

PRYP Scholarship Committee Newsletter

Rev. J. Holstege

How can I become a Christian school teacher?

A Christian teacher is full of knowledge he is bursting to communicate with simple words, relatable illustrations, and practical implications. She is the paragon of nurturing stability and personal godliness. He is a mentor as well as instructor. She is a guide, an example, a molder and a shaper of minds and hearts. Effective teaching is a priceless skill not to be compared to the staccato motions of any modern device or software. A teacher cannot be programmed or manufactured on an assembly line, but must be trained and refined through diligent labor and experience. The young person who desires to become a Christian school teacher can expect a few years in the institutions of higher learning.

What about a minister of the gospel?

The ears of many young men surely perk up when the preacher makes the regular petition for pastors and shepherds. We hope some of those young men feel called at least to begin pursuing the course that ends with ordination. But where does that course begin and how do I follow it? The young man who desires the office of minister desires a good thing, but he can also expect years of rigorous testing in the seminary. Even before the doors of seminary open to him, he too must walk in the halls of college or university for a time.

We need ministers and teachers, of course. Jesus taught us long ago that we should always be praying the Lord to send laborers into his harvest (Matt. 9:38). It does not matter whether the church is flourishing, languishing, prosperous or lean at any given time in her history. The

harvest is always white and ready, and “he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap,” (Eccl. 11:4). The need for ministers is an ever-present reality in the church, but felt especially acutely at present in light of the repeated urgings of our synod. And if school building projects and the establishment of new schools are any indicator, the need for good Christian school teachers is at an all-time high.

But the need for ministers and teachers comes at a cost. It comes at the cost of long hours spent behind books and desks, receiving back papers meticulously marked with red ink, tremulously taking the first steps behind a podium in a classroom with a freshly made lesson plan. It comes at the cost of intense effort, discipline, and time. But there is another cost as well, much more tangible, which is measured in dollars and cents. We can say we need ministers and teachers. We can pray for them knowing our heavenly Father will much less deny us what we ask in true faith than our parents will deny us earthly things (LD 46). But as with most of his gifts, Father is pleased to provide this gift also through means, in this case the means of careful training. In our day and age, proper training includes the financial burden which inevitably comes along with it.

The Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies, with a sincere desire to promote the pursuit of such training, once instituted a committee called the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee. This scholarship committee becomes visible only once a year when a number of highly scored essays are published in *Beacon Lights* magazine, such as the issue currently in your hands. But behind that visible climax of its labors is the organization by the committee of the annual writing contest, whereupon financial rewards are granted on the basis of the quality of writing and reported needs. All essays are read multiple times by the six committee members who score the essays according to the criteria of a pre-approved grading rubric. This year those six committee members included Joel Bodbyl as president, Justin Van

Dyke as secretary, Emily Kuiper as treasurer, Mr. Brian Dykstra from Hope PRC school as teaching advisor, Mr. Tom Pastoor as business advisor, and Rev. Joe Holstege of Zion PRC as spiritual advisor. Thanks especially to Justin Van Dyke and Mr. Brian Dykstra for their labors over the last three years, as their terms have now expired. Thanks also to the twenty-seven applicants who submitted essays to the scholarship committee this year! It is heartening to know the Lord is answering our prayers for spiritually-minded, academically gifted and mature young men and women to pursue these important callings. Please continue to take advantage of the scholarship committee as a resource that is designed for your use and benefit!

It may be of interest to the readers of *Beacon Lights* that the scholarship committee grants its rewards out of an account supplied by church collections, private donations, and from the capital earned by its investments. The current financial situation of the scholarship committee enabled it to distribute \$38,600 of financial assistance to this year's applicants. We are thankful for the opportunity to assist these students with the heavy costs of tuition, textbooks, supplies, and every-day living expenses.

However, if you do the math, \$38,600 distributed to 27 applicants averages to about \$1,430 per applicant. In reality, some applicants were rewarded more and some less than the average. Surely every little bit of assistance counts. But it should not be lost on us that in comparison to the days when the cost of college tuition could be covered by a summer's work in the fields, today's prospective teachers and ministers are faced with a serious financial obstacle. Barring any grants or scholarships, four years at Grand Valley State University will run a young man or woman more than \$40,000 in tuition expenses alone. The private Christian colleges many of our young people desire and are encouraged to attend will run them close to that amount in one simple year.

As great as our need for teachers and ministers is at present, so high are the costs associated with acquiring the necessary training for those callings.

The scholarship committee would love, if possible, to help our prospective teachers and ministers more significantly in the future. Naturally, the implication is that the bottom line of the scholarship committee's fund must grow. The higher the fund, the higher the awards to be distributed. We are thankful to the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches who consider this worthy cause when the collection plate passes and when year-end donations are made.

Please continue to consider this cause in your giving, along with your prayers to the Lord of his harvest, who alone can provide us with capable teachers and ministers.

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