

Dear Congregations of the PRCA,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Here is an update regarding our labor and life here in service to our sister churches of the PRCP in the metro Manila area and in our continuing PRCA mission work in Southern Negros Occidental.

Family Life

One of the two main highlights of our family life in the past several months is the blessing of the birth of Violet Joy to Rev. and Mrs. Holstege on December 10. Mother and baby were able to return home soon after birth, and they are both doing well. We rejoice with the Holstege family in the blessing and gift of another covenant child. Arrangements are being made for Violet to receive the sign and seal of the covenant in baptism soon in the Provident PRC with Rev. Holstege administering the sacrament to the family's new daughter and sister.

The second main highlight of our family life was the wedding of Mr. and Mrs. Brian (Rebekah) Buitier in Redlands, CA, on Friday, December 27. With much-appreciated travel assistance from our churches, my family was able to attend and participate in the wedding. For those unable to attend, the wedding was livestreamed to friends and family throughout North America and in the Philippines. We rejoice with Brian and Rebekah, being now joined together in the Lord in lifelong marriage, and going forward down life's pathway together in faith in Jehovah Who, according to His promises in Christ, builds their godly home. (Psalm 127:1a)

In addition to officiating at the wedding, I preached in one service on December 22 and another on December 29 in our Hope-Redlands congregation. We enjoyed the opportunity to worship with the congregation, and enjoyed the hospitality and fellowship with friends, family, and church family in the latter part of December. The brief visit was a great encouragement for our continuing labor and life here.

On Sunday, January 12, the Lord touched the Taal volcano, and it erupted spectacularly. The Lord displayed clearly His awesome power in the volcanic eruption, located about 60 km directly south of our houses and on which some of our visitors over the past several years have even hiked. The towering ash cloud drifted northward so that by Sunday night the ash was falling in our subdivision and by morning left a thin, gritty coat over everything exposed to the sky. The particles of volcanic ash are actually harmful to breathe so extra caution has been taken by area residents to clean up the ash. Even at our houses, we were careful with ash clean up (with wet mops (inside) and water (outside), no sweeping). Officials warn of a possible larger eruption of the Taal volcano, which could possibly bring larger amounts of ash northward over our area. We are preparing for that possibility. Nevertheless, we do not live in terror and panic, but by faith we find our peace and comfort in Psalm 104:32 and the truth that Jehovah is our God and the God of that smoking mountain, too. It is His clear and comforting sign of the imminent, final appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The children are back at school again at Faith Academy nearby, except on January 13 and 14 when classes were cancelled for cleanup of the gritty layer of Taal volcanic ash, spread over the whole campus. After two unusual "ash days," school resumed on January 15. FA's "Spring Break" is scheduled from March 16 to 23, probably a little earlier than "Spring Breaks" in our schools in Canada or the USA. This second semester ends on Friday, May 29, the Lord willing.

PRCP Theological School

With thanksgiving to God, we can report that our first semester of classes was completed on December 6, and final exams were finished on December 13. The second semester began on January 14 so that we are now at the end of our third week of classes.

We have two students (one a pre-seminary student, the other our full-time seminary student) in NT Greek Grammar class (Rev. Smit). Hermeneutics (Rev. Holstege), Homiletics (Rev. Kleyn), Church History (Rev. Kleyn), and Dogmatics-Anthropology (Rev. Smit) are being taught again in this second semester. Classes are held in the mornings on Tuesdays through Fridays.

Our full-time student is Mr. Jeremiah Pascual. He and his wife, Leslie, were blessed with the birth of a son on November 1. His name is Iohanne Cauvin, "after the Latin and French name of John Calvin," according to what Mr. Jeremiah Pascual explained to us. He was baptized by Pastor John Flores at the PRC in Bulacan on December 15. We rejoice with our brother and sister in the precious gift from the LORD of a covenant child.

Our part-time student, enrolled only in NT Greek, is Mr. Emmanuel Jasojaso. He and his wife and children are members of the Provident PRC in Marikina, where Rev. Holstege labors. He currently is a full-time teacher, but he has made the time to fit in NT Greek study this school year with a view to enrollment in the PRCP Seminary in the near future, the Lord willing.

The due date for submission of enrollment for new students is at the end of February. Classis will approve new students for enrollment at its next regular meeting on June 12, 2020. After that, we can report on the number of students for the 2020-2021 school year. Course preparations for the next school year are already underway.

A seminary library of theological books continues to grow in one of the rooms of the guest house on the Kleyns' property. This room can be air conditioned in order to avoid mold build-up on the books. The good selection of books, thus far, has been helpful already to the student.

PRCP Growth

The Classis of the PRCP approved some changes that affect the involvement of our PRCA missionaries in the PRCP. Before the October 31/November 30 meetings of the Classis, there were two standing committees: Committee 1 and Committee 2. Since 2014, each committee had two of our missionaries as advisors. Now, in order to spread the growing workload among more men, the Classis has

expanded the number of standing committees from 2 to 4. Each committee has 3 members of pastors and elders (or former elders), with one missionary advisor. The committee mandates with the missionary advisors are:

- C1- Theological School (Smit)
- C2- Missions, Contact with Other Churches (Holstege)
- C3- Finance, Emeritus, Seminary Student Aid (Kleyn)
- C4- Translation, Publication (Holstege)

Progress on a PRCP Tagalog translation of the Heidelberg Catechism continues. C4 is recommending to the Classis in February 2020 further review by C4 before final adoption is recommended. Final adoption allows the translation to be used in preaching and teaching in the PRCP congregations and mission work.

Classis reaffirmed the role of missionaries of the PRCA, or other sister churches laboring in their midst, in its broader assembly when it approved for its Rules of Order on October 31 the following decision: "the missionaries of the PRCP or sister churches shall have advisory votes in all matters during Classis meetings. They may give their advice after giving priority to the opinions and suggestions of the official delegates."

PRCP Missions

The PRCP has a mission work in Albueria, Leyte. The calling church of the mission work is the PRC in Bulacan whose pastor is Rev. J. Flores. The Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Albueria is visited every month by a delegation, usually consisting of Rev. J. Flores and an elder or deacon. This delegation preaches, visits the brethren, and disburses benevolence according to need. In January 2020, all of the members of C2 (Missions, Contact), Rev. J. Flores, Elder. E. Mescallado, and Elder B. Montoya, visited the PRFA in Leyte on January 12.

A missionary call was extended in June 2019 to Rev. V. Ibe. He accepted the call in July, but then later needed to withdraw his acceptance. The PRCP Consistory approved his withdrawal and announced this publicly in the PRCP in November as follows:

Last September 29, 2019, the Consistory of the PRC in Bulacan approved the request of Rev. Vernon Ibe to withdraw his previous decision to serve as local missionary in PRFA, Leyte, due to the following reasons: (1) Unavailability of Christian schools for secondary level; and (2) Should Rev. Ibe consider home schooling as an alternative, the allotted budget will not be sufficient to cover the educational cost of his children. Therefore, the previously announced ordination and installation for the missionary set on November 17, 2019, will no longer push through. Let us continue to uphold our brethren in PRFA, Leyte, in our prayers that the Lord will provide them a missionary in His time.

PRCP Contact with Other Churches

The Classis of the PRCP approved on November 30 that Elder Eric Mescallado will represent the PRCP as a visiting foreign delegate at the Synod of the PRCA in June 2020.

Since the sister-church relationship is reciprocal, there will be a delegation from the Contact Committee of the

PRCA visiting and meeting with the CC of the PRCP in late February. Rev. Koole and Prof. Dykstra plan also to attend as foreign delegates the PRCP Classis on February 25. We thank the Lord for the opportunities in which the PRCA and PRCP can express our fellowship as sister churches and our unity together in the Lord and His precious truth.

PRCA March Delegation Visit

A delegation from the Council of the Doon PRC and the FMC will visit the missionary families and our missionary work from March 12 to 25. The delegation consists of Rev. and Mrs. Jonathan Langerak, from the Heritage PRC in Sioux Falls, SD, and Mr. Caleb Woiwood, a deacon in the Doon PRC and a member of the Philippine sub-committee of the Doon Council. The delegation will have the opportunity to visit the PRCA mission work in southern Negros Occidental among our contacts in Inayauan (The Reformed Free Church), Si-alay, Canturay, and Sipalay. They will have opportunity to observe the preaching and teaching we do there on Sundays (church services, catechism classes) and Mondays (monthly pastors' lectures on Homiletics and Dogmatics-Christology). They also plan to visit the evangelism work in Guiguinto/Baliwag (north of Manila) that Rev. Holstege is fulfilling in behalf of the Provident PRC. In addition to that, the delegation will conduct annual family visitation, and enjoy some informal visiting throughout their stay with the missionary families.

Reformed Bookshelf and Philippine Book Fund

We express our thanks to the PRCA for their continued and generous support of the Philippine Book Fund that subsidizes RFPA book prices here for the local members of the PRCP as well as the contacts of the PRCP throughout the Philippines. To help move the stock, we had a book sale at the beginning of December, which seemed to go very well. With thanksgiving to the Lord, we can report that we distributed about 1,800 books in 2019.

Holstege's Furlough

As approved by the Doon Council and FMC, Rev. Holstege has scheduled his 2020 furlough in North America. He with his family will have a 9-week furlough from May 18 to July 22, mostly in the Midwest USA area. This furlough will provide time for field promotion, PRCP seminary course preparation, and family vacation. In light of that, the Holstege's are making good progress in obtaining a US passport and Philippine immigration travel documents for baby Violet. It should be an enjoyable time.

We conclude this newsletter in the call, comfort, and confidence of Psalm 104:31-35:

The glory of the LORD shall endure forever: the LORD shall rejoice in His works. He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: He toucheth the hills, and they smoke. I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD. Let sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

In His service, Rev. Richard J Smit