



Canturay Reformed Church



Pastor-Elect Ibe during his exam



Pastor Flores receiving his exam diploma

## PROTESTANT REFORMED FOREIGN MISSIONS - THE PHILIPPINES - - DECEMBER 2012 NEWSLETTER -

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### **First Pastor of the Berean PRCP**

The highlight of the past months has been the return of the Ibe family after Pastor Ibe completed his seminary training at the PRC Seminary and submitted to a synodical examination at the PRCA Synod in June.

The Berean PRC called Pastor Ibe to be pastor of the congregation, and he accepted the call in September. On Thursday, November 1, he was examined according to article 4 of our Church Order by the combined consistories of the Berean PRC and the First Reformed Church. Rev. Kleyn and myself asked the questions at the request of the consistories, and there was opportunity for the officebearers to ask follow-up questions after each part of the examination.

In attendance at this examination as observers were Rev. David Overway and Mr. Leon Uittenboogaard, representing the Doon PRC and the FMC, as well as Rev. Ronald Van Overloop, who was Pastor Ibe's internship mentor and was already nearby in Singapore for pulpit supply there in October and November.

Having heard Pastor Ibe's specimen sermon and all of his answers, the consistories unanimously approved him to be ready for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the Berean Protestant Reformed Church.

His ordination took place on Friday, November 2, with Rev. Overway leading the worship service, preaching on Jeremiah 9:23-24 ("Glorying in Knowing Jehovah"), and leading the actual ordination of the brother into the ministry of the Word. The ceremony of the laying on of the hands on Pastor Ibe was conducted by the 4 PRCA ministers present.

Since then, Pastor Ibe has preached his inaugural sermon, overseen the installation of an elder, and administered the Lord's Supper.

The Berean PRC celebrated on November 19, 2012, its 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a Protestant Reformed congregation with much joy and thanksgiving to God, especially for the gift, from the hand of the Lord of the harvest, of a Filipino preacher of His Word.

Of course, we could write a lot more about the entire experience of the examination and ordination. Suffice it now for us to say that we are very, very thankful to see our Lord provide graciously the gift of Pastor Ibe to the Berean congregation. And, we are very humbled to have been part

of the preparation of the Berean congregation for this gift of their own Filipino pastor. We give much thanks to Jehovah who does remember and bless His church militant because His mercy endures forever.

### **What Now?**

"What will Rev. Smit do now?" That is probably not only your question, but it was also my question a few months ago. What work will the Lord have me do since I have finished fulfilling the work as pastor in the Berean congregation?

Actually, the Lord did not make the answer to that question hard to find. Rev. Kleyn and I have worked out some changes in the division of our labors here, and this update is being treated currently by the Council of the Doon PRC and the FMC. We will inform you of these changes once the necessary approvals have been given.

We have received some new work with a group and congregation in the Marikina area, another suburb of Metro Manila. These have become more interested in the Reformed Faith, and we have planned, at their request, to provide lectures on topics about which they are eager to learn. Our next lecture with them is scheduled for Thursday, December 6. We will see how the Lord leads us with them, and, of course, let you know.

### **Update on Progress Towards PRCP Federation**

Necessary meetings and discussion towards federation have been put on hold because of the need for the examinations of the pastors of the Berean PRCP and the First Reformed Church of Muzon, Bulacan. There was a joint meeting on November 1, as noted above, and then another combined consistory meeting on November 30 for the examination of Pastor John Flores according to article 9 of the Church Order. As a result, the work of discussion on article 67 of the Church Order (concerning special services) and the validity of the baptisms of other churches, particularly the Roman Catholic Church, will need to be pushed back to future meetings.

This should not be viewed as bad. This delay is a good thing. The recent combined meetings for the exams have given to the consistories an experience in

the basic procedures and practices of a meeting of a Reformed broader assembly (classis). Besides that, the exams have also increased greatly their respect towards the office of the ministry of the Word and Sacraments. The officebearers, and members of the churches alike, commented that the examinations emphasized that a pastor must be properly trained, called, and sent for the important and sacred calling of the preaching of the Gospel. This is a good witness in a country where many say they are "pastor," but, in fact, they have neither been trained nor sent.

### **Examination of Pastor John Flores**

With a view to the future PRCP federation, the combined consistories examined Pastor John Flores on Friday, November 30, according to the requirements of Article 9 of the Church Order. Pastor Flores is the pastor of the First Reformed Church in Muzon, Bulacan. This examination was similar to what Pastor Vernon Ibe sustained, except there were two additional sections of questions about the Church Order and Protestant Reformed distinctives. The combined consistories voted unanimously to approve the exam, and when the federation is formed in the future, the Lord willing, Pastor Flores will be accorded the rights and privileges of a minister in good standing in the future denomination. As missionaries, we are very thankful for this successful exam because we have been preparing Pastor Flores for this exam for over 2 years. We also rejoice in the evidence of the Lord's blessing of a gifted and distinctively Reformed pastor for the First Reformed congregation and for the future denomination, the Lord willing.

### **Developments in Negros Occidental**

On Wednesday, October 10, Rev. Kleyn and I flew from Manila to Bacolod City, and then we drove a rented car for 3 hours from Bacolod City to Inayauan. We visited with Pastor Rosal on Wednesday afternoon for awhile, and then continued on to Sipalay where we had supper and stayed overnight. Thursday morning and afternoon we conducted the conference in Canturay at the church there which is committed to the Reformed Faith. We lectured about the sovereignty of God, Reformed worship, family worship, and infant baptism. Later on Thursday evening, we met with 6 pastors, who requested to the FMC that we continue to come regularly for instruction in Reformed doctrine and in church government. The FMC and Doon Council have approved their request for more instruction, and we planned our next lectures on Wednesday, January 16, 2013, and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays, normally, of the following months.

While we had a little extra time on Friday afternoon, October 12, waiting in Bacolod City for our return flight from Bacolod to Manila, we visited and renewed contact with Mr. and Mrs. Rudy Corpus and family.

### **Family Things**

We have enjoyed visitors again since the last newsletter. Rev. David Overway and Elder Ike Uittenboogard visited our work here around the time of the

November 1 examination and November 2 ordination of Pastor Vernon Ibe. They were lodged at the Kleyns' house. In addition to the work with Pastor Ibe, the committee also fulfilled the regular work of an oversight visit: family visitation, separate visits with the missionaries and their wives, visiting the different churches and groups with whom we labor, and some time for relaxation. Both have visited the Philippines before, and they were happy to have enjoyed once again Filipino life for a week and half.

We enjoyed the visit of Rev. R. Van Overloop, who especially surprised the churches here in connection with Pastor Vernon Ibe's exam and ordination. He found a place in the Kleyns' house somewhere to stay over a few nights before returning to Singapore on Saturday, November 3.

A little later in November, Lynette and Peter Kleyn (from the Nick Kleyn family in Grace PRC), and Stephanie Van Maanen (from Hull PRC) came to visit. They helped us enjoy a traditional US Thanksgiving dinner at the Kleyns' house on November 22. In the middle of their stay here, they also spent a few days and a Lord's Day on November 25 in Singapore with our fellow saints in the CERC of Singapore, which is a short 3 hour flight from Manila. They returned home on November 30.

Our children are counting down the days till the end of school for the calendar year, 2012. Their last day for this year is Friday, December 14, and classes do not resume until Tuesday, January 8. Now, there may be a few young readers who are feeling suddenly a little jealous about such a long holiday break! However, there is a price to pay for such a long holiday break, which is that the school year begins in the first week of August! Perhaps, that will help you, young readers, not feel so bad.

### **Thanks**

We conclude our newsletter with a word of sincere thanks. We are very thankful for the faithful and visible support that the work here and we all have received through another year of joys and sorrows. Indeed, the Lord has been good to us on the mission field in many ways. We are so very, very thankful for the members, young and older, of our churches in Canada and the USA who support us weekly and faithfully.

All of us here wish to you the Lord's richest blessings as the end of 2012 and the start of 2013 passes quickly. May our Lord continue to be your only comfort and blessed hope.

In His service,

*Rev. Richard J. Smit*

1 December 2012