

PRCA FOREIGN MISSIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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FIRST REFORMED CHURCH OF BULACAN

Rather than bringing you up to date concerning our work in various churches and fellowships within and outside Metro Manila, or concerning the training we provide pastors in various locations throughout the Philippines, or concerning new doors the Lord has recently opened to us, I decided to devote this newsletter to our work in the First Reformed Church of Bulacan (partly pictured above – I'll explain later).

I do this because, in addition to our past and present work in the Berean Protestant Reformed Church (a name and thus a church that is no doubt familiar to most), the Lord has also given us much to do in the FRCB. This church has been and continues to be a significant part of our mission labors. One clear evidence of this is that I make twice-monthly visits to the FRCB for preaching, teaching, and consistory work. Another evidence is the fact that the FRCB is working with the BPRC toward the formation of a Protestant Reformed denomination here in the Philippines, after which (the Lord willing) the denomination will take up the work of seeking to establish a sister church relationship with the PRCA.

The FRCB (located in Muzon, Bulacan, approximately 1.5 hours from where we live in Antipolo) was originally a congregation of the Jesus Our Hope for the Nations Ministries. That denomination is Arminian and Pentecostal, which gives you a sense of what the FRCB came from. The congregation in Muzon was established in 1999, with Rev. John Flores as its pastor.

Early in 2002, conflict began between Rev. Flores and the National Council of the denomination. The conflict centered around differences in doctrine, specifically concerning the gospel of God's sovereign grace in salvation. But Rev. Flores and the congregation in Muzon also had concerns regarding practices in worship.

What brought about these differences, in the providence

of God, was the fact that Rev. Flores was studying materials concerning the Protestant Reformation, such as the decisions of the Synod of Dort in response to Jacob Arminius, John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, and materials regarding the Regulative Principle of Worship.



FRCB's Church Building in Muzon, Bulacan

In October of 2002, the officebearers and congregation separated from the Arminian and Pentecostal denomination, and eventually adopted the name, "The First Reformed Church of Bulacan." October 2002 is therefore a significant date for the FRCB, marking the time when the Lord separated them to be a Reformed church, set them on the path of continued reformation, and has since led them to become Reformed in doctrine, worship, church government, and life.

Soon after the initial separation and reformation, Rev. Flores took up further studies in a Reformed seminary in Manila. The studies were indeed profitable for his growth in the Reformed faith, but the problem was that the seminary was Baptist and dispensational.

What helped Rev. Flores immensely in these studies was the fact that he came across a copy of Rev. Herman Hoeksema's Reformed Dogmatics in the seminary library (yes, in the library of a Reformed Baptist seminary in the Philippines!). Rev. Flores eagerly devoured its contents and leaned heavily on this book for his understanding of the truth and for his class assignments – something that was not always appreciated by his dogmatics professor. An interesting anecdote in this connection is what happened with the library's copy of Hoeksema's Dogmatics. From year to year, it was moved higher up in the shelves so that it was more difficult to reach. And eventually it disappeared altogether from the library. But already the Lord had used this book to give Rev. Flores a good grounding in the Reformed truth. And in this way, the Lord used Rev. Flores to lead the congregation in Muzon into a right understanding of His truth.



Rev. John Flores, wife Rose Ann, John David, John Calvin

The FRCB became aware of the PRCA and of our missionary work in the Philippines through the internet. This led to a request from the FRCB to have one of our missionaries visit regularly in order to strengthen them further in their understanding of Reformed faith and practice.

Beginning in 2010, I have labored in the FRCB two Sundays each month. This has involved preaching (including Heidelberg Catechism sermons), teaching the youth, leading classes in Reformed church government (studying the Church Order of Dordt), and monthly consistory meetings.

In the process of the work, my wife and I have come to know and love the saints in FRCB dearly. We very much enjoy and appreciate their hospitality and their friendship in Christ. One of the highlights of our visits is our Sunday noon meal and fellowship. But a more significant highlight is the question and answer period after each worship service, which underscore the congregation's keen interest in the truth that has been preached, and in its application to their lives.

It has been encouraging to see spiritual growth in the FRCB over the past years. After completing our study of the Church Order of Dordt, the FRCB adopted it as their own. The sacraments are now administered in the Reformed way, including infant baptism. Psalms are sung in the worship services, using The Psalter itself as well as various Psalter

numbers that have been translated into Tagalog. Regular catechism classes are conducted for the children and young people. And the consistory and congregation continue to give evidence of a desire to grow in the truth and to do things in the Reformed and biblical way.

The congregation has also grown numerically, with the addition of a number of families, and with the addition of newborn children (the latter being a fruit, under God's blessing, of a proper understanding of God's covenant). FRCB now numbers 18 families (approximately 50 members).

We thank God for His blessing and this fruit.



FRCB Consistory: Elder Ronald Mercado, Rev. John Flores, Rev. D. Kleyn, Elder Reden Zuniega, Deacon Lito Trias

One more significant piece of news regarding the FRCB is the oral examination of Rev. Flores which took place on November 30, 2012. (That, by the way, explains the picture at the top of this newsletter – all who were able to gather in Muzon, Bulacan for Rev. Flores' exam.)

The exam was conducted with a view to the establishment of a future federation. Since Rev. Flores did not receive his ministerial training in a Protestant Reformed seminary, he was examined by the combined consistories of the FRCB and the BPRC in accordance with Article 9 of the Church Order. A significant part of his preparation for this exam were the 7M (pastors' training classes) that we have been conducting for the past three years.

Rev. Flores successfully sustained his exam and this means that he will be accorded the full rights and privileges of a minister of the Word and Sacraments in a future Protestant Reformed denomination in the Philippines, when that is established, the Lord willing. We thank the Lord of the harvest for providing men to serve in His church here.

I trust that this newsletter has helped make you more familiar with a church that is, though far away, nevertheless a dear "sister" in Christ. And hopefully the name, "First Reformed Church of Bulacan," will mean more to you whenever you might hear it again in the future.

In Christ's service and on behalf of us all,

Rev. Daniel Kleyn