

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed semi-monthly magazine

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PRCA Synod issue
2022 highlights



Pre-synodical sermon:
The priority of love

Synod 2022 in review
Pictures of Synod 2022

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Editorial office

Prof. Barry Gritters
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
gritters@prca.org

Business office

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

United Kingdom office

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

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Corrections: In the June issue of the *Standard Bearer*, Rev. Justin Smidstra's article entitled "Immortality" was incorrectly identified on the cover, omitting the first 't', as "Immorality." Not quite as serious an error as one printing of the KJV in 1631, which came to be called "The Adulterous Bible" or "The Wicked Bible" because it omitted the "not" in the seventh commandment; but our error was serious, nevertheless. Our apologies to Rev. Smidstra.

Also, the footnote on page 405 was cut off. It should have read, "... in *The Confessions and Church Order of the PRC*, 11."

The Editors



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Meditation

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This is the text of the pre-synodical sermon he gave on June 13, 2022 in Zion PRC.

The priority of love

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.

I Corinthians 13:1-3

What a memorable and beautiful description this chapter gives on love! It is poetry, suited to weddings and wall-hangings. In context, though, it must be read as a rebuke to the Corinthian church, which, though very gifted, lacked love.

The emphasis in this chapter falls not on the love of Christ for us, nor on a biblical definition of love, nor on a description of our love for God, but on the behavior of love in our horizontal, earthly relationships (cf. vv. 4-7). The love described here is not based on feelings but is a choice to have loving attitudes and behaviors, even when I least feel like doing so. Such love comes at great expense to self. The supreme display of such self-sacrificing love is, of course, the love that the Savior demonstrated on the cross.

The illustrations

The first three verses of this chapter emphasize the importance of love. Love should always take priority and love is indispensable. Whether I have few gifts or many gifts, whether I have a prominent place in the church or am a lesser member, I must have love as I live in the body.

In the church at Corinth, recognition was given to those who either had teaching gifts, or to those with apostolic gifts (healing and tongue-speaking, cf. ch. 14). The result was a clamor for position in the church and a neglect of the “lesser members” of the church (those without obvious gifts). They had neglected the “fruit of the Spirit” (which begins with love, Gal. 5:22) for the gifts of the Spirit.

In that context, the apostle’s primary message is that, all by themselves, the best of gifts are of no value and

have zero benefit without love. You may teach your children, but if you do not love them, it is of no value. You may be committed to life-long marriage, but without love that is unprofitable. We may preach the gospel with biblical precision, but without love it is like shouting into the wind. I may live a righteous life before the world and speak biblical truth, but without love such a testimony is futile. We may gather to worship with like-minded, Reformed believers who confess and know the doctrines of grace but, if love is absent, we are wasting our time.

Looking at the passage, we see that we need not come up with our own examples. With five “if” clauses Paul demonstrates the priority of love. The repeated words, “though I...” mean “even though I....” The apostle is saying, “I might have...but without love....”

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels....

“Tongues of men” are human languages. The gift of tongues was the ability to speak different languages without ever having learned them, an obvious supernatural gift. This gift was present among believers in Corinth and was viewed by them as the most important gift (though Paul ranks it as least important, I Cor. 12:28). “Tongues of angels” are heavenly languages. We do not know what these are, but to be able speak in these would be an even more remarkable gift.

Without love, the one who has the gift of tongues is as a “sounding brass” and “tinkling cymbal.” Such instruments have their place in an orchestra, but by themselves are obnoxious and irritating, like a yipping dog or a squeaky wheel. And this applies to all kinds of speech. A minister may be gifted in language and preach with eloquence and clarity, but without love he is of no profit. A man may be able to articulate correctly very fine details and distinctions in theology, but without love that is unprofitable.

Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge....

A prophet received personal revelations from God. In the apostolic age, before the completion of Scripture, this was an important and necessary gift. The gift

of prophecy has ended, but we still have the gifts of understanding and knowledge in the church today, and these are also important and necessary gifts. A person with understanding and knowledge can explain God's Word clearly, can relate it to history and current events, and can apply it to life. Imagine having a minister who understood *all* mysteries or who had *all* knowledge. Never will there be such a man, but how useful he might be. Without love, he is nothing. The humble believer with a simple grasp of the gospel and a tender heart for others is far superior. True spirituality must never be judged by the standard of understanding and knowledge but by the presence of love.

Though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains....

This same expression is figuratively used by Jesus to describe the strength of genuine faith which believes that with God nothing is impossible (Matt. 17:20). So we should think, not of a person with a "name-it and claim-it" faith, which is a false faith, but of one who through the most difficult trials of life quietly trusts in God without complaint. A Job, who losing ten children in one day, blessed his sovereign God (Job 1:21). I might have such a faith, but if I "have not charity, I am nothing."

Though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor....

These words do not describe the philanthropy of the extremely rich, but rather the religious activity of one who has given away all his possessions in order to provide for the needy and now lives a very modest life. While he could be traveling the world and living in a mansion, he instead has given away his wealth in order to help others and to lift them from their poverty.

Surely this has to be love? Who would do this?

But Paul says that even this can be done without love. It may be for praise, for an ego trip, or even as a religious exercise to merit with God.

Without love, such generosity amounts to nothing.

Though I give my body to be burned....

This describes someone so committed to the cause of Christianity that she allows herself to be slowly burned to death by her persecutors. Surely, this is commendable. This one is willing not only to let goods and kindred go but this mortal life also.

Yet a martyr without love is a nothing, a hypocrite.

The reasons

But why? Why, without love, does everything amount to nothing?

First, love is indispensable because God is love. "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love"

(I John 4:8). To know God is to experience the love of God shed abroad in our hearts (Rom. 5:5) and to express that same experience in our external relationships. We may do many splendid things but, without love, they are without God. Empty!

Second, love is indispensable because love is the "bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14). This is the way to think of the life of God triune—a perfect bond. This is also the way to think of our life with God and our life with other believers—a perfect bond. Apart from that, that is, without love, there is no true fellowship with God or with others.

Third, love is indispensable because the sum of the Christian life is contained in this one word: love. This is how Jesus positively sums up obedience: love God and love your neighbor. This, He says, is the summary of all the law and the prophets. This is our basic debt to God and the neighbor (Rom. 13:8).

Fourth, love is indispensable because it is the first fruit of the Spirit and the outstanding mark of the Christian (cf. Gal. 5:22; John 13:34). An absence of love is evidence of the absence of the Spirit, and "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8:9). Where the Spirit has worked, that will be evident in the attitudes and behaviors of love described here in I Corinthians 13: patient, kind, not proud, rejoices in truth, bears, believes and hopes all things.

The application

With regard to synod and its work, the application is this, that God will answer our prayer for His presence and the work of His Spirit in our deliberations, first, by giving to us as delegates the attitudes and behaviors of love, here described in I Corinthians 13. Let us remember this week the words of verses 4-7 that describe the behavior of love, not only as we work with each other, but also as all of the work of synod comes before us: missions, seminary, Contact Committee, appeals, and more.

The applications of this passage ought to be considered both personally and corporately.

In the church we have many gifted people. These are God's gifts to the church. There are gifted theologians who can understand Scripture with clarity. There are gifted preachers who are easy to listen to and whose ministry has a wide impact. There are gifted authors who, with words and books and blogs, are able to answer critics and questions. There are people with gifts of music, prayer, money, generosity, leadership, witnessing, encouragement. There are people with all kinds of practical, hands-on gifts, for projects that are necessary for the continuation of the Lord's work.

Individually, God has gifted you in some way. Paul

has in mind personal gifts when he says, in verse 1, “though I....” The Word calls us here to consider how we use our own gifts.

What duties am I performing in my life without love? What am I simply doing out of a sense of duty without love for God or the ones I serve? What religious activities of prayer, of worship, of giving, of suffering for Christ, am I busy with in an entirely selfish way, perhaps to be seen of men and with a complete absence of love for others?

I may have all knowledge, I may have strong faith, I may even give my body to be burned, but without love all this accomplishes nothing and has no value.

And so also for the church. Like Corinth, we may “come behind in no gift” (I Cor. 1:7), but without love we are worthless.

Love must be preeminent.

We may have the best doctrinal statements; we may have members who know the Scriptures and their theology; we may have sound biblical preaching; we may have the most reverent and God-honoring worship; we may be busy in evangelism and missions; and we may have all this without love.

A visitor comes to worship and experiences the opposite of love; he is dealt with impatiently and unkindly; he notices that those to whom he talks are easily provoked; he finds that they rejoice in iniquity and not truth about others; he hears us vaunting ourselves. And he leaves wondering to himself whether they love each other, whether they know how to love the stranger, and wondering whether they even love God.

Without love there is no profit. We have failed.

These words are confronting and convicting.

“Let all your things be done with charity” (I Cor. 16:14).

When I think about love, I am thankful for God’s unfailing love toward me. I am glad that I know and experience the love of God through Jesus Christ. I appreciate that God sheds abroad this love in my heart by the Holy Spirit. I am thankful that this fruit of the Spirit is displayed by others toward me. And, I pray that the love with which God has loved me may be evident in my attitudes, words, and behavior toward you.

May God bless this word to our hearts.



Editorial

Rev. Joshua Engelsma, pastor of the Crete Protestant Reformed Church in Crete, Illinois

Synod 2022 in Review

The synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America met from July 14-17, 2022, in the facilities of Zion PRC (Jenison, MI). In addition to the twenty delegates representing Classis East and Classis West and the five professor-advisors, there were two foreign delegates from our sister churches present.

As one present at the meeting, I am glad to report that all the proceedings were carried out in a fine spirit of brotherly love and mutual trust, even when the delegates may have had differing views on certain issues.

In this article I will not attempt to review all the decisions taken by synod. The daily news reports that were sent out the week of synod referred to many of the decisions, and the interested reader can read carefully through the *Acts of Synod* when it becomes available. Instead, I want to call attention to a few of the more significant matters addressed by our denomination’s broadest assembly.

The ministry of the gospel

One of the highlights of synod’s work was the examination of Mr. Marcus Wee. Mr. Wee is a member of Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore (CERC), and this spring completed four years of training in our denominational seminary. At the request of his home congregation, he was examined by our synod. He preached a specimen sermon on Tuesday morning, and was examined orally for most of Wednesday morning and Thursday morning. The brother demonstrated the natural and spiritual abilities necessary for the ministry of the gospel, and synod unanimously approved his examination. Accordingly, it took a decision to inform CERC that synod judged him worthy to be declared eligible for a call to the ministry of the Word and sacraments. The session of CERC will now decide whether or not to declare him a candidate

for the ministry and whether or not to issue a call to him to serve as one of their pastors.

Mr. Wee was one of the two graduates of our seminary this year. The other graduate was Mr. Isaac Peters. Mr. Peters is a member of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, and just finished a special three-year program of study. Mr. Peters was not examined by our synod, but intends to go back to Australia for a one-year internship after which he will be examined by his presbytery for candidacy in the denomination.

The graduation ceremony for these two men was held on Thursday night (cf. the photos on page 417). Prof. Russell Dykstra gave the commencement address on “The Minister’s Calling to Seek Unity.” This was the last commencement address for Prof. Dykstra, as he now has completed 26 years of faithful instruction in our seminary. Thankfully, he is still willing and able to serve the churches as a pastor in one of our local congregations.

We consider it a privilege to train men from around the world for the gospel ministry, and give thanks to God for answering our prayers to provide men for the ministry. May the Lord be pleased to open up places of labor for these two men and bless them with fruitful ministries.

Not only has the Lord been pleased to answer our prayers for ministers by providing men for the churches in Singapore and Australia, but he is also supplying men for our own churches. Synod approved admitting Mr. Bruce Feenstra, originally from Hope PRC (Redlands, CA) and now a member of Hope PRC (Walker, MI), into our seminary this coming fall. This means that next year we will have one student training for the ministry in our own churches in each of the four grade levels.

The need for these men is great, and only increasing, as was evident at synod. Synod approved the work of its synodical deputies in concurring with the decision of Classis East to depose a man from the ministry this past year. And synod approved the request of Rev. Carl Haak for emeritation (effective September 1) after 43 years of faithful service to the churches. May the Lord continue to provide faithful men to serve in our churches.

A change to the Church Order

Another notable decision of synod was its response to an overture from a consistory seeking to amend the Church Order. Specifically, the overture argued for the removal of the requirement to hold worship services on Old Year’s Day and New Year’s Day as that requirement is found in Article 67 of our Church Order.

After considerable debate, synod decided to approve the consistory’s overture in part, that is, insofar as it spoke of the observance of *Old* Year’s Day but not *New* Year’s Day. Therefore, the words “and Old” were re-

moved, and Article 67 of our Church Order now reads: “The churches shall observe, in addition to the Sunday, also Christmas, Good Friday, Easter, Ascension Day, Pentecost, the Day of Prayer, the National Thanksgiving Day, and New Year’s Day.”

Synod made this change on the following four grounds:

1. The churches’ commemoration of the passing of the old year to the new year can appropriately be held in one service on the first day of the new year.

2. Of all our special services, Old Year’s Day is of most recent origin, having not appeared in the Church Order prior to 1914.

3. Many special services in a short period of time can diminish the value of the Lord’s Day worship services. When the Reformation churches considered the worship on special days, a major concern was the sanctity of the Lord’s Day, which ought to be our concern.

4. Three special church services within eight days can be taxing on both ministers and congregations.

While the Church Order ought not to be changed lightly and frequently, a synod may make changes to the Church Order per Article 86: “These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent that they (if the profit of the churches demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented, or diminished.” Synod judged that a change to Article 67 would be for the “profit of the churches” and so “altered” that article.

It is certainly within the rights of an autonomous, local congregation to hold a worship service on Old Year’s Day, but the requirement for all the churches in the denomination to do so according to Article 67 is no longer there.

An overture and a protest

On its agenda synod also had an overture from an individual regarding a doctrinal statement authored by a special committee of Classis East in January of 2018. In treating an appeal regarding the matter, Synod 2018 pointed out several ambiguous statements and an erroneous statement in the document. The individual bringing the overture to Synod 2022 asked that the authors be required to explain in writing their doctrinal position regarding the doctrinal statement, give a response to the judgments that Synod 2018 made regarding it, and include their theological convictions regarding the relation between obedience and the experience of covenant fellowship with God. Before coming to synod, the man had brought his overture to Classis East, which assembly had rejected the overture.

Synod 2022 judged that the overture was not legally

before it on the ground that the requirement of Article 30 of the Church Order had not been met, namely, that “in major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies.” In explanation, synod pointed out that the man’s original overture was a request for action on the part of *Classis East* and not *synod*. For instance, the man wrote: “However, I believe that this Special Committee of Classis East...must also be held accountable for what they wrote and that it is Classis East’s responsibility to hold them accountable as they are a committee of Classis.” His course of action should have been to protest the decision of Classis East to reject his overture, and then if not satisfied to appeal to synod. His overture, then, amounted to an appeal to synod, without having first protested to classis. For synod to take this matter up would have been hierarchical in that it would be taking up work that was not finished at the classical level.

Synod also had before it a protest of an individual who objected to decisions made at last year’s synod in the case of a former minister in the denomination who was deposed from the ministry for sins of insubordination, slander, and schism.

Synod did not sustain the first part of the man’s protest because, while asking synod to rescind the decision of Synod 2021 to approve the deposition of the minister, the individual ignored two of the four decisions which grounded the approval of the deposition. Since he made no attempt to address the charges of insubordination and public schism, and these two decisions are sufficient to uphold the approval of the deposition, the decision stands.

Synod also did not sustain the second part of the individual’s protest in which he contended that the protests of five protestants were not fully considered by Synod 2021. Synod judged that Synod 2021 did adequately consider and answer all the protests. Synod gave five points of explanation:

1. In dealing with the protests Synod 2021 had carefully explained the approach that it followed in order to give all the protestants equal opportunity to be heard, and the protestant made no effort to interact with that explanation.

2. The protestant did not demonstrate that there was a significant omission of the arguments of the protests by Synod 2021 that would have impacted the decisions of 2021.

3. Synod has made plain in the past that synods are not obligated to deal with every detail of a protest or appeal (cf. *Acts of Synod* 2009, p. 84; *Acts of Synod* 2010, p. 46).

4. Synod has followed the practice of combining the treatment of protests when multiple protests address

similar concerns (cf. *Acts of Synod* 2009, p. 68).

5. It should be evident that if synod does not explicitly address all of the arguments, that does not mean that synod ignored them. Synod 2021 entered into and dealt with the main arguments of the protests, demonstrated by the many quotations from the five protests.

NAPARC

The Contact Committee (CC) of the PRCA included in its report to synod that it was not planning to send observers to the North America Presbyterian and Reformed Council (NAPARC) this year, as has been done in years past. The reason was largely that synod had mandated the CC to include a presentation of our view on the Federal Vision heresy and to determine whether the body has any desire to deal with this serious threat to the Reformed truth. At the 2021 meeting of NAPARC it was made plain to our delegation that this request was not going to be honored since we are only observers. Since it could not fulfill that mandate, the CC could not see how they could send observers to NAPARC this year.

After discussing the matter, synod did vote to accept NAPARC’s invitation to send observers to the 2022 meeting, on the following four grounds:

1. Sending observers is in line with the considerations adopted by Synod 2016 and gives us opportunity to: 1) discuss doctrines and practices that divide as well as those we have in common with other churches; 2) discuss the possibility of closer relationships with other denominations; 3) discuss current heresies and practices that threaten Reformed and Presbyterian churches. Sending observers has given the PRCA delegates an opportunity to explain informally to attendees the distinctive Reformed truths that have been delivered to us and to testify against fundamental doctrinal and practical errors that threaten Reformed and Presbyterian churches today, such as the Federal Vision; and 4) discuss with the attendees so that we might learn from other churches.

2. Sending observers does not bind the PRCA to any of NAPARC’s positions or decisions and so does not compromise our distinctive Reformed heritage as churches.

3. Sending observers gives us the opportunity to answer any questions that may arise over the recent schism in the PRCA.

4. There is continued value in introducing the PRCA to the churches and attendees of NAPARC. Not only is there always more that can be shared about the PRCA in our presentation and conversations, but the individual delegates are different from year to year, providing new opportunities to introduce the PRCA.

continued on page 418



Delegates to Synod 2022

row 4: Rev. Vernon Ibe, Mike Gritters, Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. W. Langerak, Peter Smit, Dan VanUffelen, Chester Hunter

row 3: Rev. R. Kleyn, Loren Gritters, Phil E. VanBaren, Rev. A. Brummel, Sid Miedema, Keith Bruinsma

row 2: Prof. B. Gritters, John VanBaren, Rev. J. Laning, Rev. R. Barnhill, James Lanting, Wee Gim Theng, Prof. B. Huizinga

row 1: Prof. R. Cammenga, Rev. N. Decker, Rev. J. Engelsma, Rev. S. Key, Prof. R. Dykstra, Prof. D. Kuiper, Prof. C. Griess

Synod 2022

Zion PRC
Jenison, Michigan
June 14-17, 2022



Officers of Synod:
Second Clerk, Rev. N. Decker;
First Clerk, Rev. J. Engelsma; President, Rev. S. Key;
Vice-President, Prof. R. Dykstra



Examination of Marcus Wee



Graduation of Isaac Peters and Marcus Wee



Address by Rev. Richard Smit



Address by
Rev. Vernon Ibe



Foreign delegates
seated at synod:
Wee Gim Theng (CERC),
Rev. Vernon Ibe (PRCP)



Break and fellowship time



The PRCA at 100

Worthy of note are the plans made by Synod 2022 for the celebration of our denomination's 100th anniversary in 2025. Plans are for the celebration to be held at Calvin University on June 23-27, 2025. The theme of the celebration is "Grace: The PRCA at 100," with a theme text of Ephesians 2:4-10. Three main speeches will develop this theme along the following lines: 1)

Teaching Grace, 2) Defending Grace, 3) Living Grace. There are also plans for a large, multi-authored book to be written commemorating this historic event. Do make plans to attend.

The thought of God's faithfulness in preserving our small denomination, and preserving her in faithfulness to the gospel of grace is cause for great humility and gratitude. May God preserve us in faithfulness for another 100 years, if the Lord Jesus tarries.

Letters

Dear Rev. Hanko,

I must convey my great disappointment in your quoting of Frederick Faber's poem in your introduction to Habakkuk in the *SB*. He is an obvious Protestant apostate to Rome (false church indeed. I am amazed today of how many so-called Reformed folk consider Rome to be a less than pure, true church of Christ).

Any comment on Faber's "worshiping" of the will of God?

For the gospel,
Creighton Baldwin

And the reply:

Dear Brother Baldwin and the *SB* Staff,

I apologize for the delay in responding to this letter but we were traveling.

My quoting Frederick Faber was done without knowing the story of his apostasy to Rome. I should have checked his biography before quoting him and apologize to all who were offended by the quote for including it in my article.

As to worshiping the will of God, I am not sure what Brother Baldwin is getting at by mentioning Faber's worshiping of the will of God, but it is my understanding that God's will is God Himself and that worshiping Him includes honoring, praising, submitting to His will and doing with respect to His will all that is included in worshiping Him.

All the best,
Rev. R. Hanko



Taking heed to the doctrine

Prof. Ronald Cammenga, rector and professor of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary and member of Southwest PRC in Wyoming, MI

Antinomian? Without a doubt (1)

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.

Ephesians 4:15

Introduction and approach

Most readers of the *Standard Bearer* are aware of the recent schism in the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). Three ministers, Nathan Langerak, Andrew Lanning, and Martin VanderWal, have led the schismatics out of the PRC. They have organized themselves as the Reformed Protestant Churches (RPC). At the time that they left the PRC, these ministers were guilty of public schism. One had been deposed for this sin.

Besides the sin of public schism, there is also a criti-

cal theological issue involved in the breach between the RPC and the PRC. Since they have left, in their writings in the magazine they founded, *Sword and Shield*, in the public speeches they have given, and in the sermons they have preached, the leaders of the RPC have developed in this error. Their error is the error of antinomianism. Although it is true that the ministers were never formally charged with antinomianism when they were in the PRC, there were indications already then of antinomian tendencies. Since then there has been doctrinal development (declension).

In a few articles, I hope to demonstrate this distortion of the gospel of grace that has been embraced and is being aggressively promoted by the RPC. It is also my intention to demonstrate that, contrary to the charge of

the RPC, the PRC remain faithful to the gospel of God's sovereign, particular grace as set forth in Scripture and defended in the Reformed creeds. From their founding nearly one hundred years ago, the PRC by God's grace have remained faithful to the truth, rejecting error both on the left and on the right. The leaders of the RPC have departed from the old paths and have laid another foundation than that which was laid in 1924 when the PRC were birthed.

Some have been dismissive of the charge of antinomianism against the RPC and its leaders. At the very least they have been skeptical of the validity of the charge or have rejected it altogether. Surely, the RPC are not rejecting the place of the law of God in the life of the Christian, as the term "antinomian" would indicate. "Antinomian" literally describes someone who is "against (anti-) the law." Surely, the leaders of the RPC are not rejecting altogether the law as the rule of life for the saved Christian.

But what must be borne in mind is that over the years antinomianism has morphed. And not only has it morphed, but over time the error has developed and become more subtle. That is true of the error that is the ditch on the other side of the straight and narrow way into the everlasting kingdom: legalism. Legalism is not only the bald error of the Pharisees who sought by their own good works to merit salvation. That error, too, developed and was refined. From Phariseism, the error was further developed by the Judaizers, still further by the Pelagians, the Semi-Pelagians, the Arminians, the proponents of the well-meant offer of the gospel, and finally by the teaching of the conditional covenant. Similarly antinomianism has developed over the years. It is not the forthright rejection of the law in the life of the Christian that is the error of the RPC. But it has become, as we will see, a much more refined error, an error that aims to elude the charge of antinomianism.

At the outset, I want to be clear that I am not interested in character assassination. I do not in any way want to assault persons. I am interested in the truth—biblical and confessional truth. In my defense of the truth, I consider it to be my duty to expose error as did our Lord and His apostles. I will strive to speak the truth in love, as is the calling of every Christian according to Ephesians 4:15. It is not enough that we speak the truth; we are called to speak the truth *in love*. My aim is especially to help our readers in assessing the teaching of the leaders of the RPC. I am also interested in convincing those who have been led astray. I fervently desire the return of those who have left the PRC. I also pray for the repentance of the leaders of the RPC. May God use these articles to these ends.

My approach in these articles will be to contrast le-

galism with antinomianism—the antinomianism of the RPC—on specific doctrinal issues, after which I will set forth the historic Reformed faith. For easy reference, I will number the errors of the leaders of the RPC. In setting forth the historic Reformed faith, besides appealing to Scripture, I will cite the Reformed confessions, as well as representatives of the Reformed tradition, particularly John Calvin. It is my purpose to demonstrate that the position of the PRC throughout its history is that which has historically been held by the Reformed. The RPC represent departure and novelty within the Reformed camp.

Error #1: Forgiveness apart from repentance

Legalism. It is the teaching of legalism that repentance *earns* forgiveness. God forgives us *because* we repent. In some sense, we merit forgiveness on account of our act of repentance. In the medieval Roman Catholic Church, this legalistic view of repentance led to the doctrine and practice of penance. The sins of the faithful were forgiven on the condition that they confessed their sins in the ear of a priest and carried out the prescribed penance. It was the Roman Catholic doctrine of repentance that gave rise to the blasphemy of the church's selling forgiveness for money. This was the evil practice of indulgences, the sale of which in the vicinity of Wittenberg led to Martin Luther's nailing his Ninety-Five Theses on the chapel door.

Antinomianism. In contrast to the teaching of the legalists, the teaching of the antinomians is that God forgives our sins *apart from* our repentance. First God forgives our sins, and then we repent. Because God is always first (with which we would not disagree), they argue, forgiveness—a work of God—must precede repentance—regarded as a work of man in the skewed view of the antinomians. This is their remedy to repentance being a condition unto forgiveness.

That forgiveness precedes repentance is the teaching of the RPC and its ministers.

[T]he teaching that in some sense a man's activity of repenting precedes God's activity of remitting his sins is so deadly and wretched.... Let them stop talking in the abstract about salvation. Let them stop saying this: "Repentance precedes remission of sins." (*Sword and Shield*, February 15, 2022, p. 20.)

Repentance has no bearing whatsoever on man's remission of sins or his justification. (*Sword and Shield*, March 15, 2022, p. 27.)

Now also we deny that in a certain sense God causes man to be first so that God may act...we deny that the call of the gospel is repent that you may be forgiven.

We deny that. We deny that emphatically. (*Sword and Shield*, March 15, 2022, p. 42.)

Before the ministry of reconciliation preached one syllable, God forgave his elect all their sins and did not impute those sins unto them without a single tear of repentance. They were forgiven. (*Sword and Shield*, March 15, 2022, p. 43.)

A lamb slain before the foundation of the world [Rev. 13:8] means justification before the foundation of the world and therefore that there was forgiveness before repentance and without any repentance at all. Let everyone hear, and let them agree or disagree; let them believe it or not believe it. This is the gospel message of the Reformed Protestant Churches. The sinner has forgiveness without repenting. This is the gospel message of Scripture. This is God-first theology. That is our gospel. (*Sword and Shield*, March 15, 2022, p. 43.)

In an April 2022 public lecture, one of the leaders of the RPC disparaged and essentially denied the teaching of the Canons of Dordt, V.5. What he finds objectionable is the teaching of the article that by their enormous sins elect children of God can “lose the sense of God’s favor for a time, until, on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God’s fatherly countenance again shines upon them.” The article teaches clearly that forgiveness follows repentance. If it is not “until” we repent that the sense of God’s favor (forgiveness) is restored, then repentance precedes forgiveness. Or, to put it differently, forgiveness follows repentance. This is indisputably the teaching of Canons V.5.

That forgiveness precedes repentance has become a distinctive doctrine of the RPC: “This is the gospel message of the Reformed Protestant Churches.” Though it was not an issue when the leaders of the RPC led their followers out of the PRC, they now identify it as one of the fundamental doctrines that distinguish the RPC from the PRC. It is a doctrine that distinguishes them from the PRC not because this once was the teaching of the PRC in its early history and from which she has recently departed. For this idea that forgiveness precedes repentance never has been the teaching of the PRC and cannot be demonstrated ever to have been a distinguishing doctrine of the PRC. It certainly was not regarded as a distinctive of the PRC in the minds of those who wrote in opposition to her over the years. Never did any of these opponents identify as a teaching of the PRC to which they took exception that repentance follows forgiveness. No PRC theologian has ever taught that God’s forgiveness of us precedes His work in us to bring us to repentance. Contrary to the contention of the leaders of the RPC, they do not represent a contin-

uation of the PRC, at least not in this peculiar doctrine that forgiveness is a work of God that takes place prior to repentance.

Not only is this teaching not Protestant Reformed, neither is it Reformed in its pedigree. Quite to the contrary, it is unreformed and antinomian. And it is antinomian, at the very least, because it minimizes the importance of repentance, while at the very worst, it denies the need for repentance altogether. Why ought the sinner to repent if his sin is already forgiven? Why ought the church member under discipline repent of the sin on account of which he is going to be excommunicated if his sin is already forgiven by God? Why ought there be any call to repentance in the preaching of the gospel if forgiveness has already been granted by God? Why ought there to be any warning that, if the sinner does not repent, he will perish if God has from eternity forgiven the sinner? Why should the child of God at day’s end humble himself before God and plead for the forgiveness of the sins committed against His most high majesty if he already enjoys the blessing of God’s forgiveness of his sins?

Forgiveness apart from repentance. Our Dutch forebears were fond of warning, *beginzellen werken door* (“principles work through”). Therefore, if sins are forgiven apart from repentance, repentance will ultimately be dispensed with. Since God has not only determined (decreed) that He will forgive our sins, but has actually forgiven them in eternity, what need has the sinner of seeking His forgiveness? Does not the seeking of forgiveness, which is repentance, or, at the very least, the fruit of repentance, reflect doubt that our sins are forgiven?

The Reformed Faith. Eternally God has decreed to forgive our sins. On the cross, the Lord Jesus made satisfaction and atonement as the basis for God’s forgiveness of our sins. Forgiveness actually takes place when by faith in Jesus Christ, God declares in our consciousness, “Thy sins are forgiven.”

Over against legalism, on the one hand, and antinomianism, on the other hand, is the teaching of the Reformed faith. With regard to the relation between forgiveness and repentance, the Reformed faith teaches that God forgives sin *in the way of* repentance. When the child of God repents, God forgives his sin. Forgiveness follows repentance. It is true that God has eternally decreed that He will forgive the sin of the wayward believer, and has also decreed that He will work repentance (sorrow over and confession of sin) in His wayward child. This is the *source* of forgiveness and repentance. It is also true that Jesus Christ has died in order to establish the legal *basis* for forgiveness and repentance. In Ephesians 4:32 the apostle teaches that God *for Christ’s sake* has forgiven us. It is equally true

that God the Holy Spirit works repentance over sin in the life of the believer in order that God may forgive him. This is the God-ordained order: repentance followed by forgiveness.

That forgiveness follows repentance is the teaching of Scripture. The Bible clearly teaches that God's forgiveness follows God-worked repentance. This is also, as we will see, the teaching of the Reformed tradition and the Reformed confessions. That divine order is confirmed by the experience of every believer as well.

I Kings 8 contains Solomon's prayer to God on behalf of Israel at the time of the dedication of the temple. Included in his prayer is his supplication that, "If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy" (v. 46) and in the land of captivity they "repent, and make supplication unto thee" (v. 47), "Then hear thou their prayer" and "forgive thy people that have sinned against thee" (vv. 49-50). Clearly, God's forgiveness of Israel's sin follows their repentance.

Psalms 32 records the experience of David when he fell into his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of Uriah. In verse 5 we read, "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." God forgave David's sin only after he repented of and confessed his sin. In the way of repentance, God forgave David's sin.

In Proverbs 28:13 we read, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." They who confess their sins

shall have mercy—God's mercy, the mercy of forgiveness. They enjoy the mercy of forgiveness who confess and forsake, that is, repent of their sins.

Acts 2 records Peter's Pentecost sermon. In verse 38 Peter calls those in his audience to repentance: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." They are to "repent... for the remission of sins." Once more, forgiveness ("the remission of sins") follows repentance. Repentance is the God-ordained way to forgiveness.

The teaching of the apostle in I John 1:9 is: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." If we confess our sins, and we will as the elect children of God, then God is just to forgive our sins. Since confession of sin is the fruit of repentance over sin, the apostle teaches clearly in I John 1:9 that repentance precedes forgiveness.

In Luke 17:3, Jesus exhorts that "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him." Here God's behavior with respect to us is the model of our calling with respect to each other. If our brother sins against us and repents of that sin, we are called to forgive him. Why are we called to forgive our repentant brother? Because this is God's way with us: when we repent, He forgives us. Of course He does. He is the One who has worked repentance over sin in us. He has brought us to confess our sin. Since our repentance is the fruit of His work of grace, He will certainly receive us and forgive us.

Standing on the clear testimony of Scripture is the Reformed tradition and the Reformed confessions. We will examine that testimony in our next article.



Search the Scriptures: Bible characters

Mr. Kyle Bruinooge teaches New Testament history at Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, Michigan and is a member of Faith PRC

The commitment of Silas

"And Paul chose Silas, and departed, being recommended by the brethren unto the grace of God."

Acts 15:40

In the nearly 100 years of the Protestant Reformed Churches, missions have been a part of her history. Soon after the development of this new denomination through the faithful defense of sovereign, particular grace, early ecclesiastical meetings recognized the need to develop a system and structure for mission work. In 1928, a Mission Committee was officially formed and

the question of *how will we do missions?* was posed and wrestled with by the classis.¹

Over the course of her history, twelve Protestant Reformed ministers have left their calling as local pastors and ventured out onto the mission field, the first being a mission to Canada in 1950 by Rev. A. Cammenga. On average, six years have been spent by these missionaries on their respective fields, including those

1 Supplement 1 of the classis meeting of August 29, 1928. Article 11.

who are serving as foreign missionaries in the present.

Compared with the church of today, there was less structure in how mission work was carried out following the Great Commission during the apostolic age in the first century. Additionally, the missionaries in the first century had specific places they wanted to go, but most of the details of getting there were unknown. For example, Paul writes that he wanted to do mission work in Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28), but he certainly did not know exactly what that would look like when he reached those shores.

In light contrast, as is the case for the PRC, missionaries are usually sent to where there is a seed of interest. Nevertheless, Paul, along with his faithful companions, followed the Spirit's guidance into places that had never heard the gospel. While the structure was different, there was a manner they followed: to the Jew first, and then to the Greek (Rom. 1:16).

What has not changed in the 2,000 years since the first century AD is the commitment and faithfulness demonstrated by missionaries who are faithful to the Spirit's lead in bringing the hope of the gospel message. Paul's good friend and companion Silas showed this very same commitment to this gospel, as well as an understanding of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Silas was a Christian Jew, originating in Jerusalem. His primary work during the early church after the death and resurrection of Christ was to preach to Jews living in Palestine. The Scriptures mention him seventeen times, most of them coming in the book of Acts while with Paul on his second missionary journey.

The first mention of Silas comes at the conclusion of the first great synod of the early church, the Council of Jerusalem (c. AD 49-50). Paul had concluded his first missionary journey (Acts 13-14) and returned to Antioch to bring their joyous report that Gentiles were converted. As Judaizers came to Antioch to accuse the missionaries of not requiring circumcision in addition to faith in Christ for salvation, the two groups traveled to Jerusalem to discuss the matter before the leaders of the church (15:1-4). The question to be settled was this: Do new Gentile converts need to be circumcised and follow the Mosaic laws in order to be received as full members into the church?

After deliberation, the council made its decision: "that we trouble [burden] not them, which among the Gentiles are turned to God" (Acts 15:19). This decision was undoubtedly one of the most significant decisions in all of church history, directed by the Holy Spirit (15:28). Satan was defeated, knowing full well that a reverse decision would have discouraged new converts, having devastating consequences on the growth of the church. Rejecting dualism, we can be thankful for an-

other example in church history where the power of the Spirit trumped the power of darkness in this world.

Once the decision was made through James, an official letter was drafted, to be sent to Antioch, the calling church of the missionary program. It was not by accident that Silas was chosen along with Judas, Paul, and Barnabas to bring this letter to the leaders in Antioch. This clearly shows us that Silas was an outstanding man in the early church, for he is described as one of the "chief men among the brethren" (15:22). His task would be not only to bring the official letter, but also to help explain the decision and answer questions that may arise (15:27). This speaks to Silas' ability to be a teaching, spiritual leader, clearly respected by the other men of Jerusalem.

After Silas delivers the official letter to Antioch, his commitment in carrying out the decision of the Jerusalem Council was truly brought to life. When asked by Paul if he is willing to go on a second missionary journey with him, he accepts. As a Roman citizen, Silas would have been qualified in his freedom of travel (Acts 16:37); but his intimate knowledge of the recent decision confirmed his spiritual ability to bring the gospel to heathen lands.

The significance of his commitment to the second missionary journey must be examined in more detail.

Silas' life was Jerusalem. As a Jewish man, he undoubtedly was married and had a family.² His willingness to leave his wife and children, his good friend Peter (1 Pet. 5:12), and the land that had been his home his entire life, showed a profound commitment to this new, unique calling of being a missionary. Silas demonstrated his willingness to leave his 'refuge' in Judea and "go out" (Heb. 11:8). While reasonable fear of the unknown may be a powerful emotion felt by our foreign missionaries, for Silas the fear may have been for what was *truly* unknown. His sacrifice is an example to us all of how committed one man can be, not just for truth itself, but also for telling others that truth.

Remember that Silas did not know the full scope of the journey to which he had committed. Paul had explained that their first desire was to revisit the Galatian churches, established on his first journey (Acts 16:1-6); but the call of the Macedonian man (16:9) was certainly not something to which Paul had prior knowledge. Through this the Spirit led them from Troas into Macedonia, crossing from Asia Minor into Roman Europe.

This was significant. Roman and Greek culture were strong in places like Philippi, Thessalonica, Athens, and Corinth. Silas was truly venturing far from home, but he had the support of many, the leadership of Paul, and

² John Pollock. *The Apostle: A Life of Paul* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co., 1972), 19.



AD 50-51. After they searched in vain for a synagogue, they were led to Lydia and the women of prayer at the riverside (16:13). In Philippi, Paul casts an evil spirit out of a slave girl, infuriating her masters. Paul and Silas are brought to the magistrates, accused of troubling the city, then publicly flogged and beaten (16:20-23).

The story from here is familiar to the reader. Paul and Silas are jailed, and while they raised their voices in praise, an earthquake miraculously tears apart the bars, bringing the jailor to suicidal fear, assuming the prisoners had fled (Acts 16:25-28). Luke, the author, then writes, “And *they* said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (v. 31). *Together*,

Paul and Silas brought the call of the gospel to the Philippian jailer. While Paul was the leader of the group, Paul and Silas are named together frequently in Luke’s recounting of events. This clearly shows that Paul and Silas were united in their message, but also that Silas showed strong leadership in his work as a missionary.

After being used to plant a church in Philippi, Silas was used by the Lord for this same task in Thessalonica, a city very different from Philippi in that there was a large Jewish population. After positive fruit and the establishment of a church, unrest among some accelerated, forcing Paul, Silas, and Timothy to flee on account of a rough band “of the baser sort” that assaulted the house of Jason (Acts 17:5-10). This brought them to the Scripture-searching Bereans, and after a profitable time there, Paul set sail for the city of Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy behind (17:14). Silas’ time spent with the Bereans strengthened his faith and prepared him for what would come next: church planting in Corinth.

Prior to Silas’ arrival in Corinth, Paul had battled the Greek philosophers on Mars Hill before entering the immoral city of Corinth alone. In addition to this, the challenge of church planting in Corinth weighed heavily upon Paul; therefore, he must have greeted his close companions Timothy and Silas with exuberant joy when they were reunited with him from Macedonia (Acts 18:5). So difficult was the work in Corinth that the Lord appeared to Paul in a vision, bringing encouragement and the comfort of His presence with him (18:9-10). No doubt Silas’ added presence alleviated some of Paul’s discouragement in reaching the Corinthians.

an official church decision, all reinforcing his commitment to mission work. The decision of the council solidified his confidence that any skeptic to the color-blind power of the gospel could not appeal to the leaders of the church at Jerusalem.³

Therefore, one of the most significant aspects of Silas’ involvement in the second journey was his belief that a church must embrace both Jew and Gentile. The beauty of the gospel is that it does not discriminate between race, gender, or status. The gospel truly bridges the gap between chasms of pride and selfishness that focus on differences and seek division. In Christ, His people are one. This was Silas’ firm belief.

In addition, his experience with the Jerusalem Council’s decision prepared him for interaction with the Greeks. The second journey took the missionaries into new territory, and Silas was prepared through the official confirmation of the church that the Gentiles were spiritual equals with the Jews. As Gentiles would express concern over their worth as God’s children, Silas would have silenced their doubts with the pure gospel of sovereign grace.

This conviction gave him courage on one of their first stops into Macedonia: the Roman colony of Philippi. As a Roman colony, there were few Jews in the city, due in part to a recent decision of Emperor Claudius to expunge Jews from Rome itself in c. AD 49, a decision with far-reaching effects (Acts 18:2). Paul and Silas, along with Luke and Timothy, arrived in Philippi in c.

3 F.F. Bruce. *New Testament History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Co.1969), 290.

Alongside Silas' work with the Corinthians was his involvement in the inspired letters to the Thessalonians, written at this time while they labored with the Corinthians. After a report is brought that the Thessalonians are thriving in spite of the missionaries' abrupt departure (I Thess. 3:6), Paul pens two letters to them to encourage them in their faith, citing Silvanus and Timotheus (Roman versions of Silas and Timothy) as co-laborers in the gospel ministry (I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:1). Paul's mention of his close companion Silas in his greetings to the Thessalonians proved his worth and reminded the Thessalonians of the vital role Silas carried out in establishing their church.

The church planting in Corinth, of which Silas played an important part, lasted eighteen months before he and others concluded the second journey with a brief stop in Ephesus before setting sail for Antioch of Syria. What we learn from Silas' involvement on the second missionary journey was how instrumental he was in planting churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth. When Paul wrote his second letter to the Corinthians, he acknowledged the impact that Silas had on them, too, through Silas' pure preaching of Jesus Christ (II Cor. 1:19).

A note about Paul here. His mention of Silas in his writings also reinforces the humility that Paul possessed as a great leader and missionary in the early church. He frequently cites the important men and women who are a part of his network of co-laborers, and who are crucial in establishing Christian roots across the Roman empire. I imagine Paul often raising his hands, quieting the recognition, saying, "Not unto me, O Lord," then raising his eyes to heaven in praise for the One who gave the increase (I Cor. 3:6-9).

Paul's understanding of his own weakness and sin developed and progressed with increasing humility. In chronological order, he wrote first, "For I am the least of the apostles" (I Cor. 15:9); then "unto me, who am less than the least of the all the saints" (Eph. 3:8); and finally, "Christ came into the world to save sinners; of who I am chief" (I Tim. 1:15). This profound humility led him to acknowledge the committed and faithful work of his friend and companion Silas, who undoubtedly shared this same level of humility.

The narrative of Acts gives no mention of Silas after the conclusion of the second missionary journey. It is most probable that he stayed the eighteen months in Corinth, crossed the Aegean Sea for a short stay in Ephesus, and then traveled on to Jerusalem. Paul's desire at this time was to celebrate the Passover before traveling north to Antioch (Acts 18:21). As a Jew, Silas would have also had this desire to celebrate this important Jewish feast.

Additionally, Silas would have been motivated by a

strong desire to see his beloved family and Jerusalem once again, and to tell of the wonderful works of God in the hearts of new Christians he had encountered on his journey. What stories he would have told!

But the story of Silas was not over. Previously leaving his good friend Peter behind in preparation for mission work brings us full circle. While Paul was a missionary to the Gentiles, Peter continued as a missionary to the Jews in Palestine, preaching the truth of the risen Lord. This great apostle and fisher of men must have had a strong influence on Silas, being used by God to help train him for work with the Jews in Jerusalem and for being a missionary of the Gentiles alongside Paul.

As Silas remained in Jerusalem at the conclusion of the second journey, his friendship with Peter was strengthened. Christian tradition has supported Peter's trip to Rome at the end of his life, and the final comments of his first epistle support this fact. Peter writes, "The church that is at *Babylon*, elected together with you, saluteth you [Jewish Christians in Asia Minor]; and so does Marcus my son" (I Pet. 5:13). Babylon does not refer to the region of Babylonia to the east; rather, it refers figuratively to the city of Rome.⁴ Additionally, Peter's reference to Marcus (John Mark) with him *in Rome* is supported by Paul's final letter to Timothy prior to his own execution, where Paul requests Mark come to him in Rome (II Tim. 4:11).

Therefore, Silas traveled *with* Peter to Rome at some point after the missionary journeys were concluded, for he is mentioned in the final verses as being alongside Peter: "By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you" (I Pet. 3:12). More than that, however, Peter's reference to Silas leads us to believe that he was the scribe of Peter's first letter. Silas served as an amanuensis. This refers to the person who aids the main writer in being a transcriber, contributor, and composer,⁵ a means Paul also used in as many as six of his thirteen epistles (II Thess. 3:17-18; I Cor. 16:21-24; Gal. 6:11; Rom. 16:22; Col. 4:18; Phile. 19).

It is entirely possible that while in Rome, Silas was witness to Peter's crucifixion at the hands of Emperor Nero, a martyrdom prophesied by the Lord Jesus Himself to Peter (John 21:18). Perhaps Silas even experienced that same persecution while in Rome, becoming a martyr himself. No record of this is given, but we can be confident that Silas remained committed and faithful in the Lord's work to the end.

4 J. Gresham Machen. *The New Testament: An Introduction to Its Literature and History* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), 250.

5 E. Randolph Richards. *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 80, 93.

Silas: committed missionary, preacher, scribe, and friend. As the psalmist instructs us, “Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass” (Ps. 37:5), so we can know with certainty that Silas committed *himself* to the work of the Lord, trusted

Him when he ventured into the unknown, and rested in the knowledge that *he* was known in love, and that the Lord’s promises were brought to pass in his eternal reward.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Holstege, former PRC missionary and now pastor of the Wingham Protestant Reformed Church in Wingham, Ontario

The covenant of God and our mission to the world (7) God’s people in the world

Previous article in this series: March 1, 2022, p. 255.

As promised in a previous article, we now turn to the ideas of covenant, missions, and the antithesis as they relate to all believers. We have already considered the topic as it relates to ministers of the gospel. We saw that if we have a culture for missions in our covenant community, we do not only focus inwardly on the needs of our own churches, but we just as zealously focus on the needs of the scattered elect outside our churches. We seek to obey the Great Commission of our Lord and to send fishers of men into the sea of the world. We saw that when missionaries go out, they must live and preach as men of God’s covenant who have personally tasted the grace of God in Christ, so that they shine brightly in the darkness with an antithetical life and an antithetical message. Now we turn to the relation between covenantal missions and the antithesis as it applies to lay members of the church.

Ye are the light of the world! You are a city set on a hill that cannot be hid. You, covenant people of Jehovah! (Matt. 5:14)

The Holy Spirit lights your candle through the preaching of the gospel every Lord’s Day. You are to carry that candle into the darkness all week long.

We may not hide our light under a bushel in our hearts, homes, or schools. Has the Holy Spirit lit the candle of your heart through the gospel of Christ? Where have you put that candle? Have you kept it hidden in your heart? Have you put it on a candlestick in your covenant home so that it gives light to all who are in the house? Very well, but have you also opened the shades and let your light shine through the windows out into your neighborhood? Have you also carried your Spirit-lit candle into the workplace? Surely you have not hidden your light by cussing and swearing with your

coworkers or by working on Sundays. But have you also shined the light into their lives by gospel-centered speech that is “always with grace, seasoned with salt”? (Col. 4:6).

But is it proper to talk to unbelievers at work or in our neighborhood? After all, we must live the antithesis. Yes, but the antithesis does not call for *physical* separation from the world. There are no more physical or geographic borders between the church and the world, as in the Old Testament. In the New Testament the covenant people of God are right in the midst of the heathen, but we must live in a way that is *spiritually* distinct. We are the salt of the earth. But if the salt has lost its savor, what good is it? (Matt. 5:13). The call to spiritual separation does not forbid close interaction with the world. We are not to flee from the world, except when we are persecuted (Matt. 24:16). We are to be in the world, brushing shoulders with the people of the world, and fleeing from the evils of the world. The call to be spiritually distinct is not a call to avoid significant conversation with unbelievers about the things that matter most—God, faith, hope, love, salvation, eternity, Jesus Christ our Lord.... The call to avoid such conversations comes from the spirit of our age, not from God’s Word. We are told that our religion is a private thing and we must keep it to ourselves. But God tells us that we are a city on a hill that cannot be hid and we must let our light shine.

Let me give some practical examples to illustrate the point.

First, there is the matter of dating. The young people of the covenant must not date or marry the young people of the world because God warns that the latter will entice the former to serve their gods (cf. Gen. 6:1-8;

Deut. 7:3-4; Jud. 3:6; I Cor. 7:39). Dating is not a proper form of evangelism. Young believers must date within the sphere of the covenant because they must marry a believer whose candle has been lit by the Holy Spirit like them, with whom they can walk together through life with one heart and mind. I do not mean they may only date within their own denomination or that it is always wrong to date someone from another denomination. I did always believe, and still believe, that if they are Protestant Reformed and committed to what their churches teach, they would logically and rightly search for a spouse within those churches, because then they would have much greater confidence of finding someone who believes and lives as they do. But I have also come to appreciate that, whether young people date within or outside their own denomination, they must always strive to make sure from the outset that the person is a true believer in Jesus Christ who lives a distinctively godly life. And if they date someone from another denomination, they better get down to business right away and deal with the differences in doctrine and life. If there is resistance to the Reformed faith and life, they should end the relationship before it develops further.

But there should be no doubt that dating must take place within the sphere of the covenant. We must not date an unbeliever and say that we are evangelizing. That may sound nice, but it is actually becoming unequally yoked with an unbeliever and failing to live in spiritual separation. We must rather bear witness to that unbeliever concerning Jesus Christ before we ever cherish the thought or hope of a romantic relationship. Some are tempted to think that since God Himself caused their path to cross the path of that unbeliever and gave them both a romantic interest in each other, it must be God's will that they date so that the believer can evangelize the unbeliever. Beware of that thinking. We know God's will from Scripture: Do not marry the ungodly. Dating is for marriage. Therefore, do not date the ungodly either. I know it is not easy, but young people must keep their hearts with all diligence and avoid romantic involvement with someone they know to be an unbeliever. There is only one calling of the believing young person to the unbelieving young person: Bear witness of Jesus Christ.

For another example, it is not proper for a saint to join his unbelieving coworker or business associate at the bar on Friday night after work to unwind with a few beers or a few shots of whiskey. He is not walking as a child of light when, sitting on the barstool next to his ungodly coworkers, he stares with them at the seductive women, sings with them the worldly songs blaring from the speakers, and engages with them in filthy talk and

foolish jesting (cf. Eph. 5:3-18). He ought to remember who he is, a man brought by God into His covenant by mere grace through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. He ought to go home and rejoice with the wife of his youth and read to his little children.

But have we ever considered inviting one of those same unbelieving coworkers to a quiet lunch to talk about our God? Perhaps we have heard him say that he is going through a divorce or his loved one has a disease or he lost his license for driving drunk too many times. Have we ever viewed that as an opportunity to shine the light of the gospel into his darkness, or do we ignore him and his problems and steer clear? We need wisdom to know what to say to him, when to say it, and how to say it. But if 'wisdom' is always telling us to steer clear of the man of the world with his problems and mind our own business, we are probably hiding our light under a bushel.

For still another example, it ought to be clear from Scripture that it is not proper for a saint to form a friendship with an unbelieving neighbor on no other basis than some common earthly interest like sports and for no other purpose than a good time. For the friendship of the world is enmity with God (James 4:4). What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (II Cor. 6:14). If we get together with our ungodly neighbor just to shout at the television together for several hours, moaning and groaning together when our team is losing, slapping hands and jumping around together when they are winning, and agree that it was a great time when it is over, then God reminds us, "I am your God, and you are my people, for I have established my covenant with you. Therefore, come out from among them, and be ye separate and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you and be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters" (cf. II Cor. 6:16-18).

Have we ever considered, instead, to invite that neighbor to church with us? Maybe we say, "He would not be interested in our church. The preaching is too deep and the sermon too long for him. The worship is too formal and the songs too old-fashioned." But maybe we should think again. How much time and money do we put into our hobbies and sports? The Scripture says bodily exercise profits a little, but we often act like it is the most important thing in our lives. We are given one life to live before eternity, and we spend countless hours on frivolous things of no spiritual value. What if we would devote just a small percent of those hours to thinking, planning, and preparing to invite our neighbor to church?

There is no doubt that most of our neighbors would

find our worship services too long, too deep, too formal, and too old-fashioned. They are under the spell of modern culture and entertainment as well as the bewitchment of Satan and the flesh. But is anything too hard for the Lord? God can use our witness to stir within them a curiosity to come to church and hear His Word. We can begin by simply talking to them about our faith. If they show interest, we can tell them about our church, what we do on Sundays, what is the focus of our worship service. We can tell them what to expect at our church in terms of clothing, atmosphere, and the sermon. Let us not apologize for the length and depth of the worship services, as if we are slightly embarrassed about it. Let us be positive and unashamed. If fear of rejection or ridicule keeps us silent when it comes to our faith and church, we are probably hiding our light under a bushel.

But lest I leave the impression that I perfectly practice what I preach in this article, I conclude by confessing that I too struggle and fail in this area of the Christian

life. I also do not always know what to say to my neighbors or how to say it. I too fight against fears and social pressures that would keep my lips silent. So what I say to you I say to myself first: We must remember who we are and what we must be in the midst of the world. We are the people of God, chosen to eternal membership in His covenant through the blood of a Savior who loved us. We are God's friends in the world. We have fellowship with the living God by faith in Jesus Christ. Thus, we are to walk with our God and be spiritually distinct from the world. But we are also to love our neighbor who is lost in darkness by shining the light of truth and grace before his face.

There is no conflict between staying spiritually separate from the world and seeking close contact with the people of the world to witness to them. Let us live anti-thetically to the world *by* witnessing to the world. Let us hold forth our Spirit-lit candles in the darkness by speech that reflects our hope and joy in Christ.



All Thy works shall praise Thee

Mr. Joel Minderhoud, science teacher in Covenant Christian High School and member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan

Sand innumerable: God's precious thoughts towards His precious church

As the summer season is upon us in North America, many of us will likely take the opportunity to visit a beach. As you relax on the beach, basking under the warm summer sun and watching the waves lap upon the shore, take a moment to pick up a handful of sand and ponder this unique aspect of God's creation. What passages of Scripture come to mind? What spiritual truths does God reveal in His Word through this particular product of the work of His hand? Let us consider what God reveals to us in this portion of His elegant book of creation as we examine it in light of His Word.

Identity and variety of sand

We have been studying minerals in this rubric. Although sand is not a mineral, it is a mixture of different materials, the most common constituent being the mineral quartz (silicon dioxide). These quartz particles are generally mixed with other small, granular

substances, such as broken rock fragments, minerals (like iron oxide), and decaying biological materials, such as sea shells, coral, and micro-organisms. Since much of the earth's crust is made of granite rock, which contains an abundance of quartz and feldspar (aluminum-silicon dioxide mineral), fragments of quartz and feldspars will naturally accumulate in the sand as the earth's crust erodes through the forces of water, wind, and freeze-thaw cycles.

Many of us in North America who have not traveled much elsewhere might assume that all sand is light brown in color, due to its composition. But sand comes in many different colors depending on the kinds of materials found in various specific geographical locations. The sand found at many tropical islands, for example, contains an abundance of calcium carbonate from the shells and skeletons of marine organisms. This calcium carbonate makes the sand much whiter than quartz/

feldspar/iron oxide sands. In contrast, particulate matter from corals, mollusks and microorganisms can add a red hue to sand, giving it a pink color, as found in Bermuda. And sand that contains particles from volcanic eruptions might have a black or green color, as is found in Hawaii.

Besides its color, the texture of sand also varies based on location. Water erosion tends to shape the sand crystals differently than wind erosion. Water-eroded sand has more angular grains, whereas wind-eroded sand contains more rounded particulate matter.

A handful of sand at the beach, therefore, tells a rich story to the careful observer. Both color and texture reveal much about the geological nature of the area and its natural surrounding influences, such as wind, water, volcanic activity, and type of organisms in the water.

While new sand certainly does form through the erosion process, it would be a mistake to assume that all sand is the product of current erosion as we observe it today. This is the geological teaching of worldly scientists, who maintain that the earth is billions of years old. They teach that the sand we observe is from millions upon millions of years of erosion. Their teaching is based on the false doctrine of Uniformitarianism—that all biological, geological, and other processes on earth continue in the same way as they always have, without change—a teaching of which we have shown the error in a previous article.¹ Rather, we confess that God created the earth about 6,000 years ago and that a global flood—a wonder-work (miracle) of God—brought monumental changes to our earth. Sand, therefore, is not the product of millions of years of erosion, but is a marvelous work of God both at the Flood and at the original creation.

Innumerable

As you look at a handful of sand, with all of its tiny grains, and glance down the shoreline at the length of the beach, it becomes immediately apparent that to number all the grains of sand would be an utter impossibility. With the use of satellite photography, it has been determined that approximately 30% of all coastal regions are sandy beaches. This amounts to about 120,000 miles of sandy coastline in the world.

But how deep does the sand in those beaches go? And how far inland does that sandy beach extend? If one were to have access to these dimensions, one could perhaps make a rough estimate of the volume of sand. But actually to number the grains of sand is simply impossible.

To better appreciate the immense amount of sand on the earth, consider the following. Next to water, sand is the most consumed raw material on earth. One of the most common uses of sand is in the production of concrete. Every cubic yard of concrete (27 cubic feet) requires 17 cubic feet of sand. Each year over 5 billion tons of concrete are produced for the construction of roads, buildings, and bridges. To put this in perspective, one would be able, every year with this amount of concrete, to build a wall 30 feet tall and 30 feet wide that wraps entirely around the earth's circumference!

And concrete is not the only use for sand. Sand is also melted down to make glass for windows, as well as for computer and cell phone screens. It is also an important ingredient for the computer chip industry. It is estimated that the annual global consumption of sand for all uses is 40 billion tons. And some

estimate that a single teaspoon of sand contains some 40,000 grains. Clearly, the amount of sand upon the earth is unfathomable (and uncountable)!

Spiritual lessons

“How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand...” (Ps. 139: 17-18).

The majority of Scripture passages that speak of sand draw our attention to its innumerable quantity. That innumerable amount of sand is used to teach God's people about two important spiritual truths. One of these truths is, as we learn from these verses in Psalm 139, God's innumerable thoughts unto us.

Our God is a personal, covenant God who knows all things. As the all-knowing God, Jehovah has a perfect and precious plan for each of our lives. Psalm 139 teaches that our all-knowing, covenant God has thoughts to usward that are precious and innumerable. We are in the thoughts of Almighty God! This demonstrates the deep covenant love God has for us His adopted children. In a loving marriage, a wife thinks often of her

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¹ *Standard Bearer*. Volume 95, No. 2 (October 15, 2018).

husband, and likewise the husband of his wife. Vastly more so does our heavenly Father have innumerable precious thoughts towards us. What a covenant love He has for us!

God's precious thoughts towards us are manifested in how He speaks of us and what He desires for us. As His thoughts towards us are those of love, God speaks of His love for us. On the basis of the work of Christ, God calls us Hephzibah—those in whom He takes delight—and “the holy people, The redeemed of the LORD” and “Sought out, A city not forsaken” (Is. 62:4,12). And as His thoughts towards us are those of love, His sovereign plan for us is a plan of peace and good! “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end” (Jer. 29:11). Imagine, thoughts of peace and love are the thoughts of our blessed God and Father towards us, His covenant children! Expressed in loving words and actions to us! What could be more precious!

We would do well to ponder *these* thoughts when we sometimes fret over the thoughts of sinful man towards us that are not the thoughts of peace and love, but rather the thoughts of evil. Especially painful is reproach during times of family strife or church schism, when we may be hurt even by our “familiar friends” (Ps. 41:9). We read in the Psalms (52, 58, 59, 64, etc.) of the great hurt King David (and King Jesus) endured due to the sinful tongues of men. We do well, I say, when it is also our lot to endure the pain from the piercings of the tongue, to consider that our God has *innumerable precious* thoughts towards us. By faith, we know and trust that God's thoughts toward us are the precious thoughts of peace and love. If we should count them, they are more in number than the sand of the seashore.

Remember also that our ever-merciful High Priest, Jesus Christ, truly knows our suffering! “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Let us patiently endure harsh reproach for the sake of Jesus Christ. In fact, “*blessed are ye*, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you *falsely*, for my sake” (Matt. 5:11). Regardless of how others view us, remember how *God* views

us—as His precious covenant children for whom He has infinite thoughts of peace and love.

Then there is the second spiritual truth to be learned from the innumerable sand upon the seashore. It directs us also to consider God's covenant promise to gather His universal church—a multitude that no man can number—and to prepare His church for glory. “That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies” (Gen. 22:17). God *is* gathering His universal church—each member, grain by grain. And how does he gather them? Again, look to the sand. Just as sand is shaped and formed through harsh erosion processes, so we are shaped through all sorts of heavy trials. God gathers His people through judgments, perfectly preparing us for glory through unique trials and afflictions. And in doing so, God surely does us good. God is good and faithful. Always! Do not be discouraged in your trials, but be comforted that God's promises never fail and “that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

The innumerable sand on the seashore reminds us that our God will bring us and His entire universal church to our place in glory. What a multitude that will be! Though we cannot count each saint, as we cannot count each grain of sand, God knows each of His children by name. “Af-

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ter this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Rev. 7:9-10). Hallelujah! Worship the King of the church!

Grains of sand without number! A spiritually rich picture of the blessed reality that God has innumerable precious thoughts towards you! And that He is faithfully gathering His church—a diverse and innumerable host—for their perfect place in glory! “By all His creatures let His Name be honored and adored; Let all that breathe, in praise unite to glorify the Lord” (Psalter #411, stanza 2).



Strength of youth

Rev. Ryan Barnhill, pastor of Heritage Protestant Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Have you considered the ministry?

Young man, have you considered the ministry?

How much have you thought about this matter? How often have you given yourself to earnest prayer about this work? How frequently have you discussed this with your parents or with someone else whom you trust?

The need for ministers is great!

It is certainly true that *God* will bring into the office whom He will, and God's will is never frustrated. But this does not mean that articles like this one are unnecessary. Dear reader, if you feel the inward call to serve God in the ministry, my prayer is that this writing would strengthen you in that conviction. But, whether right now you sense that inward call or not, my desire is that God would use what you read here to encourage discussions about the ministry with your parents, elders, teachers, and godly friends.

A fear

Before we come to the need for more ministers and some practical advice for young men, I find it necessary to address a fear. Anyone who has been observing the denomination in the last few years will know that the atmosphere is stormy. The tempest of controversy has blown about and hurt many families, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. Ministers, too (perhaps *especially*), have felt the cutting winds. The fear is this: Men who enter the ministry, and do so especially nowadays, will face many hardships and deal with heavy situations. And so, there is a hesitation even to bring up the topic of our need for more men in the pulpit.

Parents fear to ask their sons about the ministry. A father avoids the conversation with his boys, because he does not want to see them “put through the wringer” in their pulpit ministry. He dreads the possibility that men might critique their every word and blacken their name. I personally have heard more than a few fathers express how loath they are to talk with their children about the pastorate.

Young men cringe when they are asked about the ministry. These young men have observed what has happened in the last years. They know, perhaps from observing their own pastor, what a toll these times have

taken on him. They have seen how men have subjected ministers to the microscope, examining their teachings at close range and sometimes even publishing abroad their criticisms. And so, the young man is not so quick to pray about the ministry, or even to give it much thought.

What do we say to this fear and hesitation? We know, of course, that God *will* bring every man into the ministry whom He has eternally determined to set into the office, but that does not mean we should not address these fears.

We must remember that God never promises ministers an easy path. He promises that He will always be with and will strengthen ministers as they go *through* the waters and fires of many afflictions, but never does He promise a water and fire-free ministry. By the way, saying that the ministry contains suffering is not to deny the reality of joy in the office—just ask any faithful servant of Christ and he will tell you of the joy he experiences as a gospel minister, a joy that exists even in the midst of dark places and suffering. He will exclaim what a privilege it is to serve Christ in the pastorate, something that brings him daily to his knees in gratitude. But the fact remains: in the office, there is toil and pain. Consider a Jeremiah, functioning as a true prophet—how cruelly treated he was! Think of a Paul, preaching and teaching God's Word faithfully—and men persecuted him! What we are facing now in our churches is no new thing for ministers in church history. Jesus Himself knew very well the hardships that His servants undergo in their work, but that did not stop Him from saying, “Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:38). Current troubles should not be reason for us to fear bringing up the ministry, to stop thinking about it, or to quit praying regarding it.

In fact, an argument could be made that these hard times in our churches lend even *more urgency* to such consideration of the ministry. Exactly *in these times* we need undershepherds who will lead the sheep into the green pastures. Precisely *at this moment* we need men who will clearly explain the truth, oppose all er-

ror, and help navigate the church through all the issues that a controversy brings. If ever the church has need for faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ at the front lines of battle, that time is now!

The need

Great is the need for more men to serve in the office of the ministry!

This need for pastors is nothing new. The matter of considering the ministry has appeared repeatedly on the pages of the *Standard Bearer*, evidence that the Protestant Reformed Churches have, throughout their history, struggled with a shortage of pastors. Our churches are not alone in this either. Talk with people from other denominations, and you will discover that they face similar challenges. None of this surprises us, for our Savior Himself said long ago, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few...” (Matt. 9:37). The need for more preachers of the Word is not new, but it is just as real and urgent in 2022 as it has been through the years. Therefore, we address it once again.

As of this writing, four churches have no minister. Those four vacancies will need to be filled at some point. Additionally, a few men in the denomination are nearing retirement. The time will not be long before these men step aside from the full-time, active labors in their congregations, understandably unable to give themselves to the work like they had in years earlier. This will leave more vacancies in the churches. Furthermore, five students were enrolled in our seminary during the 2021-22 school year. If the Lord brings them all into the ministry, it is not likely that all five will labor in our churches in America and Canada (and that is not to take away from our gladness that some of the men might serve Christ’s church in other places of the world; it is merely to state a fact). And so, should the seminary students graduate and receive calls, that would only partially fill our immediate needs. Finally, one of our churches is beginning the process of calling a man for the good and necessary work of home missions. If a man currently serving a congregation accepts this call,

he will leave that congregation vacant. We need more men for the work of the ministry!

These facts and statistics are concerning to us because we understand the nature of the ministry and why it is so important. A good exercise would be to take some time, perhaps on a Sunday afternoon, to read the installation form for ministers in the back of the Psalter. Part of that form explains the duties of a minister, supplying biblical proof throughout. By way of brief summary, ministers of God’s Word are, first, to preach the Word of the Lord, including all the elements that faithful preaching should have. Second, the servants of Christ are to pray publicly in behalf of the whole congregation. Third, the office is to administer the sacraments, which Christ instituted as seals of His grace. Fourth, the duty of ministers is to keep the church in good discipline and govern it in a proper manner. Following these four points is a paragraph to which we should pay special attention: “From

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these things [the duties of the minister summarized above] may be learned what a glorious work the ministerial office is, since so great things are effected by it; yea, how highly necessary it is for man’s salvation, which is also the reason why the Lord will have such an office always to remain.” How vital is the ministry! A shortage of ministers concerns us, therefore.

Some advice

Considering this need in the churches, a need that legitimately concerns us, what advice can be given to young men?

First, pray! Jesus said, after all, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38). Surely, the *church* must be praying for more laborers. But this includes *you*, young man! Make not only the *general* prayer that the Lord will send more laborers into His harvest, but be asking that the Lord would make known His will for *your* life. Do that regularly. Years ago, Homer C. Hoeksema gave the following counsel to young men, as relevant today as it was in his day: “Finally, let me take this opportunity to address young men directly, particularly young men who

are considering the question of further education upon graduation from high school, or even some of our young men who are perhaps already in college. Don't make the mistake of looking at your future simply from a carnal point of view of what you may or may not like to do. But consider and seek the answer to the question, 'Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'"¹

Second, communicate! That is, maintain open lines of communication with others in your life. Primary here are your parents. Your father and mother know you best: where you are spiritually, intellectually, and in other areas. If your parents want a sit-down with you to talk about the ministry, do not cut off the conversation, but be open to what they say. And even if your parents do not approach you, take the initiative by starting the discussion with them: ask them good questions and glean their thoughts. Whether or not you sense the inward call to the ministry, such talks will prove edifying for you and your parents. You might be

¹ Homer C. Hoeksema, "Our Urgent Need of Students for the Ministry," *Standard Bearer* (April 1, 1986), 294.

less inclined to bring up this topic with a teacher, your pastor, or an elder, which is understandable. But if they open up communication with you about the ministry, consider carefully what they say, and then take their words home and pray fervently that God would plainly show to you His will for your life.

Remember your siblings and friends, too. They know you well, sometimes just as much as your own parents. Whether you feel that inward call or not, what could it hurt to have an open, honest conversation about the ministry? If anything, such spiritual conversations will only add to the richness of the relationship you have with that sibling or friend. Perhaps you, reader, *are* that sibling or friend. Is there a godly and gifted man in your family or in your friend circle? Have you ever pulled him aside to ask him if he has considered the ministry? Do not underestimate how the Lord may use you in the life of that young man you know.

Men, have you considered the ministry? The need is great!

Lord, send forth laborers!

Announcements

Reminder

Remember that the *Standard Bearer* will be published only once each month during the summer months: June, July, and August.

Reformed Witness Hour reformedwitnesshour.org

Rev. Carl Haak

- July 3—The Dedication of the Wall
Nehemiah 12:27-47
- July 10—The Separated Life
Nehemiah 13:1-3
- July 17—Why Is the House of God Forsaken?
Nehemiah 13:4-14
- July 24—Why Is the Sabbath Day Profaned?
Nehemiah 13:15-22
- July 31—Shall We Transgress in Forming Mixed Marriages?
Nehemiah 13:23-39

Classis East

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 14, 2022, at 8:00 A.M., in the Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 13, 2022.

Rev. C. Spronk, Stated Clerk

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Doon, Iowa on Wednesday, September 28, 2022, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 29, 2022. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Doon's Consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk