



Worshipping at 330 W. Indiana, Spokane WA

[www.reformedspokane.org](http://www.reformedspokane.org)

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To the congregations of the Protestant Reformed Churches,

It has been quite a while since I wrote a newsletter to the churches on the work here in Spokane. The work here continues to progress, with some changes in our congregation and also a considerable amount of outside interest through new visitors.

Our primary work here is the preaching of the gospel and continuing to advertise and invite people to our worship services. Expository preaching, combined with reverent worship, are a rare combination in our city. You add to that confessionalism and reformed doctrine, and we almost become the only church of our kind here. There are some churches that have men who are well trained in expositional preaching, but generally their worship services are contemporary. And then there are some churches that are quite traditional in worship, but the preaching is generally not biblical exposition and instruction, but more of the Arminian gospel service flavor. We have had people come to our services interested in our worship and liturgy, and we also have visitors come for the preaching. It seems that the number of visitors has increased lately, so perhaps there is a growing awareness of our presence in Spokane.

Over the past 4 months I have been on the Reformed Witness Hour again and this has brought some visitors and phone calls. I am glad to do this, and glad that the program can be produced elsewhere by the good volunteers of the RWH committee. At the same time, I think it's good for me, a local pastor, to be on the air here. Along with the RWH we have been recording one minute promos that run on air. These are in addition to the RWH promos, and they air every half hour, 24 hours a day, on a network of about 8 radio stations in Eastern Washington. I record four of these at once and they run on a rotation. The first two sets of 4 were more introductory to our church, but now I have started working through a doctrinal series. I recorded 4 last week on the

doctrines of revelation and Scripture. People do hear these and respond. We've had a surprising number of new visitors, and comments from different people in the community about these. We even had a gentleman come to a rummage sale advertisement at church and as he was chatting with me, he suddenly said, "I hear you on the radio all the time." Anyhow, pray that the Lord blesses this witness and that there is more name recognition for our church in this city, as well as an understanding of who we are and what we teach and practice as a congregation.

Our congregation has grown in the past year in several ways. We have grown numerically through the birth of some children, most notable being twin boys to Fred and Becky Johnston who are also now expecting another child. We also have some regular visitors who are working with me towards confession of faith and membership. In some of these cases these people are quite committed to attending and even open to private instruction, but have some obstacles/disagreements toward membership. We try to work patiently with them in these areas, and are thankful for their continued presence and contribution to the life of the church, even though they are not yet members. Introducing people to the Reformed Faith, and helping them to see how it works out in their lives, doesn't come "presto" (all at once), but requires time and patience. As we bring the word and instruct, we pray that God uses it to bear fruit. That fruit is not just that we get people into our church as members, but God must and does use it to help individuals grow in their understanding and walk as believers.

A massive boost to our congregation in this past year was the move out here of the Mark and Melinda Moore family from Loveland, CO. They come with five children, and have settled in Idaho, about 40 minutes from where we meet for church. Their presence has been especially good from this point of view, that they have grown up in our denomination and understand how the church functions and what life in the church involves, as well as being a godly example as a family to the other members in the church. They have thrown themselves into different aspects of the life of the church here.

I want to use this as an opportunity to encourage more of you to do the same, maybe not just to Spokane, but to other of our outlying smaller and struggling congregations. The gospel does not spread, and the church does not grow through missions, when everyone stays in one place. The church may get stronger and larger where you are, but we also need a pioneer spirit for the spread of

the gospel. I encourage you to consider this prayerfully. We are glad to hear that a young man from one of our congregations is considering moving out here to attend college this fall. We hope that works out for him and us.

The congregation is also growing spiritually. Just now, I am working on a sermon on Galatians 3:16 for Pentecost Sunday, walking in the Spirit, and am reminded of what spiritual maturity looks like. What I am going to say here is true of members in every church, but it's something that I think is quite obvious here. As we walk the Christian life there are two dangers to avoid. The one is that I think that because I have liberty, I can exercise that as I please, and then the flesh gets in the way of my spiritual growth. I hold on to the world. The other danger is legalism, I understand what I must do and be externally, and I do that, I conform to an external standard, but at the same time I exalt myself to a position where I can judge others who are not doing what I am doing. In neither case am I being led by the spirit. In one case the flesh and its desires leads me, and in the other, I am led by the law and pride. As we grow in our spiritual walk, this is what we must seek, more and more to be delivered from the world and the flesh, and at the same time to depend on grace and not self. I would say that our church is growing in this way.

Another aspect of the development of a young congregation is towards self-sufficiency. This includes being self-governing, self-supporting and self-propagating.

In the past year we replaced our first deacon with another man from the congregation, Ed Banton. This means that we've had some rotation/change in the office bearers. The new deacon is, I'm sure, the oldest deacon in the PRC, at 79 years old, but he still has the health, capacity, and willingness to serve and we are thankful for him.

In an effort to be more self-supporting, the church bought its first real estate this past year. The house that we as a family live in was owned by us, until this past year the church purchased it from us. They were unable to do this outright, but had enough money in the building fund to make almost a 50% deposit on the house. Our goal as a church is to get this paid off, if possible, within about five years. We cannot express, enough, our gratitude to your congregations for taking collections for our building fund. These are greatly helping us in our goal toward self-sufficiency.

I already mentioned the growth of our congregation. Young families are essential to this

in a church that holds to the truth of God's covenant being established in generations. We are thankful that God has given us this kind of growth here and that he continues to bring other interested individuals and families to our services too. Sometimes we have visitors who come regularly for a while, end up disagreeing with something and so we don't see them for months, and then they come back because, in their own words, it's difficult to find anything else that's solid and biblical. We just don't know whom God will bring to our service each week.

We hosted, with Lynden PRC Young People, our second Summer Young People's Retreat last year. We have plans in place for a third one this Summer, and already have good registration numbers. This has been good for the Young People from our smaller Western congregations who are quite overwhelmed by the numbers at the YP convention, and it has also been good for our congregation to be able to participate in an activity that includes others from our denomination.

We have also continued to have two or three lectures a year. Last year we had Rev. Eriks and Lanning come out and speak on the Emergent Church Movement. I also gave a lecture on Reformation Day on Martin Luther. Recently we had Rev. VanOverloop come and speak on the subject, "Does your Church Need a Vision?" He did a nice job of reminding us that more important than a "vision statement" for the church, is active members who serve willingly in the body.

I hope this report doesn't sound too glowing. It's not my desire to sell the work to you, but simply to inform you so that you can continue to pray for us. The reality is that this is work that requires much patience with the Lord. At the same time, as we survey the progress of this work over the past 4 years since we moved out here, it's amazing to see what changes God has brought.

If you're passing through this way this Summer, be sure to give us a call. I'd love to spend some time introducing you to the work here. And, if you can, we'd love to have you stop to worship with us too.

Please continue to pray for us.

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