

# The Standard Bearer

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## The pursuit of excellence

Rev. Michael DeVries

## Respecting those in authority: Divinely mandated

Rev. Kenneth Koole

## Good works and justification

Prof. Brian Huizinga

## Worldwide preaching and the return of Christ

Rev. Daniel Kleyn

## Rev. Jason L. Kortering In memoriam

Mr. Don Doezema



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## Meditation

Rev. Michael DeVries, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

# The pursuit of excellence

**Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.**

**Philippians 3:8**

To a considerable extent our current society is characterized by mediocrity. That mediocrity is frequently evident in the sphere of education as well as in the workplace. In contrast, there are those involved in the pursuit of excellence—academic excellence, athletic excellence, excellence in job performance.

As Christians, we are involved in the pursuit of excellence. It is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. It is the knowledge revealed in the holy Scriptures, the infallibly inspired Word of God. That knowledge we must pursue with all that is in us! We are to strive to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (II Pet. 3:18). The pursuit of this excellence must be a life commitment. In this season, as Bible studies and societies of the church resume and as our children and young people take up their catechism lessons, let us recommit ourselves to this pursuit of excellence. The apostle declares, “I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.”

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This chapter of Paul’s letter to the Philippians begins with a sharp warning against the false teachers, the Judaizers, that were troubling the church of Philippi. These Judaizers were Jews that were bitter enemies of the church and of the truth of the gospel. They denied the efficacy of the cross of Christ and put their confidence in their own righteousness, emphasizing especially the outward rite of circumcision.

Then with a powerful argument, using his own life as an example, Paul exhorts the Philippians to reject the doctrine of righteousness by works, by the law, by outward forms and rites. Paul, as it were, challenges the Judaizers, “If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more; circumcized the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Ben-

jamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless” (vv. 5, 6). He lays it out—“Look at me! If any one can trust in the flesh, I can!” But to Paul all these separate “gains” became one huge loss for the sake of Christ. As the apostle totaled the column of assets in his ledger, he finds that they are all transferred to the column of liabilities. They are entered as one gigantic loss for Christ’s sake. One thing is above all things precious to the apostle: “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!”

What is this knowledge that is so precious? It is “the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Paul refers to the Savior as He stands revealed in all the preciousness and beauty of His person through His threefold name. This is knowledge of “Christ,” the Anointed One, who was ordained by God the Father and anointed with the Holy Spirit to be our chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King. This is knowledge of “Jesus,” Jehovah Salvation, who saves His people from their sins. This is the knowledge of the “Lord,” the Exalted One, who owns us because He bought us with the price of His precious blood.

This is the knowledge revealed in the gospel, in the holy Scriptures. Christ is on every page and in every passage of the Bible. The knowledge of the Scriptures you must pursue if you would know the Lord Jesus Christ. Further, this excellent knowledge is set forth in our creeds, the Three Forms of Unity. In a truly marvelous and eloquent way they systematize the truth of Scripture. In other words, this knowledge is knowledge of the Reformed faith, even our distinctive Protestant Reformed faith! This faith proclaims the absolute sovereignty of God’s grace in Christ by which the elect are saved and the calling of the redeemed to live in thankfulness to God, showing forth His praises. The pure preaching of the gospel proclaims this Christ, the Christ of Scripture, as the revelation of the God of our salvation.

Paul, indeed, has an intellectual apprehension of the Savior. He had been instructed at the feet of Gamaliel. Throughout his life he had been taught the Old Testa-

ment Scriptures. He had heard about this Christ from the lips of dying saints as he had joined in their persecution years before. On the way to Damascus Paul had learned to know Jesus. Since that time he had learned more and more about Jesus. We may never minimize the importance of the intellectual knowledge of the truth of Christ. The instruction imparted in our covenant homes, in the thorough program of instruction in the church, as well as in our good Christian schools is vitally important. We see an awful ignorance in so much of the nominal church today! The word of the Lord rings true today as never before; “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6). Paul could not know Christ without knowing all about Him. The revelation of Christ had to fill the mind of the apostle.

But notice that he writes, “the knowledge of Christ Jesus *my Lord*.” Obviously this knowledge that Paul had was far more than an intellectual conception, far more than a mere cold assent to the truth concerning Jesus. *My Lord*! What value would all this intellectual knowledge have if he could not say, “*My Lord*”? This means that Paul personally appropriated this knowledge. This is a knowledge of the heart. This knowledge that Paul had compelled him to flee to Christ to find all his righteousness and salvation.

Without this spiritual knowledge Paul would never have really known Christ. No matter how much he knew *about* Christ, he would not have really *known* Him. Even if he could lecture hour after hour concerning Christ’s incarnation, even if he could write volumes on Christology, he would not really know Christ. Without this spiritual knowledge his soul would have remained empty and dark. Of this knowledge Jesus prays, “And this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). This knowledge is everything, even eternal life! This knowledge is the knowledge of a true and living faith that unites the believer to Christ.

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That directs us to the purpose of this knowledge. The apostle says, “that I may win Christ.” Now, “that I may win Christ” must not be understood in a selfish, self-glorifying sense. Paul is not sacrificing one thing just so that he can make a great personal gain in the end. It is true that he is seeking to promote his own spiritual welfare. But the purpose of this knowledge is never separated from concern for the glory of God. “Winning Christ” cannot refer to a personal glory or profit like that associated with the simple pleasure of winning a game. He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord!

In addition, “that I may win Christ” must not be understood in an Arminian, free-willist sense. Arminians love to speak about “winning Christ.” They maintain that “winning Christ” is something anyone can do of himself through the exercise of his free will. They insist that for a man to “win” Christ he must, by an act of his own will, accept Christ as offered to all in the gospel. Such a false teaching makes God dependent on the whims of man. It destroys the sovereignty of God. It leaves God helplessly standing by, His hands tied, waiting patiently for carnal man to “win Christ.”

Literally, the term “win” here means “to gain” or “to acquire.” The idea is that to know Christ, to have “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,” means that we strive to gain or acquire an ever greater knowledge of the Savior. That’s the pursuit of excellence! It means that our souls hunger and thirst after Christ, desiring to know Him more and more. In the opening chapter Paul had prayed for the Philippians that their love “may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment” (1:9). It is true, of course, that as soon as the child of God appropriates Christ by faith he has in principle “won” or gained Christ. One does not gain Christ a little bit at a time, receiving first one, and then another, of the riches of Christ, until he has completely “won” Christ. It is not a piecemeal process. But, principally, “winning” Christ is accomplished the moment one has appropriated Christ and all of His benefits by faith.

Yet, although in principle the believer may have “won” Christ, he continually wins or gains Christ in the way of spiritual growth and development. We see that we have only a taste of Him and His blessings, and we long for a clearer, fuller apprehension of the riches of Christ. When we first believe in Christ, we do not half realize what a wonderful Savior we have! So the purpose is that we become ever more mindful of how wretched we are in ourselves and how great Christ is. Christ becomes ever richer and greater as the object and basis for our faith and hope. To win Christ is everything, for we know that perfect knowledge of Christ awaits us in glory when we shall no longer see through a glass darkly but face to face.

Thus, this knowledge is priceless! Paul speaks of the “excellency” of the knowledge of Christ. This knowledge stands far, far above everything else. It is an all-surpassing knowledge. It is characterized by super-eminence. He is saying that, in comparison with this knowledge, all other things lose their value. The knowledge of Christ is so overwhelmingly excellent that, compared with it, there is nothing that is important. Paul emphasizes that nothing else can constitute



his righteousness before God; nothing else can possibly be the basis for his confidence. We too must confess that the knowledge of Christ is priceless. Nothing may replace or be substituted for that. Nothing may in any way interfere with that incomparable knowledge. That all-surpassing knowledge must be the fundamental goal of our lives.

Notice that there is a progression in Paul's personal appropriation of this knowledge. First he says, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." When he says, "I count all things but loss," he includes much more than he mentioned in the context concerning his descent and his own works. Now Paul includes all of his earthly possessions, his money, his friends, anything and everything that could possibly hinder his knowing Christ.

Then Paul says, "for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." He emphasizes that he had lost whatever was at one time very dear to him for the sake of his Savior. All of those things had been a hindrance to him by being the objects of his trust and confidence. The incomparable preciousness of the knowledge of Christ was still the only thing that mattered. In fact, Paul

underscores that truth when he says, not only that he has suffered the loss of all things, but that he counts them but "dung," that is, worthless, filthy. Not only are all the things in which Paul formerly placed his confidence a loss to him, but they are as manure, as refuse or rubbish that must be cast out. And remember, Paul is writing this letter looking back over the years of his life. Paul was at this very moment imprisoned in Rome nearing the end of his life. His life clearly demonstrates that he renounced all trust and confidence in himself. He would let nothing hinder him from the excellency of the knowledge of Christ!

We too must count all things but loss and dung for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. We must not glory in the flesh, but if necessary we must lose all things for the sake of the knowledge of Christ. Indeed, "for what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. 16:26a). Do you long to gain Christ, to know Him more and more? Is the all-surpassing thing in your life the knowledge of Christ? Knowing Him, we feel we have only begun, even if we are already growing old. For we long to know Him in all His fullness, to see Him face to face, to know as we are known. Rejoice in the unspeakable excellency of the knowledge of Christ!



## Editor's notes

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

# Editor's report on volume 98

At the beginning of this new volume year for the *Standard Bearer*, we have many things to report. We start with the most significant.

## New editors!

At a special and significant Staff meeting on August 31, the *Standard Bearer* Staff appointed two new editors. Rev. Joshua Engelsma and Prof. Brian Huizinga become editors to join the undersigned and to replace Prof. Russell Dykstra and Rev. Kenneth Koole. The Staff is very pleased and encouraged to have these brothers on board.

Readers are aware of Prof. Dykstra's resignation this summer on account of his taking the call to be Byron Center PRC's new pastor. They are unaware that Dykstra's somewhat sudden resignation pre-empted Rev.

Koole's planned announcement of his retirement. Koole has turned 70 years old and was ready to lay down the editorial pen. With Dykstra's resignation, Koole was willing to continue as one of the editors for another year. That is, until the special committee appointed by the staff informed him that they had found *two* men willing to take on an editor's role. Thus, at the Staff meeting, the Staff received Rev. Koole's resignation, thanked him for his seventeen years of service (Rev. Koole began serving with Dykstra and the undersigned in 2004), and appointed Engelsma and Huizinga.

The *SB* Staff which appointed these men is comprised of all the regular writers in the magazine, who now number 38. This body governs the magazine by their decisions to appoint or re-appoint editors, appoint

writers, assign rubrics, and more. In June this multitude of counselors appointed a special committee to search out new editors and then in August judged the recommendation of the committee to be sound: Appoint Engelsma and Huizinga.

Implied in these appointments was a decision to continue the shared editorship. Beginning in 2004, and for the first time in many years, three editors shared the responsibility to write editorials and edit the magazine. Many considerations have led the Staff to conclude that this way of editing the *SB* is wise. Among these considerations is the amount of work required. Few realize the weight of responsibility that the former, sole editors bore when at the same time they labored full time in the pastorate or teaching in the seminary.

Of note, and appreciated as well, is the concurrence of the overseeing bodies of the two new editors. Both Engelsma's consistory and Huizinga's Theological School Committee gave their approval for the men under their care to take on this added responsibility.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma is pastor of Crete (IL) PRC, and former pastor of Doon (IA) PRC. He is a well known writer in the *SB* and author of two RFPA books—*Dating Differently: A Guide to Reformed Dating* (2019) and *Watchman on the Walls of Zion: The Life and Influence of Simon Van Velzen* (2021). He is husband of Courtney and father of six children. Prof. Brian Huizinga presently serves as Professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the PRC Seminary, and formerly was pastor of Redlands (CA) PRC. He is well known for his doctrinal writing in the *SB*. He is husband of Michelle and father of five.

The *SB* staff (and editors) express thanks to God for the seventeen years of labor given by Prof. Dykstra and Rev. Koole. May our good God richly bless the newly appointed editors and cause the *SB* to prosper under their editorship. We must continue to be a witness of the Reformed faith of the Scripture, a defender of the faith, and an instrument to build up Christ's kingdom worldwide.

Now, since the appointment of the two new editors was somewhat sudden, Rev. Koole has consented to write the first two editorials of this volume year. Thus, he writes for this issue and for October 15. The November 1 issue is the special Reformation issue, this year on the Diet of Worms where Luther gave his "Here I stand" speech. On November 15, Prof. Huizinga will begin to write.

### Church news editor and more

Mr. Perry—"trivia-quiz"—VanEgdom is retiring from his position as our news editor. Perry knew how to keep the news interesting, especially with his little opening trivia quiz question to pique interest. We learned about

the church. We thank the brother for his work, for fulfilling his assignments when the deadlines come with killing regularity, and for his evident interest in and love for the life of the church.

We cannot yet divulge who the new "News" editor may be. Although the prospect is optimistic that he can take the position beginning in one year, his optimism is "cautious." We pray that the brother can accept our invitation. The temporary plan for the rubric is to have our managing editor, Mr. Charles Terpstra, with the help of a few others, produce the "News" each month (alternating issues), making use of feature news items from sister churches, mission stations, and so on. Thanks to our tireless managing editor who now wears yet another hat.

We may also note that Dr. Nathan Lanning, a contributor to the "All Thy Works Shall Praise Thee" rubric, resigned this spring. We thank him for his four years of service to the magazine and the valuable contributions he gave.

### Rev. Arie denHartog

After many years of writing for the *SB* in various rubrics, most recently "When Thou Sittest in Thine House," Rev. denHartog lays down the pen. The young minister was asked to contribute to the magazine early in his ministry. His first articles were two on "The Communion of Saints." From there, he wrote over 200 articles for our edification. He retired from the active ministry in 2016. In God's fatherly providence, health problems now prohibit the brother from preaching or writing. But his weaknesses do not hinder him from encouraging visiting ministers to his congregation after they preach. We remember, brother, your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.

### RFPA

Finally, a note of appreciation for the Reformed Free Publishing Association (RFPA), publisher of our magazine. This board of a dozen men have worked hard to establish and maintain a good working relationship with the editors and staff of the *Standard Bearer*. Although the Staff of the *SB* determines the writers and content of the magazine, the RFPA publishes, distributes, advertises, promotes, finances, and everything else important for the witness to go out. Without the RFPA, there is no magazine. Carry on, brothers, in this important work of the Lord.

— BG



## Editorial

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

# Respecting those in authority: Divinely mandated

Honor.  
Respect.  
Esteem.

Three words. Synonyms. In fact, so much so, that to define any one of them is difficult to do so without using the other two. And yet, though they overlap in meaning, each has a different connotation.

As my term as an editor draws to a close, we will use these words to reflect on important issues that face us as believers in our present lawless society, and then along with that, what must be true of ourselves as members of the Protestant Reformed Churches looking forward. That is, if we are to remain in unity of heart and mind as a denomination and community.

As the words listed above apply to our assessment and treatment of others, there is a certain order to what they designate.

Chief of these attitudes towards others, as referred to in Scripture, is the word “esteem” and what it designates. To esteem another means to have a high regard for one. It includes what is signified by the other two—honor and respect—and then adds additional elements, such as valuing the judgments and advice of certain others, viewing them as exemplary, as patterns of behavior to be followed, and, in some instances, even having an affection for them.

The biblical passage that comes to mind when speaking of esteem for others is I Thessalonians 5:13a, where the apostle Paul instructs the Thessalonians how they are to view God-ordained officebearers: “And to esteem them highly in love for their work’s sake.” What is most significant in this verse is the very next phrase out of the apostle’s pen, “And be at peace among yourselves.”

If one does not see the inseparable connection between the two statements, he is willfully blind.

We will come back to this.

The words “respect for” and “showing honor towards” another (as Scripture often uses that latter word and phrase) have different connotations and are less comprehensive. To respect another does not necessarily mean one esteems that other. Whereas esteem applies

to those whom one knows and, in its fullest expression, is reserved for those whose character and behavior one finds exemplary, respect may be shown to those whom one scarcely knows, if at all.

For instance, we want our children to be respectful of others. This is especially true of those with whom they have to deal in school or church. But we expect our children to respect even other adults whom they may not know, whom they may run into in public. One can hardly esteem another whom he does not know. But for all that, we require our children to respect these others. We will not have them speak disrespectfully of those having authority over them, but neither are they to speak with sass to other adults or refuse to acknowledge them. They are to be polite and defer to those who are their superiors, whether they know them well or not.

And then there is the matter of having to honor certain individuals. The question arises, what about those whom one not only does not esteem, but also cannot respect as a person due to his or her immoralities and abuses? Government authorities come to mind, men and women holding office whom we not only do not esteem, but for whom, due to their behavior and godless policies, we have no personal respect.

And yet, as God’s Word makes plain, even such are to be treated with a certain honor, and spoken of and to respectfully. Romans 13:1-7 comes to mind: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers [authorities]. For there is no power [authority] but of God: the powers that be are *of God*” (v. 1). These words, mind you, were addressed first to a body of believers in Rome who were living under the shadow of an ungodly Caesar and his godless senators, rulers who were becoming increasingly anti-Christian and subjecting believers to unrighteous judgments. The apostle goes on to declare, “Wherefore ye must needs be [!] subject.... Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due...*honour to whom honour.*”

You can add to this I Peter 2:17, where the apostle, who himself would be executed by the Roman authorities for Christ’s sake, declares, “Fear God. Honour the king.”

Again, note the two phrases, the one command following hard upon the other. It is plain, we must not claim the one if we are devoid of the other. If one refuses to honor the king (our magistrates), one does not properly fear the God who placed them there. And honoring magistrates applies not only to submitting to them if hauled into their presence, but it applies to our speech as well, how we speak of them to each other day by day.

I don't know about you, but I find the latter (curbing my speech when it comes to our "wonderful" governors and federal politicians) difficult, to say the least. Yes, I realize what I just wrote was sarcasm and not very 'honoring,' but I did so to underscore a point, namely, how difficult it is to refrain from dishonoring our present rulers, how easy it is to transgress in this regard.

As believers we bridle against their blatant unrighteousness. And yet, we are called to refrain from dishonoring them. And it is only as we do so and insist our children do likewise that we distinguish ourselves from the world, that is, as followers of Christ Jesus, who made Himself subject to wicked authorities, submitting Himself to unrighteous rulers of church and state.

Worldlings consider it their "God-given right" to speak with contempt of magistrates, of all those "lousy" politicians whom they despise. Mocking, deriding words for rulers, for these unrighteous, hypocritical civil authorities.

Humanly speaking, understandable. But God-forbidden.

It has become common place amongst ourselves as well, I fear. But derision of rulers it is not a "God-given right." Rather it is transgression of a God-ordained ordinance, "honour to whom honour," meaning, honor displayed towards wicked persons who due to their office yet have a God-ordained authority. Failure to do so means we do not "fear God" as we ought.

We are raising children in a society that despises those placed in authority. There is an escalating spirit of lawlessness. Witness the "defund the police" movement, and the ensuing anarchy with its news-media justification. And if we imagine this lawless despising of authority so prevalent today is not affecting ourselves and our children, we are mistaken.

Such a spirit loose in a society brings judgments of God upon that society. And if not curbed in our own homes and families, it will bear bitter fruit for us in our generations as well, generations that will be required to suffer who knows what abuses by unrighteous civil authorities in the days ahead, maybe sooner than we think.

We must be preparing our youth to suffer these things with a proper Christian spirit of submission. But if they have been taught to dishonor and disparage the magistrates as "worthless rulers," how will they properly subject themselves to such later? We must not be failing in our educating and preparing our youth in this regard by our own rash, deriding, dishonorable speech and example. There is too much at stake for the future, and also for our own present witness of the difference that biblical Christianity makes (at least it should!) in this regard.

But, as much as refraining from dishonoring those who hold civil office ought to concern us these days, what ought to be of even greater concern is how those who hold office *in Christ's church* are regarded and spoken (and written!) about. This command to likewise honor those who hold church office, which is to say, to refrain from speaking rashly about officebearers, even those whom one may judge to be apostatizing or unworthy of esteem, is also clearly scriptural.

We do well to pay heed to the passage in Acts where Paul, having been brought before the apostate Jewish officebearers, spoke vehemently against Ananias the High Priest, likening Ananias to a white-walled sepulcher [a hypocrite]. And then this, "And they that stood by said [to Paul], Revilest thou God's high priest? Then said Paul, I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest; for it is written, *Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people*" (Acts 23:4, 5).

We (and others) better understand that to do so, to speak with contempt in a derogatory and rash manner of officebearers, whatever one may think of these officebearers, is contrary to the apostolic word and not of Christ's Spirit.

We call to mind Jude 3 where Jude wrote, "Likewise also these...*despise dominion, speak evil of dignities*. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee" (vv. 8, 9). Note, a warning against bringing railing accusations even against the Devil.

These warnings against speaking rashly about God-ordained officebearers, and we think of preachers in particular as the most common targets, does not hinge on whether or not one judges them worthy of respect or whether one has any esteem for them. Such license of tongue and pen is of another spirit, namely, one that is reprov'd and condemned by God. It is that in which the Evil One delights. To persist in this derogatory, critical, and abusive speech concerning God-ordained officebearers, whatever one's estimation of their character, abilities, or faithfulness, is not going to carry



with it the blessing of God. Rather, it will bring His judgment upon oneself and one's generations. Especially this is true if it is an assault on the character and labors of officebearers of one's own churches.

The Spirit of Christ in His Word is clear.

I was raised in the home by a father who for some forty years regularly served in the office of elder. The older I become, the greater my esteem for him. Not that he was without weaknesses. But one of those weaknesses was not speaking in demeaning, critical fashion about officebearers, especially about preachers. And he served with a good number of them. With the others he was familiar.

What my siblings can attest to is that in our home we did not hear derogatory, critically demeaning speech about ministers, or for that matter, of our school teachers. Not that our father was oblivious to weaknesses and faults, nor to variation in gifts and abilities granted. More than once, when hearing complaints that this or that one whose preaching some claimed did not measure up to certain others, I recall him saying, "They all cannot be a Calvin or a Hoeksema. They all have their own strengths and weaknesses and abilities. I served with Rev. So & So. He was good pastor. When he left, the congregation was spiritually healthy and living in godliness. He was sincere and diligent. He served the congregation well. The sick and dying never lacked a visit and good pastoral words. There is far too much comparing this man with that these days. No good will come of it."

What he was getting at was that when open, regular criticism of officebearers and teachers becomes commonplace in homes, families begin to unravel with the children growing up and leaving the Reformed community. Why remain? Having heard the qualifications and spirituality of so many openly criticized and judged, they lose all respect for a great many. Why submit oneself to such? According to constant parental assessment, few in places of authority are qualified or trustworthy anyway. Having heard this all their lives, when of age, the children take their leave, turning their backs on all they have been taught. And not for doctrinal reasons.

We ought not be surprised.

What loomed large in my father's biblical vocabulary was the word "forbearance." It is striking how often when Scripture calls believers to love one another in the interests of unity and peace, it inserts a qualifying phrase. And that qualify phrase is "forbearing one another."

Why do you suppose the apostles time and again found it expedient to add that word *forbearing*?

For good reason. The community of believers is made

up of sinners, and if they (we) know little of forbearance for weaknesses and variations of character and abilities, we can kiss unity and goodwill good-bye.

"*Forbearing* one another in love." Without it, so-called 'love,' be it even in the name of 'the truth,' turns into judging others in harsh, unbrotherly, rash terms. And one will dare even to "speak evil of dignities," that is, of those holding God-ordained office, and at last, even of those ordained in Christ's own church.

It can happen too easily, as I think, we by this time, are well aware.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, these things ought not so to be.

In conclusion, we return to the apostolic admonition, "[E]steem them highly in love for their works' sake."

When I entered the ministry some forty years ago, I was a minister in Classis West. What remains with me as I served in that Classis was the esteem the elders and ministers had for each other. We did not agree on every issue. Deliberations were vigorous at times. But this was apparent: We were confident that we all had the same goal in mind, namely, the well-being of the souls entrusted to our care, and the maintenance of the truth of the gospel committed to Christ's church we represented.

I found the same to be true in Classis East and our synods as I was privileged to serve in them. And for that reason, even when decisions were made that were not unanimous, some voicing their dissent, peace and unity was preserved in the churches. As officebearers, we did not doubt the sincerity and integrity of those with whom we served, even when we voted differently on some significant issues. There was a mutual esteem.

It was apparent, men were not serving or voting to push their own agenda, but rather, were concerned with what was in accordance with the Word of God and the will of Christ, and what was in line with the wisdom of the church of all ages.

Where this Spirit rules, and not only in our broader assemblies, but also in our congregations and their families towards God-ordained officebearers and teachers, there, in the end, unity will prevail.

And we will be at peace among ourselves.

May God so grant.





## Taking heed to the doctrine

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

### As to our good works (12)

## Relating good works and justification (h)

Previous article in this series: July, 2021, p. 424.

Most recently in this series I have expounded the biblical concept of the righteousness of Christ which is imputed to us in justification. As our representative head, Jesus came under the law, was rendered guilty in our place, and suffered all the punishment that the law threatens for our transgressions. He suffered *all* the punishment we deserve for our sins. On our behalf He also rendered in full all the obedience that the law demands for the satisfaction of God's justice. He provided *all* the obedience necessary for us to be received back into the favor of God. How tremendously significant then is the righteousness of Christ with respect to *our* suffering and obedience in God's covenant.

### Our suffering

The significance of Christ's righteousness with respect to our suffering in this life is *not* that His suffering the payment of God's wrath for us exempts us from all suffering. Paul expressly states that Christ left suffering behind for His church (Col. 1:24) and that we must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of heaven (Acts 14:22). The church always passes through fires (Is. 43:2); therefore, when a fiery trial comes we should never be perplexed as though some strange thing has happened unto us (I Pet. 4:12). In addition to all the calamities common to our race—plague, pestilence, famine, and earthquake—"all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (II Tim. 3:12). God lays upon our back a cross of tribulation as we follow Jesus. We must and we do suffer.

The significance of Christ's suffering on our behalf as the sin-bearer is that He made the once-for-all payment for our sins so that when God sovereignly brings suffering into our life it is never visited upon us as payment for sin. The inspired apostle Peter teaches, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God...." Once! "Once" means *once for all*, having perpetual validity and never needing repetition. Christ suffered once for our sins, hence we cannot be made to suffer for them a second time. The just God *never* visits penal judgments upon His peo-

ple requiring them to atone for their sins. He chastens, He scourges, and He corrects. He lays His heavy hand upon us and makes us suffer in order to strengthen our faith and our life of consecration; nevertheless, not one millisecond of that suffering is payment for sin. By our good works of bearing up in our suffering, loving God, loving our neighbor, submitting to God, and confessing God's goodness, we do not and we cannot and we must not attempt to make any atonement for any of our past or present transgressions. God will never lay an atoning cross upon us.

While in the midst of suffering, the unbelieving, impenitent sinner who rejects admonitions and stubbornly persists in sin possesses no assurance that Christ died for him but must tremble before the everlasting wrath of God. He must know that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31), and he must hear the call to repentance, "Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning. And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God, for he is gracious and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil" (Joel 2:12-13). If you are such an impenitent sinner, turn from your evil ways! Our prayer of love for impenitent sinners is that God the Spirit will accompany the call to turn and through that call effectually soften their hearts that are hard as flint so that they turn in sincere repentance.

However, there must be no terror in the heart of the penitent believer in the day of adversity. When troubles round him swell and fears and dangers throng, when loved ones are suddenly taken in death, when disease ravages his flesh and his agonizing thorn leaves him writhing upon his bed, when foes scorn him, when Satan buffets him, when his own son rises up and calls him accursed, when floods or fires destroy his dwelling place, then in his suffering he flees by faith to the Rock that is higher than he. The Rock is made of three words (in the Greek of John 19:30, one word—*tetelestai*) IT IS FINISHED! All the wages for the sins of the believer have been paid

by Jesus Christ the Righteous in His sufferings. Upon the Rock the child of God confidently sings, “Upon the bed of suffering, Jehovah will sustain, and in his sickness God will soothe the weariness and pain” (Psalter 113, stanza 3). In his deepest agony he confesses with certainty, “God is not against me. God is not punishing me for my sins. In this too, God loves me and is for me.” When he comes to the very end of his life and the grave begins to open its mouth for him, he does not fear some mythical, dancing flames of a purgatory, the real flames of hell, or the face of a Divine Creditor who will bark, “Pay that thou owest!” The gospel rings in his heart, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus...” (Rom. 8:1).

Do not try to pay. Do not subject yourself to pain and torture as a way to appease the wrath of God, soothe your guilty conscience, remove your sense of shame, and attempt to feel the nearness of God. There is for the sinner no healing and no sense of the peace of God in the works of self-harm—personal berating, starving, cutting, burning, overworking, or withdrawal from friendships and fellowship. Healing is found in Christ alone, and knowing God’s acceptance and approval of you in Him.

### **Our obedience**

The significance of Christ’s righteousness with respect to our obedience is not that His perfect fulfillment of the law of God exempts us from the obligation to obey the law. We must obey the law of God, the substance of which is, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength.” The law is holy, just, and good (Rom. 7: 12) and to the believer its commandments are not grievous (I John 5:3). So far is it from being true that the obedience of Christ on our behalf dissolves our obligation to keep the law, that His work actually strengthens the obligation and desire of justified believers to keep the law. Now, out of their inmost heart of profoundly deep gratitude for Christ’s infinite sacrifice and God’s infinite redeeming love, justified believers delight in obeying their covenant God. Any zealous defense of sovereign grace that casts aside the moral law of God and makes it inoperative in the life of the justified believer arises out of a zeal that is not according to knowledge.

The significance of Christ’s obedience for us is that it constitutes our righteousness before God now and forever. With that righteousness we have a right to all the blessings of salvation including life eternal. When God showers blessings upon us by opening up the storehouses of Christ’s treasury in heaven, He does not bless us because we first gave Him obedience as the key that un-

locks those blessings for us. God freely showers blessings upon us for the sake of Jesus Christ the Righteous. God does not pardon us because we obey Him, but because Christ obeyed Him. God does not bow down His ear, hear, and answer us because we earn it by our obedience, but because Christ earned it by His obedience. God does not receive us into His presence and fellowship because we live in good works of obedience, but because Christ our Mediator lived the perfect life of obedience. Not even our faith, important and necessary as it is, makes us worthy of the presence and blessings of God. Only the righteousness of the obedient Christ opens up for us a way unto God.

You are mistaken and are living a life of bondage and fear (pride too) if you think that by all your obedient striving to keep God’s law you can earn communion with God, or you can obtain a ticket to enter heaven, or you now have the solid ground on which to be confident that God will hear and answer your prayers. You are toiling like a bondservant if you cast your weary body upon your bed at night and dare not turn to God in prayer because you failed in so many respects to carry out the obedience that He required of you and that you purposed in your heart. If you dare not pray because you so shamefully transgressed His law, you are living a performance-based life in which you wrongly suppose that God’s hearing of you depends upon your obedience and not Christ’s. You are a child in the house of God, not a slave. Go to God by faith in Christ, pour out your heart and confess your sins before Him. He will hear you, pardon you, and bless you. Of course the Father will not cast out but receive His children who come to Him in Christ, for He is the One by whose sovereign drawing they came.

It is a daily struggle for every believer to attain to the high mark of the glory of God in all his thoughts, words, and deeds. No matter how diligently we strive to obey every precept of God each day in our station and calling, we fall short over and over again. We simply do not do what we are called to do or even what we set out to do, and our conscience does not fail to remind us that we have fallen short. We cannot argue against the conclusion of any adversary, “You are not worthy of God’s ear, presence, love and favor.” There is unspeakable relief and freedom in the knowledge of Christ’s perfect, “active” obedience, and that our peace with God is never based on our performance but Christ’s. Enjoying the presence and gifts of God, we are motivated to a holy life of obedience to the law and willing to suffer reproach for Christ in order that God’s name might be magnified for the power of His effectual grace working in us.

With this article I bring to a conclusion my treatment of the relation between justification and our good works. My intent was to continue the series “As to Our Good Works” by taking up the subject “Relating Good Works and Sanctification.” However, my appointment as editor requires that I depart from this rubric and discontinue my series. Some of what I had hoped to

include in this rubric will be incorporated into my editorials, in which I plan, Lord willing, to address some of the fundamental doctrinal issues treated by our PRC synods after 2018.

Now let us give all diligence and add to our faith many virtues that we be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Pet. 1:5-8).



## Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

# Worldwide preaching and the return of Christ (1)

The end of time is coming, and coming quickly. Soon this world and all that is in it will be subjected to a great upheaval and a violent conflagration. Soon we will be forever separated from every earthly possession, pursuit, and pleasure. For soon our Lord Jesus Christ will return on the clouds of glory in mighty power to fulfill His promise to bring the history of this world to its close. There will be no earthly utopia. There will be no earthly kingdom of Christ. Instead, the Lord the righteous Judge will destroy it all.

We who confess such things are often accused of being pessimistic. But the Word of God makes clear that this is a true and faithful confession. It is the confession of those who live by faith in God and His Christ. The true believer is not a pessimist or a defeatist. He is optimistic and lives with hope in his heart. He is thankful that an end is coming, and that it is coming soon. His believing perspective is described in Luke 21:28. When he notices that the end is approaching, he looks up. He lifts up his head toward heaven. By faith he looks away from all that is earthly and focuses on that which is heavenly. He does so with great joy, for he knows that his redemption is near.

In today's climate of untold problems in the world as well as grievous struggles in the church, who among us has not been much more conscious of the return of Christ? How can any believer, living under such difficult circumstances, not be more interested in and not turn his mind more often to Scripture's eschatology? The precursory signs are increasingly obvious, and through them the Lord awakens us from spiritual slumber and directs our focus to His return.

Significant and disturbing events are happening in the

world and in our lives. The news is filled with reference to and analysis of a worldwide pandemic (the pale horse in Revelation 6). We see the drastic effects of this pandemic and the responses to it on the economy (the black horse in Revelation 6). Much more significantly, we see the negative effects on the church and on the preaching of the gospel (the white horse in Revelation 6).

There are also other signs aplenty that point to the nearness of Christ's return: terrorism and war (the red horse of Revelation 6), natural catastrophes, increasing ungodliness, riotous living, abounding apostasy, violent rebellion against authority, a crazed pursuit of sinful pleasure, and a world in which every man does what is right in his own eyes.

I trust we are not so spiritually dull that we fail to notice these signs. I trust you hear Christ's footsteps as He approaches. I trust you realize from all these signs that soon the heavens will open and soon your Savior will appear in order to condemn and destroy, and in order to vindicate and save.

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Among the many precursory signs, however, there is one sign that is the sign of all signs. It stands out as the most prominent of them all, for it is of central importance for the coming of Christ. It is the sign that most clearly demonstrates that His return is near. And that is the sign of the worldwide preaching of the gospel.

The nearness of the end is not confirmed so much by war or pestilence or terrible ungodliness. Nor is it confirmed so much by apostasy or the appearance of the Antichrist. But it is confirmed by this, that the gospel is preached in all the earth.



That this is the sign of all signs is specifically stated in Christ's final discourse to His disciples in Matthew 24 when He said: "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt. 24:14).

God's Word is clear that Christ will return only when His gospel has been preached in all the world and has accomplished His purpose of hardening the wicked and, more importantly, of saving the elect. What sign can be more significant than the one which accomplishes the salvation of the church? What sign can be more important than the one that, when it has been fulfilled, determines that "then" Christ will return?

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This is confirmed in Revelation 6. Of the four horses mentioned there, the first is the white horse. This horse, along with its rider, goes forth conquering and to conquer. This represents the victorious, worldwide preaching of the gospel through men Christ calls and sends as preachers of His Word. That the white horse is mentioned first shows that the victorious preaching of the gospel is preeminent. That preaching dominates the whole New Testament age. Everything else follows from and is subservient to it.

We also read of this in Article 37 of the Belgic Confession which states that "when the time appointed by the Lord (which is unknown to all creatures) is come, and the number of the elect complete, that [then] our Lord Jesus Christ will come from heaven, corporally and visibly, as He ascended, with great glory and majesty to declare Himself Judge of the quick and the dead, burning this old world with fire and flame to cleanse it." When the preaching has brought about the completion of the number of the elect, then Christ will appear without delay and bring all things to an end.

Reformed believers understand and confess that the preaching of the gospel in all the earth is crucial with a view to the end and the return of Christ.

The prominence of this sign is seen by how it relates to the other precursory signs. Many of the other signs are dependent upon this one. As the following examples show, the preaching of the gospel is a sign that causes these others to happen.

First of all, the preaching of the gospel brings about the sign of apostasy, for the rejection of the truth can only take place when and where that truth is first of all preached and proclaimed. Secondly, the sign of preaching is a significant cause of the sign of lawlessness, for lawlessness and ungodliness arise in men's wicked hearts when they hear and then hate and reject the demands of God's Word in the preaching. Thirdly, the sign of preaching also brings about persecution, for the wicked not only hate and rebel against the truth that is preached, but they also persecute those who embrace and confess it. The preaching of the gospel is clearly the prominent and controlling sign.

That this is the most prominent sign means that the worldwide preaching of the Word, more than any other precursory sign, tells us how close the end of time is. When watching for the end, therefore, our minds should focus first of all and foremost on this sign. And as we hope to see in our next article, that will lead us to conclude (correctly) that Christ's final return is indeed on the horizon.

What a gift and blessing of Christ when He leads us to observe this sign. Then we will cry out all the more earnestly, "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly."

[to be continued]

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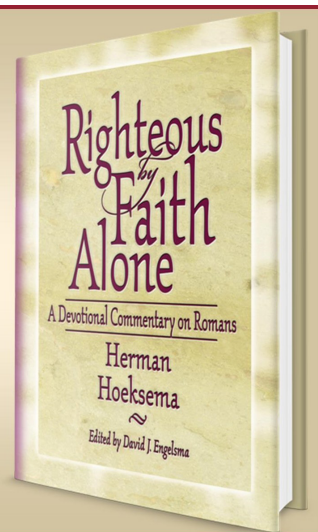
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## Ministering to the saints

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

### The elders' work of oversight (4): Overseeing the officebearers

Previous article in this series: February 1, 2021, p. 205.

In our last article we noted that the elders must oversee the election and installation of officebearers, and the work of officebearers. Doing that, they oversee the various offices in the church. Now we see that their oversight is even more specific: it extends to the doctrine and life of every officebearer personally.

#### Overseeing their doctrine and life

The elders are to oversee both the doctrine and the life of the church's officebearers—that is, they oversee each officebearer personally. The Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons requires this of them: “Therefore, in the first place, the office of elders is...to take the oversight of the church which is committed to them, and diligently to look whether every one properly deports himself in his confession and conversation.” It also requires this specifically regarding the minister: “Thirdly. It is also the duty particularly to have regard unto the doctrine and conversation of the ministers of the Word.” And the Church Order (Articles 53 and 54) requires all officebearers to sign the Formula of Subscription, ensuring that their own doctrines and faith corresponds to that set forth in our Reformed creeds. But also Scripture requires it: the elders are to oversee the flock (Acts 20:28), and yet they themselves are part of that flock. They must oversee their own doctrine and life.

For two reasons the elders oversee more than the work of the officebearers. First, the doctrine that a man professes and the life that he lives must adorn the work he does in God's covenant and church. That God would give inspired instruction regarding the qualifications of officebearers (I Tim. 3; Titus 1) is itself warrant to say that the elders must oversee the doctrine and life of every officebearer. How a pastor lives, conducts his family, and treats other people, all affect the people's ability to receive, hear, and respect him as the servant of Christ. How an elder or deacon lives affects the people's respect for that man when he comes to visit them.

Second, Jesus Christ is the King of the church. He is this not only regarding the church as an institute, gath-

ered for worship, but also regarding the church as an organism. Every member of the church is part of the living body of Christ that He governs. Therefore, the elders rightly oversee the doctrine and life of the members of the church, including her officebearers.

The point is that God does not permit a compartmentalization of one's life, so that one's “private life” is in conflict with his “public life.” Nor does God require the elders to oversee only the public life, or only the ecclesiastical life, of an officebearer. Everything regarding that officebearer's doctrine and life is subject to the oversight of the elders.

Having defended the proposition that the elders do have this oversight of the officebearers personally, let us note exactly what it is that the elders oversee.

“Doctrine” refers both to what the officebearers *believe* and to what they *teach*. The officebearers must believe that which is taught in Scripture and the Reformed creeds. If they believe something contrary to Scripture and the confessions, even if they are not actively teaching it, the elders must address the matter, for everyone who confessed their faith publicly stated that they believe the doctrines taught in Scripture and in the Reformed confessions to be the true and complete doctrine of salvation.

It follows that what the officebearers teach is under the elders' oversight. Certainly this means that the elders as a body oversee the preaching and the catechism instruction, even when the elders do the catechizing. But the work of the pastor involves teaching in his pastoral visits, and the work of the elders and deacons involves teaching as they bring the Word of God to God's people in committee visits. In other words, every aspect of the work of the pastor, elders, and deacons, at every single moment and in every single circumstance, is under the oversight of the elders.

“Life” refers to every aspect of their conduct—in public and in private, not only when doing church work but also in the officebearers' daily vocations and in their own homes. How an officebearer treats his wife and disciplines his children, how he runs his business and



performs his work, and even what he does in his spare time, is under the oversight of the elders.

How do the elders carry out this oversight?

Certainly they ought not micromanage the doctrine and life of the officebearers. No committee of elders would ordinarily be assigned to visit the workplace of another elder, or to investigate how he runs his home. But if they hear that an officebearer's conduct or teaching does not accord with Scripture, or is not glorifying to God, or does not promote the gospel, or does not manifest love to his neighbor, the elders may address that matter with the officebearer. If the officebearer steals from or lies to his boss, and the consistory is aware of it, they must rebuke him and call him to repent. If he states falsehood on the witness stand in the courtroom or in some public venue, the consistory is to address it. For then the man has transgressed God's law, and the enforcing of this law in every area of life is an ecclesiastical matter. To put it differently, then the man has in some regard departed from right doctrine or conduct, and brings reproach on the name of God and the church. For this reason, nothing about his doctrine or life, no matter in what circumstance, is beyond the oversight of the elders.

Usually the consistory is more readily aware of an officebearer's personal relationship to the congregation, and of the work the officebearer does in the congregation. The elders manifest their oversight, partly, by approving the work of the various committees of officebearers. They also oversee their work when mutual censure (*censura morem*) is conducted before the Lord's Supper.

This oversight means that the elders, as a body, may administer an admonition, or even more strongly, a rebuke, to a fellow elder, or to the minister or deacon. They might require that he confess his sin, and/or that he make amends in some way. They might require that he cease a practice in which he had regularly engaged. And they may require him to demonstrate that he has taken their admonitions and rebukes to heart. Even if the congregation never becomes aware of this matter, if it stays in the close confines of the consistory room, the elders may do this.

That the elders have this oversight has a very specific application: no officebearer may claim that some aspect of his life is not under the oversight or jurisdiction of the elders, or is not an ecclesiastical matter. I refer to Church Order Article 30: "In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted." The point of this article is that the consistories and assemblies may not, and ought not, deal with political, social, or economic issues. They need not enter into a personal dis-

pute between an officebearer and his employer, or an officebearer and a representative of the government of his state, province, or nation.

However, everything about how the man lives and what he says is subject to the oversight of the consistory, and is an ecclesiastical matter. If this is true of the elders and deacons by virtue of their being officebearers, it is all the more true of the minister, whose life must be devoted to the congregation that he serves. Whether a minister may serve on some board of another organization, or start a new magazine, or join some civic club, and to which schools he will send his children and for what reasons, is an ecclesiastical matter, not only because he is an officebearer, but because he has been called to serve a local congregation, whose consistory oversees not only his work, but also his doctrine and life.

### Discipline of officebearers

It stands to reason, then, that the elders may also administer ecclesiastical discipline to an officebearer in accord with Articles 71-77 of the Church Order, and may suspend and depose an officebearer in accord with Articles 79-80.

It is not my intent to spell out the procedure to follow in such instances; the elders can find that in the Church Order.

Rather, my purpose here is to show that this aspect of the work belongs to the elders *alone*. The deacons join with the elders in the election and installation of officebearers. At *censura morem*, the deacons also play a role in ensuring that every officebearer faithfully discharges the duty of his office. And, because every member of the church has the calling to admonish and warn brothers and sisters whose doctrine and walk does not accord with Scripture, in a general way the deacons are also involved in that work. But as regards ecclesiastical discipline of officebearers, and as regards suspension and deposition, the elders act apart from the deacons. The exception to this is when the deacons are added to the consistory in keeping with Article 37 of the Church Order.

That the elders alone do the work of discipline, including suspension and deposition, is clear from the Church Order. Articles 74-77, regarding Christian discipline, speak of the calling of the "consistory." The Church Order consistently uses the word "consistory" to refer to the elders. When it speaks of the elders and deacons, it specifies that: "the consistory and the deacons." Here the word "consistory" only is used. The same is true of Article 79, regarding suspension and deposition. Regardless of which office one holds, and

whether one will be immediately deposed or only suspended, such is to happen “by preceding sentence of the consistory thereof,” that is, by the decree of the elders of the congregation.

This underscores that the office of elder is a unique office, with a unique calling. In a particular way, the office of elder manifests the kingship of Jesus Christ in and over His church. As the Old Testament king, not the priest or prophet, was called to administer judgments to those who sinned against God, so the New Testament elders are to do this work. The minister will be involved in it as an elder, but the deacons need not and ought not be involved in it. Their office is not that of oversight and rule.

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Elders, the church of Jesus Christ needs you to do your

work in regard to overseeing the doctrine and life of the church’s officebearers. Neglect or failure to do this will harm the church!

Elders, Jesus Christ requires you to do this work. He put you in office. Neglect or failure is disobedience to Jesus Christ!

So do not be intimidated by your pastor. Do not be swayed by your fellow elder and friend. Do not be influenced by an outspoken deacon. Oversee the doctrine and life of every officebearer. Carry out your calling!

The church that you oversee fervently prays that you do so. Christ, whom you serve, has equipped you to do so. So take this part of your calling seriously! Consciously, soberly, lovingly, humbly, righteously, and in every other way that shows Christ is working in and through you, do this—oversee the doctrine and life of your fellow officebearers.



## Strength of youth

Rev. Ryan Barnhill, pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Dyer, Indiana

# Authority (1) The idea

Authority. We begin a series of articles unpacking that word, with this article spelling out the ABCs of the topic. Why a series on this subject?

First, this matter of authority is foundational. Q&A 93 of the Heidelberg Catechism says that the Ten Commandments are divided into two tables: “...the first of which teaches us how we must behave towards God; the second, what duties we owe to our neighbor.” Within that second table of the law, the fifth commandment is *first*. And that fifth commandment concerns authority. The order of the commandments is not arbitrary. In God’s wisdom, it is not, for example, the sixth commandment (the neighbor’s life) that is first, or the eighth commandment (the neighbor’s possessions), but the fifth commandment. Proper attitude toward authority, which the fifth commandment is about, is basic to “what duties we owe to our neighbor.” We will revisit this matter in more detail later in the series.

Second, authority is such a prominent part of our life. Everyone is under authority: employees, the citizens of a nation, the people of a congregation, and many others. But especially is this true of young people who live in the home and are under the rule of their parents: authority

is more thickly weaved through the life of the child and teenager than any other age group. Just like anything else, you want to learn as much as you can about something that is so commonly found in your life. Do you eat and drink every day? Then you want to study up on healthy eating and nutrition. Have you started at a new job? You will want to learn the ropes carefully. Similarly, in our youth we encounter authority daily. Do we not desire to grow in our knowledge of what it is?

Third, what authority *is* might be somewhat fuzzy to us. This is not to say we know nothing about it, but only that the sharpening of our understanding never hurts. If someone walked up to you at church or in the hallway at school and asked you to define authority, could you do that? And notice the question: not *who* is in authority, but what authority *is*. The answer to that question is not some abstract, non-essential matter in life and relationships. Rather, the definition is vital and will shape the way you view and treat authority.

Fourth, authority is challenged today, which drives us to see what the Bible says about it. Many are the voices in the world shouting for our attention, telling us what to think about this matter. These voices are like so many

battering rams, seeking to undermine authority at every point. Rebellion against and the total disregard for those set in their positions by God is as common as it is appalling. Turn on the local, national, or world news: you need not wait long to see disobedience on full display. These voices in society are loud enough that the church hears them. Some view the ecclesiastical ruling bodies with an eye of suspicion, as if they are corrupt and abusive power structures. The anti-authority message reaches the ears of young people through media of all sorts, encouraging disrespect toward parents in the home. Even as we read this paragraph, we must confess: this challenging of authority is found in *our* hearts. How necessary, therefore, to hear about authority and our attitude toward it from a biblical perspective.

We make a beginning in these articles by getting at the idea of authority. To that end, let's take a fill-in-the-blank quiz. Authority is \_\_\_\_\_. How would you fill in that blank?

### What is authority?

As you take pen in hand, you might fill in the blank with, "Authority is *respect*." That is, if a person is respectable or over time earns my respect, I can recognize that he is in a position over me. Or you might write, "Authority is *agreement*." That is, if I can agree with what my dad and mom have decided, then I will submit to it. Or you jot down, "Authority is *muscle and size*." If that police officer who walks up to my open car window has a commanding bodily presence, then I'll be quicker to cooperate with what he says. Or you scribble, "Authority is *intelligence*." That is, if the teacher, parent, or officebearer is smarter than I am, then I can look up to such a one. The implication in all of this, is that if someone is *not* respectable, convincing enough, sizable, or intellectually capable, then he or she may be disobeyed.

Filling in the blanks with those words will guarantee you a failing grade on this quiz.

To be sure, one in authority might very well possess all those qualities (and we certainly wish that someone over us would be respectable, in particular). But someone in a position of authority might not have these characteristics. We must fill in that blank with another definition.

The correct answer for the quiz is: "Authority is *the right to rule*." This rule involves fixing laws, making determinations about obedience or disobedience, meting out penalties for disobedience, and so much more. Importantly, the right to do all of this does not originate from those in authority positions. The town mayor, the father in the home, and the elder at church do not have

authority *in themselves*. Rather, it is a rule which is *given* to them.

This immediately shifts our attention to the Triune God with the man Christ Jesus at His right hand. God has all authority, has conferred authority upon Jesus Christ according to His human nature, and through Christ has bestowed the right to rule upon certain people in the earth. Let's unfold this a bit.

God has all authority and all authority is from Him. God has the right to rule, and He has that in Himself. He, the sovereign God, is the Creator of heaven and earth with all that is in them. He owns all things that He has created. God is God!

The Triune God has conferred authority upon Jesus Christ according to His human nature. Follow the path of Jesus' suffering: He walked that dark road, beginning already in Bethlehem. On that way He continued, heading steadily and willingly to the cross. On the tree He hung suspended between heaven and earth, suffering for sin. He died for all His sheep. Having satisfied the justice of God, He was raised from the dead, ascended into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. The ascended and exalted Lord Jesus Christ, King of kings and Lord of lords, has all authority (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22).

Through Christ God has given authority to certain people on earth. That is, God has bestowed upon certain individuals, in various spheres, the right to rule.

**#1: The home.** Foundational is the authority God has given to parents. So basic is parental rule, that the fifth commandment specifically mentions father and mother: "Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Ex. 20:12). Also in the home, God has appointed the husband as *head* of his wife (Eph. 5:23). There is the school, the extension of the home, where teachers stand in the place of parents.

**#2: The church.** God has set in His church officebearers, who occupy a position of rule in the congregation (I Thess. 5:12, 13).

**#3: The government.** This includes figures on the national, state, and local level (Rom. 13).

**#4: The workplace.** This is a phase of life into which you have likely transitioned or in which you will soon find yourself. The Word of God teaches us that the employer has authority over employees (Eph. 6:5).

**#5: The gray head.** This has to do with age and Scripture's call for us to honor those who are older (Lev. 19:32).

Clearly, the Bible speaks to the various spheres in which God has given authority. So do our confessions. If asked where in our creeds we would find something on authority, most of us would mention Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 39, an explanation of the fifth com-

mandment: “What doth God require in the fifth commandment? That I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.” These few sentences pack in many truths we will take the time to expand upon later in the series. But there are other confessional references. Perhaps Article 36 of the Belgic Confession comes to your mind: God has “appointed” the magistrate; furthermore, we are to “subject [ourselves] to the magistrates; to pay tribute, to show due honor and respect to them, and to obey them in all things which are not repugnant to the Word of God....” Take some time on a few Sunday afternoons to read through the creeds. Where else do you find the idea of God-appointed rule?

There it is—the ABCs of authority: God has all au-

thority, has conferred authority upon Jesus Christ according to His human nature, and through Christ has bestowed the right to rule upon certain people in the earth. This helps us have the proper perspective toward those set above us. When dad is carrying out discipline, or the teacher is setting down classroom rules, or the elders come knocking for family visitation, you must not merely observe a dad enforcing, a teacher talking, or an elder walking in. But you must see, by faith, *God in heaven who has through Christ* given that dad, that teacher, or that elder to rule over you. Lord’s Day 39, based on the fifth commandment, teaches us about our father and mother (and all in authority), that it “pleases God to govern us by their hand.” Oh, how this changes the way we view authority and the attitude we have toward them—we look past them to God Himself! God grant you, by His grace, to have this perspective more and more.



## In memoriam

Mr. Don Doezema, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan

# Rev. Jason L. Kortering: In memoriam

“Come and get it, Jay.”

Those words, recalled Rev. Jason L. Kortering some fifty years later, were the exact words spoken—at his graduation from seminary in 1960. We’ll return to them in a moment. Suffice it to say, now, that informality seems to have been the order of the day.

Have you been at the seminary on Ivanrest recently? If so, you were greeted by a full-time receptionist. Just to your right, you would have seen an office for the registrar, one of whose duties is the calculating of cumulative grade-point averages and of the regular reporting of them to the students. Going then to your left, you would find yourself in a huge library. Exploring even further, you would find no fewer than five offices for professors—current, retiring, and recently elected.

Now scroll back, if you will, to Jay Kortering’s seminary years 1957-1960. Classroom—last room on the north side of the west end of the single hall of Adams St. School. Library—non-existent. Registrar—what’s *that*? Students—one, Jay Kortering. Professors—Rev. H. Hoeksema and, till his incapacitating stroke in 1958, Rev. G.M. Ophoff. After that stroke, it was Revs. G. Vos, H. Hanko, and B. Woudenberg, for Dutch, Church

History, and O.T. History, respectively, for one year, till Prof. H.C. Hoeksema arrived on the scene in 1959.

What did Jay think of Rev. Hoeksema and Rev. Ophoff? In retrospect, he said, “old and tired.” But, also in retrospect, he remembers having much appreciated them both. Concerning Ophoff, for example: “I was pretty happy. We worked hard on Hebrew grammar. He couldn’t keep much straight, but in his old age he could sleep Hebrew, I think. So we worked nicely together—even though he couldn’t ever keep the every-day activities straight. If we had finished a unit, and the next day or so I had to have a test, I had to call him in the morning to remind him that I had a test.”

An internship had no part in Rev. Kortering’s seminary training. But he did have opportunity to bring “words of edification” in the churches during those three years. In the January 19, 1958 bulletin of Hope Church (Grand Rapids), there was this announcement: “The pastor is filling a classical appointment today in Kalamazoo. We welcome to our pulpit Student J. Kortering and Rev. G. Ophoff.” Nothing seems particularly noteworthy about that—till one takes note of the *date*. In January of 1958 student J. Kortering had been





January 15, 1936-  
December 20, 2020

in seminary for...*one semester*.

“Frankly,” said Rev. Kortering years later, “I look back and think that I did not learn really good skills in the seminary training. If I look at the men today, I think, Oh my, oh my. I had nothing. I got caught in the transition.”

“And, thankfully,” he adds, “I made it.” Which brings us back to “Come and get it, Jay”—a fitting conclusion to the ‘looseness’ that characterized his three years of training,

during which, he says, he never got a report card. “They reported to synod, evidently, what my grades were, but they never told me. And I was a laid-back kind of guy. If they don’t want to tell me, I guess that’s okay. All the way through, I never got a report card or any information about how I did academically.” A “looseness” that persisted right through graduation. A kind of informality that could have been demonstrated by no one better than Rev. H. Veldman, who as president of the TSC had the honor of presenting the diploma that marked the successful conclusion of three years of study by Jason L. Kortering. (No one who knew Rev. Veldman can read this without a smile!) “Well,” says Rev. Veldman, “we don’t have any diplomas. We’re going to have to get some printed. So, now all we have is a rolled-up blank piece of paper. Come and get it, Jay.” Ah yes, that was sixty years ago. “And I think today,” says Rev. Kortering, “wow, we have really, really dotted the i’s and crossed the t’s and made it really good, made it respectable.”<sup>1</sup>

In the fall of 1960 Rev. Kortering arrived in Hull PRC in Iowa. His first charge. How will *this* go—after a seminary training that, as we have seen, included neither an internship nor even a class in Poimenics, but did have instruction from two men who could be described accurately as “old and tired” but were nevertheless ‘master craftsmen’? The fruit of the former showed itself at the beginning of young Rev. Kortering’s ministry, and of the latter, throughout the whole of it.

One example of the former, Rev. Kortering recalled vividly years later. After he had been at Hull for only a few months, he received a telephone call from the mortician at a local funeral home. A stillborn child, he was told, of a member of his congregation. And there will of course be a service...today. This afternoon. “Well, I had had no pastoral teaching [no Poimenics] at sem. And I had no internship.” So...a desperate call from the parsonage in Hull to the parsonage of a colleague in the ministry. “What do I do with *this*?” “Oh,” was the response, “you read the Bible, pray, and that’s it.” The large family soon gathered in the farmhouse, and the little coffin was carried by the man from the funeral home into the kitchen and all eyes turn to the pastor. “I read the Bible, made a few comments (just ad-libbed something about it), and had prayer. And then, I’ll never forget it, the man from the funeral home says to me, ‘It’s so cold. Why don’t we have the committal here?’ And in my head is: ‘committal—what’s *that*? I don’t even know what a committal *is*.’ It was that bad. This is spinning my head. I’m right on the spot. And this has to be right *now*. So I made some comments from I Corinthians 15, and then just had prayer. And I felt just awful! Just awful! Can you imagine a minister acting that way and not even knowing anything? So I’m a big supporter of internships to help these students.”

Just one more early-ministry experience of Rev. Kortering. This one from his first round of family visitation. One of those visits he recalled clearly, even after 50 years. It was, he says, with a “nice spiritual family—an older couple.” “Are you edified by the word?” he asked. “No!” “No?” “No, you take away all our comfort.” (No wonder that the recollection of *that* visit remained vivid years later!) “I thought, What? I’m preaching my heart out—and taking away all their comfort?” Not knowing, at the moment, what they were talking about, young Rev. Kortering asked them for an explanation. “Well, they did some explaining. And it went along this line that, ‘when you preach, you call us to *do* something. And we can’t do anything. So you lead us to complete frustration. We have to do something we can’t do. And we have no comfort.’ I discovered, later on, that that’s very typically antinomian. They saw the Reformed faith to be that Jesus has done it all, and that we have no responsibility. In a certain sense our Split of 1953 had that effect on some people. Rev. Heys told me this. He said, ‘Jay, at the time of the Split, you couldn’t even preach the commands of the Bible without being charged with conditions.’” On reflection, therefore, Rev. Kortering saw the explanation offered by the old couple to be “bad, bad theology. But, as a young preacher, to have someone say that on a first round of

<sup>1</sup> Lots of quotation marks in this article. A frequent source was the transcribed version of an interview with Rev. Kortering conducted by Mr. Mark Hoeksema in June 2009.



family visitation, wow, that set me back. The whole night I couldn't sleep."

Hardly was that reaction to Rev. Kortering's preaching representative of that of his parishioners generally. To be convinced of that, one need only read a few of the expressions of deep appreciation for his ministry by those who profited from it. There is this, for example, from a man in Calvary PRC, concerning sermons preached there after Rev. Kortering's retirement: "For myself, I must take issue with the old saying that 'You can't go home.' For me to close my eyes, and listen to you begin a prayer, brought me right back to my childhood [in Hull], and the many worship services and catechism classes that I attended, led by you. It was truly a comfort and joy for me to hear the voice of the shepherd that I knew as an immature lamb."

Rev. Kortering served as pastor in a number of churches in the PRC. After an initial six years in Hull (IA), he was for four in Hope, Grand Rapids. That was followed by another six years in Hull. Then three in Redlands (CA), five in Loveland (CO), and six in Grandville (MI). For a total of thirty years.

Hardly, however, was that the end of Rev. Kortering's service to our churches. "I had always," Rev. Kortering recalled, "had an interest in missions. I had always wanted to learn more about missions." And what he had especially in mind was *foreign* missions. Twice, he said, an opportunity seemed to present itself, when he was asked by the DMC to go to Jamaica. "But each time my consistory said no." He knew and understood why they said no but, nevertheless, he was both times disappointed. "I wanted to get some exposure. What's it like to get into another country, and see what mission work there is like."

It was during what would be his last year as pastor in the PRC that Rev. Kortering had an opportunity to begin to learn the answer to those questions. It happened that there were difficulties in the ERCS at the time, and the Contact Committee looked for a senior minister to go to Singapore for half a year to render some assistance. They asked Rev. Kortering, and, to his delight, his Grandville consistory was agreeable.

As one who knows Rev. Kortering would expect, he threw himself into that work, which was considerable. But, also true to character, he did not forget his flock on the other side of the world. In what may have been his first monthly letter to his home congregation, he expressed sympathy to a bereaved member, assured another family of his prayers for them in their "special time of need," congratulated two couples on the births of babies, and expressed his delight in hearing that another member was "recovering well." All, of course, by name. A shepherd's heart.

Then in that same letter he told something of his work in Singapore. As, for example, this. At the conclusion of his second lecture, he wrote, "Someone brought a juice to me while I was still standing in the front of the auditorium. Soon afterward," he continued, "there came [a young girl], with a piece of cake in a napkin, gave it to me, hugged me, and with big round eyes looking at me said, 'Can you come to my house to tell me about Jesus?'"

There you have it. In his first letter home from afar. A pastor's heart. And a heart for missions. There's no way Rev. Kortering would have recounted that one, momentary exchange with a Singaporean *the way that he did* if he had not by it been 'touched' to the core.

Interestingly, there's one thing that Rev. Kortering did *not* mention in those letters to his home church. And that is the toll that the work in Singapore took on him. He had been asked to go to Singapore in order to help the two churches there weather a crisis. In his interview with Mr. Mark Hoeksema he admitted, "I came so close to a complete nervous breakdown. I was so weak. That's when my heart complications were really bad. My Crohn's Disease was bad. I was having all kinds of problems. It was all stress, complete stress."

"But," he added, "the Lord helped us through it." He made it through the six months of labor in Singapore, returned home—and then was faced with two calls. One from Hudsonville PRC to serve as missionary in Northern Ireland, and the other from Hope PRC to return to Singapore, this time as a minister-on-loan. Singapore?! "I mean, humanly speaking, I would have stayed as far away from that as I could because I had been just [barely] hanging on."

However, after receiving a 'go-ahead' from two key doctors, the heart specialist and the colon doctor, he accepted the call from Hope PRC and went back...to Singapore. "That had to be the grace of God," he recalled, "for there was nothing, nothing, that had any natural attraction, as far as, personally, what was in it for *us*. It was a tough call. But we went back."

Rev. Kortering's work as minister-on-loan in Singapore is the stuff of a *book*. In this brief reflection on that service to the churches, let me draw attention to just a few aspects of it. One is his very evident enthusiasm for it. The early *interest* that he expressed in it quickly became his *delight*. About the heathen ancestral worship that he observed all around him, he wrote: "They believe if they treat their ancestors well by offering them food, talking to them, worshiping them, then their ancestors will treat them well in return. How desperately poor these people are! They know nothing of the Christian's joy, of God's love for us in sending His

Son to die for our sins and of living a life of gratitude and praise to God. But what a joy when God calls His own out of darkness into His marvelous light. And that is what we see in the churches here.”

Rev. Kortering could conceivably, as minister-on-loan, have been kept very well occupied with labor in the two congregations of the ERCS and the establishing of the Evangelical Reformed Bible School. He did, in fact, put a lot of fruitful work into those. But that, in it all, *missions* was always close to his heart was evident throughout his years in Singapore. That could be seen, first of all, in how he went about his work in Singapore itself. He was ‘touched’ by what he observed...and was ready always, where possible, to *act* on it. In “Focus on Singapore,” a newsletter in our churches in the States, Rev. Kortering wrote, “I always carry in my bag my Bible, basic tracts about the Reformed faith, and my calling card. That way, wherever we meet people, we can share with them the written Word as well.”

But Rev. Kortering, in his zeal for missions, was also always looking *beyond*. To Myanmar, first of all, but then also to India, and even to *Nepal*. Nepal? Listen to what he wrote in a report to the Contact Committee and Hope Church Council: “It is heartening to hear that the small congregation (about 15 souls) which worships with Pallab in Mahendranagar has been blessed with one [!] conversion in their first year and a half of worship. This is pioneer missions in the real sense. My soul just yearns to visit with them. [Before he returned home from Singapore, he did in fact find it possible to do exactly that.] It is both a strong Hindu area and in some ways hostile against Christianity. But what an opportunity! God is directing us to many significant areas where not only the Reformed faith is introduced for the first time, but even Christianity itself.” Those words tell it all.

That was in early 1995. Later he traveled to Myanmar to give instruction there. How much did he enjoy that? Let his wife tell us. We quote from a letter she sent to their family at home in early 1999. “It’s Wednesday already, and the third day of teaching is finished. Dad is a good teacher, is having the time of his life and enjoying every minute of it. (He said to me today he wishes he could do this full time—go to all these countries and teach the Reformed faith.)”

Synod repeatedly commended Rev. Kortering for his “energetic labors in Singapore” as minister-on-loan. The energy was indeed remarkable, all the more so for a man nearing retirement age. And especially so because they involved numerous trips to other countries. By the time his term of service as minister-on-loan was completed he had visited the Philippines twice, Myanmar no fewer than five times, India four, and Nepal once. No

overstatement was it when the Contact Committee reported to synod that “Rev. Kortering has an extremely heavy workload.”

Retirement did finally come for Rev. Kortering when he and Mrs. Kortering returned to the States in 2002. His emeritation took effect on August 1 of that year. But that didn’t mark the end of the Korterings’ activity in the Orient. Already in 2003, Rev. Kortering returned to Singapore to teach, for several months, in the ERCS’s Asian Reformed Theological School. They returned in August of 2005, for a seven-month stay, and then again for a half year in 2006-2007, during which time they visited India and Myanmar. A spiritual father Rev. Kortering had become, especially to (by then Pastor) Paulraj in the former and Rev. Titus in the latter.

Half way through that last visit to Singapore, Rev. Kortering acknowledged, in an email to the undersigned, that “Jean and I are weary, in that this is emotionally draining.... We look at it as this is now time to close our chapter in Singapore. We are getting too old for such heavy pressures and work.”

That’s what it was. Heavy pressures and work. Even well into his ‘retirement’ years. But his heart was in it. His love for missions never faded. And he kept at it as long as his ailing body would allow it. Those ailments multiplied in later years, until, finally, he contracted COVID-19, from which he would not recover.

Not long before he died, his daughter Lori (Gritters) visited him. She shared that experience, in an email, with her own children. First two words are noteworthy: “Beautiful morning.” Not what one would expect. But the reason for it became immediately clear. “Never dreamt that sitting at the deathbed of my dad would be such a positive experience. I feel like I just enjoyed a morning of glorious worship. Mom had a CD of Psalters going, so I started singing along, commenting occasionally on the words. After a while, he joined me singing!! Not just the words, but even the tune. I talked to him about God getting him ready for heaven, and, though it probably wouldn’t be today, it would be soon. He teared up. I said, ‘Are you ready for that?’ His response: ‘I can’t wait!!!!’ I asked what he was looking forward to: ‘Seeing Jesus!’”

And now he has. He has received the reward, the real reward, which has nothing to do with the accolades of men. Though many of those did come. From near and far.

From a former parishioner in the States: “We give thanks to God for [Rev. Kortering’s] faithful ministry in the churches throughout the world. He was our pastor twice, and we loved him dearly. He was a true pastor with a heart for God’s people—strong and gentle, firm

and fair, loving and kind. And his preaching, well, it was always a blessing to us—truth blended with loving application!”

And from afar. This one from Pastor Paulraj. To Mrs. Kortering. “Dear Mom,” it began. “This is your Indian son in the Lord.” And it closed with: “Take care, Mom. We’ll be missing Dad a lot. Yet we are hopeful of meeting him in glory.” And signed: “Paulraj, Kashturi, Jason (named after Dad), and Joan (named after your daughter).” Such was the affection for Rev. and Mrs. Kortering that was the natural fruit of their labors in India.

And then there’s this one, from Rev. Titus and his family in Myanmar. It, too, began with “Dear Mom.” And went on: “Yes, Dad is my teacher, my mentor, my friend, and my Dad, and you are my Mom. He will be in my heart and our hearts all the time. I was quite sad, the same time happy. Sad because Dad my friend is no more to talk to, happy because he is now in heaven.”

Which was the object, too, of Rev. Kortering’s hope: “I can’t wait!”

A legacy? Yes. What a gift to our churches was Pastor Jason L. Kortering!



## News from our churches

**Mr. Charles Terpstra, member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and full-time librarian/registrar/archivist at the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary**

### Trivia Question:

(Yes, we do plan to continue our predecessor’s tradition!) With Josiah Tan’s graduation this spring, what graduate number was he in the PRC Seminary’s history?

### PRC News (Denominational)

- **Classis Meetings:** Classis East met on September 8 in Grandville MI PRC. Classis West met in Crete IL PRC on September 29. Look for reports of these meetings in the *SB*.
- **Officebearers’ Conference:** In connection with Crete PRC hosting Classis West on September 29, the Council decided to host an Officebearers’ Conference the day before on September 28 at the church. The theme of the conference is “Sanctification—the Blessed Work of Christ’s Spirit.” Speakers are Revs. S. Key on “The Spirit of Freedom”; M. Kortus on “Be Ye Holy: The Doctrine of Sanctification from Leviticus”; and J. Engelsma on “In the Way of Our Obedience.” All are welcome to attend.

- **Minister Calls:**

On September 5 Rev. M. DeBoer (Edgerton MN PRC) declined the call from Kalamazoo (MI) PRC.

On September 5 Rev. R. Barnhill (Peace PRC, Dyer, IN) declined the call from Doon PRC.

The Council of Covenant of Grace PRC (Spokane, WA) formed a new trio from which to call a pastor: Rev. R. Barnhill (Peace PRC), Rev. E. Guichelaar (Randolph PRC), and Rev. D. Holstege (Missionary, Philippines).

The Council of Hudsonville PRC formed a new

trio of Revs. E. Guichelaar, C. Haak, and D. Lee.

- **Seminary:** On September 15 in Southwest PRC a special worship service was held for the installation of Rev. C. Griess as professor of theology. Prof. B. Gritters, whom Prof. Griess will replace within five years, led the service. Seminary convocation was also included with a time of fellowship afterwards. And the seminary with its most recent addition (new archives room) and renovations (library and professor offices) was open for viewing—something that was supposed to happen in the Fall of 2020—but you know the rest of that story by now.

- **Missions (Philippines):** Rev. D. Holstege and his family finally received their approval to return to the Philippines after an extended furlough this year. They hope to depart sometime in November.

- **General:** Prof. D. Engelsma’s Reformed Doctrines Class began a new season of study on September 22, in the auditorium of Faith PRC. The class is continuing the study of the Reformed doctrine of salvation, particularly the truth of faith as assurance. The class meets every 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesdays of the month and all ages are welcome.

### PRC News (Congregational)

- **Covenant of Grace PRC (Spokane, WA):** On Friday September 17 the congregation gathered at the church for a special supper fellowship to say goodbye to the Kleyns. Rev. R. Kleyn preached his farewell on September 19 and headed to Grand Rapids, MI the next day.

- **Faith PRC (Jenison, MI):** From September 9-19,



Titus Kamps, Rev. C. Spronk, and Pete and Dorothy VanDerSchaaf were in Germany. The purpose of the trip was to witness and rejoice with the saints in the BERG in the installation of Jochen Klautke as their pastor. The installation took place on Saturday, September 11. We too rejoice with the congregation there that the Lord has supplied them with a pastor.

- **First PRC (Grand Rapids, MI):** Meanwhile, on the other end of Rev. R. Kleyn's trip, his new home church announced the arrival of the family around September 23 and his installation as her next pastor for October 3.

- **Hope PRC (Redlands, CA):** Did you hear the church had to cancel her evening service on September 5 due to a covid outbreak in the congregation, including her pastor, Rev. M. Kortus? We hope no one was seriously ill and they could resume services quickly.

- **Providence PRC (Hudsonville, MI):** On September 5 Rev. M. McGeown was installed as the second pastor in the young history of Providence PRC (Hudsonville, MI), with Prof. B. Gritters leading the service. After the service a welcome program and brunch was held. We rejoice with the saints there in God's goodness to them and pray that the Lord will richly bless Rev. McGeown's ministry in their midst.

## Sister-Church News

- **PRC-Philippines:** Our fellow saints in the Far East are suffering through tight pandemic restrictions again, with in-person worship not allowed. Let us remember to pray for them.

- **Covenant ERC-Singapore:** We rejoice in the wonderful news from our sister in the Far East that Cand. Josiah Tan accepted her call (Aug. 15) and was ordained into the gospel ministry by Rev. J. Smidstra on August 22. This is the special notice she had in her bulletin for that Sunday: *22 August 2021. Not just another day in 2021. Ordinary for many perhaps, but for CERC, a momentous day. Certainly, a very special and unforgettable day for our new pastor Josiah Tan. In His perfect time and according to His perfect will, our faithful covenant God has provided us with another under-shepherd today. This day the Lord of the harvest sends forth another servant-shepherd, called and equipped by none other than the Chief Shepherd Himself, to proclaim the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ in and from our midst. While Josiah and his wife Hui Qi are no stranger to us, nevertheless we want to welcome him and his family warmly into our fellowship as our pastor. As Rev Josiah Tan moves in and out among us, may the Lord build up the bonds of love and friendship between us as shepherd and sheep. As we rejoice in the Lord's provision for our congregation, may He also*

*renew our zeal to bear witness of His grace in saving us from all our sins and be faithful in the work of His kingdom according to the place He has given each one of us in this body.*

- **Covenant PRC-N.Ireland:** The church is inviting its community to attend this year's *Reformation Day Lecture* on Friday, October 29, entitled "Fulgentius of Ruspe, the Sixth-Century N. African Church and God's Saving Will." Sounds like a subject of interest and instruction for all of us!

## PR Christian Schools

With all our Christian schools back in session, let's remember to pray for our administrators, teachers, staffs, boards, and the precious children of God's covenant. How blessed we are to have these means of spiritual development in kingdom truth and life in Jesus Christ! We'll have more features on the schools in future news.

## Evangelism

Starting this fall is a special workshop series on personal evangelism for young people and young adults, hosted by the Young Calvinists and Young People's Federation Board. This practical four-part series will cover the why, what, and how of witnessing, featuring small group discussions, activities and several speakers. The workshop will be held at Trinity PRC on September 19, October 3, October 17, and October 31. To learn more and to participate, follow Young Calvinists on Facebook and Instagram, or subscribe at [youngcalvinists.org](http://youngcalvinists.org) for more details.

## Food for Thought

"One other thing we should remember is that the biblical doctrine of hell is not just a matter of theology and of theological debate, but a testimony to the righteousness and justice of God, the necessity of believing in Jesus Christ, and the evil of rejecting and despising Him. The sad thing is, however, that no one will ever be scared into heaven by the Bible's teaching on hell and hell fire. The only way anyone sees his great peril and turns to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith is by the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit, implanting and giving the gift of faith, and opening one's ears and heart to the sweet call and good news of the gospel of God's free grace." ~ Rev. R. Hanko in the July 2021 "Covenant Reformed News."

## Trivia Answer

Rev. J. Tan was graduate number 116 in the history of the PRC seminary.

## Announcements

### Wedding anniversary

With thankful hearts to God, we rejoiced with our parents and grandparents, **Pete and Phyllis Miedema**, as they celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary on September 15, 2020. We as a family see the wonderful gift God has given us through His constant faithfulness and His ability to provide us with God-fearing parents and grandparents who have raised us to love His truths. We are grateful for the years of love, devotion, and sacrifice they have made for us. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless them and use them for His kingdom, which is eternal and forever. “For ever, O LORD, thy work is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.... I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me” (Psalm 119: 89-90, 93).

Rick Miedema (in glory)

Joy DeGroot

Jeffry,

Cassandra and Mitch Overweg (Harlyn and Milly)

Brad and Ruth Brower

Austin and Rachel, Brendan and Casey,

Alexandria, Colton, Danielle, Sammantha,

Annikkah

David and Julie Miedema

Rick, Mitch and Anna, Trent

Hudsonville, Michigan

### Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Southwest PRC express our Christian sympathy to Tom and Brenda DeVries in the death Tom's mother, **Jeanette DeVries**, who died at the age of 92. “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 19:25-27).

Rev. D. Noorman, President

Tom VanderWoude, Clerk

### Reformed Witness Hour

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

#### Rev. W. Bruinsma

October 3—Faith: A Confident Conviction  
Hebrews 11:1, 2

October 10—The Voice of All Creation  
Hebrews 11:3

October 17—Abel's More Excellent Sacrifice  
Hebrews 11:4

October 24—Enoch's Translation  
Hebrews 11:5, 6

October 31—By Faith Noah Prepares an Ark  
Hebrews 11:7

PREACHING THE GOSPEL

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# THE LORD GAVE THE WORD

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A conference sponsored by the  
Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary

HOSTED BY  
TRINITY PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH  
3385 VAN BUREN ST  
HUDSONVILLE, MI 49426

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October 28	4:00	THE NATURE AND POWER OF PREACHING PROFESSOR DOUGLAS KUIPER
	7:30	PREACHING THE GOSPEL PROFESSOR BRIAN HUIZINGA
October 29	4:00	PREACHING COMMANDS PROFESSOR RONALD CAMMENG
	7:30	MAKING APPLICATIONS IN PREACHING PROFESSOR BARRETT GRITTERS

Refreshments following our evening speeches.