

Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church (Singapore)

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The staff of *Beacon Lights* have asked me to write a short introduction and prayer requests for CERC for a series on praying for the church universal. We are very thankful and eager for opportunities to interact with our beloved international brethren. Many of the youth from our congregation in Singapore have made the trip to the US to visit the PR churches. If any PR youth are looking for a sunny, tropical, exotic getaway, why not consider paying Singapore a visit too? The airfare is steep, but you will be assured a warm welcome to a lively, friendly, and importantly, fellow Reformed community that is one with you in the faith.

At the present time of writing, CERC consists of 151 communicant and non-communicant members (about 35 families). There are also between 25-40 regular visitors. We currently have no place of worship that would resemble a proper church building by US accounts, but occupy the 4th floor of a factory building in an industrial area, as some US visitors may have seen before. Finding a suitable place of worship is an issue for our congregation as scarce land is prohibitively expensive in Singapore, the cost running into many tens of millions. We have been using this factory space for several years now, but new government land usage rules state that industrial spaces can no longer be used exclusively as places of religious worship. At this time, we have obtained a 3-year waiver from the land authority to continue worship here for now, but beyond that is highly uncertain. We trust Jehovah to provide us what we need in this regard. This is certainly an area that our brethren may pray for us.

Despite the humble and unlikely outward appearance of CERC's place of worship, God does make it possible for visitors to find us often. Singapore being a major international commerce and transit hub, we often have visitors transiting through from other countries join us for worship. A large proportion of the church's members are newly Reformed, many being actively brought in by friends, especially the young people. In Rev. Andy Lanning's current round of pre-confession/membership classes, there are as many as 15 visitors of all ages attending. We recognize that the Lord alone gives us this period of growth and peace in the church, and are thankful for it.

However, we do see that the fruits of the gospel are indeed twofold. For every visitor that stays and eventually becomes a member, many others hear the Reformed preaching and go their way. Also, like the church in Corinth in Paul's day, we are surrounded by a very materially rich, very godless culture, while man's idols (pagan and otherwise) abound. The megachurch and charismatic movements also have especially strong traction in the land (there is one megachurch just across the street). The ungodly influences of the land we live in are never far from the doors of our church and from our own hearts, just as they are with you in America. Pray for us too, that we may have grace and boldness to live antithetically.

CERC has also by the Lord's leading been deeply involved in the work of missions at home and abroad. At the present time, God has given us an opportunity to work in the mission field of Kolkata, India, where we have been in close contact with a pastor named Emmanuel Singh for several years. Emmanuel became Reformed upon reading A. W. Pink's *Sovereignty of God*, and for some time thought he was the only Reformed man left, until he came into contact with the PRCA after listening to the PRCA's Reformed Witness Hour broadcast. After some contact and work with various PR ministers including Revs. Haak, Kortering, Woudenberg and VanOverloop, the PRCA transferred ownership of the work over to CERC. Over the past few years much more has been done, including the training of Emmanuel and many delegation visits between the two countries, and today, Kolkata has a vibrant infant congregation that is looking to organize, while Emmanuel also does frequent work in the surrounding villages. The next step, Lord willing, will be to examine Brother Emmanuel in a classical examination in Singapore on 29 October 2016 with the view of calling Emmanuel to be CERC's missionary to Kolkata. Please pray for CERC in this area as well as the Lord leads us to fulfill the calling to preach the gospel in all the world for a witness unto all nations (Matt. 24:14).

An introduction to CERC would not be complete without mentioning CERC's storied history. The history of CERC has not been without controversy, grief, and a constant struggle for the truth. There is insufficient space in this brief article to do this weighty history justice. Rev. Arie den Hartog, who was one of the instrumental missionaries during the early years of the ministry, has written an excellent account of how the truths of God, particularly with regard to the truths of marriage and God's sovereignty, were preserved in CERC today at much great personal cost for its members. This history has profoundly affected the lives of the youth of our church, many of whom were children at the time of these events and are now young adults. I strongly encourage *Beacon Lights* readers to read Rev. den Hartog's sharp but warm and personal six-part narrative, which can be found online in the Salt Shakers (CERC's youth magazine) archives from issues 22–26 titled "Lessons from the History of the Beloved Church of Jesus Christ Now Among Us". This history is perhaps to us like what 1924 and 1953 are for the PRCA, and through it all the faithful labors of many officebearers, ministers, and ordinary members can be seen. But most of all, we see the loving, guiding hand of Jehovah, who through mighty waters broad and deep, save His people did keep (Psalter 211). These battles fought have helped the church, by God's grace, to be sharpened and zealous for the truth. Pray for us, that we may not lose this zeal, unity, or the precious lessons of our past for the generations to come.

As I hope *Beacon Lights* readers will see in this brief introduction, though we may be half a globe apart, spiritually and historically our churches are and have been very close. While we covet your prayers in various areas, our PR sisters are not far from our own hearts and minds. We confess the same Reformed truths, are brothers and sisters in the Lord, and are members of the same body. Once again, I thank the staff for the opportunity for contact and interface, and hope we may seek many more opportunities to preserve this unity.

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