

# Philippines BEACON LIGHTS



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## The Issue at Hand Dewey Engelsma

Sa mga Minamahal na Kapatid sa Pilipinas, 8,111 milya ang layo natin sa isa't isa. Malamang hindi tayo mabigyan ng pagkakataon na magkita dito sa mundo. Kung nagkikita tayo, siguro mahihirapan tayong magkaintindihan ang isa't isa. Sadyang magkakaiba ang ating mga kultura, klima, kaugalian at iba pa na maghihiwalay sa atin.

Gayunpaman, may isang bagay na nagbubuklod sa atin. Sa katunayan, tayo ay pinagkakaisa nito kaysa sa kahit anong pinagsamang wika, kasaysayan, o kultura.

Tayo ay pag-aari ni Jesu-Cristo.

Tinawag tayo ni Jesu-Cristo, sa pamamagitan ng kanyang salita at Espiritu, at binigay niya sa atin ang kaloob ng pananampalataya upang tayo ay maging kaisa sa kanya. Bilang kaisa kay Cristo sa pamamagitan ng totoo at buhay na pananampalataya, masiyahan kami ng napakalapit na pagsasama, kahit hindi tayo kumakain ng sama-sama.

Irene at Rosalyn, tama kayo. Ang bagay na nagbubuklod sa atin ay napakaganda—ang ating mahalagang pananampalatayang Reformed.

Kami ay natutuwa sa mga artikulong gawa nin-yong lahat.

Brother Andy, kami ay namamangha sa awa ng Diyos na palayain ka mula sa pagkaalipin ng malamig, walang buhay, at maling doktrina para marinig mo ang mahalagang, libreng, at mabuting balitang biyaya ng Diyos na nagpalaya sa iyo. Tuwang-tuwa ang kaluluwa namin nung narinig ito.

Nung nabasa namin ang “hindi mapaglabanan katotohanan ng mga doktrina ng biyaya ng Diyos” na nakuha sa iyo, Brother Jeremiah, inuusig kami ng aming konsiyensya, sa pagkilos ng Espiritu, kaya nabaling muli ang aming atensyon sa parehong doktrina. Ang parehong, mabuting balita tungkol sa soberanong biyaya ng Diyos ay pumupukaw sa amin na lalo pang masigasig na pagsilbihan ang ating Tagapagligtas ng buong buhay namin.

Nakita namin ang paghihirap na kailangan mong danasin dahil sa iyong kapahayagan.

Pinalakas mo ang loob namin.

Nung nabasa namin ang pag-uusig na kailangan mong danasin dahil nagsabi ka ng totoo, lalo mong pinaigting ang aming kagustuhan na ipaglaban ang pananampalatayang “na minsanang ibinigay sa mga banal” (Judas 3).

Mayroong isang bagay na karaniwan sa lahat

ng mga artikulo—na ang lahat ng papuri ay sa Diyos lamang! Ito ay totoo sa ating Reformed na mga puso! Ang tanging tugon lamang na ibinibigay dito ng isang nagpapasalamat na anak ng Diyos ay ito—purihin!

Madami sa inyo ang humiling na ipanalangin namin kayo. Masigasig naming gagawin iyon. Ipapanalangin namin sa Diyos na panatilihin ang malakas ang inyong mga pananampalataya. Ipapanalangin namin na katigan kayo ng Diyos sa inyong mga pagsubok, pag-uusig, at paghihirap. Ipapanalangin namin na ang mabuting balita ng Diyos ay patuloy na mag ministryo sa inyong mga kaluluwa, kung saan ang mabuting balita ng Diyos ay isang gamot sa kahit anong mang kalagayan ng buhay.

Ngunit mayroon kaming isang kahilingan sa inyo.

Idalangin ninyo kami.

Mayroon bang iglesyang nasa mas matinding panganib kaysa sa iglesyang nabubuhay sa kasaganaan? Sinusubukan ng diyablo na alisin ang katotohanan ng Diyos sa pamamagitan ng pag-uusig. Ngunit lalo lang nito nagiging ang kapahayagan ng mga banal na mas malinaw na masunog.<sup>1</sup> Ngayon sinubukan naman ng masamang ito ang kamay niya sa kasaganaan. Bakit kailangang sunugin ang mga libro kung pwede naman itong nakatabi lang sa isang istante at hindi binabasa? Bakit kailangang sunugin ang katawan, kung pwede naman ibigay ng tao ang kanilang katawan sa mga maka mundong kaligayahan? Bakit kailangang agawan ang tao ng kanilang kalayaan kung sila mismo ay alipin na ng teknolohiya, paligsahan, at trabaho? Bakit kailangang kumprontahin ang iglesya ng pakikipagdima, kung mas gusto ang isang iglesyang natutulog? Mas mabuti na ang espada ay nakalagay sa lalagyan, kaysa paalalahanan sila ng mga salita ni Martin Luther, na “ang pakikipaglaban (tungkol sa katotohanan) ay laging nasa iglesya, lalo na kung ang doktrina ng Mabuting Balita ay lumalaganap” (Komentaryo tungkol sa Galacia, 50).

Anong mga tukso ang kinakaharap natin mula sa ating mortal na mga kaaway – ang diyablo, ang

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<sup>1</sup> Isipin si Hugh Latimer, nung panahon na malapit na siyang sunugin sa poste dahil sa kanyang pangungumpisal, pinapalakas ang loob ng kanyang kaibigan na si Nicholas Ridley, “Maging lalaki ka, Maestro Ridley, makikita natin ang liwanag ng araw katulad ng kandila, sa awa ng Diyos, sa Inglatera, tulad ng tiwala ko ay hindi mawawala.”

sanlibutan, at ang ating sariling laman!

Mga kapatid, 8,000 milya ang layo natin sa isa't isa pero tayo ay pinagsama ng iisang pananampalataya. Itaas natin ang ating mga panalangin sa Panginoon na bibigyan Niya tayo ng lakas ng loob para maging matatag para sa katotohanan lalo na ngayong oras nang dumadami ang tumalikod sa Kanya (tingnan ang Mateo 24:3-28).

Bagaman hindi tayo makapag salu-salo dito sa mundo, idalangin natin na dumating ang araw ng pagdating ni Cristo, kung saan tayo ang magtitipon sa dakilang kasal ng Kordero. Doon sa wakas tayo magkikita-kita, at nabibilang sa “napakaraming tao na di-malibang ng sinuman, mula sa bawat bansa, sa lahat ng mga lipi, mga bayan at mga wika” nagsasabi “Ang pagpapala, kaluwalhatian, karunungan, pagpapasalamat, karangalan, kapangyarihan, at kalakasan, ay sa aming Dioys magpakailanpaman. Amen.” (Apocalipsis 7:9, 12).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Philippines,

We are 8,111 miles apart. It is possible we will never meet during our earthly sojourn. If we are ever able to meet, we might find it difficult to communicate. Our cultures, climates, and customs are vastly different, and there is much that would separate us.

We do have one thing that unites us, however. In fact, we share a tighter bond than any shared language, history, or culture.

We belong to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ called us by his word and Spirit and gave us the gift of faith so we are one with him. Being united to Christ by that true and living faith, we now enjoy the closest of fellowship, although we may never share a meal together.

Irene and Rosalyn, you are correct. The thing that unites us *is* beautiful—our precious Reformed faith.

All of you have blessed us with your articles.

Brother Andy, we marvel at the mercy of God to call you out from under the bondage of cold, lifeless, false doctrine to hear that precious, liberating gospel of free, unmerited grace. Our souls thrill to hear it.

When we read of the “irresistible truths of the doctrines of grace” capturing you, Brother Jeremiah, our conscience, by the work of the Spirit, smites us, so we too are again captured by those same doctrines. That same gospel of sovereign, particular grace excites in us, as only it can, an “ardent desire” to serve our Savior with all of our life.

We also see the price you have had to pay for your confession.

We are inspired by it.

When we read of the persecution you have faced

to confess the truth, it stiffens *our* resolve to contend more strongly for “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

There is a common thread that is woven throughout the entire issue—all of the glory belongs to God alone! This rings true to our Reformed hearts! This evokes the only possible response of the thankful child of God—praise!

Many of you asked us to pray for you. We will. Fervently. We pray that God will preserve and strengthen you in your faith. We pray that God will uphold you in your trials, persecutions, and difficulties. We pray that God will continue to minister his gospel to your souls, which gospel is a balm, no matter the circumstances of life.

But we have a request for you.

Pray for us.

Is there a church in greater danger than the church that lives in affluence? The devil has tried his hand at stamping out the truth of God by persecution. That only made the saint’s confession burn all the brighter.<sup>2</sup> Now, the evil one tries his hand at prosperity. Why burn the books when they can sit on the shelf, unread? Why burn the body, when the people

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<sup>2</sup> Think of Hugh Latimer, about to be burned at the stake for his confession, encouraging his friend Nicholas Ridley, “Play the man, Master Ridley; we shall this day light such a candle, by God’s grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.”

can give their bodies over to be consumed by earthly pleasures? Why rob the people of their freedom when they enslave *themselves* to technology, sports, and work? Why confront the church with warfare, when a sleeping church is much to be preferred? Far better to have the sword safely sheathed, than to remind them of Martin Luther’s words, that “such fighting and condemnation (over the truth) is always in the church, especially when the doctrine of the Gospel flourishes.”<sup>3</sup>

What temptations we face from our three-fold enemy—our nature, the world, and the devil!

Brothers and sisters, we are separated by 8,000 miles but united by a common faith. Together let our prayers rise up to God that he may grant us the courage to stand strong for his truth in this time of increasing apostasy (see Matthew 24:3–28).

Although we may never enjoy a feast together on this earth, let us all pray for the hastening of the day of Christ’s return, when we can gather at the great marriage supper of the Lamb. There we shall finally meet, numbered among the “great multitude, which no man could number, *of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues*” saying, “Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 7:9, 12).

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<sup>3</sup> Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 50

## Editorial

# MISSIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

## INTERVIEW WITH REV. DANIEL KLEYN, A MISSIONARY OF THE PRCA IN THE PHILIPPINES

**BEACON LIGHTS:** Where is the Philippines?

**REV. KLEYN:** The Philippines is located in Southeast Asia, approximately 8,000 miles from central USA. It usually takes a good 25 hours or more to travel from the USA to Manila. We missionaries live in the greater metro-Manila area, which has a population of approximately 22 million people. We live just

15 degrees north of the equator; thus our hot and humid climate year round.

**BL:** Please tell us how the work in the Philippines got started.

**DK:** Our contact with saints in the Philippines began already in 1995. At that time, the Evangelism Committee of Peace Protestant Reformed Church



received some correspondence from the Philippines, which included requests for audio sermons and Reformed literature. However, Peace’s Evangelism Committee soon realized they needed to hand over this work to the Foreign Mission Committee. The FMC, from 1997 to 2001, sent seven delegations to investigate the field and to develop our contacts there. This all led to Synod 2001 of the PRCA declaring the Philippines a mission field, with Doon PRC as the calling church. Doon PRC then began the process of calling a missionary. Rev. Aud Spriensma was our first missionary in the Philippines and served there from 2002 to 2007. From 2009 onwards, we have had either two or three missionaries on the field. The three missionaries currently serving in the Philippines are Rev. D. Holstege, Rev. R. Smit, and me.

**BL:** What is the scope of the work today?

**DK:** Over the years, the work has progressed through various stages. Initially we worked especially with a Bible study fellowship. This led to the organization of a Reformed church, the Berean PRC. Then, after we had worked for some years also in a second church (the PRC in Bulacan), the two churches formed a denomination (the PRCP—Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines). Later, another church was added, the Maranatha PRC. More recently, a fourth church was accepted into the denomination, namely, Provident PRC. The PRCP has also established sister-church relationships with the

PRCA and with the CERCS (Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore). As missionaries, we have assisted and guided the PRCP in all of the above. Currently we are also helping them with their own seminary. This has become a major part of our work, with all three of us providing the instruction. We currently have one student in his first year, and there is a possibility that a few others will begin seminary training in the next school year (August 2020). These are exciting developments, and we are very thankful to the Lord for his blessing on the churches and the work.

**BL:** What prepared you to work as a missionary? Did you always know you wanted to be a missionary?

**DK:** While studying for the ministry, and even during my first few years in the ministry, my desire was simply to be a pastor in one of our churches. But the Lord gradually planted seeds in my mind and led me to consider the possibility of being a missionary. One concrete way was by having me face a number of calls to serve as a missionary. Another significant factor was that I served as a member of the FMC from 1998–2005 and had the opportunity, during those years, to serve on four of the seven delegations that were sent to the Philippines. But what especially served as good preparation for mission work, in addition to what I was taught about missions in seminary, was that I was able to serve as a pastor in two of our Protestant Reformed churches (Edgerton and Holland) for a total of 11 years. As I look

back, those years of experience in the ministry were invaluable as preparation for mission work, a work which involves teaching others to understand what it means to be truly Reformed in doctrine, in worship, in church government, and in life, and a work which involves leading them to put all this into practice in their churches and in their lives.

**BL:** We encourage young men to consider the gospel ministry. What would you say to the young men reading this article as they consider becoming a minister?

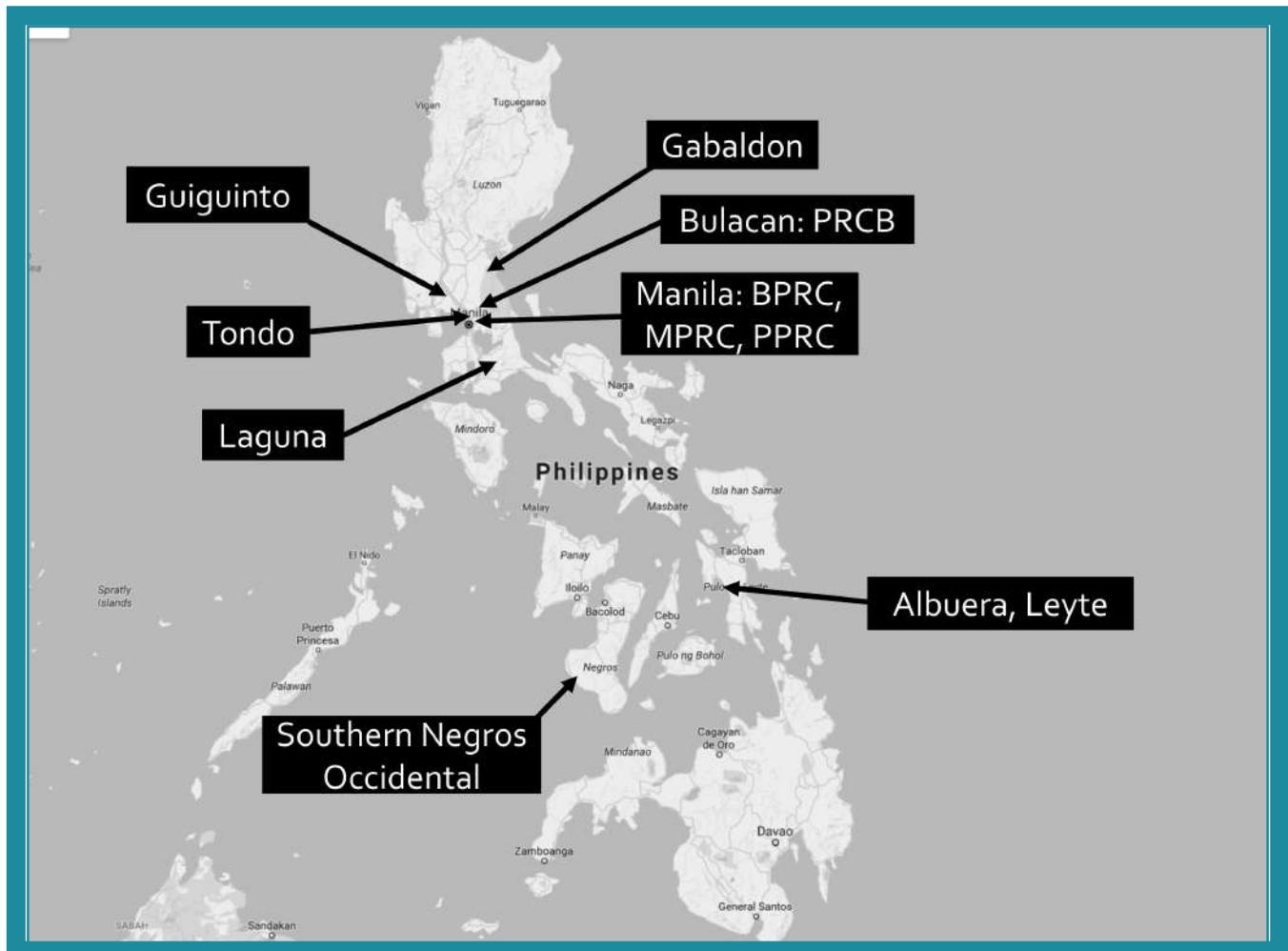
**DK:** First of all, I'm very thankful to hear of young men who are considering the ministry. That's always encouraging to hear. Secondly, I would impress upon them the fact that ministers (and missionaries) are urgently needed in our churches. And thirdly, I would let them know that the work of a minister (and missionary) is, through God's blessing, a most honorable calling and a most blessed work. May God provide our churches with the men we need.

**BL:** Looking back, what (if anything) would you do differently?

**DK:** One thing that comes to mind is the benefit of learning Tagalog first—that is, dedicating a year or more to studying and learning this language so that one knows it well before he actually takes up the work of missions among Filipinos. In the providence of God, we were not able to devote ourselves full-time to learning Tagalog when we moved to the Philippines, since the field had been vacant for some two years and it was necessary for us to focus mainly on the mission work. We were, however, able to study Tagalog part-time, and that was certainly helpful for the work. But I believe it would be more beneficial, if it is possible, for a missionary to devote more time from the start to learning the language and thus also the culture of those among whom he will work.

**BL:** What one thing should the young people of the PRC know about the saints in the Philippines?

**DK:** The saints in the Philippines, though from a different country and nationality, and though living many miles away, are indeed your fellow believers in Christ. They know that, and they greatly appreciate it. What especially encourages them is to know that



they are not the only Reformed young people in the world but have fellow saints in other lands who confess the same truth, face the same temptations and struggles, and experience the same wonders of the grace of God.

**BL:** How can the young people of the PRC assist their brothers and sisters in this far-away land?

**DK:** Your brothers and sisters in the Philippines need the prayers of their fellow saints for them. I hope, therefore, that this article, and even this special issue of the *Beacon Lights*, serves to give you a better knowledge and understanding of your fellow believers in the Philippines so that you will be able to pray for them with understanding. As you read through this issue of the *Beacon Lights*, perhaps you could write a list of things to keep in mind in your prayers for your fellow saints in the Philippines.

**BL:** What struggles do you face as a missionary?

**DK:** At times, because we live far from our families, the missionary life involves a measure of loneliness. One especially feels the distance when family members have struggles and needs. Another challenge is the ongoing adjustment to life, communication, and many other things in a foreign country and culture, as we strive to be all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:19–23).

**BL:** What unique blessings do you experience in your work?

**DK:** One of the most enjoyable aspects of doing mission work is to observe, and even to be caught up in, the excitement that the saints in the Philippines have as they learn and embrace the Reformed faith. It is a great blessing to see the joy and comfort that God gives them, by the work of his Spirit, through his word and by means of his truth. And it is also rewarding to see the Spirit leading them to apply the word to their lives. “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). Another privilege is the opportunity to experience firsthand the reality of the catholicity of the church of Christ.

**BL:** What two books should every child of God have and read?

**DK:** Allow me to answer this question from the perspective of our Filipino brothers and sisters. As you know, we are able to sell Protestant Reformed literature in the Philippines. In the many years in which we have been selling books, the two most popular ones have been and continue to be *Doctrine according to Godliness* by Rev. R. Hanko and

*Saved by Grace* by Prof. R. Cammenga and Rev. R. Hanko. I believe most of the church members and our contacts in the Philippines would place these two books at the top of the list.

**BL:** What is your greatest disappointment? Your greatest joy?

**DK:** One disappointment that stands out in the work is when some with whom we have labored for a time do not embrace all the truth, reject some of it, and depart from us. This has happened a number of times with regard to the truth of double predestination (they agreed with election, but not with reprobation). It has also occurred when we have taught the truth of the covenant and, in that connection, the baptism of the infant children of believers. My greatest joy, as I mentioned earlier, is to observe that God’s people love, embrace, are comforted by, and strive to live according to his truth. Their zeal for and love of the truth is often contagious.

**BL:** Is there anything you wish people back home would know about your work or the field?

**DK:** Two things come to mind. The first is my personal appreciation that the Lord has provided and that the churches faithfully support three men for this work, and for the fact that we can labor well together and assist each other in all aspects of the work. My wife and I also enjoy and greatly appreciate the companionship we have with the other missionaries. They and their children are like family to us. Secondly, I would mention how much we appreciate the interest in and support of our churches for the mission work and for the churches in the Philippines. We know that you remember us all in your prayers. It is an encouragement to experience the communion of saints in this way.

**BL:** Any final thoughts or reflections?

**DK:** Yes. We do well to conclude by mentioning our appreciation for the churches and saints in the Philippines. We love God’s people here, and they show in countless ways their love for us. The second stanza of Psalter #27 comes to mind: “I love Thy saints, who fear Thy Name And walk as in Thy sight; They are the excellent of earth, In them is my delight.” We are most grateful for their interest in and zeal for the truth, and for their desire and willingness to have us live and labor among them. The Lord has given us a blessed work to do. We count it a privilege. We ask that you continue to remember us all in your prayers. And may God be praised for the work he has done and continues to do.

## A PERSONAL JOURNEY TO THE REFORMED FAITH

There are diverse manners of circumstances which every man experiences. In the providence of God, some are at ease because they have much, while others struggle to have food on their tables. Some are physically healthy, while others by reason of debilitating illnesses are deprived of so many things. Some were born in the sphere of a covenant family, so that from their early ages they are privileged to experience the blessings of a covenant home; on the other hand, others were raised in a family where God is unknown, being destitute of the gift of assurance of salvation which flows from the gospel of Jesus Christ alone.

I was born in a Roman Catholic setup of ideologies, and our home was bedecked with images, figures of (they assumed to be) the Virgin Mary and Jesus arranged in an ornamented altar, side by side with various superstitious practices and idolatrous veneration. As a young boy, I was taught these things, and I can vividly recall when I was told by my parents, “We were born as Roman Catholic, so we will die as Roman Catholic.” I have no idea if that was a serious confession, or just a mere axiom conveyed without any firm understanding of its sacrilegious system. We were practically devotees to Roman Catholicism: attendance to Sunday mass was encouraged among the family, and other customs of this religion were also observed. However, we scarcely opened the Bible to read it; studying the same seemed hopeless; so no one wanted to do it; and I was somehow content that I was a member of the Roman Catholic Church. That lasted until I turned 18 years old. Then God took me out and led me into a different ecclesiastical terrain.

In the year 2005, I left Roman Catholicism, and I started to be involved in a Pentecostal denomination. As a new convert, it was overwhelming, considering the liturgical practice I was accustomed to before—that is, from a solemn, ceremonially dry, and ritually orchestrated Roman Catholic mass to the loud and emotionally driven worship services of a Pentecostal church. For a time, God ushered me to this path to teach me some important lessons which I did not realize yet and never did while I was under

the influence of Roman Catholicism, such as how to read and have an interest in studying the Bible, faithful worship service attendance, involvement in church activities, and affiliation with some of the church ministries. God trained me in those aspects. Arminianism had not yet come to my vocabulary, even though that is the core tenet of the church I was in, and for a time I was vulnerable to theological insensitivity. In spite of rampant ignorance to church dogmas and apparent doctrinal discrepancies, we still blindly believed that we loved God, while church doctrines helplessly succumbed to our highly emotional devotion to this holy God, whom we really did not know. We were zealously active in the ministries of the church. We loved to engage in evangelism works and were sent to schools to herald and witness of our faith to students; we conducted short dramas, seminars, and youth camps. However, upon these exploits, we were inculcated to confess that we are saved because we freely accepted Jesus Christ to be our Lord and Savior—and that is Arminianism to the core, utterly deadly, hell-bound heresy! Alas! I was a passionate adherent of this doctrine for a long period of time, and only by the grace of God was I led out from thence.

Over the years of my membership in that church, the Lord, in his time, gently called me out from among them. It happened when a friend introduced a discussion about the five points of Calvinism. At first, being adamant, I defended a doctrine (Arminianism) which I didn’t fully understand yet. It led to a debate that ran until midnight. I was zealous to justify salvation by man’s free will, which I thought to be sound and biblical. Nonetheless, God used that occasion to prick me in my reins. He removed from me some unnecessary doctrinal baggage and stirred up my soul with the seed of reformation. Eventually, I turned to scripture to restudy my friend’s arguments over against mine, and I was bewildered because all his points were affirmed and mine were not. I stood corrected by the word of God. Then I realized that it was God’s gracious act. He didn’t leave me in my spiritual obscurity, but he overhauled my understanding; the seed of

reformation started to spring forth its branches, and its roots struck deeper into my soul. God realigned my perspective on the very core of Christianity. By his grace, he led me to survey deeper in his word, asking questions like, Did Christ really die only for the elect and not for all? How about John 3:16? Does this text explain the universality of God's love? Is preaching useless because of election and reprobation? Is the altar call a biblical practice of the church? Why are those entertainments (such as drama and dance) in the church not appropriate in worship services? From that time on, I became dubious about all the activities and practices of the church. Month after month the struggle of reformation within my soul became more intense, to the point that I interrogated the leadership of the church (youth ministry leadership, of which I was also a member), throwing them questions such as why our church practiced the altar call and why there was liberality of special numbers as part of worship services. They responded negatively and insisted that those were a necessary part of church worship. Straightaway, the discussion became that of all against one, and to my surprise, they deliberately quipped against me. From that point on, I ceased from contending.

My love for the service waxed cold, and I felt uncomfortable in the church. Worship services for me became dry. I could not lift my hands anymore, even if the song leader said to lift our hands while singing. What was even worse was that I became so skeptical every time I sat under the preaching of any of the pastors. Most of them were funny, always cracking jokes in their sermons. I experienced spiritual dryness and I thirsted for God's word, though they always asserted that they were preaching it; but in the final analysis, their sermons were mostly about themselves, about what they did, man-made stories to lure the emotions of their hearers and so on. And the scripture texts they used for preaching were out of context, obviously. I will not forget the statement posited by one of the pastors in his sermon: he said, "It is easy to be saved. In just five minutes of your time, follow this prayer (sinner's prayer) with all your heart, and you will be saved." My soul was vexed. I could not continue listening, and I decided to leave the church in the middle of his sermon. It happened for three consecutive Sundays that I left the church in the middle of the preaching, because I could not tolerate those intolerable messages of the preachers, which were a consistent blend of Arminian heresy, prosperity false gospel, and too much emphasis on giving an offering (tithes). By that

time, I was contemplating leaving the church to seek for another. I tried watching online sermons from preachers like Paul Washer, John Piper, Leonard Ravenhill, and Al Martin. I immersed myself in reading online books and articles about Calvinism. And I prayed to God to lead me where his word is faithfully proclaimed. In the providence of God, through online searching, I was led to find Berean Protestant Reformed Church that was situated near our home.

December 25, 2011. The first Lord's Day I attended Berean PRC worship service. I was a bit timid. People were looking at me, and I didn't know what to do. So I sat at the back, observing. Elders greeted me with a tight handshake, asked some questions, and helped to familiarize me with Reformed worship liturgy. Thereafter, the worship service started, and it felt so strange. They were not using drums and guitars. There was no dancing and no song leader. I was thinking at that moment whether this church was faithful to her calling, or just a Reformed facade where Arminian theology still lurked to deceive its hearers. I waited for the message to be preached so that I might scrutinize its totality. The sermon, read by an elder, was about the incarnation of Jesus Christ, and by the grace of God I was captivated by the message. It was the first time I experienced hearing an expository sermon soberly delivered (because back in the Pentecostal church where I came from, sermons were not expository, but generally moralistic man-made stories, and the preaching always had those portions where the congregation laughs because the preachers are exceptionally witty. As if the word of God purports jokes, so that the prophets, apostles, and even Christ must quip while they herald the glad tidings). Afterwards, they invited me to join their Heidelberg Catechism classes, led by the elders, in between the services. It was a thorough and lively discussion, it enlightened my understanding of some of the important doctrines of the Reformed faith, and it became the turning point of my life. At that moment, I was led to confide in myself, "I need to stay in this church." All of these are God's doing. From then, God by his word instructed and guided me. And now I, together with my wife and my son, are continually growing and reforming and being fed nutritious spiritual meals from Lord's day to Lord's day at Berean PRC. And we will continue to be members, by his grace, as long as the church remains faithful to her calling, the Lord willing.

How dreadful for those who are drowning in

sin (because of spiritual blindness) to die without Christ. Being enemies of the holy God, they deserve nothing but hell, and I myself and my loved ones by nature share that same predicament (Rom. 3:10-20, Eph. 2:3). We can never see the reality of our own lifeless spiritual condition unless God regenerates us. We failed in Adam, we fail daily, our consciences testify against us because of our habitual affront towards God, and we all deserve to fall straightway to eternal condemnation due to our sins. Notwithstanding, God will never leave his scattered sheep to perish, but he will save them in Christ. He will lead them in ways so that they might come to know him, ways such as I have gone through to be taken out from the corrupt theological umbrellas of anthropocentric religions (although my parents

remained Roman Catholics; for this reason, it is my earnest prayer, until now, that they too will come to the knowledge of Jesus Christ, in God's time, the Lord willing). Surely, from the day we were formed in our mother's womb until the final hour that we will draw our last breath, we know that God is the one who sovereignly directs our life's journey here on earth until we meet him in glory. Ergo, nothing happens by chance. Indeed, what a wonderful comfort for us that we can humbly confess with the psalmist, "Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Ps. 73:24).

*Andy Bryan T. Ragual is a member of the Berean Protestant Reformed Church, Antipolo City, Rizal, Philippines.*

Rev. Dan Holstege

## PASTORING A PHILIPPINE CHURCH

It's the Lord's day. Like most Sundays, we ministers in the churches here have to preach two sermons before lunchtime. Around 5:30 a.m., I get out of bed and start preparing for those two sermons. Having committed my way to the Lord, spent time with my notes, and finished my cup of coffee, I pull a traditional Filipino dress shirt out of my closet and pull it over my head. It's too hot for a suitcoat and tie! We eat breakfast, load our five kids into the car, throw open the gate, and motor away under a canopy of tropical trees. At the entrance of our subdivision, we stop for a moment to let in our seminary student, of whom I am one of the instructors, with his wife and baby boy. Then we pull out onto the main road and begin our journey from the mountains down into Metro Manila. Thankfully, traffic in this megacity is not too bad on Sunday mornings. Yet there are still plenty of fascinating sights for our visitors: jeepneys with artistic (though sometimes rather horrid) designs, slow-moving trikes (which make quite a racket), and swarms of motorcycles (which are about as plenteous as the ants in this country). But inside our car, we enjoy the delightful singing of Protestant Reformed choirs and a spectacular view of one of the world's biggest cities as we head down the hill. Soon we arrive at a church that has become very dear to me, in a quiet neighborhood in a bend of the Marikina River.

There's a sign on the gate that says, "Provident Protestant Reformed Church." The church in this neighborhood began as a Bible study in the early 1990s. Later in that decade, God directed their path to Reformed theology, and they began to embrace the five points of Calvinism. But it wasn't until 2012 that the Lord brought them into contact with the missionaries of our churches (PRCA), whom they requested to come over and help them. Since then, they have grown tremendously in their knowledge and convictions concerning Reformed doctrine, worship, government, and life. They formally adopted the Heidelberg Catechism, Belgic Confession, Canons of Dort, and Church Order in 2018 and joined the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP) in 2019. Since 2017, I have had the immense privilege of guiding them through these milestones and continuing the work of building them up as a self-governing, self-supporting, and self-propagating church here in the Philippines.

Keep reading to learn more about what it is like to do the work of a pastor in a young Protestant Reformed church in the Philippines.

Having parked on the road by the church, we enter the gate and pass by a garden bed that was built from the leftover sediment of a devastating flood. Anyone may pluck the fruits or herbs growing there, and many do. Before our first worship service,

I meet with the two elders and two deacons in the library for prayer. Everyone else walks up the stairs and enters the sanctuary. At 9:00, we begin our first service. The second is at 11:00. You would feel very comfortable in the worship services here. They are very similar to the ones in your churches. We sing from the same Psalter, though we do not yet have live musical accompaniment. We use piano recordings for now. We read the law in the first service and recite the Apostles' Creed in the second. We join hearts in congregational prayer to God and give our offerings to the causes of his kingdom. We have baptisms and celebrate the Lord's supper too.

But the centerpiece of the worship service is the reading and preaching of the word. Essentially, pastoring a Philippine church is no different from pastoring a church in any nation. It is the great task (the great commission!) to go into the world, to preach the gospel of salvation, and to teach all things Christ has taught us. It is the awesome work, assigned to the minister of the word, to bring the glad tidings of great joy which are unto all peoples. It is the task of proclaiming the gospel of God, who promised to send the seed of the woman to crush the head of the serpent and accomplished that wondrous salvation through the cross and resurrection of his Son. It is the wonderful task of calling the weary and heavy laden to come to Christ and declaring the promise that God gives the blessings of salvation to all who believe in him, according as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world. Pastoring a Philippine church is preaching Christ, who gives oh so precious comfort and hope to every elect believer. Like that great missionary of old, I have determined not to know anything, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Like that apostle, too, I do not shun to declare all the counsel of God, including election and reprobation. Hence, too, we preach through the Heidelberg Catechism and proclaim the truth of our only comfort in life and death, that we belong to our faithful Savior Jesus Christ, by declaring the greatness of our sins and miseries, how we have been delivered from our sins and miseries, and how we must show our thankfulness to God by a life of obedience and love.

But unlike you, the saints at Provident PRC occasionally hear those truths in the Tagalog language. Last year, I began using their new Tagalog translation of the Heidelberg Catechism and preaching a little bit more in Tagalog. Using the Tagalog language, one of the main languages of the Philippines, is a very unique aspect of pastoring a Philippine church. In North America, we all speak the same

language in our churches, and no other languages. That means communication in the church usually flows smoothly from speaker to hearer and back again. But here, the people of God speak more than one language, which means communication is sometimes a bit difficult for us foreign missionaries. We have to get used to the reality that we are not always going to understand everything that is said, even if we have spent many hours studying their language. The saints at Provident know English very well but also appreciate when I use a little Tagalog and have encouraged me to continue studying their mother tongue. I have found it helpful to know the local language for connecting with the people. A greater knowledge and ability than I have would be even better!

After our two morning services, we eat lunch together at church (some go home for lunch). Pastoring a Philippine church includes certain culinary delights! We think it's a wonderful practice to sit down together as a church family, after worship, for fellowship with food and drink. Maybe you prefer your roast beef and mashed potatoes every Sunday (we like that too!). But we also enjoy the hot meals of delicious Filipino food, pots of steamy rice, bowls of pork, chicken, or fish soaked in mouth-watering sauces, and mixtures of local vegetables. I haven't had a meal at church that I didn't like or one that has given my stomach any trouble. So *kain na* (let's eat!)

As in the PRCA, the children and young people here also go to catechism. I teach Old Testament Bible stories to twelve little children on Saturday mornings. Their dads love to listen too. They never heard those stories before because, sadly, most churches here do not see Christ in the Old Testament, so they don't bother to teach it. I teach the Essentials of Reformed Doctrine on Sundays after lunch to eight young people plus a few others who are interested in joining the church. Once in a while, too, we have an outdoor fellowship with the youth. Last December, the youth came to our house for a breakfast fellowship around Christmas time. We had cheesy pasta, apple pie, mango and pineapple juice, and three-in-one coffee (you know, the little packets with coffee, cream, and sugar all mixed together). Then we played some games and went for a walk under the trees. Lord willing, we will soon have another youth camp for all the young people of the PRCP.

Other aspects of pastoring the church here include the annual family visitation (which we are about to begin again); the monthly council meetings of elders and deacons (of which I am the chairman); and the

evangelism work, which includes a monthly visit to a church north of Manila (which would like to follow in the footsteps of Provident PRC). There are also plenty of other meetings for me to attend as one of the missionary advisors to the classis and to two of its standing committees.

Thanks for taking this glimpse into the pastoral ministry in one of your sister churches in the

Philippines. We pray that by means of the new seminary that is now up and running the Lord will someday give them a Filipino pastor to replace me. Until then, I am thankful for the privilege of serving Christ in this church.

*Rev. Holstege is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines.*

Rev. L. Trinidad

## MARANATHA PRC'S ROAD TO THE REFORMED FAITH

### Introduction

The Maranatha Church was born many years ago, in May 1983, through a group desiring to continue their Bible study once a week by inviting me, Rev. Leovino A. Trinidad, to lead them. At that time, I was a minister in a Pentecostal denomination, and an Arminian, and working for a radio station which was broadcasting worldwide by medium and shortwave frequencies in Asia and other countries. The church work progressed for a number of months, with the group's place of worship moving from a living room to a garage and eventually to a good place of worship which they could rent every Sunday. At this point the church was Arminian in nature, and many people were coming to join this group, so that the attendance grew, and we became a large congregation. This church was classified as a family church. Services were held in the morning and evening; Sunday schools were held for primary, secondary, young people, and adults; and we also had a midweek prayer meeting.

However, as the minister and pastor, I felt so confused for many years. It seemed that there was something wrong in the preaching of the Arminian doctrine, for it was contrary to the teaching of the Bible. One of the main false teachings of Arminianism was that salvation can be lost if the member does not do his own work, and often Philippians 2:12 was used and quoted: "work out your own salvation." But in reality, this is the opposite teaching of the biblical and the apostolic teaching, for Paul was addressing the Philippian believers who were already believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Another teaching of the Arminian is that the center of preaching is on man's ability and decision to be saved by man's effort and work and by a freewill acceptance of the

gospel. But the Bible itself classifies this as another gospel.

### The Perfect Time

Two decades passed, and the church was constantly growing in number to almost three hundred adults and children in attendance. We also had five affiliated churches. Yet still the confusion was increasing because of the Arminian teaching. But God's perfect time had come for the minister and the church to experience the long desire of reformation in answer to our prayer that God would be gracious enough to show his mercy and love by teaching the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and show us that his death had a specific purpose.

A number of questions are normally asked by local visitors and by Reformed visitors from other countries, such as: How did you come to know the Reformed teaching? Where did you get those Three Forms of Unity? Who gave you the materials, such as Reformed Dogmatics books and pamphlets? What made you to be Reformed?

Indeed, God in his graciousness had shown to the minister (myself) and to the church the truth of the gospel in the year of 2002, when I was invited by another group of pastors to meet Rev. Audred Spriensma of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, who was then a missionary-pastor of a group that had also come out of an Arminian denomination. It was truly a turning point for the whole group when Rev. Spriensma gave us the Reformed Dogmatics books and the outlines of it and also pamphlets to study. God in his gracious mercy and love then worked in my life as the minister during many hours and sleepless nights of studying the Reformed teachings, and through it all the

Lord opened and enlightened my heart to his truth. I then shared with my family about the great truths and the true message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord brought me to see what the most valuable and solid doctrine was indeed, namely, that Christ died only for his body, the church, his elect. The meaning of Ephesians 1, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, came alive, especially verses 3–14, namely, that election is the foundation of salvation through the wonderful grace of God. This chapter is at the heart of the true knowledge of election, and that is a truth that the triune God works in the lives of believers whose names have been written in the book of life before the foundation of the world. Having been enlightened by this truth, I then recalled that during my seminary studies I had come across a book that explained the meaning of election. I remembered that I had desired at that time to study more on the subject of election, but for some strange reason that book was removed from the school library without any explanation.

### **The Remnant**

Immediately, God in his sovereign and gracious work began the reformation of the church. The Lord led me to teach, in the following year, the Canons of Dordt, and then also to teach and explain the Reformed regulative principle of worship and its application to the order of worship.

As the teaching was going on, opposition came from the congregation. Some were asking a lot of questions concerning the love of God for all mankind, and regarding the right exposition of John 1:12 and John 3:16. This was the beginning of reformation of the church by means of introducing the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ to the congregation and studying the dear lessons of the Canons of Dordt.

It was beyond the imagination of an ordinary man that Jesus Christ died only for a particular group of people, the elect. As a result, a number of members were leaving the group for the simple reason that they believed that they were not depraved and had not committed any serious sins. Now from almost three hundred, the remnant that remained was only about ten families who were faithfully studying and faithfully attending the regular Reformed worship services every Lord's day.

### **The Road of Growth**

We recall the graciousness of our sovereign God in that in 2009 he sent us two missionaries of the

Protestant Reformed Churches in America, Rev. Daniel Kleyn and Rev. Richard Smit, who were ordained and appointed by our almighty God to come to the Philippines to help the growth of the church. The missionaries have helped in our church since 2011. It would be a challenge to anyone to live the life of those missionaries, for they have given of themselves, their families, and their time for the sake of the call to help the growth of the church so that the churches here may increase spiritually through the teaching of the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The missionaries are fulfilling the call from the Philippines, "Please come and help us," by helping us through preaching and teaching in our churches with a view to the growth of the church according to the gracious plan of the Lord. We were given twenty-five Psalter books due to difficulties with photocopying the Psalter songs every Lord's day. The Psalters have greatly improved the flow of our order of worship. We are being consistently taught the Church Order in the church, which helps us to understand proper church polity. This is especially through the faithful work in our church of Rev. Smit, who also serves the consistory as an advisor during the regular meetings once a month, and for special meetings.

In the growth of the church, we are amazed by the providence of God in his work of raising up young people to become the pillars of the church as officebearers, such as elders and deacons. They indeed have (as we all do) different weaknesses and strengths, but by God's grace the weaknesses are not a hindrance to their serving and loving the Lord and his work. Through the years they have grown to be caring leaders and have faithfully given their lives to carrying out the work of the special offices of our Lord Jesus Christ by watching, encouraging, disciplining, and praying for the flock. They faithfully stand in order to protect and guide the church of our Lord.

Another road of growth for our church spiritually is through being a member of the Federation of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines, which was organized in the year 2015, as well as through our sister-church relationships with the Protestant Reformed Churches in America and the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. This is all a realization of the wonderful fact that we belong to a universal catholic church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God is still calling his elect and adding members to the church through public confessions of faith of new members who receive at least a year of being

taught the Essentials of Reformed Doctrine and the creeds, and also through the baptisms of the children of our families.

As a church, by the grace of God we maintain the confession and belief that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again. We look forward to that, and to

everlasting joy and singing the songs of the redeemed in Revelation 14:1–4.

*Rev. Trinidad is pastor of the Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church in Valenzuela City, Manila, Philippines.*

Irene and Rosalyn Smit

## LIFE ON THE MISSION FIELD

According to God's good pleasure, he has placed each of his elect saints in different circumstances in life, and as the children of a missionary, we have been given the opportunity to experience living among another nationality in another country from which God also gathers his elect people. About 1,500 miles (2,500 km) from Singapore and 8,000 miles (13,000 km) from North America, in Southeast Asia, lies the archipelago of the Philippines. The Philippines consists of 7,641 islands, and the three missionaries live on the main island of Luzon in a province called Rizal. The three missionaries work with the churches of the PRCP, do mission work on another island with some contacts there, as well as teach at the seminary that has recently started in Manila.

As missionary children who have moved across the world a few times, we have found several physical differences among the countries we have lived in—mainly climate, language, culture, and daily life. Despite the differences that exist between life here and elsewhere, there is one beautiful thing that unites us as fellow believers in Christ: our Reformed faith.

One example of the differences between life in the Philippines and back in America is our schedule on Sundays. We are busy each Sunday with traveling to church, ranging between thirty minutes to an hour and a half each way, and we have two services back to back with a *merienda* (snack break) in between.

When we attend Maranatha PRC, Rev. Smit teaches a Belgic Confession class after the second service. Afterwards, we eat lunch there with some of the members. Sometimes Rev. Smit has a consistory meeting after lunch, and that can last four to five hours. During the consistory meetings, we pass the time by memorizing our catechism lessons and reading Reformed literature. We also spend time with an officebearer's wife, who is also patiently waiting for

the meeting to finish, discussing struggles we share as Reformed believers. Despite the long Sundays, we enjoy the time with our fellow saints and hearing the word of God preached.

When we attend Berean PRC, we arrive home earlier because it is closer to our home, and they start their services earlier. This leaves us with a lot of time on Sunday afternoons to learn our catechism, read spiritual books, talk with our siblings and parents, and visit with the other missionary families.

One of the hardships that we deal with is the language barrier between us and our fellow saints here in the Philippines. This presents us with some difficulties in communication, sometimes leading to misunderstandings between each other. Most of the members understand English, but because it is not their first language, they prefer speaking in Tagalog. To help with this difficulty, we have been learning Tagalog in school, which helps us to understand them and their culture better. Because of the language and culture barriers, close friendships are difficult to make. Nevertheless, Filipinos are very friendly and hospitable, so we enjoy having fellowship with them at church and other church gatherings.

The greatest blessing as missionary children is the opportunity to see firsthand the gathering of Christ's sheep from the different nations of the earth. Throughout the years, we have seen the spread of the gospel through the growth of Protestant Reformed churches here. We were able to witness the formation of the Federation of the PR Churches in 2014, and then later, the addition of Provident PRC to the federation in 2019. We have also been able to see the work being done in Sipalay, an island farther south where Rev. Smit teaches doctrinal classes to a group of pastors. Things like these are very exciting to witness, because we are reminded of God's irresistible grace by which he plants the word in the hearts of

his children and causes it to grow and be fruitful.

There are also challenges in our daily lives. Living on the mission field means that we are far from our relatives and friends. This is hard in many ways, but we are thankful for the technology that God has given us, such as texting, Skype, and email. Thus, we are able to keep in touch on a regular basis with friends and family, especially with our three siblings who live in the United States.

The Philippines is in the tropics, so the climate is quite nice, especially during December and January, when there is not as much humidity and the temperatures get as low as 70F (21C) at night. From June to August is the rainy season, which brings high humidity, but also heavy monsoon rains and typhoons, which can be very exciting. On the other hand, the hot season, from March to May, is not as pleasant, with temperatures going above 100F (37C) during the day and rarely falling below 80F (27C) at night.

While living here, we have faced typhoons, earthquakes, ant and termite infestations, cockroaches that scurry across our toes and make us scream, house lizards that jump out at us from cupboards, electrical outages, and no running water due to water restrictions in the hot season. One time, we had no electricity for almost a week, which meant no internet, lights, or warm showers. Most recently, we experienced the eruption of Taal Volcano, which is about forty-four miles from our house. Through this, we are reminded of God's power and greatness and Christ's promise that he will come again to destroy the wicked and save his people from this world of darkness and bring them to eternal life and glory with him.

Those of us who are still in school are attending Faith Academy. It is an international school, so we have learned about many different cultures from around the world. Not attending a Protestant Reformed school comes with its own challenges, such as the doctrinal differences between us and our classmates and teachers. We are often asked questions about what we believe and why we do not participate in certain activities. It is only by the grace of God in Christ that we are able to be ready to answer their questions and to stand strong against the false doctrines we are presented with in class.

As permanent residents, we are permitted to get jobs in the Philippines. However, it does not make sense for us to get jobs here when it is already difficult for the Filipinos to get jobs. Here, they begin working around the age of eighteen while they are

going to college, because when getting a job they need to have proof of further education. It is possible for us to go to college here, but it would be too long of a commute every day, and living on campus is not an option for us. That being said, we need to go to America in order to go to college and get a job.

While living here in the Philippines, we sometimes are tempted to question God and wonder why he has placed us *here*, what his purpose is with *us* being here, or what he has in store for us later in life. These are questions which young people often ask. These are also questions which we face as young people placed by God, according to his good pleasure, on the mission field in the Philippines.

We sometimes think about what it would be like to live in one house for our whole childhood, or what it would be like to grow up with our cousins and friends, and sometimes, discontentment tends to show up in these thoughts. It is not wrong to think about what it would be like growing up in a different situation, but when we become discontent, that is when it is wrong. Therefore, we must fight those thoughts and realize that we have been placed *here* in the Philippines for the sake of Christ and the gathering of his church.

We are grateful for the opportunities we have been given and are reminded that we must be content in all areas of life. In I Thessalonians 5:18, we are commanded to be thankful for whatever happens in our lives, and whatever circumstance we are in, because God has a purpose for it, and it serves our salvation. It is sometimes hard to be thankful for those difficult times that we face in life, but as Ephesians 5:20 says, we must be "[g]iving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." So as we face the challenge of being far from family and friends, as well as all the other challenges in life, we must be thankful for these opportunities, realizing the purpose for which God has placed us here where we belong.

*Irene & Rosalyn are daughters of Rev. Richard and Tricia Smit, missionary in the Philippines.*

## JUNE ISSUE: WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

## MISSION WORK OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES (PRCP)

*“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:8).*

### The Great Commission

Dear young readers, the passage quoted above highlights for us the *mandate* and the *scope* of the work of the apostles of Christ in the world.

The word “apostle” literally means “one who is sent on a mission with the full authority of Christ.” Here, the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned the apostles to bear *witness* of what they had *heard*, *seen*, and *known* of him, “both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” The realization of this mandate and scope of the work of the apostles (including the apostle Paul) is outlined in the whole book of Acts: the Jerusalem witness is narrated in Acts 3:1–7:60, the witness in Judea and in Samaria up to Antioch of Syria is recorded in Acts 8:1–12:25, and the word going to the ends of the earth is recorded in Acts 13:1–28:31.

God eternally chose men and women in all generations (both Jews and Gentiles), scattered throughout the world, and he willed to reconcile them to himself by his gift of faith in Jesus Christ, the King of the church (Acts 13:48).

We understand that after the death of the apostles this mandate was passed on to the church. The white horse continues to work until all God’s elect in Christ are taken into the sheepfold. He fulfills this through the church in her faithful proclamation of the gospel of Jesus by her “*pastors* (missionaries) and *teachers*” (Eph. 4:11).

From the apostolic fathers, down to Augustine, on to the Reformation movement of Martin Luther and John Calvin, and leading up to the 20th century to the present day, Christ continues to call God’s elect people through faith in him in the preaching of the sovereign grace of God in the gospel of Jesus. From the North to the South, from the East to the West, God calls, saves, gathers, defends, and preserves his people in Jesus Christ.

### The Mission Work in the Philippines

Indeed, God’s grace and mercy have been extended even to us here in the Far East (“uttermost part of the earth”), the Philippines, as many delegations from the PRCA have been sent here since 1998. The delegation of Revs. Kleyn and Bruinsma arrived in Manila (Feb. 2001) to assess the prospect of doing mission work in the Philippines. After that visit, a letter was sent to the PRCA Foreign Mission Committee (March 2001), requesting a missionary to work with the Berean Church of God Reformed (BCGR—its name then, but now the Berean PRC). In June 2001, the PRCA synod approved the sending of a missionary to the Philippines. Doon PRC (the calling church of the mission work in the Philippines) extended a call to Rev. Spriensma (Oct. 2001) to work as a missionary to the Philippines. Rev. Spriensma accepted the call on December 9, 2001. The following year, April 20, 2002, Rev. Spriensma and Elder Gene Van Bommel arrived in Manila to make final preparations for the Spriensmas to take up residence in the Philippines.

God in his sovereign, undeserved grace blessed the faithful labors of Rev. Spriensma with the saints of BCGR. The fruit of hard labor was now ready for harvest, for in November 13, 2005, a request was made to the PRC Foreign Mission Committee for church organization of the BCGR. Again, through God’s mercy and providence, the synod of the PRCA in June of 2006 approved BCGR’s request for organization! Four months later, in November 16, 2006, BCGR was officially instituted as a Reformed church and took on a new name: Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines (BPRCP). During that time, fifteen persons made their public confession of faith (including yours truly and my wife Melody). There were also five adults and five children baptized.

Rev. Spriensma received a call from Kalamazoo PRC in 2006. After careful evaluation of his work in the Philippines and prayerful consideration, and brotherly consultation with the men in the Berean congregation, he accepted the call from the PRC in Kalamazoo, Michigan. On February 25, 2007, Rev. Spriensma preached his farewell sermon in the Berean

PRC. They went back to the U.S. in March of 2007.

2007 was the same year that yours truly and my wife went to the U.S. The Berean PRC sent me to the seminary as their student in order to be trained, and afterwards, the Lord willing, to become their pastor. God was with us throughout our stay in the U.S., and he graciously blessed my training in the seminary. In addition to this, God also blessed us while in Michigan with two covenant children, Martyn John and Louvin Jedidiah. We went back to the Philippines after my synodical examination in July of 2012. Four months later, I was examined by our church with the help of our missionary brothers, Rev. Kleyn and Rev. Smit. The Lord sustained my examination, and I was ordained on November 2, 2012.

Outside the Berean PRC, there were others who shared the same gospel truths with us! This was true with the church in Muzon, San Jose Del Monte, Bulacan, and with the church in Valenzuela City, Metro Manila. These two churches were formerly Pentecostal in their doctrine and practice but in the grace and providence of God were rescued, so to speak, from the heresy of Arminianism and embraced the Reformed faith as well.

In fact, the Federation of Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (FPRCP) was organized on April 9, 2014, composed of the Berean PRC and the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan (PRCB). And in the following year, classis approved Maranatha PRC (formerly Maranatha Foursquare Gospel Church) as a member of the Federation of PRCP, on October 31, 2015.

Classis in June of 2019 has also approved the membership in our federation of the Provident Protestant Reformed Church (formerly Provident Christian Church). This is the church where Rev. Daniel Holstege is working right now as their missionary/pastor.

Over the period of almost two decades (from the year 2001 to 2020), the churches here in the Philippines have grown not only numerically (in terms of the number of people and churches) but also as far as doing mission work in various places, both in the northern and southern parts of the Philippines.

So what is the situation right now as far as the mission work of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines? The Berean PRC is currently working with a church in Tondo, Manila (Kerusso Community Church) to help them understand the Reformed faith and hopefully confess the same in the near future, the Lord willing. Kerusso Community Church is an independent Pentecostal church

founded by its pastor, Teddy Quirante. They were introduced to the Reformed faith through the help of Rev. Flores. The consistory of Bulacan PRC asked our consistory if we were willing and able to help them with Kerusso, to which we said yes. And thus, the work in Tondo was endorsed to us. Right now, we are helping them with the Catechism preaching and the study of the Church Order of Dort. I go there twice a month, i.e., every afternoon of the second and fourth Sundays, to preach for them and teach them the church order.

Berean PRC is also holding an outreach in Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, namely, the All of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship. The saints there are situated to the northeast of Manila, approximately a five to six-hour drive. The work in Gabaldon started way back in 2004 and went on until the consistory of Berean PRC decided to close it due to decreasing membership and lack of men who were qualified to be elders. It was only in 2017 that the work there opened again due to the sincere request of the saints who were former members of the fellowship. The group there was able to establish new contacts around the area, which prompted the consistory of Berean PRC to start to work with them again. At present, Rev. Ibe goes there once a month to preach for them and conduct Bible studies. The elders are also helping out by leading the worship services by reading a sermon from our local pastors or from the ministers of the PRCA, the latter of which is translated into Tagalog. They do this on the second, third, and fourth Sundays of each month.

Likewise, the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan (PRCB) is also active in mission work. Not a long time ago they started to work with the saints in Sta. Cruz, Laguna. The work there is continuing, and the brethren and sisters in the Lord in that area are also growing in their knowledge and appreciation of the Reformed faith.

PRCB is also the calling church of the mission work of the Federation of the PRCP. This mission work is in Albueria, Leyte (southern portion of Leyte Province). The Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Albueria (PRFA) started way back in 2007 with a couple, Bro. Felix and Sis. Norma Montalban (members of PRCB), when they went back from Bulacan to their home province in Albueria, Leyte. This couple started a Bible study (they were not yet Reformed in those days) around the neighborhood, and the interest grew, by the grace of God, until such time that they could not handle the work themselves and they thought of asking help from the church where they used to be members, the PRCB. So the consistory of

PRCB visited their place and saw the growing interest of the group in learning the gospel of Christ, and thus the Reformed faith.

Years passed by, the work there flourished, and the consistory of PRCB decided to bring up the matter to the classis to make PRFA an official mission work of the PRCP. With great joy, the classis approved the recommendation of PRCB on October 31, 2017. And in July of 2019, PRCB called Rev. Ibe (pastor of Berean PRC) to labor with the saints in PRFA as their missionary/pastor. Rev. Ibe, after prayerful consideration, accepted the call not only to labor with the saints in PRFA but also to become the first missionary of the PRCP. However, after the acceptance of the call, there was one thing that was overlooked which greatly affected Rev. Ibe's decision to pursue the call: there was no suitable Christian school found in Albuera and even in nearby towns and in the city of Ormoc, Leyte, offering instruction for high school students. My eldest son (Martyn John) is entering junior high next school year, and the lack of a Christian school for him created a big dilemma in the whole picture. Homeschooling is one of the options. But considering that the adjustment both in the field of labor as missionary and the life in general in Leyte for the whole family is so great already, and added to that is the thought of homeschooling Martyn John, that would be a huge undertaking. Therefore, Rev. Ibe requested to the consistory of PRCB if he could withdraw the acceptance of the call. After careful analysis and examination of the situation, which included our strong stand as far as providing not only quality education for our children but especially *Christian* education, as the doctrine of the covenant of grace no less demands and as per requirement of the Church Order Article 21, PRCB graciously approved the request of yours truly. PRCP Classis in October 31, 2019, received and concurred with the decision of PRCB.

PRCB and the PRCP remain steadfast and committed, as decided by the classis, to continue providing the saints in PRFA pulpit supply at least once a month through either Rev. Flores or through the pastors in our federation, and also with our missionary brothers from the PRCA if their schedules will allow them to do so.

Also, and in keeping with the mandate of preaching the word in all the world, we are thankful for the opening of the Seminary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines in August of 2019. The three missionary brothers from the PRCA are helping us in providing instruction for the students in the seminary. Currently, we have one student enrolled in

the seminary, Bro. Jeremiah B. Pascual (a member of the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan). The announcement for aspiring seminary students for the school year 2020–21 is already out in the PRCP churches. We hope that God will call and raise up men and young men of his own choosing in our churches seriously to consider serving God in the ministry of the word and sacraments.

### **Our Challenge to Our Young People**

God has tremendously blessed his work in the Philippines both in the ministry of his word and sacraments in our churches and in the mission works/labors of our own pastors and missionary brothers from the PRCA in various places in our country.

With this development, we encourage our young people to support and be involved with our mission work both here and abroad. The good question now is, how?

First of all, it is good that our young people are aware of the various labors our churches do as far as mission work is concerned. We love the word of God as well as the mission labors in our churches, and so we are excited to know. We as churches, and the young people in particular, are interested to find out who our missionaries are; their families; perhaps even their needs! We value what they are called to do and why they do it. And so we want to get involved because, in the second place, we are willing to support both the mission work and our missionaries. We lift them up regularly to God in our prayers. We pray that God may powerfully work through them as they minister the gospel of Christ to God's elect children on the mission field. We pray that God will bless their faithful labors as they give their time and energy in all that they do for his glory. Young readers, pray that God will sustain them both physically and spiritually, for the work is hard and at times pressing and wearisome. Cease not to ask God that he will establish more contacts, whether from within the churches already established or in other places. And because the work is expanding and we need more laborers in the field, pray therefore to the Lord of the harvest to touch the heart and soul of *you*, young men, to *witness* what the apostles (which was passed down to us and which we greatly love and confess) have *heard*, *seen*, and *known* of Jesus in the North or in the South or in the West or even in the Far East, for God's glory and for the salvation of his church and for Christ's sake.

*Rev. Ibe is pastor of the Berean PRC in the Philippines*

## BEING A STUDENT IN THE THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH IN THE PHILIPPINES

*Dear Readers of Beacon Lights,*

*As many of you probably have heard by now, the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines have received by the grace of God their own seminary for the training of men for the ministry of the word and sacraments in the PRCP. This amazing gift of the Lord has allowed the PRCP to begin training men right here at home in metro Manila. Seminary classes began in August 2019, and soon, by the middle of May 2020, we will have finished our second semester of classes.*

*Rather than give you a brief history of the preparation and formation of the PRCP seminary, I thought that you would prefer meeting the current full-time student of the seminary. Therefore, what follows are the written answers from Seminarian Jeremiah Pascual to a few general questions that I gave him.*

*I trust that you will enjoy, as much as I did, what he has written for you.*

*Cordially in Christ,*

*Rev. Richard J. Smit*

\* \* \* \* \*

*How did you become a member of the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan?*

“It was in the year 2013 when I was introduced to the Reformed faith through the relentless effort of my Uncle Jorge, who was then a deacon of the PRC in Bulacan. I was reluctant at first, but the irresistible truths of the doctrines of grace captured me. By the grace of God, I was fully convinced that what I learned was the very gospel of God which had been watered down by my former church, or worse yet, rejected by all means. Subsequently, I had to resign as youth leader and assistant music director in that church. And eventually, I also had to cut off from the membership in order to find a Reformed church. It was hard. One of the pastors of that church is my grandfather. In Asian countries, we are very family-oriented and religious. So I had to consider also the impact of my conversion on my relationship with my family. Nevertheless, on October 20, 2013, I tried to attend at PRCB and since then, I desired to be a member of that church. After more than two

years, I confessed publicly, together with Leslie (who was still my girlfriend at that time), on January 17, 2016.”

*How did you meet and when did you marry your wife, Leslie?*

“Leslie and I met in Boracay at the youth camp of our former churches. By the way, we were in the same denomination. Her church was in Taytay and mine was in Tondo. The youth camp aimed to unite the youth from different churches in our denomination. That happened in the summer of 2011. That was the first time we met each other, and we didn’t have any “spark,” as they call it, yet. But in October that same year, our denomination organized a sport fest in Nueva Ecija. That’s, I think, the beginning of God directing my attention to her. On April 6, 2012, we started texting each other. We started to stay up all night just to make conversation. And then, that same month, I courted her. That lasted one year for her to say “yes”—not for marrying me yet, but for us to start dating—on April 6, 2013. The dating lasted five years, until we got married on April 6, 2018. Rev. Vernon Ibe solemnized our wedding, and it was attended mostly by the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines.”

*Have you and your wife received from the Lord any children?*

“God gifted us a covenant child on November 1, 2019. We named him Iohanne Cauvin, after the Latin and the French name of John Calvin. Iohanne was baptized on December 15, 2019, by Rev. John Flores at the PRC in Bulacan.”

*How did it happen that you had the desire to serve the Lord in the ministry of the word and to train in the PRCP seminary?*

“Even when I was still in my former church, it had been my desire to be a pastor. And that desire got an authentic motivation when I totally embraced the Reformed faith. I realized that the Reformed faith in the Philippines is something that must be propagated through the faithful preaching of the word. We have been corrupted by the adulterated gospel of Roman Catholicism and Arminianism.

The pure preaching of the gospel has to be done. But the Reformed faith here is something new and sometimes characterized by many as mere doctrinal religion or as dead orthodoxy. When I started sitting under the pure preaching of the word of God at PR churches here, I realized that the Reformed faith is a religion which finds its root in the gospel of sovereign, particular grace. That gospel excites in a Christian an ardent desire to serve his Savior with all of his life. This same gospel impressed on me the need to serve in the ministry of word and sacraments, especially as God opens more doors for the spread of the gospel. That alone dictates the need for men. Here, the PRCP officially works in Albueria, Leyte (PRFA), while the three churches of the PRCP have their respective mission works. Bulacan PRC has an outreach in Laguna and contacts in Cavite; the Berean PRC works in Tondo and in Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija; Provident PRC works in Guiguinto, Bulacan. The PRCA missionaries have been working in southern Negros Occidental. And still there are churches which show interest to federate with the PRCP or at least ask for assistance in church reformation. This is the reality that confronts us at the present. God uses this to impress more in my heart the desire to enter into the ministry. That is why, when the PRCP announced the opening for the applications to enter seminary, I immediately sought the advice of my consistory and wrote a letter regarding my desire. When I did so, the consistory advised me to stop my secular job and start complying with the pre-seminary courses. The Theological School Committee of the classis approved my application for enrollment in April 2019 and then forwarded it to the classis for its final approval on June 12, 2019.”

*What are the subjects, who are your instructors, and at what times and where are your seminary classes normally taught?*

“I am currently studying biblical hermeneutics under Rev. Dan Holstege, church history and homiletics under Rev. Daniel Kleyn, and New Testament Greek and dogmatics under Rev. Richard Smit. Their training is done at Provident PRC in Marikina. It’s usually a half day of classes (in the morning) from Tuesday until Friday: two hours per class and a 30-minute break between classes. The Tuesday classes are biblical hermeneutics at 7:00 a.m., and after a 30-minute break (devotions and refreshments), homiletics class starts at 9:30 a.m.; Wednesday classes are New Testament Greek and dogmatics; Thursday class is church history; Friday class is New Testament Greek.”

*How do you describe being the only full-time student in the seminary at this time?*

“When I was at the June 2019 classis meeting of the PRCP and learned that there were no other young men who applied for the training, I was discouraged. I was wondering if it was still the Lord’s will to continue the establishing of the seminary. But God nevertheless reminded me that before the classis approved my application, he was already in control. He indeed was the one who prepared all the circumstances for me to enter the seminary. I have nothing to worry about. My strength comes from him alone. And now that I am the only student, I feel blessed that both the PRCP churches and the PRCA missionaries are working toward the goal of training me even though I am the one, only student. The PRCP and the missionaries are working hard for this historic establishment of a seminary. We are still very hopeful for this to succeed. Lastly, my wife is a great companion. She encourages me a lot, together with my fellow saints in Christ, especially Bros. Reuben, Matt, and Emmanuel, who never tire of listening about my burdens in the course of my training.”

*How long do you expect to be a seminary student before you can complete the program and be examined by the classis?*

“I expect to finish my training after four and a half years. So, the Lord willing, it would be in early 2024 that I could be examined by the classis.”

*Do you know of others in the PRCP that might have a desire to become seminary students also?*

“Oh, yes. There are some names that I could think of. And I am still hopeful that these men will apply for the 2020-2021 school year.”

*What words of encouragement do you have for young men in the PRCA who might be considering whether they should train for the ministry of the word as you are now doing?*

“God has given both the PRCP and the PRCA fields characterized by a tremendous opportunity to propagate the gospel. But we are facing a problem that echoes the words of our Lord: ‘The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few’ (Luke 10:2). We are indeed in great need of men for the ministry. It is urgent. Parents and officebearers must, therefore, inculcate in the hearts and minds of the young people the need for pastors and encourage the young men to aspire to the pulpit in the service of God and of his people. We are blessed to have a good training venue for us to develop the gifts that God has already given us. If you are desiring to be a pastor,

you are desiring a ‘good work’ (1 Tim. 3:1). Take courage. It is God who sends forth laborers into the field. And through the Spirit, he calls them by name, and he directs the church to approve those men. Let us then be willing to be slaves of God in the ministry of the word and sacraments. This is the work of God in us. And you must be certain, according to the infallible word, about your calling. There is joy in serving God in these last days. Diligently pray

that your desire to serve not be quenched by fiery trials, but be ever burning until our Lord says, ‘Well done, thou good and faithful servant.’ We in the Philippines are praying for you, too.”

*Rev. Smit is a missionary in the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines and Bro. Jeremiah Pascual is a member of the Protestant Reformed Church in Bulacan, Philippines and a student in the PRCP seminary.*

**Devotional** Ben Laning

## THE DAILY PRESS

“press toward the mark...”  
(Philippians 3:14)

Note: Nearly all of the commentary contained in these devotionals, as well as their organization, comes from Rev. McGeown’s book *Grace and Assurance*.

**May 8**

Read Romans 3:9–31

Read Head 1, Article 1 of the Canons of Dordt

The point of this first article is simply to say that all men are guilty and undeserving of God’s grace. God would have been just if he had decided not to save anyone; he owes us nothing. Salvation is all of grace. The Arminians, who the Canons were written in response to, always wanted to start the discussion with reprobation in order to put the truth in the most negative light possible, but the Bible always starts with election, so that’s where the writers of the creed started as well. They explain that the Arminian claim that the truth regarding election “isn’t fair” is making man the judge, not God.

The truth of election is clearly taught in Romans 3. In verse 19, we read that we are all guilty before God. Verse 23 reinforces this by saying, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” What we deserve is death. What we have been given is everlasting life. What a wonder! *Sing or pray Psalter #206.*

**May 9**

Read John 3:1–21

Read Canons Head 1, Article 2

Article 1 talked about what God could have done, and now this article says what he did do. God loved his people so much that he sent his only begotten

Son to die for them. It’s good to point out that the Canon’s treatment of salvation begins with God’s love, even though the Arminians claim the Reformed truth turns him into a God of hatred. The Son didn’t come to try and convince the Father to be merciful, as many believe, but the Father sent him because of his love for his people.

Arminians love to point to John 3:16 as supposed proof that God loves everyone and wants everyone to be saved. However, the word “world” needs to be interpreted within its context. In John 12:19, the Pharisees didn’t literally mean that the entire world was following Jesus, but that he was getting increasingly popular. Similarly, in John 3:16, Jesus was just telling Nicodemus that God’s people would now come from all nations. If Jesus had just said “elect,” Nicodemus wouldn’t have understood that he was including the Gentiles in that as well. He wouldn’t have understood that Jesus was including *us*. *Sing or pray Psalter #114.*

**May 10**

Read Romans 10:5–21

Read Canons Head 1, Article 3

This article talks about how God uses means to bring his people to saving faith. Arminians claim that unconditional election makes preaching unnecessary. What’s the purpose of preaching if God does it all anyway? The simple answer to this is that God uses means, or instruments, to accomplish his purpose. The call to repent and believe is an authoritative command that God issues through preachers, his human instruments. We read of this in Romans 10:14–15. God sends his preachers to bring this call

to his people. The people hear and, by the grace of God, believe. Believing, they call on God and place their trust in him.

Of course, although God uses his ministers to bring the gospel to his people, there are some in the audience to whom the preaching is nothing but judgment. God does his good pleasure, and it pleases him not to save everyone to whom the gospel is preached. Do you receive the preaching in your heart? Then rejoice in the wonder of God's mercy toward you! *Sing or pray Psalter #417.*

**May 11**

Read Matthew 11:20–30

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Errors 9

The Arminians so detest the truth of God's sovereignty that they even reject it regarding the preaching of the gospel. According to them, God sends the gospel to a certain nation because he sees they are worthier than others. Sounds kind of like Hitler and the Aryan race, doesn't it? Sounds kind of like us in our wicked pride, doesn't it? We can easily exalt ourselves above people of other nations who haven't had Christianity brought to them to the extent that we have or above our neighbor who's been brought up under false doctrine.

In Matthew 11:23, Jesus said that Sodom and Gomorrah would have repented if they had heard the gospel like Israel had, yet it hadn't been preached to them. If the citizens of these cities would have believed when Israel did not, wouldn't that make them more worthy than Israel? And if they were worthier, then why didn't God save them? You see how swiftly the Arminian logic falls apart. The amazing truth, once again, is that God saved us solely because it pleased him to do so. *Sing or pray Psalter #210.*

**May 12**

Read Ephesians 2:1–10

Read Canons Head 1, Article 4

It's important to see that the writers of the Canons are building the foundation on which to introduce predestination. Rev. McGeown says this is a good practice for us to follow as well, especially when witnessing to those who are trying to attack us, because we mustn't allow them to frame the debate around reprobation.

Article 4 says that the preaching brings a two-fold response. Unbelievers remain under God's wrath after they hear the preaching. It's not that God loves everyone, but then those who reject the truth he presents to them are placed under his wrath. Instead, all men, including the elect, are born under God's

wrath. When God's people hear the preaching and hold it for truth, they are brought out from under this wrath, but the wicked who reject it remain under it.

This is explained in the first part of Ephesians 2. In verse 3, we read that we "were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." The following verses then explain how God has quickened us in Christ "and hath raised us up together" (v. 6), bringing us out from under his wrath into "heavenly places." *Sing or pray Psalter #53.*

**May 13**

Read Philippians 1:18–30

Read Canons Head 1, Article 5

Article 4 stated the two-fold response to the preaching, and Article 5 explains that response. Unbelievers are guilty for their unbelief. It is not God's fault that they don't believe. Arminians say that God could only fault man for not believing if he gave him the power to believe, but man's accountability is based on the fact that he's a creature, not on his ability. In addition, it's man's fault that he has, at the fall, become unable to believe. God did not force Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit; they wanted to do it.

The article also sets forth the truth positively, saying that faith is the gift of God. Ephesians 2:8 and Philippians 1:29 are just two examples from the many in scripture that make this clear. We were born dead in sin, guilty before God. Yet, out of his good pleasure, God saved us from that death by sending his own Son to die in our place. Now, that Son is preparing a place for us in our heavenly home, where we will go to be with him soon forever. Isn't the truth amazing? *Sing or pray Psalter #46.*

**May 14**

Read Acts 16:1–15

Read Canons Head 1, Article 6

Article 6 states to whom it is God gives the gift of faith and why he gives it to them. Rev. McGeown explains some theological terminology that's helpful for understanding this. First, God does his good pleasure; he saves whomever he wants. God's counsel is his eternal plan of history. God's decrees are all his purposes within his counsel. There are many decrees of God, but only one counsel. Predestination is God's decree to elect some and reprobate others. As with all the decrees, predestination is again simply based on God's good pleasure.

This is over against the Arminian teaching that faith is man's contribution to salvation. They teach resistible grace, not the irresistible grace manifested

in the scriptures. All hearts are hard by nature, but God softens the hearts of the elect. We see that in Acts 16:14, where Lydia was given a new heart, and in Ezekiel 36:26–27, where God promises to give his people new hearts in place of their old, stony ones and to put his spirit in them. *Sing or pray Psalter #2.*

**May 15**

Read Deuteronomy 7:1–11

Read Canons Head 1, Article 6

This work of God to save some and not others is described in this article as “discrimination.” The world loves to talk about how we must not discriminate against anyone. If God discriminated, that would make him a respecter of persons, they say. This would be true if God chose his people based on some characteristic, such as their nationality, education, or social status. However, God chooses his people simply based on his good pleasure; it has nothing to do with their characteristics. Ironically, it’s actually the Arminians that make God a respecter of persons, because they say God chooses those who are worthier than others.

Deuteronomy 7:7–8a reads, “The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people: But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers.” The message is clear: God saves whom he wills. It has nothing to do with us; it is all of him. Glory be to God! *Sing or pray Psalter #3.*

**May 16**

Read Job 38:1–18

Read Canons Head 1, Article 6

The Canons teach three things about this discrimination we discussed yesterday. First, it’s profound, meaning we can’t understand why God chose whom he did. We must be thankful that God has opened our heart and must work diligently to bring the gospel to our neighbor, praying that God might use our weak means to open his heart as well. Second, God is merciful to give his people a new heart. Third, God’s discrimination is righteous, for he has full authority and right to decide what he will do with his own gifts.

In Job 38, God finally answers Job. Job has had everything taken away from him, even his health. Even though he initially glorified God in his trials, the departure of his health caused him to curse the day of his birth and wallow in despair. God now responds to Job, telling him he has no right to complain. Was Job there when God made the world and

formed man out of the dust of the ground? How humbling this is when we think about how easily we complain against God and question his authority. *Sing or pray Psalter #10.*

**May 17**

Read Romans 8:18–30

Read Canons Head 1, Article 7

Election is defined here in Article 7. The main difference between the biblical and Arminian views of election is that the Bible teaches that election is God’s choice of persons, while Arminianism teaches it is God’s choice of conditions. They say that God has decreed to save everyone who falls into a certain category, but he lets man choose for himself whether he will be a part of that category or not. This corruption destroys the very idea of predestination, for it is nonsense to say that this truth merely means God said before time that he would save all those who accepted him in time.

Romans 8:30 reads, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” This verse is one of many that clearly demonstrates that God elected certain people. The focus of the verse is on those whom he predestinated, not on his criteria for predestinating someone. This is a great comfort for us, because if we were saved based on our worthiness, then we would all be lost. *Sing or pray Psalter #13.*

**May 18**

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–31

Read Canons Head 1, Article 7

Today, we will look at nine truths this article teaches about election. First, election is God’s purpose, not a random selection of people. Second, election is unchangeable, for God never changes his mind. Third, God’s decree of election is eternal, meaning he decreed to save his people before the beginning of time. Fourth, election is unconditional, meaning God didn’t choose us because he foresaw some quality in us. Fifth, election is gracious. It is “undeserved, unmerited, and even forfeited favor.” Sixth, election is personal, meaning God decreed exactly who his elect would be, not just that he would save an elect people. Seventh, those who are elected are saved and have been given all the blessings of salvation, not just external privileges or positions of service, as the Arminians teach. Eighth, those who are elected are no more deserving of it than those who are not. There is no reason to boast, whereas the Arminian lie gives man every reason to boast. Ninth, the goal of election is the glorification

of God. Arminianism robs God of his glory. We must thank God from the bottom of our hearts that he has chosen us, wretched sinners that we are. *Sing or pray Psalter #17.*

**May 19**

Read Hebrews 8

Read Canons Head 1, Article 7

There is one remaining truth about election taught here, which we will look at today. Election is in Christ, for it's only through his sacrifice that we are saved. We see this in Hebrews 8, where we read that Christ is our high priest, our mediator, in the better covenant. He is the head of God's people, who are now gathered from all the nations of the world. Arminians agree that Christ is the head of the church, but they deny he's the head of the elect. To say this would be to admit that Christ determines who the elect are, which the Arminian rejects. Arminians pretend to make much of Christ, but they really believe he is nothing more than a potential head of a potential people. If no one chooses to believe, then Christ, for all his efforts, is no one's head. Therefore, Arminian election is impersonal, because God has nothing to do with who is saved. How comforting it is for us to know that the only way we could fall out of the covenant would be if Christ fell, which is impossible. The elect and Christ stand together. *Sing or pray Psalter #22.*

**May 20**

Read Ephesians 1:1-14

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Errors 1

This error rejection focuses on one of the truths about election brought out in Article 7: that election is personal. The teaching of the Reformed fathers and the Arminians here are polar opposites. As Rev. McGeown puts it, "The Arminians said, 'Faith and obedience determine who are elected.' The Reformed fathers said, 'Election determines who will believe and obey.' Arminianism proclaims an election in which God elects nobody. The Bible teaches an election in which God chooses a particular people for himself."

The Canons prove that election is personal by citing John 17:6, Acts 13:48, and Ephesians 1:4. In John 17:6, Jesus prays to his heavenly Father, saying he'd preached to all those whom the Father had given him. In Acts 13:48, Paul and Barnabas had just told the Jews that the gospel would now be preached to the Gentiles, because they had rejected the truth. The Gentiles rejoiced when they heard this "and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Paul then in Ephesians 1:4, rejoiced with the Ephesians

that God had chosen them in Christ "before the foundation of the world." Scripture clearly demonstrates the comforting truth that election is for me and you personally. *Sing or pray Psalter #31.*

**May 21**

Read Psalm 115

Read Canons Head 1, Article 8

God's word is simple, but the heretics try to make it complicated. The Arminians teach that God decrees to save only the elect, while also desiring to save all men through the preaching. This is a blatant contradiction, and there are many verses in the Bible that show the oneness of God's will. In Job 23:13, Job says of God, "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." Psalm 115:3 and Psalm 135:6 say that God does whatever he pleases, and Daniel 4:35 adds that no one can stop or question him.

This article also refutes the idea of dispensationalism, which teaches that God has two people: the Jews and the church. In opposition to this, the article makes it clear that there is only one decree of election that includes all of God's people, in both the Old and New Testament. God's Word is simple, but wicked man works hard to complicate it in his efforts to sneak in the lie. *Sing or pray Psalter #49.*

**May 22**

Read Matthew 7:7-20

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Errors 2

The Bible does talk about different kinds of election. Israel was elected in distinction from the heathen nations around them. Within that election, there were also those who were not God's people. In addition, there was also the election of men to different offices. Saul was elected to be king of Israel, and Judas was elected to be one of Jesus' disciples, although these men were reprobate. It was the election of God unto eternal life, however, that the Arminians focused their efforts on.

It is things like this that can make the lie so difficult to detect. Although today Arminians are content to openly teach conditions, it used to be that they tried to hide these false teachings and disguise it to look like the truth. They would take the idea that there are different kinds of election and twist it to mean there are different kinds of election unto eternal life. We must always be on guard against the new errors that are stealthily being pronounced around us. Those who teach these things are the wolves in sheep's clothing Jesus warned against in Matthew 7:15. *Sing or pray Psalter #33.*

**May 23**

Read Romans 9:1–29

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Errors 2

The Arminians believed in two decrees of election: one general decree for all humanity and one particular. The particular decree could be one that had to be completed by man, and God didn't decree whether these elected members would persevere in faith; that was up to them. This decree also depended on the fulfillment of certain conditions. Then, to make matters much more confusing they contradicted themselves to say that this decree could also be complete, irrevocable, decisive, and absolute. The decree could be completed by God, or it could not. The decree could be cancelled, or it could not. The decree could be one where God decreed who would believe and persevere in faith, or it could not. The decree could be one where God knows that those who believe will be saved, or it could not. Still, after we wade through all this nonsense, we realize that one word is still missing: the word "unconditional." All these distinctions are nothing more than a smokescreen for the Arminians to teach conditional election. Over against all this confusion and nonsense we embrace the clear truth found in Romans 9. *Sing or pray Psalter #41.*

**May 24**

Read Galatians 2:11–21

Read Canons Head 1, Article 9

The main point of this article is that election is unconditional. According to the Arminian, salvation depends upon the faith of obedience (and perseverance in those things till death) of man. They use the image that God looks down the corridor of time, sees that Tom will believe, and so he elects him. He also sees that Sally will not believe, so he doesn't elect her. This makes foreseen faith the prerequisite, cause, and condition for God choosing you. It's something required before your election, like the passport and visa needed to enter the United States. However, the truth is that faith and the other gifts of salvation "proceed" from election. In Galatians 2:20–21, Paul says we gained faith by Christ's sacrifice, for if we could gain faith of ourselves there would have been no reason for Christ to die.

We have here two radically different viewpoints regarding the relationship of election and faith. The Arminians say that faith is the condition on which election depends, while the Reformed say that faith is the fruit and effect of election. Election comes first, then faith, not the other way around. What a humbling and God-glorifying truth! *Sing or pray Psalter #42.*

**May 25**

Read Galatians 5:16–26

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Errors 4

Arminianism is closer to Pelagianism than it is to the word of God. As Rev. McGeown writes, "Pelagius, a heretic condemned in the early church, taught the free will of man and the ability of man to be saved by his own efforts, while he denied the depravity of man's nature. Indeed, Pelagius denied that grace is necessary for salvation." Similarly, Arminians said there were conditions of election unto faith, which this rejection of error addresses, and conditions of election unto salvation. These conditions for being elected unto faith are using the light of nature aright, being pious, being humble, being meek, and being fit for eternal life. In order to say this, Arminians must teach that man by nature has some good in him.

The truth is that, instead of being conditions man must fulfil in order to be elected, these things flow out of election "as water flows from a mountain." The fruits of the Spirit listed in Galatians 5 aren't present in man by nature. We are given these things through Christ and grow in them our entire lives. We must be on guard and make sure we are always distinguishing between conditions and fruit. *Sing or pray Psalter #47.*

**May 26**

Read John 15:1–17

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Errors 5

This rejection of error addresses the Arminian teaching that there are conditions of election unto salvation. According to them, there are different conditions for "incomplete and non-decisive election" and "complete and decisive election." Those elected completely and decisively are "more worthy" than others, because God saw that they would persevere in faith, the obedience of faith, holiness, and godliness; the other would only have these qualities for a time. What a proud doctrine!

Oh, how this appeals to our sinful flesh! As mentioned earlier, by nature we are always looking for some way to exalt ourselves above others. Maybe we think we are a better ball player than someone else. Maybe we think we're smarter. Maybe we think we're a better parent. Maybe we think we have a better mind for business. Maybe we think we're more likeable. Maybe we think we're a better Christian. That's the trap in which the Arminians find themselves. The Bible is clear in its refuting of this foolish doctrine. John 15:16 is just one example: "Ye did not choose me, but I chose you." Gloria in excelsis deo. *Sing or pray Psalter #48.*

**May 27**

Read Galatians 4:1–7

Read Canons Head 1, Article 10

Article 10 proves that who God elected is based only on his good pleasure. Romans 8:14 says that God's sons are those who are "led by the Spirit," and verses 15–17 go on to explain that we are his adopted children and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. Similarly, Galatians 4:4–7 says that we were made under the law, but Christ redeemed us from under the law and made us the adopted sons of God. We were only servants, but we have been made his sons and heirs through Christ. John 1:13 clearly states that God saves whom he will when it says of us, "Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Another important point here is that the word "peculiar" comes from the Old Testament and is applied to the New Testament. This is important, because it demonstrates that there is only one people of God throughout history. We see this in verses like Exodus 19:5 and 1 Peter 2:9. There is one church of God from beginning to end. *Sing or pray Psalter #54.*

**May 28**

Read 2 Timothy 1:3–18

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Error 3

Arminians say God could have chosen any condition he wanted, but he chose the "act of faith" with "its incomplete obedience" as a condition of salvation. This means God "lowered the bar" for us so that we would have a chance to be saved. Perfect obedience was unattainable, so God "graciously" decided to accept imperfect obedience as enough. This is how the Arminian attempts to insert God's grace into a picture devoid of it.

There are a few problems with this. First, faith is only undeserving if it's the gift of God. If it's the work of man, then faith is deserved, a meritorious activity or work. Second, it would be unjust of God to consider incomplete obedience to be complete obedience. Third, eternal life is only given by grace, not on the basis of faith and incomplete obedience. Therefore, this false teaching is an assault on God's good pleasure, on the merit of Christ's death, and on God's justice. We thank God that he equips us to fight these errors around us with beautiful passages like 2 Timothy 1:9. *Sing or pray Psalter #57.*

**May 29**

Read Revelation 1:1–8

Read Canons Head 1, Article 11

This article is about the certainty of election.

God's attributes prove that this is true. If election depended on man it would be uncertain, because man is uncertain. The Canons focus on four of God's attributes to prove election's certainty. First, God is "most wise." He works everything perfectly to the glory of his name. Second, God is "unchangeable." Election cannot become reprobation. God never changes his mind. Third, God is "omniscient." He knows everything about the past, present, and future, for he decreed it all. Nothing can surprise God or thwart his plan. Fourth, God is "omnipotent." All power comes from him. As God says in Revelation 1:8, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." This is a wonderful, solid foundation for our faith. We have absolutely nothing to fear. God is in complete control and working everything for our good. Glory to God in the highest! *Sing or pray Psalter #58.*

**May 30**

Read Matthew 24:15–28

Read Canons Head 1, Rejection of Error 6

Arminians believe that some of the elect perish. We can fall out of the covenant by failing to persevere in faith. The fathers at Dordt called this a "gross error." It is gross, first of all, because it makes God changeable. Those whom he decreed to save are not saved after all. Secondly, it is gross because it destroys the comfort of God's people. We know the sinfulness of our hearts; how terrifying, therefore, to believe we can be ripped out of heaven and thrown into hell because of our sinful actions. How terrifying to believe that our salvation hangs by the thread of our own free will!

The Canons provide a sampling of scripture passages that expose this false teaching. In Matthew 24:24 we are warned against the false prophets, who would deceive God's people if it were possible. The implication here is clearly that it isn't a possibility. Christ says in John 6:39 that he doesn't lose any of his children, but that they will all be raised at the end. Finally, we again have the comforting words of Romans 8:30, where we are assured that all those who were predestinated will indeed receive heavenly glory. *Sing or pray Psalter #132.*

**May 31**

Read 1 Thessalonians 1

Read Canons Head 1, Article 12

This article talks about the assurance we have of our salvation. Actually, it's more than that. The Arminians agreed we can have this assurance at any particular time. What they rejected was that we can

be assured that we will remain saved our entire lives. However, it is not good for God's people to doubt their eternal election. This is sin, for it doubts God's work. Assurance is not just for a select few in the congregation who have had some special experience or revelation, but it is for all of God's people. This is the sad teaching of the Netherlands Reformed. What a terrifying existence! What if I live my whole life waiting for my special experience, and it never comes? What if I make up an event to become a member and must live believing my salvation is a lie? No, the scriptures instruct us not to live in doubt. The personal pronouns (us, you, me, and we) in verses like Romans 9:23–24, 1 Thessalonians 1:4–5, and 1 Peter 1:2–5 indicate that Paul was talking about specific people who had the assurance of salvation and encouraged their fellow saints to have it as well. *Sing or pray Psalter #133.*

## June 1

Read 2 Corinthians 7

Read Canons Head 1, Article 12

So, we have assurance of our salvation, but where does it come from? Our assurance simply comes from seeing the fruits of election in ourselves that are laid out in God's word. The first of these fruits is faith in Christ. This is the main one, from which the others flow. One of these fruits that comes out of faith is filial fear. This means that we desire to please God, just as a son desires to please his father. The wicked never have this, as we read in Romans 3:18. The second fruit that flows out of faith is a godly sorrow for sin. The wicked have a certain sorrow for sin, but this sorrow is just because of sin's consequences. Only the elect have a true sorrow of heart that they have transgressed God's commandments, as taught in 2 Corinthians 7:10. Third, God's people have a hunger and thirst after righteousness. It is when we observe these fruits in our lives that we have the wonderful assurance of our election. Do you observe these in your life? *Sing or pray Psalter #134.*

## June 2

Read Colossians 1:1–14

Read Canons Head 1, Article 13

The Arminians argued that it's harmful to believe we have assurance of our salvation. What would be the motivation for continuing in a life of good works if you already knew you were saved, they said? In answer to this, the Canons set forth five fruits of this assurance. The first of these fruits is humility. Salvation is all of God, so there is no reason to boast. The second fruit is worship. God saves the chief of

sinners, as we read in 1 Timothy 1:15. As assured Christians, we must praise God for his mercy towards us. Third is holiness. 2 Corinthians 7:1 tells us that we must cleanse ourselves from the filthiness of sin. The fourth fruit is love for God. We love God in return for his love for us (John 14:15). The final fruit is gratitude. In Colossians 1:12, we read that one of the ways we walk worthy of the Lord is by "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." *Sing or pray Psalter #161.*

## June 3

Read Romans 6:1–14

Read Canons Head 1, Article 13

Article 13 goes on to address two main Arminian concerns regarding how assurance makes one careless and profane. The first of these was that it encourages "remissness in the observance of the divine commands." However, Q&A 114 of the Heidelberg Catechism states that Christians are holy, they have a desire to keep God's commandments, and they do begin to live according to all those commandments in this life. The second charge was that it gives men "carnal security," but the truth is that this assurance leads us to be holy (Rom 6:1–2), not to "live it up."

What kinds of people, then, does this make careless and profane? The first one mentioned in the article is someone who claims to be a Christian and latches onto certain doctrines to justify his wicked life. The second is someone who likes to philosophize about doctrines without actually applying them to his own life. Do either of these describe us? Do we give the world a cause to blaspheme by the hypocritical way we live? *Sing or pray Psalter #170.*

## June 4

Read 1 Timothy 4:6–16

Read Canons Head 1, Article 14

Today we will look at the necessity of the preaching of election, before moving on to its manner and purpose tomorrow. There are many ministers who claim to be Reformed who are reluctant to preach this. They might be afraid of people in the pew who find it offensive and rave about it being unfair. Maybe they're worried the people won't understand it, but the truth of God's word is very simple compared to the convoluted lies that oppose it. Others are worried about how easily the doctrine can be abused, but this isn't a real reason for not preaching it.

The main reason the doctrine has to be preached is that it's in the Bible. We don't have the right to ignore parts of scripture. Our churches have

their ministers continuously preach through the Heidelberg Catechism so that they regularly preach all the doctrines found in the Bible. It's true that there are certain aspects of the doctrine that belong to the "secret things" of God, but that is not the case of the doctrine itself. To hide a doctrine taught in scripture would be to try and make ourselves wiser than God. *Sing or pray Psalter #180.*

**June 5**

Read Deuteronomy 29:21–29

Read Canons Head 1, Article 14

What is the manner in which election should be preached? The article says it must be "in due time and place." Election must be preached in the church, but also out on the mission field. The capacity of the hearers determines how the minister approaches the subject, although it never gives him license to ignore it. As mentioned earlier, the Canons carefully laid the groundwork before they preached this doctrine directly, demonstrating to us the importance of approaching it appropriately and reverently.

What is the purpose of such preaching? The aim must be to glorify God. In addition, it must be taught without trying to discover the secret things and fill our minds with frivolous speculation (Deut. 29:29). We are assured that God has chosen us and not others, but it's not for us to know if each person is saved or not, or to explain why one is saved and another is damned with anything other than it's the good pleasure of God. The doctrine of election must be preached, for it edifies and comforts God's people and glorifies our heavenly Father. *Sing or pray Psalter #178.*

**June 6**

Read Jude 1–16

Read Canons Head 1, Article 15

As mentioned regarding election, the Canons writers wisely waited until now to treat reprobation. The Arminians like to put all the focus on this doctrine and scream about how this makes God a horrible people-hater. Because of this, we need to make sure to carefully place the doctrine in its proper place. Reprobation is "the rejection of some from salvation and glory." This is implied by election, because by choosing something you are rejecting all other options. The four things we learn about reprobation in this article are that God doesn't elect all, that he has determined to pass some by, that he's decreed not to give the reprobate saving faith and conversion, and that he's determined to punish the reprobate forever in hell.

It's important that we understand the difference

between damnation and reprobation. Reprobation is God's eternal decree, as mentioned in Jude 4, and damnation is God's sentencing a person to hell. Reprobation isn't on the basis of sin (that would be Arminianism), while damnation is the result of reprobation and sin. It's through a proper and clear understanding of these terms that we are equipped to witness to those God places in our path. *Sing or pray Psalter #187.*

**June 7**

Read Exodus 9:13–26

Read Canons Head 1, Article 15

What is the purpose of reprobation? For one, it demonstrates the grace of God in saving a particular people. It also makes salvation precious to believers, as they see what they've been saved from. It shows the elect that they have no reason to boast, for they are equally undeserving. In addition, this doctrine shows the awesomeness of God and displays his glory, sovereignty, and terrible wrath.

We must always remember that reprobation serves election, like the chaff serves the wheat. Saul served Jonathan by being his father and bringing David into his life. Saul served David by giving him the chance to fight Goliath and later forcing David to put all his trust in God as he fled for his life. The wicked Jews who crucified Christ served the elect Jews and Gentiles, because Jesus' death on the cross was the victory over sin and the beginning of the gospel being preached to all nations. The Bible and all of history are full of examples, such as the one in Exodus 9. Can you think of some? *Sing or pray Psalter #191.*

**JULY ISSUE:**

**WITNESSING AND  
EVANGELISM**

## MOTHER'S DAY

Why do you honor Mom today?  
Because she gave you birth,  
Because she fed and clothed you  
Does that comprise her worth?

Your heavenly Father chose her  
To fill this special place  
That you might be instructed  
In his way and by his grace

Her labors are not easy,  
Her griefs, oft hard to bear,  
Yet strengthened in her duty  
She continues in her care.

Do not begrudge, but thank her  
For correction that she gave  
For God so uses mothers  
That their children he may save.

Yes, show your mother honor,  
Rise up and call her blest  
For she's the instrument God gave  
That he might be confessed.

*This poem was written by the late Mrs. Jacob Kuiper Sr. of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Walker, Michigan.*

## Church News Melinda Bleyenbergh

### BAPTISMS

“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Mark 10:14

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:  
Micah James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Philip & Susan Hall—Ballymena, N Ireland

Kedon Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Ashley Van Maanen—Calvary, IA

José Roberto, son of Mr. & Mrs. Juan Luis and Lisa Ortiz—Calvary, IA

Graham Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Chase and Beth De Groot—Calvary, IA

Violet Joy, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Dan & Leah Holstege—Doon, IA/Phillippines

Logan John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Renae Kuiper—Georgetown, MI

Adalind Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan and Katelyn Vermeer—Hope, MI

Tayah Joelle daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Nate and Kolette Villalobos—Hull, Iowa

Garrett Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. Lee & Laura Kooienga—Loveland, CO

Megan Grace, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Matt & Stacy De Jong—Peace, IL

Annika Faith, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Nathan & Brenda Dykstra—Peace, IL

Judah Trent, son of Mr. & Mrs. Travis & Amy Kooima—Sioux Falls, SD

Mataya Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Larissa Vanden Bosch—Sioux Falls, SD

Grace Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason & Karen Elzinga—Unity, MI

Benjamin Lee, son of Rev. & Mrs. Joe & Lisa Holstege.—Zion, MI

### MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

Mr. Grant Lubbers and Miss Danielle Schimmel—Georgetown, MI

Mr. Johnny Schat and Miss Alison Eriks—Hudsonville, MI

Mr. Titus Langerak and Miss Hannah Butgereit—Southwest, MI



## FOUR LITTLE THINGS UPON THE EARTH (4): SPIDERS

*There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise: ...The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces. (Proverbs 30:24, 28)*

The littlest spider grasped her thread in her hands and spun her web between the branches of a tree. She wove the thread back and forth, creating a beautiful pattern. After a long night of work, the littlest spider rested.

But along came a thunderstorm. The rain pummeled her web, and the wind ripped it to shreds, leaving the littlest spider without a home.

Finding a new place to build her web, the littlest spider grasped her thread in her hands and spun her web between the beams in a house. She wove the thread back and forth, creating a beautiful pattern. After a long night of work, the littlest spider rested.

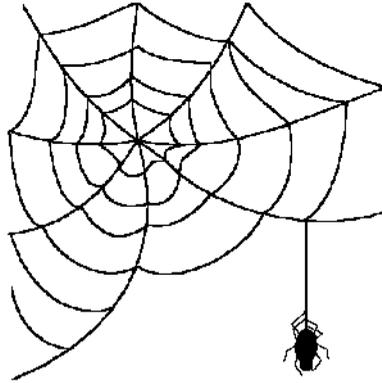
But along came the people who owned the house. They swept away her web with a broom and tossed the spider out of the house, leaving the littlest spider without a home.

Finding a new place to build her web, the littlest spider grasped her thread in her hands and spun her web between the gold-trimmed decorations on the wall of the palace's throne room. She wove the thread back and forth, creating a beautiful pattern. After a long night of work, the littlest spider rested.

Along came the palace servant. The servant reached for a broom, intending to sweep the spider away from the king's grand throne room.

But the king saw the littlest spider, and he took pity on her. "Leave her be," the king told his servant. "She will keep the flies from bothering me when I sit on my throne."

So the littlest spider was given a home. She didn't care that it was huge and beautiful and covered with gold. She didn't know it was an honor to live in a corner above the king's throne. She was simply glad to have a place where rain and brooms didn't



destroy her web.

In gratitude, the littlest spider spun the most beautiful webs for the king, and he never had to worry about flies buzzing around his throne room ever again.

\* \* \* \* \*

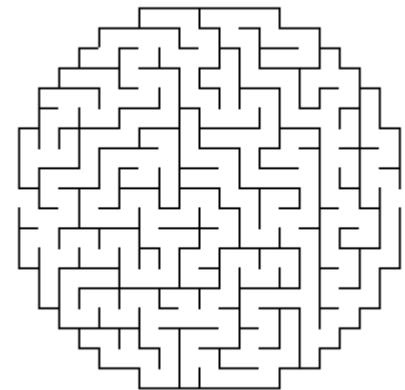
The Bible tells us to take wisdom from the spider. We often think of spiders as pests that we kill or swat with brooms to clean them from our homes.

But no matter how often we clean, the spiders always come back. The lowly spider is found everywhere, including in a king's grandest palace.

As the people of God, we are like the spiders that no one wants. We are sinners who are ugly and icky. Yet God, in his good pleasure, takes pity on us and loves us. He chooses us and gives us an eternal home in his heavenly kingdom. We no longer have to fear the storms of life or what people can do to us.

And, out of gratitude for what God has done for us, we use our talents for his glory, and we obey his commands. He does not need us the way the king in the story needed the spider to keep the flies away, but he is still pleased when we obey him.

We should be content to be little spiders in God's kingdom. We do not have to be great. We do not have to do great things as the people of the world call great things. By God's grace, we use the little talents we have been given and spin our humble webs for God's glory.



Tricia is a member of Unity Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.



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