

THE STANDARD BEARER

August
2025

VOLUME 101, NUMBER 13

PRC
SYNOD
2025
issue

EDITOR'S NOTES | **PROF. BRIAN HUIZINGA** | 390

For It Seemed Good to the Spirit and to Us

MEDITATION | **REV. WILLIAM LANGERAK** | 391

PICTURES OF PRC SYNOD 2025 | 397

Synod 2025 Summary

EDITORIAL | **REV. JOSHUA ENGELSMA** | 399

The Minister's Relation to Christ's Body

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCHES IN COMMON—PRC SEMINARY | **PROF. DOUGLAS KUIPER** | 402

Brutal Persecution; Canadian Reformed Synod; Christian Reformed Synod

ALL AROUND US | **REV. DANIEL HOLSTEGE** | 405

The Renewal of James

BIBLE BIOGRAPHIES | **MR. KYLE BRUINOOGHE** | 408

Little Ones

A WORD FITLY SPOKEN | **REV. JOSEPH HOLSTEGE** | 411

The Prodigal Son (1)

WHEN THOU SITTEST IN THINE HOUSE | **MR. TOM CAMMENG**A | 413

Paths, Problems, and Prayer

STRENGTH OF YOUTH | **REV. RYAN BARNHILL** | 416

Myanmar Semi-Annual Report

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCHES IN COMMON—MYANMAR | **MR. BRANDON WASSINK** | 418



A REFORMED SEMI-MONTHLY MAGAZINE

EDITOR'S NOTES

Along with other edifying articles, you will find in this issue coverage of Synod 2025 of the PRCA. As usual, the pre-synodical sermon is included as our meditation. Rev. W. Langerak, president of last year's synod, preached an enlightening sermon from Acts 15 on the important work of the Holy Ghost in the work of ecclesiastical assemblies. Rev. Engelsma's editorial gives a helpful summary of synod's actions. Also, we

print the instructive graduation speech that Professor Kuiper delivered for our seminary graduate—now “candidate for the ministry”—Mr. Aaron Van Dyke. Until the *Acts of Synod* are published, readers who are interested in a summary of synod's decisions may find them at prca.org, under the “News” tab. May this issue strengthen your hearts in the Lord.



Delegates and International Guests to the PRC Synod 2025



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a monthly periodical with two special issues Fall and Spring published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

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

Reprint and online posting policy Permission is hereby granted for the reprinting or online posting of articles in the *Standard Bearer* by other publications, provided that such reprinted articles are reproduced in full; that proper acknowledgment is made; and that a copy of the periodical or Internet location in which the reprint or posting appears is sent to the editorial office.

Editorial policy Every editor is solely responsible for the contents of his own articles. Letters to the editor should be limited to 600 words, be written in a brotherly fashion, and be in response only

to published articles (not to published letters). More extensive exchanges on a significant topic of broad interest may be included as guest contributions at the editors' discretion. Letters and contributions will be published at the editor's discretion and may be edited for publication. All communications relative to the contents should be sent to the editorial office.

Advertising policy The *Standard Bearer* does not accept commercial advertising of any kind. Announcements of church and school events, anniversaries, obituaries, and sympathy resolutions will be placed for a \$10 fee. Announcements should be sent with the fee to: RFPA, Attn: SB Announcements, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr., Jenison, MI 49428-7137 (mail@rfpa.org). Deadline for announcements is one month prior to publication date.

Annual subscription price
Print: \$32 USA / \$52 international
Digital: \$22 / free to print subscribers
The Reformed Free Publishing Association

maintains the privacy and trust of its subscribers by not sharing with any person, organization, or church any information regarding *Standard Bearer* subscribers.

Editorial office
Prof. Brian Huizinga
4949 Ivanrest Ave SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
bhuizinga@prca.org

Business office
Mr. Dwight Quenga
1894 Georgetown Center Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428-7137
616-457-5970
dwight@rfpa.org

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

rfpa.org / prca.org



FOR IT SEEMED GOOD TO THE SPIRIT AND TO US*

REV. WILLIAM LANGERAK

Pastor of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, Michigan and president of the 2024 PRC Synod

The standard Jesus Christ has set for synod is high, impossibly high. That standard is our text: “for it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us” (Acts 15:28). Every prayer, motion, discussion, and decision of Synod 2025 must have this standard as its goal so that all the delegates and churches may be able to say at its conclusion: “It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”

The synod may not be content to say only that it seemed good to us, for this is only the standard of men. Man, and every assembly of men, does only that which seems good to himself. Because his mind is at enmity with God, he deliberately makes decisions against what seems good to the Spirit (Rom. 8:7). Jesus has set a much higher, humanly impossible standard for us. We must say of all our work at synod that it seemed good to us *and* to God’s Holy Spirit.

It is especially fitting to consider this highest of standards tonight. This year, by the grace of God, we not only celebrate our 100th anniversary as a Reformed denomination, but it is also the 85th anniversary of our first synod, held in First PRC of Grand Rapids—a place many visited last week for our 100th. On Tuesday, May 21, 1940, the night before that first synod convened, Rev. Herman Hoeksema laid the weight of this same text on the delegates and church members assembled at Roosevelt Park PRC for the first pre-synodical service.

The sermon must have made an impression. The first article in the 1940 *Acts of Synod* called it “very appropriate” (Art. 1). After convening, the first president of synod, Rev. Gerrit Vos, “expressed the hope that... the Holy Spirit will guide in all the work that awaits,” which is the idea of the text (Art. 7). And the last minute

records that at the synod’s conclusion, Vos “testified that by God’s grace we could say of our acts, ‘It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us’ to decide as was done” (Art. 113).

A bold declaration this was, especially given some of the decisions Synod 1940 made. Its first decision was that “the official language...shall be the English” (Art. 9). Why would this seem good to the Spirit? The next two major decisions were not even on the agenda. Two weeks before synod, at dawn May 10, the German Wehrmacht launched its infamous blitzkrieg that overran Europe so quickly that by synod’s end, evacuations at Dunkirk had begun. Four days later, on May 14, the Luftwaffe bombed Rotterdam, and the next day the Dutch surrendered. Synod decided, “In view of the invasion...the [officers] shall send a cablegram to the Netherlands requesting information as to the condition, welfare, and whereabouts of Dr. K. Schilder” (Art. 16), and “advise our churches to take up offerings for the Netherlands Relief” (Art. 17). Why did this seem good to the Spirit?

Synod 1940 even said this about an error. The error concerned student John Heys. After examining him, synod admitted him to candidacy, then rescinded that decision. What was the reason that synod for the first—perhaps only time—rescinded a poor student’s candidacy? It “inadvertently omitted...the usual examination in *Practica*.” So Hoeksema conducted it. And afterwards, synod again “voted unanimously...to admit Student J. Heys to candidacy” (Art. 66). Again, we may ask why this *faux pas* seemed good to the Spirit? But it did.

Who knows what the Spirit has in store for Synod 2025. We have our agenda, a lengthy one. Maybe it takes longer than we expect. Maybe unexpected world

* This is the text of the pre-synodical sermon given on June 9, 2025 in Faith PRC (Jenison, MI), host of synod.

events come up. Perhaps we make an error, even in the examination of our student. Whatever the case, every action, discussion, and decision of the 86th synod must meet the same high standard that Jesus Christ set for our first synod in 1940, the words of our text in Acts 15:28: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us.”

THE STANDARD OF BROADER CHURCH ASSEMBLIES

“For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us” was said by delegates of the first general assembly of the church of Jesus Christ. More significantly, it was said by the Holy Spirit, and said specifically about that broader church assembly, and not about any of the assemblies of the local church—consistory, deaconate, council, or congregational meetings. Thereby, the Spirit not only approved, but demanded broader assemblies, established their necessity and principles of their authority and work—all which seem good to us, for these are incorporated into our Church Order.

First, with these words the Holy Spirit established the *legitimacy* and *necessity* of broader assemblies: It seemed good to the Spirit that there be broader assemblies to do certain necessary work. This is evident because the specific thing that seemed good to the Spirit was the decision of the assembly, which He then calls “these *necessary* things” (v. 28). The necessity was twofold: It decided a matter that could not be settled by a local church—the church at Antioch appealed to the broader assembly because they were divided over this issue; and it decided a matter that was serious—it “troubled” them and was “subverting souls” (v. 24). True churches of Jesus agree—it seems good to us that churches federate, participate in, and recognize the *legitimacy* and *necessity* of broader assemblies. Churches who refuse, and members who consider broader assemblies only hierarchical, meddlesome, or unnecessary do that which is not good to the Holy Spirit.

Second, with these words the Spirit established the *authority* of broader assemblies. It seemed good to the Spirit to give real authority to the broader assembly at Jerusalem. This is evident when the Spirit calls the decision a “burden laid upon you” (v. 28) and later, “decrees... to be kept” (Acts 16:4). These two phrases refer to the authority the Spirit gives to broader assemblies to make decisions that individuals and churches must obey. This

too seems good to us, for our Church Order calls such decisions “settled and binding” (Art. 31), and considers that settled and binding character to be the authority of Christ Himself as the Head of the church.

Third, with these words the Spirit established the *derivative nature* of an assembly’s authority: It is *delegated* by Christ only through the local churches. The Spirit made plain that this authority is neither inherent nor given directly to the assembly as if it were a church. It is not even given to the assembly directly through the offices of its delegates. For it is conceivable the Spirit settle the matter at Antioch simply by the apostolic authority of Paul, who was a member there and had been given authority from Christ to make binding decrees. But the decrees at Jerusalem were made by “apostles *and* elders” (v. 4), who acted not on the authority of their offices but on authority delegated to them by the church that sent them. The church at Antioch “*determined* that Paul and Barnabas and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem... and [they] *were brought...by the church*” (vv. 2-3). Worth noting also is that Antioch sent only men. And this seems good to us: Our Church Order requires all delegates of broader assemblies be men sent with letters that ultimately come from their local church, from which their authority to deliberate and decide all lawful matters is derived (Art. 33).

Fourth, with these words, the Spirit *limited* the settled and binding *authority* of broader assemblies. They do not have the right to enter into and settle every issue that seems good to them. The authority Christ delegates to broader assemblies must meet three criteria, which also seems good to us and are found in our Church Order. They must be: 1) “ecclesiastical matters;” 2) that “could not be finished” in a local church; and 3) that “pertain to the churches in common” (Art. 30). The matter at Jerusalem was all three. It was *ecclesiastical* because it was doctrinal; it *could not be finished* at Antioch for they sent delegates only after “no small dissension and disputation” (v. 2); and it *pertained to the churches in common* because it concerned the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, and the law of God as the rule of the thankful life for converts.

Two more things about the *limits* of this authority: First, it is limited to churches that recognize this authority by federating and sending delegates; second,

it extends to the whole Christian church. This also is evident. The “you” bound to “keep the decrees” refers first to the two churches who called the assembly and sent delegates—Antioch and Jerusalem; but secondly, it also refers to “the whole church” (v. 22), that is, all Christian churches unified in recognizing the authority of those decrees. In our age, it is unlikely the “whole church” would again recognize the authority of any one broader assembly. Yet, so certain must our synod be that its decisions seem good to the Spirit, and not just the PRCA, that if possible, they would apply as the will of Christ for every Christian church. For the church has only one Head and one Spirit who says it seems good.

Fifth, with these words the Spirit established the *manner* in which broader assemblies must conduct business: what our Church Order calls an “ecclesiastical manner” (Art. 30). This basically means everything must be done according to the Spirit. More specifically it means two things. First, all things must be done *decently and in good order* (1 Cor. 14:40), that is, according to the simplicity, love, grace, honesty, and mutual respect of the Spirit that lays aside the letter of complicated rules, malice, guile, envies, and evil speakings (Col. 3:8; 1 Pet. 2:1). To this end, our Church Order also requires censure of bad behavior, and the president must “silence the captious and those...vehement in speaking (Arts. 35, 42). Secondly, “ecclesiastical manner” means delegates are to be “of one accord” (v. 25). This requires delegates first be equals. At Jerusalem not only apostles, but elders spoke and voted, with no delegate given more authority, time, or power over another. Also noteworthy is that the speech which carried the day was not of an apostle, but an elder, James the half-brother of Jesus. Our Church Order likewise requires assemblies be of equal parts elders and ministers, and forbids any to lord it over another (Arts. 41, 50, 84). Also, to be of one accord requires assemblies be *deliberative* and seek a consensus. The assembly at Jerusalem made a unanimous decision, but only after full deliberations took place, including “much disputing” (v. 7). But delegates did not come directed to vote a certain way or with minds made up; they did not shout over each other and dominate discussion. They came “to consider the matter” (v. 6), that is, they interacted, spoke one by one, and more importantly, they listened to each other. The

result, in spite of much disputing, was a consensus and unanimous decision: they were “of one accord.”

A unanimous decision is ideal, but not always what seems good to the Spirit. So our Church Order reminds us that it seems good to the Spirit that “settled and binding” is determined by “majority vote,” adding this caveat, “unless it be proved to conflict with the Word of God.” The same article in the Church Order grants every member the right to prove any decision is in error. But here too the Spirit places limits. First, the Word of God is the sole standard by which to judge error; secondly, the body to which it must “be proved” is the assembly that made the decision, not whoever disagrees. This is obvious. Anything otherwise is a spirit of pride, anarchy, and schism, the very opposite of the Spirit who said it seemed good there be broader assemblies with authority.

THE CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF BROADER ASSEMBLIES

One amazing aspect of broader assemblies is that the Spirit gives them the certain knowledge their *decisions* seem good to the Spirit. When the delegates at Jerusalem said *it* seemed good, they were referring specifically to the *decision* they made. When they said this, they were not boasting, guessing, or assuming. They knew this with certainty. The important question is this: How did they know, and how do we know? In brief, the answer is that broader assemblies know their decisions seem good to the Spirit when they know that decision is made according to the Word and Spirit.

It is worth noting that this certainty is partly derived from the knowledge that the assembly itself is lawful, necessary, and operates according to the principles of the Word outlined above. No church or assembly that violates these principles will have any certainty their decisions seem good to the Spirit. Rather, the Spirit will plague them with doubts and with division because they are only doing what seems good to themselves. Having said this, a broader assembly’s certainty of the Spirit’s blessing is mainly derived from the knowledge that the decision itself is according to the Word and Spirit. This was true at Jerusalem, which is clear simply by comparing that decision with Scripture, and from the fact that James, whose advice is adopted, grounds his advice on Amos 9:11-12.

But what explains why they made a decision in harmony with the Word and Spirit? First, the delegates personally knew the Word and His Spirit by faith. They knew the Word and Spirit were present in them and their churches. They knew this Spirit as the third person of the Trinity, given to be the personal Spirit of the ascended Jesus Christ, the Head of the church who suffered and died to redeem them from sin and death, who poured out His Spirit on the church, and placed that Spirit in them personally as the seed of regeneration and holiness. This Spirit baptized them, gave them the new life of Christ, and called, qualified, and directed them in their offices. And this Spirit, through the Word, had gathered, defended, and preserved their respective churches and members.

The chapter highlights this. As they traveled, the church of Antioch came “declaring the conversion of the Gentiles,” and at Jerusalem they declared “all things that God had done with them” (vv. 3-4). Peter recounts “how...God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel and believe,” then speaks of God giving them the Spirit “even as he did unto us” (vv. 7-9). Paul and Barnabas testified “what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them” (v. 12). And James grounds his motion on the fact that “known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (v. 18). These men personally knew the work of God the Father, through His Son, by the power and grace of His Spirit. No one can have any confidence of what seems good to the Spirit unless he personally knows the Word and Spirit.

Second, the delegates made their decision in harmony with the Word and Spirit because they personally knew the nature of the Word as written in relation to the saving operations of the Spirit. Their decision was a result of the fact that, by this Spirit, they believed the Scripture to be the one, authoritative, infallible written Word of God for themselves and the church; they knew Scripture to be the only standard of what seems good to the Spirit; and knew the Word and Spirit always operate inseparably for good in the church. And they knew this in part, because they were believing officebearers who labored in that Word by the Spirit, and some of them the Spirit used to write the Word (2 Pet. 1:21). No one will make decisions in harmony with the Word who considers Scripture to be

fallible and partly the word of man, or who imagines the Spirit works apart from Scripture.

Third, the delegates had the same interests as the Word and Spirit, that is, they loved what the Word and Spirit loves—the essential meaning of “it seemed good.” The Spirit has two main interests. First, the relationship of the Father and Son in the Trinity (including the communion of the divine and human natures in the Son); second, the relationship of the Son and His body, the church (including the communion of the members with each other). These are the Spirit’s interests because of His personal relationship to the Word. First, the Holy Spirit is the personal bond of love between Father and Son in the fellowship of the Trinity, and communion of the divine and human natures in the Son. Second, the Holy Spirit is the personal bond of love between Jesus and His church in the fellowship of the covenant of grace, and communion of every member with each other. These personal relationships are literally the love-life of the Son by His Spirit. And every decision of the church that seems good to the Spirit, must be made in love for these same interests.

That an assembly shares these interests with the Spirit will be evident from the precision with which they divide the Word in its two constituent parts—the law and gospel. This is because the Spirit is the power of God’s grace to save those the Father chose and the Son redeemed by giving them faith to believe the gospel, and sanctifying them to live in the communion of the saints according to the law of God. So the Spirit uses certain criteria to judge if a decision seems good. First, it must promote the gospel as the means the Spirit uses as the power of God unto salvation; second, it must promote the law of God as the abiding standard of love for those sanctified from sin by the Spirit; third, it must promote the spiritual well-being (love, peace, and unity) of all members of the church. The decision made in Jerusalem met all three criteria. The controversy demanded it.

The controversy began when Jewish converts came to Antioch teaching the Gentiles that “except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (v. 1). It expanded at Jerusalem when former Pharisees argued that if the law of Moses required Gentiles be circumcised to be saved, then they must also keep all the law of Moses (v. 5). So this is how the

issue was framed. These teachers insisted the Gentiles could not be saved unless they became Jews, just like the “strangers” in the Old Testament.

The controversy, thus framed, showed how serious and far-ranging were the issues facing the delegates. The entire truth and operations of the Word and Spirit in the church were at stake. It threatened to divide Jews and Gentiles in the one church of Christ. It threatened the unity of the two testaments. It threatened the gospel as the power of God unto salvation, and the moral law as necessary for the life of converts. It confused the ceremonial and moral laws, and even threatened the ministry of the apostles, who “gave no such commandment” as these other teachers (v. 24).

The precision of the assembly dividing the Word of truth began with their deliberations. Peter showed the issue was not whether Gentiles could be saved and received into the church, for this was decided “a good while ago” when the Spirit called him to preach to Cornelius and baptize his whole house (v. 7). He also noted the issue was not whether Gentiles and Jews were saved differently, for “God put no difference between them and us, purifying their hearts [like ours] by faith” (v. 9). At the same time, delegates addressed the main error of these teachers, which concerned the gracious power and means of salvation. Peter testified the Gentiles believed by “the word of the gospel” (v. 7) and were saved by grace even as the Jews, and not by the law of Moses, which was a yoke no Jew could bear (vv. 10-11). Paul and Barnabas recounted how God saved the Gentiles by “miracles and wonders” (v. 12). And James insisted that this salvation was “all his works” [God’s] and in fulfillment of prophecy (v. 18).

The result is that the assembly reframed or clarified the issues. They showed what the issue was not. They got to the heart of the matter by affirming the truth and rejecting the error. And they did so by distinguishing between the law and gospel, then proving that the gospel does not require the burden of keeping any of the law to be saved—the call of the gospel is the command to believe, and Jew and Gentile alike are converted by faith alone through the grace of the gospel. The result is that the assembly could then focus on the remaining issue.

The PRCA can learn from this. We ought recognize one benefit of broader assemblies treating matters

only after they are finished in consistory is that issues can become clarified and focused. We ought also to recognize that this may not occur, so broader assemblies may still need to define and clarify issues during deliberations.

The remaining issue was the question of how Gentile converts saved by grace through the gospel are to live with Jewish converts saved by grace. The decision they made was this: “It seemed good to the Spirit to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that they abstain from fornication, meats offered to idols, blood, and things strangled” (vv. 28-29).

They made the decision with the same precision as their deliberations, dividing the Word of truth. This is evident from something so obvious that no one can miss it: the decision seems to be in error. First, it apparently compromises the truth affirmed in deliberations by still adding a burden of law to the gospel (it is called “no greater burden,” but it is a burden nonetheless). Second, the burdens they added seem to be unnecessary and conflate aspects of the law. One burden (abstain from fornication) belongs to the abiding moral law, and the other three are matters of Christian liberty or the ceremonial law, which was abrogated or repealed for Gentiles (so why add them?).

So what is going on? First, the Spirit is teaching that decisiveness may sometimes require dividing of the Word of truth so precisely that it will draw the charge of being in error, contradictory, or compromising. Some still make similar charges against this first broader assembly. Similar charges have been made against the Synod of Dordt or ecumenical decisions on the Trinity and natures of Christ—one even split the church. The PRCA should take notice, but fear not. Those who disagree with decisions in harmony with the Word and Spirit are exposed as ignorant or unbelieving, and their issue ultimately is not with the assembly or its delegates, but with the Word and Spirit.

Secondly, the Spirit is demonstrating that the assembly at Jerusalem had the same love-interests as Himself. The assembly did not compromise the gospel by adding these burdens. Rather, they defended that gospel in love for God, His Word, and His church. They had “hazarded their lives” for the gospel (v. 26). And their deliberations show precisely what their decision meant: Since the gospel does not require the

burden of keeping the law to be saved, the necessity of the burden laid on the Gentiles was not salvation—Jew and Gentile are saved by faith through the grace of the gospel, without keeping any burden of the law. Rather, the necessity of this burden was love, love of those saved by grace for God and their neighbor.

The assembly also did not lay unnecessary burdens on the Gentiles that conflated aspects of the law. What explains the four burdens is love for God, His Word, and the church—the same interests as the Spirit. The necessity of the first burden is simply that it is the abiding will of God as the way of love for all converts sanctified by the Spirit. The necessity of the other three burdens is love for the church of Christ, a sacrifice even of rights granted by the gospel, freely made so as to prevent offense among their Jewish brothers in the church.

This is basically how the delegates in Jerusalem knew their decision seemed good to the Holy Spirit—it was made in the same interests as the Spirit and according to His criteria. And the broader assemblies of the PRCA, including Synod 2025, would do well to remember these same love-interests and criteria in all of its decisions. In love for God, His Word, and His church—no adding burdens to the gospel, keep the ten commandments of God’s law, and make decisions that promote the spiritual well-being of the churches—this is what seems good to the Spirit.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF THE CHURCHES

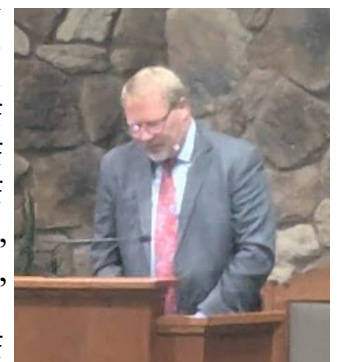
The decisions of broader assemblies that seem good to the Spirit are a blessing to churches that federate, hold such assemblies, and submit to their authority. This is the essential “good” that is mentioned, and it explains why we read that when the churches read the decision, they “rejoiced for the consolation.” The good was not personal satisfaction at a job completed, or personal good. What seemed good to the Spirit and the delegates was that the assembly and decision was a blessing for the churches and its members because it brought the consolation of peace, truth, and unity.

The Spirit by this word of our text condemns as evil any notion that broader assemblies are inherently bad, hierarchical, or to blame for all trouble in the church. What good broader assemblies and decisions according to the Word and Spirit have proved to be for the church

throughout history! Think of the early church councils; synods that adopted creeds and confessions as faithful summaries of the Word, including the great Synod of Dordt and its fruit we still enjoy. The Spirit has used broader assemblies in our history for good to maintain the truth and condemn error, to bring peace and unity to churches ravaged by division, to vindicate beleaguered consistories or officebearers, and to deliver wronged or oppressed saints. Peace, love, and unity restored in the church. What good!

The Spirit also condemns abdication of responsibility for decisions of broader assemblies that are not good to the Holy Spirit. There are such. The PRCA began because of such a decision adopting false doctrine, and another whereby an assembly assumed authority it was not given by the Spirit to depose ministers and consistories who objected to that false doctrine. And it is common when assemblies make similar bad decisions, that the churches and members they represent abdicate any responsibility for them. “We didn’t make that decision,” they say. “It’s synod’s decision—synod allowed women in church office, approved homosexual relationships, called the Word of God partly the word of men, rejected the history of Genesis 1-2, and adopted false doctrine.” When the apostolic churches received the decision from the assembly at Jerusalem, they were expressing their own responsibility for it. So when members and congregations abdicate responsibility, that is not “good” but only the misery of falsehood, division, and eventual withdrawal of the Holy Spirit Himself will ensue.

But where broader assemblies gather according to principles the Holy Spirit has deemed good, and make decisions according to the Word and Spirit, and those decisions are received with joy and considered settled and binding, only good ensues. It is the goodness of consolation, the goodness of the comforting presence of the Spirit of Jesus Himself, and goodness of the peace, love, and unity that always accompany the Spirit of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Head. Amen.



*Rev. W. Langerak
Pre-synodical service*

Synod 2025



Faith PRC
Site of 2025 Synod

Eduardo de la Rosa
Mexico



Special Speakers:

Examination of
Aaron VanDyke



Elder
Lim Seow Thong
Singapore



Jon Lubbers
from the DMC



Rev. Torlach
EPC Australia



Elder Stefan Hahn,
Rev. Jochen Klautke
BERG-Germany



Ronaldo Marquez
PRC Philippines



Rev. A. Stewart
Covenant PRC
Northern Ireland



Rev. Smit with Filipino representation
and Missionary E. Singh (Kolkata)



Delegates to the PRC Synod 2025

Back (l to r) Rev. J. Engelsma, Rev. N. Decker, Elder Kevin Brummel, Prof. C. Griess, Elder Brian Kroese, Prof. B. Huizinga, Rev. W. Langerak
 Middle (l to r): Elder David Kregel, Prof. R. Dykstra, Elder Lim Seow Thong, Elder Glenn Feenstra, Rev. D. Noorman,
 Elder Jim Regnerus, Rev. J. Marcus, Elder Stephan DeJong, Elder Doug Dykstra, Elder Tim Block, Rev. D. Kleyn, Elder Scott VanUffelen
 Front (l to r) Rev. R. Smit, Rev. G. Eriks, Elder Doug Mingerink, Rev. R. Barnhill, Prof. D. Kuiper, Prof. B. Gritters



Officers:

Rev. N. Decker, 2nd clerk; Rev. J. Engelsma, 1st clerk;
 Rev. G. Eriks, president; Rev. R. Smit, vice-president



Committee 1

Rev. D. Noorman, Rev. R. Smit, Elder Stephan DeJong,
 Prof. B. Gritters (advisor), Elder Scott VanUffelen



Committee 2

Elder Kevin Brummel, Elder David Kregel, Prof. C. Griess (advisor),
 Rev. N. Decker, Rev. R. Barnhill, Elder Lim Seow Thong (observer)



Committee 3

Prof. D. Kuiper (advisor), Elder Glenn Feenstra, Rev. D. Kleyn,
 Rev. W. Langerak, Elder Tim Block



Committee 4

Prof. R. Dykstra, Elder Jim Regnerus, Rev. J. Engelsma,
 Prof. B. Huizinga (advisor), Elder Doug Dykstra



Committee 5

Elder Doug Mingerink, Rev. G. Eriks,
 Elder Brian Kroese, Rev. J. Marcus



SYNOD 2025 SUMMARY

REV. JOSHUA ENGELSMA

pastor of Crete PRC in Crete, Illinois

Synod 2025 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) met over the course of two weeks, beginning on Tuesday, June 10, and concluding on Wednesday, June 18.

One of the highlights of synod was the examination and graduation of our senior seminarian, Aaron Van Dyke. By the time this issue appears in print, Cand. Van Dyke will hopefully have received a call to a local congregation, the Lord willing. Another highlight was the presence of a number of international delegates from our sister churches and others with whom we have contact. Synod heard from brothers from Northern Ireland, Singapore, the Philippines, Australia, Germany, India, and Mexico.

In the interests of space, I will not attempt in this article to summarize all the decisions of synod. Instead, I want to summarize the decisions of synod related to the evil of sexual abuse, since synod spent a considerable amount of time addressing various matters related to it.

FOUR PROTESTS

Synod 2025 had on its agenda four protests against a decision of Synod 2024. The matter goes back to Synod 2023, which approved “the substance” of an overture appearing before it and decided to “hire a third-party organization to investigate sexual abuse in the PRCA.” The third-party organization approved by Synod 2023 was Guidepost Solutions. Synod 2024 upheld protests against the decision of Synod 2023 and declared that “Synod 2023 erred by authorizing a secular organization to assist Christ’s church in an ecclesiastical work (investigating sin) that belongs exclusively to the church.” Four protests were presented to Synod 2025 against this decision of Synod 2024.

Synod 2025, in answer to the protests, made two decisions. First, it sustained the four protests on the point that Synod 2024 was too restrictive in forbidding

Christ’s church to use a secular organization to assist in *fact-finding*. Synod distinguished between investigation understood as *fact-finding* and investigation understood in a broader sense to include *more than* fact-finding. With regard to investigation understood as *fact-finding*, Synod explained it using language like “obtaining objective facts” and “the gathering of objective facts.” With regard to investigation understood as *more than fact-finding*, Synod used language like “the application of those facts and the rendering of judgments and directives,” “investigations in a broader sense that in some way infringe on the rule of consistories,” “ecclesiastical work,” “to make a proper, godly spiritual assessment...of sin,” “the...judgment and determination of sin,” and “spiritual oversight and government.”

Having made this distinction, Synod 2025 judged that the decision of Synod 2024 suffered from a lack of clarity regarding *investigation*. Synod 2024 did not define its use of the term *investigation*. The lack of clarity regarding what investigation entails led Synod 2024 to make too broad a judgment in forbidding investigations by secular organizations. If investigation is understood in a broader sense that in some way would infringe on the rule of consistories, then Synod 2024’s decision would hold. But if investigation refers to the gathering of objective facts, then consistories may use secular organizations at their discretion to help them in their investigation of sin. As much as is possible, consistories need to know the facts as they exercise discipline. The ninth commandment requires that in our judgments and all our dealings we seek and speak what is true, and that we do not judge nor join in condemning any man rashly or unheard (cf. Heidelberg Catechism, LD 43). God’s Word requires consistories to hear both sides of any matter before judging (Prov. 18:13, 17). It is permissible for a consistory to hire a secular organization to assist

them in the gathering of facts in cases of sexual abuse. In some cases this may even be *necessary*, for example, in interviewing a victim or in gathering large amounts of facts when there is limited manpower. In such an instance, the elders still rule in the congregation and would be the ones to interpret the facts presented to them and make final judgments in the exercise of discipline.

Synod 2025 judged that investigation understood as *fact-finding* does not necessarily and exclusively belong to the ecclesiastical realm because such an investigation does not require a godly, spiritual assessment of sin. It also ruled that a consistory using a secular organization to assist in fact-finding would not be a failure to trust in God but would be a legitimate use of a providentially-available means given by God. In this respect, using a secular organization to obtain facts would be no different than a consistory hiring a secular lawyer or accountant for assistance in legal or financial matters. Neither would a consistory using a secular organization to assist in fact-finding involve a breakdown of the antithesis since the secular organization would not be exerting any spiritual influence upon or authority in the church.

The second decision Synod 2025 made in answer to the four protests was not to sustain them in their main contention to rescind the decision of Synod 2024. Synod 2025 judged that the decision of Synod 2023 to hire a secular organization gave to them actions that exceeded investigation of sin that was merely fact-finding. This decision resulted in a survey that went beyond fact-finding and was at times “subjective” in nature, addressing things like “confidence in policies, guidance, practices, training...and culture.” Since Synod 2023 went beyond fact-finding, the grounds of Synod 2024 to overturn the decision of 2023 still stand. The requirement of Synod 2024 was that clear evidence must be brought forth from Scripture that when the church was in need, or distress, or afflicted by sin, she turned to the world for help. This would be providing a scriptural basis for using a secular institution to do more than fact-finding. But Synod 2023 failed to do this. In addition, the biblical passages quoted by Synod 2024 demonstrate that the church, when in need, or distress, or afflicted by sin, turns not to the world but rather turns within the church for assistance. These passages still apply with respect to an investigation by a secular organization that is more than fact-finding.

THREE OVERTURES

Synod 2025 also had on its agenda three overtures related to the evil of sexual abuse. An overture is a request made to an ecclesiastical assembly to initiate some action that is of importance to the churches and is a vehicle for initiating something new.

The consistory of Providence PRC brought an overture to Classis East in January 2025 to add decisions pertaining to Articles 72 and 75 of the Church Order. They requested that a decision be appended to Article 72 that said that in the case of abuse the rule of Matthew 18 does not apply, and that in the case of criminal sexual abuse of a minor the matter shall be immediately reported to the civil authorities. They also requested that there be added to Article 75 a decision that defined abuse and also a decision that stated that those criminally convicted of child sexual abuse, and those judged by the consistory to have committed the sin of sexual abuse, shall have their names and the nature of the sin disclosed to the congregation. Classis East in January did not approve the overture, but Providence’s consistory decided to exercise their right to forward the overture to Synod for its consideration.

Synod 2025 voted not to approve the overture on the following four grounds:

- The overture does not sufficiently demonstrate the necessity of adding this definition and these policies to the Church Order. The Church Order explains general practices and avoids getting as specific as the overture desires, unless the necessity of it is demonstrated.
- The overture does not reckon with the organic development in the churches on the very matters it is addressing. Speeches, articles, and decisions have established and are establishing principles and precedents in the churches.
- The overture does not give sufficient weight to the abuse guidelines. Though they will remain guidelines, they will be an important development in the churches to guide consistories in handling abuse.
- The overture does not give sufficient weight to the existing Church Order articles. Article 72 makes the qualification that the rule prescribed in Matthew 18 is to be followed ‘as long as the sin is of a private character, not giving public offense...’ Additionally, Article 71 already states that ‘Christian discipline...exempts no one from civil trial or punishment by the authorities...’

The consistory of First PRC (Holland) brought two overtures to Synod 2025. First, they brought an overture regarding the hiring of a third-party investigation. As noted earlier, Synod 2023 approved an overture “to hire a third-party organization to investigate sexual abuse in the PRCA.” But Synod 2024 sustained protests against that decision and ruled that “Synod 2023 erred by authorizing a secular organization to assist Christ’s church in an ecclesiastical work (investigating sin) that belongs exclusively to the church.” In response, the consistory of First PRC (Holland) decided to overture Synod to hire “a third-party investigation of sexual abuse in the PRCA using a Christian organization from the church organism.” The specific organization that they recommended hiring was Fact Finding Ministry. They presented the overture to Classis East in January 2025, and Classis East approved the overture and added some considerations for implementation. The overture was then forwarded by Classis East to Synod 2025 for approval.

Synod 2025 decided not to approve the overture of First PRC (Holland). It did so for the following three reasons:

- After Synod 2024 ended the work with Guidepost, it directed the *consistories* to deal with the follow-up investigation of the specific cases of sexual abuse reported to them by Guidepost.
- The overture does not sufficiently account for the work that has already been done by the PRCA. To establish this point, synod referenced the work previously done by Guidepost Solutions and the follow-up work being done by consistories and classes, as well as the work of the Abuse Guidelines Committee (more on this later).
- The overture leaves too many questions unanswered so that synod cannot make an informed decision on hiring Fact Finding Ministry.

In response to this overture, synod also decided to “encourage consistories, when they judge it necessary in specific cases of sexual abuse or when advised by Classis, to make use of third-party organizations to assist them in their investigations.”

The second overture from the consistory of First PRC (Holland) had to do with the designating of denomination funds to assist consistories in responding to sexual abuse. The overture was presented to Classis East in January 2025, Classis approved it, and forwarded it on to Synod 2025 for consideration.

Synod approved this overture of First PRC

(Holland) and decided to designate \$500,000 from existing unrestricted funds for consistories to use for education, training, and especially the investigation of specific cases of sexual abuse. Synod authorized each classis to spend these funds subject to approval of a formal request with explanation from member consistories. Synod judged this to be necessary because “there is an ongoing need in our churches for education and training on the subject of sexual abuse, and at times there may be a need for investigation of specific cases especially those that cross the lines of multiple congregations and have oppressed many” and also because “the costs associated with education, training, and especially investigation, may not be affordable for every congregation, even if a consistory judges these things to be necessary.”

TWO SPECIAL COMMITTEE REPORTS

Synod 2025 also had before it the reports from two special committees tasked with labors related to sexual abuse. One of those special committees is the Abuse Guidelines Committee (AGC). Synod 2023 appointed an Abuse Guidelines Committee to “produce a concise manual outlining key biblical, confessional, and theological principles to guide consistories in understanding and addressing abuse.” The AGC presented a first draft to Synod 2024, the general direction and content of which Synod 2024 approved. After Synod 2024, the AGC sought feedback from consistories, and much of the feedback was implemented in the second draft that was presented to Synod 2025.

In response to the second draft, synod decided to “inform the Abuse Guidelines Committee that it approves of the general direction and content of the second draft of the abuse guidelines manual, and that it believes this manual should serve our consistories well as a guide in their understanding of and labors in addressing the sin of abuse.” Synod did direct the committee to consider and possibly address several specific matters pointed out in the manual, and also encouraged the committee to continue collaborating with consistories as much as possible by sending them the second draft of the manual for feedback.

The second special committee is the Guidepost Report Evaluation Committee (GREC). Although Synod 2024 sustained protests against the decision

of Synod 2023 regarding the hiring of Guidepost Solutions, it did appoint a new committee (GREC) to: 1) review the minutes and supplements of the Ad Hoc Committee appointed in 2023; 2) evaluate the final report of Guidepost as well as its methodology; and 3) send a copy of the final report of Guidepost to consistories with a cover letter.

Synod 2025 approved the work done by the GREC in the past year. Synod instructed the GREC to request of Classis East's special committee working with the church visitors and Classis West's church visitors information from the Guidepost reports to determine and provide a statistical summary of a number of possible categories (the number of separate, alleged perpetrators; how many cases were previously known to consistories and how many were new; allegations of sexual abuse vs. grooming vs. sexual misconduct; allegations of mishandling; allegations brought against officebearers vs. members; allegations brought by survey vs. hotline vs. website; allegations of multiple reporters against a single individual). Synod also instructed the GREC to fulfill the remaining mandate given by Synod 2024, with the following two clarifications:

- In light of information gained from the 43 reports Guidepost gave to consistories and input solicited from consistories in response to these reports, review the various recommendations from the Guidepost final report and recommend to Synod 2026 which of those recommendations would be worth further looking into because they fit within our Reformed church polity and are not already being fulfilled by the Abuse Guidelines Committee, consistories, Classes, or the organic life of the PRCA.
- Draft a concise letter of response conveying with self-reflection some of the things we have learned from the Guidepost final report, the 43 reports, and input solicited from consistories.

ONE GOAL

Not all these decisions were unanimous (although many were). But it was clear that, while disagreeing on some of the specifics, the synod shared one goal: to make decisions that help our churches respond properly to the evil of sexual abuse, for the sake of God's honor and the care of our members, especially the little lambs. May God be pleased to use the work of this synod to lead our churches forward in a healthy, united way.

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCHES IN COMMON—PRC SEMINARY



THE MINISTER'S RELATION TO CHRIST'S BODY*

PROF. DOUGLAS KUIPER

professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary, and member of Trinity PRC in Hudsonville, Michigan

Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 are two of several New Testament passages that speak of the church as Christ's spiritual body. This beautiful figure suggests that:

1. The church is numerically one. A body is only one entity. So Jesus Christ died to save, and now indwells by His Spirit, one church.
2. The church is inwardly united. The body's many

parts work together for the good of the whole. So the church's members serve each other.

3. The body is diverse. Each member has different gifts; if each were an ear, an eye, or a foot, the body could not function as a living organism. Applied to the church, the figure teaches the communion of saints.

4. The members serve and function spontaneously. Our cells and organs do not consciously think, "I must work now, breathe now, beat now." God created them such that they breathe and beat spontaneously. While the church's members must be reminded to serve each

* This is the text of the 2025 commencement speech of the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary given on June 12, 2025 in Faith PRC.

other, much of our service is spontaneous, inworked by the Spirit. We serve without realizing how.

5. The church's existence, and the communion of gifts by her members, is a wonder of grace. The human body did not evolve, nor did Christ's church form randomly or accidentally. God planned them and sovereignly brought them into existence.

But what is the minister's relation to Christ's body, the church? Romans 12:1-8 and Ephesians 4:7-12 enable us to answer this question.

THE THREEFOLD RELATION

First, *the minister is a member of the body of Christ*. Paul, an apostle, includes himself as a member of Christ's body: "So *we*, being many, are one body in Christ" (Rom. 12:5). In Ephesians 4:11-12, he teaches that God gives some the gift of pastors and teachers. The gift is given within the body; pastors and teachers are part of it.

This point is worth emphasizing. It explains why the following two points regarding the minister's relation to the body can be true. It also explains why the minister's relationship to Christ's body is a *positive* relationship. If the minister were not part of the body, his relationship to it might be antagonistic or mechanical, but would not be one of mutual service and benefit. It also drives home that the minister is, in every respect, just like the ones whom he serves. As I read elsewhere recently, the minister is himself a sheep, and smells like a sheep.

Especially the point is worth emphasizing because it drives home that the minister, like the other members, is part of the body *by God's grace*. In grace, God gives us an office; but also in grace, He gives us to be members of the church. We are members on the basis of Christ's atoning work, for as sinners we are unworthy. We are members because the Holy Spirit applies the life and benefits of Christ to us. This Spirit not only equips us to be ministers, but bestows the spiritual gifts on us by which we serve the body (1 Cor. 12:13).

Of this wonder ministers must always be profoundly conscious and grateful. Our own holy walk and communion with God is motivated by this. Our godliness is not merely a qualification for office; it is an inworked grace that God gives to the body's members. We must be profoundly conscious of this in our pastoral

work. When building up a member of the congregation in the assurance of his or her faith, pointing to the finished work of Christ and the Spirit's work in us, we must know the wonder of which we speak.

But have not some served in the ministry who apparently were not converted believers? In fact, some have. It is possible that, in the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches, several have. They are like King Saul, whom God used for a time for Israel's well-being, but whose hatred of David and self-seeking demonstrate that things were not well with his soul. Such ministers can preach the gospel, by which the congregation is built up, but cannot preach it with passion and conviction.

The minister is reminded that the gospel's call to faith, repentance, and obedience—which gospel we are to issue to others—comes first of all to the minister himself.

Second, *the minister serves the body*. God recreated every member of Christ's church in order to serve the body. Ephesians 4:11-12 notes that God gave some "pastors and teachers" for the body's well-being.

The specific form that our service takes is that of *teaching*. The body *needs* instruction *continually*. Those young in faith must be taught in order that they grow; those mature in faith must be taught in order that they remain healthy. We may not conclude, if our congregations are mature and well grounded in Reformed doctrine, that it is more important that we lead in some other way than by teaching. Inherent in the existence of the office of minister is the task of the office: teaching. Though it was not John Calvin's view of Ephesians 4:11-12, Reformed churches have viewed "pastors and teachers" as one group of men who pastor by teaching.

Yet the minister's service to the body is not limited to his official work. As a *person*, apart from his office, the minister serves. We see needs of brothers or sisters that can be met in ways other than teaching, though not at the neglect of teaching.

Third, *the body serves the minister*. Romans 12 and Ephesians 4 teach that *every* member of the body serves another. Because the pastor is a member of the body, he is served



Commencement
Speaker:
Prof. D. Kuiper



TSC President, Rev. N. Decker; Candidate A. VanDyke;
Rector, Prof. D. Kuiper

by others and must be ready to receive the gifts of others for his own advantage.

A carnal-minded minister envisions how the body serves him only in a carnal way. The church serves him by paying his salary, or by providing him a sphere of influence. After all, every teacher needs students. This is not what I mean when saying that the body serves the minister.

The body serves the minister primarily in that its members use their spiritual gifts for his spiritual advantage. After all, the minister has spiritual weaknesses too, and his gifts are limited. He has wisdom and knowledge, but is not all-wise or all-knowing. He needs the wisdom, knowledge, and other spiritual gifts that the members of the body have.

Ministers should remember this when coming to a conviction about where God would have us labor. When considering calls, we often ask where we are best able to serve at the moment. But in leading us to accept a call, the Lord is also showing us that we need the gifts that the members of that congregation have. Even the brother or sister who seems to make our work harder, has gifts by which we are served.

THREE IMPLIED CALLINGS

The first implied calling is that we ministers *not think more highly of ourselves* than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3). The danger is real and the warning is necessary. The minister is a prominent member of the body. We stand before our congregations in worship; we preside over the council meetings; our name is on the church sign; and often we rank among the most highly educated members of the congregation. Our prominence might make us think more highly of ourselves than we ought.

But *prominence* is not the same as *preeminence*. The former regards where God has put us in the body; the

latter is a sinful desire to be first (3 John 10). Prominence without wisdom is folly; prominence without knowledge is disastrous. The nose is a prominent member of the body, but is not more necessary than the heart and lungs.

So Romans 12:3 gives us both a negative warning and a positive command. We are warned against thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought. While the church needs pastors, and God gave us those gifts, our personal gifts are not the greatest gifts the church has ever possessed. Positively, we must “think soberly.” In the Greek original, the word translated “soberly” is not merely a one-word adverb, but is a purpose clause: “think, for the purpose of thinking soundly, or of having a sound mind!”

The reason for the warning and positive command is that God has given every member of the body the gifts of faith. There is variation in the degree and in the specific form that the gift takes, but the value of the various gifts is the same.

So we go to Bible study, having prepared well, and find that some attendees have true insights into the passage that we had not seen. And we leave many a pastoral visit realizing that the one whom we visited ministered to our own soul.

The second implied calling is that we *teach*. So Romans 12:7: “or he that teacheth, on teaching.” Ministers must remember that this is our calling. We lead rightly by pointing the people to God’s Word.

The apostle is also exhorting us to *diligence* in teaching. To teach requires one to understand the subject matter clearly and present it carefully. This takes time.

Implied also is that we do our work to the best of our ability, confessing that God has given us our gifts with their weaknesses and limitations and that God has determined that we are the man He wants in a particular congregation at a particular time.

Every minister has a different degree of ability. In our ministry, we might notice two other ministers, or categories of ministers. Of one we stand in awe: they have more gifts, greater abilities, and more frequent opportunity to use them. Were we like him, our congregation would be better served! The other, we think, has fewer gifts, abilities, and opportunities.

We may not think this way. First, even if some have more abilities and others have fewer, it is not for *us* to judge

these matters on the basis of outward appearance. Second, God requires faithfulness of all, in accord with the gifts He has given. Third, God is pleased to use us with the gifts He has given us; for that reason He raised us up.

The third implied calling is that we *remember the goal of our work*: “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). God created the office of minister and provides men to fill that office in order to realize this goal.

The goal is to equip (the idea of “perfecting” here) the saints to serve each other and our Lord. Our work must aim at building each other up in faith and godliness. We do this by pointing the members to our Savior and emulating His love and holiness in our life.

In other words, part of our service to the body is that we teach each other how to serve, and why.

Who is sufficient for these things? How are *we* going to do *this*? In fact, the Holy Spirit will do this. But He does so through us as means. He will bless the means that He raises up. And when we, like Solomon, cry out to Him for wisdom (1 Kings 3:9), He answers our prayer (Jam. 1:5).

Brother, may God give you to remember the relation in which you stand to Christ’s body, to serve to His glory and for the church’s spiritual well-being, and always to view yourself as one who also needs the gifts of others. Thus may your service on earth and your joy be an anticipation of perfect service in heaven.

NOTIFICATION OF CANDIDACY

All Protestant Reformed congregations are hereby informed that the 2025 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has declared Mr. Aaron VanDyke a candidate for the gospel ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches. Candidate VanDyke will be eligible for a call on or after July 12, 2025.

Mr. VanDyke’s address is:
7302 Melody Lane
Jenison, MI 49428
Phone #: 616-818-8525

Email: airinvandyke@gmail.com

Douglas Mingerink, Stated Clerk



ALL AROUND US



BRUTAL PERSECUTION; CANADIAN REFORMED SYNOD; CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNOD

REV. DANIEL HOLSTEGE

Pastor of Wingham PRC in Wingham, Ontario

BRUTAL PERSECUTION

Last February, Open Doors reported that “seventy Christians were discovered beheaded inside a Protestant church” in a northeastern province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). That part of the country has been torn by war between the DRC and rebel forces backed by neighboring Rwanda for some thirty years. An Islamist militant group with ties to ISIS, called Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), has added to the fear and chaos in that same region. They were the ones who carried out the brutal murder of those seventy men

and women last February, after holding them hostage. According to a persecution watchdog, this was “not an isolated incident but part of a grim tapestry of violence that has claimed over 6 million lives in the DRC over two decades of on-and-off war.”¹

In a Christian farming community in Nigeria,

1 Anugrah Kumar, “70 Christians beheaded in DRC church attack: ‘Grim tapestry of violence,’” *The Christian Post* (February 20, 2025), <https://www.christianpost.com/news/70-christians-beheaded-in-drc-church-attack.html>.

another central African country, armed nomadic herders who practice Islam “wielded guns and machetes, set residential houses and food stores ablaze, and ambushed and slaughtered defenseless victims when they tried to escape” last June. They reportedly “locked families inside their homes and burned them to the ground.... An estimated 100 to 200 people, mostly farmers, have been reported dead.” Reportedly, these Islamic herders literally got away with murder. According to one young Christian man in Nigeria (where more Christians are killed for their faith than in all other countries combined), “Since the government has failed to enforce laws, the people must now take care of themselves.... We continue to lean on God’s protection.”²

Many more stories could be told, since the violent persecution of Christians continues throughout the world today, especially in Africa and Asia. We need to hear these stories regularly, lest we fail to “remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body” (Heb. 13:3). To learn more about persecuted Christians throughout the world, go to <https://www.opendoors.org>.

CANADIAN REFORMED SYNOD

The Canadian Reformed general synod, which meets once every three years, met this past May in Aldergrove, British Columbia, just north of the border from Lynden, Washington. A fraternal delegate who is the pastor of the Free Reformed Church of Launceston, Tasmania rather effusively characterized it as “the most momentous synod in the history of the Canadian Reformed Churches.” He informs us that “there were numerous decisions made affecting especially the worship and ecumenical relations of the CanRC.”³ In the blog post referenced below, he lists ten noteworthy decisions.

Some decisions had to do with relationships with

other denominations. For example, they entered into what we would call a full sister-church relationship with the Reformed Churches (the Netherlands), “a new federation formed by the merger of two church groups that had previously separated from the Gereformeerde Kerken vrijgemaakt (GKv) [the Reformed Churches (liberated)—DJH].” According to their synodical press release, “In 2019, our churches were compelled to sever ties with the GKv, and it was therefore a joy to recognize and enter into fellowship with a faithful Reformed federation in the Netherlands.” The synod also introduced a new category of ecclesiastical relationship in which they hope to pursue denominations of “known Reformed character with whom full ecclesiastical fellowship is not yet feasible.”⁴

Regarding worship, the synod declared that the previous cap of 100 hymns for their *Book of Praise* is null and void. They added thirty-one new hymns and nineteen alternate psalm settings to their songbook and revised the article of their Church Order that regulates what each church may sing in worship services. Previously it said, “The metrical Psalms adopted by general synod as well as the hymns approved by general synod shall be sung in the worship services.”⁵ Now it says,

The 150 Psalms of the Bible are foundational to the church’s worship and are to be sung frequently in the worship services. General synod shall adopt metrical versions of the Psalms and shall approve hymns for inclusion in a song book which shall, as a rule, have the principal place in the worship of the church. The consistory may also approve the singing of alternate settings of the psalms and additional hymns, provided they are in harmony with the Word of God as confessed in the Three Forms of Unity.⁶

What is most striking to me is not so much that they are adding more hymns to their songbook, but that they have added to their Church Order the statement that local consistories are free to choose other psalms and hymns that are not in their denominational songbook. It is a matter of denominational unity and local autonomy, and they have decided to lean more in the direction of local autonomy in this regard.

2 Emmanuel Nwachukwu, “A Brutal Attack Shocks a Village, and a Country,” *Christianity Today* (June 20, 2025), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2025/06/nigerians-reel-from-attack-on-christian-village/>.

3 Wes Bredenhof, “A Most Momentous Canadian Reformed Synod,” in “Wes Bredenhof: A Reformed Christian Blog and Resource Page” (May 22, 2025), <https://bredenhof.ca/2025/05/22/a-most-momentous-canadian-reformed-synod/>.

4 “Press Release of General Synod Aldergrove 2025,” <https://canrc.org/documents/10735>.

5 <https://canrc.org/documents/9191>.

6 <https://canrc.org/documents/10834>.

In the Protestant Reformed Churches, I think we take it for granted that all our churches use *The Psalter*, either the 1912 or the 2024 version. We should be thankful for the denominational unity we have in regard to the songs we sing to God in worship. Local consistories are free to choose songs not found in our Psalter for use in singspirations and programs. But in our worship services, we freely bind ourselves to Article 69 of our Church Order and sing only the 150 psalms and a few other songs. I would encourage my fellow members of the PRC to be thankful for that and to rejoice in the rich treasure that is our Psalter, both the one many of us grew up using and the beautiful revision that has recently been approved.

CHRISTIAN REFORMED SYNOD

The annual Christian Reformed synod met at Redeemer University in Ontario, Canada in June of this year. Among the many topics on their agenda, I point out three that grabbed my attention.

First, the synod unanimously approved the recommendations of an “Assisted Suicide Task Force” and declared “that synod deplore the legalization and practice of medically assisted suicide as well as the efforts to expand it to include minors, and those suffering solely from psychological disabilities.” Stephen Vander Klippe, a medical doctor who lives just down the road from us here in Wingham, is the chair of the task force. He said to the synod, “I don’t believe our response to suffering should be to authorize the health care system to facilitate death: unfortunately that’s how our society is responding to suffering. I think we need to be involved in compassionate care.” He added, “I do feel like there’s a strong line between intent to relieve suffering and intent to kill.”⁷ We can be glad to hear about this pushback on the evil of euthanasia.

Secondly, by a vote of 171-3, the synod turned down an overture from a Canadian congregation to separate the American and Canadian branches of the CRC. The lengthy discussion of the motion at synod was “almost entirely in support of remaining one denomination.”

7 Kristen Parker, “Synod 2025 ‘Deplores’ Assisted Suicide, Affirms God’s Gift of Life,” *The Banner* (June 17, 2025), <https://www.thebanner.org/news/2025/06/synod-2025-deplores-assisted-suicide-affirms-gods-gift-of-life>.

Caleb Bosveld, a “young adult representative,” pointed out that “there are differences in our cultural contexts, but these are not defined by the border.” He went on to say, “We have shown, as a synod, that we are able to make decisions on issues that disproportionately affect a country, in a unified and discerning manner. For example, our unanimous decision on medically assisted suicide yesterday, which disproportionately affects Canadians.”⁸ “Toward CRC Canada” said this about the decision on their website, “Synod 2025 has voted not to create a distinct Canadian CRC. Disappointed, we recognize that the time has come to turn the page.... Toward CRC Canada will be hosting a summit... in Kitchener, Ontario from November 5-9. With the goal to lay the foundation for a new community of Reformed congregations, we are inviting councils from across Canada to send delegates.”⁹ It seems they are determined to have a Canadian CRC one way or another.

Thirdly, the synod decided that from now on the content of *The Banner* must “speak from a distinctly Reformed perspective in line with our confessions and synodical decisions, representing the CRCNA as its official publication.” The editor of the magazine said this “was not a minor tweaking but a fundamental shift in the role and purpose of *The Banner*.” Jonathan Spronk from Classis Central Plains argued in favor of the change. He said, “I would prefer a magazine (that says) this is what we believe, this is who we are.” Ben Wimmers of Classis B.C. South-East argued against the change, saying it would be “a black mark on this synod.” He added, “If we move in this direction that restricts and constricts, we’re moving into an intellectual cul-de-sac.” But he was in the minority. The recommendation passed by a vote of 129-35.¹⁰

8 Kristen Parker, “CRCNA to Stay United as a Binational Denomination,” *The Banner* (June 18, 2025), <https://www.thebanner.org/news/2025/06/crcna-to-stay-united-as-a-binational-denomination>.

9 <https://towardcrccanada.net/event/summit-2025/>.

10 Gayla R. Postma, “The Banner’s Mandate Curtailed,” *The Banner* (June 19, 2025), <https://www.thebanner.org/news/2025/06/the-banners-mandate-curtailed>.



THE RENEWAL OF JAMES

MR. KYLE BRUINOOGUE

teacher of New Testament history at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, Michigan, and is a member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan

After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles—1 Corinthians 15:7

Faith in Christ is not a blind leap into the unknown, but is grounded in truth, substance, and evidence (Heb. 11:1). Saving faith rests on the Word of God and the historical reality of Christ's resurrection. But the experiences of coming to faith vary. Some are nurtured in the covenant community from childhood, others are called out of deep spiritual darkness, and still others believe in Christ after seasons of doubt or indifference. Nonetheless, the object of faith remains the same: Jesus Christ, the risen Lord. James, the brother of Jesus, stands as a striking example of one whom God brought from unbelief to faith through the undeniable evidence of the resurrected Christ.¹

James was a half-brother of Jesus and was likely the eldest of the siblings after Jesus (Matt. 13:55). James did not follow Jesus during his earthly ministry, and like many of his siblings, was skeptical, even dismissive, of Jesus' claims. John 7:5 says, "For neither did his brethren believe in him" (see also Mark 3:21).

Although James was raised in a devout Jewish household and shielded from the moral decay of the Roman empire, he still lived in spiritual darkness. Within the context of believing parents Joseph and

Mary, within the context of family life with the Son of God, and within the reality of Jesus' extensive ministry, James did not yet believe and was shaped by doubt and human assumptions. Even the three hours of darkness did not convince him.

Imagine growing up in the same household as Jesus. Consider the typical interactions of brothers and sisters with Jesus present. They witnessed Jesus' perfection, heard His words, and saw Him up close. James remembered the time, perhaps with envy, when as a twelve-year-old Jesus astounded the teachers in the temple (Luke 2: 41-52). Yet, familiarity did not produce faith, and James remained in unbelief. This could be why, when Jesus hung on the cross, He committed His mother Mary to John, not to James, or to any of the other siblings (John 19:25-27).²

This teaches us that saving faith is not born from proximity, personality, or experience, but is a sovereign work of God, grounded in the truth of Jesus' death on the cross for the sins of His people.

And Jesus did that for James. After His resurrection, Jesus manifested His love for James by making a special appearance to him prior to His ascension. In the most powerful chapter on the resurrection, Paul wrote that Christ was seen of Peter, then a multitude of 500, and then, "after that, was seen of James" (1 Cor. 15:7). Paul noted this special appearance that the Lord used to change James' heart, so that after this life-changing appearance, he was found praying with believers (Acts 1:14), holding the traits of an apostle (Gal. 1:19), writing an epistle (Jam. 1:1), and leading the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:13-21).

James, also known as "James the Just," came to faith

¹ The James in this article is to be distinguished from the two contemporary James in the New Testament, both of whom were disciples-turned-apostles. First, there is James the son of Alphaeus ("James the Less") of whom little is known (Matt. 10:3). Second, there is James the son of Zebedee ("James the Greater") who was the first apostle to be martyred by Herod Agrippa in AD 44 (Acts 12:2). He was the brother of John and was in Jesus' inner circle along with Peter (Matt. 17:1; Mark 10:35-40). Further, there may have been two other minor figures named James (Mark 15:40; Luke 6:16).

² See R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James*, (Columbus, OH: Wartburg Press, 1946), 506.

in Christ through eyewitness testimony of the Word made flesh. While God does not use the resurrected presence of Christ in this way today, He gives to His people a “more sure word of prophecy” which is His written revelation (2 Pet. 1:19; cf. also Luke 16:19-31).

But God gave the experience of *seeing Jesus* to James. And a renewal took place. He was transformed! He was changed!

He now understood Jesus to be his Elder Brother in the fullest sense.

And God used him.

After James’ encounter with Jesus, he was immediately led to minister to the apostles in the upper room after the ascension. This must have had a profound impact on him (Acts 1:14). Then, soon after, the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, and James heard the powerful preaching of Peter (Acts 2).

And then he encountered Paul, the one who had “made havock of the church” (Acts 8:3). After Paul’s conversion (Acts 9) and his three years in the Arabian desert (Gal. 1:17, 18), Paul returned to Jerusalem to see Peter and abide with him (c. AD 34-36). Then Paul wrote, “But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother” (1:19). James was one of the first men from Jerusalem to see the renewal of Paul! In this James and Paul shared the same experience, witnessing the risen Lord, and the result for both was revolutionary.³

Therefore, through Paul’s personal visit with James (as recorded in Galatians 1:19), Paul recognized James’ apostolic gifts—not as one of the original apostles, but as one who showed himself a leader and witness of Jesus’ resurrection.⁴

Now, strengthened and encouraged by the testimony of Paul and his high regard for him, James became a leader in the Jerusalem church.

His leadership abilities developed for ten years, and Acts 12 reveals James as one who received the report

of Peter’s miraculous release from Herod’s prison (c. AD 44). Here, Peter commanded Rhoda’s house to “go, shew these things unto James, and to the brethren” (Acts 12:17). Through this, James’ faith was strengthened as he witnessed the miracle.

As James developed as a leader, he became a writer. He was inspired to write *The Epistle of James* to Hebrew Christians, commonly considered the first book of the New Testament, written c. AD 37-50.⁵ Interestingly, having grown up with Jesus and witnessing His resurrection, James in his epistle does not reference Jesus’ life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Rather, he focuses on the practical application of belonging to Christ, writing that “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Jam. 2:17). In humility, James called himself a “servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1), and he understood that he was called to live out what he had seen beyond the empty tomb, to serve his risen Lord.

The themes of James’ general epistle to Hebrew Christians coincided perfectly with what would come next. Soon after James wrote his epistle, we find him in his most significant moment yet as president of the Council of Jerusalem (c. AD 49-50). Acts 15 records the first, and arguably one of the most significant decisions in all of church history. As prototype for church synods today, particularly in its overall process and structure and in its desire to seek the will of the Holy Ghost (Acts 15:28), the Council is tasked with deliberating on and answering an essential, doctrinal question: “Do Gentiles need to be circumcised to be accepted into the membership of the church?” (15:1-6). At stake was the doctrine of justification.

Through the witness of Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, along with deliberation by apostles and elders, James announced the decision: No! “Do not trouble [burden] the Gentiles” (Acts 15:19).

What a moment! The church, through the power of the Spirit, dealt a deathblow to the Judaizing spirit that desired circumcision and the Mosaic law in addition to faith in Christ. The decision of the Council was justification by faith alone!

Of further significance as part of this decision was

3 Further on this shared experience, see F. F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James & John: Studies in Non-Pauline Christianity*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979), 87.

4 Sometimes the word “apostle” was used in the broader sense, and not just to the original apostles. In addition to James, this broader use was used for Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (1 Thess. 2:6), Andronicus and Junia (Rom. 16:7), and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:25).

5 William Hendriksen, *Bible Survey: A Treasury of Bible Information*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1947), 198.

James' guidance as they drafted the official letter to be sent out to the churches. Specifically, James and the others included certain rules to govern table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles in the church and recognized the inclinations and temptations for the Gentiles to turn back to their idolatrous lives. "But that we write unto them, that they [Gentiles] abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20, 29).

In this we see that James was used by God to lead His church through a doctrinal disagreement. James had become a pillar of the church (Gal. 2:9), and he faithfully discharged his office, not only in the specific question raised in Acts 15 but also to help the Judean Christians understand the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, James' leadership was incredibly influential, particularly over Jewish Christians. Paul, narrating Peter's Antioch incident (c. AD 49-50) in Galatians 2:11-14, wrote, "For before that certain came from James, he [Peter] did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision" (v. 12). Although James would not have endorsed what Peter did, Peter's behavior was influenced directly by those associated with James.⁶ Even though James had his own moments of weakness, he wholeheartedly believed in a non-segregated church: Jews and Gentiles were spiritual equals.

This was proved, as James' leadership in Judea continued several years later when Paul returned to Judea at the conclusion of his third missionary journey in c. AD 58. This return was one of foreboding (Acts 21:10-12), for as the gospel spread to Gentiles, Paul was accused of teaching that Jews should forsake their ancestral customs. Paul knew that the Sanhedrin would not receive his presence well.⁷

But days prior to Paul's anticipated arrest and impending suffering, James greeted Paul and ministered to him. Acts 21:18-20a says,

And the day following Paul went in with us unto James; and all the elders were present. And when he had saluted them, he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry. And when they heard it, they glorified the Lord....

This passage proves *both* James' leadership *and* his approval of Paul's work with the Gentiles. While God called James to the Judean region, James maintained his understanding of the growing evidence of the universality of the church. At His ascension, Jesus had said: "ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). James' experience in that early prayer meeting after Jesus spoke these words secured his belief in the full scope of the church's membership. And he knew the impact and significance of Paul's faithful labors.

In the end, the renewing appearance of the risen Lord led to a faithful thirty-year ministry by James. The Jewish historian Josephus (c. AD 37-100) and early church tradition cite the tragic martyrdom of James in Jerusalem in c. AD 62. James was executed by stoning, prompted illegally by the temporary jurisdiction of the high priest Annas (son of the Annas of the Gospels), while the replacement of Festus (Acts 25, 26), Albinus, was enroute to Jerusalem as the new procurator of Judea.⁸ Through God's providence by the hands of wicked men, James, a man renewed by the *sight* of his risen Savior, now saw Jesus in His ascended glory.

Even as James wrote, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jam. 1:18), he understood how God, according to His divine will, eternally planned his own renewal, and manifested that perfectly in his own earthly brother, the Son of Man. The "firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

Truly his Elder Brother.

And ours, too.

So today, we stand at the empty tomb. We have not seen Him face to face. But Scripture reveals Him and we enjoy His presence each week as we hear His voice. Therefore, as those who "have been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13), we are called to live as character witnesses of Him, for He dwells in us. Whether on the mountain top of faith, or low in the valley as the shadow of the

⁶ Further on the Antioch incident and its significance, see "The Consolation of Barnabas," vol. 99, no. 18, *Standard Bearer* (July 2023), 422, 423.

⁷ These difficulties would lead to a two-year imprisonment in Caesarea before appealing to Emperor Nero in Rome (Acts 21-28).

⁸ F. F. Bruce, *Peter, Stephen, James & John*, 110, 111.

mountain presses hard, we live as those who are, like James, *certain* of the resurrected Lord and our own reward.

Without the resurrection of Jesus, the gospel would be a lie, our faith would be in vain, and there would

be no hope for the future (1 Cor. 15). But we have it all, for like James, our faith *will* become sight. We *will* see Jesus face to face and for evermore praise the risen Lord, our Elder Brother, who in love gathered us into His family.

A WORD FITLY SPOKEN



LITTLE ONES

REV. JOSEPH HOLSTEGE

pastor of First PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan

Better that a millstone is tied around your neck, and you are cast into the deep water, than that you should offend one of the little ones (Matt. 18:6). Jesus taught this to His arguing disciples after setting a child in the middle of them all. That child was the visual cue, for the disciples and for us, as to what Jesus meant by the “little ones.”

Little ones are, of course, *little*. They are too little to keep up with adults on foot, so wagons are sent to carry them from Canaan to Egypt with their mothers and grandfather (Gen. 45:19; 46:5). They are, likewise, too little to be expected to provide for themselves; but, not to worry, promises Joseph to his forgiven, yet still fearful, brothers: “I will nourish you, and your little ones” (Gen. 50:21).

Little ones are, on account of their littleness, dependent on those bigger than themselves. This can work out for their advantage. The little ones of the tribes Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, for example, were kept safe in fortress cities while the men of Israel went off to endure the hardships of war in Canaan (Num. 32:16, 17; Deut. 3:19; Josh. 1:14). Even the little ones of some outside enemy nations were spared the edge of the sword that slew their fathers, and instead were taken as spoil of war by Israel (Deut. 20:14).

Little ones’ dependence on those bigger than themselves can also be to their detriment, however. When the adults of Israel refused to believe God is able to protect their little ones, those same little ones were made to “wander...forty years...until [the] carcasses” of their parents were “wasted in the wilderness” (Num. 14:33). When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were swallowed alive

into the pit, the earth did not close its mouth on them alone. Standing with them in the door of their tents when the horrible moment arrived were “their wives, and their sons, and their little children” (Num. 16:27). When the men of Dan marched north with stolen idols, doing what was right in their own eyes, they “put the little ones...before them,” driving them onward into a tainted inheritance (Jud. 18:21).

Those little ones who belong to God, however, shall not be disappointed, even when others fail them. There is no way God was going to leave behind the little ones when it came time for the great salvation event known as the Exodus. Not that Pharaoh (a stand-in for the Devil) did not attempt to keep them all in bondage. With palpable sarcasm, this was Pharaoh’s offer when Moses said all of Israel, both young and old, must go to serve God in the desert: “Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones” (Ex. 10:10). Just kidding! “Not so: go now ye that are men, and serve the Lord; for that ye did desire”. (Ex. 10:11). The plague of locusts, which finished off the crops of Egypt, was God’s reply to this attempt of Pharaoh to forbid the little ones from coming to Him.

Of course, eventually Pharaoh had no choice, and the whole nation of Israel, little ones and all, left Egypt. That whole nation then proceeded, little ones and all, to walk under the cloud and through the Red Sea, “by which baptism was signified” (Reformed “Baptism Form”; see also 1 Cor. 10:2). That whole nation, little ones and all, was then consecrated to God in the covenant before entering

the land of promise (Deut. 29:10-13).¹ And this explains why, though we may imagine their little attention spans struggling, we find the little ones gathered in the worship assembly to hear Joshua read the entire law of Moses.

“There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones...” (Josh. 8:35).

As much as God is the covenant God of little ones, however, it is also true that He is the enemy of many little ones, even as He is the enemy of many adults. That is clear from His devastating retribution on those who maliciously attack His people. “O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed...happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones” (Ps. 137:8, 9). Contrary to modern notions that little ones are innocent by virtue of their littleness, is the command of Moses to “kill every male among the little ones” of Midian, who seduced Israel into fornication (Num. 31:17). Contrary to modern notions that assume guiltlessness among the small or the weak is Israel’s righteous destruction of the cities of the Amorites, including their destruction of “the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain” (Deut. 2:34). Little ones, like their adult progenitors, are conceived and born in sin, and are only ever saved from just damnation by a sovereign act of divine mercy.

That observation helps further to explain exactly which “little ones” Jesus has in mind when He threatens those who offend the little ones with a more terrible fate than drowning at the end of a millstone. He was not only referring to those who are little in stature, little in

strength, little in emotional stability, or little in some other earthly way. He was referring to those “little ones which believe in me” (Matt. 18:6). He was referring to those who, by virtue of conversion, have become as

little children (Matt. 18:4). Little ones, as Jesus speaks of them, may indeed be the little ones who are carried in the arms of their father and mother to the baptism font. Little ones, however, may also be the great grandpas and grandmas of those same infants, on their death beds, hoping soon to be carried into the arms of the Lord who laid down His life for their sins. Little ones may only have enough life experience to have perpetrated what are, in human eyes, little sins. Little ones may also be those so deeply fallen into sin that the Shepherd must leave the ninety and nine to seek them out. Yet when he finds it, “he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. Even so, it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish” (Matt. 18:13, 14).

However tall or short, however blonde or gray their hair, however notorious their reputation in the eyes of men, however uncomely or unseemly they seem to you, “take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones.” If you do, you look down your nose on one whose angel stands in the presence of the heavenly Father (Matt. 18:10). You also forfeit the reward of a true disciple of Jesus. On the contrary, “whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only...verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Matt. 10:42).

And this explains why, though we may imagine their little attention spans struggling, we find the little ones gathered in the worship assembly to hear Joshua read the entire law of Moses. “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones...” (Josh. 8:35)

¹ Especially verses 11, 12: “Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp...that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God...” Might some of those “strangers” be the “little ones” of the enemy nations, mentioned earlier, who were taken as spoils of war, and thus were incorporated into the nation itself?



THE PRODIGAL SON (1) A FATHER'S LOVE

MR. TOM CAMMENGA

elder in and member of Faith PRC in Jenison, Michigan

In the middle of the parables of Jesus that are recorded in the Gospel of Luke, we find a familiar parable with which Jesus teaches His people, then and now, of the boundless and infinite love and mercy of God for His people. In the parable Jesus uses the example of the intimate life of a family, a life that is precious to us as the covenant people of God.

The events of Luke 14 and 15 transpire on the Sabbath day in the house of one of the chief Pharisees, where Jesus had been invited to dine. Having healed a man with the dropsy after asking those in attendance whether it was lawful for one to heal on the Sabbath day, Jesus goes on to instruct further those around him in parables regarding humility, charity, and discipleship. In the first two verses of chapter 15 we see that many publicans and sinners had gathered around Jesus to hear Him speak. This, of course, was a terrible affront to the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees in attendance, who thought it horrible to acknowledge such sinners, much less to interact with them. The parable that follows in verses 4 through 32 is the teaching response of Jesus to the murmuring of these indignant men regarding His receiving these who are clearly sinners. Our focus is on the last of the three parables, the well-known account of the prodigal son.

This young man, in stubborn rebellion, had determined that life would be much better and far more enjoyable away from his family and the oversight of his father. And so, he demands of his father that he be given “the portion of goods that falleth to me.” His father acquiesces, likely with great grief and with a prayer that God will somehow use this, though he cannot imagine how, for the good of the young man, and divides the portion between his two sons. The younger son then takes his leave of his family and travels to a far country, where the young man lives in sinful opulence far beyond

his means, and in no time at all, has exhausted all that his father had given him and finds himself destitute.

Do you and I see ourselves already in this young man? Certainly, as children and young people we can see our own tendencies in him, can we not? But what about those of us who are older? Admit with me, fellow believer, that this is the tendency for all of us, young or old. We much prefer things to go the way we want them to go and how we want them to go. We desire, as did Adam and Eve, to be our own god and to have the final say in our lives and how we live them. This is our fallen human nature that still clings to us, and it seems that so often we must hit rock bottom before our conscience is pricked, and we see our sin.

This was indeed the case for this young man. Once all his wealth had been wasted, he did not in remorse and repentance turn around and return home. Oh no, instead, he persevered in his wicked stubbornness and blindly joined himself to a man who lived in that country. This was significant and speaks volumes regarding the state of the soul of the young man. This was not the joining of one individual to another in a casual begging for food or a simple request for assistance either. The meaning of the text is that the young man fastened himself to this man and cleaved to him, so that as far as this young man was concerned, in this man was his salvation. Even in this low state he was yet too proud to admit his sin and too stubborn to see that the only way to be rescued from this dire situation was to return to his father in humility and true repentance.

What was the salvation that this man provided? He sent the young man out into his fields to feed his swine. Notice what verse 16 says; “And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.” The man did not give him food to eat or wine to drink. He did not provide for him a bed or cot on which to sleep or even threadbare blankets with which to

cover himself. Nor did he provide a change of clean clothes for him. He simply sent him out into his fields to feed his swine. This should have been an unacceptable affront to the young man, as swine were considered unclean to the Jews; and yet, at this point, it seems not to matter, illustrating just how far he had sunk in his sin.

How often do you and I not react the very same way as this young man? Rather than see the error of our ways, acknowledge our sin, and seek forgiveness out of a truly repentant heart, we run from it and seek our salvation in everything else besides our Father. If you or I are walking in sin today, whether that be what we would consider minor or major sin, may our prayer be for ourselves and for one another, that God will convict us of that sin and work true repentance in our hearts so that we may really experience His forgiveness and enjoy the love and mercy that only our heavenly Father can give.

Having proudly and stubbornly separated himself from the fellowship of his family and the good rule of his father and having lived in shameful wantonness for a time, the prodigal son finds himself in the field of a man of that country, feeding his swine. He had gone from having all that his soul sinfully desired, to having absolutely nothing, save the clothes on his back. His was the classic story of riches to rags. Sadly, at this very point, it appears that he is no different from the wicked men of the world around him. Indeed, he had certainly not been living his life any differently from them and had quickly and purposefully assumed their riotous living.

This young man was raised in a godly home by parents who loved the Lord. This is evident not only from the confession that he makes later in the chapter, but also from the response of his father when he returns. He had been taught the truths of Scripture and knew very well what the walk and life of a believer was supposed to look like. His friends had also been brought up in the truth and, with him, understood the difference between good and evil and the importance of living a life of thankfulness to God.

It was on these truths and these friends and family members that he had turned his back. More importantly though, he had turned his back on God Himself. In the parable that Jesus teaches, this young man's father is clearly a picture of God, and it was ultimately from his heavenly Father that he had turned away. And that turning away had been purposeful. He no longer desired to live his

life in subjection to his father. He no longer wanted his father to have a say in how he lived. Worst of all, he no longer desired to have a relationship of fellowship with his father, understanding that this separation was not simply from the rule of his father, but from his father himself. No longer would it be possible for there to be a relationship of love and communion with his father in his turning away.

This is indeed the effect that sin has in our lives too. Our sin drives a wedge between us and God. Left in our sin, we are unable to have any kind of fellowship with God, and we experience that utter desolation that this young man now experienced as he found himself in a field; hungry, dirty, destitute, and surrounded by swine. So pitiful was his plight, in fact, that he desired the very husks that the swine ate for his own sustenance. He could sink no lower.

Is it possible for you and me, dear brother or sister in the Lord, to find ourselves where this young man now stands? Can it be that we have fallen so far and so fast that upon hitting the bottom, God's grace snaps us out of our folly and brings clarity to a mind that was completely taken over by our own sin and stubborn rebellion?

The answer, of course, is yes. Certainly, it is possible and for most if not all of us, it is a reality. But praise be to God that He never leaves His people in their sin nor does He turn His back on us, even though we so often turn our backs on Him. Never does He abandon us and leave us to wallow in our sin and misery. In His love and tender mercy, He, by His grace, brings us to our senses as He did to the prodigal son, gathers us in His arms, and in Jesus Christ, removes our sin from us. Of this we read in Psalm 103:3-5, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." What a great God is ours and what tremendous reason we have, to bless His name!

In his quest for freedom from his father's rule, the prodigal son had become a slave. No, not a slave to the citizen of the country to which he had joined himself, but a slave to sin. Thus, it is for everyone who would seek to live outside of the rule of God's law. It is too much, they say. It is not fair that He requires so much of us, they say. To be out from under this tyranny and burden will be freedom, they say. In the end, as with

the prodigal son, the freedom they think they enjoy is nothing but spiritual slavery.

But the prodigal son came to his senses, or more accurately, he was brought to his senses. Make no mistake that this was the wonder-working power of the Holy Spirit in the heart of this young man. In a moment of clarity, he realizes that even his father's servants have what they need to live, and yet here he is, destitute and starving. And further, he realizes that he has sinned, not only against his father but against God. Notice what he says in verse 18 of Luke 15: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee." And so, he determines to return to his father, not as a son—for his sin has in his mind made that impossible—but as a servant.

And his father saw him coming. How was it, we wonder, that the father happened to see his son returning? This would seem to be somewhat of a coincidence, would it not? But when we consider the father's love for his son, we can well imagine that day after day he would stand as it were, on the front porch, watching, waiting, and praying for his wayward son to return. If it is true that there is no greater joy than to see our children walk in truth (3 John 4), and certainly it is, then conversely, there is no greater sorrow than to see them walk in sin. While those children are alive, the hope of the parents is that they repent and return. It is this that every parent of a wayward child so longs for and prays for, often with many tears. This is their earnest desire, and it was the earnest desire of this father.

And so, the father sees his son returning, and that from a long way off. As telling as the father's watching and waiting were, so also is his reaction when he realizes that the haggard form off in the distance is his son. He did not wait for his son to come to him with humility and eyes downcast, expecting an admission of sin. He did not even meet him halfway. No, he drops everything and runs, and likely as he ran, the tears flowed freely. This is striking and we should take note of the fact that for a man of his standing and age to run would have been extremely unusual in the culture of the day. And yet, he runs, not with reckless abandon, but with the purpose of encircling his returning son in his arms.

In the parable, the father is a picture of God. So then, in the running of the father to his son, are we to see God Himself running to us? Does God indeed

run? Certainly, this cannot be the case as God is not a physical being, but rather a spiritual being. As such, He does not have feet or legs as we do upon which to run. How then must we understand this?

The father's running to meet his son vividly demonstrates to you and to me the swiftness with which God is merciful in forgiving the sins of His people. He does not wait for us to come to Him, and certainly He does not meet us halfway. In His boundless love and mercy, He is so swift to forgive us that, even before the repentant words cross our lips, He has already with unconditional love, wrapped His arms around us in complete forgiveness.

Notice that this father's embrace is not simply a formal hug, but it is an all-encompassing embrace that is filled with emotion. When the text says that the father kissed his son, the idea is not simply a light peck on both cheeks, but rather that he rained kisses down upon him. Over and over, he kissed him, with tears of joy streaming down his face. This embrace was an embrace of love. This father loved his son and showed that love in his reception of his son.

This, beloved, is God's love for you and for me. His love is a love that never changes, no matter the depth of our sin and depravity. His love is a love that forgives, ere our confession of sin leaves our lips. How can that be, you ask? It is because God's love for you and for me is eternal. If God has set His love upon you and me, then we have been loved from eternity, and we will remain in that love into eternity. Nothing can change that love and nothing can take it away.

How is that love of God for you and for me possible? How can it be that He could love those who are nothing but filthy sinners? It is because He sees us in Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ has covered our sins with His blood so that when Father looks upon us as His children, He does not see the filth of our sin; He sees the righteousness of His only begotten Son who gave Himself for us, in love. Praise be to Him!



PATHS, PROBLEMS, AND PRAYER

REV. RYAN BARNHILL

pastor of Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Psalms 25:4-5, penned by the psalmist David, is a beautiful prayer for young men and women to make daily: “Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.” We can organize these two verses around three “Ps”: paths, problems, and prayer.

PATHS

Young people, you are in a busy time of your life. Depending on your age, you have a set of wheels and the ability to go many places. Some of you are looking to transition from one high school year to another, while others of you are entering or have been in college or an occupation. This time of your life is filled with friends and all kinds of social engagements, and perhaps with dating and serious contemplation of marriage.

In other words, you are going many places. But no matter where you go in these busy years of your life, there is something you must never forget: *stay on the paths!*

The paths or ways in Psalm 25:4 are Jehovah’s will for your life as revealed in His Word. These paths are God’s commandments. These are the ways of godliness that a Christian walks in thankfulness for salvation in Jesus Christ. Like a stamped-down path in the woods, these paths are well worn by the saints throughout history who have already walked down them—and that should already be an encouragement for *you* to walk in these ways. David expresses that these are “thy ways” and “thy paths,” which means that these ways or paths belong to Jehovah: they are *His* will for our life and *His* commandments that He gives us. Because these are Jehovah’s paths, you can be sure that they are always the true paths, which is

why David in verse 5 calls them “truth”—they are the right and true ways that will never bring you to a place where you are lost and will never lead you in a wrong direction.

PROBLEMS

However, the psalmist David faced problems in his life that threatened to pull him off these paths of Jehovah.

One problem David experienced was enemies (read Ps. 25:2, 3, 16-19, where David makes reference to his enemies and sufferings). It may be that the background of Psalm 25 is David’s son Absalom rising up against his father who was king of Israel. Absalom wickedly rebelled against David, seeking to take the kingdom away from him. Even David’s advisor, Ahithophel, betrayed David by going to Absalom’s side. It must have been very difficult for David to know what to do in this confusing and hurtful situation. Left to himself, David would have responded in all the wrong ways and gone on paths of his own choosing.

Young readers, ask some older people in your life, and they will tell you how they have been betrayed by others in their life. It may be *your* experience, too, that a trusted friend turns his or her back on you, leaving you in a broken place. When everything is turned on its head, you will struggle to know how to respond; of yourself you will go lost from the right paths and walk in a way displeasing to the Lord.

But don’t just think of enemies in terms of those who might betray and oppose you; think, too, of the Devil himself, whom the Bible calls your adversary. As you go many places in the next years, Satan will be around every corner, tempting you to veer off Jehovah’s ways. He will seek to lure you into the paths of drinking, drugs, bad friends, evil entertainment, or foolish use of

social media. Apart from grace, you would tread these dark roads of the Tempter.

Another problem David faced was his own sin (see Ps. 25:7, 11, 18, where David speaks about his own sin). David remembered well his sins of youth, but also his sins with Bathsheba and Uriah, as well as all his other sins. What was happening with Absalom gave David a fresh reminder of his sin, for Absalom's rebellion was part of God's chastisement of David for his sins against Bathsheba and Uriah. David knew that apart from divine guidance, he, a sinner, would turn from Jehovah's paths and choose sinful ways.

Do you know that about yourself, too? You are a sinner. You know well the sins of your youth, for you are still in that stage of life. When faced with perplexing situations, a tempting Devil, or really just any scenario in life, you would quickly, of yourself, choose to walk in a direction contrary to God's will for you.

PRAYER

Don't you therefore see your need for Jehovah to show, teach, and lead you in the paths and ways you must go? For that you must pray, as David did. With David, ask for three things.

First, pray that Jehovah would *show* you His ways (v. 4). That is, pray that He would cause you to know what those ways are in which you must walk. If He doesn't show or cause you to know them, you will never go in them.

Second, ask that the LORD would *teach* you His paths (vv. 4 and 5). He will show or cause you to know the paths to tread, and He will do that *by teaching* you. The preaching in worship each Sunday is the primary way that Jehovah teaches you the way to go. He instructs you also in catechism, at home under faithful parents, in the Christian school, and through your own personal devotions. Understand: When you pray that Jehovah would teach you His paths, you're really praying for all these *means by which* He teaches you. Don't ever separate yourself from these means, lest your life not match your prayers!

Third, make supplication that God would *lead* you in His truth (v. 5). It's not enough that you ask Him to show you the paths by teaching you. You desire also to *walk* in those paths, and so you ask Him to make you, by His grace and Spirit, actually to go in them.

It should encourage you to know that many have *already* made these petitions for you in the past years of your life. When your mother carried you in her womb, she prayed, "Show, teach, and lead this little one." When you entered kindergarten, your dad and mom earnestly asked, "Show, teach, and lead our child." Through your grade school years, day by day they made the supplication, "Show, teach, and lead our developing son or daughter." Your parents, along with grandparents, uncles, aunts, friends, pastors, elders, and teachers, have been and will continue praying these things. As you mature in your faith, join the chorus of their voices in raising this prayer to heaven, knowing how dependent you are upon Jehovah for His guidance!

The reason that you pray for Jehovah to show, teach, and lead you in His paths is that He is the God of your salvation. David expresses this in verse 5: "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation." Let's say that you go on vacation with your family. The itinerary includes a cave tour. For the tour, you need a guide. In one word, how would you describe the kind of guide you need to lead you? A good answer would be, "trustworthy." If you need a trustworthy man to lead you in a *cave*, much more do you need a trustworthy guide to lead you in the *right and true paths of godliness*! That trustworthy guide is what you have in your God! He is the God of your salvation: therefore, He's dependable, reliable, the One to whom you should pray for guidance.

When David said that God was the God of his salvation, he may in part have been thinking about how God had saved or delivered him from the hand of Saul. But especially, David was referring to God as his Savior from *sin* (including his sins of veering from the right ways). David saw *Christ's* day from afar off—the seed of the woman who would come to crush the serpent's head. But what David saw from afar off, *you* can look *back* on and can see with so much more clarity: the Lamb of God who died for your sins (including the times when you have strayed from the true paths) and arose from the dead in victory. How powerful, loving, and wise God is in your salvation! How *trustworthy* He has, therefore, demonstrated Himself to be. Pray for Him to lead you in the true ways, for He is able, willing, and wise to guide you.

As the God of salvation that He is, you can also say with David that you wait on Him all the day (v. 5). Waiting on God is looking expectantly for Him to answer this prayer that you make. Waiting on God all the day is looking eagerly to Him throughout every day and into the future. Your waiting on Jehovah to show, teach, and lead you, will not be disappointed. He *will* hear and answer your prayer, all for Jesus' sake.

Lay down the magazine now, and pray these words of Psalm 25:4-5. Then, grab the nearest Psalter, and sing number 60, stanzas three and four: "Show me Thy paths, O Lord, teach me Thy perfect way, O guide me in Thy truth divine, and lead me day by day. For Thou art God that dost to me salvation send, and patiently through all the day upon Thee I attend."

PERTAINING TO THE CHURCHES IN COMMON—MYANMAR

MYANMAR SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT

MR. BRANDON WASSINK

Hope PRC Myanmar Committee, Walker, Michigan

Over the past several months, the saints in Myanmar have continued to walk through challenging circumstances, and the Council of Hope PRC (Grand Rapids) would like to share a brief update. It has been heartening to witness the steady outpouring of concern, questions, and encouragement from both our congregation and from our sister congregations—clear evidence of the love that binds us together as one body in Christ. In these times of hardship, such support has not only uplifted the believers in Myanmar but also served as a testimony to the spiritual unity of the church across the globe. On behalf of the Myanmar Committee, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your ongoing prayers and generous financial assistance, which have been a tangible blessing to our brothers and sisters there.

The ongoing civil conflict continues to impact daily life and ministry efforts. An earthquake in Mandalay (where the military was stationed) resulted in increased military movement to Yangon (where Hope PRCM is located). No one in the churches in Myanmar were affected by this earthquake apart from the military shifts. Although this has raised some concerns, Rev. Titus views the shift as manageable due to his father's former military service and assurances from the local

county chief. They have also seen a rise in the amount of electricity that they have each day, most likely due to the fact that the military and military families are there. Although the conscription laws remain in effect, the county chief continues to protect the young people from conscription, by reporting that there are no more young people that can be conscripted in this area. The county chief did mention to Rev. Titus that he would warn Rev. Titus if the situation was getting worse and if he should flee or not. One other development is that the military is requiring people to show their ID's when going to and from various areas, to ensure that if you are going somewhere, you are not a threat to the military. By God's providence, between the unrest and lies and war, the Lord continues to watch over His own.

Rev. Titus's family is in good health. Certi's thyroid condition is stable due to medication and Rev. Titus heart remains okay. The consistory continues to work the best they can to manage Rev. Titus' workload. The children are attending college safely, aided by student IDs which provide conscription exemption. Kap Mang, who we have detailed in previous reports, passed away this past month after months of suffering from cancer. According to Rev. Titus, the family was able to bury

him just before intense fighting has come to that area. Kap Mang's son had been leading worship services in that area, but now they are only able to pray together due to the intense fighting. According to Rev. Titus, the family confesses God's goodness in delivering Kap Mang from this vale of tears.

Hope PRCM continues to thrive spiritually, holding two services each Sunday. Attendance remains strong, with 17–20 regular visitors weekly. Worship services are marked by active participation, regular observance of sacraments, and strong mutual support among members. Family visitation is routine, and one adult woman has recently been baptized. The congregation shares meals between services, promoting fellowship and care.

Rev. Titus has completed the Bible translation and the mobile app that was developed by the young people of the congregation is live. There have been testimonies already to the blessing this has been for the use for the young people and other saints in Myanmar. A Psalter translation is underway, led by a returning congregation member. In all these events, it is astounding to see God working in mysterious ways always accomplishing his will.

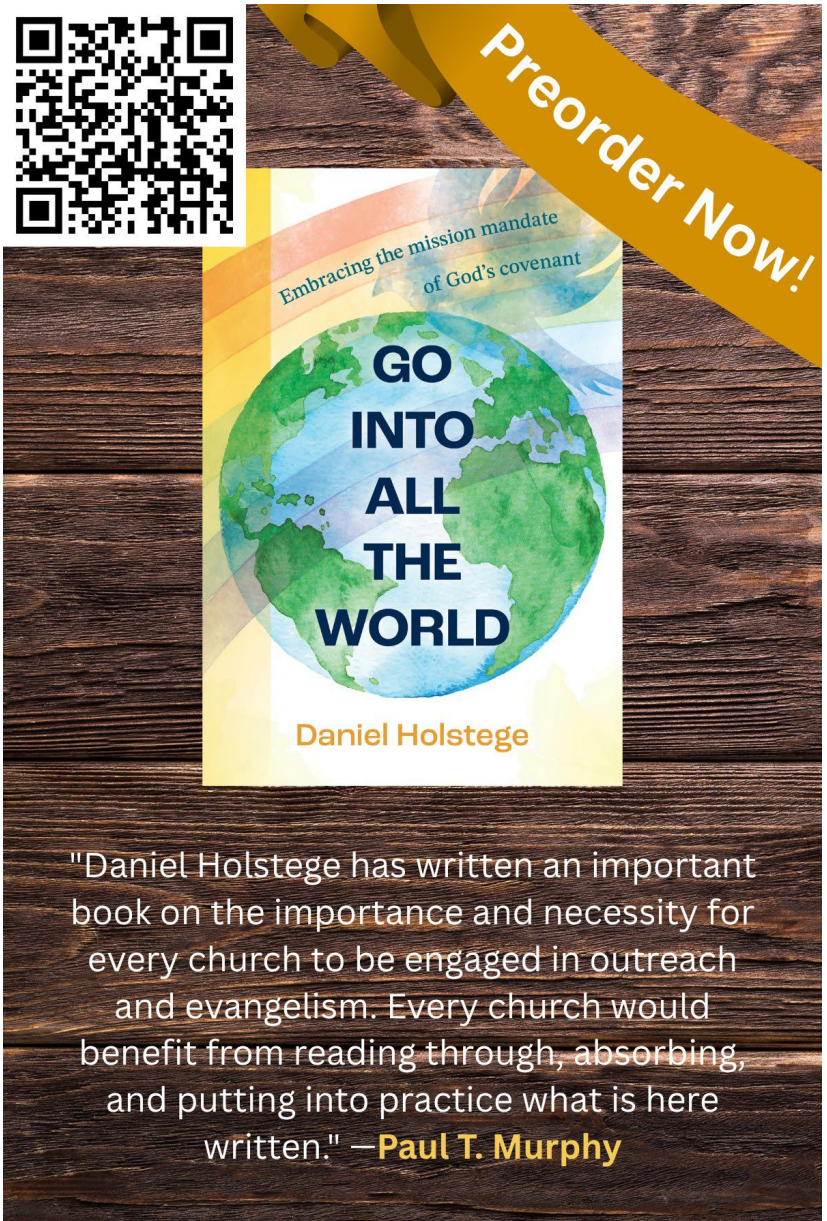
Rev. Titus and his family had hoped to come to the PRC 100th during the beginning parts of June. They applied for visas to be able to come but were denied because of the amount of people from Myanmar that do not come back. The US government was afraid Rev. Titus and his family would not leave the United States. Rev. Titus and family long for the communion and fellowship that we all have. May those that have the freedom to worship and fellowship not take these blessings for granted.

The path for the saints in Myanmar has not been easy. But like the early church under Roman rule, the saints in Myanmar shine as lights in a crooked and perverse nation. Their trials are difficult, but the testimony to God's faithfulness

remains strong. Even in this season of war, He builds His church, and the gates of hell do not prevail. Continue to pray for these saints, as they strive to live lives of faithfulness to their heavenly Father.

"We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed."

2 Corinthians 4:8-9



GO INTO ALL THE WORLD

Embracing the mission mandate of God's covenant

Daniel Holstege

"Daniel Holstege has written an important book on the importance and necessity for every church to be engaged in outreach and evangelism. Every church would benefit from reading through, absorbing, and putting into practice what is here written." —**Paul T. Murphy**

THE STANDARD BEARER

1894 GEORGETOWN CENTER DRIVE
JENISON, MICHIGAN 49428-7137

PERIODICAL
POSTAGE
PAID
AT JENISON,
MICHIGAN

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NOTICE:

RFPA Association Meeting, in Southwest PRC on September 25 at 7:30 p.m.

WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

The Lord willing on August 15, 2025 **Richard and Betty Peterson** will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary. We are thankful for them and God's faithfulness. May God continue to bless them in the years ahead, according to His will. Psalm 136:1: "O give thanks to the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endures forever."

Joel and Stephanie Beute

Megan, Ethan, Paige

Eric and Liz Lubbers

Dylan and Taylor Lubbers

Kaleigh and fiancé Noah Dykstra

Alicia, Brooke, Carter

Eric and Tricia Bouma

Patrick and Madalyn Medenblik

Harper and baby due in September

Mariah Bouma

Gloria

Anthony and Anna Griess

Austin, Shania, Jaxon, Layla

Ben and Becky Peterson

Isaiah-in glory, Aaliyah, Oscar, Emmitt

Jacob and Cassie Peterson

Xander, Oakleigh

Eric and Katherine Pols

Analise, Zachary, Abbie, Makenzie

Mike and Heather Pols

Drew, Blake, Owen, Leo, Max

Grandville, Michigan

CLASSIS EAST

Classis East will meet in regular session on Wednesday, September 10, 2025, at 8:00 a.m., in First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Material for this session must be in the hands of the stated clerk no later than August 11, 2025.

Rev. C. Spronk, Stated Clerk

CLASSIS WEST

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Crete, Illinois, on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at 8:30 a.m., the Lord willing. All material for the agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk 30 days before classis convenes, that is, by August 25, 2025. All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Crete's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

NOTICE:

In connection with the PRCA's 100th anniversary, Heritage PRC will be hosting a series of speeches on September 12, 2025, at 7 p.m. (CST). There will be three speeches: PRC early history (Rev. De Boer), PRC history leading up to and including the 1953 controversy (Rev. Kleyn), and lessons learned from the history (Rev. Barnhill). The event will be live streamed on Heritage's YouTube Channel: [heritageprcec2113](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6t2113).



REV. CARL HAAK

- 8/3 God's Dealing with Repentant Sinners, Jonah 3:10
- 8/10 A Sinful Response to Sovereign Mercy, Jonah 4:1-5
- 8/17 God's Rebuke to a Pouting Prophet, Jonah 4:6-10
- 8/24 A Greater Than Jonah Is Here, Matt. 12:41
- 8/31 Teach as an Eyewitness, Deut. 4:9, 10

