Acts 2:23). But let those thoughts be carefully concealed again before the sun goes down, for today is the preparation, and tomorrow is the high Sabbath of the Passover week. “The Jews therefore...that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day...besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away” (John 19:31). For the Lord Himself, though, such a measure was unnecessary. His body already hung limp on the cross.

Now what did it mean when those simple words of the Lord drifted down to the ears of the cross-gazers before the Lord bowed His head in death—“it is finished” (John 19:30)? It meant that He who came to do God’s will did it to the bitter end. The perfect mind of Jesus was herein, that He “humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). And therefore, as the Head of His people, He blotted “out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us...nailing it to his cross” (Col. 2:14). *Us*, that is, whether we be Jew or Gentile, for Christ has reconciled “both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:16). Indeed, “by the blood of his cross” Jesus has reconciled “all things unto himself...whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20). Such is the significance of the cross, both *personal* for every individual sheep in behalf of whom the Good Shepherd laid down His life (John

10:15), and *cosmic* for the whole creation in behalf of which God in love sent His only-begotten Son (John 3:16). Therefore, “notwithstanding all the ineffectual opposition of the gates of hell,” there shall never “be wanting a church composed of believers, the foundation of which is laid in the blood of Christ...who as a bridegroom for His bride, laid down His life for them upon the cross” (Canons, II.9).

To them that perish, of course, the preaching of such a cross is all nonsense and foolishness (I Cor. 1:18). What kind of a king goes like a lamb to the slaughter to save His people (John 1:29)? What kind of a Messiah is cursed by the God He represents (Gal 3:13)? Even in the Christian church, too often the crosses that dangle from necks and earrings really symbolize a new religious formalism, like circumcision, which in all reality causes “the offense of the cross” to cease (Gal. 5:11). Just let the popularity of the cross as a symbol run dry, however, and what was adopted out of a “desire to make a fair shew in the flesh” will quickly be cast aside, “lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ” (Gal. 6:12). As much as these speak favorably of Jesus, eventually their walk reveals “that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phil. 3:18, 19).

Unto us who are saved, however, the cross “is the power of God” (I Cor. 1:18). It is the main point of every gospel sermon, which is proclaimed “not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” (I Cor. 1:17). The cross is the eternal foundation of our salvation. Its blood is the purchasing price of our redemption. And its centrality in the faith sets the tone for the entire Christian life in this bloody, broken, miserable, cursed, sin-filled world. The Christian looks hopefully to “Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2). The Christian rests in that finished cross-work of the Lord who calls him to come and labor no more. And then he heeds that other call of the same Lord who says, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23). Deny yourself, you rich young ruler, by selling your possessions and taking up your cross, and you shall have treasure in heaven (Mark 10:21). Deny yourself of your satanic understanding of the kingdom, Peter, and take up your cross, and follow Me (Matt. 16:24). Deny yourself even of family and friends, of father, mother, son, and daughter, for “he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:38).

A symbol of life and death, of suffering and salva-

tion, is the cross. At the same time, it is for many the ‘mascot’ of Christendom and its greatest stumbling block. For the Christian, however, the cross is everything. Therefore, with the apostle, the doxology of the

Christian is a doxology of the cross: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14).



When thou sittest in thine house

Mrs. Margaret Laning, wife, mother, and grandmother in Hull Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa

Set free to serve

It does not take long for a new mother to notice her work is never done. There are so many needs. There are diapers to change, feeding and burping the baby, giving baths, cooking, cleaning, washing laundry, ironing, fixing things that break, running errands, potty training, wiping noses...whatever the need is, and then some, as more children are added to the family. Perhaps a young mother’s most shocking realization is that the bulk of her work is routine and unglamorous.

How do you, dear Christian mother, like doing those unpaid, lowly, menial tasks to meet the needs of others? Though it may sound like an oxymoron, are you content with your freedom to serve? I have been blessed to know and learn from many Christian mothers who serve with kindness and selfless love. I trust you have, as well. Yet, these humble women are the first to admit that they have a sinful nature they fight against constantly. Motherhood requires a great deal of God’s grace to be selfless.

There are plenty of temptations around us, and we are prone by nature to be selfish—young or old, male or female. It is not surprising to see the temptations coming from the world, but how grievous it is when they come from confessing Christians. A religion of selfishness is being promoted through social media, best-selling books, and megachurches. They tempt us and tantalize us with promises of earthly pleasures. Serving the Lord by serving others? That is not in their message.

This is your life. You are meant to be the hero of your own story.... You should be the very first of your priorities. (Rachel Hollis, Christian women’s convention speaker, from her book, *Girl Wash Your Face*, 2018.)

Anyone who tells you to deny yourself is from Satan.

(Paula White, Christian women’s convention speaker, Orlando, FL, 2007.)

If you stay in your faith, you are going to get paid. I’m living now in my reward. (Joyce Meyer, referring to her affluent lifestyle. Christian convention, Detroit, MI, 2003.)

When you come to church, when you worship him, you’re not doing it for God *really*! You’re doing it for yourself, because that’s what makes God happy—Amen? (Victoria Osteen, wife and co-pastor with megachurch pastor Joel Osteen, Houston, Texas. 2014.)

God has already done everything He’s going to do. The ball is now in your court. If you want success, if you want wisdom, if you want to be prosperous and healthy, you’re going to have to do more than meditate and believe; you must boldly declare words of faith and victory over yourself and your family. (Houston megachurch pastor Joel Osteen, from his book, *Your Best Life Now*, 2004.)

You are destined to reign in life. You are called by the Lord to be a success, to enjoy wealth, to enjoy health, and to enjoy a life of victory. (Singapore megachurch pastor Joseph Prince, from his book, *Destined to Reign*, 2007.)

Self is supreme in this movement, often nicknamed the “prosperity gospel,” sometimes the “self-help and wellness industry.” With the power of positive thinking and faith in your own generated faith, you can make things happen in your life. In turn, God will give you health, wealth, success, and abundant luxuries.

How does their self-obsessed message apply to caring for and cleaning up after a sick child all night? When

someone becomes infected by this movement, something starts to happen inside. Selfishness gets the upper hand while love grows cold. Narcissism is being ushered into the church world. It is no wonder that families are falling apart. Truly, we live in the last days. “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, unthankful...lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (II Tim. 3:2, 4). How we need God’s grace to fight against this temptation, this idolatry, and warn our friends and family of the same.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect opposite of selfishness. He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:7, 8). He is the compassionate One, touched with the “feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15). Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart...” (Matt. 11:29). He performed lowly, menial tasks to meet the needs of others. He fed multitudes. He washed others’ dirty feet. If He, the King of kings, served others, is it not a privilege for us to do the same?

Jesus set us free to serve. Early in His ministry recorded in Luke 4, Jesus preached a sermon based on Isaiah 61. In that sermon, He revealed that He had fulfilled the Jubilee. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord...” (Luke 4:18, 19).

What gracious words to those who know they are freed from the bondage of sin! The Jubilee, referred to in Leviticus 25:8-16, 23-25, and 27:16-25, was a picture of that. It was to be observed every fiftieth year in the promised land. Debts were forgiven, land was returned and given a rest from farming. Indentured servants were released to go back to their land of inheritance and to their families. The Jubilee was an undeserved, precious gift, a joyous year of liberty.

This truth was at the heart of Jesus’ ministry. He redeemed His people. He paid our debt. “Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses” (Matt. 8:17). “With his stripes we are healed” (Is. 53:5). He healed our sin-sick, selfish souls so that we might serve Him by serving one another. Christ has fulfilled the Jubilee and we have been called to liberty. What an amazing and beautiful truth still today!

Shortly after that sermon Jesus entered the home of Peter. Peter’s mother-in-law was sick with a very high fever. We do not know her name but we know she was a mother and perhaps a grandmother in a believing home.

Her life was interrupted by sickness. A faithful mother, such as this woman, would be used to meeting the needs of her family and guests even while not feeling very well. “Moms aren’t allowed to get sick!” Perhaps you have heard or said that yourself. There are too many times to count when a faithful mother puts aside how she feels to meet the needs of her family.

On this day, however, the hostess of the household lay in bed too ill to do anything else. Surely, the family was very concerned for their loved one. They brought Jesus to her. “And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them” (Luke 4:39).

You can only imagine everyone’s utter amazement, thankfulness, and joy. Jesus was merciful and full of compassion. However, He did not come primarily to heal physically. His miracles confirmed the truth He preached. The One who fulfilled the Jubilee set her free from fever’s grip instantly and completely. She did not experience a slow, gradual gaining of strength. She was brought to full strength and vitality; a picture of Christ’s perfect work in our salvation.

Then what did she do? She got up and served! Perhaps some might feel a bit disappointed with her response. Here, Jesus had performed a great miracle and this woman is now perfectly healed...to make dinner? That is not how the prosperity gospel people would like this story to end. Where is her life of luxury?

Perhaps you have known some mothers who stop making meals and doing other such labors altogether. As far as they are concerned, they have put in their time. (Like an ex-convict in prison?) Their families scrounge in the cupboard and fridge dining solo, on a daily basis. “Where is Mom?” “She is at a three-day women’s conference learning how to stop denying herself.” “Well, Jed put an unopened can of soup in the microwave and it blew up. Plus, I need some shirts washed and I don’t know how to do it. What do we take to school for lunches tomorrow? I think it’s our turn to bring two dozen cupcakes.”

If Peter’s mother-in-law could have known the future, how so many mothers are turning sour on serving, she would have been perplexed. She would not have dreamed of doing anything else, for she was set free to serve her Lord and imitate Him. He ministered to her, so she served Him by serving others. That is what we are all called to do, too. “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). What a crucial verse to take to heart when considering the many needs of our family, our church family, and beyond.

Later, Jesus visits the home of some other friends, Mary and Martha, according to Luke 10. It is another story that teaches us about serving. Sometimes while serving we can worry, get distracted, and angry. Instead of serving in love, we bite and devour. This gets in the way of listening to Jesus. No matter what we are in the midst of doing, taking heed to His Word is the one thing needful.

Peter's mother-in-law got up to serve without delay. There were hungry, weary people in her home and she wanted nothing more than to minister unto them. Serving others takes effort. Mealtime, for example, takes effort. Yet, it is a precious time for our families, and for our bodies and souls to be nourished. It is a time to relax together, pray and give thanks, talk about the day, read and discuss God's Word, and sing His praises. Certainly there will be times the family cannot be together, but placing it as a high priority is a great blessing.

Let us teach our children to serve others in an age of selfishness. Mothers are not the only ones who should

be serving. Everyone has the responsibility to help around the house. Even our sons can learn that changing a diaper or washing dishes is not going to threaten their manliness. A two-year-old can help pick up toys. When children are old enough they can learn how to use the washing machine, help cook meals, clean the house, etc. Freedom does not give license to be rude, rarely saying "please" and "thank you" or rejecting meals to forage in the fridge. We certainly do not want our children growing up entitled. May they learn to help others in the home and outside the home impressed with the truth of this verse: "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matt 25:40).

So we pray to the Lord together to teach us how to serve selflessly with love. It does not require any special talents, but a great deal of God's grace. Serving is not drudgery when we consider imitating Christ, as Peter's mother-in-law did. For our Lord fulfilled the Jubilee; He has set us free to serve Him by serving one another.



Strength of youth

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor of the Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa

Watch your mouth! (1)

We are all communicators. Already as babies we begin to communicate what we want by pointing, crying, and stammering our first words. As we get older, our ability to communicate becomes more sophisticated, and we spend a large portion of our days talking, texting, and tweeting.

While it's true that we are all communicators, it's equally true that we are not very good communicators. To give just a small sampling of our communication errors, we say things that aren't true, we say true things at the wrong time and in the wrong way, and we gossip and backbite. How many hurts and misunderstandings are caused by our failures to communicate properly!

An important part of maturing as Christians is learning and practicing sanctified communication. In this and a few other articles I would like to lay out some of the basic principles of how we are rightly to communicate with one another.

The nature of communication

What is communication? Consider the following definition: *Communication is a process of sharing information with another person in such a way that the sender's message is understood in the way he intended it to be understood.*

Both parts of that definition are important. First, communication is a process of sharing information with another person. The information we desire to share comes in many different varieties: we might be trying to comfort, confess, confide, correct, encourage, humor, instruct, motivate, question, or rebuke. Whatever the information we are trying to get across, communication involves the sharing of that information with others.

Second, communication involves the sharing of that information in such a way that the message is understood in the way we intended it to be understood. For communication to be effective, information must not

only be shared; it must also be received and understood. If the intended information is not received and understood, communication has not taken place. This can be the fault of either the one sending the message or the one receiving it. A teacher might explain a mathematical equation to you in algebra class, but you raise your hand and say, “I still don’t get it!” You might not understand because the teacher was not clear, or because you were daydreaming when he explained it the first time. Communication has not taken place because the teacher’s message is not understood as it was intended to be understood. Your mom might tell you that your room needs cleaning, and you think, “Ok, I’ll do that by the end of the week,” when in reality she meant, “Clean your room right now!” The confusion might be due to mom’s lack of clarity, or it might be due to your failure to pick up from her words and tone what she intended. Communication has not taken place because mom’s message is not understood as it was intended to be understood. Communication involves both the conveying and the understanding of a message.

When we think about communication, we usually think immediately of our words. Words are certainly the main means of communication. We mainly communicate with the words we speak and with the written word (text message, social media post, email, handwritten letter, etc.).

But words are not the only way in which we communicate. We communicate with one another in a host of different ways:

- We communicate with our *eyes*. A wink at another person? You might be sharing an inside joke. Roll your eyes? You’re probably annoyed. Eyes darting all over? You might be nervous. Eyes bulging? You’re surprised at the news you just heard. Eyes narrowed and brow furrowed? You’re communicating that you are angry. Eyes filled with tears? Something has made you sad.

- We communicate with our *facial expressions*. A smile probably means we are happy; a frown that we are upset; a smirk that something amuses us; a bottom lip jutting out that we are pouting.

- We communicate with our *bodies*. We even have

a name for this: body language. When we shrug our shoulders, we communicate that we are confused. When we talk with our hands gesturing all over, we communicate that we are excited. When we tap our foot on the ground, we communicate that we are impatient.

- We communicate with our *tone of voice*. Not only do the words we speak communicate a message, but the tone with which we speak those words also conveys a great deal. Just as important as *what* we say is *how* we say it. A husband might say to his wife in a harsh and angry tone, “Don’t you know I love you!” and his wife might run in the opposite direction. But if

he says to her in a soft and quiet voice, “Don’t you know I love you!” his wife will probably run into his arms. A classmate might say to you, “You’re a great friend,” and a good friendship is born. But if she says those same words dripping with sarcasm, a good friendship might have just ended.

- We communicate with our *presence*. Your presence at a church function conveys that you are

interested in what is going on, but your absence from that function conveys that you are too busy or you are not interested. Your presence at the home of the grieving conveys you care, but your absence conveys that you might not care.

- We communicate with our *gestures*. A touch on the arm says, “You’re important to me!” A hug says, “I care about you.” A pat on the back says, “Keep up the good work!” A snap of the fingers says, “Hurry up!”

- We communicate in a host of other ways: by our willingness to help another (or not), by the giving of a gift (or not), by a note we leave them (or not), and so on. We convey messages to others in many different ways.

The gift of communication

It is important that we learn to appreciate what a precious gift communication is.

Begin here: God is a God of communication. He is a God of communication eternally within His own triune being. God was not a lonely God who created humans so that He could have someone to talk to. Eternally Father, Son, and Holy Spirit communicate with one another, speaking the truth in love. Evidence of this trinitarian speech is found in Genesis 1:26 where, prior

...communication involves the sharing of that information in such a way that the message is understood in the way we intended it to be understood. For communication to be effective, information must not only be shared; it must also be received and understood. If the intended information is not received and understood, communication has not taken place.

to the creation of man, we read, “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness....”

God is a God of communication because God is a covenant God. Among Father, Son, and Holy Spirit there exists a perfect bond of communion, friendship, and love. As communication is essential to our closest earthly relationships, so communication is an essential element of God’s perfect, covenant life within Himself.

In His good pleasure, God determined to share His covenant life with His elect people in Jesus Christ.

To that end, He created the universe as the stage on which the drama of sin and grace would play out. In a marvelous demonstration of the power of His voice, God spoke and all things came into existence.

“By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.... For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast” (Ps. 33:6, 9).

At the pinnacle of this creation, God placed the man and woman. God made them with a unique ability to communicate one with another, an ability that set them apart from and above all other earthly creatures. Pods of dolphins can com-

municate with various clicks and pulses, and troops of monkeys can communicate with various howls and barks (all of which is fascinating to hear and study). But dolphin clicks and monkey howls cannot come close to the rational, intelligent communication among humans. Having made them so fearfully and wonderfully, God walked and talked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the day (Gen. 3:8). He shared with them the secrets of the divine mind and spoke to them as a Father with His children. Wonder of wonders, the Divine reached down and spoke to the human!

But then sin entered the world through the fall of Adam and Eve. Rather than listening to the voice of God, they listened to the voice of the devil. As a consequence, they were driven out of the garden, never again to commune with God there as they once had. By nature their descendants are conceived and born without “ears to hear” (Matt. 11:15).

But God had prepared some better thing for His chosen people. What sin destroyed, grace restores. In the fullness of time, He sent the eternal Word, Jesus Christ, to take our flesh and to atone for our sins. As our chief

Prophet and Teacher, He “fully revealed to us the secret counsel and will of God concerning our redemption” by His death on the cross (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 12). Now from heaven, He speaks to us the glad tidings of our salvation and gives us ears to hear and hearts to believe. He speaks to us words of instruction, rebuke, exhortation, comfort, and encouragement. Wonder of wonders, the Shepherd speaks and the sheep hear His voice!

By His work in us, Christ sanctifies our tongues and teaches us to use them rightly, to God’s glory and our neighbor’s edification. As His covenant friends, we delight to hear His voice and listen to His Word, and we also respond by speaking to Him in prayer and song.

Such communication is at the heart of our daily experience of covenant friendship with God.

Consider two applications in closing. First, while learning to communicate rightly with others is important, most important is our communication with God. Imagine what one of your friends would think if you never listened to him and never spoke to him. That friend might think that you are not really friends.

Now think about your friendship with God. Do you love to listen to Him speak in the preaching and in the Bible? Do you speak to Him often in prayer?

Second, what we have said about the gift of communication ought to make us grateful for it and motivated to make sanctified use of it. More on that next time.

By His work in us, Christ sanctifies our tongues and teaches us to use them rightly, to God’s glory and our neighbor’s edification. As His covenant friends, we delight to hear His voice and listen to His Word, and we also respond by speaking to Him in prayer and song. Such communication is at the heart of our daily experience of covenant friendship with God.



All Thy works shall praise Thee

Dr. Nathan Lanning, cellular and molecular biologist and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California

Information flow—The Creator's signature

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.

Colossians 1:16

When beholding the creation with the eyes of faith, we note that some of God's works so obviously point to our Creator that any theories of origins that exclude Him simply become absurd. One example of this is biological information and the flow of biological information.

The flow of information through biological systems is a foundational concept within the biological sciences. Information flow is readily evident at many levels of biology—from whole organisms to molecules—and is critical to maintaining life. Simply put, information flow is the transmittal of biological information from one form to another, and is the physical reason why all biological processes occur.

Take, for example, a person who is running low on energy. Various hormones and even mechanical processes will transmit the information about low energy in such a way that the person will feel hungry. The feeling of hunger is the result of information related to energy levels that has been transmitted through various forms (molecules, cells, and organs), so that the person realizes that it would be wise to eat. Upon consuming a sufficient amount of food, new sets of information now flow through the person in order to alert relevant organs, cells, and molecules that new energy sources are available for use. Information is also relayed back to the person and results in the feeling of being 'full.' These are orderly, regulated processes. Virtually every aspect of living beings' experience is a result of the processes of information flow.

At the other end of the living spectrum, a specific type of information flow within single cells is sometimes referred to as the "Central Dogma" of molecular biology. The Central Dogma is considered by many scientists to be the starting set of information from which all other information is generated and flows. In the Central Dog-

ma, information exists in the form of ordered sequences of chemicals (called nucleotides) that make up our DNA. These ordered sequences of nucleotides are often illustrated as instruction manuals that provide the directions for producing the parts of cells called proteins. Proteins then build the other parts of cells and carry out cellular actions (like harvesting the energy from food, to extend the above example). The information flow process within the Central Dogma commences with special enzymes 'reading' the ordered sequences of nucleotides within DNA. As the enzymes read the DNA, they produce a new molecule, called mRNA. mRNA molecules also consist of ordered sequences of nucleotides. The production of mRNA from the instructions in DNA, therefore, has allowed information to flow from one molecule (DNA) to another molecule (mRNA). As opposed to DNA, which is relatively immobile and sequestered in a specific cellular compartment, mRNA can move freely to the general open area within a cell—the information has now become mobile.

Once mRNA molecules—and the information they carry—move to the cell's common area, the information flow of the Central Dogma continues. Now, a new set of enzymes reads the ordered sequence of nucleotides in the mRNA, and from that information produces a specific protein. Proteins, too, are constructed by linking together ordered sequences of chemicals (called amino acids); therefore, the ordered sequence of amino acids in proteins is information that directly corresponds to the ordered sequence of nucleotides in mRNA, which directly corresponds to the ordered sequence of nucleotides in DNA. Information flow! As the amino acids are being linked together in their specific, ordered sequence, they begin to fold into a specific shape. This shape is determined by the amino acid sequence and this shape is what gives them their specific function. A protein that serves as a digestive enzyme to break down carbohydrates has a very specific shape, while a protein that serves to produce fat molecules has a very different specific shape. In this respect, the specific shape of each protein is also a form of information that can be di-

rectly linked to the original information in the ordered sequence of nucleotides in the DNA.

The information flow comprising the Central Dogma is a topic of much contemporary discussion.

First, new technologies have made it possible to easily edit the ordered sequence of nucleotides in DNA. This is profound because many diseases are the result of ‘incorrect’ information in DNA (some nucleotides are out of sequence). Various clinical trials are coming to completion wherein this new technology has been used to edit the DNA information by putting the nucleotides into the correct sequence. The results of these trials show that it is possible for some diseases to be effectively cured with this technology.

Second, the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19 hijacks the Central Dogma information flow process. SARS-CoV-2 releases its own RNA into infected cells, which then read the RNA and produce viral proteins in the manner described above. Once the viral particles are produced by the infected cell, they then assemble many new viruses inside the cell and are released to

infect neighboring cells; and the process begins again. With our eyes of faith, we can see this hijacked information flow as both an effect of the Fall and the running of the pale horse.

Third, at least one of the vaccines against COVID-19 that has been approved also hijacks the Central Dogma information flow process. Similar to the virus, the Moderna vaccine delivers mRNA into our cells, which then read the ordered sequence of nucleotides and produce a ‘broken’ piece of the virus’ proteins. Our cells can then present this broken piece of protein to our immune system, which can prepare in advance for a potential SARS-CoV-2 infection. Understanding and harnessing information flow is a pillar of the biotechnology industry.

The remarkable processes of information flow in biological systems is clear evidence of design within living beings. Viewing this information flow through the spectacles of Scripture, we stand in awe before the Creator.



Pertaining to the churches in common— PR Theological Seminary

**Prof. Ronald Cammenga, rector and professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in
the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary**

News from the seminary

The member of the church struggling with a debilitating injury or terminal disease. The widow or widower coping with loneliness. The young person fighting against a particular temptation—drunkenness, immorality, worldliness. The young mother overcome by the demands of her calling in her home and with her children. The parents who are taking seriously their calling to bring up their children in the fear of the Lord. The couple whose marriage relationship is severely strained. The church member who has been wickedly deserted by an unfaithful spouse. The Christian schoolteacher discouraged because of harsh criticism by parents who do not much appreciate the demands placed upon our schoolteachers. The covenant father who is disheartened by the stress in the office or factory, who in addition finds it difficult to earn an adequate wage to meet his family’s needs, pay his children’s Christian school tuition, and contribute to the church budget.

The brother or sister who has a trusted, long-time friend betray them and leave the church. The sinner stricken over the guilt of his sins and crying out to God for forgiveness. The person who, although chosen by God in eternity and redeemed in the blood of Christ, knows nothing of Christ, His Word, and the church.

What do all these people have in common? What is the great need that they share? The answer: their need for the preaching of the gospel. Their need for God’s appointed means by which sinners are brought to repentance over their sins and faith in Jesus Christ. Their need for the pure preaching of the gospel, which works and confirms faith. Their need for the preaching of the gospel, which is foolishness to the world but the power of God unto salvation (I Cor. 1:18.)

The Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary is in the business of training qualified young men for the ministry of the gospel. In the seminary, those who

have served in the ministry are committed to train others for this highest of earthly callings. By teaching the full complement of subjects in the areas of the biblical languages, Reformed theology, church history, practical theology, and biblical exegesis (interpretation of Scripture), men are equipped academically for the rigors of the gospel ministry. At the same time, the focus of the curriculum is on preparing men to be *preachers*, those who handle the Word of God honestly (II Cor. 4:2) and “rightly divide the word of truth” (II Tim. 2:15). Men who are teachers and communicators. Additionally, we aim to develop the *spiritual* gifts with which God endows men to be faithful undershepherds of the Good Shepherd, whether in the established church (including those churches with whom we have official relationships) or on the mission field.

We live in challenging days. We have experienced great upheavals in society and controversy in the church. The years 2020 and 2021 will go into the record books for many reasons. The record book of the PRCA certainly. These are days in which the love of many for the truth has waxed cold. These are days in which people “will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts...heap to themselves [false] teachers, having itching ears” (II Tim. 4:3). These are days of lawlessness, not only in society, but also in the church. Men do what is right in their own eyes. They conduct themselves as a law unto themselves, as accountable to no one other than themselves. Men and women disregard the will of Christ “[t]hat there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another” (I Cor. 12:25). These are days in which as never before, our churches need faithful servants of Christ, who sacrificially minister to the needs of God’s people and submit to their elders.

May God give our churches and sister churches such men!

Considering the current situation in our churches, the need is great. Presently there are only six students studying in our seminary. Three of the six are not in training for labors in the PRCA: two for the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore, and one for the Evangelical Presbyterian Church in Australia. These men are Josiah Tan, Marcus Wee, and Isaac Peters. The

three remaining students are committed to ministry in our own churches. Matthew Koerner is a second-year student; Luke Bomers and Arend Haveman are first-year students. It is true that there are men in the wings. Some who are presently in college or in high school have expressed their desire to train for the ministry, including two men who are currently taking Greek grammar in our seminary. But considering the number of vacant congregations, the number of retirements among our clergy in the coming years, and replacement of another of our seminary professors, our missionary fields, and it is obvious that our need is *great—very great!*

We urge parents, grandparents, Christian school-teachers, officebearers, and church members to encourage your sons and grandsons, your students, and your friends who show promise to consider the calling to the ministry. It is never too early to plant the seed in the

minds and hearts of the sons of the church. And pray, all of us—fervently and often—that God will look upon our need and raise up in our midst faithful servants of Christ. We invite all young men who have thoughts of the ministry, either to stop by the seminary or correspond with our registrar, Mr. Charles Terpstra (prcseminary1925@gmail.com) or one of our professors. We would also welcome your

visits to our classes for a day, to see firsthand what goes on in the seminary.

Classes are in full swing for the second semester. Prior to the start of the new semester, our students attended the Interim course for eight days. These are intense courses taught by the faculty on a rotation basis. This year’s Interim was taught by Prof. R. Cammenga and was entitled “The Theology of John Calvin.” A special treat for our students was that they were joined for the course by the missionaries and their three students in the Philippines. The sessions were video-recorded, and our Filipino brothers listened to the lectures later in their own homes by means of Zoom. If you are wondering, the Philippines is thirteen hours ahead of Michigan. They submitted their questions via email, and we were able to answer them first thing the following day. It was a special delight to include them and in a small way get to know brothers Jethro Flores, Emmanuel Jaso, and Jeremiah Pascual.

Our seminary is a denominational institution. It is





supported by the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Although the seminary is under the supervision of

the synod, between the meetings of synod a specially appointed committee of five ministers and five elders oversees the day-to-day operations of our theological school. This committee (Theological School Committee, or TSC for short) meets monthly and regularly sends visitation committees to sit in classes to evaluate the instruction given and the progress of the students. One of the important items with which the committee is tasked is preparing an aggregate of names to synod when one of the faculty is facing retirement. Prof. B. Gritters is scheduled to *begin* the mandatory retirement process this year. Synod 2021 will decide on the appointment of his successor to the departments of New Testament Studies and Practical Theology. This will undoubtedly be one of the most important items on the agenda when our synod convenes in June this summer.

The faculty and licensed students stay busy preaching regularly, not only in the churches in southwestern Michigan, but throughout our denomination, including those churches located in the western United States. Airplane travel is a wonderful thing—usually. Four of the professors are regularly supplying vacant churches with Heidelberg Catechism preaching. Professors and students preach regularly on the Lord's Day. In addition to preaching, the faculty keeps busy preparing for their classes, developing their courses, writing in the seminary's theological *Journal*, as well as the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, teaching catechism classes in various churches, serving on denominational committees, giving special lectures, attending our assemblies, and many other aspects of the life and work of the church.

Prof. R. Dykstra and his wife, Carol, are serving our sister congregation in Singapore for five months. They plan to return to the States in May. The other faculty members are teaching Prof. Dykstra's courses so that he can provide this very valuable service for our sister church in southeast Asia. We remember our brothers and sisters living in this far-away is-

land country. One of their students, brother Josiah Tan, anticipates completing his seminary training in May. He plans to sit before our synod for his oral examination. Pending his successfully sustaining his examination, he hopes to return to Singapore with his wife and children to take up work in our sister church.

Prof. D. Kuiper is teaching several courses as the replacement for Prof. Dykstra. Most of these courses he is developing for the first time. Prof. B. Huizinga, Prof. R. Cammenga's replacement, is in the process of studying theological Dutch and beginning the work on his Th.M. thesis. He has completed the course work for his advanced degree. As faculty, we want to take this opportunity publicly to express our deep appreciation for the work of our registrar-librarian-archivist, Mr. Charles Terpstra, and our office secretary, Miss Sharon Kleyn. If you come to the seminary, you will probably be greeted by their smiling faces.

The members of our churches must know that the professors take seriously the responsibility entrusted to us. We rejoice in the confidence that our members have in the work we do in the seminary. We are thankful that as in the past, so also to the present day, we have the trust and support of our people. Wherever we go, we hear the expressions of gratitude and encouragement. We do not take this for granted.

Continue to pray for us. Pray that the Lord keeps us faithful in the dark days in which we are living. Pray that the Lord is pleased to continue to use us for the defense and development of the truth. And pray that He may be pleased to continue to supply our pulpits and mission fields with faithful, competent, trained men of God. For His glory and the gathering of His church.





News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Two daughter churches have been born of Faith PRC in Jenison, MI. Do you know which churches they are? See the church profile section for the answer.

Another trivia question: How many members make up the Foreign Mission Committee? In what location? Answer later in this column.

Minister activities

The Council of Hudsonville PRC formed a new trio from which to call their next pastor: Revs. E. Guichelaar, J. Marcus, and J. Smidstra. On January 24 Rev. Smidstra received this call.

The Consistory of Kalamazoo PRC formed a new trio from which to call a pastor: Revs. M. DeBoer (Edgerton, MN), E. Guichelaar (Randolph, WI), and J. Lansing (Hull, IA). On January 31 Rev. Guichelaar received this call. May God grant clarity to all His servants as they consider calls to other congregations.

On January 10 Rev. A. Spriensma was installed as Cornerstone PRC's (Dyer, IN) new pastor, and in early February he and his wife moved and he began his labors.

January 2021 marks 40 years in the ministry for Rev. A. Spriensma (Cornerstone PRC). He was ordained in January 1981 in Atwood CRC (N. Michigan), and then after serving at Bethany CRC (S. Holland, IL), joined the PRC in 1992. Since then, he has served Grandville, Kalamazoo, and Byron Center PRCs, and served as missionary twice—to the Philippines (foreign) and in West Michigan (domestic). We thank the Lord for his faithful service in Christ's church for 40 years! May the Lord bless him in his new charge and continue to use him for good in the churches.

A glimpse from the past

As you might imagine, due to the COVID outbreak and its accompanying regulations, many events have been canceled, postponed, or changed in the last year. That makes for less news. So I begin with this issue to include a "Glimpse from the Past" of news from our churches. I hope you find it interesting reading. This will be random, the facts taken from whichever bound volume of the *SB* I happen to pull from my shelf.

So here goes...from 1983-1984: Byron Center was

a newly formed congregation with 24 families. They made a trio of Rev. C. Haak, Rev. B. Woudenberg, and Prof. R. Decker. Later, Candidate B. Gritters became their first pastor.... Hope PRC of Redlands, CA had a local mission work in Ripon, CA with Rev. S. Houck as missionary. The new church building at Redlands was to hold its first service on November 20, with dedication set for December. They celebrated the 50th anniversary of their congregation at the same time, with Rev. C. Hanko giving the address.... Classis East met and gave permission for the formulation of a Grandville church..... We had a mission in Birmingham, Alabama with Rev. R. Van Overloop laboring there..... Rev. den-Hartog continued to labor in Singapore.... Here are two excerpts from a newsletter of the Board of the Society for Protestant Reformed Special Education: "Initially, it appears that we will serve a student body of three to six children ranging in age from 5 to 11 years old. We have found that there are PR people who are willing and able to serve as special education teachers. The board hopes to extend contracts early in 1984. Also, we are heartened by the number of PR young people in college who hope to make special education their careers." Southeast PRC celebrated 40 years in existence.... Rev. C. Hanko conducted services in the Bradenton, FL area for a few months. As many as 60-80 attended.... First PRC approved the proposal to purchase a pipe organ.... In September, Rev. George Lubbers celebrated 50 years of faithful labor in the ministry of the gospel.... The bulletin of First Church in Grand Rapids read in part, "At the General Consistory meeting it was decided that henceforth the following designations will be used: 1. The body of Deacons will be called 'The Board of Deacons'; 2. the body of Elders will be called the 'Consistory'; 3. the body of Deacons and Elders sitting together will be called the 'Council.'"

Trivia answer

The Foreign Mission Committee is made up of ten men. Five of those members are the pastors of the five Siouxland area churches (Iowa, Minnesota, South Dakota). The other five members are elders or former elders of the same churches. So each church has two representatives.

And now a ‘shout out’ I couldn’t resist. Before the last FMC meeting we were all assembled and bantering a bit about various topics. Somehow the topic of Edgerton, MN PRC and its assorted delightful characters came up. Someone made the comment: “Yeah, those Edgerton people, there’s nothing ordinary about them!” We all took note of that in a positive sense, and with a

chuckle. Keep up the good work, Edgerton! And more trivia next time.

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

Church profile—Faith PRC, Jenison, MI



Faith Protestant Reformed Church was organized on February 22, 1973. For several years before this date there had been talk of the rising need for a new church in the Grandville-Jenison area. Hope PRC was crowded, Hudsonville PRC was crowded and using its basement for worship services, and more and more families were moving to the area.

Three men, Dale Mensch, William Huber, and Irvan Velthouse, approached the consistories of Hope and Hudsonville requesting permission to canvas the members of their congregations to evaluate the amount of interest in organizing a new church.

When Classis East met on January 3, 1973, a letter signed by sixteen men was presented, requesting approval for organizing a new church. The request was granted and Hope PRC’s consistory was appointed to oversee the organizational meeting.

The organizational meeting was held February 22, 1973, according to Article 38 of the Church Order. Prof. H. Hanko spoke on “The Church—Pillar of Truth.” Afterward Rev. R. VanOverloop installed the new elders and deacons.

For the charter members and all others present, it was truly a most memorable and edifying experience. The uncertainty of the future and the tremendous responsibility of starting a new church were overshadowed by the great joy of establishing a new church.

Plans were immediately made for renting the gym of Jenison Christian Junior High School. The first service was held there February 25. Society meetings and catechism classes were held in a room above the former Union Bank in Jenson.

From the names of Bethel PRC, Faith PRC, and Jenison PRC, Faith PRC was chosen.

At the congregational meeting of October 22, it was decided to purchase five acres of land on 20th Ave. in Jenison for \$13,000. Hope and Hudsonville each gave us \$5,000.

A farmhouse was rented and remodeled for a parsonage. In February of 1975 a parsonage was completed on the new property. On November 22, 1977, the plans and proposed financing of the new sanctuary was unanimously passed and the ground-breaking set for the following April. December 10, 1978 we held the first service. An addition was built in 1992 with more seating in the sanctuary, a wing of society rooms, larger bathrooms, nurseries, kitchen, and large fellowship hall.

The ministers who have served us are: Rev. M. Joostens, Rev. W. Bruinsma, Rev. W. Bekkering, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. R. Cammenga, Rev. A. Lanning, Rev. C. Spronk.

Our daughter churches are Providence PRC and Zion PRC.

The charter members that remain are five couples and seven individuals.

As a congregation we give thanks to the most gracious Lord who has guided us and granted us so very much through these 48 years. “Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: Be thankful unto him and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Ps. 100:4).

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of the Kalamazoo PRC extend our Christian sympathies to Tom and Marcia Kiel and Tim and Whitney Kiel and their children Meredith and Simon in the death of their father, grandfather, and great grandfather, **Leonard “Bud” Ekema**. He went to be with his Lord on January 28, 2021. Psalm 18:2, “The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.”

Steve DeVries, Vice-president
Thomas Verbeek, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Doon PRC, Doon, Iowa express Christian sympathy to Floyd and Mary VanDenTop and to Richard and Joanna VanDenTop and children in the death of their father, grandfather, and great grandfather, **Dick Burgers**. “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:3).

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, President
Dr. Paul DeJong, Clerk

Reformed Witness Hour reformedwitnesshour.org

Rev. R. Kleyn

March 7—The First Disciples Called
Mark 1:16-20
March 14—Jesus Demonstrates His Authority
Mark 1:21-28
March 21—Miracles for a Mother and a Multitude
Mark 1:29-34
March 28—Therefore Came I Forth
Mark 1:35-39

Call to aspirants to the ministry

All young men desiring to begin studies in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary in the 2021-2022 academic year should make application at the March 18, 2021 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).

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 18 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

The Protestant Reformed Seminary admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin.

Teacher needed

The Edmonton PR Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2021-2022 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1-6 minus grade 5. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com or 780-777-5780 if interested.