

and stamina. How our besetting sins weigh us down. How our sinful nature tires us. How the temptations of the world distract us. To finish the race is impossible on our own. Yet in Jesus Christ there is the strength to run this race and overcome every obstacle. For He sits at the right hand of the throne of God in power. Look to Him in faith. Look in such a way that you rely upon Him for all that you need in order to run the race of the Christian life. Look not to yourself. Look not to those broken reeds upon which the world relies. Fix your eye of faith solely on Jesus, who sits on the right hand of God.



Look to Jesus, remembering that He is the author and finisher of our faith.

That He is the author of our faith means that our faith originates in Him. No, faith does not originate in us. On account of the fall and the corruption it brought to the human race, we do not have even the ability to

believe. Faith must be given to us from above. Jesus works that faith irresistibly in the hearts of all those for whom He gave His life as an atonement for sin.

Jesus is also the finisher of our faith. He is the one who brings faith to completion, to its goal. And the completion or goal of faith is our own glory. For our glory Jesus died for us in shame—to earn it. For our glory Jesus also brings us to faith in Him so that we are empowered in Him to run the race that leads to glory.

Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith only because He has been set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

For this reason we must look to Jesus.

He it is that gives us faith.

And He it is that will finish our faith, bringing us to glory.

Look to Him, that we may run the race set before us.



EDITORIAL

PROF. RUSSELL DYKSTRA

Pre-Synodical Report

What do you get for \$1.6 million?

The denominational labors of the Protestant Reformed Churches are directed by the annual synod. The churches empower the twenty delegates to govern the work of the churches in common. Synod also tells the churches what the work will cost monetarily. Each family is assessed a certain amount, collected by the local congregation as part of the budget of each.

The budgeted amount for all the labors of the churches in 2012

was over \$1.8 million. After adjustments for existing balances, that was reduced to about \$1.6 million. Each family is assessed \$871 for 2012. From the reports in the synodical agenda, the amount approved at the synod of 2012 for next year should not be a drastic change.

Now \$1.6 million is a lot of money. A tremendous amount of money. Yet, viewed another way, for the contribution of \$871 over one year's time, a tremendous amount of kingdom work is supported. And

here is another perspective: The per-family synodical assessment is about what the average tuition-paying family in the PRC pays—each month.¹

Every synod, and all the committees, are deeply conscious of their

¹ That is an estimate, based on budgets of Hope PR Christian School, Walker, and Covenant CHS. Hope's tuition is from \$413 per month (one in kindergarten) to \$1,019 per month (four or more in school). Covenant's families will pay from \$580 to \$1,305 per month. Many of these families (from Hope and Covenant) overlap.

responsibility before God to do the work to which He calls them—they answer to the King of the church. At the same time, they know that they must be good stewards of the money that God provides, which money the saints willingly contribute. All the committees spend conservatively. The committees rarely spend all that is allotted them, and the surpluses offset the budget for the next year.

Synod 2012 convenes June 12, D.V. The agenda is in. The agenda contains reports to the synod of the work of the various synodical committees. The committees ask for synodical approval of past labors, as well as of proposals for future labors. To put it differently, they report how they spent the money last year, and how they propose to spend it in the year following.

So, what do the Protestant Reformed Churches get for \$1.6 million?

Allow me first to point out what the PRC are NOT getting for their money. The synodical assessments are not financing agricultural programs, schools, hospitals, or abstinence programs. There are not reports on programs for drug awareness, race relations, better nutrition, the homeless, or HIV/AIDS. Nor is any of the money going to adoption agencies or orphanages.

Why not? Do not the members of the PRC care about any of these things? That would be the wrong conclusion to draw. The correct answer is: None of the above is “ecclesiastical” business, and therefore all are excluded from the ecclesiastical

assemblies. (Church Order, Art. 30: “In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner.”)

Christ commands His church to preach the gospel to all the nations, administer the sacraments, and exercise Christian discipline in the church. All three of those activities are the work of the local congregation. Yet the churches work together on projects, ecclesiastical matters, that one congregation could not do on its own. Synod’s work is strictly “ecclesiastical matters.”

Returning to the question, the answer is, first, that the churches’ money supports mission work. Solid, Reformed, God-honoring, church-establishing mission work. The larger portion is outside of North America.

Foreign Mission Work

The Foreign Mission Committee reports to synod on the diligent labors of Revs. Kleyn and Smit and their families in the Philippines. These men are involved in an amazing amount of labors that makes the reader feel a bit tired just reading of it—preaching, teaching, traveling. They are doing what they are supported to do—bring the gospel and the Reformed truths everywhere they can. Their report begins:

Our labors in the past year have for the most part consisted of a continuation of the work we reported on a year ago: in the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in Cubao (Manila), the All of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Gabaldon (Nueva Ecija), the First Reformed Church in Muzon (Bu-

lacan), the Christian Faith Ministry in Batasan Hills (Manila), and the Reformed Free Church in Inayauan (Negros Occidental). In addition to the above, we have also taken up regular work in the Maranatha Church in Valenzuela, Manila.

What we do not realize is all the extra work that goes on. Free of charge, if I may say. Let’s look in on some of the labors of the missionaries and committees of which most of us are unaware. Here is an excerpt from Doon PRC’s report:

First, the sub-committee of our council meets regularly with our missionaries via Skype, at least once a month, and usually on the fourth Thursday of the month. This committee thoroughly dissects the monthly field report provided by our missionaries and approves the labors of each man, as well as approving financial requests for reimbursement by Rev. Smit and Rev. Kleyn. We ask additional questions of the men to attempt to obtain the fullest understanding possible of the work there. The sub-committee reports heartfelt confidence in the men God has called to the field, and also an excellent working relationship with them.

Secondly, our council, at its monthly meeting each first Tuesday, treats recommendations of the sub-committee and meets also with our missionaries via Skype. This method of communication presents the entire council of nine men the opportunity to address our missionaries personally, and in an individual or a collective manner. We find this method to be very profitable....

The third method our council uses to evaluate the Philippine mission field is the annual sending of one of our members as part of a two-man delegation to the field of labor to observe and report on the work there. This was most recently accomplished from January 18-31, 2012....

And that is only Doon's council—the FMC itself meets regularly besides. And the FMC reports not only on the mission work in the Philippines, but of ongoing work in Myanmar, though the time is not right, they report, for a missionary there. All of this, to send forth the word to the nations wherever Christ sends.

Also included in the mission work supported by the churches is the Limerick mission in the Republic of Ireland. Rev. McGeown labors there faithfully and zealously. Our sister congregation, the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland, oversees the work, but is unable to finance it at this time. There can be no doubt that this is money well spent for the cause of the spread of the Reformed faith and the gathering of the church.

Domestic Mission Work

For our synodical assessment of \$871, the churches are able to support in common also the good work in Pittsburgh. Rev. Bruinsma continues to nurture the saints there in Reformed doctrine, walk of life, and church government—preparing them for organization, in God's time, D.V. He manifests a zeal to send the word out to other places as much as he is able.

The Domestic Mission Committee, desiring to call a second home missionary, reports on other investigatory work as they seek in particular a place where Christ gives an open door. They report that no place has been found that would justify calling a second missionary.

What we do not realize, again, are the many hours spent making sure that the work is carried on in a Reformed (i.e., biblical) way. The DMC reports on many hours of writing and meeting expended by missionary, calling church (Southwest PRC), and the missionary.

Both the FMC and the DMC wrestled much with the matter of giving missionaries a certain term of service on a conditional basis, and both come with separate proposals. If the minister and his family work well on the field, he would be given another term of service (and this is to be repeated, say, every three years). If not, the minister will be declared eligible for a call. The FMC adds the provision that the foreign missionary would not be eligible for a call during his term of service. Synodical delegates will have to judge whether or not these proposals 1) are in harmony with the Church Order, 2) are in fact equivalent to the manner in which a seminary professor is dealt with, and 3) will serve well the cause of missions. Synod will also need to harmonize the two proposals, at the very least the terminology.

A Seminary

A large portion of the synodical budget supports the Protestant Reformed Theological School in which

students are trained to be solid, Reformed preachers and pastors. Student numbers are down to but four, three preparing for the ministry in the PRC, and one, Vernon Ibe (pronounced like Ebay), preparing to be a preacher in the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines. Mr. Ibe completes his studies this year. His home church in the Philippines requested that the PRC synod examine their student, and the Theological School Committee recommends an exam that includes elements from the synodical as well as the classical exam. The TSC reports that next year's lone fourth-year student, Erik Guichelaar, plans to do his internship in Loveland PRC.

Among the many things that money cannot buy is the Christian spirit of Mr. Ibe. He is one among a thousand—a capable, diligent, and humble servant coming to a seminary in America who, after five years, remains steadfastly committed to returning to his native land. Vernon and his wife, Melody, cheerfully leave behind the comfort, the wealth, and the conveniences of America, zealous to bring the gospel to their own land and people. Such students, and their wives, are an inestimable blessing to the seminary. And, FYI, his financial support was not from the assessments, but from free-will offerings for foreign students.

The TSC also reports on the completed remodeling of the building (financed exclusively by private donations—bequests) resulting in a beautiful and functional building. They propose 1) holding off on Prof. Cammenga's permanent ten-

ure one year until his Th.M degree is complete; 2) hiring Mr. Charles Terpstra on a permanent basis and expanding his labors beyond that of librarian; 3) granting Prof. Dykstra a partial sabbatical to do research and writing on Christian schools; and 4) seeking release from the mandate to find a way to obtain instruction in the Dutch language for our seminarians.

Contact with Other Churches

Confessing from the heart that the church is “one, holy, catholic church,” the PRC have a standing committee (the Contact Committee) that seeks to manifest the unity of the church on earth as much as that is possible. The CC reports on the blessed relationship with the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland, as close a sister as one could want. Part of the relationship includes a yearly visit to CPRCNI—a visit that includes a modified church visitation, a visit to the mission field in Limerick, and, generally, cementing the bond between us.

The renewal of a sister-church relation with Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore was approved at the synod of 2011. With joy the CC reports that CPRCNI has no objections to this relationship and, accordingly, the CC asks synod to confirm this relationship. In the last year, the new sister in Singapore endured the painful process of release of their pastor (not for sin, but according to Church Order, Art. 12). Because of the vacancy, the CC has supplied CERC’s pulpit as much as possible,

with CERC bearing the costs. The CC brings a proposal to synod to call, temporarily, a minister-on-loan for Covenant.

The CC reports on contact in Germany, with the BERG (Confessing Protestant-Reformed Congregation) and with Dr. Klautke. Dr. Klautke’s theological school has endured reproach and attack for standing faithfully for the infallibility of Scripture and the doctrines of sovereign grace. The CC plans to send two members to Germany this summer to encourage the saints and to seek closer unity in the truth.

The CC also reports that the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia, with whom we maintain a corresponding relationship, has suffered a blow in the loss of one of their ministers, who was granted release from his labors due to ill health.

Concerning the six churches in Namibia, visited two summers ago by Profs. Gritters and Dykstra, the CC informs synod that currently little advance is possible toward any official relationship. The six churches remain part of a larger body of apostatizing churches, and will eventually be forced to face the possibility of leaving their denomination. Unofficial contact is proposed, along with the translating of PRC material into Afrikaans.

The CC also reports on their delegation’s visit to NAPARC (North American Presbyterian and Reformed Council). The CC brings a recommendation that the synod approve sending observers again this year.

Catechism Books

The churches in common maintain their own catechism curriculum. The Catechism Book Committee seeks to make improvements to these books as directed by synod. Their report indicates the seriousness with which they take their work. Delegates will see the fruit of their careful study and review of the Confessions book of the PRC, and the recommendations concerning the proof-texts given for the Heidelberg Catechism.

Ministers Emeriti

As part of the commitment of the PRC to the gospel ministry, the churches gladly support the ministers who have given their lives to the work of the gospel ministry. The Emeritus Committee brings requests for these eleven ministers and for one widow of a deceased minister. They bring no recommendation whether or not to change the minimum level of support.

Stated Clerk

Without fanfare, Mr. Don Doezema reports that he has done the ordinary work of the stated clerk. And that he has, with the capable assistance of Mrs. Doezema. And at as little cost to the churches as it could possibly be done.

Meetings of Classes

The synodical budget finances the meetings of Classis East and Classis West. The classes also send reports to synod. Among other things, both classes recommend to synod the support of smaller churches. Without this support,

these churches could not afford to call their own pastor, and the gospel would not be preached regularly from Protestant Reformed pulpits in Dyer, Roselle, Kalamazoo, Lynden, Edmonton, Lacombe, Spokane, Sioux Falls, or Wingham.

All that, only as a summary, you get for \$1.6 million.

But, it is not about money, is it? Finances are *an* aspect of the work of synod. God provides ministers, elders, and others who assist in the labors, the spiritual work of the church. He also provides the necessary funds.

Yet we are deeply conscious of the truth of Lord's Day 50 "that neither our care nor industry, nor even Thy gifts, can profit us without Thy blessing."

Therefore pray for the blessing of God on the work of the Protestant Reformed Churches and on the labors of the PR synod in Crete, IL.

If you are in the area, do come to the pre-synodical service in Crete Protestant Reformed Church, Monday, June 11, at 7 P.M. And you are welcome to visit the examination of Seminarian Ibe on Tuesday morning and following, and the deliberations

of synod, most of which are open to the public.

And if you are in the Grand Rapids area, please join the seminary for the commencement of Mr. Ibe in First PRC on Tuesday, June 19 at 7:30. Prof. Cammenga will speak.

Pray for synod. The agenda is mainly "ordinary" and contains few controversial elements. Nonetheless, pray for the direction of the Spirit and the blessing of God. Without that, it is \$1.6 million that will testify against us. With His blessing, it will honor Him, and bless His people. ∞

EDITOR'S NOTE

Included in this Pentecost issue is a sermon by Prof. Engelsma on John 7:37-39. A year ago, a reader of the *SB*, having heard the sermon preached, recommended that this be printed in the *SB*. All agreed that it was worthy of printing, but the length of the sermon was a question. Articles of this length, common in the

"old days," we today ordinarily will split into two parts. But the sermon does not divide well. Since the sermon is not only edifying, but is also a fine model for ministers and seminarians, the editors decided to print the entire sermon in this issue.

—RJD ∞

FEATURE ARTICLE

PROF. DAVID ENGELSMAS

Out-flowing Spirit of Jesus

(A Pentecost Sermon)

Prof. Engelsma is professor emeritus of Dogmatics and Old Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

Sermon preached on Pentecost Sunday 2011.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)

John 7:37-39