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Envy not the oppressor

Rev. James Slopsema

The covenant and Dordt Head 2, A unilateral covenant

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Mrs. Lael Griess



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Meditation

Rev. James Slopsema, minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches

Envy not the oppressor

Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward is abomination to the LORD: but his secret is with the righteous.

Proverbs 3:31-32

Have you ever envied the ungodly? They have little concern to keep the Sabbath day, to be honest in business, to keep their word, or to care for the needy. This opens the door for riches and a lifestyle that many of us would like to have but are denied as we strive faithfully to serve the Lord.

This envy is addressed in the proverb before us.

There are several elements found in this proverb. There is a contrast made between the oppressor and the froward on the one hand, and the righteous on the other hand. We are instructed neither to envy the oppressor nor to choose any of his ways. The reason is that the oppressor and his ways are an abomination to the Lord, whereas His secret is with the righteous.

Let us now hear this wisdom of the Lord.

The wicked oppressor!

An oppressor is one who is violent, who wrongs others for the sake of personal gain, whether monetary or position or power. These people are found on every level of life. There is the politician who comes to power by smearing the name of others. There is the businessman who builds an economic empire by cheating others. There is the worker who brings home a large paycheck because he has joined himself to an ungodly labor union that uses violence or the threat of violence. There is the athlete who wins by playing dirty. There is the boy or girl who becomes popular in school by cleverly playing students off against each other. There is the student who gets good grades by copying another's paper. There is the person who steals the ideas of others and receives the credit that belongs to others.

This kind of person is also described as one who is "froward." That term describes one who is perverted. In fact, this word is translated that way in other versions. We know what it means to be psychologically perverted. It means to be mentally deranged. But we are talking here

about *spiritual* perversion. God made us good and upright, an image of Himself. At the Fall we lost that and became spiritually perverted, twisted, and deranged. This spiritual perversion explains why one becomes an oppressor. Perhaps the greatest perversion that took place at the Fall was our loss of ability to love God and our neighbor. At the Fall we became a hateful, selfish, and self-seeking people. This, in turn, leads one to become an oppressor—to use others for personal gain and advancement.

These froward oppressors are contrasted with the "righteous."

The basic idea of righteousness is that one is in harmony with God's law.

Righteousness in Scripture can refer either to one's legal status before the law or to actual righteous activity in keeping the law. Sometimes it is used legally to emphasize that one appears before the judgment seat of God in perfect obedience, so that he receives a favorable verdict of God and all the blessing of God that comes with such a verdict. Then again, this term is sometimes used to emphasize righteous living.

Whether Scripture uses the term to refer to one's legal status or to actual righteousness, righteousness is possible only in Jesus Christ. Of ourselves we are wholly unrighteous. Our lives are filled with sin and that is how we appear before God, the Judge of heaven and earth. But God has graciously provided a perfect righteousness for His elect people in Jesus Christ. This righteousness consists in a covering for all their sins and a perfect obedience. Jesus accomplished this righteousness all His life long, but especially at the cross, as He suffered the full penalty of His people's sin in perfect obedience to the Father.

One receives the righteousness of Christ by faith. This is a faith that approaches God in humility and godly sorrow, seeking the righteousness of the cross. This faith is the gift of God to all His elect people, which He sovereignly works in their hearts by His Word and Spirit. Through faith the elect of God are credited with the righteousness of Christ so as to be judged righteous before God. And, on the basis of that justification, they are also renewed daily, given the power to walk in righteousness.

These are the righteous described in the proverb before us. The emphasis is on their righteous living. The motive for this righteous living is gratitude. Their righteous walk is characterized especially by love of God and love of the neighbor. This makes them the opposite of the ungodly oppressor. They are not froward but meek, seeking the welfare of their neighbor in love. This also explains why they do not often succeed in ways that the ungodly oppressors do. Sometimes God prospers the righteous. But most often they are the downtrodden, oppressed by the wicked.

Envy not!

To envy someone is to be jealous of what he is or has and to want it for yourself. This is a strong word that indicates that one is so filled with envy that he has redness of face.

It is very easy for the righteous to envy the ungodly for their prosperity. The Christian businessman can quickly envy the worldly businessman, who has succeeded by his questionable business tactics. The Christian worker easily envies the wages of those who work in a union shop or have a better job because they are willing to work Sundays. The covenant family easily envies what the worldly family next door has in terms of homes, cars, vacations, and lifestyle.

We are warned against this. Do not envy those who have prospered by taking advantage of you or others. Do not envy those who prosper by ignoring the law of God, even though this has not directly oppressed you.

Added to this warning is also the warning not to choose any of their ways.

Envy always leads to sinful action. The Bible abounds with examples. Joseph's brothers envied Joseph for the favor he had with their father. This envy led them to sell Joseph into Egypt. Ahab was full of envy over Naboth's vineyard and arranged his murder. The Jewish leaders envied Jesus for the popularity He had. This was so evident that Pilate understood that to be their motive for their seeking Jesus' death.

In like manner, envying the wicked in their prosperity will invariably lead to choosing their ways in order to gain what they have. This will lead the Christian businessman to adopt the aggressive, dishonest tactics of the world. This will lead the Christian worker to join the ungodly labor union or work on the Sabbath. This will lead the covenant family to ignore certain aspects of the law of God in order to have what others have.

Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways!

Although nothing is stated, there are positive implications here. We are to be content with what we have.

The Scriptures repeatedly call us to contentment. "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5). "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content." (I Tim. 6:7-8)

And this is our calling also when we see the wicked prosper in their wickedness, whereas we in our righteousness come up behind. Be content with your little or less.

And in that contentment continue in the ways of righteousness. If we are not to choose any of the ways of the wicked and the oppressor, then we are to continue in the way of righteousness. And we are to do that even if that should assign us a lesser place in this earth or even consign us to poverty.

Abomination to the Lord!

The spiritually perverted oppressor is abomination to the Lord. Notice that not just his perverted and oppressive ways are abominable to the Lord, but the perverted oppressor *himself* is abomination to the Lord. This is true, no matter whom he oppresses. But this is especially true when he oppresses the righteous.

Those that are an abomination to the Lord do not enjoy His blessings. They rather fall under His terrible wrath and curse. This is the lot of the froward oppressor. The Lord may even prosper his hand with earthly abundance and prosperity as he oppresses others. But this God does to set him on slippery places that will bring him down to sudden destruction.

But the secret of the Lord is with the righteous. The term "secret" has the basic idea of a couch upon which two sit to communicate secrets. This speaks of intimate fellowship of love in which one shares the intimate thoughts of his heart.

This is what the Lord does with the righteous. He is the covenant God who draws close to the righteous in His love to share with them His secrets. He tells them of His great love for them. He assures them of His care and provision. He tells them of His plans for them. God shares His secrets not through mystical revelations but through the Word as applied by the Holy Spirit. But the Lord does this only with the righteous who walk in His ways. Should the righteous in envy chose the way of the oppressor, their fellowship with the Lord will be disrupted and they will know His chastening anger.

This certainly is good reason to heed the admonition of this proverb. Nothing that the ungodly oppressor gains in this life can overcome or compensate him as he falls under God's wrath for his abominations. In turn,

the secret of Jehovah is far better than all the earthly gains of the oppressor.

This is the wisdom of God.
Let us walk in wisdom.



Editorial

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

The covenant and Dordt (9) Head 2 concluded, A unilateral covenant

Head 2 of the Canons sets forth the Reformed truth that Jesus' death is an effectual atonement for sin, because it was a substitutionary death and a satisfaction for the sins of the elect only. In harmony with that, the gospel never promises salvation to all who hear the preaching. Rather, in the preaching, though all hearers are commanded to repent and believe, the promise of eternal life is specifically spoken to *those who believe*. Only the elect can and do believe, for election is the fountain of faith. And since the sacrament of baptism is a sign and seal of the gospel, the promise of baptism is likewise to the elect alone.

The covenant theology in harmony with the Canons is the unconditional covenant of grace governed by election. On the other hand, the teaching of Head 2 rejects the theology of a covenant in which God promises salvation to every baptized child on the condition of faith. This editorial will continue to spell this out and finish the treatment of Head 2.

In the history of this doctrine, covenant theology has usually included the notion of a pact or agreement. This is understandable, since in Scripture a covenant between *men* can be an agreement, as when Abraham and Abimelech made a covenant in Beersheba (Gen. 21:27-32). With any such agreement come conditions or stipulations that must be fulfilled by both parties. Applying that to God's covenant with His people, theologians have taught that God makes certain promises of what He will do and then lays down certain stipulations for man to accomplish. These stipulations or conditions are required either in the formation of the covenant or in maintaining it. This is identified as a *bilateral* (two-sided) covenant.

Several theological problems stand out with this teaching of the covenant as agreement. One is that

it makes God, almighty Creator of all, a party to an agreement with man, a mere creature. However, the overarching problem is the inconsistency between God's covenant and the Reformed doctrine of salvation. Reformed soteriology insists that salvation is all of God, and therefore salvation is never an agreement between God and man, and salvation is not conditioned on what man does, either in the initial work or in maintaining salvation.

So must it be in the covenant. The covenant is all of God, with no dependence on man. When God establishes His covenant with His people, He promises to be their God, and promises that they will be His people. He promises eternal life, and all His promises are sure and unailing. That is identified as a *unilateral* (one-sided) covenant. In that unilateral covenant God gives life to His people and they become active. But the covenant is all of God who alone planned it, establishes it, and maintains it.

Klaas Schilder started with a one-sided covenant, and insisted that God then made the covenant two-sided, an agreement. Schilder affirmed that the promise of God could not fail. But to make this fit into the covenant as agreement with conditions, he changed the promise to every baptized child (as he taught) into a promise and a demand. The Canadian Reformed Churches follow this, as is evident from the fact that these churches use an altered Form for administering baptism. The Reformed Baptism Form written in the Netherlands, translated into English, and used historically by the Reformed Church in America, the Christian Reformed Church, the Netherlands Reformed Congregations, the Heritage Reformed Churches, as well as the Protestant Reformed Churches reads as follows in the third part of the instruction section:

Whereas in all covenants there are contained two parts, therefore are we, by God, though baptism, admonished of and obliged unto new obedience.

The clear implication is that the Form sets forth (in the ‘secondly’) God’s work of establishing His covenant with His people, and now it sets forth what God requires of His redeemed, Spirit-filled covenant people. This is their part, namely, with gratitude, loving God and obeying Him. The covenant does not depend on their keeping this requirement. If the covenant depended on that, it is null and void; not one baptized child or adult will fulfill the requirement. Rather, God having established His covenant, He tells His people what He expects of them in His covenant.

At that point, the Baptism Form of the Canadian Reformed Churches reads:

...since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation, we are, through baptism, called and obliged by the Lord to a new obedience.

The Federal Vision, which movement develops Schilder’s covenant theology, also turns God’s word to the baptized child into a promise and a demand. Promoters of this covenant theology teach that God establishes His covenant with every baptized child and even grafts each one into Christ, promising salvation in Him. But then, God demands that the child believe and obey for the maintaining of the covenant. Promise and demand. Promise contingent on the child believing.

This is not God’s promise to His covenant people.

God’s promise to His people was first announced in Genesis 3:15—the promise of the seed of the woman. In that promise is neither a condition nor a threat, though it speaks of salvation in the way of the destruction of the serpent and his seed. God’s promise is spoken to Abraham: “I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee...” (Gen. 17:7). It is entirely promise, no threat and no conditions. And thus it is all through the prophets and even the Lord Himself, who promised, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28).

This notion of promise and demand, with the demand as a condition that God sets before the covenant child to fulfill, is not the Canons. The Canons explicitly reject the idea of a conditional demand for election and accordingly, for salvation.¹ On the contrary, God’s

promise to the believer is simply eternal life in Jesus Christ. “He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life, and rest” (III, IV, 8). And the Canons insist that it is impossible that “His promise fail” (V, 8).

That is not to say that God never threatens—He certainly does! The Canons speak of “exhortations [and] threatenings” in the preaching. God warns (with threats) Israel and the church today of the terrible judgments that He will bring on disobedience. There is a fearful divine wrath on those raised in the sphere of the covenant who reject God and His Christ. This was demonstrated previously in connection with the organic understanding of the covenant (*SB*, Dec. 15, 2019). But these threats are neither the promise of the gospel nor the promise of the covenant that the Baptism Form gives. If God’s word in baptism, His covenant declaration, be a promise and a threat, then one ought not speak of the *covenant of grace*, but rather of the *covenant of grace and wrath*.

Again, this is not to deny that God makes demands of His covenant people. He surely does. Though the Canons say little about this, the Heidelberg Catechism introduces the law with the question “Q. 4. What doth the law of God require of us?” And in the exposition of the Ten Commandments, Lord’s Day after Lord’s Day asks, “What doth God require in the ___ commandment?” But that requirement is exactly the “part” that the Baptism Form sets forth—the believer’s response of thankfulness for salvation, for being brought into the covenant. Nowhere do the confessions hint at the notion that this requirement is needed to establish or maintain salvation or the covenant.

Before concluding the treatment of Head 2, we briefly treat a few more articles that bear on the doctrine of the covenant, particularly as to whether it is conditional or unconditional. First, notice Rejection of Errors 4, where the synod rejected the error of those who teach

that the new covenant of grace, which God the Father through the mediation of the death of Christ, made with man...herein consist(s)...in [this] that God having revoked the demand of perfect obedience of the law, regards faith itself and the obedience of faith, although imperfect, as the perfect obedience of the law, and does esteem it worthy of the reward of eternal life through grace.

This article condemns the Remonstrants’ teaching that in the “new covenant” the condition for eternal life

¹ Head I, Rejection of Errors (B), 5: “...that in the election unto faith this condition is beforehand demanded, namely, that man should use the light of nature aright, be pious, humble, meek, and fit for eternal life, as if on these things election were in any way dependent.” This article does not limit rejection of the error in regard to election only, but applies it to all of salvation by quoting

Ephesians 2:3-9, which concludes, “for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory.”

is faith and obedience. As this article states, the Remonstrants taught that God accepted faith and the obedience of faith as being worthy of eternal life. This is one way that the Arminians denied justification by faith alone. Over against this, the Canons insist that only the merits of Christ earn eternal life (I, B3; II, B4).

This article also condemns the modern-day error of Federal Vision. This theology is the working out of the error of a conditional covenant. The Federal Vision also denies justification by faith alone by teaching that a believer's righteousness before God is by faith and the obedience of faith.

Another article of Head 2 that clearly militates against the theology of a conditional covenant is Rejection of Errors 2 which points out the truth that "the testament is of force where death has occurred." That is to say, because Christ died, God's covenant is in force. The application to the covenant then is this: If God establishes His covenant with every baptized child, it is "of force" with each of them. Because Christ died, God's testament or covenant is effectually established, and no one can annul it. This cannot be true in a conditional covenant, for there the covenant relationship depends on the faith of the child. However, a covenant governed by election is completely in harmony with this teaching. God's covenant with His people is "in force," grounded in the cross of Christ. It will never fail.

Head 2, Rejection of Errors 6 addresses another error in conditional covenant theology. This article denies the "teaching that God, as far as He is concerned, has been minded of applying to all equally the benefits gained by the death of Christ..." Is not this teaching that Article 6 rejects exactly the consequence of a conditional covenant, where God comes to every child personally and promises to every child salvation, if he/she will believe? If God promises the benefits of Christ's death to every baptized child, surely He is "minded of applying to all [baptized children] equally the benefits gained in the death of Christ." The conditional covenant takes this Arminian teaching into the sphere of the covenant.

And finally, we must take notice of the very word "condition." The Canons use the terms *condition* or *con-*

ditional eleven times. Head I explicitly denies that God has determined anything as a "condition of salvation" (10). Nowhere is the term *condition* used to explain the Reformed doctrine of salvation. In Head 2 the idea of conditions is consistently rejected, several times connected with the Arminian teaching on the covenant, and the term is only used to set forth and condemn the *Remonstrants'* teaching.

This is most instructive. The term was a favorite of the Remonstrants. They used it to teach a salvation that was not all of God but dependent on man. Man had to fulfill a condition in order to be saved. Why then use such a term to explain the doctrine of God's covenant of grace? Oh, yes, some solidly Reformed theologians in the past, including John Calvin, used the term *condition* in their writings in a legitimate way. This is easily proven. Herman Bavinck made this important observation in connection with the doctrine of the covenant.

In the beginning Reformed theologians spoke freely of "the conditions" of the covenant. But after the nature of the covenant of grace had been more carefully considered and had to be defended against Catholics, Lutherans, and Remonstrants, many of them took exception to the term and avoided it.²

That complements his conviction on the relation between election and the covenant, also fully in harmony with the Canons. Bavinck writes:

So far from election and the covenant of grace forming a contrast of opposites, the election is the basis and guarantee, the heart and core, of the covenant of grace. And it is so indispensably important to cling to this close relationship because the least weakening of it not merely robs one of the true insight into the achieving and application of salvation, but also robs the believers of their only and sure comfort in the practice of their spiritual life.³

2 Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker) III, 229.

3 *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans,

Letters

Respect for ministers, charity in the churches

I submit this letter reflecting on the discussions taking place in the "Letters to the Editor" section of the *SB*. I do not take writing this lightly, but do so out of love for Christ and His church. My intention is not to hold

myself above anyone else. These words that I write are to be applied to me and my shortcomings in this life, as much as or more than anyone.

I fear that we are being influenced greatly by the world's ways of discussing an issue. Respect is not being shown to those with whom there is a disagreement.

This only escalates the division. So much worse is this when done in the church. We are called by God's Word to be meek and to deal with disagreements among us with charity.

When we have a grievance against a brother of a private nature, we are called to go the way of Matthew 18. The principle of Matthew 18 to keep matters as private as possible applies in all aspects of our lives. If a minister says something in a sermon that we disagree with, we are not to speak to others of our disagreement, but to go to the brother first. We should have his good name and reputation in mind, especially because of the office he holds in Christ's church.

When we draw conclusions about one's intentions without talking privately first, we do great harm to a relationship on a personal level. How much worse is it when we draw hasty conclusions in a public way for all to see when we have not heard him out first. I would assert that this inflicts great harm to your neighbor publicly, and raises up others against the neighbor. In the words of Lords Day 43, the ninth commandment speaks against judging or condemning a man rashly or unheard. It also states that we are to defend and promote our neighbor's name as much as we are able. We must pray for humility and grace from God to deal with one another in meekness.

Our ministers are men. They make mistakes. When they are made into false teachers rashly, great harm is done to their ministry. When a minister does not cross

all of his t's and dot all of his i's, someone listening to the sermon or reading the article must show charity to the man by talking to him. The worst thing that can be done is to voice a disagreement with others so that a sermon goes viral. We need to remember who our ministers represent.

My purpose in this is not to say we should not discuss issues. My hope is that we will see letters written that do not mislead the reader concerning the intentions of the author and paint him in a bad light.

The Canons of Dordt 400 years ago recognized our inability to understand fully this debate we have been having by writing what they did in heads 3 and 4, Article 13. "The manner of this operation cannot be fully comprehended by believers in this life." With this in mind, let us use more sanctified wisdom in our writing.

Proverbs 15:1 "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."

I Timothy 6: 3-4 "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings."

In Christ,
Rodney Rau
Grand Rapids, Michigan



All around us

Rev. Nathan Decker, pastor of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, MI

The development of sexual immorality

In this installment of "All Around Us," I would like to consider the progression of sin in this present evil age. We clearly see the development of depravity in all spheres of society and culture in the world today. Where it is particularly deep is in all matters relating to sexual immorality. This we know all too well from simply a cursory observation of present-day news and culture. What follows are three recent stories that demonstrate this development.

In the first place, *Answers* magazine (the publication of the organization Answers in Genesis) reported on a

recent piece written for *Teen Vogue*, a popular magazine for teenage girls. The title of the *Teen Vogue* piece is "Why Sex Work is Real Work." The *Answers* article correctly interprets the content of the article with its headline, "Teen Prostitution in Vogue." The review in *Answers* comments, "In the opinion piece, Dr. Tlaleng Mofokeng, a South African reproductive specialist, argued that prostitution should be legalized and that it's just like any other career. She said, 'The idea of purchasing intimacy and paying for the services can be affirming for many people who need human connection,

friendship, and emotional support’.”¹ The push for the legalization of prostitution is nothing new. Potential Democratic nominee for President of the United States, Elizabeth Warren, has stated her openness to legalizing prostitution, tweeting on October 10, 2019, “I’m open to decriminalization. Sex workers, like all workers, deserve autonomy but they are vulnerable to physical and financial abuse and hardship. We need to make sure we don’t undermine legal protections for the most vulnerable, including the millions of individuals who are victims of human trafficking each year.”² She is not alone; several other 2020 presidential candidates support the same. This is troubling all by itself. But the piece in *Teen Vogue* takes it one step farther. Now prostitution, a vile abomination in the sight of God, is promoted for young girls as legitimate, positive, and fulfilling.

A second example comes from an article in a special pastor’s edition of *Christianity Today* that addresses the subject of polyamory.³ Take note of the article’s title, which falls in line with the main point of this article: “Polyamory: The Next Sexual Frontier.” The development of sin will not cease. New frontiers of sexual sin will continue to be paved as time marches on. Polyamory is simply another example. In addition to explaining the deepening depravity of the world, the article also calls attention to the apostatizing of the church. The subtitle of the article reads: “These Once Taboo Relationships are Showing Up in Churches Across the U.S.”

The article describes polyamory this way: “Polyamory—from the Greek *poly*, meaning ‘many,’ and the Latin *amor*, meaning ‘love’—refers to the ‘practice of, or desire for, intimate relationships with more than one partner, with the consent of all the partners involved.” Polyamory differs from polygamy because it may or may not be practiced within the context of marriage. The point of polyamory is consensual, intimate, sexual or non-sexual relationships with multiple people.

The development of polyamory is unsurprising considering the sexual revolution in Western society spearheaded by the LGBTQ community. When marriage is no longer defined by the truth of God’s Word as that which is between one man and one woman, the door opens to any conceivable type of relationship, including polyamory. There is no end in sight. What may come

as a surprise, however, is the popularity and permissibility of polyamory in the lives and minds of Americans, even professing Christians. The article states:

For many Christians, polyamory seems so extreme and rare that there’s no need to talk about it. But it is much more common than some people think, and it’s growing in popularity. According to one estimate, “as many as 5 percent of Americans are currently in relationships involving consensual non-monogamy,” which is about the same percentage as those who identify as LGBTQ. A recent study, published in a peer-review journal found 20 percent of Americans have been in consensual non-monogamous relationship at least once in their life. Another survey showed that nearly 70 percent of non-religious Americans between the ages of 24 and 35 believe that polyamory is okay, even if it’s not their cup of tea. And perhaps most shocking of all, according to sociologist Mark Regnerus in *Cheap Sex*, roughly 24 percent of church-going people believe that consensual polyamorous relationships are morally permissible.

In the same magazine there is a third example that is important for understanding the progression of sexual immorality and the battles that the church will have to fight in the near future. The pornography industry has capitalized on every form of new technology over the past fifty years: television, VHS, DVD, the Internet, the smartphone, and social media. The technological wave of the future is virtual reality. Preston Sprinkle, who co-authored the previously cited article, writes, “Despite how outlandish they may seem, virtual reality (VR) sex and sex with robots will soon become a regular practice in our churches. Pornography use shows no signs of slowing down, and neither does the development of technology. Some studies suggest that Christians use porn at virtually the same rate as non-Christians, and there’s little reason to think the same won’t be true of VR sex and sex with robots.”⁴ This emphatically is not a next-generation concern. Experts predict that virtual sex will be as common place in 20 years as the use of pornography is presently. Already today, virtual reality in the form of gaming devices are in the homes of the world and church. The author is correct concerning the effect of this trend on the church. While the previous two examples concerning prostitution and polyamory may seem to be distant developments to us, this third example of the progression of sin may start affecting members of the church, and that relatively soon. Enslavement to pornography and sexual sin always ad-

1 “Teen Prostitution in Vogue,” *Answers* (November-December 2019), 41.

2 <https://twitter.com/ewarren/status/1182239891507339269?lang=en>.

3 Preston Sprinkle and Branson Parler, “Polyamory: The Next Sexual Frontier,” *CTPastors* (Fall 2019), 35, 36, 38.

4 Preston Sprinkle, “VR Sex and Sex with Robots,” *CTPastors* (Fall 2019), 38.

vances, if there is not, by the grace of God, deliverance and repentance. And as the cost barriers to obtain this technology continue to decrease, virtual reality is but the next natural context in which the longings of sinful lust will be satisfied.

In this connection the author makes a thought-provoking point: “People will likely come to pastors with ethical questions and excuses we should prepare to address. If virtual murder and theft (think *Grand Theft Auto*) are frowned upon but often allowed, even in Christian homes, then why not VR sex?” Are we open to such line of argumentation because of participation in sin through virtual means? The church must be prepared for what is coming. Are we?

All of the above leads me to make a few brief concluding applications.

In the first place, the citation of these three articles to demonstrate the point of the article are three of literally dozens or hundreds that could be referenced. There is a real danger in being inundated with this reality as Christians living in this world. The danger is that we become calloused in our minds towards the abominable nature of sin. What stood out as particularly vile and God-dishonoring upon reading about or seeing these things for the first time, doesn’t seem quite as vile and God-dishonoring as before after repeated exposure. And if that mentality creeps into our minds concerning what is in the world and apostatizing church, it will also make way into our own hearts as it concerns our own personal lives. May God through the power of His

Spirit and Word work in our hearts a healthy sensitivity toward sin as it is seen in the world, the apostatizing church, and in our own lives.

In the second place, any discussion of the development of sin leads us to consider our own lives carefully. Sin progresses in the world and in the apostatizing church. Sin also always has the potential to progress in our own lives, apart from the powerful saving work of God. Such is the effect of the deceitfulness of sin and the craftiness of the devil’s temptation. It is not in the spirit of haughtiness that we read and consider the above subjects, thinking “how could people walk so sinfully and turn to such vile wickedness,” as though such is impossibility for us. We are no better by nature. In humility we consider this subject, deeply thankful for God’s work in Jesus Christ to justify and sanctify. Knowing that this is how sin works—always progressing—we are led daily to the cross of Christ and the power found in Him alone, such that we are preserved from walking down the paths of sin.

In the third place, we say and pray in response, “come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” The cup of iniquity is filling up. The world is becoming more and more ripe for judgment. In this as Christians we have hope, leading us to long for that great day when our Lord will return on the clouds of glory to make all things new. What a day that will be: no more sin, but perfect light and life in the Lord Jesus Christ. Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!



Pertaining to the churches in common— Contact Committee

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

Report on our contacts (1)

As we stand near the beginning of a new year, the year of our Lord 2020, it is appropriate to consider the church universal, and, along with that, our denomination’s contact with small but greatly varied manifestations of it. Be they ever so small, they are ever so important.

An important element of our prayers during this coming year (as it ought to have been in past years) should be for the church universal, of which the PRCA are only a small part.

I still remember visiting an old saint in her mid-90s in a rest home in Artesia, California, and her telling me that her one regret (confined as she was to her room at this stage in her life), was that she could do so little for the members of Christ’s church anymore. “But, Reverend,” she said with slow dignity and great emphasis, “I can still pray for them. And I do, for His people all over the world. And I send a few contributions to some causes here and there too. I don’t know how much my

little bit helps, but maybe it encourages them, don't you think?"

You better believe it did. The prayers and small gifts of that aging saint availed much! The Holy Spirit honors such prayers and such sincere hearts.

It is striking how often in his epistles the apostle Paul not only sent his own personal greetings to churches spread over the Mediterranean world, but added as well, greetings from others in the church where he was laboring at the time. And then he also instructed the saints to whom he wrote to remember others, including himself and his own work, in their prayers. Whether they knew each other personally or not, the apostle, who was nothing less than the mouthpiece and pen of the Holy Spirit Himself as the Spirit of our Elder Brother Christ Jesus, exhorted them (and us, by implication) to pray for their brothers and sisters in Christ found throughout the world.

Paul's concluding chapter to the Romans (chapter 16) is a striking case in point, saluting many by name, naming many who with him sent salutations, and requesting remembrance in return: representatives of the church universal united over great distances through the means of prayer.

As should be clear from the great apostle, as well as other scriptural writers, no congregation or denomination is to be content with being provincial, basically only interested in and committed to taking care of herself and her own needs. If one has the Spirit of Christ, one is in a mysterious and yet altogether real, powerful, living way connected to all the members of Christ's body worldwide. And for those other members of Christ's body, a believer (and congregation of believers) ought to have an interest in their wellbeing. It is called love—the fulfillment of the law. And one way to seek that wellbeing is by remembrances in prayer.

To aid us in this calling it helps to have a few specifics. Thus, in the interest of giving some incentive to this aspect of our life and some content to our petitions, this article and another following will give some updates on the contacts in which we as your Contact Committee (CC) are engaged.

In this first installment we remind ourselves of those churches and saints with whom we stand in a formal ecclesiastical relationship. In a following article we will report on contacts we have with churches and groups with whom we have no formal relationship as yet, some of recent vintage, others of longer duration.

The PRCA, as you know, stand in sister-church relations with three denominations in foreign lands—Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (CERC), Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of

Northern Ireland (CPRCNI), and the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP).

Between ourselves and these churches there is ongoing contact not only by correspondence, but also through personal contacts and visits of an official nature.

All three sister churches annually send a representative to our synodical assembly. And we as CC, on behalf of our churches, send a delegation to each of these churches on an annual basis as well; primarily, to provide them with church visitation according to the requirement of the church order we hold in common.

Three delegations traveled to our sisters this past year and three more are being scheduled for this coming year, sometimes two ministers, at other times, a minister and an elder.

A second purpose of the visits is to discuss issues facing our sister churches, as well as whether and in what way the PRC can be of assistance. And third, we go to learn about work they are carrying out in their locations in the interest of missions and church extension. Strikingly, in all three areas there seems to be greater opportunity for missions and church extension work with positive fruit than in the States. So the ingathering and growth of Christ's church takes place by their faithful labors. Reason for prayer and willing support in whatever way we can be of use.

And let's remember that in two of our sister-churches we have men of our own churches laboring, men who need and request the prayers of those "back home."

Three men have been serving as missionary-pastors in the Philippines the past number of years—Revs. D. Holstege, D. Kleyn, and R. Smit. (Revs. Kleyn's and Smit's labors in the Philippines go all the way back to 2009.) This past year, the three have added the task of seminary instruction to their labors. At present, they have one student to instruct. There is good hope more will be added in the near future.

These are men with their families who must not be forgotten in our prayers. They are engaged in a great work of the Lord in the Philippines as they labor alongside the energetic Filipino officebearers to gather Christ's church in those islands, as well as to preserve the faith developing in the members.

This is a labor that brings to mind the incident of the miraculous catch of fishes on the Sea of Galilee, when Christ first called His disciples to begin their training to become fishers of men. The catch was so great, the fish so many, that Peter and Andrew could not handle them all. They beckoned frantically to John and James to come and help them, the demand of the labor going beyond their own unaided abilities.

Indeed, what we see in the Philippines is proof of Christ's words for the New Testament age, when He exhorted His disciples to pray to the Lord of the harvest, because "The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few." In our history in missions that has not often been the case, it would seem. But here, confronting us, is an instance where one does not have to go out searching for contacts. Rather, there are those who have their foot in the door and would take the kingdom by force. "What do you mean, you have need of sleep? We have needs over here and a multitude of questions that need to be answered as well. Come over and help us!"

Our ongoing prayer must be, "Lord, continue to use us, and bless these men abundantly along with the other faithful laborers on those islands!"

In the other instance, in Singapore, we have had a faithful brother ministering to the saints of CERC, Rev. A. denHartog (together with Sherry, his wife). He has done a yeoman's job in filling their pastoral needs during their ongoing vacancy. Rev. denHartog may be emeritus, but he has not been resting on his laurels. He is as busy now as he was when he was getting a full salary, maybe busier. The number of years he has put into ministering to the saints in Singapore is remarkable. We cannot commend him enough.

As the denHartogs prepare to return to the U.S. (whether for a time or permanently, the Lord knows), our prayers must be for the faithful officebearers of the congregation, officebearers who continue to lead their congregation in development in the faith as well as laboring to bring the gospel to others, many of whom are from an idolatrous background, shackled in devilish superstitions, whose family and parents consider them traitorous ingrates should they turn to the Christian faith.

It is a demanding, and yet glorious work.

That the Lord may soon provide our beloved CERC with a full-time under-shepherd is our prayer added to their own.

And, of course, we have a third sister church, Covenant PRC of NI, with its mission fellowship in Limerick, Ireland. Both pastors of Covenant and of the Limerick Fellowship are well known to us, Revs. A. Stewart and M. McGeown, having graduated from our seminary, having married good Dutch 'girls', and found on our pulpits from time to time when they visit us for denominational or family reasons. Covenant is well known in Reformed circles worldwide, not only for its sermon library, but also for its literature outreach, especially the growing number of materials translated into foreign languages. How the saints there, most of Scotch-Irish descent, covet our prayers for the gathering

of Christ's church on the Emerald Island and the continued use their website ministry. Through their labors little groups of believers scattered across the globe are fed the time-honored Reformed gospel truths and encouraged to persevere.

And then there is the Evangelical Presbyterian Churches of Australia (the EPCA), with whom the PRCA has a corresponding relationship.

We want to emphasize how cherished this contact is and should continue to be to the PRC. It is a relationship that is of mutual benefit, one that has a long history reaching all the way back to the late 1970s, one that took a long time to be formalized. In the judgment of this writer, too long a time, but, at the same time, understanding that for both denominations establishing formal relations where there were certain disagreements (in spite of the basic, doctrinal and confessional agreement) was uncharted waters, new to both of us.

This past summer two of our ministers, on behalf of the CC, traveled to Australia: Prof. B. Gritters from the States and Rev. D. Holstege from the Philippines.

They gave speeches that tied in with the 400th anniversary of the writing of our Canons of Dordt, that distinctively continental—one might even say Dutch-Reformed document—but for all that, highly esteemed by the Presbyterians of Scotland in particular with their staunchly Calvinistic convictions. This is the doctrinal and ecclesiastical pedigree of our brothers and sisters "down-under."

There were representatives of the Scottish Presbyterian churches at the great Synod of Dordt, men who gave their full approval to the condemnation of Arminius and his man-glorifying errors, as well as to the adoption of the Canons. Its doctrines of salvation by God's sovereign, free grace was and is woven into their Westminster Confession and Catechisms.

Such convictions still govern the officebearers and members of the EPCA. They number only a few hundred, standing all but alone in their consistent Calvinistic convictions. But they do not despair. Gideon was left with only 300, was he not? And consider how the LORD used him and those 300!

Prof. Gritters and Rev. Holstege had opportunity to discuss various issues with men of the EPCA, attending one of their Presbytery (synodical) gatherings while in Brisbane. As well, they were given the right and privilege to preach to the Brisbane congregation. The officebearers trusted our men to bring nothing but the gospel and the biblical, confessional doctrines of faith unto godliness. Which they did.

We have it on good authority that the sermons were well received and warmly appreciated. It is a reminder

that mutual trust is an important element in any formal relationship, especially if it is to continue to develop. Something for us to reflect upon.

Considering how small both our denominations are, and how unique we are in the whole Reformed world in various, fundamental doctrinal distinctives that we hold, this relationship of mutual trust and encouragement cannot be too highly valued or too often nurtured by prayer.

Following that visit, the CC received from the EPCA a warm, cordial letter meant to be conveyed to our churches, which, a bit belatedly, we do at this time. It reads:

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ our glorious God and Redeemer:

At the Presbytery meeting of July 2019, the Presbytery was able to meet with the two men sent out to the EPC by your Contact Committee.

The Presbytery desired that I write to you, as Contact Committee, to thank you and express our appreciation for the visit of both Professor Barry Gritters and Rev. Daniel Holstege. These men gave valuable speeches at our conference on the Canons of Dordt, preached in the pulpit of Brisbane congregation of the EPC, and spoke a number of times on the floor of our Presbytery.

We appreciated their labors, and both the Presbytery and the Brisbane congregation were enriched by their presence and work. We do desire that our corresponding relationship may be strengthened and made closer, by such means as this.

May our King and Saviour continue to bless, strengthen, and lead our respective denominations into an ever greater knowledge, love, and practice of His gospel truth in Christ Jesus. We will continue to remember you all in our prayers, and we likewise desire your prayers on our behalf.

In Christ's Service,
Rev. David Torlach
(Clerk of EPC Presbytery of Australia)

The name "Rev. David Torlach" is not foreign to many of us, certainly not to the members of both our Byron Center and Unity congregations. The Torlach family spent three years in Byron Center during Rev. Torlach's time of study at our seminary, as did Rev. Mark Shand and his family during his three years at

our seminary. You may recall that Rev. Shand gave an excellent and stirring speech at our recent conference marking the work of the Synod of Dordt and the writing of the Canons. We remember it well.

Two others of the EPCA have studied at and received diplomas from our seminary, the Revs. Chris Connors and David Higgs, some 25 years ago.

And now the EPCA has entrusted a younger man of the next generation to our seminary, Isaac Peters (and his family). He has just finished the first semester of a three-year course of study. The Peter's children are attending our Hope PR Christian School.

Making what plain?

Our contact with the EPCA is more than just one of correspondence. It is personal and regular. The EPCA

Considering how small both our denominations are, and how unique we are in the whole Reformed world in various, fundamental doctrinal distinctives that we hold, this relationship of mutual trust and encouragement cannot be too highly valued or too often nurtured by prayer.

is willing to make use of us, and they have been of use and benefit to us. Rev. Shand is not the only one of their ministers to address us at conferences marking great historical events of the NT church age. Both Revs. Connors and Torlach have also benefited us in direct fashion, Rev. Connors with a memorable address at our 500th anniversary of Calvin's birth in 2009, and Rev.

Torlach two years past when we marked the 500th anniversary of the beginning of the Reformation.

And these are just a couple of instances, of course.

All this as a reminder of whose work both our denominations are engaged in, and who it is that the officebearers of our churches represent, and whose life and Spirit is working in our members. We must not ignore or forget each other. We dare not, lest we be reproved. It would be as if we were forgetting Christ Himself and the work of His body and Spirit elsewhere.

From both sides of the great expanse of Pacific Ocean the supplication to each other must be, "Brethren, pray for us." And the response should be, "Making mention of you in [our] prayers." A reassuring phrase found repeatedly in the apostolic letters.

Next installment, we turn to those other contacts the Lord has privileged us to have laid across our path.



Strength of youth

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

The Christian man as husband

In recent articles on what it means to be a godly man I've written about male sexuality (especially as it relates to single men) and how a godly man behaves in a dating relationship. This article addresses the next logical subject: the Christian man as husband.

Ordinarily it is the will of God for believing men that they seek a wife and get married. Obviously, this is not the case for all men, some by choice and others because God never leads them to a spouse. The fact that they are not married does not make them less of a man. Jesus was never married, and He was fully man. The apostle Paul was not married, and he exemplified biblical manhood. Taking the time to address husbands under the heading of biblical masculinity does not mean that being married is a stipulation for being a man. The church needs godly men who are singles. But the Bible makes clear that ordinarily God's way for men is that they marry and become husbands.

The church has always needed and continues to need men to be godly husbands. This is all the more urgent in our day because of the spineless, selfish husbands in the world around us. If the strength of our homes and churches are godly marriages, then the strength of our marriages are godly husbands (and wives).

This is one of the true tests of genuine, manly strength: "Do you treat women, and particularly your wife, in a proper, biblical way?"

What does the Bible require of husbands? The Reformed "Marriage Form" is helpful in setting forth the essential responsibilities. They can be easily remembered as the three L's: love, lead, and labor.

Love

The fundamental calling of a husband is to love his wife. All the other responsibilities of a husband fit under this primary duty. If a husband remembers nothing else, let him always remember this calling: just as Christ loves the church, so must the Christian husband love his wife (see Eph. 5:25, 28, 33; Col. 3:19).

What does it mean to love your wife? The world says that love is simply an emotion. It is a warm, fuzzy feeling inside. It is something that you can fall into and

also something you can fall out of. But that is not true love. Love is not a feeling, but a decision and a commitment. Love is demanded of us whether we feel it or not. Love is a decision and commitment to esteem our wife highly and consider her to be delightful and precious. It means we think this way and treat her this way even when she is undeserving of it and we do not feel like it.

The husband's love must be modeled after Christ's. Consider these five characteristics:

- First, his love must be *unconditional*. His love is not based on whether his wife first submits to him. His love is not conditioned on her abilities or attractiveness. He is called to love her unconditionally and at all times.

- Second, his love must be *tender*. He must nourish his wife: nurture her so that she grows. And he must cherish her: hold her dear and precious. He must be gentle and careful with her so that he does not destroy or break her. I Peter 3:7 says, "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."

- Third, his love must be *sacrificial*. His concern is not first about himself. He is not selfish and demanding. But his love means that he gives himself for his wife. He is willing to suffer and even to die to provide for and protect her.

- Fourth, his love must be *close*. He does not live independently of her. He is not gone all the time at work or with his buddies. But in love he lives with her. He is home and spends time with her. He shares his life with her so that the two are the closest of friends and companions. It has been rightly said that for a husband "love" is spelled T-I-M-E.

- Fifth, his love is *expressed*. He does not leave her to doubt his love by being cold or giving her the silent treatment. His attitude is not, "I told her at our wedding that I love her, and if anything changes she will know." He may not think, "It's not manly to express feelings." Or, "That's not my thing. I'm not good at that. It doesn't come naturally." You must express your love for her. She must never doubt but always be reminded of your

love. Show this in words, in actions, in helping around the house, in spending quality time with her.

For the one who is already a husband, love your wife as Christ loves the church! For the one who is not yet married, prepare yourself to love your future wife with the holy love of Christ!

Lead

Husbands are also called to lead their wives, as Christ is the Head of His church (see Eph. 5:23).

There are two dangers to be avoided in this regard. One danger is that the husband relinquishes his headship. He is spiritually weak and lazy. Rather than taking the lead, he forces his wife to assume this role. He is not involved in the rearing of the children, he does not lead in spiritual matters, but he dumps this all on his wife. This is gross unfaithfulness to his calling!

The second danger is that a husband abuses his position of headship by being a cruel, selfish, proud tyrant. An extreme form of this would be a husband whose attitude toward his wife is that she is his slave; he owns her and may do whatever he wants with her. She is a doormat that he walks all over. He is controlling and abusive. This too is gross unfaithfulness to his calling!

What does it mean for him to lead faithfully?

The husband's headship means that God has placed him in a position of authority and leadership towards his wife. He is the chief decision maker in the marriage. He is the primary provider of her needs. He is her protector.

A good head is like a good manager. A good manager doesn't pass the buck to others. He is responsible for everything that happens in the plant. All big decisions are made by him. He takes responsibility for problems and does not make excuses and blame others. The same is true of a good husband. He is ultimately responsible for what happens in his home. All major decisions are made by him (with input from his wife). He takes responsibility for mistakes and does not make excuses or blame others.

At the same time, a good manager does not micro-manage every job and every employee. He gives them freedom to make decisions, to give input, and to use their abilities for the betterment of the company. The same is true of a good husband. He does not micro-manage his wife. He respects her as his closest friend and helper. He respects and seeks her opinion. He gives her freedom to make decisions and to use her talents for the good of their home.

As a good head, the believing husband is the spiritual leader in the home. He takes charge of the spiritual life and sets the spiritual direction. He leads in family devotions. He makes sure that the family is in church

twice on Sunday. He sees to it that the children know their catechism. He encourages reading and Bible study and spiritual growth.

All this shows that the calling of headship means that a husband is the chief servant. We husbands must follow the example of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve (see Matt. 20:20-28; Luke 22:27; John 13:1-15; Phil. 2:5-8). Our sinful natures want to think that headship means we are the boss, we can do what we want, we always get our way, our wife has to do whatever we say, and it's all for our benefit. But that is worldly, proud, selfish, and wicked. Christ calls us to a radical idea of headship as humble serving. We must give of ourselves for our wives.

The faithful husband does this with the good of his wife always in mind. A husband who is spineless and lazy does not seek the good of his wife but rather hurts her tremendously. So also a husband who is controlling and domineering does not seek the good of his wife but crushes her spirit, discourages her gifts, and hurts her deeply. A faithful husband has his wife's best interests at heart always. Everything he says and does must promote her wellbeing. His desire is to see her grow spiritually and to walk more closely with her Lord Jesus Christ.

Husband, lead your wife faithfully! And young man preparing for marriage some day, be ready to lead your future wife as Christ is the Head of the church!

Labor

A third responsibility that God places upon the believing husband is that he is called to labor to provide for his wife and family. There is much that could be said about a man's calling to work, something I hope to address in a later article, but here I want simply to emphasize that the husband has the unique calling to provide.

The "Marriage Form" addresses this calling to the husband: "And since it is God's command 'that the man shall eat his bread in the sweat of his face,' therefore you are to labor diligently and faithfully in the calling wherein God hath set you, that you may maintain your household honestly, and likewise have something to give to the poor."

The Form obviously has Genesis 3:17-19 in view. The context is God's words addressed to the woman and to the man after the fall into sin. God's chastisement upon the woman relates to the specific sphere of labor for which God created her: the sphere of the home and child-rearing. God's chastisement to the man relates to the specific sphere of labor for which God created him: the sphere of labor and provision. He must work hard by the sweat of his brow from day to day to provide for

the physical needs of the home and to be able to give to the church and the poor.

There is not space here to address the whole subject of “working mothers,” but it ought to be noted, even if briefly. A husband can be guilty of doing great harm to his wife and family by encouraging the mother of his children to work long hours outside of the home. Often the reason given is financial, although sometimes there are other reasons given (for example, a mother wants to use the higher education she received, or she thinks she cannot handle being home with the children every day deprived of adult interaction).

Husbands must recognize that the mother’s sphere of labor is the home (see I Tim. 2:15; 5:14; Tit. 2:4-5). She is not called to be the provider. Her life is to focus on and revolve around the care of her home, her husband, and her children. This does not mean that a mother may never for one hour do something unrelated to the home. This does not mean that a mother may never un-

der any circumstances work a few hours a week outside the home. But the mother must always be conscious that her home is receiving her best. Too often mothers who work long hours outside the home give their best time and energy to persons other than their husbands and children. When the home is the focus, a mother is going to give her best to her family and not the leftover crumbs. This is a difficult, yet honorable, joyful, and rewarding work! Husbands help the mothers in their work by working hard to provide for the needs of the home, so that this burden does not fall to them.

Too often the question is phrased this way: “Can we afford (financially) not to have the mother working outside the home?” The question ought to be this: “Can we afford (spiritually) not to have the mother in the home? There is too much at stake, and the influence upon our children is too great!”

Husbands, work hard for the sake of your wives, families, and churches!

Guest article

Submitted by Mrs. Lael Griess, a pastor’s wife and member of First PRC, Grand Rapids, Michigan

Miscarriage: A word of comfort for grieving mothers

Tiny. Unseen. Hidden in darkness and safety. An intricate wonder. A display of the creative and glorious power of God. *Precious*. Loved—by family and even more by God. Each little baby in the womb of a godly mother is a life, with a soul, and a specially determined, God-given purpose. This purpose may be carried out in a long life with many years on the earth and many visible works accomplished. Or this purpose may be carried out entirely in the mother’s womb, ending after a few brief months, weeks, days, or even hours. The inscrutable wisdom of a loving heavenly Father determines the length of each life, but whether long (humanly speaking), or a brief blip in history, the death of all of His saints is precious to Him.

The more mankind discovers about the mysteries of the womb, the more God’s people stand in awe of His design. With scientific discoveries such as ultrasounds, we understand more of the truth that David proclaimed in Psalm 139,

For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are

thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them (vv. 13-16).

Similar scientific discoveries have allowed us to grasp in a greater way the truth Scripture speaks in Genesis 3:16 when God told Eve that as a result of her fall into sin He would “greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy *conception*” (emphasis added). Miscarriage, the spontaneous loss of a baby before the twentieth week of pregnancy,¹ has always been a common part of childbearing. However, now that scientists and doctors know more about the early stages of human life, our estimate of the number of miscarriages that occur has greatly increased. Currently, some experts believe as many 50% of pregnancies end in miscarriage.²

1 <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001488.htm>.

2 <https://www.marchofdimes.org/complications/miscarriage.aspx>.

Certainly there is pain for both the godly father and the godly mother who have lost a child in a miscarriage; but given that the baby's whole life was spent inside the mother and given that the physical suffering of the miscarriage exclusively affects the mother, her pain is often greater. The experience of a miscarriage can vary greatly in the circumstances that surround it, and in its physical and emotional/spiritual effects. As with all suffering, it can be hard to separate these effects, with the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of life being so intertwined.

While miscarriages that occur before a woman even knew she was pregnant pass unnoticed, other miscarriages happen after a woman has rejoiced that her prayers have been answered, announced her happy news to friends and family, and begun planning and looking forward to her child's arrival. A mother may miscarry after having already suffered for months with the intense sickness that accompanies early pregnancy. Or she may have endured many doctor's appointments, medications, and procedures trying to maintain the pregnancy. Other mothers may have been shocked and even disappointed to learn of the pregnancy, perhaps because they recently gave birth, were struggling with depression, or felt more than overwhelmed with the children for which they already had to care. After much prayer and battle to conform their hearts to what appeared to be God's plan, the baby is taken. This type of miscarriage is understandably an emotional roller coaster.

Later miscarriages can be as long and painful as the labor of childbirth, only instead of welcoming a sweet baby, a mother is faced with the emptiness of loss. After a miscarriage, suffering may continue with various complications including severe anemia, infections, invasive surgeries and procedures, infertility, and more. Emotionally, some women may bounce back quickly, while others carry a tender sorrow for the rest of their lives. Some mothers experience a miscarriage once or twice in their child-bearing years; others look back on years riddled with one loss after another. For still other women of God, their *only* experience as a mother in Zion is the brief weeks or months they spent carrying a dear one inside.

While the pain, discomfort, and physical suffering of many maladies are well known, the suffering of a miscarriage is often endured in silence. And, though common, miscarriage is rarely publicly spoken of or written about. In fact, Christian women may even feel pressure to keep their miscarriages secret, and this can add to their suffering. Because of this secrecy, many church members may not be aware of the difficulty experienced during and after a miscarriage.

What does all this mean for the people of God? It means that when we sit in our local congregations, looking around at God's children, we can rejoice greatly in the wonder of each new baby. But it also means that, seeing the faces of the women of Zion, we can know that many, *many* of them have experienced the sorrow and suffering of miscarriage. Or perhaps you, dear mother in Zion, are one of the women who has been through this trial once, twice, or many times. In either case, this trial is not rare, and no church body is left untouched by this pain. The likelihood of being able to share this painful circumstance with someone who has experienced it is great.

Furthermore, we can know, as with all difficulties God sends our way, He has a loving purpose in sending so many miscarriages to His people. The path may be treacherous, but the destination is breathtakingly beautiful. For all this difficulty, pain, and loss is not without a spiritual purpose, especially for the beloved mothers who have suffered.

While miscarriage is a general result of the fall into sin, it is not necessarily sent to a woman as a result of any of her specific sins (Gen. 3). However, in a tender emotional state after the loss of a miscarriage, it can be tempting for a Christian woman to question, "If children are a blessing, and my child was taken from me, am I cursed?" No, dear daughter of God, the curse has been taken by Christ! While you suffer the effects of the Fall, for you this trial too is actually working for good. You are being beautifully sanctified; even in this painful, sorrowful loss, you are being made more like Christ. After a miscarriage, you may be blessed as you grow in your understanding of God's tender promise to "gently lead those that are with young" (Is. 40:11). Your resolve to thank God for each new life He brings, and your conviction that the children of God are truly blessings may deepen. Your prayers and reliance on God for strength and comfort will intensify. If your miscarriage is known by others in the church, I am confident you will experience as I did, a new level of the sweet fellowship of Christ's body as many individuals step forward to comfort you in your loss. In turn, your calling to "comfort those who are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted by God" (II Cor. 1:4) develops.

By God's grace, enduring a miscarriage is part of your gift of sacrifice and love to the kingdom of God, as we "have no reason to doubt" that each lost life is welcomed straight from the womb into the hands of the loving Father in heaven.³ This can especially be a

³ Canons of Dordt, I, Art. 17.

comforting thought to those mothers who are never able physically to hold *any* of their dear children on earth. The time each mother spends carrying a child in the womb, *no matter how brief*, makes a woman in the church a mother in Zion, and her dear ones are as much a part of the kingdom as those saints who die in old age. She may also rejoice in the fact that these children who die in infancy receive the special blessing of not having

endured the suffering of a long life on earth battling the threefold enemy of the world, the flesh, and the devil. And you, godly mothers who have suffered miscarriage, can be comforted looking with expectation to that one glorious day when the earthly pilgrimage is ended, the loving Father welcomes you home, and you will have the joy of meeting your (*His!*) child/children in glory.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Richard Smit, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

Dealing with day-to-day cultural differences on the mission field

One of the aspects of mission work in cross-cultural settings is the day-to-day differences that a missionary must face and to which then he must respond appropriately and wisely. This day-to-day reality of cultural differences is true for all missionaries and their families, who are sent across cultural and linguistic boundaries, no matter their originating background, birth-nationality, and home-culture. Although the degree of differences can vary between the culture in which the missionary labors and the culture in which he was born and raised, yet they are an unavoidable part of his daily and weekly work. In this article, we will highlight only a few, general, day-to-day differences that a foreign missionary might experience.

In doing so, our intention is not to criticize the cultures that are foreign to the author and in which our fellow saints might live. Instead, the intention is merely to increase awareness of the distinct, day-to-day differences that our missionaries might face, and to increase awareness of how missionaries must learn to adapt in matters that are non-essential, that is, those things which are not necessarily right or wrong according God's commandments. One can then appreciate how missionaries try their utmost to adjust their behavior and language for the furtherance of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gathering of His church in a cross-cultural setting.

In the first place, a missionary may face differences regarding time. North Americans generally value punctuality highly and move at a rapid pace, almost impa-

tiently; perhaps this view of time in part explains the ballooning and prosperity of the Western fast-food and quick-delivery industries. North Americans tend to be impatient when waiting in long lines and when from their viewpoint discussions seemingly meander and do not conclude promptly. North Americans generally plan well in advance, even maintaining schedules that extend weeks and months in advance. Appointments are planned and rigorously kept. Some cultures would consider North Americans to be slaves to their watches, daily planners, and calendars.

In contrast, for some cultures being on time for meetings or visits has a different level of priority. Arriving after the published time for an event seems normal, and is often due to unpredictabilities of public transportation, traffic congestion, the previous needs of a visitor or family friend, or, in some cultures, the higher cultural status of an individual. In some cultures, a delay in the start of a meeting due to late arrivals seems to be normal. What a North American missionary might think has a very simple solution, such as leaving earlier next time, in reality might not be so easy to implement as it may seem.

Second, in North America, a queue of people would be a normal expectation at a school cafeteria, at a customer service counter in a department store, in traffic at an intersection, or at a check-in desk at an airport terminal or ferry terminal. Cutting in line is seen as rude and disrespectful, and the failure of the clerks or nearby security guards to notice or do anything about "cut-ins"

irritates a North American who is accustomed to orderly queues and everyone taking a turn at the end of a line.

In some cultures, it is normal that people cluster around a bank teller window or a customer service desk, all competing in various well-practiced ways to be the next one served. It is considered normal that some cut to the front of the line at a grocery store check-out because they have only a handful of items compared to others lined up with full carts. To a North American this seems exasperatingly unfair, while to some cultures it is a normal way of life.

Third, the use of material resources can differ significantly between a North American missionary and the people of a culture in which he labors. A North American prefers to buy in bulk, while in some cultures, people like to buy just enough for a day or two. A North American generally likes to follow a pre-planned budget in the spending of his money. In some cultures, the financial need that occurs historically first has the first claim on the spending of one's money. A North American tends to store his wealth and commodities in bank accounts, retirement accounts, houses, tool sheds, barns, and many other things. In some cultures, resources are to be used, not hoarded, so that if someone sees that his neighbor's hammer or other resources are not being actively used, he feels free to "borrow" the unused hammer or other resources for his work until the owner "borrows" them back for his next project. A North American tends to view his wealth and resources individualistically, while in other cultures resources are viewed in terms of the extended family and community.

Fourth, many North Americans, generally speaking, enjoy "peace and quiet." North Americans value a quiet day or overnight hike, listening to the quiet sounds of God's creation. Laws are enforced by the police to maintain orderliness and quiet during the nighttime in neighborhoods. A North American couple enjoys a meal at a restaurant in quiet conversation with minimal background noise that might disturb and distract their fellowship. In some cultures, a North American is uncomfortable with the booming music in a restaurant or the house-shaking noise of an annual fiesta through the night. At the same time, a foreigner in North America can be very uncomfortable with the unsettling quietness and seeming lifelessness of sparsely populated North American neighborhoods.

One missionary noted that to "an African, when a city is quiet at night, it is a bad sign. Normally an African city is full of sounds. When it is quiet, something is wrong." What the Western missionary may have initially interpreted as a welcome development of "peace and quiet," was actually the result of an attempted overthrow of the government in that particular African

country. While in North America a person might buy a house in a rural area to enjoy a life of solitude and quiet, in one African country such a person is viewed with suspicion as possibly dangerous, being greedy, or, perhaps, being a wizard or witch.

Fifth, the understanding of personal privacy differs between cultures. In North America, privacy tends to be defined in terms of physical distance and separation, while in other cultures privacy is defined in terms of the amount and degree of his involvement in family, church, school, and employment relationships in life. To a North American, the ability of several families and generations to live in close proximity to another, in one house even, is exceptionally amazing, while the local culture views it as normal. To a North American, questions about age are acceptable, but in some cultures direct questions about someone's age may be disrespectful.

Sixth, in the area of communication, a North American values direct communication, direct eye contact in communication, and clear answers to questions. If there might be a problem, then he wants to be told directly and accurately. To a North American, the use of body language in communication has a lower emphasis. In contrast, in some places, indirect communication is used to avoid the appearance of being confrontational with others. Direct eye contact for a prolonged period of time is considered improper and is avoided in some cultures. Certain kinds of body language are often used to communicate an answer in place of a direct verbal answer. Invitations for a visitor to stay for supper need to be repeated several times before a visitor might agree to stay. In such situations, a quick "yes" in response to the first invitation for supper would give a hasty and an improper appearance.

Finally, when a North American borrows something from his local neighbor, for example a bottle of ketchup, he might show appreciation to his friend with a full bottle of ketchup in return, maybe even a larger size. In some cultures, such a gift of thanks would be an offense because the larger bottle in return sends an indirect message that the original bottle was not good enough, reflecting badly on help of the local friend. In North America, when people bring gifts to a friend at his birthday party, the friend will open the gifts in the presence of the givers, express thanks, and the gift is handed around to those attending the party. In some cultures, it would be inappropriate that gifts be opened publicly before the givers in order to avoid unfavorable comparisons between givers. Instead, the gifts are opened privately at a later time, and warm thanks is expressed appropriately to each giver individually.

Cross-cultural differences sometimes may be baffling, frustrating, and even irritating occasionally to

those people of God on both sides of a cross-cultural divide. However, a foreign missionary must be willing to receive, change, and adapt as much as possible to the non-essential differences in a foreign culture of his labor by continued learning of the day-to-day differences. Each particular culture in which missionaries live and labor may have its own specific peculiarities that make it a unique and interesting culture and linguistic group according to God's will and providence. In submission to God's providential government of cultural differences, the missionary must learn and appreciate the differences if he is to grow in his ministerial effectiveness in a cross-cultural setting.

A missionary ought to follow that strategy because it is biblical. In I Corinthians 9:19-27, the apostle Paul expresses to the church of Corinth that he "made [himself] servant unto all..." (v. 19) and was "made all things to all men" (v. 22). We understand that this means that in matters non-essential, neither morally right nor wrong, Paul behaved as those whom he served in the ministry of the Word. Similarly, if a local culture is one in which food is eaten with hands and without chopsticks or other utensils, then the missionary and his family will learn to do as the people do. If the local people of God wear certain kind of formal wear to the church services, then

the missionary and his family will learn to fit in with the local culture's respectful clothing for the reverent worship of Jehovah.

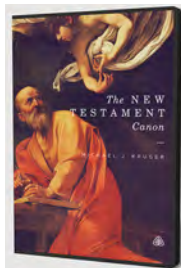
The purpose for that assimilating behavior is two-fold. First, the missionary seeks to avoid unnecessary hindrances by his day-to-day behavior in matters non-essential to the preaching of the gospel. The apostle wrote that he was temperate in that area of his life so that "by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away" (I Cor. 9:27). By "cast-away" the apostle meant "ineffective and worthless" in his labors. This the apostle avoided by his strategy of temperate assimilation in matters non-essential.

Secondly, his purpose was to "gain the more" (v. 19), "that I might by all means save some" (v. 22), and "this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you" (v. 23). Likewise, a foreign missionary is encouraged to labor diligently by faith according to a strategy of cultural assimilation for the furtherance of the gospel and the spiritual advance of the kingdom of Christ among the nations. Doing so faithfully as he administers the Word each week, a foreign missionary may labor in the confidence of faith that Christ's Spirit of Pentecost will graciously gather His eternally chosen, catholic church.



Bring the books...

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



The New Testament Canon, by Michael Kruger. Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, 2019. DVD, 138 minutes. \$30.00. Reviewed by Douglas J. Kuiper.

How do we know that God intended the New Testament to have only 27 books? Did God intend the church to have these 27 books, or did men foist them on the church? Might these books be forgeries? Should other books that are not currently in the New Testament be added?

If these questions serve to remind us that God's revelation is complete and that God has providentially preserved His revelation for the church of all ages,

we can appreciate them. However, some ask them to undermine the New Testament Scriptures by instilling doubt regarding the authority and trustworthiness of these books.

Michael Kruger (president and professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, NC) responds to this undermining of the New Testament Scriptures. His response is simple in format: six lectures, each 23-minutes long, given in class on the campus of Ligonier Ministries. His goal is to defend the gospel itself: this undermining of Scripture is an attack on the gospel of Jesus Christ as the only, sufficient, and complete Savior.

Kruger uses the word "canon" to refer to the Scrip-

tures. The word refers to a standard by which we can determine if something else is good or right; for example, a measuring stick is a standard of length. The use of the word “canon” underscores that the Scriptures are the only authority for faith and life.

After describing “The Problem of Canon” in his first lecture, Kruger explains what the canon of Scripture is (“The Definition of Canon”). In his third lecture, “The Reason for Canon,” he teaches that the church did not create the New Testament canon, but that she recognized that God provided her with divinely inspired writings. This she recognized early, even in the first century (lecture four, “The Date of Canon”). The inspired writers themselves understood that they wrote with divine authority (lecture five, “The Authors of the Canon”). Kruger’s final lecture explains three characteristics of these books that show they are from God. In the end, his argument is that only the 27 books of the New Tes-

tament possess these characteristics; no other books do.

These lectures are informative, educational, and easy to understand. They lay the scholarly groundwork for our conviction that Scripture is God’s true and complete revelation. We know that none will receive this apart from faith. These lectures demonstrate that our faith is reasonable; it rests on a good foundation. Kruger does not explicitly refer to the Belgic Confession Articles 2-7, but his teaching accords with the Reformed doctrine of Scripture that these articles set forth. For these reasons, I recommend the DVD.

Some might prefer reading to watching, and others might prefer a more substantive treatment of the subject. They may read Kruger’s book *The Question of Canon: Challenging the Status Quo in the New Testament Debate* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013). If you want to make use of other Ligonier teaching series (free), visit the “Learn” tab at ligonier.org.



News from our churches

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

Trivia question

Can you name the four churches in the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines? Can you name the pastor of each? Answers later in this column.

Minister activities

At her congregational meeting on December 18, Unity PRC voted to call Rev. R. VanOverloop (Grace PRC). From her bulletin we learn this: “Due to the busyness of the holiday season, the Council has extended the time frame in which Rev. VanOverloop has to respond to our call to January 19, 2020.”

Rev. Erik Guichelaar (Randolph PRC) was considering the call to Kalamazoo PRC. On January 5 he declined this call.

Also on January 5 the congregation of Cornerstone PRC voted to call Rev. G. Eriks for her new pastor from the Council’s trio that also included Revs. J. Engelsma (Doon PRC) and R. Kleyn (Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, WA). On December 15, Rev. Heath Bleyenberg received the call to Immanuel PRC, Lacombe, Alberta, Canada. He was to answer by January 19.

Pastor Wilbur Bruinsma of Pittsburgh, PA PRC and

his wife Mary traveled to India on January 29 to follow Rev. and Mrs. C. Haak and Mr. and Mrs. Deane Wassink. They were scheduled for a three-week stay in India during which time Pastor Bruinsma was to preach and teach among the saints there.

Rev. K. Koole was in Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland, January 2–13, to preach for Rev. A. Stewart while he and his wife were in the States for the funeral of her father.

Young people’s activities

Chaperone registration for the 2020 Young People’s Convention hosted by Georgetown PRC is now open! The convention is planned for August 10-14, 2020 at the Lake Williamson Camp in Carlinville, IL. To register, go to www.prcconvention.com, and follow the instructions under the chaperone tab.

School activities

The Fourth Annual Pinewood Derby Event is scheduled to be held at Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD on February 29, 2020. The \$15 entry fee includes a standard class kit and lunch. Races begin at 11:00 A.M. with weigh-

in starting at 10:00 A.M. Visitors are free to come to watch, have lunch, and fellowship as well. A free-will donation will be taken to help offset the costs of spectator lunches and support the Sioux Falls Protestant Reformed Christian School.

The congregation and school society in Loveland, CO are excited! Why? Because with God's blessing things are falling into place to alleviate their school space concerns. About a year ago God opened the door for the school to purchase a 10-acre property only a quarter mile from their present location. The option to purchase this property was presented to the school society and on May 20, 2019 the society overwhelmingly voted to purchase the property with an eye towards constructing a new building. On September 18 the school officially took ownership! In December 2019 their expansion committee met with an architectural firm that specializes in helping schools and churches with building projects. The committee spent three days working

closely with this firm to develop a conceptual floor plan as well as a conceptual plan for a three-phase building project. When the architectural plans are completed, the plan will be submitted to the county to obtain the official "green-light" for the project. Exciting times in Loveland, CO!

Trivia answer

The churches in the PRCP are: Berean PRC (Pastor Vernon Ibe), Protestant Reformed Church of Bulacan (Pastor John Flores), Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church (Pastor Leovino Trinidad) and the Provident Protestant Reformed Church (Missionary-pastor Daniel Holstege). More trivia next time.

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

Church profile—Hudsonville PRC

The following was supplied by Mr. Ben Wigger. We thank him for the interesting information!



The Hudsonville, MI PRC was organized on July 26, 1926 at a meeting in Cornelius Spoelman's barn. A classical committee consisting of Revs. H. Danhof,

H. Hoeksema and G. Ophoff led the organizational meeting. At that meeting a group of 22 families and several individuals presented their membership papers and were organized into one of the first PR congregations besides the three already in existence through the deposition of their pastors in 1924. Hull, Iowa had been first to organize; Hudsonville followed about a year later.

Hudsonville continued to meet in Spoelman's barn, sitting on rough boards placed between onion crates until colder temperatures forced them to move to a warmer location across the street. Soon the congregation bought that old barn, sold it, helped move it, and built a church on that property. This building served them well until 1975 when, at 110 families, the church was just too small. That year Hudsonville began meeting in the nearby Hudsonville High School while their present sanctuary and parsonage were under construction. Then in 2011 Hudsonville experienced growing pains again and an addition of several classrooms, a library, rest rooms, a nursery, and an enlarged "all purpose" room were added.

Today Hudsonville continues to grow with a membership of 164 families and some 640 members leading, once again, to serious talk of a fourth daughter congregation (after Byron Center in 1983; Georgetown in 1993; and Trinity in 2001).



Throughout her history she has been blessed with nine faithful pastors, starting with Rev. G. Vos in 1929, followed by Rev. J. DeJong in 1932. He served until 1941. Rev. B. Kok served from 1943 until 1947. In 1948 Rev. G. Vos returned and served until his retirement in 1965. Rev. H. Veldman came and served as pastor until 1971, when Rev. C. Hanko arrived. He retired in 1977. Rev. G. VanBaren heeded Hudsonville's call that same year and served until 1994, when Rev. B. Gritters began his ministry among us. He stayed until

accepting a call from our denomination's seminary in 2003. Hudsonville's current pastor, Rev. G. Eriks, followed in 2005.

In 1990 the Synod of our churches appointed Hudsonville the calling church for what was then the denomination's mission work in the Ballymena area of Northern Ireland. In late 1992 Rev. R. Hanko accepted Hudsonville's call, and he and his family arrived in Northern Ireland in the spring of 1993. That mission work continued until Covenant PRC of Northern Ireland was organized on August 2, 2006. A sister-church relationship was established between the CPRC, NI and the PRCA about a year later in June of 2007.

Certainly the Lord has blessed Hudsonville through the years, not only with numerical growth but with spiritual growth as well. Through faith, and by His Word, Hudsonville confesses the words of I Samuel 7:12, "Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

Note from the editor...please submit your church profile if you have not already done so. A recent photo of your congregation would be welcomed too.

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Kalamazoo PRC in Kalamazoo, MI express their Christian sympathy to Carleen Dykstra in the death of Carleen's grandfather, **Mr. Fred Hanko**. May she be comforted in the words of Psalm 23:6: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever."

Rev. Michael DeVries, President
David Pryor, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland extend Christian sympathy to Mary Stewart and her husband Rev. Angus Stewart on the death of Mary's father **Fred Hanko**. "Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints" (Psalm 116:15).

Mr. Brian Crossett, Clerk

Seminary

All students enrolled in the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary who will be in need of financial assistance for the coming school year are asked to contact the Student Aid Committee secretary, Mr. Stephen Bylsma (phone: 616-828-3699). This contact should be made before the next scheduled meeting, February 13, 2020, at 4 P.M. in the seminary, D.V.

Student Aid Committee,
Stephen Bylsma, Secretary

Announcements continued

Teacher needed

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

Teacher needed

Covenant Christian High School in Grand Rapids, MI is accepting applications from members of the Protestant Reformed Churches for teaching positions in the 2020-21 school year. There is a particular need in the area of Mathematics but applications will be accepted from those with secondary certification in other subject areas. Those who are interested are encouraged to contact Mr. Rick Noorman, Administrator, or Dr. Brian Decker, Education Committee, for more information. Email contacts are ricknoorman@gmail.com or call 616-453-5048 and deckerbj@gmail.com.

Teacher needed

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

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Peace PRC on Wednesday, March 4, 2020, at 8:30 A.M. the Lord willing. All material for the Agenda is to be in the hands of the Stated Clerk by February 3 (30 days before classis convenes). All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Peace's consistory.

Rev. J. Engelsma, Stated Clerk

Call to aspirants to the ministry

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

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

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

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

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. R. Kleyn

- February 2—"The Privilege and Necessity of Prayer"
Luke 11:1
- February 9—"Praying to our Heavenly Father"
Luke 11:2
- February 16—"Hallowed Be Thy Name"
Luke 11:2
- February 23—"May God's Kingdom Come"
Luke 11:2