



Delegates to Synod:

l. to r.: Rev. R. Miersma, Rev. D. Kuiper, Prof. R. Dykstra, H. Ferguson, Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. N. Langerak, J. Regnerus,
Rev. K. Koole, Rev. S. Key, Rev. J. Slopsema, L. Gritters, F. Tolsma, Prof. R. Cammenga, G. Kuiper, Rev. R. VanOverloop,
S. Miedema, G. Eriks, Rev. M. VanderWal, D. Ondersma, Rev. C. Haak, Prof. B. Gritters, C. Kalsbeek, D. Doezenia

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Site of Synod 2009:

*Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church
Hudsonville, Michigan*

Pre-Synodical Sermon

Quit You Like Men

Rev. Kenneth Koole

*“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.
Let all your things be done with charity.”*

I Corinthians 16:13, 14

Men and brethren, beloved in the Lord Jesus Christ, the church of Corinth was a troubled church. Any number of evils were loose in that congregation. Special-interest groups had their own agenda, challenging apostolic authority; sexual immoralities were winked at; drunkenness was found at the Lord's table. As a result, the Corinthian church was making an extremely poor witness to the world as to any real difference between the Christian faith and ungodly society itself. Unbelievers said, “This is Christian behavior? We can take you to our marketplace, where people behave and speak no worse than you Christians, and they may be even more trustworthy. If this is what belonging to the Christian church means, all this evil speech and slander and the absence of peace and unity, we want no part of it. We have enough division and bitterness towards each other in our own ungodly families without adding that of your church to ours!”

All this largely because officebearers were shirking their duty and failing to take the apostolic Word and apply it with vigor to the life and doctrine of the congregation.

And if you were to worship in the Corinthian church, you would have found chaos and confusion. Any number were trying to out-shout each other, claiming that their gifts and authority of the Spirit outweighed all the others.

Decency and good order were not the order of the day.

As the apostle points out in chap-



Rev. Kenneth Koole

ter 14, if outsiders were to visit and observe what was happening in their assemblies, they would think the Christians mad.

“Let’s get some order in this church of yours, officebearers!”

What the apostle speaks of here is the need of the hour in the church of Christ. She needs those who will ‘play the man.’ Not playing at *being* a man, while behaving like an irresponsible child, but playing the man, filling the part, doing what God made the male of the race to accomplish to begin with.

Understand, I did not select these verses because I think our churches lack such men, or that our churches are in trouble like the church of Corinth. Not at all. True, from our agenda it is apparent that we have an issue to deal with that is unsettling our churches at the time, but nothing of the magnitude of the issues troubling the church of Corinth.

Rather, I selected this passage because we as delegated officebearers who represent all of our churches must “quit ourselves like men” if we are to prevent the great issues and evils of our apostate ecclesiastical age from entering our beloved congregations and our broader assemblies as well. We are to take the apostle’s exhortation to heart for the sake of true unity and peace, for maintaining a distinctive witness, and for the purity of the gospel of truth.

It is where the church of Christ has men who function as men that she provides a good environment, one in which to grow spiritually and raise a family, one where spiritual maturity and peace prevail. So, men and brethren:

Quit You Like Men

- 1. What the Apostle Means by This**
- 2. Why This is the Need of the Hour**
- 3. The Great Incentive Given**

What the Apostle Means by This

There is a dearth in this land of ours.

There is a dearth in the church of our day and age.

It is a dearth of men, of those who will ‘play the man.’

There are plenty of women willing to ‘play the man’; women who thrust themselves forward; women who have much to say about running affairs in home and church. But where are the men?

One could almost wish that some men would study these forward women and take a lesson or two on how to assert themselves and act like men.

And yet that’s not the remedy either, is it. Such women, for all their manly traits, are out of place. They are the source of endless confusion.

Men step aside and the church becomes emasculated. The very presence of these women in places of authority in the House of God means that already the Word of our Lord and the authority of our King has been shoved aside. Where they are seated in assemblies you can be sure that vital concessions concerning the Apostolic Word have already been made, and every concession will be sure to follow.

What is instructive for us is the word that the apostle uses here and which the A.V. translates by the phrase “Quit you like men.” It is one composite Greek word. It is not derived from the common Greek word that is translated as ‘man’ or ‘mankind’—the word *anthropos*. Rather, the apostle uses a gender specific word that refers specifically to the male in distinction from the female. It is a word that could be translated as “be the male,” or “be men,” or “behave as men should.” Or, to use King James language, “Quit (that is, *Acquit*) you like men,” instead of behaving as if you are neutered and do not dare to confront a mouse.

Significantly joined to this gender specific word is the Greek word for *courage*. This sets the direction that the apostle has in mind and tells us why, in large part, God created men as males. True manhood has to do with courage.

Courage to do what?

What else but to face danger and that which threatens life, family, and kingdom, and not to be easily intimidated or collapse in fear. That is all part of true male headship.

Scripture itself exalts our Lord Christ as a warrior-king and lion with this connotation.

As you know, in ancient times both in pagan society and in the nation of Israel herself the strong desire of parents, wives as well as husbands, was to have sons, and not a few.

Why?

For the sake of the inheritance, you say. That’s true. Having a son had everything to do with keeping one’s property in the family and continuing one’s name. Ask any royal house or patriarch.

But there was more to it than that. In those days of warfare by hand-to-hand combat it was in those sons—an abundance of stalwart, manly sons—that resided the very safety of one’s nation and home, safety from the invading foe or marauding bands.

Without those sons, sons of courage schooled in the skills of weaponry, no one was safe—not one’s wife, not one’s daughters, not one’s way of life itself. One would simply have been swept from the land, lives ending in death or slavery. Fathers and sons in sufficient number had everything to do with a people’s protection and security.

That is how it was in biblical times for the nations. So it is for the church of Christ herself in the New Testament age. The apostle's point is that true manhood has everything to do with courage to withstand evils and errors and to take a stand for what is right for the preservation of the church. Therein lies the keeping of our inheritance as churches.

The apostle is talking here, or course, not simply of natural manhood. That, for all its displays of natural courage, is yet prone to be self-centered and self-serving. Rather, he is referring to redeemed and sanctified manhood. Fallen manhood is prone to display itself either in domineering, dictatorial ways—"I run the show!"—or in irresponsible fashion, never growing up. Not so, redeemed manhood. Redeemed manhood uses its strength of character and resolution of will not for self, but with *others* in mind, for loved ones, for their protection and well-being.

Courage, then, brethren, the willingness to behave as men, is the need of the hour for the name and well-being of Christ's church.

And let it begin over against the spirit of feminism so prevalent today. Let us not be ashamed to be one of the increasingly rare ecclesiastical assemblies where women are excluded as delegates, an assembly just of men, and one, mind you, that represents a denomination that not only does not allow women to hold office, but not even to vote in church affairs! Can such a species of Christians still exist? A hew and cry goes up. How long civil law will permit such remains to be seen. Many roundly castigate us (and I think would not mind altering a few letters in that verb if they could).

"What! You think women are inferior to you men? You male chauvinists, you!"

No, good brethren, not inferior at all. In fact, in certain areas of life they are much our superiors, as any married man with children knows. It is not a matter of their not being our *equals*, it is a matter of their being *different*, God be thanked! God be thanked that the church of Christ is not composed simply of males or of those who want to think as a man or react to everything like a man. Where would the counter-balance be? Such would be an impoverished and diminishing church (yes, in numbers too!), I will tell you that.

If you don't believe it, check the condition of any number of churches where the feminist spirit dominates today.

Why will we not allow women as delegates? Because when it comes to authority in the church and home this same apostle made plain elsewhere, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:12). This means women of Christ's church must not think to govern affairs in the church. And the apostle's point is, where believing men function as men and do not abdicate their calling and place, women will not need to 'run the show,' they will not

want to. They will have men to answer to their needs. And where such men are found, we find happy wives and women, satisfied and secure!

Do not get me wrong, the apostle does not mean women have no input into the affairs of the church, no voice. They do, but it is in the biblically approved way, namely, through their husbands and men of the church. The wise husband listens carefully to his spouse. But when it comes to governing affairs of the church, it is the role of the man.

Brethren, do we have the courage to oppose the feminist agenda on every front? I trust we do. We must take the same stand Paul took when it came to some insisting Titus be circumcised. “[T]o whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour” (Gal. 2:5).

From the apostle’s exhortations it is plain that functioning as a man in the church means that one is doing some assessing on his own and making independent judgments, in the sense of not letting someone else do his thinking for him. As the apostle says “Watch!”—that is, “Be on the alert!” and like a sentry on a city wall make your assessment and respond accordingly.

At the same time, let us not mistake the apostle here as though he is advocating that we all come to our own conclusions about matters, and then, regardless of what others think, go our own independent way. Nothing of the sort.

Let us remember that true, sanctified manhood comes to expression within the oneness of the body of Christ. It has everything to do with a recognition of the Spirit of Christ in others, an interest in listening to the others, and even deferring in various matters.

In this connection, I draw your attention to the verse preceding our own, verse 12.

“As touching our brother Apollos, I greatly desired him to come unto you with the brethren: but his will was not at all to come at this time; but he will come when he shall have convenient time.”

That’s quite a verse. Unable to free himself from Ephesus to go to Corinth at the time, Paul urges Apollos, a fellow preacher, to get himself to Corinth as soon as possible. Apollos considers it and decides not to. He disagrees with the apostle on this matter.

What is going on? If an apostle had told you to secure passage on the next ship leaving Ephesus’ port city, would you have refused? Would I? Apollos did.

Let us understand well that the power of the passage is not that Apollos held his own counsel. The power of the passage is that the apostle allowed it.

Why?

Because, in the first place, Paul was not dealing here with a principle

matter, a matter of biblical doctrine. When it came to such matters, the apostle suffered no one to disagree with him in a misbegotten spirit of brotherhood. He had no tolerance for the attitude of modern churchmen, “You view the authority of the apostolic doctrines as you want to view them. I’ll view them as I want to. We will just agree to disagree and in brotherly fashion allow these various views in the church.”

Nonsense!

This was the same apostle, remember, who withstood a fellow apostle to the face, Simon Peter by name. He did so when Peter caved into Judaism and withdrew himself from the Gentile Christians and would not eat with them, leaving the impression that they were unclean and their spirituality suspect, not measuring up to the Jewish brothers’ standards. As Paul declares, “I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11).

And the apostle Peter deferred to Paul, acknowledging he had erred.

But, with Apollos, when it came to a practical matter, dealing with what was in the best interest of the churches at that time, the apostle did not pull rank, so to speak, but recognized that Apollos was a fellow officebearer, one who also had the Holy Spirit, and was able to make judgments and assessments.

But let us be clear. The power of the reference is not that it promotes the right of officebearers in Christ’s church to disagree with the apostles when our spirit moves us, for officebearers to say “Apollos was an independent thinker, so am I. He disagreed with the apostles, so I may too. I am free to reexamine everything they taught. All the apostolic teachings are up for grabs.”

Nonsense!

For such men one word is appropriate. It is found towards the conclusion of our chapter, in verse 24. It is the word “Anathema,” which means, condemned and dismissed from the church of Christ.

No, the power of verse 12 as it has bearing on our text is not that it sponsors autonomy of thinking in the church, because, after all, I am a man. Rather, verse 12 indicates that the apostles themselves were keenly aware of the presence of Christ’s Spirit in fellow officebearers as they labored to bring God’s Word to bear on the practical life of the church. It indicates that Paul himself was willing to listen to other officers when it came to practical matters, deciding what was best for the churches that were committed not simply to his, but to their mutual care. And plainly, he was willing to defer in such matters when the others did not see it his way.

So the apostle would have viewed us were he to have been delegated

to our assembly, and so he would have labored as well. Not a man without his own strong opinions and perspective. But also not one who obstinately refused to hear what others had to say.

Why This Is the Need of the Hour

And why does the church need such men, men who acquit themselves like men?

As the apostle makes plain in the whole epistle, it is because of all the enemies the church must deal with. As he stated in verses 8 and 9, “But I will tarry at Ephesus until Pentecost. For a great door and effectual is opened unto me and there are many *adversaries*.”

On this earth we serve the church militant. Many are the adversaries of the church and of the apostolic gospel. The enemy without would prevent the spread of the gospel. The enemy within would corrupt it so that what goes forth is not the gospel.

It is significant that the language of our text is basically militaristic.

“Watch!” That is, be on the alert for danger and the subtle infiltration of the enemy.

“Stand fast in the faith!” That is, when it comes to the faith, hold your ground. Here the emphasis is not on the inner activity of faith, but on the *content* of the faith, the faith once delivered to the saints. When it comes to that faith and the doctrines of the gospel of sovereign, free grace, yield not one inch.

“Quit you like men!” Behave and give a good account of yourselves as ‘a man’ should.

“Be strong!” Defend those entrusted to your care, doing so with energy, with resolution, and without fear.

As well, what we find in verse 14, namely, making sure that everything we do is done in charity, is not contrary to a military theme.

To be sure, the call of verse 14 to do all things with love is to provide a balance to the idea of battle and warfare. It is a reminder that being a man with its emphasis on strength and not flinching in the face of combat does not exclude tenderness and care. As Paul writes elsewhere, “Husbands love your wives, as Christ does the church.” The apostle is not interested in the rule of authority that seeks to be domineering and harsh, but in the rule that takes the lead in love. That’s true in marriage, and that’s true in the church. Consideration of each other and of those affected by our decisions is how we must go about our business.

But love is also part and parcel of being a good soldier. Stalwart, faithful Uriah of old comes to mind. He willingly died on a battlefield, on the forefront, because he so loved his land, his wife, his true Lord, and even David, that unworthy king of his who sent him to his death.

That said, how thankful, good brethren, we can be that the one on whose behalf we labor is not merely David himself, but the true and faithful Son of David. It is that faithful Shepherd King who is worthy of a loyalty and love that inspires.

How many have died with great courage on battlefields, in the name of love! They put their lives on the line, standing in the forefront of the battle out of loyalty to their motherland and for the sake of their families and loved ones back home.

Ultimately the urgent need of the church for sons who will behave as men is because of the enemy's relentless assault on the gospel truth. And if that was true in the apostle's own day (just read the Epistle to the Corinthians if you need convincing), how much more so today.

For our purposes, we need make reference only to one evil loose in Protestantism today, namely, the deadly evil of the Federal Vision heresy. The ancient error of the Judaizers against the great apostolic gospel of justification by faith alone has been resurrected and, in its mutated form, is infecting the very life's blood of the whole of the Presbyterian and Reformed church world, it seems.

God grant that against it we continue to stand fast and with boldness dare label it for what it is—a deadly cross-destroying, grace-defaming, faith-denying, apostle-despising, man-glorifying heresy.

With respect to this heresy I have a great grief. My grief not simply on account of how many are willing to buy into this heresy, but also on account of how few of those who do oppose it do so with a true courage and decisiveness.

We do not deny that there are men out there opposing this heresy within their own denominations. Any number of good books and articles have been written which take issue with the error. There are even those who within their church assemblies and courts are in the process of opposing the error, though sadly without much success.

But the great grief is what those who oppose the error will not say about the Federal Vision teachers themselves. They will not label them for what they are – wolves in sheep's clothing, heretics! I could give you the names of writers of books and articles that do good work in exposing the error, and yet they cannot bring themselves to say one cross word about the men who are injecting this deadly poison into the life's blood of the church. I refrain at this time from naming names. But these men refer to the promoters of the Federal Vision as "Brothers in Christ," as "men for whom I have the highest regard," and again, as "those to whom I am indebted for their deep insights into the Scriptures," and so forth. They are so worried about being ever so nice in the name of emasculated love that they cannot bring themselves to say one harsh word against these

deceivers for all the deadly damage they are doing to the church by their staggering dishonesty and their corruption of the apostolic gospel.

Brethren, I don't care how moral and genteel and 'gracious' these false teachers may be (or others like them who may come along later), we must have the fortitude to apply to them the language of the apostle. You know his words, "Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed [anathema!]" (Gal. 1:8). Mind you, even an angel from heaven! How much more upright and gracious could Beings be, blameless as far as their lives are concerned. And yet, should even such a Being dare tamper with the gospel delivered by the Holy Spirit to the apostles, Paul says "Let him be ANATHEMA." That means under the interdict and wrath of the Lamb Himself!

So much for allowing these deceivers to remain in the church with honor in order to prove how 'brotherly' we are.

Brethren, in the name of the Lord Jesus we ourselves must not be afraid publicly to label those who teach this deadly error for what they are—enemies of the gospel, ministers of darkness. We must acquit ourselves like men. We must not allow ourselves to be intimidated by those who would accuse us of harsh-speech and of being unbrotherly and judgmental.

The apostle Paul would not have been. Neither must we.

We must insist on the purity of the gospel and be set for its defense.

Why?

For the sake of missions, first of all, of course. What better way to prevent the spread of the gospel than by corrupting it, so that what goes forth is not really Christ's gospel at all, but another? The great Adversary's goal would be accomplished. All of our decisions with regards to missions and its generous support would be to no purpose if what those sent forth to preach is not the apostolic gospel after all.

And the same goes for our seminary. What good would it be to approve so much financial support for that valuable institution if what the young men are given to wield is not the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, but rather something brittle and dull, not genuine and sharp, something filled with impurities, sure to betray one in the battle?

We must continue to tolerate nothing other than the pure alloy of the gospel of grace. Everything about our usefulness for our churches and Christ's greater cause depends on it. In that pure gospel of grace is our safety, security, and strength.

Brethren, let us watch, stand steadfast, and acquit ourselves like men.

The Great Incentive Given

What is the incentive? Love, you say. Love for the church and its members. Love for our families and little ones. Love for our Lord.

To be sure, there is motivation enough right there.

But the question is, why do we so love the Lord and His church?

Why else but because He first loved us!

It is significant that before the apostle mentions doing all things in love, he refers to faith, being steadfast in the faith! Faith, true faith, always comes before Christian love. Self-denying love is the fruit of faith and is produced by the knowledge of faith, the knowledge of what Christ Jesus, God's own Son, has done for me, for you, for us.

Wasn't that Paul? "... and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, *who loved me*, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Out of that faith that grasped the greatness of the gospel of a sovereign, free grace and its redeeming love came a life of service—a young ex-Pharisee living no longer for himself but for Another, and for others, so that others might know this same Lord, who so loved him, the chief of sinners.

It was another great servant of God who, fifteen centuries later (born in 1509 if I recall), in the knowledge of that surpassing love would say, *Promptly and Sincerely, Lord, I Offer My Service to Thee!* He too spent himself for the service of Christ's church and gospel truth.

There was one who acquitted himself as a man!

It is that love divine and its power that has restored to us the reality of true and redeemed manhood—not the manhood of self-centeredness, which feeds pride, "Oh, I hope everyone recognizes me and I have the last word," but the manhood of a heartfelt concern for others entrusted to our care and a consideration of others affected by our deliberations, and above all, a love for Christ our Lord and for His body, the church.

Let it be a love that evidences itself by the words we speak, words that breathe the apostolic Spirit in all that we say and do, yes, speaking the truth in love.

Brethren, manly courage is required, which is to say, faith and zeal mixed with love.

Let all that we do be in the name of the great Son of David, the epitome of true manhood, yea, striving to represent properly that great Son of Man.

Minutes

of Synod 2009 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America

held at
Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church
Hudsonville, Michigan
June 9-16 and August 25-26, 2009

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 9, 2009

Article 1

Rev. K. Koole, president of Synod 2008, leads in **opening devotions**. Synod sings Psalter Number 309. Rev. Koole reads I Corinthians 16 and leads in prayer.

Article 2

The **credentials of Classis East** (Supplement 7, p. 108) and of **Classis West** (Supplement 8, p. 115) are read. The Classes are represented by the following delegates:

Classis East

Ministers	Elders
Rev. G. Eriks (alt.)	Mr. Don Doezema
Rev. C. Haak	Mr. Cal Kalsbeek
Rev. K. Koole	Mr. Gerald Kuiper
Rev. J. Slopsema	Mr. Sid Miedema
Rev. R. Van Overloop	Mr. David Ondersma

Classis West

Ministers	Elders
Rev. S. Key	Mr. Garry Eriks
Rev. D. Kuiper	Mr. Henry Ferguson
Rev. N. Langerak	Mr. Loren Gritters
Rev. R. Miersma	Mr. Jack Regnerus
Rev. M. VanderWal	Mr. Fred Tolsma

A motion is made to accept the credentials.
The chair declares synod properly constituted.

Carried.



Officers of Synod 2005:

*Second Clerk: G. Eriks; President: S. Key;
Vice-President: R. VanOverloop; First Clerk: D. Kuiper*

Article 3

Election of officers takes place with the following results:

President: Rev. S. Key
Vice-President: Rev. R. VanOverloop
First Clerk: Rev. D. Kuiper
Second Clerk: Rev. G. Eriks

Article 4

Rev. Key now presides and makes opening remarks. He asks for the cooperation and good work of the delegates in all the labors of synod.

Article 5

The delegates arise and give assent to the **Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity** as read by the president.

Article 6

The president appoints the following committees:

1. **Committee on Committees:** Revs. VanOverloop and Kuiper; Elders Kalsbeek and Regnerus.
2. **Sermon Critics:** Revs. Koole and Miersma.
3. **OT Translation and Exegesis:** Revs. Eriks and Langerak.
4. **NT Translation and Exegesis:** Revs. Haak and VanderWal.

Article 7

Student Examination and Graduation (Supplement 32, p. 207)

1. A motion is made to adopt the proposed examination schedule for Mr. Cory Griess. **Carried.**
2. A motion is made to adopt the proposed commencement program for Mr. Cory Griess and Mr. David Torlach, to be held on Thursday, June 11, at 7:30 P.M. in Georgetown PRC. **Carried.**
3. The chair schedules Mr. Griess' specimen sermon for 10:00 A.M.

Article 8

Synod gathers in the sanctuary of Georgetown PRC to hear the sermon of Mr. Cory Griess. Synod sings Psalter Number 242. Mr. Griess opens in prayer and reads I Corinthians 1. He then delivers his sermon on I Corinthians 1:18 under the theme "The Message of the Cross."

Synod recesses to give time for the sermon critic committee to prepare its report.

Article 9

Synod treats Mr. Griess' sermon.

The chairman declares closed session.

The sermon critics present their report (Supplement 23, p. 197). A motion is made to adopt their recommendation to approve his sermon and to proceed with his examination. **Carried.**

The chairman declares an end to closed session.

The chairman informs Mr. Griess that his sermon has been approved and that synod will proceed to his oral examination tomorrow. On behalf of synod, the chair expresses appreciation to the faculty of our seminary for their faithful labors in training our students to preach the Word of God.

Elder Jack Regnerus closes the morning session with prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 9, 2009

Rev. Slopsema opens the afternoon session with prayer.

Article 10

The Committee on Committees presents its report (Supplement 1, p.

Minutes	Articles 11-13	Acts of Synod 2009
92).	A motion is made to adopt the report.	Carried.

Article 11

The script minutes of the day are read. A motion is made to adopt the minutes. **Carried.**

Elder David Ondersma leads in closing prayer.

Synod recesses for the day to allow the pre-advice committees to do their work.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, JUNE 10, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present, except Rev. Koole. Rev. C. Haak leads in opening devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 252. Rev. Haak reads selections from Jeremiah 15, 17, and 20, and leads in prayer.

Article 12

Synod begins the oral **examination of Mr. Cory Griess**, following the adopted schedule. He is examined by Prof. R. Cammenga in Introduction to Theology for 20 minutes, and in Theology, Anthropology, and Christology for 30 minutes each. Opportunity is given after each section for the delegates to ask further questions.

Rev. Koole enters the meeting.

Prof. Cammenga continues to examine Mr. Griess in Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

Elder Henry Ferguson closes the morning session in prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 10, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present. Rev. M. VanderWal opens the afternoon session with devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 266, and Rev. VanderWal reads Psalm 92 and leads in prayer.

Article 13

Synod continues the **examination of Mr. Griess**. He is examined by Prof. R. Cammenga in New Testament history for 45 minutes. Opportunity is given for the delegates to ask further questions.

Article 14

Motion is made that synod recess for the day so that the committees can have time to continue their work. **Defeated.**

Article 15

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **proposed change to the Contact Committee's Constitution** (Supplement 10, p. 117).

A. Information: The CC proposes changes to point V, C of their constitution, which treats "Corresponding Relationships."

1. After Synod 2008 decided to propose to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia that we enter a corresponding relationship with each other (Art. 21, B, 1), the EPCA brought to the CC's attention a concern about how the pursuit of full sister relationship would be possible in light of the known differences and the adherence of both denominations to their confessional standards.

2. The CC was convinced of the validity of this point and consequently proposes that their constitution be changed to read as follows (with changes in italics and deletions indicated).

"C. Corresponding Relationships with ~~Other Foreign~~ Churches.

1. *Where significant and broad agreement exists between the Protestant Reformed Churches and other churches, and yet differences are important enough to preclude a sister-*

**Committee 2:**

l. to r.: Rev. R. Miersma; Rev. R. VanOverloop; Elder Loren Gritters; Elder Sid Miedema; Prof. R. Cammenga, advisor

church relationship, a corresponding relationship may be established.

- a. These relationships may be arranged as circumstances may dictate provided:
 - 1) That whatever relationship may be arranged, the stipulations thereof shall be clear and unambiguous.
 - 2) That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith.
 - b. *These relationships shall be established only with those churches that not only accept the Reformed standards, or confessions consistent with the Reformed standards, but also maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.*
 - c. *Known differences in doctrine and practice between the two denominations are recognized with respect. This means that differences may be discussed, but constant agitation on the differences should be avoided.*
2. The activities of corresponding relationships shall consist of:
- a. Exchange of information that shall enable the churches to become better acquainted with each other. This exchange shall be implemented in the following ways:
 - 1) Exchange of observers at the broadest assemblies, if it is feasible.
 - 2) Exchange of minutes of the broadest assemblies.
 - 3) Exchange of denominational yearbooks and/or church directories.
 - 4) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Church Orders or Constitutions.
 - 5) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards.
 - 6) Exchange of songbooks used in public worship, including the forms used for various occasions in public worship.
 - b. Discussion by means of correspondence, committee visits, and conferences *in order to confirm and strengthen our unity in Christ.* ~~on differences which are~~

~~known to exist between our churches, as well as those matters on which there is agreement, in order to work toward a full sister-church relationship.”~~

B. Recommendation: That synod approve the changes proposed by the CC, with one exception, the eliding of C, 1, c.

Grounds:

1. For the change from “Corresponding Relationships with *Foreign* Churches” to “Corresponding Relationships with *Other* Churches”: This is consistent with point V, A of the constitution, which states: “A full official relationship with other domestic churches (i.e., in the United States and Canada) would imply organic union. Less complete ties may be established as circumstances may require and indicate.”
2. For the other changes within the article:
 - a. The “corresponding relationship” is part of the CC’s constitution for those relationships where there is significant agreement, but the differences are such that full sister relationship is not possible.
 - 1) The reality is that there will be relationships where a full sister relationship cannot be expected. The constitution of the CC should reflect this.
 - 2) Maintaining this provision of the corresponding relationships (i.e., that differences must be discussed) may well tend to agitation on the differences, thus driving the churches apart.
 - b. The proposed change to the constitution recognizes the reality that a full sister-church relationship is not possible at this time, but indicates that in this relationship churches work at maintaining and strengthening the ties, consistent with the existing point V, C, 1, b of the constitution: “That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith.”
3. For adding point V, C, 1, b, regarding confessions: Any church with which we establish a relationship must be a confessional church.
4. For the eliding of V, C, 1, c: What is said about the Corresponding Relationship makes this point unnecessary, namely, there are to be clear and unambiguous stipulations for each specific relationship; there is to be the seeking of real welfare of the churches involved in this relationship; and this relationship may only be with a church that has a real basis in the Reformed confessions.

Motion to amend by eliding from the main motion the words “with one exception—eliding C, 1, c” and the fourth ground. **Defeated.**

The main motion is voted on.

Carried.

Article 16

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (CERCS)** (Supplement 10, p. 123, and Supplement 11, p. 133).

A. Information

1. During the past year, contact with the CERC was advanced when Rev. A. denHartog and Prof. H. Hanko each visited the saints in Singapore twice.
2. After a most difficult split with First ERCS, things have settled considerably within CERCS. They show continued interest and growth in the truth and in the distinctives of the Reformed faith.
3. CERCS recently requested that one of our ministers preach and teach there for a time—up to six months. The CC is looking for someone who is able and willing to serve.
4. Recently the CERCS expressed the desire to work toward establishing a relationship between our churches, and invited a delegation to come to Singapore in October/November to discuss this matter.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the CC’s work with the CERC in Singapore, including authorizing the CC to continue working with this congregation. **Carried.**
2. That synod approve the CC’s action of paying the balance of the expenses incurred by Prof. Hanko (that portion not paid by CERC). **Carried.**
3. That synod authorize the CC to send a delegation to Singapore in October/November of this year in order to provide a speaker for their Reformation Day Conference, and to discuss with the Session of CERC the matter of an official relationship between our churches.

Grounds:

- a. The CERC in Singapore has requested this.
- b. Synod 2008 authorized the CC “to continue to keep contact with the Session of CERC in Singapore and to send another delegation there at Covenant’s invitation, all with a view to discussing what further needs to be done in order to enter into a relationship with them at some level” (Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 20, B, 3). **Carried.**

4. That synod again authorize the CC, as it did last year (Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 20, B, 4), to obtain and send a minister to preach and teach in CERC for a number of months.

Ground: The CERC has requested such help from the PRCA.

Carried.

Article 17

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA)** (Supplement 10, p. 117).

A. Information

1. Synod 2008 decided to propose to the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia that we enter a corresponding relationship with each other (Art. 21, B, 1).
2. The EPCA responded positively with joy and accepted the proposal to establish this relationship.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the CC's work in our contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia. **Carried.**
2. That synod declare that, with the EPCA's acceptance of our proposal, the PRCA is now in a Corresponding Relationship with the EPCA. **Carried.**

Article 18

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland** (Supplement 10, p. 126, and Supplement 11, p. 133).

A. Information

1. A delegation of the CC visited Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland in January 2009. They conducted church visitation with them as Covenant requested. They reported good spiritual health and development in the consistory and congregation.
2. The CPRC is thankful to the PRCA for allowing them to continue to use the manse, and expressed the desire to purchase the manse after completing their church building.
3. The CPRC requested continued financial assistance for their congregation and for Seminarian McGeown.
4. The CPRC has begun the construction of their church building. The monies collected in the PRCA for this cause (\$173,660.32) have been sent to them. The CPRC has approximately £395,000 (~\$800,000 US) of the £500-550,000 (~\$1 - 1.1 million US) they will need for their building project.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod grant financial assistance to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland in 2010 of \$34,500.

Ground: As a small congregation, the CPRC has need of financial help. **Carried.**

2. That synod authorize collections in our churches in 2010 for the Building Fund of the CPRC in Northern Ireland. **Carried.**

3. That synod instruct our stated clerk to send greetings to them as our sister church and to inform them that we are looking forward to conducting church visitation again this coming year. **Carried.**

Article 19

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde (Confessing Evangelical-Reformed Congregation – BERG) of Giessen, Germany** (Supplement 10, p. 127).

A. Information. The CC continued contact with the leaders of the BERG during the past year, with whom they continue to find significant agreement in the truth.

B. That synod approve the CC's work in its contact with the BERG of Giessen, Germany. **Carried.**

Article 20

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **contacts in Uzbekistan and Russia** (Supplement 10, p. 128, and Supplement 11, p. 133).

A. Information

1. The CC has maintained contact with Renat Ilyasov in Russia.
 - a. Through their continued contact, it became evident that there are significant doctrinal differences between him and the PRCA, specifically with regard to the call of the gospel, which he maintains is only for the elect.
 - b. The CC brought to an end their official contact with Mr. Ilyasov because of his hyper-calvinism.
2. The CC continued its contact with Pastors Rinat Fazliev and Dilshod Abdullaev in Uzbekistan.
3. The CC did not send the delegation that Synod 2008 authorized them to do.

B. Recommendation

1. That synod approve the CC's decision to cease their contact with Renat Ilyasov. **Carried.**

Acts of Synod 2009	Articles 21-24	Minutes
2.	That synod approve the CC's labor with the contacts in Uzbekistan.	Carried.

Article 21

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Evangelical Reformed Church Union of Russia** (Supplement 10, p. 129).

A. Information

1. The CC continued efforts to pursue contact with this congregation in Moscow, but received no response.
2. The CC is no longer pursuing contact at this time.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve of the CC's action.

Carried.

Article 22

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Protestant Reformed Christian Church in Croatia** (Supplement 10, p. 129).

A. Information: Financial assistance was given to fund Rev. Jasmin Milic's work of translating and printing the Belgic Confession in the Croatian language. Correspondence with Rev. Milic continues.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve the CC's action of the past year.

Carried.

Article 23

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Myanmar Special Projects Fund** (Supplement 10, p. 129).

A. Information: The CC distributed all the money of this Fund as authorized by Synod 2007. With this action, the Fund no longer exists.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve the CC's action.

Carried.

Article 24

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding the **Pastor Training Fund – Foreign Lands** (Supplement 10, p. 130).

A. Information: Following the guidelines adopted for this Fund by Synod 2008, the CC distributed \$17,580 to Hope PRC (Walker, MI) for its work in Myanmar. The amount available for distribution as of Dec. 31, 2008 was \$26,687.19.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve the CC's actions concerning distribution of \$17,580 from the Pastor Training Fund – Foreign Lands.

Carried.

Article 25

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding **Financial Assistance for Foreign Students** (Supplement 10, p. 130).

A. Information

1. The CC used monies from this Fund to assist the EPC of Australia and the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland in sending their aspiring ministers (each sent one student) to our seminary.
2. The CC recommends that further assistance be given to Berean PRC in the Philippines and to Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland (to be treated in closed session).
3. The CC also gave additional financial support for the Ibess and Torlachs during the past year.

Chairman declares closed session.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the CC's actions of providing additional support in the past year to the Ibess and Torlachs. **Carried.**
2. That synod authorize the CC to provide the necessary financial assistance (from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund) to the Berean PRC in the Philippines to help support their seminary student in the 2009-2010 school year. **Carried.**
3. That synod authorize the CC to provide the necessary financial assistance (from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund) to the Covenant PRC in Northern Ireland to help support their seminary student in the 2009-2010 school year. **Carried.**
4. That synod authorize four collections in the churches in 2010 for the Foreign Student Assistance Fund.

Ground: There is continued need for monies from this fund for the support of the foreign students attending our seminary.

Carried.

Chairman declares end to closed session.

Article 26

Synod treats the material of the **Contact Committee** regarding its **Budget for 2010** (Supplement 10, p. 131).

A. Information: The CC presents a proposed budget for 2010 amounting to \$61,250 (\$26,750 for committee expenses and \$34,500 for the assistance of the CPRC in Northern Ireland).

B. Recommendation: That synod adopt the CC's proposed budget for 2010 totaling \$61,250. **Carried.**

Article 27

Synod treats the report of the **Catechism Book Committee** (Supplement 4, p. 104).

A. Information

1. The Catechism Book Committee continues to make corrections in *The Confessions and Church Order of the PRC* (with Rev. Houck's help). Also, they are working to produce an electronic version of the same.
2. They are reviewing the OT and NT History for Seniors catechism materials.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve their actions as reported.**Carried.****Article 28**

Synod treats the report of the **Catechism Book Distribution Committee** (Supplement 5, p. 105, and Supplement 6, p. 106).

A. Information

1. The Catechism Book Distribution Committee faithfully filled orders for the 2008 - 2009 season.
2. The Committee requests permission to reprint the Q. & A. books and the Workbooks for OT for Seniors, NT for Juniors, and NT for Seniors.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve their actions as reported. **Carried.**
2. That synod give the CBDC approval to reprint the books needed to satisfy the demand for 2009 - 2010: the Question and Answer book and the Workbook for Old Testament for Seniors, the Question and Answer book and the Workbook for New Testament for Juniors, and the Question and Answer book and the Workbook for New Testament for Seniors. **Carried.**

Article 29

Synod treats the report of the **Psalter Distribution Committee** (Supplement 24, p. 198).

A. Information

1. The Psalter Distribution Committee reports that they have filled all orders.
2. They report that they have some 2,700 Psalters in stock, an amount they believe should last another three years.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve their activity. **Carried.**

Article 30

The script minutes of the day are read. A motion is made to adopt the minutes. **Carried.**

Elder Don Doezeema leads in closing prayer.

Synod recesses for the day.

THURSDAY MORNING, JUNE 11, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present. Rev. G. Eriks leads in opening devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 357. Rev. Eriks reads John 8:31-36 and leads in prayer.

Article 31

Synod resumes the **examination of Mr. Cory Griess**. Prof. R. Dykstra examines him in Church History for 45 minutes, focusing on the history of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Prof. B. Gritters examines him in Old Testament History for 45 minutes, and then in Church Polity for 45 minutes. Rev. C. Haak examines Mr. Griess in Practica for 20 minutes. Opportunity is given after each section of the examination for the delegates to ask further questions.

Article 32

The chairman declares closed session.

Synod deliberates on the **approval of Mr. Griess' synodical examination**.

A. The committee appointed to examine the written Old Testament translation and exegesis of Mr. Griess presents its report (Supplement 23, p. 197). A motion is made to adopt the committee's recommendation to approve the O.T. translation and exegesis of Mr. Griess. **Carried.**

B. The committee appointed to examine the written New Testament translation and exegesis of Mr. Griess presents its report (Supplement 23, p. 197). A motion is made to adopt the committee's recommendation to approve the N.T. translation and exegesis of Mr. Griess. **Carried.**

C. A motion is made to approve the synodical examination of Mr. Cory Griess and to declare him a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRCA, eligible for a call on or after July 11, 2009. Synod votes by ballot. The motion unanimously **Carried.**

D. A motion is made to instruct the stated clerk of synod to inform all the congregations of the PRCA and our sister-church in Northern Ireland that Candidate Cory Griess, having sustained his synodical examination, is eligible for a call on or after July 11, 2009, and that upon receipt of a

call has six weeks to consider that call.

Carried.

The chairman declares an end to closed session.

E. The chairman informs Mr. Cory Griess that synod unanimously approved his examination and has declared him a candidate for the ministry of the Word and Sacraments in the PRCA. He notes that Mr. Griess' testimony gives evidence of the fruit of parental faithfulness, of the spiritual nurture given by the pastors and elders of Loveland PRC during Mr. Griess' upbringing, and of the faithful work of the seminary professors. For these the chairman expresses thanks to God. Synod sings the doxology, "Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow," and Rev. Haak offers a prayer of thanksgiving to God. Opportunity is given for the delegates, family, and friends to congratulate the brother.

THURSDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 11, 2009

Silent roll call reveals that all delegates are present. Rev. N. Langerak leads in opening devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 302 and Rev. Langerak leads in prayer.

Article 33

Motion is made to recess until Friday morning in order to give Committee 1 time to do its work.



Committee 3:

*l. to r.: Elder Gerald Kuiper; Elder Henry Ferguson; Rev. K. Koole;
Rev. D. Kuiper; Prof. R. Dykstra, advisor*

Motion is made to amend by adding “after synod treats the Foreign Mission Committee material.” **Carried.**

The main motion is voted on. **Defeated.**

Article 34

Motion is made that our sessions on Friday begin at 12:30 P.M. **Carried.**

Article 35

Synod treats the material of the **Foreign Mission Committee** regarding the **Berean Protestant Reformed Church** (Supplement 20, p. 186, and Supplement 21, p. 194).

A. Information

1. The FMC reports on their work in the Philippines and with the Berean Protestant Reformed Church.

a. The FMC reports on the concurrence of the BPRCP with Synod 2008’s decision to authorize Doon PRC to call two men to the field.

b. The FMC reports on the twofold focus of their work, in developing guidelines to call a second missionary, and laying out a rigorous program for training a missionary to the Philippines.

c. The FMC has provided the BPRC with more frequent pulpit supply in the last year.

d. With gratitude to God, the FMC notes that in the last year Revs. Smit and D. Kleyn have accepted calls to be missionaries in the Philippines.

e. The FMC presents a proposed budget of \$261,250 for 2010 with two missionaries (Supplement 20, p. 193).

2. Synod 2008 (Article 58, B, 2) instructed the FMC to face the practical matters involved in the implementation of sending two missionaries to a field. The FMC’s response derives from the fact that sending missionaries two by two is a normative rather than principle practice.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod read pages 203-206 and the supplemental report. **Defeated.**

2. That synod give Revs. Smit and D. Kleyn opportunity to address synod. **Carried.**

Article 36

Rev. Smit addresses synod regarding the policy that the Foreign Mis-

sion Committee has adopted to prepare men to work on foreign fields, and how he and Rev. Kleyn are preparing themselves in light of that policy. He informs synod of how he and Rev. Kleyn intend, subject to the approval of the FMC, to divide their labors in the Philippines. He notes that their heart is with the saints on the field, and that they will consider the field their home. He reflects on the decisions of Synod 2008 to send two missionaries to the field; expresses his gratitude to God for supplying us with two men; expresses his gratitude to the churches for their commitment to the work in the Philippines; and asks for the prayers of the churches for these men and their work.

The chairman expresses, on synod's behalf, our gratitude to God for providing us with Rev. Smit and Rev. D. Kleyn to do this work, and for their commitment to this work. He commends our two missionaries to God's care and keeping as they take up their labors.

Article 37

Synod returns to its treatment of the material of the **Foreign Mission Committee** regarding the **Berean PRCP**.

B. Recommendations

3. That synod approve the sending of the delegations and the work performed by Doon and the FMC on behalf of the churches.

Carried.

4. That synod declare itself in favor of the FMC laying out a rigorous program for the training of foreign missionaries, and instruct the FMC to provide Synod 2010 with more information regarding this program.

Carried.

5. That synod declare itself satisfied with the response of the FMC to the decision of Synod 2008, Article 58, B, 2, that the FMC and calling church face the practical matters involved in the implementation of sending two missionaries to a field and report to Synod 2009.

Carried.

6. That synod adopt a budget for 2010 of \$240,250 (\$21,000 less than proposed, based on the knowledge that Rev. Smit has 8 children and Rev. Kleyn has no children; and that the 2009 budget made provision for moving the two missionaries).

Carried.

Article 38

Synod treats the material of the **Foreign Mission Committee** regarding **Finances** (Supplement 20, p. 190).

A. Information: The FMC reports on gifts it received in the past year and on its expenses in the past year.

B. Recommendation

1. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$16,000 for committee expenses. **Carried.**
2. That synod ask our churches to designate four offerings in 2010 for foreign missions. **Carried.**
3. That synod ask our churches to continue taking collections for the Berean PRCP Building Fund. **Carried.**

Article 39

Synod treats the material of the **Domestic Mission Committee** regarding **Eastern Home Missions** (Supplement 14, p. 138).

A. Information

1. The DMC reports on the work in Pittsburgh.
 - a. Rev. Bruinsma continues to work diligently with the saints in Pittsburgh.
 - b. The group is active in outreach.
 - c. The group has grown spiritually and numerically, and has three additional non-member families attending regularly.
 - d. One of the highlights of the past year was the celebration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper on the mission field for the first time.
2. The DMC reports on the work outside the fellowship, particularly regarding Rev. Bruinsma's work with a group in Franklin, PA, and with the Heidelberg Reformation Association.
3. The proposed budget for Eastern Home Missions for 2010 is \$133,400, of which \$24,000 has been pledged by the Pittsburgh Fellowship (Supplement 14, p. 152).

B. Recommendations

1. That synod express appreciation to the Bruinsmas for their ongoing energetic labors on our behalf in the cause of Eastern Home Missions. **Carried.**
2. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$133,400 for Eastern Home Missions, of which \$24,000 has been pledged by the Pittsburgh Fellowship. **Carried.**

Article 40

Synod treats the material of the **Domestic Mission Committee** regarding **Western Home Missions** (Supplement 14, p. 140, Supplement 15, p. 169).

A. Information

1. The DMC reports on the work in Spokane.
 - a. Rev. Miersma has worked diligently in instructing the saints in Spokane.

-
- b. The new location of the worship services has brought interest and visitors.
 - c. The work in Spokane has come to maturation in the organization of the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in March 2009.
 - 2. The DMC reports that the Loveland PRC consistory has requested to be replaced as calling church for Western Home Missions, and that the council of the Hope PRC of Redlands, CA has agreed to serve our churches in this capacity.
 - 3. The DMC reports on Rev. T. Miersma's status.
 - a. Loveland requests synod to declare Rev. T. Miersma temporarily emeritus. The DMC asks synod to concur with this request.
 - b. Loveland proposes an emeritus budget for Rev. T. Miersma of \$50,000 for 2009 (July-December) and of \$101,000 for 2010.
 - 4. The proposed budget for Western Home Missions for 2010 is \$130,000.00 (Supplement 14, p. 157).
 - 5. The DMC reports on the work in Tucson.
- B. Recommendations
- 1. That synod read the supplemental report of the DMC and the letter from Loveland PRC (Supplement 15, p. 169). **Carried.**
 - 2. That synod thank the Miersmas for their diligent work over the past year, which, under the blessing of God, has resulted in the organization of the fellowship into a congregation. **Carried.**
 - 3. That synod honor Loveland's request that they be replaced as the calling church for Western Home Missions for our denomination, and that they be thanked for serving our denomination's mission work in this capacity since 1994.
 - Ground: Loveland desires to be relieved of this responsibility. **Carried.**
 - 4. That synod instruct the DMC that in future instances, it must require more explicit and appropriate grounds of a calling church that desires to be relieved of its oversight of mission work.
 - Ground: Loveland's stated reason for its request is that the work in Spokane has come to a conclusion. This stated reason does not reckon with the fact that Loveland was appointed as the calling church because "Loveland is centrally located and, with modern communications and travel, is a convenient location for the calling church" and with the fact that our western home missionary was called with the understanding that "he shall be used also to labor in other areas" (Acts 1994, Article 15). **Carried.**

5. That synod designate Hope PRC (Redlands) to replace Loveland PRC as the calling church for Western Home Missions.

Grounds:

- a. Loveland has requested to be relieved of serving our denomination in this capacity.
- b. Hope Redlands has agreed to serve our denomination in this capacity. **Carried.**

6. That synod approve Hope Redlands calling a missionary for Western Home Missions, initially focusing his labors in Tucson, AZ.

Ground: The four family group in Tucson, AZ is the best base for labor, having heard the PRC preaching for over a year, desiring to see a PR congregation established in Tucson, and giving evidence of being active in witnessing to others.

Motion to recommit to the committee for reformulation. **Carried.**
(Cf. Article 48, p. 39.)

Article 41

Synod treats the material of the **Domestic Mission Committee** regarding **Sioux Falls** (Supplement 14, p. 142).

A. Information

1. The DMC reports on the work in Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship.
 - a. Rev. Brummel continues to work diligently with the saints in the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship.
 - b. The group has grown, and there continues to be outside interest. It is possible that the group will request organization within the next year.
2. The DMC reports on Rev. Brummel's work outside of the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship.
3. The proposed budget for Sioux Falls for 2010 is \$125,010, of which \$27,000 has been pledged by the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship (Supplement 14, p. 163).

B. Recommendations

1. That synod express its appreciation to Rev. Brummel for his committed labors on behalf of our denomination in the work in Sioux Falls and in the broader work of missions. **Carried.**
2. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$125,010 for Sioux Falls, of which the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship has pledged to contribute \$27,000. **Carried.**

Article 42

Synod treats the material of the **Domestic Mission Committee** regarding **Varia** (Supplement 14, p. 144).

A. Information

1. The DMC reports regarding the CPRC NI's use of the manse.
2. The DMC reports regarding the projects of Active in Missions (AIM).
3. The DMC reports on a missions conference that it sponsored in 2008, and that it is planning a similar conference in 2010.
4. The DMC reports on its radio work.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the CPRC NI's continued use of the manse.

Grounds:

- a. This is the request of the CPRC NI through the delegation of the Contact Committee. The council asks "that they be permitted to use the parsonage until it is able to purchase it on behalf of the congregation" (January 17, 2009 letter of Contact Committee delegation).
- b. The CPRC NI is financially committed at present to the building of their sanctuary.
- c. Such provision, for a sister in time of financial need, is fitting and will be much appreciated. **Carried.**
2. That synod approve a budget of \$28,480 for radio in 2010. **Carried.**
3. That synod budget \$20,000 for investigation of new fields in 2010 and budget \$5000 for operating expenses in 2010. **Carried.**
4. That synod request that our churches continue to take four collections in 2010 for the cause of domestic missions. **Carried.**

Article 43

Synod treats the report of the **Theological School Committee** (Supplement 32, p. 203).

A. Information

1. The TSC reports information regarding its committee organization, student enrollment and activities, faculty activities, school visits, the fall convocation, building and grounds maintenance, processing and upkeep of the archives, the sorting and classification of the Dr. Theodore Letis Library by Mr. Charles Terpstra, bequests received, faculty and student attendance at the Bavinck Conference at Calvin College, and the planning by the faculty and TSC, with facilitation from the Southwest PRC Evangelism Committee, of a conference



Committee 4:

*l. to r.: Rev. C. Haak; Elder Jack Regnerus; Rev. N. Langerak;
Elder Cal Kalsbeek*

September 3-5, 2009 commemorating the 500th anniversary of the birth of John Calvin.

2. The TSC seeks synod's approval on the following matters:
 - a. The adoption of the proposed budget of \$426,549 for 2010 (Supplement 32, p. 220).
 - b. That Karl Dykstra be admitted to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009, with the understanding that his second-year German be waived.
 - c. That Hindirk (Erik) Guichelaar be admitted to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009, with the understanding that his second-year Dutch requirement be waived.

B. Recommendation

1. That synod approve the Theological School Committee's proposed budget of \$426,549 for 2010. **Carried.**
2. That synod instruct the TSC to communicate to Prof. Dykstra that the highest priority be given to completion of the Th.M. degree in the coming year.

Grounds:

- a. TSC Constitution VII, A, 6.
- b. Although Prof. Dykstra has been granted reappointment and permanent tenure, the requirement of the TSC Constitution VII, A, 6 still holds.

Motion to recommit to the committee for reformulation. **Carried.**
(Cf. Article 54, p. 45.)

3. That synod approve admitting Karl Dykstra to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009, with the understanding that his second-year German be waived.

Ground: Synod 2008 allowed the TSC to waive the requirement for some students (Acts of Synod 2008 Art. 42, B, 8-11). **Carried.**

4. That synod approve admitting Hindirk (Erik) Guichelaar to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009, with the understanding that his second-year Dutch requirement be waived.

Ground: Synod 2008 allowed the TSC to waive the requirement for some students (Acts of Synod 2008 Art. 42, B, 8-11). **Carried.**

Article 44

The script minutes of the day are read. A motion is made to adopt the minutes. **Carried.**

Elder Sid Miedema leads in closing prayer.

Synod recesses for the day.

FRIDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 12, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present. Rev. R. Miersma leads in opening devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 407. Rev. Miersma reads Psalm 121 and leads in prayer.

Article 45

Synod treats the report of the **Theological School Committee** regarding the **Seminary Remodeling Proposal** (Supplement 32, p. 207).

A. Information

1. The TSC provides introductory information, a chronology, a summary evaluation of the building, current and projected use of space, miscellaneous issues, and finances, as well as their conclusion on the basis of their studies to continue plans to remodel the seminary albeit following a pre-approved master plan.

2. The TSC recommends that synod adopt a long-range master plan for the future remodeling of the seminary building in order to provide continuity in the future remodeling projects.

3. The TSC recommends that synod authorize the TSC to proceed with phase one of the master plan at this time with construction to take place in the summer of 2009 and summer of 2010.

B. Recommendation

1. That synod give the TSC the opportunity to give a presentation on the proposed plan. **Carried.**

Tim Pipe and Ed Hekstra, members of the TSC, give a presentation to synod regarding the TSC's proposal to renovate the seminary.

2. That synod approve the long-range master plan of the TSC for future remodeling of the seminary building.

Grounds:

- a. It would help plan, budget, organize, and keep cohesive and cost-effective all future remodeling of the seminary building, as well as provide direction for future members of the TSC.
 - b. It represents a reasonable, cost-effective, and efficient way to meet most expected future requirements and improvements of the seminary in the next 20 years in light of the studies of the TSC and a wide spectrum of advice from all involved with the seminary.
 - c. It provides a long-term vision for those interested in contributing to the seminary and an on-going tangible avenue for unrestricted funds contributed in the future. **Carried.**
3. That synod approve \$248,000 of available seminary funds for architectural prints and remodeling of the classrooms, administrative offices, and front entrance. Note: This will represent phase one of the master plan to be completed in summer 2009 and summer 2010. Of the total cost of \$248,000 for phase one, approximately \$14,000 of seminary building fund money has already been spent in order to obtain working plans and in order to provide accurate information to Synod 2009.

Grounds:

- a. The present economic conditions provide an opportunity to obtain competitive bids.
- b. The funds are available now.
- c. This project provides needed work for qualified PR tradesmen who will be given priority as much as possible.

Motion to recommit to the committee so that the grounds can be reformulated. **Defeated.**

Motion to amend the second ground to read "The funds are available now for that portion of phase one planned for the summer of 2009."

Carried.

Motion to recommit to the committee to reformulate the main motion in light of the amendment made to ground two. (Cf. Article 46, below.)

Carried.

Article 46

Committee 4 presents its recommitted material (cf. Article 45, above).

3. That synod approve the beginning of phase one (\$248,000) of the long-range master plan, funds for which are to be taken only out of the seminary bequest fund.

Grounds:

- a. The present economic conditions provide an opportunity to obtain competitive bids.
- b. The funds are available now for that portion of phase one planned for the summer of 2009.
- c. This project provides needed work for qualified P.R. tradesmen who will be given priority as much as possible. **Carried.**

Article 47

Motion is made to instruct the TSC to begin a building fund.

Carried.

Article 48

Motion is made to depart from the order of the day and return to the material of Committee 3. **Carried.**

Committee 3 presents its reformulated material regarding **Western Home Missions** (cf. Article 40, p. 32).

A. Information (cf. Article 40).

B. Recommendations

1. That synod reconsider the decision it took in Article 40, B, 3.

The chairman rules this motion out of order, effectively recommitting this material to Committee 3. (Cf. Article 62, p. 49.)

Article 49

Committee 1 presents its material regarding the legality of the appeals, overture, and protests. Committee 1 recommends:

- A. That synod instruct the delegates to re-read the appeals and protests on their own time prior to synod's taking up the deliberations of this material next week. (To read the material publicly would take synod an entire day). **Carried.**

B. Regarding legality:

1. That synod declare Rev. Dick's appeal legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**
2. That synod declare Rev. Dick's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**
3. That synod declare Mr. Paul Hoekstra's appeal legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**
4. That synod declare Mr. Arjen Vreugdenhil's appeal legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**
5. That synod declare Mr. Ken Feenstra's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

Chairman declares closed session.

6. That synod rebuke Mr. Ken Feenstra for serious allegations impugning the motives of synod in the conclusion to his protest (Supplement 41, p. 433), specifically, "Article 21 was used as a club... instead of used charitably," and "Synod seems blinded by tradition... and more than likely by money." **Carried.**



Committee 1:

*l. to r.: Elder Don Doezema; Rev. S. Key; Rev. J. Slopsema;
Elder Garry Eriks; Prof. B. Gritters, advisor.*

Motion made that the first clerk of synod inform Mr. Feenstra of this decision of synod. **Carried.**

7. That synod declare Mr. Jason Kuiper's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

8. That synod rebuke Mr. Jason Kuiper for the harsh language and serious allegations at the end of his protest (Supplement 45, p. 454), specifically, "This wrong interpretation constitutes not merely an innocent misunderstanding" and under point 5 with references to "the preaching of this false doctrine and similar nonsense...by consistories and ministers who...know better." **Carried.**

The chairman personally administers this rebuke to Mr. Kuiper in the presence of synod.

Chairman declares end to closed session.

9. That synod declare Prof. Hanko's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

10. That synod declare Mr. Paul Hoekstra's protests legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

11. That synod declare Mr. Marvin Kamps' protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

12. That synod declare Mr. Bert Mulder's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

13. That synod declare Mr. Fred Tolsma's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

14. That synod declare Mr. Joe VanGeldereren's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

15. That synod declare Mr. Arjen Vreugdenhil's protests legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 31 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

16. That synod declare Dr. Roy Slice's overture legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 and 46 of the Church Order. **Carried.**

Article 50

Motion is made to reconvene Tuesday morning at 8:30 A.M.

Carried.

Article 51

The script minutes of the day are read. A motion is made to adopt the minutes.

Carried.

Elder Gerald Kuiper leads in closing prayer.

Synod recesses for the day.

TUESDAY MORNING, JUNE 16, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present, except Prof. Dykstra, who is ill. Prof. R. Cammenga leads in opening devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 160. Prof. Cammenga reads Psalm 61 and leads in prayer.

Article 52

Motion that after the completion of the treatment of material in the hands of Committees 3-5, synod recess until Tuesday, August 25 in order to give Committee 1 time to complete its advice and to send it to the delegates to study prior to deliberation.

Grounds:

1. The committee needs more time carefully to prepare its advice.
2. Synod would be best served by having opportunity to digest the advice before we have to deliberate.
3. This is permissible under the Rules of Synod, XIII.

Motion to table the motion until after the lunch break. (Cf. Article 61, p. 49.)

Carried.

Article 53

Synod treats the proposal of the **Theological School Committee** regarding the **Dutch/German Prerequisite** (Supplement 32, p. 215).

A. Information

1. The TSC gives the history of the decisions regarding altering, augmenting, or eliminating the Dutch requirement from the Seminary curriculum since Synod 1991 and culminating in the decisions of Synod 2008 instructing the TSC to investigate the matter.

2. In light of this mandate and after investigation the TSC came to the conclusions that current instruction in one year of grammar and one year of reading was insufficient to provide proficiency; that our seminary, because of the heavy teaching loads and requisite training necessary for the faculty to teach Dutch at the desired level, is unable to take on this responsibility; that there is no “normal” way in our seminary to train a man to teach Dutch at the desired level.

3. In light of its investigation, the TSC recommends that synod drop German as an alternative to Dutch; that synod discontinue Dutch instruction in the seminary and the Dutch prerequisite for entrance into the seminary; and that synod declare itself in favor of the concept of a financial incentive for a pre-seminarian or a seminarian who has the interest and ability to develop a high level of competency in the Dutch and mandate the TSC to come to Synod 2010 with a well-worked out recommendation.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod mandate the TSC to present to Synod 2010 a well-designed program in which a pre-seminarian or a seminarian who has the interest and ability develops a high level of competency in a foreign language (Dutch preferable).

Grounds:

a. This would satisfy the desire expressed in the seminary catalog that “if at all possible...theological research in Dutch writings will still be possible by at least some ministers,” and so that they might be able to translate when it is necessary or beneficial for consistories, classes, or synods.

b. This would allow some to learn another foreign language besides Dutch and thus be of broad benefit to the churches.

c. Competency demands an intensive study of the language that normally cannot be attained in one year of grammar and one year of reading that previously defined the Dutch requirement.

Motion to amend by replacing “a foreign” with “the Dutch,” by eliding the parenthetical phrase “Dutch preferable,” and by eliding ground b.

Defeated.

The main motion is voted on.

Carried.

2. That synod drop German as an alternative to Dutch as a prerequisite for admission to the seminary.

Ground: It follows in light of recommendation 1.

Motion to amend by replacing the one ground presented by the committee of pre-advice with the three grounds presented by the Theological School Committee. The grounds will then be:

1. The grounds adopted by Synod 2003 give only minimal proof that German, instead of Dutch, is of value for the work of a minister in the PRCA.
 - a. Synod's grounds were:
 - (1) "It is very difficult for aspiring seminary students to get a solid Dutch grammar course."
 - (2) "German is more readily available and it is a valuable background for seminary study."
 - b. The grounds provided by the TSC added only a little:
 - (1) "There is some value for a Reformed minister to know the German language. Not only are there theological writings in German, but the Heidelberg Catechism was originally written in German."
 - (2) "German is more readily available in colleges, and those living outside of Grand Rapids would be able to fill this requirement."
2. The quality of German instruction in other institutions is also inadequate to equip one with the level of competency to read theological German. None of our current ministers is able to read theological German.
3. Our emphasis has been and is still on taking Dutch, for two reasons:
 - a. Our denomination's heritage (both in theology and in church polity) is most emphatically in the Netherlands and not in Germany.
 - b. The volume of good, theological Reformed material in the German language is not nearly as great or as significant as that which is in the Dutch language.

Carried.

The main motion as amended is voted on.

Carried.

3. That synod discontinue the Dutch instruction in our seminary.

Grounds:

 - a. It follows in light of recommendation 1.
 - b. Given the present responsibilities and the extensive training necessary to teach Dutch at the desired level, it is unrealistic to require our current faculty to teach Dutch.

Motion to amend by adding “and that the prerequisite for entrance into our seminary be eliminated.”	Carried.

The main motion as amended is voted on.	Carried.

Chairman declares closed session.

Article 54

Committee 4 presents its reformulated advice regarding Prof. Dykstra’s Th. M. Thesis (cf. Article 43, B, 2, p. 36): Motion that synod instruct the TSC to come to Synod 2010 with advice regarding the Th. M. of Prof. R. Dykstra.

Grounds:

1. Given the heavy workload of Prof. Dykstra he has not been able to complete the Th.M.
 2. Synod has gone on record as being in favor of the Th.M. for the professors of the Theological School.
- Carried.**

Article 55

Synod treats the **Reports of the Synodical Deputies from Classis East.**

A. Information

1. The synodical deputies attended the meeting of Classis West on September 5, 2007 and concurred with the decision of Classis West to approve the organization of Calvary PRC (Supplement 28, p. 200).
2. The synodical deputies attended the meeting of Classis West on March 4, 2009 and concurred with the decisions of Classis West to approve the emeritation of Rev. S. Houck as requested by the Council of Peace PRC and to approve the organization of Covenant of Grace PRC requested by Loveland PRC (Supplement 29, p. 201).
3. In a supplemental report synod received the report of the synodical deputies to the special meeting of Classis West on May 6-7, 2009, at which the deputies concurred with Classis West’s decisions not to approve Bethel PRC’s request to dismiss Rev. Mahtani from the ministry under Article 11 of the Church Order and instead instructing Bethel consistory, with the help of a special committee of classis, to labor pastorally with Rev. Mahtani directing him to seek release from the ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order and to report to the September 2, 2009 meeting of classis (Supplement 30, p. 201).

B. Recommendation

1. That synod approve the action of the synodical deputies at the September 5, 2007 meeting of Classis West in regard to the decision to organize Calvary PRC.
- Carried.**

2. That synod approve the action of the synodical deputies at the March 4, 2009 meeting of Classis West in regard to the decision to organize Covenant of Grace PRC. **Carried.**
3. That synod approve the action of the synodical deputies at the March 4, 2009 meeting of Classis West in regard to the decision to grant emeritation to Rev. Houck. **Carried.**
4. That synod approve the action of the synodical deputies at the May 6-7, 2009 special meeting of Classis West in regard to the decision of Classis West not to approve Bethel PRC's request to dismiss Rev. Mahtani from the ministry under Article 11 of the Church Order and instead instructing Bethel consistory, with the help of a special committee of classis, to labor pastorally with Rev. Mahtani directing him to seek release from the ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order and to report to the September 2, 2009 meeting of classis.

The chairman divides the question.

- a. It is moved that synod approve the action of the synodical deputies at the May 6-7, 2009 meeting of Classis West in regard to the decisions of Classis West not to approve Bethel PRC's request to dismiss Rev. Mahtani from the ministry under Article 11 of the Church Order. **Carried.**
- b. It is moved that synod approve the action of the synodical deputies concurring with the decision of Classis West instructing Bethel PRC consistory, with the help of a special committee of classis, to labor pastorally with Rev. Mahtani directing him to seek release from the ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order and to report to the September 2, 2009 meeting of classis. **Carried.**

Chairman declares end of closed session.

Article 56

Synod treats the **Report of the Synodical Deputies from Classis West** (Supplement 31, p. 202).

- A. Information: The synodical deputies of Classis West attended the meeting of Classis East on October 21, 2008 and concurred with Classis East's decision to approve the examination of Candidate Heath Bleyenberg and advise Providence PRC to proceed with his examination.
- B. Recommendation: That synod approve the action of the synodical deputies in regard to the examination and installation of Candidate Heath Bleyenberg. **Carried.**

Article 57

Synod treats the **Appointment of Synodical Deputies of Classis East and West** (Supplement 7, p. 106, and Supplement 8, p. 113).

A. Information

1. At its meeting of January 14, 2009 Classis East appointed Rev. J. Laning to a three-year *primus* term and Rev. A. Lanning to a three-year *secundus* term.
2. At its meeting on March 4, 2009 Classis West elected Rev. C. Spronk for a three-year *primus* term and Rev. M. VanderWal for a three-year *secundus* term.

B. Recommendations

1. To approve as the duly elected deputies from Classis East for three-year terms Rev. J. Laning *primus* and Rev. A. Lanning *secundus*. **Carried.**
2. To approve as the duly elected deputies from Classis West for three-year terms Rev. C. Spronk *primus* and Rev. M. VanderWal *secundus*. **Carried.**

Article 58

Synod treats the report of the **Student Aid Committee** (Supplement 26, p. 199).

A. Information

1. The committee reports that of the \$43,000 budgeted for student aid and the \$7,500 budgeted for internship expenses, all was disbursed.
2. The Student Assistance Fund received funds throughout the year, and the balance as of December 31, 2008 was \$65,967.04. \$13,590.06 from the fund has been disbursed through December 31, 2008.
3. The committee recommends that synod budget \$50,000 in Student Aid and \$4,500 in internship expenses for 2009-2010.

B. Recommendation

1. That the chair declare closed session to treat the student aid information. **Carried.**

Chairman declares closed session.

2. That synod approve the budget of \$50,000 for student aid for the 2009-2010 school year. **Carried.**
3. That synod approve the budget of \$4,500 in internship expenses for 2010.

Motion to amend the figure for internship expenses for 2010 to \$13,500.00.	Carried.

Motion as once amended is voted on.	Carried.

4. That synod approve the disbursement of \$13,590.06 from the Seminary Student Assistance Fund through December 31, 2008.	Carried.

Chairman declares end of closed session.

Article 59

Synod treats the **Rector's Report** (Supplement 33, p. 221).

A. Information

1. In his annual report the rector, Prof. B. Gritters, reports on the active and profitable year that the faculty and seminary enjoyed in the work of preparing men for the gospel ministry, by the grace of God and the Spirit of Jesus Christ, with a spirit of cooperation among the faculty, and faithfulness among the large and diverse body of students. He reports that the faculty recommended seminarian Cory Griess for examination before synod; that Dr. David Torlach from the EPC has completed his training and the faculty recommended him to the EPC for internship; that the third year students, Mr. Daniel Holstege and Mr. Martyn McGeown, have been assigned their internships; that the faculty licensed three second-year students to speak a word of edification in the churches; and that two new students were provided by the Lord. The rector acknowledged the importance of the capable, conscientious, and tireless labors of Mr. and Mrs. Don Doezema for the work of the seminary.
2. The grades of the students were made available for the perusal of the synod.

B. Recommendation

1. That synod express appreciation for the work of the professors and the support staff of our seminary. **Carried.**
2. That synod note that the grades of the students have been reviewed and found satisfactory. **Carried.**

Article 60

A **letter of thanks** that the TSC received from Dr. David Torlach is read, thanking the PRC for solid instruction and financial support while he attended our seminary (Supplement 13, p. 137).

Elder Fred Tolsma closes the morning session in prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, JUNE 16, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present except Prof. Dykstra, who is ill. Rev. D. Kuiper opens the afternoon session with devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 252, and Rev. Kuiper leads in prayer.

Article 61

Synod treats the **matter of continuing its session in August**.

1. Motion is made to take from the table the motion in Article 52 (p. 42). **Carried.**

The motion of Article 52 is voted on.

Carried.

2. Motion is made to authorize Committee 1 to send its recommendations to the appellants, protestants, and Dr. Slice the week prior to reconvening, and to inform the appellants, protestants, and Dr. Slice that they may not distribute this material. **Carried.**

3. Motion is made that Mr. Sid Miedema, whose term of office in Byron Center PRC ends on June 30, 2009, be instructed that he may return to the continuing session of Synod 2009. **Carried.**

Article 62

Synod treats the recommitted material regarding **Western Home Missions** (cf. Article 48, p. 39).

A. Information (see Article 40, p. 32)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod not grant Loveland's request that Rev. T. Miersma be declared temporarily emeritus.

Grounds:

a. Requests for temporary emeritation in accordance with Article 13 of the Church Order cannot come directly to synod. A decision pertaining to Article 13 says: "This shall not be done, however, without the approbation of the classis and of the deputies of synod" (Decision A, Procedure 2).

b. The proposed method in effect releases him from Loveland's service without following the procedure required by Article 11 of the Church Order: "and shall not dismiss them from service without the knowledge and approbation of the classis and of the delegates of synod."

Motion to recommit for reformulation. (Cf. Article 72, p. 56.)

Carried.

Article 63

Synod treats the **Board of Trustees Report and Supplement** (Supplement 2, p. 93, and Supplement 3, p. 94).

A. Information

1. The BOT fulfilled its regular duties in filing the annual non-profit corporation reports for 2008, reviewing the treasurer's quarterly financial statements, and supervising the work of the investment manager in harmony with synod's investment policies and objectives.
2. The BOT expressed appreciation for the work of the treasurer, Mr. David Ondersma, and bookkeeper, Mrs. Brenda Brands.
3. The BOT appointed Rev. Nathan Langerak resident agent of the PRC in the state of Illinois.
4. The BOT reports that the investment subcommittee reports that, through the work of their financial manager, fund losses "have been kept to about half that of the market in general." The investment subcommittee has adopted a defensive investment strategy and is waiting for markets to stabilize.
5. The BOT reports two estate gifts:
 - a. An anonymous, unrestricted gift of \$39,476.51 to the seminary.
 - b. A restricted gift of \$32,162.35 to the seminary, from the estate of Richard G. Houskamp, specifically for the purchase of books for the library, from the income generated by the invested funds.

**Committee 5:**

*l. to r.: Rev. G. Eriks; Elder Fred Tolsma;
Rev. M. VanderWal; Elder David Ondersma*

6. The Board of Trustees presented its report of the five-year re-evaluation of the Emeritus Fund as mandated by Synod 2003 (Acts of Synod 2003, Art. 60, B, 4).
- B. Recommendation: that synod approve the work of the BOT and express appreciation to the treasurer and the bookkeeper for their faithful work. **Carried.**

Article 64

Chairman declares closed session.

Synod treats the report of the **Emeritus Committee** (Supplement 17, p. 182).

A. Information

1. The Emeritus Committee received a request from Southeast PRC requesting an additional \$3,000 for unexpected medical expenses for Rev. D. Kuiper. The Emeritus Committee approved the request and instructed the synodical treasurer to remit payment on September 10, 2008.
2. Requests for emeritation support were received from the following churches for their emeriti ministers, and were approved by the Emeritus Committee:

	2009	2010
a. First, G.R.....Prof. D. Engelsma	\$19,500.00	\$20,280.00
b. Georgetown.....Rev. W. Bekkering	36,000.00	37,000.00
c. Georgetown.....Prof. R. Decker	19,500.00	20,280.00
d. Georgetown..Rev. B. Woudenberg	24,000.00	24,000.00
e. Grandville	Rev. J. Kortering	19,500.00
f. Hope, GR.	Prof. H. Hanko	36,000.00
g. Peace	Rev. S. Houck	39,833.33
h. Southeast	Rev. P. Breen	19,500.00
i. Southeast	Rev. D. Kuiper	39,066.00
j. South Holland	Mrs. G. Lanting	25,900.00
k. Trinity.....	Rev. G. VanBaren	19,500.00

3. The EC has reviewed the defined amount for “no questions asked” and has decided to leave it at the amount of \$20,280.00 for the year 2011, with the following grounds:
- The economy is in a very depressed state.
 - The CPI (government Consumer Price Index) for 2008-2009 was down to zero percent.
4. The Emeritus Committee expresses concerns regarding the implementation of the guidelines found in the Acts of Synod 1997, pp. 53-55, Art. 60, B, 3, a, b, c, and d. Article 60 of the above states, “That synod declare that emeriti ministers or widows’ net assets be used to

determine their income and be used for their support. The portion of the assets to be used is to be determined at the discretion of the supervising consistory with the approval of the Emeritus Committee.”

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the actions of the Emeritus Committee in approving the request from Southeast PRC for an additional \$3,000 for unexpected medical expenses for Rev. D. Kuiper in 2008.

Carried.

2. That synod approve the following eleven emeritation requests for 2010, totaling \$312,300.00:

	2009	2010	
a. First, G.R. Prof. D. Engelsma.....	\$19,500.00.....	\$20,280.00.....	Carried.
b. Georgetown Rev. W. Bekkering.....	36,000.00.....	37,000.00.....	Carried.
c. Georgetown Prof. R. Decker.....	19,500.00.....	20,280.00.....	Carried.
d. Georgetown Rev. B. Woudenberg.....	24,000.00.....	24,000.00.....	Carried.
e. Grandville Rev. J. Kortering.....	19,500.00.....	20,280.00.....	Carried.
f. Hope, GR..... Prof. H. Hanko.....	36,000.00.....	39,000.00.....	Carried.
g. Peace..... Rev. S. Houck.....	39,833.33.....	47,800.00.....	Carried.
h. Southeast Rev. P. Breen.....	19,500.00.....	20,280.00.....	Carried.
i. Southeast Rev. D. Kuiper.....	39,066.00.....	37,200.00.....	Carried.
j. South Holland..... Mrs. G. Lanting.....	25,900.00.....	25,900.00.....	Carried.
k. Trinity Rev. G. VanBaren.....	19,500.00.....	20,280.00.....	Carried.

Chairman declares end of closed session.

3. That synod approve the above decision of the Emeritus Committee to leave the amount for “no questions asked” at \$20,280.00 for 2011.

Carried.

4. That synod request the Emeritus Committee to present to Synod 2010 its concerns regarding the implementation of the guidelines found in the Acts of Synod 1997, Art. 60, B, 3, a, b, c, d. **Carried.**

Article 65

Synod treats the **Treasurer’s Report and Financial Statements** (Supplement 34, p. 223).

A. Information

1. The synodical treasurer, Mr. David Ondersma, submitted his report and financial statements for the years ended December 31, 2007 and 2008, along with notes and other financial data related thereto.

2. The treasurer reports that the total assets of the PRCA decreased to \$4,840,043 at December 31, 2008, a decrease of 2.9% for the year. This decrease is explained primarily by net losses on investments, a reduction in gifts and bequests, and lower church collections.

3. The treasurer reports that the Emeritus Fund has both restricted

and permanently restricted portions and totaled \$1,851,802 at December 31, 2008. The Emeritus Fund decreased by 9.5% in 2008 primarily due to the net losses on investments. The current balance is approximately 98% of the projection prepared in 2003.

4. An annual financial review was performed by the accounting firm of Kaptein, Dykstra & Company, P.C., Grandville, and the review found the books in good order.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the synodical treasurer's report and thank him for his labors. **Carried.**

2. That synod instruct the stated clerk to print the following pages from the Financial Statement in the Acts: pp. 1-5, 7 (beginning with "Net Assets and Purposes of Net Assets..."), 8-12, 14-15. **Carried.**

Article 66

Synod treats the **Finance Committee Report** (Supplement 19, p. 184).

A. Information

1. Kalamazoo PRC, with the approval of Classis East, requested a reduction in their synodical assessments on the ground of a loss of three families, more than 10% of their total membership of 22 families.

2. Doon PRC, with the approval of Classis West, requested a reduction in their synodical assessments on the ground of a loss of six families, more than 10% of their total membership of 50 families.

3. Grace PRC, with the approval of Classis East, requested financial relief in the amount of \$60,000 from the Needy Churches Fund for 2009 on the ground that they are supporting two ministers at least for the time being (cf. Supplement 7, pp. 107-108, 110-112).

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the actions of the Finance Committee in reducing the synodical assessment of Kalamazoo PRC.

Grounds:

a. Kalamazoo's loss of families exceeds the minimum 10% reduction required by the rule (Rules for Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), a)).

b. This is in harmony with the rule that allows their decision to be retroactive up to three months (Rules of Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), b)). **Carried.**

2. That synod approve the action of the Finance Committee in reducing the synodical assessment of Doon PRC.

Grounds:

- a. Doon's loss of families exceeds the minimum 10% reduction required by the rule (Rules for Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), a)).
 - b. This is in harmony with the rule that allows their decision to be retroactive up to three months (Rules of Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), b)). **Carried.**
- 3. That synod approve the action of the Finance Committee (Supplement 19, p. 185) in approving temporary subsidy for Grace PRC. (This request is temporary in that Rev. Dick may receive a call.) (Cf. also Supplement 7, pp. 107 and 110.)
 - Grounds:
 - a. The financial obligation of fully supporting two ministers is too heavy a burden for the congregation of Grace PRC to bear alone.
 - b. The general downturn in the economy has made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the congregation to maintain the weekly budget of \$81.27. This assistance would place their weekly obligations per family at \$61.71.
 - c. The need was immediate. Grace PRC's General Fund balance was low. Historically, the amount collected during the first quarter falls below expenditures.

Carried.

Article 67

Synod deals with the **Stated Clerk's Report** (Supplement 25, p. 198).

- A. Information: The Stated Clerk informs synod that the denominational family count increased two families to 1,889.
- B. Recommendation: That synod approve the work of the stated clerk and thank him for his labors. **Carried.**

Article 68

Synod deals with **subsidy requests** (Supplement 7, p. 106, Supplement 8, p. 113, and Supplement 9, p. 116).

- A. Information
 - 1. Classis West approved the request of Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, for subsidy of \$87,735 for the remainder of 2009.
 - 2. Classis East and Classis West have approved the following requests for 2010.
 - a. Kalamazoo: \$35,000 (an increase of \$10,000 from 2009).
 - b. Wingham: \$36,000 CN (an increase of \$6,000 from 2009).
 - c. Bethel: \$56,000 (an increase of \$21,000 from 2009).

- d. Edmonton: \$20,397 CN (an increase of \$2,793 CN from 2009).
- e. Covenant of Grace, Spokane: \$87,735 for the remainder of 2009, and \$135,146 for 2010.
- 3. Wingham has the following explanation for their balance ending fiscal year 2008 exceeding 10% of their budget: “It was necessary to have our year-end balance this high because: 1) We are making church building payments in 2009. 2) We anticipate some additional church building maintenance and improvement expense in 2009. 3) Our 2009 budget per family is considerably higher than in 2008.”
- B. Recommendations
 - 1. That synod approve the subsidy request of the Covenant of Grace PRC, Spokane, in the amount of \$87,735, for the remainder of 2009. **Carried.**
 - 2. That synod approve the following subsidy requests for the year 2010:
 - a. Kalamazoo: \$35,000. **Carried.**
 - b. Wingham: \$36,000 CN. **Carried.**
 - c. Bethel: \$56,000. **Carried.**
 - d. Edmonton: \$20,397 CN. **Carried.**
 - e. Covenant of Grace, Spokane: \$135,146. **Carried.**

Article 69

Synod treats the **Place and Time of Next Year’s Synod** (letter from Southeast PRC—Supplement 12, p. 136).

- A. Information
 - 1. Southeast PRC, in a letter dated May 27, 2009, offers its services to host the 2010 Synod of the PRC, using the facilities of the First PRC, GR, and Eastside Christian School.
 - 2. Lord willing, Synod 2010 will have on its agenda the examination of a son of Southeast PRC, seminarian Dan Holstege.
- B. Recommendation: that synod accept the offer of Southeast PRC to host next year’s synod, and to convene Tuesday, June 8, at 8:30. **Carried.**

The professors leave the meeting.

Article 70

Synod **votes for synodical committee members**, with the following results.

- 1. Catechism Book Committee: Rev. N. Brummel to a 1-year term; Rev. N. Langerak and Mr. George DeJong to 3-year terms.

2. Contact Committee: Prof. B. Gritters, Rev. A. Lanning, and Jim Holstege to 3-year terms.
3. Domestic Mission Committee: Rev. J. Slopsema, Rev. J. Kortering, and Dave Moelker to 3-year terms.
4. Emeritus Committee: Leon Uittenbogaard *primus*, and Steve Kooima *secundus*, to 3-year terms.
5. Foreign Mission Committee: Rev. S. Key, Andrew Brummel, Don VerMeer to 3-year terms.
6. Student Aid Committee: Dan Bodbyl to a 3-year term.
7. Theological School Committee: Rev. K. Koole, Rev. J. Laning, Andrew Brummel, Tim Pipe Sr, to 3-year terms.
8. Finance Committee: Rev. J. Laning and Rev. R. VanOverloop to 1-year terms.
9. Board of Trustees: Rev. J. Slopsema and Sid Miedema to 1-year terms.
10. Stated Clerk: Don Doezeema to a 3-year term.
11. Synodical Treasurer: David Ondersma to a 3-year term.

Article 71

Motion to recess until 6:00.

Elder G. Eriks closes the afternoon session with prayer.

TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 16, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present. Elder C. Kalsbeek opens the evening session with devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 350, and Elder Kalsbeek leads in prayer.

Article 72

Synod returns to the recommitted advice regarding **Western Home Missions** (cf. Article 62, p. 49).

A. Information (see Article 40, p. 32)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod rescind the decision it took in Article 40, B, 3, and refer back to the DMC the matter of Loveland's request to be relieved as calling church for Western Home Missions, and the matter of Rev. T. Miersma's status.

Grounds:

- a. Loveland's reason for its request to be relieved as a calling church is not sufficient. Loveland's reason for being relieved of its responsibility is that the work in Spokane has come to a conclusion. This reason does not reckon with the fact that Love-

land was appointed as the calling church because “Loveland is centrally located and, with modern communication and travel, is a convenient location for the calling church” and with the fact that our western home missionary was called with the understanding that “he shall be used also to labor in other areas” (Acts 1994, Article 15).

b. Loveland, in consultation with the DMC, must face the question of what implications Loveland’s being relieved as a calling church has for the missionary whom it called on behalf of the churches.

c. Loveland’s request for temporary emeritation in accordance with Article 13 of the Church Order does not satisfy the requirements of Decision A pertaining to Article 13.

1) Loveland initiated the request for temporary emeritation, rather than Rev. Miersma himself initiating it. The decision says: “The minister...may apply....”

2) Loveland brings the request directly to synod. The decision pertaining to Article 13 says: “This shall not be done, however, without the approbation of the classis and of the deputies of synod.” **Carried.**

2. That synod rescind the decision it took in Article 40, B, 5, and postpone action on calling a Western Home Missionary for Tucson, and designating Hope Redlands as the calling church, until the DMC reports back regarding Loveland’s request.

Ground: The original motion speaks of Hope Redlands replacing Loveland as calling church. Until Loveland is relieved of its status as calling church for Western Home Missions, it cannot be replaced.

Carried.

3. That synod instruct the DMC that if the DMC wishes the continuing session of Synod 2009 to finish treating this matter, the DMC should distribute its recommendations to the delegates by the week prior to synod reconvening. **Carried.**

4. That synod approve a 2010 budget for Western Home Missions of \$130,000 (DMC supplemental report, p. 170).

Ground: Regardless of how the matter with Loveland and Rev. Miersma turns out, we will still be involved in Western Home Missions in 2010. **Carried.**

Article 73

Synod treats the **expenses of Synod 2009** (Supplement 18, p. 183).

A. Information: Synod incurred total expenses of \$8,240.49 for its session of June 9-16, 2009.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve these expenses and instruct the synodical treasurer to reimburse the same.

Motion to amend the figure for janitor by changing it to \$65.00 per day (raising total expenses to \$8,315.49). **Carried.**

The motion as amended is voted on. **Carried.**

Article 74

Synod treats the **budget for 2010** (Supplement 35, p. 237).

A. Information: The proposed budget is attached.

B. Recommendation: That synod adopt a budget of \$923 per family for 2010 (an increase of \$83, or 9.9% from 2009). **Carried.**

C. Motion made that synod inform the churches that the main reasons for the increase in synodical assessments, from \$840 to \$923 per family per year, is significant increase in assistance to needy churches and for the emeritus fund, as well as the fact that we have two foreign missionaries. **Carried.**

Article 75

The script minutes of the day are read. A motion is made to adopt the minutes. **Carried.**

The chairman, Rev. S. Key, makes appropriate closing remarks.

Synod recesses until August 25.

Rev. S. Key leads synod in closing prayer.

*** *** ***

TUESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 25, 2009

Article 76

Rev. S. Key leads in opening devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 27. Rev. Key reads Proverbs 16:22-33, makes appropriate opening remarks regarding the use of our tongue in dealing with controversial issues, and leads in prayer.

Article 77

Silent roll call reveals all delegates present, except that Rev. Arie denHartog is present as alternate for Rev. Carl Haak, and Rev. David Overway as alternate for Rev. Rodney Miersma. Revs. denHartog and Overway give assent to the **Public Declaration of Agreement with the Forms of Unity**.

Article 78

Synod treats the advice of Committee 1 concerning the **Jason Kuiper protest** and synod's subsequent rebuke (Supplement 50, Appendix 2, p. 515).

Motion is made to treat the following matters regarding Mr. Kuiper and Mr. Feenstra in closed session. **Carried.**

A. Information

1. In treating legality of the various appeals and protests, synod adopted the following motions (Article 49, B, 7 & 8, p. 41) concerning the Jason Kuiper protest:

- a. That synod declare Mr. Jason Kuiper's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 & 31 of the Church Order.
- b. That synod rebuke Mr. Jason Kuiper for the harsh language and serious allegations at the end of his protest (Supplement 45, p. 454), specifically, "This wrong interpretation constitutes not merely an innocent misunderstanding" and under point 5 with references to "the preaching of this false doctrine and similar nonsense...by consistories and ministers who...know better."

2. Because Mr. Kuiper, who was present, was not prepared at that time to acknowledge that he had erred, Committee 1 was directed to discuss the matter with him further.

3. Committee 1 met with Mr. Kuiper, and reports the following:

- a. Mr. Kuiper showed himself willing to receive instruction.
- b. The brother humbly owned up to his fault, and gave what we believe was a sincere apology, which we accepted on behalf of synod.

B. Recommendation: That synod receive this report of Committee 1 as the end of this matter and note this response of the brother with gratitude to God. **Carried.**

Article 79

Synod treats the advice of Committee 1 concerning the **Ken Feenstra protest** and synod's subsequent rebuke (Supplement 50, Appendix 3, p. 515).

A. Information

1. In treating legality of the various appeals and protests, synod adopted the following motions (Article 49, B, 5 & 6, p. 40) concerning the Ken Feenstra protest:

- a. That synod declare Mr. Ken Feenstra's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 & 31 of the Church Order.

- b. That synod rebuke Mr. Ken Feenstra for serious allegations impugning the motives of synod in the conclusion to his protest (Supplement 41, p. 433), specifically, “Article 21 was used as a club...instead of used charitably,” and “Synod seems blinded by tradition...and more than likely by money.”
2. The First Clerk of synod contacted Mr. Feenstra to notify him of synod’s decision.
- a. Committee 1 subsequently attempted to set up a meeting with Mr. Feenstra in order to explain to him synod’s rebuke and give him an opportunity to retract the allegations made at the end of his protest, and in order that we could appropriately advise synod when we reconvene on August 25.
- b. Mr. Feenstra declined to meet with our committee and instead submitted a letter to synod.
3. Mr. Feenstra’s letter is attached (Supplement 50, Appendix 4, p. 516), in which he retracts nothing from his statements, and makes no apology for what he has written.
- B. Recommendation: That synod still treat Mr. Feenstra’s protest insofar as it is incorporated in the recommendations of Committee 1, but bar Mr. Feenstra from speaking to the matter.
- Ground: By his inappropriate language, his impenitence with regard to such, and his unwillingness even to discuss it with the committee, he has forfeited the right to speak on the floor of synod.

Motion to amend by eliding the clause, “and his unwillingness even to discuss it with the committee.” **Carried.**

Motion as once amended is voted on. **Carried.**

The chairman reads Proverbs 15:1-5, and urges Mr. Feenstra to reflect on them.

The chairman declares end of closed session.

Article 80

Synod turns to the material of Committee 1 regarding **the appeals and protests.**

A. Information

1. History of the case.
- a. The churches stand before a case that began in Grace PRC in Standale, MI, where Rev. M. Dick was the pastor. The congregation exists in an area of established Protestant Reformed

Christian schools. The vast majority of the congregation's members received their education and have their children educated in these schools. The congregation's members have a deep love for these schools and understand the importance of the schools to our churches.

1) The case involves the educational choices of Rev. Dick and how those choices affected his ability to uphold Article 21 of the Church Order, which states, **"The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant."**

a) For several years Rev. Dick and his wife sent their children, with the exception of one of them, to Hope PR Christian School. One child was homeschooled. The homeschooling of this child was accepted by the congregation. This indicates that, contrary to the way some would present the case, the issue is **not** that the churches require all members to use the same form of education, namely, the Christian day schools.

b) Later the Dicks withdrew their children from Hope School and sent them to Eastside Christian School, another school established by Protestant Reformed parents.

c) After one year at Eastside, Rev. and Mrs. Dick withdrew all their children and in the Fall of 2006 began to teach them at home.

2) This action of Rev. and Mrs. Dick withdrawing all their children from the schools occasioned conflict in the congregation.¹ This moved the consistory of Grace to develop a position paper, which was distributed to the congregation in early January 2007.

a) The consistory wrote that they were aware that the Dicks' action of withdrawing all their children from the good Christian schools and homeschooling them "prompted vigorous discussion among the congregation regarding the 'correctness' of his decision." The consistory also indicated that there "are some conflicting opinions, some of which are very strong."

b) The consistory wrote that "there are no principles

¹ Rev. M. Dick: "...half the congregation at Grace...has no difficulty with the homeschooling of the pastor and desires that he continue to minister to them..." (Supplement 36, p. 317).

or biblical reasons that would serve as grounds for the consistory to prohibit parents from homeschooling their children even though Christian day schools are available. We also believe that the only time that the church could mandate that parents send their children to Christian day schools instead of homeschooling is when she is convinced that parents' motives are improper, or that the parents are not capable of providing a Christian education at home." Further "the Consistory **discourages** homeschooling when good Christian day schools are a viable option." Finally, the consistory reported that "The pastor's decision to homeschool, at this time, is a matter of conscience, and not merely a matter of exercising his liberty; rather, he and his wife feel convicted in their conscience that it is right, in the sight of God, that they do this."

c) The January 2007 position paper of the consistory did not calm the troubled waters. Protests to the consistory ensued, calling into question Rev. Dick's ability as a pastor to fulfill his responsibilities with respect to Article 21 of the Church Order. When the protests were not sustained by the consistory, appeals were made to the September 2007 meeting of Classis East.

b. The Dick case came before Classis East in September 2007.

1) One appellant asked that Classis East instruct Grace consistory to **require** Rev. Dick to re-enroll his children in a PR Christian school (Sept. 2007, Art. 35). Classis denied this request and judged that:

a) *Rev. Dick's position of conscience to homeschool his children is his biblical right because homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty.*

b) *No member, not even an officebearer, may be required to act against his conscience on a matter of Christian liberty (Romans 14), although in certain instances an officebearer's holding to his conscience may jeopardize his office.*

2) At the same time, Classis made significant decisions regarding Article 21 and the concrete case in Grace Church.

a) Classis judged that Grace consistory was in error in two respects (Sept. 2007, Art. 45):

i) First, they erred in saying that *Article 21 does*

not address what kind of Christian schools there must be and that Article 21 does not favor one kind of Christian education over another.

ii) *Second, they erred when they maintained that Article 21 calls consistories to promote Christian schools only for those who need them.*

b) *Positively, Classis maintained that Article 21 speaks of good Christian day schools established and maintained by the community of Reformed believers, and mandates consistories to promote the establishment and use of such schools by parents. The rule of Article 21 is binding on all consistories of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It requires of every minister and elder to promote the establishment and use of good Christian schools in community with other Reformed believers. Thus, an officebearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reasons for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so that the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation: I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; II Thess. 3:7.*

c) *Further, Classis decided that Grace consistory erred in approving Rev. Dick's decision to homeschool his children on the basis of conscience. The consistory gave no further explanation. The deciding factor should be the reason(s) why the pastor does not use the good Christian schools (which reasons are judged to be valid by the consistory), and not that his decision is one of conscience. One's conscience may not be decisive [for the consistory] because the conscience may be weak for lack of knowledge (I Cor. 8:7) or it may be defiled by our sinful nature (Titus 1:15) (Sept. 2007, Art. 45).*

d) *So Classis advised the Grace consistory to require of Rev. Dick his reason(s) for not sending his children to the existing PR Christian schools, to judge whether these reasons are valid and work with Rev. Dick to resolve, if possible, the issues that hinder him from using the existing PR Christian schools (Sept. 2007, Art. 47).*

e) *The Classis also appointed a special committee to*

assist the Grace consistory in implementing Classis' decision, should the consistory desire such help.

c. The matter was again faced by Classis East in January 2008.

1) First, the special committee appointed by the September Classis reported.

a) The committee informed Classis that they had advised the Grace consistory not to accept the pastor's reasons for withdrawing his children from the good Christian schools because his reasons focused on perceived weaknesses in the schools and would "bring the message to the members of Grace PRC that the Christian schools they use are in fact not 'good Christian schools.'" The committee also warned that the consistory's acceptance of these reasons has "several unacceptable implications (perhaps unforeseen by the consistory)."

b) The Grace consistory had also informed the committee by letter that the consistory judged Rev. Dick's reasons to be valid.

2) At this Classis was a protest by Mr. Marvin Kamps. Mr. Kamps contended that "Scripture requires Reformed covenantal instruction in a good Christian school."

a) Classis judged Mr. Kamps to be wrong *in his contention that the "good Christian schools" promoted by Article 21 of the Church Order are required by Scripture so that homeschooling does not fall into the area of Christian liberty.*

b) Classis declared that *Scripture does require covenant parents to provide good, covenantal, Christian education for their children. This is one of the demands of the covenant.*

c) Further, Classis ruled that *because Scripture does not address the manner in which covenant children are to be instructed, the exact manner of instruction is a matter of Christian liberty* (January/February 2008, Articles 50, 53).

3) Grace consistory also submitted a protest.

a) Classis did not sustain the protest, but maintained that the decisions of Classis in September 2007 *do not conflict with Scripture and the Reformed tradition.* Specifically, Classis stated that *although Article 21 does*

not speak to the question of whether homeschooling is right or wrong, it does require the promotion of the existing Christian day schools by the consistory as a whole and by the consistory members in their individual office where this is possible (January/February 2008, Articles 59, 62).

b) Classis said that Grace PRC's consistory erred when they judged **valid** Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them, as reported in their Nov. 13, 2007 letter to the Special Committee. Classis gave three reasons:

i) First, Rev. Dick's reasons, as presented in the Special Committee's report, make it impossible for him to comply with Article 21 of the Church Order...to encourage and promote the use of the good Christian schools by the other members of his congregation.

ii) Second, the reasons which Grace's consistory accepted from their pastor for withdrawing all his children from two PR Christian schools are not adequate. The weaknesses that he sees in the good Christian schools affect, not only his children, but also all the children of his flock. As the pastor of the flock, the course of action he should pursue (for the sake of all the children in the flock) is to address, in a wise and persistent way, the issues of concern and work toward resolving the issues. Withdrawing his children from the schools keeps him from being able to deal with and address these weaknesses. The pastor did not present any unique needs of his children that make it necessary for him to withdraw all of them from these schools.

iii) Third, the welfare of the congregation will be promoted and unity restored only when it is evident to the congregation: 1) That the consistory has a correct understanding of Article 21 of the Church Order; 2) That the consistory is taking into consideration the effect on the congregation of Rev. Dick's decisions and the consistory's acceptance of his reasons; 3) That the consistory recognizes that officebearers must be willing to make adjustments

in their own life so that peace may be maintained in the congregation (I Cor. 10:23, 24).

- 4) Mr. Ken Feenstra also protested.
 - a) Classis did not sustain the protest, but maintained that *Classis East in September was not talking about homeschooling per se, nor about whether a good Christian home school education meets the demands of the covenant. Rather Classis East was dealing with how Article 21 applies to the specific instance of an officebearer withdrawing his children from two existing Christian day schools without an explanation to the congregation in order to homeschool them.*
 - b) In addition, Classis said: *While a Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances, Article 21 of the Church Order is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible* (January/February 2008, Article 65).
- d. The May 2008 Classis faced a number of protests against decisions of the January 2008 Classis. In each case Classis rejected the protests. Rev. Dick, Mr. Paul Hoekstra, and Mr. Arjen Vreugdenhil come to Synod 2009 appealing some of the protests rejected by Classis East in May 2008.
- e. Synod 2008 responded to a number of appeals from two different perspectives that had been generated by decisions of Classis East.
 - 1) On the one hand, one group believed that homeschooling by an officebearer should be permissible under all circumstances because, they said, Article 21 does not specify the kind of schools that the consistory is to promote.
 - a) In response to these appeals synod first declared that Article 21 does refer to good Christian **day** schools, and that the church has always understood this to be the meaning (*Acts 2008*, Art. 52, B, 3, a). Article 21 also requires consistories to promote these schools (*Acts 2008*, Art. 64, B, 1). Synod further declared that *the church has the authority to involve itself in matters that belong to the home, even in areas of Christian liberty... While the calling to educate covenant children is the calling of the parents (Deut. 6:5ff.), the church has the*

authority, for the sake of its own welfare, to see to it that the parents have their children instructed in good Christian day schools, as set forth in Article 21 of the Church Order (Acts 2008, Art. 64, B, 2, a-b). Synod also upheld Classis East in declaring that while a Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances, Article 21 is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible (Acts 2008, Article 52, B, 3, d).

b) Synod then made decisions regarding the calling of officebearers with respect to Article 21. *Consistories, and therefore individual officebearers, must promote the existing good Christian schools.* Synod sustained Classis East's position in this, and again said that *an officebearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation: I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; II Thess. 3:7 (Acts 2008, Art. 63, B, 4, a-b).*

c) This means: *The rule of Article 21 that a minister promote the use of the good Christian schools requires that he ordinarily send his children to the Christian schools which the consistory recognizes as good, and which the members of the congregation use, and that if he does not, he must give to the consistory and congregation an adequate explanation for not using the schools (Acts 2008, Art. 64, B, 4, b).*

2) On the other hand, Mr. Marvin Kamps maintained that according to Article 21 the use of the Christian day school is a **demand** of the covenant.

a) Synod rejected the Kamps appeal, pointing out that *Mr. Kamps does not prove that just as Scripture demands (requires) Christian education, so also in the same manner Scripture demands (requires) the method this education must assume.* Synod told the appellant that he had not proved that *Scripture demands that Christian education be done only in Christian schools.*

Therefore, Classis East (January/February 2008 meeting) was correct when it stated that “Scripture does not specify exactly how the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished. God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children” (Acts 2008, Art. 47, B, 3, a, 1), b)).

b) Further interpreting Article 21 in the Kamps appeal, Synod 2008 stated: *While the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together, it does not necessarily mandate parents to educate their covenant children together in all circumstances (Acts 2008, Art. 47, B, 3, a, 2).*

c) Further, synod maintained that *Mr. Kamps’ position, though he denies this, requires the discipline of the man who does not use the existing Protestant Reformed Christian schools, because the failure to use them, according to Mr. Kamps, is to disobey a requirement of Scripture, and to sin the sin of radical individualism (Acts 2008, Art. 47, B, 3, b).*

2. Synod 2009 now faces appeals and protests by Rev. Dick, Mr. Ken Feenstra, Prof. H. Hanko, Mr. Paul Hoekstra, Mr. Marvin Kamps, Mr. Jason Kuiper, Mr. Bert Mulder, Mr. Fred Tolsma, Mr. Joe Van Gelderen, and Mr. A. Vreugdenhil, which protests and appeals differ, but focus on the following matters: (Cf. Supplement 50, Appendix 1, p. 511 for a more detailed accounting of the various protests.)

a. The main focus of the various protests and appeals is that the broader assemblies’ interpretation of Article 21 is incorrect.

1) Some insist that synod erred in its interpretation of the “Christian schools” referred to.

2) Others insist that synod erred in failing to make the Christian day schools a demand of the covenant.

b. Some protests and appeals contend that the broader assemblies improperly denied the right of Rev. Dick to be guided by his conscience in matters of Christian liberty, specifically in the matter of choosing to homeschool instead of using the existing PR Christian schools.

c. Some protests and appeals contend that Classis East and synod erred in matters of church polity:

1) Classis East overstepped the bounds of its authority by

passing judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick's withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them.

2) Classis East overstepped its bounds in involving themselves in a matter that belonged solely to the authority of parents.

d. Some protests and appeals contend that synod added to the requirements of Scripture for an officebearer.

e. There are also protests that call into question synod's decision in the N. Kleyen appeal.

f. The Vreugdenhil appeal (Supplement 38, point III, p. 357) objects to Classis East's publicly questioning Rev. Dick's effectiveness in Grace congregation.

B. Recommendations concerning Article 21 and its application to the case of Rev. M. Dick:

1. That synod uphold the decisions of Classis East and Synod 2008 in their contention that the schools of Article 21 are the Christian day schools in which parents have their children instructed by others on their behalf (*Acts of Synod 2008*, Art. 54, B, 3, a).

Grounds:

a. The language of Article 21 speaks of one kind of school.

1) Article 21 is speaking about schools in which parents **have their children instructed**, whereas in a home school the parents instruct their children.

2) This is confirmed by the questions asked the consistories during church visitation: "Does the consistory see to it that the parents *send* their children to the Christian school?"

3) This is confirmed by the questions of Church Order Article 41 asked the churches at each classical meeting, specifically, "Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?"

b. This was the understanding of Article 21 in the Reformed churches historically.

1) The Synod of Dordt 1618-19 "set forth a bold plan for education that involved the Church, home, and school in a closely integrated fashion."² The resolution adopted by the Synod included: "Schools, in which the young shall be properly instructed in the principles of Christian doctrine, shall be instituted not only in the cities, but also in towns and country places where heretofore none have existed."³

² Paul Kienel, *A History of Christian School Education*, vol. I, Association of Christian Schools International, Colorado Springs, 1998. p. 306.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

2) The Christian Reformed Synod 1936 confirmed this historic view when a study committee faced the question: Which schools are meant in the question under Article 41? The Synod saw that “Schools” in article 41 is identical with “schools” mentioned in Article 21, that is, free Christian schools, supported by the parents.⁴ The term “schools” in the phrase “The cause of Christian schools in Article 41” refers to the Christian primary and grammar and high schools (or Academies) where the bulk of our children get their general school education....”⁵ The study committee of the Synod had determined from their historical study that *The Acts of Wesel 1568, Dordt 1574, Dordt 1578, Middelburg 1581, The Hague 1586, and especially Dordt 1618-’19, all refer emphatically to the duty of the church to concern itself with the “cause of the Christian schools.” But in every case the reference is to the schools where the children are educated in reading, writing, music, and the knowledge of the Catechism....*

*The emphasis in these early Acts is uniformly upon the school training that was common to all the children, therefore to what today is called common school education.*⁶

c. The protestants and appellants err in their contention that making the good Christian schools of Article 21 the Christian day school would place Article 21 in conflict with Scripture and the Reformed confessions. The Christian day schools arise out of the following principles of Scripture and the Reformed confessions.

1) While parents are responsible for the education of their children (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7), the Scriptures also indicate that there is a communal aspect to the training of covenant children.

a) Psalm 78:3-7 demonstrates a communal aspect to the instruction of covenant children. In verse 4, the inspired psalmist does not even refer to his own children and the children of his own generation as our children or my children, but **their** children, namely, the children of those whom he calls **our fathers**. They are the church’s children.

b) Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalm 71:17-18; 145:4 also

⁴ Christian Reformed Church *Acts of Synod 1936*, p. 36.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁶ Christian Reformed Church *Agenda of Synod 1936*, p. 14.

demonstrate a communal concern in the training and education of covenant children.

2) This communal character of the education of covenant children found in Scripture is rooted in two important spiritual realities of the covenant.

a) Children born of covenant parents are included in the covenant and church of God (Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 74; Genesis 17:7).

b) An important aspect of the covenant is the communion of saints.

i) In communicating the gifts of His grace to the body of Christ, God distributes His gifts throughout the body, so that the members of the body are dependent on each other. I Corinthians 12:20-21: “But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.”

ii) Every member of the body of Christ is obligated “readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts for the advantage and salvation of the other members” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q & A 55), as expressed in:

(a) I Corinthians 12:25: “...but that the members should have the same care one for another.”

(b) Philippians 2:4: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”

iii) These principles of the communion of saints apply to every aspect of the Christian life, including the solemn duty of parents to provide covenant training for their children. **Carried.**

2. That synod uphold Synod 2008 and Classis East in their contention that the phrase “according to the demands of the covenant” in Article 21 speaks to the *instruction* that parents are to provide their children and not to the particular form in which this instruction is given, namely, the Christian day schools.

Grounds:

a. This is the natural reading of Article 21. According to rules of sentence structure, the concluding phrase “according to

the demands of the covenant” modifies “instructed,” not “good Christian schools.”

b. Article 21 itself does not address the parents’ calling, but **expects** that parents will ordinarily fulfill the demands of the covenant in part by using the Christian schools, and will need those schools in order that they might fulfill those demands.

c. The third question of the Form for Baptism asked of parents at baptism and which summarizes the demand of the covenant for the instruction of covenant children makes no mention of the calling of parents to provide this instruction in the Christian day school.

d. While the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together, it does not demand that parents necessarily educate their covenant children together in all circumstances (cf. *Acts 2008*, Article 47, B, 3, a, 2, p. 41).

e. The position of Prof. Hanko and Mr. Kamps makes all those who cannot establish a Christian day school guilty of failing to fulfill the demands of the covenant. A “demand” of the covenant, if words have any meaning, is a **requirement**, which allows for **no exceptions**.

Motion is made to recommit this recommendation to the committee of pre-advice for reformulation (cf. Article 81 below). **Carried.**

Elder Loren Gritters closes the morning session in prayer.

TUESDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 25, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present. Prof. Dykstra reads Psalm 145. Synod sings Psalter Number 281, and Prof. Dykstra leads in prayer.

Article 81

Synod treats the reformulated advice of Committee 1 (cf. Article 80, above):

2. That synod uphold Synod 2008 and Classis East in their contention that the phrase “according to the demands of the covenant” in Article 21 modifies “instructed” and not “the good Christian schools.” Thus, according to Article 21, what the covenant *demands* is Christian

instruction; but the covenant does not demand the particular form this instruction takes, namely, the Christian day schools.

Grounds:

- a. This is the natural reading of Article 21. According to rules of sentence structure, the concluding phrase “according to the demands of the covenant” modifies “instructed,” not “good Christian schools.”
- b. The third question of the Form for Baptism asked of parents at baptism and which summarizes the demand of the covenant for the instruction of covenant children makes no mention of the calling of parents to provide this instruction in the Christian day school.
- c. While the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly urges upon parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together, it does not demand that parents necessarily educate their covenant children together in all circumstances (cf. *Acts 2008*, Article 47, B, 3, a, 2, p. 41).
- d. The position of Prof. Hanko and Mr. Kamps makes all those who cannot establish a Christian day school guilty of failing to fulfill the demands of the covenant. A “demand” of the covenant, if words have any meaning, is a **requirement**, which allows for **no exceptions**.

The chairman relinquishes the chair to the vice-president, so that he can speak to the motion.

Motion to amend by eliding ground b.

Motion to meet this evening from 6:30 to 8:30. **Carried.**

Rev. David Overway closes the afternoon session with prayer.

TUESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 25, 2009

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present. Prof. Gritters reads Psalm 103:13ff. Synod sings Psalter Number 281, and Prof. Gritters leads in prayer.

Article 82

Synod returns to the motions of Article 81.

Minutes	Article 83	Acts of Synod 2009
Synod votes on the motion to amend by eliding ground b.		Defeated.
Motion is made to amend by eliding ground c.		Defeated.
Synod votes on the main motion.		Carried.
The chairman resumes the chair.		

Article 83

Synod returns to the recommendations of the committee of pre-advice.

3. That synod uphold the position that it is the calling of *every* consistory member (ministers and elders) in the Protestant Reformed Churches to uphold Article 21 of the Church Order *by word and by example*.

a. This implies:

1) That they see to it that there are, if at all possible, good Christian schools. In the context of our churches the goal is Christian schools established by Protestant Reformed parents, which schools stand in agreement with the truth taught in the Protestant Reformed Churches. This requires *of the Ministers and of the Consistories to take to heart, with all their strength and their gifts, the support and the construction of Christian Schools* (CRC Acts of Synod 1892, Art. 23).

2) That where such schools are established, the consistories have a calling:

a) to inquire of those parents who do not use the established Protestant Reformed schools their reasons for not using them, and

b) to admonish them if there is indication that they are not fulfilling the demands of the covenant to the utmost of their power in the education they provide for their children.

3) That, therefore, where there are such schools, the officebearer must send his children to those schools unless there are valid reasons not to do so, and that such reasons are subject to the judgment of the consistory.

b. Grounds:

1) Any requirement that the Church Order lays upon the

consistory falls upon the individual consistory member.

2) The spiritual welfare of the churches' children must be the concern of every consistory member (minister and elders), including the nature of the instruction they receive (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Judges 2:10; Psalm 78:1-7; etc.).

3) The consistory, as part of its spiritual oversight of the congregation, is obligated to see to it that parents, as members of the church, fulfill their promise made when they presented their children for baptism (Acts 20:28).

4) *Officebearers must be examples to the congregation: I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; II Thess. 3:7 (Acts 2008, Article 63, B, 4).*

Motion is made to amend by adding to 3, a, 2), b): "to urge upon them the wisdom of fulfilling their covenant calling by educating their children together in these schools, and..." and making the present b) become c).

Carried.

Motion is made to extend debate until 9:00 P.M.

Carried.

Synod continues to debate the main motion.

Article 84

The script minutes of the day are read. A motion is made to adopt the minutes.

Carried.

Elder Sid Miedema leads in closing prayer.

Synod recesses for the day.

WEDNESDAY MORNING, AUGUST 26, 2009

Rev. A. denHartog leads in opening devotions. Rev. denHartog reads Psalm 71; synod sings Psalter Number 213; and Rev. denHartog opens in prayer.

Silent roll call reveals all delegates present, except Prof. Gritters, who is absent to officiate at a funeral.

Article 85

Synod returns to the main motion of Article 83.

Motion to amend by making a, 3) read: "That, therefore, where there are such schools, the individual officebearer:

a) must promote the existing good Christian schools.

b) is expected to send his children to those schools

unless there are special circumstances judged by his consistory to be valid (cf. *The Church Order Commentary* by VanDellen and Monsma, p. 99).”

Carried.

Motion to amend by switching the order of a, 2) and 3). **Defeated.**

Synod votes on the main motion as twice amended. **Carried.**

Motion that we have lunch today from 12:30 to 1:30. **Carried.**

Chair instructs the two clerks to formulate a letter of sympathy to Rev. Haak, and a letter of concern to Rev. R. Miersma, both of whom are delegates to this synod, but whose present trials prevent them from being present at these sessions. (Cf. Art. 96, p. 90.)

Article 86

Synod proceeds with the recommendations of the committee of preadvice.

4. That synod uphold the decisions of Synod 2008 and Classis East by which they declared that “homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty.”

Ground: Since Scripture does not legislate the precise manner in which the education of covenant children should take place, covenant parents have freedom in determining the particular form in which this instruction is given.

a. One aspect of Christian liberty is that the conscience is not bound by the doctrines and commandments of men—the believer may do what God’s law does not forbid, and refrain from whatever God’s law does not require. In matters not legislated by God’s law, he has the freedom to serve the Lord according to the dictates of his conscience (James 4:12; Romans 14:4; Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20:2).

b. Although the Christian day schools of Article 21 are rooted in and are proper applications of biblical **principles**, they are not the only legitimate way of instructing children according to the demands of the covenant.

c. Thus, homeschooling can also be a legitimate form of education for some parents, and in some instances is the best option available.

Elder Tolsma leaves the meeting due to illness.

The chairman relinquishes the chair to the vice-president, so that he can speak to the motion.

Synod votes on the motion.

Carried.

The chairman resumes the chair.

5. That synod declare that Classis East erred when it used Christian liberty as the basis for its declaration that “*Rev. Dick’s position of conscience to homeschool his children is his biblical right.*”

Ground: An officebearer is not at liberty, indiscriminately, simply to act according to the dictates of his conscience without regard to circumstances. The exercise of Rev. Dick’s Christian liberty in the education of his children was limited by his obligations to Article 21 of the Church Order as the pastor of Grace PRC.

a. Scripture makes clear that the exercise of a believer’s Christian liberty is limited by a consideration of what is profitable for his neighbor.

1) I Corinthians 6:12 and 10:23 show that the believer willingly refrains from doing some things that, though they may be “lawful,” are not “expedient,” i.e., for the profit of the brother.

2) Holding office in the church can limit the exercise of one’s Christian liberty.

a) Paul, for example, thought it necessary for Timothy to be circumcised (Acts 16:3), if he and Timothy were to minister effectively to the Jews, in keeping with the principle that he must be all things to all men (I Corinthians 9:19-22).

b) Paul surely was an “example” *par excellence*. He manifested the principle of I Corinthians 9:19-23 in his own life. He reminded the Corinthians that he had a *right* to financial support, from them, while he labored in their midst (I Corinthians 9:11). But he had voluntarily refrained from using it (I Corinthians 9:12). John Calvin tells why. “He had of his own free will given up that right, which no one could deny to him; and that he preferred to endure anything rather than make use of his freedom in a way that would hinder the progress of the Gospel” (Commentary on I Corinthians).

b. The Church Order restricts the exercise of Christian liberty for members of the church.

1) The church has the right to make certain ordinances in

a Church Order for maintaining peace and good order, even though these ordinances are not laid down in Scripture.

a) The apostles and the elders of the church in Jerusalem, with the concurrence of the members of the church, laid down certain temporary restrictions not required by Scripture, for Gentile converts, for the sake of unity in the church (Acts 15).

b) The Belgic Confession, Article 32, teaches that “it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church, institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church.” These ordinances ought to be viewed as rules that are “useful and beneficial,” not as laws that are binding the conscience.

2) These ecclesiastical ordinances are proper limitations to the exercise of the Christian liberty of her members.

a) God, who is “Lord of the conscience” (Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20:2), has also ordained ecclesiastical authority, and He in fact rules His church through the ordinances established by the church.

b) It is the calling of the church’s members (including the officebearers) to submit to these ordinances (Hebrews 13:17).

c) That this is no new interpretation is evident from the teaching of the Westminster Confession of Faith, Chapter 20:4: “And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another, they who, upon pretense of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God....”

c. The duties that the Church Order requires of officebearers limit the exercise of their Christian liberty. Those who accept the office bind themselves willingly to these duties. Those who are not able for conscience sake to perform these duties cannot serve in the special offices.

1) Article 68 of the Church Order requires every minister to preach the Heidelberg Catechism. If one’s conscience does not allow him to do this, he cannot serve as a minister in the PRC.

2) Article 67 of the Church Order requires every minister

to conduct public worship on special days. If a man's conscience does not allow him to do this, he cannot serve as a minister in the PRC.

3) Some other practices in the church do not find a place in the Church Order itself, but are nevertheless commonly understood to limit who can serve in an office. For example, a man whose conscience would not allow him to sing with instrumental accompaniment in public worship would not be able to serve in a special office in the PRC.

d. Specifically, Article 21 of the Church Order places limitations on the liberty of a consistory member in the education of his children.

1) Article 21 is an expression of our commitment to establish PR Christian schools wherever possible.

2) Where such schools are established, each consistory member—unless there are special circumstances—must send his children to these Christian schools that he is called to promote. He is called to be an example (I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; II Thessalonians 3:7).

3) If Rev. Dick's conscience compels him to homeschool his children, he must not be compelled to act against his conscience, for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). However, his position of conscience may make it impossible for him to serve in a special office in the church.

Motion to amend by replacing the word "must" in d, 2) with "is expected to." **Carried.**

Synod recesses for lunch. Elder Dave Ondersma closes the morning session with prayer.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON, AUGUST 26, 2009

Rev. Langerak opens the afternoon session with devotions. Rev. Langerak reads Psalm 90; synod sings Psalter Number 247; and Rev. Langerak leads in prayer.

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present.

Article 87

Synod votes on recommendation 5 in Article 86.

Carried.

Article 88

Synod continues to treat the recommendations of Committee 1.

6. That synod uphold the position of Classis East and Synod 2008 in their declaration that Rev. Dick's reasons for removing his children from the good Protestant Reformed schools to homeschool them made it impossible for him effectively to carry out his obligation in Grace Church with regard to Article 21 of the Church Order.

Grounds:

- a. Rev. Dick did not reveal to his consistory any unique needs of his children that made it inadvisable for him to send his children to one of the Protestant Reformed schools available to him.
- b. Rather, Rev. Dick pointed out to his consistory what he saw to be the weaknesses in our schools—weaknesses that would inescapably affect not only his own children, but also all the children of the congregation. This made it impossible for him believably to promote in his congregation those schools that were not good enough for his own children.

Motion to postpone treatment of this recommendation until after synod has treated recommendations C, 1-3 (cf. Article 90, p. 83). **Carried.**

Article 89

Synod treats the recommendations of Committee 1 concerning **other objections raised by appellants and protestants**:

1. We recommend that synod reject the claim that classis and synod added to the requirements of Scripture for an officebearer.

Grounds:

- a. The protestants confuse the *qualifications* for office, which may not be added to (I Timothy 3; Titus 1), and the *requirements* laid upon an officebearer by the Church Order to serve in our churches. Each denomination has its own requirements for officebearers that go beyond the spiritual qualifications for the office. Confer the "Form for Call-Letter" presented to men who would serve in the ministry in our churches: "...preaching twice on the Lord's Day, attending to catechetical instruction, to family visiting...and the Church Order of Dordrecht as amended by the rules of our churches."
- b. The binding character of the regulations in the Church Order is not determined by proof-texts adduced in their support. The Church Order lays demands upon officebearers, to which demands officebearers willingly subject themselves and which subjection is required for the sake of denominational unity.

- c. While the Reformed churches historically have maintained that these demands do not have to be based on Scripture,⁷ the fact is that in the case of Article 21 the demand is established upon biblical principles, as synod has now demonstrated.

Motion to amend by inserting the words “in their interpretation of an officebearer’s duty toward Article 21” after the words “classis and synod.”

Carried.

Synod votes on the main motion as once amended.

Carried.

2. That synod reject the claim that Classis East (Jan./Feb. 2008) overstepped the bounds of its authority by passing judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick’s withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them.

Grounds:

- a. The Grace consistory made the validation of its pastor’s reasons for homeschooling the business of Classis and thus a matter that pertains to the churches of the Classis in common (Article 30 of the CO) when:

1) It included in its protest to the January 2008 Classis the November 18 letter to the Grace congregation explaining its reasons for validating Rev. Dick’s decision to homeschool (cf. Supplement 36, p. 254). In dealing with protests and appeals Classis is not limited to the specific request for action presented, but is at liberty to speak to other related issues that appear in the material.

2) It gave to the special committee of Classis the letter of Rev. and Mrs. Dick detailing their reasons for homeschooling and asked for advice (cf. Art. 96, Classis East, January 2008). Classis properly deals with all matters reported to it by its committees.

- b. The Classis did not violate the autonomy of the local congregation in its decisions concerning Rev. Dick’s reasons for withdrawing his children from the PR Christian schools as is alleged, but only exercised the jurisdiction given to it by Article 36 of the Church Order.

1) Article 36 gives the broader assemblies a certain jurisdiction or authority over the local congregation that the local

⁷ “In answer to the first question of those from Keulen, whether all things [ecclesiastical decisions] must be supported by Holy Scripture...the things that concern the order of the churches or are indifferent must not be held to such a requirement” (Acts of the Synod of Emden 1571, p. 49, (2)).

congregation, by reason of its membership in the federation of churches, delegates to the broader assemblies.

2) When the broader assemblies adjudicate matters that are legally before them, the autonomy of the local congregation is not violated.

c. Article 30 of the Church Order must be understood in light of the fact that membership in the federation of churches involves a mutual supervision in which the churches of the federation see to the spiritual welfare of each other.

1) This mutual supervision comes to expression in the questions of Article 41 of the Church Order that are asked at every meeting of Classis and in the annual church visitation (Article 44).

2) It was in the same spirit that Classis addressed the reasons that Rev. Dick gave for withdrawing his children from the PR Christian schools and homeschooling them.

a) Rev. Dick's reasons were not peripheral issues, but were very much at the heart of the unrest in the Grace congregation, and therefore needed to be the concern of Classis.

b) Classis used the information made available to them to give spiritual direction to the consistory of a troubled congregation—precisely the function of a broader assembly.

Carried.

3. That synod declare in error the objections of those who claim that Classis East and synod improperly involved themselves in a matter that belongs solely to the authority of parents.

Grounds:

a. The decisions of Classis and synod did not deny the right of Rev. Dick as a parent to homeschool, but only concerned his ability to meet the obligations of the Church Order as Grace's pastor.

b. As synod has now demonstrated in the above decisions concerning Christian liberty in this case, parental rights in an officebearer's education of his children are limited by the calling of his office.

c. Because the children of believing parents belong to the church and covenant of God no less than do their parents (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 74), the church also (not the parents alone) has an obligation to see to the spiritual welfare and training of these children.

1) This obligation is met in part by the church requiring

of parents at the baptism of their children the promise that they will have their children instructed in the doctrines of the Old and New Testaments and in the articles of the Christian faith as taught in this Christian church.

2) This obligation is met in part by the church providing catechetical instruction for the children of the church.

3) This obligation is also met in part by the consistory advising and assisting parents to make good educational choices for their children, which according to Article 21 of the Church Order involves the promotion of the good Christian day school.

Motion to amend by eliding the word “solely” from the main motion. **Carried.**

Chairman rules that in light of the last motion, the word “solely” must be also stricken from Appendix 1, 3, b, of the report of Committee 1 (Supplement 50, p. 513).

Synod votes on the main motion. **Carried.**

Article 90

Synod treats the recommendation that it earlier postponed (Article 88, p. 80).

6. That synod uphold the position of Classis East and Synod 2008 in their declaration that Rev. Dick’s reasons for removing his children from the good Protestant Reformed schools to homeschool them made it impossible for him effectively to carry out his obligation in Grace Church with regard to Article 21 of the Church Order.

Grounds:

a. Rev. Dick did not reveal to his consistory any unique needs of his children that made it inadvisable for him to send his children to one of the Protestant Reformed schools available to him.

b. Rather, Rev. Dick pointed out to his consistory what he saw to be the weaknesses in our schools—weaknesses that would inescapably affect not only his own children, but also all the children of the congregation. This made it impossible for him believably to promote in his congregation those schools that were not good enough for his own children.

Motion to reconvene at 6:00 P.M. **Carried.**

Synod recesses for supper. Elder Garry Eriks closes the afternoon session with prayer.

WEDNESDAY EVENING, AUGUST 26, 2009

Rev. VanderWal opens the evening session with devotions. Synod sings Psalter Number 239. Rev. VanderWal reads Psalm 87 and leads in prayer.

Silent roll call shows that all delegates are present.

Article 91

Synod votes on the motion of Article 90.

Carried.

Article 92

Synod continues treating the recommendations of the committee of pre-advice concerning **other objections raised by appellants and protestants.**

4. We recommend that synod sustain the appeal of Mr. Vreugdenhil that Classis East erred in *publicly* questioning the effectiveness of Rev. Dick in the Grace congregation.

Grounds:

- a. Classis East's response to Mr. Vreugdenhil's protest in this matter erroneously focused on the public knowledge of the unrest in the congregation as occasioned by Rev. Dick's actions, and therefore failed to address the protest against the public questioning of Rev. Dick's effectiveness to continue as Grace's pastor.
- b. Classis East, while not in error in raising the question with Grace's council concerning the effectiveness of Rev. Dick in the congregation, was in error to make this question public. Classis' action in making their evaluation public caused unnecessary offense.

Carried.

5. That the above recommendations be synod's response to all the appeals and protests.

Grounds:

- a. The matters dealt with here were the main issues of the concrete case before synod.
- b. Matters raised in the protests and appeals and not addressed specifically by synod are peripheral to the case and, even if having validity, do not change the outcome of the main issues considered.

Carried.

The chairman addresses appropriate remarks to the visitors, particularly those who still are not satisfied with the decisions of synod.

Article 93

Synod turns to the material of Committee 1 regarding the **overture of Dr. Roy Slice** concerning Article 21 of the Church Order (Supplement 39, p. 381)

A. Information

1. Dr. Roy Slice submits to Synod 2009 an overture to change Article 21 of the Church Order by adding an expression that defines “good Christian schools.”

a. He proposes adding the words “be they parental communal schools or parental home schools,” so that the Article would read: “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools, be they parental communal schools or parental home schools, in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.”

b. His grounds (Supplement 39, p. 383) were five (summarized as follows):

- 1) “...parents need to be instructed in their calling to properly train up their children....”
- 2) “Although Article 21 may have historically meant communal schools, the calling of the consistory relates to good Christian education and not a specific form of Christian education.”
- 3) “Christian homeschooling fulfills the covenant obligation of the parents....”
- 4) “The proposed change...promotes peace in the churches by removing this unnecessary point of contention.”
- 5) “The churches are not well served by taking positions that may be characterized as legalistic and being an extra-scriptural binding of men’s consciences.”

2. Dr. Slice submitted his overture to the consistory of Calvary PRC, where he is a member. Calvary’s consistory rejected his overture and urged him not to forward it (cf. Supplement 39, p. 387). Their grounds, in summary, were two:

- a. Parental communal schools must be the primary means whereby covenant children are educated.
- b. Historically our fathers saw the wisdom and necessity of fulfilling the demands of the covenant in the area of education through the promotion and maintenance of good Christian schools, which schools are not to be equated with parental home schools.

3. Dr. Slice also submitted his overture to Classis West, where it was rejected for failure to provide clear scriptural and confessional grounds for such a change (Supplement 39, p. 388).

B. Recommendation: That synod reject the overture of Dr. Roy Slice to revise Article 21 of the Church Order to read “The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools, be they parental communal schools or parental home schools, in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.”

Grounds:

1. The grounds for the overture do not support the proposed change:
 - a. Ground 1 is not a ground for the overture, but merely states that parents must be “instructed in their calling to properly train up their children.”
 - b. Ground 2 misrepresents or misunderstands synod’s position. The overture argues that, because synod declared homeschooling to be permissible, and “no sin,” consistories have no authority to call parents to use the “good Christian schools.” But the church’s position has always been that, although no discipline is exercised upon those who do not use the existing Christian schools, consistories must instruct and call parents to use the best means for teaching their covenant children (see ground 2, below).
 - c. Ground 3 claims that, because Christian homeschooling fulfills the covenant obligations of parents with respect to the instruction of their children, consistories can as confidently promote home schools as they do day schools. But the overture fails to demonstrate that homeschooling is just as effective a method in education as the Christian day school, and thus worthy of promotion by the consistories.
 - d. Ground 4 speaks of some hoped-for, practical consequences of adoption of the overture, which cannot stand as grounds to change the Church Order.
 - e. Ground 5 is illegitimate. A misinterpretation of the Article would not constitute a ground for changing the Article, unless it were demonstrated that such a misinterpretation arose out of a defect in the Article itself. That the overture does not do.
2. Positively, the welfare of the churches is best served by consistories promoting the Christian day schools rather than promoting home schools in the same way as the Christian day schools.
 - a. The Christian day school arises out of the calling of the covenant **community** to provide for the instruction of her children and for parents to seek the assistance of the covenant community in the education of their children.

- 1) While parents are responsible for the education of their children (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7), the covenant community also is called to be involved in the training of covenant children (Deuteronomy 32:7; Psalm 71:17-18; 78:3-7; 145:4). The education of covenant children is not the work of individual parents exclusively. Covenant parents need the assistance of others in the covenant community (I Corinthians 12:21). [For a more developed explanation, see synod's answer (above) to the protest and appeals in the Rev. Dick case, Article 80, B, 1, c, p. 70.]
- 2) Many parents who homeschool their children see the wisdom of this principle and honor it by seeking assistance from others in the education of their children.
- 3) However, the Christian day school is generally a more effective way to carry out this covenant calling.
- b. The Christian day school, with *trained teachers*, is generally a more effective way of meeting this calling than is homeschooling. While appropriate support must be given those who of necessity homeschool, the consistory must promote the best means of instruction for the covenant seed—a Christian school with well-trained teachers. **Carried.**

Article 94

Synod treats the material submitted by the Domestic Mission Committee regarding **Western Home Missions** (Supplement 16, p. 172).

A. Information

1. The DMC, with Loveland PRC, came to Synod 2009 with recommendations that synod honor Loveland's request to be replaced as calling church for Western Home Missions, declare Rev. T. Miersma temporarily emeritus, appoint Hope Redlands to replace Loveland PRC as the calling church for Western Home Missions, and approve calling a missionary to labor in Tucson, AZ. Synod referred all of these matters back to the DMC.
2. The DMC now reports to the continuing session of synod.
 - a. The DMC informs synod:
 - 1) That it withdraws its recommendation that Hope Redlands be appointed as calling church for Western Home Missions and be authorized to call a missionary whose labors will initially focus in Tucson, AZ.
 - 2) That it plans to continue working as diligently as it can with the saints in Tucson, AZ, with the assistance of Hope Redlands.

- 3) That the 2010 budget for Western Home Missions that-synod adopted (\$130,000; cf. Article 72, B, 4, p. 57) can be reduced to \$30,000.
- b. The DMC recommends:
 - 1) That synod honor Loveland's request to be replaced as calling church for Western Home Missions.
 - 2) That synod honor Rev. T. Miersma's request to be declared temporarily emeritus.
 - 3) That synod give permission to the DMC, along with the Board of Trustees, to sell the parsonage in Spokane at such time as it deems wise.
 - 4) That synod rescind the motion of Article 72, B, 4, and instead adopt a budget of \$30,000 for Western Home Missions.
3. Previously, the DMC had asked synod to approve a proposed budget for Rev. T. Miersma, in the event he is declared temporarily emeritus, of \$50,000 for 2009 (July-December) and of \$101,000 for 2010.
- B. Recommendations
 1. That synod declare that Loveland PRC no longer be designated as the calling church for Western Home Missions, effective immediately, and thank them for serving the churches honorably in this capacity for fifteen years.

Grounds:

 - a. Loveland desires to be relieved of this work after many years of service.
 - b. This is a good time for a transition because the work in Spokane has resulted in the organization of a church in Spokane.

Carried.
 2. That synod honor the request of Rev. T. Miersma that he be declared temporarily emeritus effective September 1, 2009 (cf. Decision A pertaining to Article 13 of the Church Order).

Ground: Rev. Miersma is a minister "who, through no fault of his own, is left without a fixed charge" due to:

 - a. The organization of Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, and the congregation calling and receiving a minister, and
 - b. The fact that the DMC is not recommending designating another area of labor.

Carried.
 3. Regarding Rev. T. Miersma's budget for temporary emertation:

- a. That synod adopt the budget proposed by Loveland of \$50,000 for July-December 2009 (see DMC Supplemental Report, June 3, 2009).

The chairman rules this and the following two recommendations out of order, because Rev. Miersma must fill out the Emeritus Request form and submit his emeritus needs to Loveland, who then must forward it to the Emeritus Committee (cf. Constitution of the Emeritus Committee).

- b. That synod adopt the budget proposed by Loveland of \$101,000 for 2010 (see DMC Supplemental Report, June 3, 2009).
- c. That synod instruct Loveland to investigate:
- 1) Whether Rev. Miersma is being paid the proper amount for child allowance.
 - 2) Whether the other line items in the budget are excessive in comparison to other denominationally supported ministers.
4. That synod give permission to the DMC, along with the Board of Trustees, to sell the parsonage in Spokane at such time as it deems wise. **Carried.**
5. That synod instruct Loveland to direct Rev. Miersma to move to the Grand Rapids area, and to find ways to be busy in the work of the ministry, until he receives a call elsewhere.

Grounds:

- a. We have several vacant churches in the Grand Rapids area.
- b. At age 58, Rev. Miersma is able to serve the churches.

It is moved to amend by changing the words “Grand Rapids” to “Chicago/Grand Rapids” in both the main motion and ground “a.”

Carried.

Synod votes on the main motion as once amended. **Carried.**

6. That synod rescind the motion of Article 72, B, 4 (p. 57), and instead adopt a budget of \$30,000 for Western Home Missions.

Carried.

Article 95

Synod treats the material submitted by the Foreign Mission Committee regarding **visas for our missionaries in the Philippines** (Supplement 22, p. 194).

A. Information

1. Rev. Smit informed the FMC that he has begun the immigration process. Originally he had expected to apply for a missionary 9(g) visa, but for various reasons is applying instead for a permanent visa.
2. The FMC approved Rev. Smit and family acquiring their permanent visa, on the following grounds:
 - a. Avoid having to get birth certificates and marriage licenses authenticated.
 - b. Future cost savings. (Permanent visa and 9g visa costs are equal after 5 years, 9g continue to cost more after 5 years.)
 - c. Children have access to jobs and higher education.
 - d. No yearly renewals.
 - e. Promotes perspective of long-term labor on the field.
 - f. Promotes bi-yearly furloughs.
3. The FMC approved reimbursing Rev. Smit \$32,000 (\$43,748 minus \$11,078 from expense report) for Rev. Smit's family's permanent visas.
4. The FMC also notes that the Kleyns will be obtaining permanent visas.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the FMC decision, with its grounds, to reimburse Rev. Smit the cost of acquiring permanent visas for himself and his family at the cost of \$43,478 and adjust the 2009 synodical budget accordingly. **Carried.**
2. That synod approve the FMC decision to have Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Kleyn acquire permanent visas upon arrival in the Philippines at an approximate cost of \$10,600 and adjust the 2010 synodical budget accordingly. **Carried.**

Article 96

The first clerk presents a letter addressed to Rev. and Mrs. Haak. Motion is made to adopt the letter (cf. Article 85, p. 76). **Carried.**

The second clerk presents a letter addressed to Rev. and Mrs. R. Miersma. Motion is made to adopt the letter (cf. Article 85, p. 76). **Carried.**

Article 97

The expenses of this session of synod amount to \$6,680.78 (cf. Supplement 18, p. 184). Motion is made to approve the expenses and authorize their reimbursement. **Carried.**

Acts of Synod 2009	Article 98	Minutes
Article 98		
The script minutes are read. Motion is made to adopt the minutes.		Carried.
The chairman makes appropriate closing remarks.		
It is moved to adjourn.		Carried.
Rev. R. Van Overloop closes with prayer.		

SUPPLEMENTS

SUPPLEMENT 1

Advisory Committees for Synod 2009

Committee 1: Revs. Slopsema and Key; Elders Don Doezema and Garry Eriks; Prof. Gritters (Advisor).

- A. Appeals (Rev. Dick, Paul Hoekstra, Arjen Vreugdenhil).
- B. Overture (Roy Slice).
- C. Protests (Rev. Dick, Ken Feenstra, Prof. Hanko, Paul Hoekstra, Marvin Kamps, Jason Kuiper, Bert Mulder, Fred Tolsma, Joe Van Gelderen, Arjen Vreugdenhil).

Committee 2: Revs. R. Miersma and VanOverloop; Elders Sid Miedema and Loren Gritters; Prof. Cammenga (Advisor).

- A. Contact Committee Report and Supplement.
- B. Catechism Book Committee Report.
- C. Catechism Book Distribution Committee Report and Supplement.
- D. Psalter Distribution Committee Report.

Committee 3: Revs. Koole and Kuiper; Elders Gerald Kuiper and Henry Ferguson; Prof. Dykstra (Advisor).

- A. Domestic Mission Committee Report and Supplements.
- B. Foreign Mission Committee Report and Supplements.

Committee 4: Revs. Haak and N. Langerak; Elders Cal Kalsbeek and Jack Regnerus.

- A. Theological School Committee Report.
- B. Rector's Report.
- C. Student Aid Committee Report and Supplement.
- D. Synodical Deputies Reports—East and West.
- E. Appointment of Synodical Deputies—East and West.

Committee 5: Revs. Eriks and VanderWal; Elders Dave Ondersma and Fred Tolsma.

- A. Board of Trustees Report and Supplement.
- B. Emeritus Committee Report.
- C. Letter from Loveland—temporary emeritation.
- D. Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements.
- E. Finance Committee Report.
- F. Stated Clerk's Report.
- G. Subsidy Requests.
- H. Synodical Expenses.

- I. Budget for 2010.
- J. Time and Place of Synod 2010 (letter from Southeast PRC).

SUPPLEMENT 2

Board of Trustees Report

February 23, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

The Board of Trustees can report having again fulfilled its regular mandates: filing corporation reports for 2008, reviewing quarterly financial reports, supervising the work of our investment manager, and reviewing, each quarter, the investment performance of the various funds. In addition, we appointed Rev. Nathan Langerak resident agent of the PRC in the State of Illinois.

A year or so ago the BOT authorized the treasurer to make use of a Direct Deposit system to handle routine monthly payroll checks if it proved feasible. A survey of those on the denominational payroll met with a largely positive response, and the service was implemented early last summer.

We are pleased to report that our Investment Subcommittee (the formation of which we reported to Synod 2008) is proving to be everything that we envisioned. The committee has met no fewer than seven times since our last report and has clearly gotten a good handle on the investment function of our denomination. That their reports to us are often in need of ‘interpretation’ by our treasurer is, we think, reason for confidence that they are bringing a financial expertise to this work that the BOT as a whole would not have been capable of giving it. We do understand, without interpretation, their pleasure in our financial manager’s bear-market strategy of converting a large portion of our stock-holdings to cash and Money Market Funds in what has proven, in retrospect, to be a timely manner. Fruit of that strategy is that our losses have been kept to about half that of the market in general. We agree with the committee’s advice to Mr. VanDerSchaaf that a “conservative approach should be used in the reinvestment of funds back into equities while today’s bear market continues.” “Currently,” the Investment Subcommittee writes, “our strategy is to be defensive and wait patiently for markets to stabilize, which our large MMF/bond/and short-term CD position permits us to do.” The BOT concurs.

David Ondersma, who himself brings a wealth of experience to the position of synodical treasurer, expresses appreciation for the able as-

sistance of our bookkeeper Brenda Brands, who, he says, “handles the day-to-day work very efficiently.” That’s our observation too, and we take this opportunity as Board of Trustees to thank both of them for an invaluable service to the churches.

Yours in His service,
w.s. Don Doezenia

SUPPLEMENT 3

Board of Trustees Supplemental Report

May 20, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

- A. We are pleased to report two recent estate gifts: 1) An anonymous, unrestricted gift of \$39,476.51 to the seminary; and 2) a restricted gift of \$32,162.35 to the seminary, from the estate of Richard G. Houskamp, specifically for the purchase of books for the library, from the income generated by the invested funds.
- B. We also provide herewith the fifth-year reevaluation of the Emeritus Fund mandated by Synod 2003 (Acts 2003, Art. 60, B, 4). The attached report was approved by the Board of Trustees at its quarterly meeting on May 11, 2009 and is presented here for synod’s information. Our recommendations concerning this reevaluation are two:
 - 1. That synod note that the Board of Trustees fulfilled the mandated five-year reevaluation of the Emeritus Fund; that an updated projection has been made to reflect the experience of those years; and that the combined effect of adjustments made resulted in a long-term projection that remains in line with prior forecasts.
 - 2. That synod be reminded of recommendations adopted by Synods 1999 and 2003 relative to the maintenance of the Emeritus Fund:
 - a. That the Emeritus Fund (Acts 2003, Art. 60, B, 3) “be built up in future years to an amount that approximates \$3 million, in order that the EF may have excess assets that can be used to offset the higher retiree costs [when needed], and that this be accomplished by:
 - 1) Continuing to bring the need of the EF to the attention of the denomination, with requests that regular collec-

- tions be taken by the churches.
- 2) Budgeting for the EF, whenever possible, some extra assets for the Fund.
 - 3) Retaining in the EF the income generated by bequests, large gifts, collections, and other income sources, to build up the asset base.”
- b. That synod be “on record as being in favor of advising all ministers who are not in the Social Security program to apply for the purchase of Medicare Part A and Part B insurance for themselves and their spouses when they reach age 65 and have been declared emeritus” (Acts 1999, Art. 72, B, 5).
Note: The cost of this insurance can be part of their annual support requested from the EF.
- c. That the “BOT reevaluate the Emeritus Fund every five years to see if assumptions and projections remain in line with expectations” (Acts 2003, Art. 60, B, 4).

Yours in His service,
w.s. Don Doezema, Secretary

Attachment EMERITUS FUND REPORT

Background

Emeritus Fund (“EF”) projections were originally prepared for the year 1998 and extended out for the 40-year period ending in 2038. An update of these projections was made for the year 2003 (covering the period 2003-2043), and this report was presented to Synod 2003 for consideration (cf. Acts 2003, Appendix 1, p. 225-229).

Over the years, the actions of various synods have served to build up assets in the EF, and to control the costs of emeritus needs for living expenses and health care.

Changes Noted Since 2003

An evaluation was made of the financial results of the EF for the five-year period ended December 31, 2008. The following is noted for your information:

1. The assets of the EF have increased 3.5x over the last 10 years, from \$542,000 at December 31, 1997 to \$1,851,802 at December 31, 2008. At year-end, EF assets were 98% of the \$1,884,200 prior projection set for year-end 2008.
2. The growth in EF assets has been significantly benefited by the action of synod in recent years to incrementally add to the EF balance when

assessment levels permitted. This action has added about \$200,000 to the EF in the last five years.

3. It is evident that some sources of income to the EF have not been keeping pace with our last five-year projections. Church collections have approximated only 75% of our projection; gifts and bequests in the last five years totaled \$23,500, compared to a projection of \$100,000. Dividends and interest totaled \$248,500 in the last five years (an average rate of 3.5% per year, vs. 5% in the prior projection). And net market value losses have totaled \$217,500, due particularly to the economic downturn in 2008. These observations of income that are below estimates during the last five years have been factored into the updated projection included in this report.
4. For the year 2008, there were 10 households being supported by the EF, as compared to the prior projection of 8 households for this period. This increase of two households has occurred because of one additional minister/spouse being supported that was not expected (Breen), and one spouse being supported after the 80-85 life expectancy (Lanting). These two additional households add about \$51,000 to the current annual cost being supported by the EF.
5. The average support cost per household in 2008 was \$25,920, and closely approximated our prior projection of \$25,625 per household.
6. Premiums being paid for long-term care insurance were \$49,200 in 2008 and compares with \$47,000 in the prior projection. The cost increase is due to the additional number of ministers/spouses included (currently 83, an increase of 12 in the last five years). Once enrolled, there is no increase in the monthly premiums paid for participants.
7. The number of families in the denomination has grown faster than previously estimated. At year-end 2008, the PRCA actually had 1894 families (calculated in accordance with assessment instructions), and compares to the prior projection of 1768 families for this date. During the past five years, the increase in number of families has averaged 1.45% per year (as compared to 1% growth used in the prior projection).
8. At year-end 2008, if the full emeritus cost were assessed to families, the assessment rate would approximate \$163 per family per year (see Exhibit A). The budgeted rate for the Emeritus Fund for 2009 is, in fact, \$163 per family. This assessment rate of \$163 is 14% higher than the prior projection of \$143, due to the increased number of households currently being supported (currently 10 households).

The BOT also brings to your attention its action this past year of setting up an Investment Subcommittee ("IS") to assist them in their ongoing

evaluation of the investment function of the PRCA. The IS is composed of three members who are part of the BOT and three professionals from outside the BOT. The IS was organized in April 2008 and has been meeting monthly. The focus of the IS is particularly on the Emeritus Fund and its investment needs. It can be said that the work of the IS and its regular communication with our investment manager was very important during the recession and financial crisis of this past year 2008.

Highlights of Updated EF Projection

An updated projection of the EF was prepared, based on information noted in the evaluation of financial results of the EF during the last five years. An updated minister census as of December 31, 2008 was also used in preparing revised estimates. The updated projection is attached as Exhibits A and B.

The starting base for the updated projection is the number of active and retired ministers at year-end 2008, and the actual cost of emeritus support for 2008. The update recognizes the higher costs of supporting an increased number of households during the projection period, and also factors in the higher growth rate of families in the denomination. The updated projection notes the following:

- EF assets are again projected to reach \$3.0 million by year 2018 and remain at that level until some of the assets are used to offset higher assessments needed in years when emeritus costs are high (especially beginning in years 2018-2023). A minimum of \$2.0 million in EF assets is maintained during the projection period in order to provide a base of assets to use for emeritus support in later years beyond the projection period, the Lord willing.
- Revenues that fell below projection during the last five years were adjusted in the update to reflect our actual experience. Church collections, gifts and bequests, interest, and dividends are now projected at lower levels. As in the past, no change in assets is projected from market gains or losses.
- Offsetting the revenue decreases is an increase in assessment income. In the early years of the projection, the starting assessment rate of \$163 is higher than in prior projections but is consistent with the level currently being charged to families. In addition, total assessment revenues are higher because of the increased number of families in the denomination.
- Projected costs of the EF reflect only the expected living expenses of retirees, since hospitalization and nursing home costs will be covered primarily by Medicare and the UNUM long-term care plan. In the past five years, living costs have remained fairly consistent and

in line with past projections. Household costs in the update continue to be projected to increase 3% a year, to reflect the annual impact of inflation and, in a few cases, the need to purchase Medicare insurance if they are not in the Social Security program.

- During the 40 years of the projection period, the average number of households being supported has increased by two, adding about \$100,000 on average per year to emeritus costs. This results because of the increased number of households (ministers/spouses) in the census (35 at December 31, 2008 as compared to 32 five years ago). It is also noted that three ministers now in the census entered the ministry at older ages (Lee, Marcus, W. Langerak) and are projected to need support within the next 25 years. Therefore, the number of households projected to need support in years 2033 and later has increased.

- The projection reflects excess assets in the EF to use for direct emeritus support especially in the high cost years from 2018-2023. Therefore, at those times, not all of the projected costs will need to be funded by families through assessments. Beginning in year 2028 and in later years, the projection reflects a consistent assessment rate of \$250 per family (see Exhibit A, p. 100). At the same time, the “full cost” rates have also stabilized at about \$325 per family, with increases in household costs being offset by growth in the number of families.

- The number of families in the denomination was increased in the projection at 1.5% per year, to more than 3000 by year 2048. The increase of 1.5% per year (or 7.5% for each five year period) is an increase over the 1% used in the last projection, and is consistent with our actual growth over the last five years. This increase in families helps to offset by about 50% the higher emeritus cost due to the increased number of households being supported.

- The increase in families indicates there will likely be an increase in the number of churches in the PRCA, and therefore, additional ministers included in any future census. If the current average of 65 families per church continues, there is projected to be 52 churches by 2048 (based on 3378 families) as compared to 29 churches at year-end 2008. This increase in the number of ministers will extend out the emeritus needs of the PRCA beyond the projection period, thereby continuing the need for a “healthy” Emeritus Fund balance.

Conclusions

While emeritus costs continue to increase in the updated projection, the long-term impact on assessment rates per family remains in line with

prior forecasts. Higher emeritus costs are being offset by somewhat higher assessment rates and a greater increase in number of families. During the 40-year projection period, emeritus costs are expected to increase by 3.5x current levels, and compares with the 2.9x increase estimated in the last projection. In the updated projection, the highest level of cost per family is \$340 in the years 2018-2023 (if fully assessed – see Exhibit A), but is lower than the \$386 included in the prior projection for this same period (due to a greater number of families).

Emeritus costs are again projected to more than double during the years 2019-2023. This is not because of a lack of control or excessive costs per retiree, but because of the significant increase in the number of retirees that need to be supported. This situation has been recognized for some years and its significance has not diminished. The number of retiree households is projected to almost double by 2023 (from 10 currently, to a projected high of 19). While some decrease can be expected in later years after the high point is reached, it is now projected that the number of households thereafter will stabilize at about 14-15 per year. This increase in households over prior projection happens because of our increased size as a denomination and the age mix of our ministers.

As stated previously, the cost of the EF can be made more reasonable for families if excess assets can be built up in the EF to use as offsets in the high cost years. Note in Exhibit B that assets are projected to reach \$3.0 million by year 2018. During this time, assessments for the EF per family are projected to increase 3.3% per year on average, which is in line with the historical rate of inflation each year.

By building up assets in the EF, self-funding is occurring in the earlier years for the times when costs will be unusually high. This will be a great relief to families, rather than to absorb the high costs at the time. The possible impact of doing this is projected in Exhibit A in the column entitled “Excess Assets Used.” Beginning in the five years ending in 2028 and continuing for the next 20 years (see Exhibit B, p. 103), excess assets in the EF are projected to be used to help pay emeritus support. Note that the costs per family per year in the high cost years from 2018-2023 are 30 % lower than if full costs were assessed to the families at the time, and remain 20% lower in subsequent years.

EXHIBIT A
Projection of need from Emeritus Funds
(Based on December 2008 Census and 2008 Emeritus Budget)

Year end	#Households Added	Out	Total (1) (2)	No SS	No Med	Average NN Heed	Annual HH Cost	LT Care Premium	Total Cost Per Year	# Families	Full Cost Assessed Per Fam/Yr (3)	Cost Net of Excess Assets Used Per Fam/Yr (4)
2008			10	3	0	25,920	259,200	49,200	308,400	1,894	163	163
2013	3	(2)	11	4	0	29,800	327,800	49,700	317,500	2,036	185	187
2018	6	(3)	14	3	0	34,300	480,200	50,200	530,400	2,189	242	216
2023	7	(2)	19	7	0	39,400	748,600	50,700	799,300	2,353	340	236
2028	3	(6)	16	6	0	45,300	724,800	51,200	776,000	2,529	307	250
2033	6	(6)	16	4	0	52,100	823,600	51,700	875,300	2,719	322	250
2038	6	(7)	15	1	0	60,000	900,000	52,200	952,200	2,923	326	250
2043	2	(3)	14	0	0	68,900	964,600	52,700	1,017,300	3,142	324	250
2048	5	(6)	13	0	0	79,300	1,030,900	53,200	1,084,100	3,378	321	250

Exhibit A Assumptions:

1. The above census includes ministers, missionaries, professors and their spouses as of December 2008. A household is considered to be one or both spouses.
2. It is assumed that retirement occurs during ages 65-70 and average life extends to ages 80-85.
3. This projection of assessment per fam/yr assumes that the full cost of emeritus support will be assessed each year to families.
4. This assessment per family assumes that costs will be partially offset by excess assets in the EF.
5. The average HH need in 2008 represents actual requests made by retirees for support from the Emeritus Fund. Thereafter, the average need is increased 3% per year (15% for each five-year period) the same as in the last projection, to reflect increases in living costs.
6. Growth in number of families is projected at 1.5% each year (7.5% each five-year period). While this growth rate is higher than the 1% in the last projection, it is based on our actual growth experience during the last five years.
7. It is assumed that the household qualifies for Medicare by being in the Social Security program or earned enough quarters to qualify. If not, the household is encouraged to purchase Medicare insurance and pay the premiums annually. Regardless of the situation, all households are projected to be covered under Medicare.

Exhibit A Projection Comments:

1. The intent of this projection is to show the possible impact of future emeritus needs on assessments per family (see column headed "Full Cost Assessed"). It is also possible to *reduce* the assessment by using some of the excess assets in the EF that have accumulated over the years. The impact of doing this is shown in the column headed "Excess Assets Used."
2. The 2008 projection reflects *higher* emeritus costs than projected in 2003, for the following reasons:
 - a. The average household need actually requested for 2008 has increased 1.2% over the prior projection. Currently, none of the retirees require extra support to cover the higher costs of hospitalization and nursing home care. Because of the increased cost, the beginning cost base used in the projection was increased by \$295. The new starting base should be adequate since LT care insurance and Medicare are available to provide coverage for significant portions of future health care costs. All ministers at retirement are eligible for Medicare insurance (most have

- this available premium-free or they can purchase this coverage, which is recommended by synod). 80% of our ministers now are enrolled in the Social Security program (vs. 49% at 12/31/97) and a number of ministers have IRA plans, which are also used to provide for basic living expenses.
- b. Projected annual increases in household needs from the EF remained at 3% per year to reflect increases in living costs only (not hospitalization or nursing home costs.)
 - c. The number of prospective retirees in the 2008 projection has increased on average by two households, reflecting one minister/spouse who joined the denomination and one spouse who continues to receive support beyond the maximum life expectancy.
 - d. The family count in the PRC was increased in the projection to 1.5% per year based on added growth experienced in the last five years.
3. A modest increase of 1% (for each 5 years) in LT care insurance premiums was provided because of enrollee mix or industry factors. It has not been the practice of UNUM to increase premium rates. The 1% increase is based on actual premium changes from 2003-2008.
 4. The critical years in the projection continue to be from 2023 to 2038 when the number of retiree households needing support escalates to 19 in number. It is recommended that assets in the EF continue to be built up in future years, in order that excess assets are available to offset some of the high costs in those later years.

Supplements 3-BOT sup Acts of Synod 2009

EXHIBIT B EMERITUS FUND PROJECTION									
Emeritus General	(1 Year)	2008	2013	2018	2023	2028	2033	2038	2043
		(all remaining are 5-year increments)							
Balance beginning of year	\$1,747,853	\$1,544,800	\$2,054,000	\$2,665,000	\$2,777,600	\$2,677,300	\$2,636,100	\$2,436,600	\$2,162,100
Assessments	290,119	1,739,000	2,282,000	2,702,500	3,051,300	3,280,000	3,526,300	3,791,300	4,075,000
Collections and gifts	28,969	147,000	170,000	196,400	227,000	262,400	303,300	350,500	404,900
Bequests	0	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000	30,000
Interest	56,056	308,000	399,000	508,000	529,900	514,700	509,900	477,500	432,200
Investment gains (losses)	(282,106)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total income	93,038	2,224,000	2,881,000	3,436,900	3,838,200	4,087,100	4,369,500	4,649,300	4,942,100
Emeritus payments	246,866	1,467,500	2,020,000	3,072,000	3,683,500	3,871,000	4,309,000	4,661,500	4,988,800
LT care insurance	49,231	247,300	250,000	252,300	255,000	257,300	260,000	262,300	264,700
Income less payments	(203,059)	509,200	611,000	112,600	(100,300)	(41,200)	(199,500)	(274,500)	(311,400)
Balance end of year	1,544,794	2,054,000	2,665,000	2,777,600	2,677,300	2,636,100	2,436,600	2,162,100	1,850,700
Emeritus Restricted									
Balance beginning of year	299,795	307,000	323,100	340,100	358,000	376,800	396,600	417,400	439,300
Interest	4,436	16,100	17,000	17,900	18,800	19,800	20,800	21,900	23,100
Investment gains (losses)	2,777	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total income	7,213	16,100	17,000	17,900	18,800	19,800	20,800	21,900	23,100
Balance end of year	307,008	323,100	340,100	358,000	376,800	396,600	417,400	439,300	462,400
Total EF	\$1,851,802	\$2,377,100	\$3,005,100	\$3,135,600	\$3,054,100	\$3,032,700	\$2,854,000	\$2,601,400	\$2,313,100

Note: The above is a forty-year projection of the Emeritus Funds for the period 2008-2048.

Exhibit B Projection Assumptions:

1. ASSESSMENTS: based on cash flow after other assumptions were incorporated. Collections/gifts, bequests, and interest remained in the EF (to build up the Fund) until year 2028, after which some of the excess assets in the Emeritus General Fund were used to subsidize assessments in the high cost years. This projection keeps a minimum balance of \$2,000,000 in the Funds to provide ongoing support in later years.
2. COLLECTIONS/GIFTS: year 2008 based on actual collections for the year; year 2013 based on 2006-2008 actual average x 5; thereafter yearly avg per family + 1.5% increase in collections per year (or 7.5% over five years) x avg family count x 5 years.
3. BEQUESTS: based on discretionary assumption of \$30,000 for each 5-year period. Actual was \$43,000 for period 2003-2008.
4. INTEREST: 3.5% per year (a decrease from 5%) based on opening EGF balance, plus 70% of ERF interest.
5. INVESTMENT GAINS (LOSSES): no gains or losses from market value changes are projected. However, it is reasonable to assume that there will be gains over the 40-year period of this projection. The projection is more conservative if balances are not dependent on market gains to reach desired levels.
6. EMERITUS PAYMENTS: as projected in Exhibit A, using actual participants at assumed retirement ages and need cost.
7. LT CARE INSURANCE: as assumed in Exhibit A projection.
8. ERF INTEREST: 3.5% per year based on the opening balance, with 30% of interest remaining in the Fund and 70% transferred to EGF.

SUPPLEMENT 4**Catechism Book Committee Report**

March 18, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches

to convene on June 9, 2009

in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

We submit the following report:

I. Committee Members

A. Information: The members of the committee are Rev. N.

Langerak (President), Rev. C. Spronk (Secretary), elder Bert Worries (South Holland), and elder Robert Vermeer (Peace). Rev. Mahtani resigned from the committee.

B. Recommendation: The committee nominates Rev. N. Brummel to a one-year term to finish the term of Rev. J. Mahtani; Rev. N. Langerak to be appointed to a three-year term; and George DeJong (South Holland PRC) or James Lanting (Cornerstone PRC) to replace elder Bert Worries, whose term has expired.

II. Activities

A. We continue to work on making corrections in *The Confessions and Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* and have asked Rev. Steven Houck to continue to help us with this work.

B. We are working on producing an electronic version of *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches*.

C. We are reviewing the OT and NT History for Seniors catechism materials.

Respectfully submitted,
Catechism Book Committee
w.s. Rev. Clayton Spronk, Secretary

SUPPLEMENT 5 Catechism Book Distribution Committee

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

We can report to synod that our inventory of catechism materials was sufficient for filling orders for the 2008-2009 catechism season.

An April 15 count of the books on hand reveals that we must reprint both the Question and Answer Book and the Workbook for *Old Testament for Seniors* in order to satisfy demand for 2009-2010. We request permission to do so.

Yours in His service,
w.s. Don Doezeema, Secretary

SUPPLEMENT 6
Catechism Book Distribution Committee
Supplemental Report

May 28, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

A belated reevaluation of our current inventory leads us to believe that we should have asked synod's permission to reprint several more books prior to June of 2010. In addition to the two already named, we ask permission now also to reprint the question and answer books and workbooks for New Testament History for Juniors and New Testament History for Seniors.

We anticipate expenses to be approximately \$4,000 in 2009, and \$6,800 in 2010, all of which is of course fully recoverable—eventually.

Yours in His service,
w.s. Don Doezema, Secretary

SUPPLEMENT 7
Classis East, Credentials and Material

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brothers:

Classis East has the following material for the agenda of synod:

A. Delegates to Synod (cf. attached credentials—Appendix 1, p. 108)

B. Delegates *ad Examina*

At its meeting of January 14, 2009 Classis East elected Rev. J. Laning to a three-year *primus* term, and Rev. A. Lanning to a three-year *secundus* term. The delegates *ad examina* from Classis East are now as follows:

Primi: J. Laning (2012), K. Koole (2011), J. Slopsema (2010)

Secundi: A. Lanning (2012), R. Kleyn (2011), G. Eriks (2010)

C. Subsidy Requests

1. Kalamazoo PRC

a. Kalamazoo requests \$35,000 subsidy for 2010. Classis

- East approved this request and forwards the request to synod for its approval.
- b. The Subsidy Request Form and financial statements from Kalamazoo are enclosed.
2. Wingham PRC
- a. Wingham requests \$36,000 (Canadian) subsidy for 2010. Classis East approved this request and forwards the request to synod for its approval.
- b. The Subsidy Request Forms and financial statements from Wingham are enclosed.
- D. Protest to Synod 2009 from Prof. H. Hanko
1. Material: The protest from Prof. H. Hanko and the cover letter from the consistory of the Hope PRC are enclosed (Appendix 2, p. 109).
2. Decision of Classis East
- Classis East forwards the protest of Prof. H. Hanko without comment.
- Minutes of Classis East, January 14, 2009:
- Article 21: Motion to adopt the advice of the committee, with grounds, that classis forward Prof. Hanko's protest to Synod 2009 as he requests but without comment from classis. Carries.
- Grounds of the committee of pre-advice:
- a. A protest against a decision of synod may be made directly to the following synod, without going through a consistory and classis (cf. Rules of Synod, VI, B, 3. "The following matters shall be considered by synod: d. All protests against decisions of synod.")
- b. This would not be contrary to the protestant's own intention, since he asks us to forward his protest to synod with or without our approval.
- E. Special Subsidy Request from Grace PRC
1. Material: The request to classis from Grace PRC, the necessary subsidy forms and financial statements, and the report of the committee of pre-advice are enclosed (Appendix 3, p. 110).
2. Decision of Classis East
- Classis East approved Grace PRC's request for temporary subsidy for 2009 in the amount of \$60,000. Because of its urgent nature, this request was immediately forwarded to the Finance Committee of Synod for its approval.
- Minutes of Classis East, January 14, 2009:

Article 40: Motion to adopt Recommendation II, A, with grounds,

of the committee's advice that Classis East forward to Synod 2009, with its approval, Grace's request for temporary subsidy amounting to \$60,000 (\$5000.00 per month). Carries.

Article 41: Motion to adopt Recommendation II, B, with grounds, of the committee that Classis East forward this request from Grace PRC to the Synodical Finance Committee for immediate action. Carries.

May God bless you in your deliberations.

Fraternally in Christ,
Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches
Jon J. Huiskens, Stated Clerk

Appendix 1 SYNODICAL CREDENTIALS

L.S.

To the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches to convene

June 9, 2009

at Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Classis East has appointed the brethren:

Ministers:

Elders

<i>Primi</i>	<i>Secundi</i>	<i>Primi</i>	<i>Secundi</i>
C. Haak	A. denHartog	Don Doezeema	Jon Bol
D. Kleyn	G. Eriks	Cal Kalsbeek	Robert Faber
K. Koole	R. Kleyn	Gerald Kuiper	John Kalsbeek
J. Slopsema	W. Langerak	Sid Miedema	Dave Moelker
R. VanOverloop	A. Spriensma	David Ondersma	Larry VanOverloop

as delegates to represent Classis East at the meeting of Synod above referred to.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all the deliberations and transactions of Synod regarding all matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the conception of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as in harmony with our Church Order.

By order of Classis East
w.s. Jon J. Huiskens Stated Clerk
Done in Classis East January 14, 2009

Appendix 2
Protest of Prof. Hanko

Hope Protestant Reformed Church
December 12, 2008

Mr. Jon Huiskens, stated clerk
Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches
847 Brentwood St.
Jenison, MI 49428

Dear Brethren of Classis East,

On the 10th of December, 2008, the Consistory of Hope Protestant Reformed Church received Professor Hanko's protest against a decision of Synod 2008. His protest was read at the consistory meeting of December 10. The consistory took a decision to send the protest to Classis East without comment, because we did not have enough time to study the protest and to get our comments to classis in a timely manner.

May God richly bless you in all your deliberations.

Yours in Christ,
Consistory of Hope PRC
Harry Langerak, clerk

To the consistory of the
Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan
c/o Mr. Harry Langerak, Clerk

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is my purpose, as the enclosed document indicates, to protest the decisions of the Synod of 2008, found in Article 49, page 43 of the Acts of Synod, a decision which has to do with homeschooling.

In my judgment, it is not necessary for me to file this protest with you or with Classis East, but I do not want it rejected by synod on the grounds that I did not come to synod via consistory and classis. I ask you, therefore, brethren, to consider my protest. If you are of a mind to support my protest, I would appreciate that support very much. In any case, would you send it on to Classis East with the request that classis also approve my protest and express agreement with it?

Thank you, brethren. From far-off Singapore, I send my greetings and assure you of my love for Hope congregation and my continual prayers for you and my fellow believers.

Prof. Hanko

Dear Brethren of Classis East:

My consistory in Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan has forwarded to you my protest against the decision of Synod of 2008, found in Article 49, page 43 of the Acts of Synod.

I ask you to forward my protest to the Synod of 2009, with your approval. If your approval is not forthcoming, I ask you to forward it anyway, that synod may consider it.

Greetings to you and blessings upon you in your deliberations.

Prof. Hanko

(For Prof. Hanko's protest, see Supplement 42, p. 434.)

Appendix 3 Special Subsidy Request

Grace Protestant Reformed Church

O-11225 8th Ave.

Grand Rapids, MI 49534

January 14, 2009

Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches
Meeting at Grandville Protestant Reformed Church

Brethren of Classis East,

The Council of Grace Protestant Reformed Church brings the following requests to Classis East for financial relief.

I. Information

A. Fiscal Year 2007

1. We approved a total budget of \$187,000. Based upon 64 families, the amount needed averaged \$56.19 per family per week.
2. The congregation began the year with 64 families, and ended with 58.3 families.
3. After being behind in collections most of the year, we ended fiscal year 2007 with only a \$555 shortfall, mainly due to a General Fund deficit collection in November, at which time \$5,235 was collected.

B. Fiscal Year 2008

1. We approved a total budget of \$178,310.90. Based upon 58 families, the amount needed averaged \$59.12 per family per week.
2. We ended fiscal year 2008 with a \$421.83 surplus, after having four General Fund deficit collections throughout the year, amounting to \$17,410.75.

-
- a. Actual 2008 expenditures amounted to \$10,086.17 over budget.
 - 1) Grace PRC has continued the full support of Rev. Dick since his release in May 2008. This includes additional costs for rent and utilities that began in mid-November.
 - 2) We have fully supported our new pastor, Rev. VanOverloop, since mid-November.
 - 3) We have also had additional expenses of pulpit supply for most of 2008, as well as catechism teaching for the last half of 2008.
 - 4) In order to maintain a positive cash flow, \$5,300 was not transferred into the Debt Retirement Fund during the last two months of 2008.
 - b. Our total 2008 General Fund collections amounted to \$10,508.00 over the originally approved budget, which indicates that the congregation is trying to meet its obligations.
 - 3. We have had to spend \$3,078.43 from the General Fund to pay for unforeseen expenses in our parsonage remodeling project.
 - 4. Currently, our General Fund has a balance of \$22,417.02 (8.9% of the total 2009 budget).
 - C. Fiscal Year 2009
 - 1. We approved a total budget of \$249,327.00. Based upon 59 families, the amount needed averages \$81.27 per family per week.
 - 2. The General Fund budget includes full support of two ministers, including housing for Rev. Dick.
 - 3. In an effort to make our budget more affordable, six line items were reduced, amounting to a savings of \$10,800.
 - 4. The line item for Debt Retirement has been included in the 2009 budget, because this is an outstanding obligation upon Grace Church. The interest on the remaining \$100,000 in notes must continue to be paid twice a year, as well as the notes themselves must be paid off in 2011.
 - 5. The downturn in the economy has affected our congregation as it has many others, resulting in increased benevolent needs, and an overall reduction in income for many of the households.
 - II. Requests
 - A. Grace Protestant Reformed Church asks Classis East to forward to Synod 2009, with its approval, our request for temporary subsidy

amounting to \$60,000 for 2009. (This request is temporary in that Rev. Dick may receive a call.)

Grounds:

1. The financial obligation of fully supporting two ministers is too heavy a burden for the congregation of Grace Protestant Reformed Church to bear alone.
2. The general downturn in the economy has made it extremely difficult, if not impossible, for the congregation to maintain the weekly budget of \$81.27. This assistance would place our weekly obligations per family at \$61.71.

B. Grace Protestant Reformed Church asks Classis East (if she acts favorably upon our request for assistance), to forward this request to the Syndical Finance Committee for immediate action.

Ground: The need is immediate. Our General Fund balance is low, and historically the amount collected during the first quarter of the year falls below that of expenditures.

We thank the classis for its consideration, and pray that the Lord of all justice, mercy, and wisdom will guide the classis in its deliberations and decisions.

The Council of Grace PRC
w.s. Randy Feenstra, Clerk

Attachments:

Subsidy request form
2008 Budget/2008 Expenses/2009 Budget
Debt Retirement Fund Report

SUPPLEMENT 8

Classis West, Credentials and Materials

March 14, 2009

Synod 2009 of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America
to convene on June 9, 2009
in the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church (Hudsonville, MI)

Dear Brethren,

Classis West submits the following material for treatment by Synod 2009. For synod's *action*, we report on the election of synodical deputies and two subsidy requests. For synod's *information*, we report on our approval of the emeritation of Rev. S. Houck and of the organization of the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Spokane, WA.

I. CREDENTIALS OF SYNODICAL DELEGATES (Appendix 1, p. 115)

II. SYNODICAL DEPUTIES

A. On March 4, 2009, Classis West elected the following synodical deputies (CW Minutes, March 4, 2009, Art. 34):

1. *Primus*—Rev. C. Spronk (2012), *Secundus*—Rev. M. VanderWal (2012)
2. Pending synod's approval, synodical deputies from Classis West would be:

<i>Primi</i>	<i>Secundi</i>
C. Spronk.....2012	M. VanderWal
S. Key 2011	N. Langerak
D. Kuiper 2010	D. Overway

B. Classis West seeks synod's approval of these elections.

III. 2010 SUBSIDY REQUESTS

A. Material

1. On March 4, 2009, Classis West received and treated 2010 subsidy requests from Bethel (Roselle) and First (Edmonton) with the proper forms and financial statements.

2. Following is a summary of the two subsidy requests.

Church	2010 Request	2009 Request	Difference	2010 Budget	Weekly Budget per family	Families
Bethel	\$56,000	\$35,000	+\$21,000	\$141,342	\$91.04	18
Edmonton	\$20,397CN	\$17,604CN	+\$2,793CN	\$113,997CN	\$72.00CN	25

B. Decisions

1. Classis approved the 2010 subsidy request of Bethel for \$56,000 and forwards it to synod for approval (CW Minutes, March 4, 2009, Art. 30).
2. Classis approved the 2010 subsidy request of First-Edmonton for C\$20,397 (US\$16,318) and forwards it to synod for approval (CW Minutes, March 4, 2009, Art. 31).

IV. REV. STEVEN HOUCK'S EMERITATION

A. Information (CW Minutes, March 4, 2009, Art. 23)

1. Rev. Steven Houck has made his emeritation request and proposed budget (\$39,833 for 2009 [March-December 2009] and \$47,800 for 2010) to Peace PRC (letter dated January 29, 2009).
2. Peace PRC has approved of his emeritation request and proposed budget and forwarded it to Classis West.
3. In addition, Rev. Houck has presented a letter dated February 17, 2009 addressed to Classis West. Rev. Houck is able to do the work, but his health continues to be an issue.

B. Decisions of Classis

1. At its March 4, 2009 meeting, Classis West concurred with Peace Council's decision to approve Rev. Houck's emeritation

request, effective immediately (Art. 26). The synodical deputies from Classis East were present and gave their concurrence. We forward this material to synod for synod's information. The grounds upon which classis made its decision are as follows:

- a. As of September 2009, Rev. Houck will have faithfully served our churches as missionary and minister for 30 years. This long-term devotion to the service of our churches qualifies Rev. Houck for this support (Emeritus Committee Constitution, Art. VI).
 - b. On March 8, 2009, it will be two years since Rev. Houck was released from Peace PRC under Article 11 of the Church Order. During that period of time Rev. Houck has not received a call, nor has he been put on a single trio, even though there have been several vacancies.
 - c. Rev. Houck's health continues to be an issue and would restrict the full exercise of his pastoral duties. He has a history of heart disease (three angioplasties, one as recently as January 27, 2009, and a triple bypass surgery).
2. Classis also approved Rev. Houck's proposed budget and requested the Emeritus Committee to take immediate action (Art 28).

V. ORGANIZATION OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE PROTESTANT REFORMED FELLOWSHIP

A. Information (CW Minutes, March 4, 2009, Art. 20)

1. Classis received a request from Loveland PRC to approve the organization of Covenant of Grace PR Fellowship of Spokane, Washington.
2. The request of the CGPRF comes with the signatures of four families and four individuals.
3. The request comes with Loveland's approval on the basis of seven grounds.
4. The DMC concurred with Loveland's decision.

B. Decisions of classis: At its March 4, 2009 meeting, Classis West granted the request of the Loveland PRC Council that the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship formally organize into a congregation. The synodical deputies from Classis East were present and gave their concurrence. We forward this material to synod for synod's information. The grounds upon which classis granted this request are as follows (CW Minutes, March 4, 2009, Art. 20):

1. This is the desire of the members of the Fellowship.
2. Loveland's Consistory and the DMC have determined that there are a sufficient number of men who have demonstrated that they are both spiritually qualified and sufficiently trained to serve in the offices

and thus constitute a consistory with rotation.

3. Loveland's Consistory and the DMC have determined that there are four families and four individuals who have become mature in the Reformed faith and unified in their life as a body of believers.

4. There is a long-standing precedent in our churches of organizing congregations of this small size.

5. The Fellowship is comprised of young families with children, allowing for a vibrant congregational life and potential for internal growth.

6. There continues to be potential for growth from the large community of Spokane, which has little or no other Reformed witness.

7. Their witness in the community will be more established and effective as an organized church.

May God bless the synod in its deliberations.

In Christ's service,
w.s. Rev. Douglas Kuiper
Stated Clerk, Classis West

Appendix 1 Synodical Credentials

L. S.

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches

to convene on June 9, 2009

in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America has appointed the brethren:

MINISTERS

Primi

S. Key

D. Kuiper

N. Langerak

R. Miersma

M. VanderWal

Secundi

D. Lee

J. Mahtani

J. Marcus

D. Overway

C. Spronk

ELDERS

Primi

Garry Eriks, Peace

Henry Ferguson, Edmonton

Loren Gritters, Hull

Jack Regnerus, Randolph

Fred Tolsma, Edmonton

Secundi

Jim Andringa, Hull

Alden DeJong, Hull

Hilgard Goosen, Immanuel

Chuck VanMeeteren, Redlands

James VerHey, Edgerton

as delegates to represent said Classis at the meeting of Synod above referred to.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all the delib-

erations and transactions of Synod regarding all matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God according to the conception of it embodied in the doctrinal standards of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as in harmony with the Church Order.

By order of Classis West,
w.s. Douglas J. Kuiper, Clerk
Done in Classis March 4, 2009

SUPPLEMENT 9
Classis West Supplemental Report Report

May 9, 2008

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Esteemed Brethren of Synod,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Following is a supplemental report from Classis West regarding subsidy requests.

A. Information: At a special meeting of Classis held May 6, 7, 2009, the consistory of the newly organized Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church of Spokane, WA, submitted subsidy requests for 2009 and 2010.

1. For 2009 (May-December) they request \$88,000.00. Due to some error in calculation, Classis' committee of pre-advice determined that this request should be \$87,735.
2. For 2010 they request \$136,800.00. Due to some error in calculation, Classis' committee of pre-advice determined that this request should be \$135,146.

B. Per Article 39 of our meeting, Classis decided:

1. To approve \$87,735 subsidy for 2009 (May-Dec.) and forward the request to Synod 2009.
2. To approve \$135,146 subsidy for 2010 and forward the request to Synod 2009.
3. To advise Covenant of Grace PRC to submit a subsidy request to Synod 2009 for 2009 and 2010 in case they should be without a pastor, and that this request be sent first to our classical committee.

Attached please find the pertinent supplementary materials.

May God's blessing rest upon the work of the synod.

In Christ's service,
w.s. Rev. Douglas Kuiper
Stated Clerk, Classis West

SUPPLEMENT 10

Contact Committee Report

March 25, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We present here our annual report to synod.

I. Organizational Information

A. Present Membership:

1. Professors: Prof. B. Gritters, Prof. R. Dykstra
2. Ministers: Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. D. Kleyn, Rev. K. Koole
3. Elders: Jim Holstege, Sid Miedema, Peter Vander Schaaf

B. Officers this past year:

1. President: Prof. R. Dykstra
2. Vice-President: Rev. K. Koole
3. Secretary: Rev. D. Kleyn
4. Vice-Secretary: Rev. G. Eriks

C. Membership Changes:

1. Information: The terms of Prof. B. Gritters, Rev. D. Kleyn, and Mr. Jim Holstege expire in 2009.
2. Nominations:
 - a. Professors: Prof. B. Gritters and Prof. R. Cammenga
 - b. Ministers: Rev. D. Kleyn and Rev. A. Lanning
 - c. Elders: Jim Holstege and Wes Koops

II. Proposed Change to the CC's Constitution

A. Information

1. The CC brings a proposal to change point V, C of our constitution to read as follows (with changes in italics, and deletions also indicated):

C. Corresponding Relationships with *Other Foreign* Churches.

1. *Where significant and broad agreement exists between the Protestant Reformed Churches and other*

churches, and yet differences are important enough to preclude a sister-church relationship, a corresponding relationship may be established.

- a. These relationships may be arranged as circumstances may dictate, provided:
 - 1) That whatever relationship be arranged, the stipulations thereof shall be clear and unambiguous.
 - 2) That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith.
- b. *These relationships shall be established only with those churches that not only accept the Reformed standards, or confessions consistent with the Reformed standards, but also maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.*
- c. *Known differences in doctrine and practice between the two denominations are recognized with respect. This means that differences may be discussed, but constant agitation on the differences should be avoided.*
2. The activities of corresponding relationships shall consist of:
 - a. Exchange of information which shall enable the churches to become better acquainted with each other. This exchange shall be implemented in the following ways:
 - 1) Exchange of observers at the broadest assemblies, if it is feasible.
 - 2) Exchange of minutes of the broadest assemblies.
 - 3) Exchange of denominational yearbooks and/or church directories.
 - 4) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Church Orders or Constitutions.
 - 5) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards.
 - 6) Exchange of songbooks used in public

worship, including the forms used for various occasions in public worship.

b. Discussion by means of correspondence, committee visits, and conferences *in order to confirm and strengthen our unity in Christ. on differences which are known to exist between our churches, as well as those matters on which there is agreement, in order to work toward a full sister-church relationship.*

2. The background for the main changes that we propose is our correspondence with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

a. Synod 2008 approved a proposal to establish a corresponding relationship with the EPCA.

1) The relationship approved was according to the CC's constitution, point V, C, 2.

2) Synod approved two additional elements having to do with the training and support of seminary students from the EPCA.

b. The EPCA Presbytery responded gratefully to our proposal to enter into a formal corresponding relationship. They wrote, "Please convey our delight in the extending to us of the hand of fellowship."

1) The EPCA drew attention to one point of the proposed agreement. They wrote:

a) "However, we note that as you envisage the relationship it is in light of the constant and active pursuit of a full sister relationship. We wonder, in light of the known differences between ourselves which have been explored, and in light of the adherence of both denominations to their confessional standards, how this is to function? We would see little profit in constant agitation of the differences between us, but would rather focus on areas where there is agreement and commonality.

b) "We envisage the relationship established between us to be one in which the churches are content to accept, and assist one another in proclaiming, the fundamental truths of the gospel, notwithstanding the differences that may exist.

c) "We also envisage, that if at some time in the future it is thought possible by both parties to

-
- consider seeking a full sister-church relationship, that the churches agree to do so.”
- 2) The EPCA therefore asked us to consider a refinement of the relationship. In that connection they stated: “We extend to you this refinement of the proposal as the hand of fellowship also, desiring that an agreed relationship can be established to the strengthening of our respective churches, and the blessing of the church of Jesus Christ in the world.”
3. The CC studied the matter and became convinced that the point made by the EPCA was valid and good, and therefore come with our proposal to change our constitution, and thus also the proposed relationship with the EPCA.
- a. The history of the CC’s work and our constitution support this change.
- 1) For many years, the constitution of the CC indicated that the two levels of possible church relations were related in this way: The lesser relationship is a step toward the full sister relationship. In 2000, the constitution of the CC was changed to remove part of that. Under the old constitution, the “less than complete fraternal” relationship, by name and design, was to be a relationship that had but one goal – achieving a full sister relationship. The changes adopted in 2000 indicate that the PRCA recognize the reality that some relationships may never go to the full sister relationship.
- 2) It should be noted that the PRCA has never entered into a corresponding relationship with a church as a step towards a full sister relationship.
- a) When contact is first made with a church or denomination, we seek to know points of agreement and disagreement. In a relatively short time, it becomes obvious whether the relationship can continue to develop towards a full sister relationship, or whether it must be broken off due to significant differences over the doctrines of grace.
- b) It would be in an instance where we have significant agreement on the doctrines of grace, but have other significant differences due to the fact that we hail from different ecclesiastical traditions, that we would decide to seek a “corresponding relationship.”

-
- 3) Yet the existing constitution, especially point V, C, 2, b, retains some of the language that speaks of this relationship being a step towards the full sister relationship.
 - b. In addition, as the CC noted to synod last year, a corresponding relationship is proposed with another denomination when it becomes obvious that a full sister relationship is not realistic.
 - 1) The CC reported to Synod 2008 concerning a relationship with the EPCA: "A full sister-church relationship is currently not possible with the differences that exist in the matters of divorce and remarriage, and the interpretation of the regulative principle of worship. Past synods have spoken to this as well."
 - 2) Yet Synod 2008 proposed the corresponding relationship with the EPCA due to the significant agreement in doctrine and the long history of friendship with the EPCA in which trust has been established.
 - c. The CC agrees with the EPCA, that it would not be profitable for either denomination to be governed by an agreement where the EPCA and the PRCA are continually reexamining the issues that divide us.
 4. As we examined this section of the constitution, we also took note of the fact that it does not mention the confessions. We believe this ought to be included, and thus bring this added requirement for corresponding relationships.
- B. Recommendation: That synod approve the proposed changes to point V, C of the Constitution of the Committee for Contact with Other Churches so that it reads as follows:
- C. Corresponding Relationships with Other Churches.
1. Where significant and broad agreement exists between the Protestant Reformed Churches and other churches, and yet differences are important enough to preclude a sister-church relationship, a corresponding relationship may be established.
 - a. These relationships may be arranged as circumstances may dictate, provided:
 - 1) That whatever relationship be arranged, the stipulations thereof shall be clear and unambiguous.
 - 2) That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual

- welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith.
- b. These relationships shall be established only with those churches that not only accept the Reformed standards, or confessions consistent with the Reformed standards, but also maintain them in their ecclesiastical life.
 - c. Known differences in doctrine and practice between the two denominations are recognized with respect. This means that differences may be discussed, but constant agitation on the differences should be avoided.
2. The activities of corresponding relationships shall consist of:
- a. Exchange of information which shall enable the churches to become better acquainted with each other. This exchange shall be implemented in the following ways:
 - 1) Exchange of observers at the broadest assemblies, if it is feasible.
 - 2) Exchange of minutes of the broadest assemblies.
 - 3) Exchange of denominational yearbooks and/or church directories.
 - 4) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the Church Orders or Constitutions.
 - 5) Exchange of the most recently published edition of the confessional standards.
 - 6) Exchange of songbooks used in public worship, including the forms used for various occasions in public worship.
 - b. Discussion by means of correspondence, committee visits, and conferences in order to confirm and strengthen our unity in Christ.

Grounds:

1. For the change from “Corresponding Relationships with *Foreign Churches*” to “Corresponding Relationships with *Other Churches*”: This is consistent with point V, A of the constitution, which states: “A full official relationship with other domestic churches (i.e., in the United States and Canada) would imply organic union. Less complete ties may be established as circumstances may require and indicate.”
2. For the other changes within the article:
 - a. The “corresponding relationship” is part of the CC’s

constitution for those relationships where there is significant agreement, but the differences are such that a full sister relationship is not possible.

1) The reality is that there will be relationships where a full sister relationship cannot be expected. The constitution of the CC should reflect this.

2) Maintaining this provision of the corresponding relationships (i.e., that differences must be discussed) may well tend to agitation on the differences, thus driving the churches apart.

b. The proposed change to the constitution recognizes the reality that a full sister-church relationship is not possible at this time, but indicates that in this relationship churches work at maintaining and strengthening the ties, consistent with the existing point V, C, 1, b of the constitution: "That no merely formal ties shall be established, but only such relationships as will serve the actual welfare of the churches involved and the manifestations of our unity in the Reformed faith."

3. For adding point V, C, 1, b, regarding confessions: Any church with which we establish a relationship must be a confessional church.

III. Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (CERCS)

A. Information

1. In the past year, our contact with the CERC has been greatly helped by various visits made to Singapore by both Rev. A. den Hartog and Prof. H. Hanko.

a. Rev. den Hartog was in Singapore twice. He visited there first of all for two weeks in June 2008. During this time he spoke at their annual church camp, preached both times on the two Sundays, and made many visits with the members. Rev. den Hartog was also able to visit the CERC again in March 2009. This was a visit of only a few days, made possible because he was traveling through Singapore to Myanmar as part of a delegation from Hope (Walker) PRC.

b. Prof. Hanko was also in Singapore twice in the past year. His first visit was a stay of about two weeks in August 2008. While he was there, the CERC asked him if he would be willing to return. He agreed to do so, and thus visited there

a second time in November and December of 2008. During this extended stay of six weeks, Prof. Hanko was kept very busy with such work as preaching on Sundays, speaking at the CERC's Reformation Day celebration, weekly speeches, speeches and preaching in Penang (Malaysia), meetings with the Session of CERC, and meetings with members of the church.

c. The ERCS covered some of the expenses these men incurred, with the CC reimbursing these men for the remainder.

d. We express our sincere appreciation to both Prof. Hanko and Rev. den Hartog for their willingness to travel to Singapore and to labor with and among the saints there.

2. By means of the information gained through these visits and through our correspondence, we can report the following.

a. It is apparent that things have settled down considerably within CERC. For the most part, the congregation is over the struggles caused by the split from FERC.

b. The CERC gives continued evidence of a sincere interest in the truth and in the distinctives of the Reformed faith. The men who visited there were very warmly received by both the leaders and the members of the church. Much appreciation was expressed to them for the pointed preaching and sound instruction they gave. On many occasions our men were flooded with further questions concerning their sermons and lectures.

c. There is clear evidence of continued growth in CERC in both their understanding and application of the truth. This does not mean that CERC does not have its struggles. The leaders and the members are aware of areas in which they still need to grow. And this is something they want to do. They also realize the important place that sound preaching has in that regard.

3. In light of the above, the CERC Session recently requested that one of our ministers preach and teach there for a time.

a. If possible, the CERC would like the minister to labor in their midst for up to six months. His work would include preaching, giving instruction on the Church Order, and speaking at their Church Camp in June, Family Seminar in August, and Reformation Day Celebration in October/November. The CERC also offered to help cover the expenses of this minister while he is in Singapore.

- b. Synod 2008 gave the CC the right to find and send a man to Singapore, if the CERC would express an interest in this prior to Synod 2009. With that in mind, the CC is presently looking for a minister who would be able and willing to do this. If we have any new information or any recommendations regarding this, we plan to present them to synod by means of a supplemental report.
- 4. It is clear that the CERC is interested in continued contact with our churches. They show a commitment to the Reformed faith and a desire to stand as a witness to the truth in Southeast Asia. We are encouraged by these things, and plan to continue working toward the goal of establishing a relationship with them at some level, the Lord willing.
- B. Recommendations
 - 1. That synod approve the CC's work with the CERC in Singapore, including authorizing the CC to continue working with this congregation.
 - 2. That synod approve the CC's action of paying the balance of the expenses Prof. H. Hanko incurred by his travels to and work in Singapore.

IV. Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia (EPCA)

- A. Information
 - 1. Soon after Synod 2008, the CC wrote the EPCA to inform them of and express our joy to them concerning the decision of synod to establish a corresponding relationship with them.
 - 2. The EPCA Presbytery responded positively to our proposal. In their letter they stated: "It is with joy and a sense of God's goodness upon us that we receive your proposal to establish a formal fraternal relationship between our denominations. Brothers, we thank you for the proposal and the evident regard and love that it manifests toward us as a true church of Jesus Christ. We express to you our desire to enter into fraternal relations with the PRC. We desire such a relationship as the natural expression of our regard and love for you as faithful churches of Jesus Christ, churches with whom we find substantial, precious, and rare unity in the vital truths of the gospel. Therefore, we accept the general proposal to establish a fraternal relationship that is less than full sister church."
 - 3. In their response the EPCA also raised a concern over one part of the proposed agreement, namely, the constant discussion of the differences that are known to exist between our churches.

The EPCA expressed the desire that the focus be upon the areas of agreement between us. In light of this, the CC has presented a proposal to change our constitution (see point II above). We are convinced that such a change is necessary, not only for the benefit of our relationship with the EPCA, but also for the sake of any other corresponding relationships our churches may establish.

4. The EPCA had in mind sending a delegation here while their student, Mr. David Torlach, was still in our seminary, but this did not work out for them. Rev. Chris Connors plans, however, to attend and speak at the conference on John Calvin that our Theological School is planning for September of this year, the Lord willing. We are thankful that he is willing and able to do this, and believe it will serve well in our relationship with the EPCA.

5. The CC continues to underwrite gift subscriptions of the *Standard Bearer* for the ministers of the EPCA.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the CC's work in our contact with the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia.

2. That, if synod approves the proposed changes to the CC's constitution (see point II above), synod declare that these changes apply to the Corresponding Relationship that Synod 2008 decided to establish with the EPCA.

V. Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland (CPRC NI)

A. Information

1. A delegation of Prof. B. Gritters and Mr. Peter Vander Schaaf visited the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland in January 2009. They conducted the annual church visitation, as requested by the CPRC Council, and reported that they found the congregation to be spiritually unified and at peace. The congregation is thankful for the Lord's leading, and for the blessing God has given them through their energetic and faithful pastor and his wife, Rev. and Mary Stewart. The congregation has been blessed by the Lord with young families and children. In addition to this, the work in Limerick has also prospered under the Lord's blessing.

2. The Council of the CPRC mentioned that they hope to break ground on their church building in the spring of 2009. They are very appreciative of all the gifts collected in the PRCA toward

this project. At this point they still desire and would appreciate continued collections in our churches for their Building Fund.

3. As regards the manse, the CPRC expresses thanks to the PRCA for the ability to continue using it for the Stewarts. They hope to be able to purchase it from the PRCA after they have completed their church building project.

4. Both the council and the members of the congregation showed a keen interest in the progress of Mr. Martyn McGeown as he studies in our seminary. They also expressed appreciation for the support that is given him.

5. The CPRC desires that we provide financial assistance to them again (in 2010) of £23,000 (\$34,500). They also ask that we continue assisting them with financial support for Mr. Martyn McGeown.

6. The CC has extended an invitation to our sister church in Northern Ireland to have a representative(s) attend our synod. Rev. Stewart was not able to do so this year, but he plans to be in the Grand Rapids area to attend and speak at the conference on John Calvin in September, the Lord willing.

7. The CC informed the CPRC of Synod 2008's decision regarding establishing a corresponding relationship with the EPCA.

B. Recommendation

1. That synod grant financial assistance to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland in 2010 of \$34,500.

Ground: As a small congregation, the CPRC is in need of financial help.

2. That synod authorize collections in our churches in 2010 for the Building Fund of the CPRC in Northern Ireland.

VI. *Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde* (Confessing Evangelical-Reformed Congregation—BERG) of Giessen, Germany

A. Information

1. The CC has maintained contact with the leaders of the BERG throughout the past year. The main focus has been to continue our discussion of various doctrines with them. This has included discussion of such truths as the covenant and the call of the gospel. We have also discussed our respective histories and creeds. We continue to discover significant agreement between us in the truth.

2. It is evident that the BERG has a sincere love for the Reformed faith. They also have a keen interest in discussing the truth with us. The CC plans to continue doing this with them.

- B. Recommendation: That synod approve the CC's work in its contact with the BERG (*Bekennende Evangelisch-Reformierte Gemeinde*) of Giessen, Germany.

VII. Contacts in Uzbekistan and Russia

A. Information

1. The CC has maintained contact with Mr. Renat Ilyasov in Russia.
 - a. He and his family, who moved from Uzbekistan to Russia in 2007, have recently attained their Russian citizenship. This now allows him to find work in Russia. At this point, however, he and his family have not been able to find a church to join. Presently one of our diaconates continues to provide benevolence help to this man and his family. We are thankful for this diaconate's willingness to do this work, and their faithfulness in doing it.
 - b. Mr. Ilyasov is fluent in English and has been very important to us in our communication with the contacts we have in Uzbekistan. As time allows, he has been translating some of our Protestant Reformed material into Russian. Byron Center PRC's Evangelism Committee is working on setting up a Russian web site for this material.
 - c. The CC has been busy discussing doctrinal issues with Mr. Ilyasov, especially the truth of the call of the gospel. It has become evident, however, that there is significant disagreement between us on this matter. The CC continues to work on this matter with a view to determining whether or not our contact should continue.
2. The CC has also stayed in touch with Pastors Rinat Fazliev and Dilshod Abdullaev in Uzbekistan.
 - a. These men are the pastors of two small congregations in Uzbekistan. One congregation is part of the ERCUU (Evangelical Reformed Church Union of Uzbekistan), and the other is an independent church. Because of the language barrier, our communication with them has been through Mr. Renat Ilyasov.
 - b. Pastor Rinat Fazliev in Tashkent is suffering from a serious kidney disease and has been receiving regular dialysis treatments. Because of his illness and his high medical costs, the CC asked a diaconate of one of our churches to provide benevolence assistance. The diaconate readily agreed, and we are thankful to them for their willingness and their faithful labors.

- c. The CC plans, as best we are able, to continue communicating with and developing these contacts in Uzbekistan.
- 3. Last year's synod gave the CC approval to send a delegation to Russia in 2008 to pursue our contact with and give instruction to the contacts we have in Russia and Uzbekistan. However, various factors arose (both on our part and theirs) that contributed to our postponing the planned visit. The CC has no plans at this time to send a delegation to these countries.
- B. Recommendation: That synod approve the CC's labors with the contacts in Uzbekistan and Russia.

VIII. Evangelical Reformed Church Union of Russia (ERCUR)

- A. Information
 - 1. Last year's synod approved the CC pursuing contact with the ERCUR congregation in Moscow. We have written to the leaders in this church, but there has been no response.
 - 2. In light of this, the CC is not pursuing contact with them at this time.
- B. Recommendation: None.

IX. Protestant Reformed Christian Church in Croatia

- A. Information
 - 1. With the approval of last year's synod, the CC funded Rev. Jasmin Milic's work of translating and printing the Belgic Confession into the Croatian language. The gift of \$1,500 funded the printing of approximately 500 copies of this confession.
 - 2. We continue to correspond with Rev. Milic from time to time. Recently we informed him of the 2010 BRF (British Reformed Fellowship) Conference and suggested it would be good if he could attend in order to meet with members of our churches, and we with him.
- B. Recommendation: None.

X. Myanmar Special Projects Fund

- A. Information
 - 1. Synod 2007 approved distributing the remaining balance in the Myanmar Special Projects Fund to the Protestant Reformed churches that would take up the work in Myanmar and in India.
 - 2. We reported to Synod 2008 that two thirds of this Fund had been distributed: one third to Hope (Walker) PRC, and one third to Georgetown PRC. In connection with the distribution of funds

to the latter, we inform synod that Georgetown PRC has kept us informed of their labors with Paulraj and the saints in Vellore, India.

3. Soon after last year's synod, Byron Center PRC requested the remaining one third of the funds for its work with Rajasteph in India. The CC approved this request and sent them the balance of the Fund (approximately \$18,240.00).

4. Since all of the money in this Fund has now been distributed, we inform synod that the Fund no longer exists and that our work of supervising its distribution is completed.

B. Recommendation: None.

XI. Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands

A. Information

1. Synod 2008 approved the new fund policy for the Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands (formerly the ARTS Fund). The primary purpose of this fund is its use by any PR church, denomination committee, or sister church for expenses involved in the theological training of men in foreign countries (i.e., countries outside the USA and Canada). If necessary, it may also be used to cover travel and living expenses of foreign students attending the Theological School of the PRC.

2. Following the new guidelines, the CC, in the past year, approved and distributed \$10,580 from this fund (i.e., from the interest and dividends received) to Hope (Walker) PRC for its work in Myanmar. The CC has also approved paying Hope PRC, in September of this year, an additional amount of \$7,000 from this fund.

3. As of December 31, 2008 the balance in the fund was \$290,864.11. The amount available for distribution (i.e., interest and dividends) was \$26,687.19.

B. Recommendation: That synod approve the CC's actions concerning distribution of \$17,580 from the Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands.

XII. Financial Assistance for Foreign Students

A. Information

1. In accordance with the approval given by Synod 2008, the CC assisted the BPRC in the Philippines in the support of Mr. Vernon Ibe and his family from the Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands. The CC also assisted the EPC of Australia in the support of Mr. David Torlach and his family, and the CPRC in Northern Ireland

in the support of Mr. Martyn McGeown, with support for these students coming from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund.

2. The CC approved providing financial assistance to two foreign students in the 2009-2010 school year. With synod's approval, both Mr. Martyn McGeown (CPRC in NI) and Mr. Vernon Ibe (BPRC in the Philippines) would receive assistance from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund. The reason the Ibese support would now come from this fund is that the fund policy for the Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands specifies that that fund is to be used for foreign students only when the Foreign Student Assistance Fund is not able to meet the need. We believe the Foreign Student Assistance Fund can meet that need in the 2009-2010 school year. The details of the support needed for the upcoming year are provided in Appendix #1, to be treated in closed session.

3. During the past year, the CC approved providing additional support to both the Ibese (from the Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands) and the Torlachs (from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund). This was necessary on account of increased living expenses for these families (cf. Appendix #1).

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the CC's actions of providing additional support in the past year to the Ibese and Torlachs.

2. That synod authorize the CC to provide the necessary financial assistance (from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund) to the BPRC in the Philippines to help support their seminary student in the 2009-2010 school year.

3. That synod authorize the CC to provide the necessary financial assistance (from the Foreign Student Assistance Fund) to the CPRC in Northern Ireland to help support their seminary student in the 2009-2010 school year.

4. That synod authorize four collections in the churches in 2010 for the Foreign Student Assistance Fund.

Ground: We continue to need monies from this fund for the support of the foreign students who are attending our seminary.

XIII. CC Budget for 2010

A. Information: The proposed 2010 budget for the Contact Committee is attached (Appendix #2, p. 132).

B. Recommendation: That synod adopt the Contact Committee's proposed budget for 2010.

May the Lord bless and guide the synod in all its deliberations.

In Christ's service,
For the Contact Committee,
w.s. Rev. Daniel Kleyn, Secretary

Appendix #1
Assistance for Foreign Seminary Students
(Closed Session)

Appendix #2
Proposed Budget for 2010

Committee Expenses	
CERC (Singapore) Travel.....	\$ 10,000.00
CPRC (Northern Ireland) Travel	\$ 2,750.00
BERG (Germany) Travel.....	\$ 5,000.00
Other Conferences/Travels	\$ 3,000.00
Literature Distribution	\$ 1,000.00
Travel Assistance for Contacts	\$ 5,000.00
Subtotal for Committee Expenses.....	\$ 26,750.00
Northern Ireland Assistance	\$ 34,500.00
TOTAL.....	\$ 61,250.00

SUPPLEMENT 11
Contact Committee Supplemental Report

June 2, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

We present to synod, by way of this supplemental report, various additional matters for your information and consideration.

I. Organizational Information

A. Since submitting our regular report to synod, Rev. Daniel Kleyn accepted the call to serve as a missionary in the Philippines. Because of this, we have replaced his nomination for committee membership with that of Rev. A. Spriensma.

B. The two minister nominees are now as follows: Rev. A. Lanning, Rev. A. Spriensma.

II. Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland (CPRC NI)

A. In May of this year, the CPRC began work on the construction of their church building. They hope to complete this project by May of 2010.

B. The monies that were collected by the PRCA for the CPRC's Building Fund have been sent to them. This totaled \$173,660.32. On behalf of the CPRC, we express appreciation to the members of the PRCA for this generous giving.

C. At this point the CPRC has approximately £395,000 (~\$800,000 US) of the £500-550,000 (~\$1-1.1 million US) they will need for their building project. We mention this especially in light of the request (in our regular report) that our churches continue taking collections for the CPRC's Building Fund.

III. Contact in Russia

A. In our regular report to synod, we indicated that we were seeking to determine if our contact with Mr. Renat Ilyasov in Russia should continue. Through further correspondence with him it has become evident that there are significant doctrinal differences between him and the PRCA. These differences exist specifically with regard to the call of the gospel, for he maintains that the call to repent and believe is only to the elect.

B. The CC recently decided to end our official contact with Mr. Ilyasov, and have informed him of this. We have also passed on information concerning this decision to the diaconate of one of our churches which has been providing benevolence help to Mr. Ilyasov and his family for the past few years. We again express our appreciation to this diaconate for its faithful assistance.

IV. Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore (CERCS)**A. Information****1. Prof. H. Hanko's Labors in Singapore**

a. In our regular report to synod we mentioned that the CERC was asking for a minister from the PRCA to labor in Singapore for a time. In early April, Prof. H. Hanko contacted the CC and expressed his willingness to travel to Singapore to do this work, and his wife's willingness to accompany him. We were very thankful for this offer, as were also the saints in Singapore. Prof. Hanko and his wife left for Singapore on Thursday, April 23, and returned home

on Monday, June 1 – a period of approximately six weeks.

b. Prof. Hanks's work in Singapore included the following: preaching in Covenant's worship services (also on the Heidelberg Catechism), leading a class on the principles of the Church Order, holding meetings with the Session, teaching the adult Sunday School Class, and giving numerous speeches. It goes without saying that he was very busy during his time there.

c. Prof. Hanks reported that the congregation in Singapore was very appreciative of his preaching and teaching, and eager to receive it. He was also encouraged by the interest shown from the young people.

d. We are deeply grateful to Prof. and Mrs. Hanks for their selflessness in being willing to travel to Singapore, and for the many faithful labors he performed while there. We trust his work will serve well as a means for the CERC and the PRCA to build each other up as churches.

2. Rev. A. den Hartog's Visit to Singapore

a. The CERC requested our help in finding a minister from the PRCA to speak at their June Church Camp. The CC asked Rev. den Hartog if he would be able and willing to do this, and he gladly agreed to do so. The consistory of Southwest PRC also gave its approval to release him for this work.

b. Rev. den Hartog plans to leave for Singapore on June 8, and to return on June 18. We express our gratitude to him, and to Southwest's consistory, for their respective roles in providing this valuable assistance to us and to our fellow saints in Singapore.

3. CERC's Requests

a. In the past year, CERC has expressed, more than once, a desire to receive continued assistance from the PRCA. This includes the request that a minister from the PRCA speak for their Reformation Day Conference in October/November of this year. The CC continues to work on securing the services of a man who could labor in Singapore for a longer time in the near future.

b. In early May of this year, the CC received a letter from the Session of CERC in which they mention their heartfelt appreciation to the PRCA for our assistance through the services of Prof. Hanks, and also Rev. den Hartog. They also stated that they desire to work toward establishing a

relationship between our churches, and invited a delegation to come to Singapore in October/November of this year to discuss this matter. Their letter is attached (Appendix #1).

B. Recommendations

1. That synod authorize the CC to send a delegation to Singapore in October/November of this year in order to provide a speaker for their Reformation Day Conference, and to discuss with the Session of CERC the matter of an official relationship between our churches.

Grounds:

- a. The CERC in Singapore has requested this.
- b. Synod 2008 authorized the CC “to continue to keep contact with the Session of CERC in Singapore and to send another delegation there at Covenant’s invitation, all with a view to discussing what further needs to be done in order to enter into a relationship with them at some level” (Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 20, B, 3).

[Note: The CC has in mind using part of the funds that were allocated for, but not used in, the work with our contacts in Russia (\$6,500).]

2. That synod again authorize the CC, as it did last year (Acts of Synod 2008, Art. 20, B, 4) to obtain and send a minister to preach and teach in CERC for a number of months.

Ground: The CERC has requested such help from the PRCA.

In Christ’s service,
For the Contact Committee,
Rev. Daniel Kleyn, Secretary

Appendix 1

COVENANT EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH

9 May 2009

Rev. Daniel Kleyn,
Secretary, Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Committee for Contact with Other Churches
3645 104th Avenue, Zeeland, MI 49464

Dear Rev. Daniel Kleyn,
Subject: Exploring Official Church Relationship with PRCA
Greetings in our Master’s Name!

We refer to your letters dated 30 July 2008 and 2 February 2009.
Firstly, on behalf of CERC, we like to express our heartfelt apprecia-

tion to PRCA for your willingness to assist us during this difficult period with the services of Prof. Herman Hanko at this present period and, Lord willing, Rev. Arie den Hartog for our June Church Camp next month.

The Session of CERC met on 6 May 2009 night to discuss on Synod's instruction to the Contact Committee to explore further relations with CERC at some level. We like to inform you that we are keen on this relationship and would like to invite a delegation to come to Singapore in October / November this year to discuss on what further needs to be done in order to enter into an official church relationship with PRCA at some level.

May our Lord's blessing be upon PRCA as you serve Him faithfully.

Thank you,

Humbly Serving our Master,
Elder Wong Chee Choong
Clerk of Session, CERC

SUPPLEMENT 12
Correspondence
Letter from Southeast PRC

May 27, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

The Lord willing, seminarian Dan Holstege will be examined by Synod 2010 with a view to being declared a candidate for the ministry. Dan is a son of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church. In light of this fact, we offer our services to host Synod 2010. If approved, our intent is to use the facilities of First Protestant Reformed Church and Eastside Christian School. Requests for the use of those facilities have already been made, and it appears there will not be any difficulties. Of course, we also will assume all responsibilities for arranging needed housing, the pre-synodical service, the graduation exercises, and meals during the sessions of synod.

In Christ,
Council of Southeast PRC,
w.s. Timothy R. Pipe, Clerk

SUPPLEMENT 13
Correspondence
Letter from Dr. David Torlach

Letter of thanks to the PRCA

I take this opportunity to briefly express appreciation and thanks to the PRCA, on behalf of myself and my family, and therefore somewhat also on behalf of the EPC of Australia.

We want to thank the PRC for:

1. My training in the seminary. I have received seminary training that I have no doubt is one of the best in the world. I have been taught by professors who not only have a solid and deep knowledge of the truth of the Scriptures, but also demonstrate a practical love for that truth, both in their teaching and in their personal lives. I have grown in my personal faith and knowledge, and my love of my Saviour and His truth has grown immeasurably whilst under their teaching.
2. My training has been provided free of charge to myself or the EPC in general. I do not believe that the EPC, at the present time, with its limited resources, could provide the kind of training I have received here. We are indebted to you for this. This is a very generous undertaking. There is no direct benefit to the PRC. They are doing this simply in their love and support of the gospel and the church of Jesus Christ in other places.
3. Not only, but I have been trained in all the Reformed doctrines, with a sensitivity to the differences between us. There has been a respect of our position, and even allowing the putting forward and consideration of those differences, without it making any difference to my training or assessment. I pray that this may likewise be reflected in our broader relationships in the years to come.
4. The care of our family. We were included in the Byron Center congregation and made to feel as if we were members there, and cared for as such, even if not quite in reality. We have been cared for by the council of Byron Center Church in many ways, but also by all the members of the congregation there. They have shown a love for us, not just in word but in deed. We have all grown spiritually here. We have been blessed by the preaching of the word, the fellowship, the catechism classes, and the schools. We have made so many firm friends in the Lord. It has not just been Byron Center: everywhere we have gone in the PRC the people have shown an interest in and a care for us, putting themselves out for us. At times this has been overwhelming for us, and we consider it to have been a privilege to

live amongst God's people here. I believe it is not until you travel and even live outside of your usual circle of church family, that you start to truly appreciate the universality of the church of Jesus Christ—that He really has His people in every place upon the face of this earth.

May our Lord and King, Jesus Christ the Saviour, strengthen all the Protestant Reformed Churches, as you seek to serve Him, preach the gospel, and glorify God. May He also bless both our denominations with stronger ties in the truth of the Scriptures and the Reformed faith, that we might be a blessing and encouragement to one another, and strengthen one another's hand in the great task of proclaiming the gospel, preserving the truth, and shepherding His sheep, until He comes again.

David Torlach

SUPPLEMENT 14

Domestic Mission Committee Report

April 2, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches

to convene on June 9, 2009

in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

What follows is our annual report of activities over which the Domestic Mission Committee has supervision.

I. Organizational

A. Present membership

1. Ministers: Revs. denHartog, Haak, R. Kleyn, Slopsema, and VanOverloop.
2. Elders: Vern Haveman, Gary Kaptein, Harlow Kuiper, Dave Moelker, and Dave Rau.

B. Membership changes

1. Information—the terms of Rev. R. Kleyn, Rev. Slopsema, and Dave Moelker expire in 2009.
2. Nominations:
 - a. Ministers: Rev. R. Kleyn, Rev. A. Lanning, Rev. J. Slopsema, Rev. A. Spriensma.
 - b. Elders: Erv Kortering, Dave Moelker.

II. Eastern Home Missions

A. Information

1. The work of Eastern Home Missions has steadily progressed over the past year. Rev. Bruinsma, despite two major surgeries,

continues to work diligently both within the Fellowship in Pittsburgh and with new contacts. The members of the Fellowship also continue to grow spiritually, and the Lord is adding to the membership both through internal growth and from without.

2. Aside from Sunday worship, regular activities in the life of the Pittsburgh Fellowship include an Adult Bible Study, a Young People's Society, four catechism classes, pre-confession and membership classes, as well as other instruction given by the missionary as needed.

3. Rev. Bruinsma reports that two committees have been formed in Pittsburgh to help with the outreach and to get all of the members of the Fellowship involved in the work of missions. The Neighborhood Outreach Committee is involved in developing ways and means to spread the Word in the Pittsburgh community through organizing lectures, seminars, and workshops. This past year Rev. Koole gave a Reformation Day lecture, and the committee has also worked on developing a welcome package for visitors, including pamphlets explaining our worship and the Reformed distinctives. The Media Committee works in developing the web site of the mission, arranging advertising and programming on the radio, recording services and lectures, uploading these to the Internet, and distributing these as requested. This committee, with Rev. Bruinsma, is also working on recording a series of DVDs on Reformed doctrine, taught by Rev. Bruinsma. Rev. Bruinsma has also been interviewed a number of times on a Sunday-night radio talk-show.

4. Rev. Bruinsma's work outside the Fellowship includes his ongoing contact with and preaching monthly for a small group of saints in Franklin, PA; work with the Heidelberg Reformation Association; and corresponding and meeting with other new contacts in the Eastern USA and particularly around Pittsburgh. The saints in Franklin are becoming more and more interested in and dependent on the preaching and teaching of the PRC. Rev. Bruinsma preached there once a month this past year, and men from the DMC preached there five Sundays in 2008. For the evening services, the congregation has begun watching DVDs of PRC services and at present are setting up a live video feed to Pittsburgh, with the hope of tuning in to Rev. Bruinsma's preaching and mid-week studies. The work with the Heidelberg Reformation Association included a conference in May 2008, at which Prof. Cammenga was the guest lecturer. The fruit of this is that officebearers from other churches are seeing the value of

adopting and using the catechism as a tool for instruction in their own congregations.

5. Apart from the ongoing spiritual growth of all the members of the Fellowship, there has been growth in the size of the Fellowship this year with the baptism of an infant, the confession of faith of two of the young people, and the addition of a young married couple of Reformed background to the Fellowship. The Fellowship totals eight families at present; there is another family attending regularly with a view to membership; and two other families are attending on a semi-regular basis.

6. One of the highlights of this past year was the celebration, for the first time, of the Lord's Supper on this mission field. In preparation for this, Rev. Bruinsma gave a special course of instruction on the Lord's Supper to the seventeen members of the Fellowship who would be partaking. The administration of the Lord's Supper required the enrollment of the eight families of the Fellowship into special membership at Southwest Church (per synod's decision 2005, Art. 30), as well as the approval of the calling church and the DMC to proceed with the administration of the sacrament. On March 15, with representatives of Southwest Church and the DMC present, the Lord's Supper was administered and joyfully received in Pittsburgh.

7. Rev. Bruinsma reports that "the members of the Fellowship are functioning together more and more as a whole," and that "a congregational life is emerging." He sees this as an indication that "with time we will have a group of believers who will be able not only to function effectively in an instituted church but also to interact with each other well in the organic life of the church." He says, "The saints here are fully committed to the organization of a church," and "they work hard toward that end." We agree with him that, "Certainly, this is what we seek in our mission work."

B. Recommendations

1. That synod express appreciation to the Bruinsmas for their ongoing energetic labors on our behalf in the cause of eastern home missions.

2. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$133,400 for eastern home missions, of which \$24,000 has been pledged by the Pittsburgh Fellowship.

III. Western Home Missions

A. Information

1. The work in Spokane this year has come to maturation in the approval by Classis West in March to organize the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship into a congregation. This is an answer to the prayers of the churches for missions, and the fruit of years of hard labor and good instruction on the part of our missionary and calling church. We are thankful to the Lord for this development.
2. Regular activity on the mission field includes the Sunday services, midweek Bible Studies, catechism instruction, as well as extended doctrinal instruction by the missionary to new attendees to the worship services. Rev. T. Miersma has also been giving instruction to a young couple with a view to adult baptism, confession of faith, and marriage.
3. Loveland PRC has continued to be closely involved in the work in Spokane, sending three delegations to visit the field this year and monitoring the missionary's work as well as the spiritual well-being of the members of the Fellowship. This past year, besides our annual delegation visit to Spokane, the DMC was able to meet personally with Rev. Miersma on two different occasions when he was in Grand Rapids for synod and for the Fall Missions Conference.
4. The missionary and the COGPRF continue to give a witness in their community and to pursue new contacts. This past year they began to upload their Sunday sermons to the Internet, which has brought some new interest and contacts. Advertisements are placed on the radio in connection with the Reformed Witness Hour. Their new location, at a busy intersection just north of downtown Spokane, has brought some interest and phone-calls as well as a number of visitors. The missionary also maintains contact by telephone, email, and letter with some outside of the region who remain interested in the work in Spokane.
5. One of the major events of this past year was a two-weekend conference on the doctrine of the covenant, at which Prof. Hanko was the featured speaker. He spoke six times, twice on the Friday evenings and for the four Sunday services, on the subject of the covenant. Promotional advertising brought a large group of visitors to these speeches, with particular interest from a nearby congregation. Since this time two of the families of that congregation have become regular attendees and are receiving doctrinal and catechetical instruction from Rev. Miersma. Speeches of this conference were also mailed out to interested parties.
6. In terms of the number of people attending worship services, the size of the group in Spokane has increased considerably

over the past year. There have been a number of births in the COGPRF as well as new families in attendance with a view to membership. Though the COGPRF itself still numbers fewer than six families, regular Sunday attendance is in the forties.

7. For sure, the greatest development on the Spokane field this year was the request of the Fellowship to organize and the approval of Loveland, the DMC, Classis West, and the synodical deputies to proceed with this. At its March meeting, upon approving this request, classis appointed Loveland as the overseeing church, and Rev. R. Miersma as the moderator. Classis also instructed the COGPRF to bring its request for subsidy to synod through their Classical Committee. Loveland acted on the approval of classis already in early March and scheduled the organizational service in Spokane for March 31, 2009.

8. On March 30, 2009 the consistory of Loveland PRC decided that, “in light of the fact that our labors have come to a conclusion in Spokane, we ask the DMC to recommend to synod that another church be declared as calling church for western home missionary.” In light of this, they further decided that Rev. Miersma would be recommended to the churches for a call, which they did by way of an announcement in the churches on April 5, 2009. Due to the timing of these decisions, any action and recommendations from the DMC will have to come to synod by way of supplement.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod thank the Miersmas for their diligent work over the past year, which, under the blessing of God, has brought the mission work in Spokane to where it is today.

2. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$130,000 if the Western Home Missionary is relocated to another field and of \$101,000 should he be released for a call.

IV. Sioux Falls

A. Information

1. Over the past year there have been many positive developments and events in the work in Sioux Falls. The calling church, Edgerton PRC, reports that “Rev. Brummel has labored energetically and diligently as missionary” and, as far as the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship (HPRF) is concerned, sums up the work since Synod 2008 as a year of “growth and stability.”

2. Besides the regular Sunday worship services, the life of the HPRF includes a Monday evening Bible Study, catechism

classes as necessary, a monthly steering committee meeting that focuses on the work of evangelism, a Church Order class led by the missionary, as well as other instruction of new members given by the missionary as the need arises.

3. Rev. Brummel reports that he and the members of the HPRF are busy making their presence known in Sioux Falls through personal witnessing and through various means of advertising: an Internet web site, two yellow-page advertisements, the RWH broadcast, advertising in the local newspaper, and 30-second spot advertisements on the local Television station. The calling church has also encouraged and instructed the HPRF in these things by using for their family-visitation theme the subject of “Shining as Lights in a Dark World.”

4. The missionary and the HPRF understand that to organize as a church they must work towards being “self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting.” In these areas there has been definite development in the HPRF in the past year. The ongoing instruction in Reformed church government, as well as a rotation of men involved in the Steering Committee, shows a willingness among the men of the Fellowship to take up leadership in the church. From their personal witness, their advertising, and the internal growth of the group, there has been “substantial numerical growth, and there is good potential for more numerical growth in the near future” (Edgerton). Rev. Brummel also reports that “the giving over the course of the past year was very generous” and that they have also begun taking collections for a building fund with a view to purchasing their own property.

5. Numerically, without the missionary and his family, the HPRF now numbers 12 families and 2 individuals, a total of 27 confessing members and 7 baptized children. This is an increase of 10 members from last year. Though most of this growth has come through the marriage of members of the HPRF, there continues to be outside interest, with a regular number of visitors to the worship services. There is also potential for growth from other interested folks within the PRC, which is an added encouragement to the HPRF. The growth of the HPRF has made it necessary for them to rent a larger room for worship services at the hotel where they are meeting.

6. With all these things in mind, Edgerton’s consistory met with the members of the HPRF in February “to initiate consideration of organization in the near future.” At the time of writing this report, this question is being considered by the members of the

HPRF and there is a high possibility that there will be request for organization coming to Classis West either in September 2009 or March 2010. This development gives us reason to be truly thankful for the Lord's blessing on the work in Sioux Falls.

7. Rev. Brummel's work outside of the HPRF includes ongoing contact with two non-PR families who are still considering moving to the Sioux Falls area and joining the HPRF. He also mails out numerous letters and material to those who visit the services or show interest in some other way, and he is mailing material to many other new residents in the Sioux Falls area. He has also been very involved with "new field" work in developing and giving advice to the contacts in Tucson (more about this below). His travels this past year included a trip to the Philippines on behalf of the FMC. He is also busy in personal development in the area of missions through taking a seminary course, and reading and writing on missions.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod express its appreciation to Rev. Brummel for his committed labors on behalf of our denomination in the work in Sioux Falls and in the broader work of missions.
2. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$125,010 for Sioux Falls, of which the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship has pledged to contribute \$27,000.

V. Varia

A. New Field Work—Tucson, AZ

1. Early in the summer of 2008 our Western Home Missionary, Rev. Miersma, received correspondence from a man in Tucson, which he passed on to the secretary of the DMC. We quote here parts of that letter,

My family and I had been attending a church here in Tucson for the past ten years and came to the conclusion that they are essentially ashamed of the true gospel because it conflicts with the importance unfortunately placed on worldly and man-centered pursuits. Over the past year or so we have tried several other churches here that claimed to be Reformed. Most were better than where we had attended, but proved in one way or another to shy away from boldly proclaiming essential doctrines of election/predestination, or had some other fatal flaw such as being charismatic. My wife and I were introduced to the PRCA when we read a book on Reformed education by David Engelsma. We have read much of the literature and listened to a number

of sermons available on your web site and the web sites of PRCA churches around the country. It is refreshing to know that there are folks in this country who believe and proclaim the 'divisive' doctrines so often avoided in the mainstream church. Quite frankly, it is equally dismaying that living in a metropolitan area of a million people we are unable to find any substantial group of like-minded believers.

...We would like to get some feedback from you about the possibility of a church plant in Tucson. Is this an area currently under consideration by the PRCA for expansion? What are the first steps in the process?

2. Upon further inquiry by phone we discovered that there were four families in Tucson who had been meeting together to discuss God's Word and reading and discussing PRC literature. They had also found on-line the Sunday School papers of the PRCA and were using these with their children and for family devotions. Even though they were encouraged by us to find and remain in an instituted church while we worked with them, these four families, because they could find nothing suitable for worship and membership in Tucson, began to gather with each other for Sunday worship using DVD sermons provided by the evangelism committee of one of our congregations. In the morning they would watch a sermon, and in the evening they would have a discussion on a Lord's Day of the Heidelberg Catechism, using Hoeksema's *Triple Knowledge* and the Heidelberg Catechism Workbooks.

3. In September of 2008 the DMC sent an initial delegation, consisting of Rev. VanOverloop and Dave Rau from the DMC and our missionary, Rev. Allen Brummel, to visit these saints. The purpose of this visit was to become better acquainted with the four families in Tucson and to give them an opportunity to become better acquainted with the PRCA. Sunday services were conducted at a room in a local hotel, and there were a number of meetings introducing the PRCA to them and giving opportunity for discussion and questions. This committee came back to the DMC recommending that we continue working in Tucson by sending ministers to preach for the Tucson saints, leading possible mid-week Bible studies, follow up on potential contacts, and provide additional evaluation of the Fellowship as well as of the area. The saints in Tucson responded to this visit with a letter of

“formal and sincere entreatment...for the PRCA to support and guide us in growing a church for God’s elect in Tucson.”

4. Subsequent to this the DMC sent Rev. VanderWal, Rev. R. Kleyn, Rev. D. Kleyn, and Rev. S. Houck to preach for them in October, November, and December. We also asked Rev. Kortering to work in Tucson for us for the early months of 2009, which he planned to do, but because of health reasons was unable to fulfill. We also began airing the RWH on Sunday mornings in Tucson in early December.

5. In February our missionary, Rev. Allen Brummel, made another visit to Tucson for two Sundays. While he was there, two additional families visited the worship services. After his visit, Rev. Brummel reported to the DMC that, even though “there are questions yet about some areas,”

There is evidence of increased understanding of our distinctives and appreciation for the boldness with which we are willing to preach the gospel.... The four families are wholeheartedly one with us in their bold defense of an unconditional covenant and sovereign particular grace. The pulpit supply from our ministers has been much appreciated.

His conclusion was that, because we cannot do mission work with sporadic pulpit supply, the DMC should propose to Synod 2009 the calling of a missionary to begin his labors in Tucson, AZ.

6. In March the DMC sent another delegation to Tucson.

7. The work over the past year has been a time of our growing to know these saints, and for them a time of becoming more familiar with the PRCA and growing in their appreciation for and commitment to our churches. What we now have in Tucson is a group of people committed to the Reformed faith and desirous that the PRCA begin a full-time work there as soon as possible by sending them a missionary. These people have also demonstrated their own enthusiasm for spreading the gospel to others through their conversations, advertising, holding Bible studies, and book discussions to which they are inviting their acquaintances, as well as the use of the Internet. As a result of this there is evidence of other interest in the establishment of a faithful Reformed witness in the large community of Tucson.

8. Any further information and developments that are worthy of reporting to synod will come by way of a supplemental report.

B. Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland

1. Information

a. Synod 2008 made two decisions regarding the manse presently being used by the pastor of Covenant PRC of NI (Article 39, Acts of Synod 2008, p. 33).

1) “That synod approve the Stewarts’ continued use of the manse (on the same grounds given last year, Art. 31, B, Acts of Synod 2007).”

2) “That synod authorize the DMC to investigate the feasibility of upgrading the bathrooms, kitchen, and laundry room; to work with the synodical treasurer to finance the project as a capital improvement; and to proceed with these improvements.

Grounds:

a) These areas show evidence of aging and wear and tear.

b) Improving these areas of the house will maintain the property value.

c) This will be good stewardship of our denomination’s assets.”

b. In January 2009, representatives of the Contact Committee visited Northern Ireland and discussed these issues, on behalf of the DMC, with the pastor and consistory of the CPRC NI. They were able to confirm that sections of the house were in need of upgrading and improvements.

c. Subsequent to this the DMC began communication with the CPRC NI about the cost and plans for these improvements with a view to proceeding with this work.

2. Recommendation: That synod approve the CPRC NI’s continued use of the manse.

Grounds:

a. This is the request of the CPRC NI through the delegation of the Contact Committee. The council asks “that they be permitted to use the parsonage until it is able to purchase it on behalf of the congregation” (January 17, 2009 letter of Contact Committee delegation).

b. The CPRC NI is financially committed at present to the building of their sanctuary.

c. Such provision, for a sister in time of financial need, is fitting and will be much appreciated.

C. Last year we reported to synod that we were using the services of Active in Missions (AIM) for two projects: the production of an introductory DVD of the PRCA and the planning of a Mission

Awareness Day. We can report that both these projects were completed in June 2008 and have proved very successful and useful.

D. Missions Conference

1. In September 2008 the DMC sponsored a Missions Conference over two evenings at Southwest PRC. All three of our missionaries were present at this conference, as well as representatives from the calling churches.
2. The conference included four speeches. On the first evening Rev. denHartog gave an introductory speech to encourage us in the calling to do mission work, after which Prof. Gritters gave "A Critique and Evaluation of the History of Protestant Reformed Mission Work." On the second evening, Rev. Bruinsma spoke on "What we can learn from the History of Reformed Missions," and Rev. Kortering on "The Need for Special Training for the Work of Missions." Each speech was followed by a brief period for questions and discussion.
3. Because the conference proved profitable, the DMC is working on planning another, similar conference for the year 2010 on the general subject of doing mission work with the un-churched and those who have had little previous contact with Christianity.

E. Radio

1. First Protestant Reformed Church, Grand Rapids, has forwarded to us the annual report of the Reformed Witness Hour, which we in turn forward to synod.
2. Last October the DMC approved putting the RWH on a radio station in Tucson, AZ. The details of this were worked out by the saints in Tucson together with the RWH Committee. The RWH broadcast in Tucson began in November 2008, each Sunday morning at 7:00 AM on KQTH.
3. With the organization of Spokane in the year 2009, the RWH will be asked to take over the funding of their broadcast in Spokane beginning in January 2010. Hence, we are not including a request for radio in Spokane.
4. Recommendation: That synod approve a budget of \$28,480 for radio in 2010. Projected (estimated) expenses are as follows:

a. Pittsburgh, PA.....	\$7,800
b. Sioux Falls, SD.....	\$9,100
c. Tucson, AZ.....	\$8,580
d. Related RWH expenses.....	<u>\$3,000</u>
Total.....	\$28,480

- F. Additional items for the budget
1. We recommend that \$20,000 be budgeted for investigation of new fields in 2010 (same as in 2009). We spent only \$9,841.99 in 2008, but with the ongoing work in Tucson, \$20,000 will be a good amount.
 2. We recommend that \$5,000 be budgeted for operating expenses in 2010 (used \$6,918.70 in 2008—we were over budget because of the missions conference).
 3. We recommend that synod request that our churches continue to take four collections in 2010 for the cause of domestic missions.

VI. Finances

A. Actual expenses in 2008:

Category	Amt. Approved	Amt. Spent	% of budget
1. Operating exp.	5,000	6,918.70	138.37
2. Radio	40,100	35,960.30	89.68
3. Invest. new fields	20,000	9,841.99	49.21
4. West. Home Missions....	108,000	113,824.00	105.39
5. East. Home Missions....	110,625	110,638.13	100.01
6. Sioux Falls.....	107,500	107,756.17	100.24

B. Domestic Mission Committee proposed budgets for 2010 (summary)

1. Eastern Home Missions
 - a. 2009—\$133,000 (\$20,000 by Pittsburgh Fellowship)
 - b. 2010—\$133,400 (\$24,000 by Pittsburgh Fellowship)
2. Western Home Missions
 - a. 2009—\$139,000 (\$17,000 by Spokane Fellowship)
 - b. 2010—\$130,000
3. Sioux Falls, SD
 - a. 2009—\$121,900 (\$18,000 by S. F. Fellowship)
 - b. 2010—\$125,010 (\$27,000 by S. F. Fellowship)
4. Investigation of new fields
 - a. 2009—\$20,000
 - b. 2010—\$20,000
5. Radio
 - a. 2009—\$29,000
 - b. 2010—\$28,480

In His service,
w.s. Rev. Rodney Kleyn, Secretary

Appendix 1
Annual Report of Southwest PRC

February 19, 2009

Dear Brethren,

The Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church submits this report to the DMC, with a view to its being forwarded to Synod 2009. This report is a summary of the work and events that have taken place on the mission field centered in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Rev. Bruinsma continues faithfully to carry out his labors as eastern home missionary. He preaches the word to the Pittsburgh Fellowship and gives instruction both in catechism classes and in Bible study meetings. In addition, he makes pastoral visits to those who belong to the Fellowship, giving them help, guidance, and comfort from the Scriptures. The saints there continue to grow spiritually, and, while numerical growth is slow, yet that is occurring also.

In addition to his work in the Fellowship, Rev. Bruinsma continues to preach once a month to a group in Franklin, Pennsylvania. During the course of the year, he also spends time making contacts with various individuals in and around Pittsburgh. Furthermore, he is involved in the activities of the Heidelberg Reformation Association. Through these various labors and activities, a witness to the gospel of Christ is being carried out in the greater Pittsburgh area.

Rev. Bruinsma is seeking to develop personally as a missionary and to increase his knowledge of mission work. This is indicated by his having taken two courses in missions during this past year at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological School in Pittsburgh. We appreciate these efforts on his part and have encouraged him to take additional courses in the future if possible.

During the course of this past year, the Lord sent physical trials into the lives of Rev. and Mrs. Bruinsma. Rev. Bruinsma had to undergo two surgeries, and his wife also had to undergo surgery. Her surgery was followed by a long recovery period. These stays in the hospital and the recuperation periods prevented Rev. Bruinsma from carrying out his work for a number of weeks. We are happy to report that in God's goodness to him he has recovered and is now able again fully to carry out his labors.

Two committees were formed in 2008 in the Pittsburgh Fellowship to facilitate the mission work there. One of these committees is the Neighborhood Outreach Committee and the other is the Media Committee. Besides facilitating the mission work in Pittsburgh, there are several additional benefits to having these committees. One is that, because all the adult and young people of the mission are involved in the work of these committees, the majority of those in the Fellowship are actively participating in one way

or another in carrying out the work there. Such active involvement in the work is a healthy thing for the Fellowship. It promotes the communion of saints and it gives a sense of belonging. It gives to the members of the group a greater appreciation for what is central to the purpose of their existence as a mission, namely, the work of outreach. And the energy and enthusiasm that they bring to this vital work of outreach is a great source of encouragement and support to the missionary.

The Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Pittsburgh makes considerable use of the means of radio to make its presence known in the Pittsburgh area. Advertisements of upcoming events and sermon topics have been aired over a local radio station. The continuation of such advertisements is planned for the coming year. Rev. Bruinsma himself has been on a radio talk program on various occasions, and the Reformed Witness Hour is broadcast weekly in the Pittsburgh area.

Each year the Southwest Protestant Reformed Church Council sends two delegations to visit the mission field in Pittsburgh. The first delegation went in February 2008, and the second went in November 2008. These visits are appreciated by Rev. Bruinsma and the other saints in Pittsburgh and are an encouragement to them. Such visits also provide an opportunity for fellowship between the saints there and visiting delegations.

There are disappointments in the work on the mission field. An example of this is that during the course of the year one family that had seemed very interested in joining the Fellowship decided instead to affiliate with a Presbyterian church in the area. Disappointment is also experienced when considerable work is done in promoting an event, and the response is very meager.

On the other hand, there are reasons to be encouraged. Such was the case when one of the individuals attending the Fellowship married during the course of the past summer, and he and his wife both joined the Fellowship. In addition, a marriage took place between two of the members of the Fellowship. Two confessions of faith took place in December, which also was a cause for rejoicing.

No doubt of very special encouragement was the celebration of the Lord's Supper for the first time in the Pittsburgh Mission. Rev. Bruinsma, some months ago, had advised us that, though the mission was not yet ready for organization, the membership as a whole had, in his opinion, come to the level of spiritual maturity and unity that would warrant a calling church's administration of the Lord's Supper in their midst. Our consistory agreed, and, accordingly, decided to grant the special membership of Church Order Article 39 to the mission group, with a view to administering the Lord's Supper to the eligible members. The Domestic Mission Committee gave its approval, and March 15, 2009 was set for the first administration. We

rejoice with the saints of the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Pittsburgh in this evidence of the blessing of God on our labors as calling church for the denomination's eastern home missionary.

In conclusion, though the work at times is difficult and the fruit slow in coming, we believe God is blessing the work of our eastern home missionary. Rev. Bruinsma remains committed to the work and maintains a good outlook toward it. The members of the Fellowship also manifest strong commitment to the Reformed faith. Both our missionary and the members put forth much effort in the labors being carried out in the Pittsburgh area. Their desire and their prayer is that, in God's own time, a Protestant Reformed church may be established there. Let us remember Rev. Bruinsma and the members of the Fellowship in our prayers. If it be God's will, may He cause an organized church to be formed there sometime in the future.

Attached is our proposed budget for 2010.

Roderick Kreuzer

on behalf of the Council of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church

Appendix 2
PROPOSED BUDGET FOR
EASTERN HOME MISSIONS

	2008 Actual Expenses	2009 Approved Budget	2010 Proposed Budget
Salary	35,925.00	38,700	39,400
Housing Allowance	5,000.00	5,000	5,000
Child Allowance	3,000.00	1,500	1,500
Medical Insurance	11,604.30	14,000	14,000
IRA	10,000.00	10,000	10,000
Property Insurance	895.00	1,300	900
Housing	4,285.07	5,600	5,600
Housing Maintenance	1,077.77	2,500	2,500
Parsonage Utilities	7,521.29	7,500	7,500
Travel	5,837.12	10,000	10,000
Advertising	15,533.73	18,000	18,000
Office Supplies and Equipment	2,302.59	2,000	2,000
Church Utilities and Taxes	9,451.63	10,000	10,000
Church Maintenance	7,920.68	5,000	5,000
Miscellaneous	1,445.69	2,000	2,000
Total	121,799.87	133,100	133,400
Less PRFP Pledge	16,000.00	20,000	24,000
Total to be paid by Synod	105,799.87	113,100	109,400

Appendix 3**Rev. Bruinsma's Report to Synod 2009**

January 28, 2009

Dear Brothers of Synod,

Greetings in the name of our exalted Lord, who through His church calls sinners to repentance and faith.

We have had a busy year in missions again despite some of the physical setbacks of your missionary. In February of this past year I needed back surgery, and in November I underwent total knee replacement. These surgeries kept me from the pulpit for about six weeks out of this year. Presently, I am doing well and am performing all my labors once again.

The Lord continues to give us much work to do in and around Pittsburgh. The labors in the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Pittsburgh continue as usual. I teach four catechism classes of children from first grade through high school. Our Young People's Society presently has nine members. I was also privileged to teach in this past year a pre-confession class to two of the young people of the church and give membership classes to a young couple who have now become a part of the Fellowship. Our Adult Bible Study meets every other Wednesday to study Reformed doctrine. On top of these routine labors there are also the labors of outreach, in which the saints in the mission here are intimately involved.

This past year we have been blessed with the baptism of an infant son of one of the members, two confessions of faith of young people, and two marriages of members within the Fellowship. We have one new family that has been in regular attendance for the greater part of this year and is asking about taking membership classes with me. There are also two other families in semi-regular attendance (once a Sunday), but who have not asked to join with us (yet). Southwest Church just recently has enrolled the eight families of our mission in a special membership in Southwest, a process approved by Synod 2005 (Art. 30, p. 32). In March 2009 seventeen members of our Fellowship will participate in the first administration of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in our midst. More and more we are beginning to see the communion of saints and congregational life emerge in the Fellowship, both of which, I believe, are necessary unto the establishment of an instituted church.

At the end of 2007 I appointed two committees that could take up work that I was unable to handle on my own. These committees involve all the young people and adult members of the mission. The first committee is the Neighborhood Outreach Committee (NOC). This committee is involved in the development of ways and means to spread the Word in the community in which we are located. The main task of this committee is to bring recommendations concerning lectures, seminars, and workshops.

Once one of these is approved by the Steering Committee and Southwest Church, the NOC is involved in the mechanics of advertising and all the little details that are necessary to assure that the meeting runs smoothly. This past year Rev. Kenneth Koole spoke for our eleventh annual Reformation Day lecture. There are other functions, of lesser importance, that this committee also handles, such as the making of schedules for greeters in church, preparation of pamphlets explaining our worship services, and the development of welcome packets for visitors. This committee has been busy in this past year.

The second committee, which likewise has been very busy, is the Media Committee. This committee is involved in the development of our web site, advertising and programming on radio, and the recording of CDs and DVDs for distribution. With the help of Ben Mahtani, our web site has improved a hundred percent! As far as radio is concerned, we continue to air the Reformed Witness Hour. I have also personally been interviewed numerous times on Bibleburgh, a Sunday-night talk-show. In 2009 we are going to begin advertising daily with one-minute ads that include a brief statement of faith. This committee is presently recording DVDs of the doctrinal studies used in our Adult Bible Study. We have filled a number of requests for these and intend to use them for distribution more generally.

Other labors outside of the mission fellowship continue as well. I have taken two missions courses at the Reformed Presbyterian Theological School. They have been profitable for me in gaining knowledge of missions in general and of my own mission work in particular. It is my hope to continue taking such courses in the future.

The Heidelberg Reformation Association continues to meet on a regular basis. If you recall, this association was organized over a year ago in order to promote the use of the Heidelberg Catechism in those churches that in their history had stopped using it. This past spring Prof. Ronald Cammenga spoke, for our first annual conference, on "Reformation Themes in the Heidelberg Catechism." The conference was a success. Of the men who attended, a number went home intending to propose adopting the Heidelberg Catechism again as the confession of their church. The association meets twice annually. The executive committee of the association meets in the fall of the year for business and to plan our spring conference. This year we had planned to have a conference with the theme of the teaching of the Heidelberg Catechism on the perseverance of the saints. But our intended speaker, Daniel Hyde, of Westminster West, had to back out at the last minute. At the writing of this report the committee is attempting to find someone else to take his place. At all of our meetings, I display a number of our books and commentaries on the confessions. These always attract interest.

I continue to preach one service a month for the saints in Franklin, PA as well. There are four months out of the year that have five Sundays. During these months a member of the DMC fills the pulpit in Franklin. Our contact and influence among these saints grows. When we are not present in Franklin, DVDs obtained from several of our PR congregations are used during the evening worship service. We are grateful that we can be of assistance.

There always seem to be contacts in and around Pittsburgh that keep me busy. For example, I have contacts in Geneva College in Beaver Falls, PA; in Zelienople, PA, a suburb north of Pittsburgh; and in Steubenville, OH, west of Pittsburgh who have expressed an interest in our work.

My evaluation of the work in Pittsburgh remains positive. The Fellowship itself is growing spiritually as well as numerically. The growth is slow, but that is good. Time is needed to instruct new members carefully in order that they might fully understand the doctrines of our churches. We also see growth in the members who have been a part of the Fellowship for years. The members are functioning together more and more as a whole. A congregational life is emerging that is wonderful to see. This is an indication to me that with time we will have a group of believers who will be able not only to function effectively in an instituted church but also to interact well with each other in the organic life of the church. Certainly, this is what we seek in our mission work.

Consider the evidences of God's blessing on our mission work here. The baptism of an infant child, the confessions of faith of two young people of the families here, marriages in the Lord—all are evidence that God is gathering His children in the line of the generations of the saints here. In other words, God is establishing His covenant with His saints in our Fellowship. And this, in turn, means that God is gathering His church among us. This does not mean that organization is imminent. We are yet in a developmental stage. The spiritual life that is emerging needs still to be nurtured. To organize now would be similar to allowing an adolescent to strike out on his own.

Besides the development we see in our own Fellowship, the Lord continues to provide open doors to preach the Word to others in the area. This too is evidence that our work in and around Pittsburgh is being blessed by God.

We have every indication, therefore, that the Lord is giving us a work to do here. There are disappointments in our work, just as there are in every congregation. Not everyone grasps the truth and runs with it in his life. In certain saints there are still weaknesses that need to be dealt with. But there are also many reasons to rejoice. The saints here are fully committed to the organization of a church. They work hard toward that end.

We ask for the continued prayers and financial support of our churches for the new year of labor that lies ahead.

In Christ's service,
Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

Appendix 4
Loveland PRC Report to Synod

March 11, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches 2009

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The following is the annual report regarding our oversight of the Western Home Missionary. We have also received the annual report from Rev. T. Miersma regarding his labors as Western Home Missionary, and we forward that report to you.

We have visited the mission three times during the past year. Family visitation was conducted during a visit in August. The consistory also met with a visiting delegation from the DMC, during which a very beneficial discussion was conducted regarding the field in Spokane. Rev. Miersma regularly sends us bimonthly reports of the status of the mission field. We have also been receiving reports that detail his activity regarding contacts that are made on the mission field.

As the year progressed, our general assessment of the field was that there was continuing spiritual growth and growth in the number of visitors. Because of letters and reports from our missionary, as well as reports from visits to the field by other ministers, the consistory explored the idea of organizing the field into an instituted church. As a result, in January 2009 the core group sent the consistory a letter requesting organization. With the concurrence of the Domestic Mission Committee, the Loveland consistory sent a letter to Classis West requesting organization. At the March 2009 meeting, Classis West approved organization. The Loveland Consistory rejoices in what God has accomplished in Spokane. We are also thankful for the diligent labors by our missionary, Rev. T. Miersma, the labors of the Domestic Mission Committee, and the labors of the various visitors to the field.

At the time of the writing of this letter, the consistory is still considering future plans for the Western Home Missionary. We will be discussing this with the Domestic Mission Committee and Rev. T. Miersma. The consistory will also be assisting the group in Spokane as they organize. Because we are not yet certain regarding the future, two budgets for 2010 are presented for consideration. One is for having the missionary labor in an unspecified field, and the second is for finishing the labors of the

Western Home Missionary and releasing the Rev. T. Miersma for a call.

We are thankful for the labors of synod and we pray for the Lord's blessing upon your decisions. May the decisions be to the glory of His name and for the spiritual welfare of our churches.

Proposed Budget for Western Home Missions 2010

		Budget if Missionary is relocated to another field	Budget if Western Home Missionary is released for a call
	2009	2010	2010
Salary and child allowance	\$43,500	\$44,500	\$44,500
Housing allowance, Housing rent.....	6,000	18,000	18,000
Housing (insurance, filing fees, maintenance) .	4,000	4,000	4,000
Parsonage utilities	6,500	6,500	6,500
Medical insurance	18,000	18,000	18,000
Travel—missionary, calling church, DMC, pulpit supply	8,000	8,000	0
Advertising.....	7,000	7,000	0
Church rent and utilities.....	34,000	12,000	0
Miscellaneous	2,000	2,000	0
IRA	10,000	10,000	10,000
Total	\$139,000	\$130,000	\$101,000
Contribution from Spokane.....	17,000	0	0
 TOTAL to be paid by synod	 \$122,000	 \$130,000	 \$101,000

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church Consistory
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

Appendix 5
Report of Rev. Thomas Miersma

March 13, 2009

To the Loveland Consistory and the Mission Committee

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the Lord who gathers and builds His church. The following is my annual report for the work in Spokane to be forwarded to synod.

Steady growth

This past year has been one of solid development in the work in Spokane, which has taken the form of a steady maturing of the Fellowship into a congregation. While events and activities are easier to report, they are not always the most significant element of the mission work we do. Those who come to the Fellowship must be founded in the Reformed faith and instructed. Without this, no church is built.

I regularly lead the normal catechism classes found in a congregation. I also lead special classes of various kinds required by the nature of mission work. While such classes usually last a couple of hours formally, they often run longer, as more pastoral types of questions are addressed. At the end of the last year (2007) three individuals began to attend the Fellowship. With an interruption over the summer they have continued. The result has been a special class last spring including them and some who are already members, who are working through the material a second time. Two of these individuals are now engaged to be married in April of this year, and I am working with them both with a view to adult baptism and marriage in what is now a separate class. This will add another young married couple to the Fellowship.

More recently (January) the Lord has brought into the Fellowship two more couples, one with seven children, and an individual. These live in Idaho, and I am now teaching an additional set of catechism classes for the children and an adult class in Hayden, Idaho. There are other contacts in this area as well. Both the Spokane and Hayden classes also serve as a place to bring visitors. Another couple has also begun attending late February so that the work continues to prosper.

The Lord has blessed the Fellowship with the birth of two children over the course of the summer, in July and September. Both children were baptized in the course of the year. Another child was born in February of this year, 2009. The Lord continues therefore to give us internal growth in the generations.

We currently have 41 in attendance, with the added child, and 17 children. With the missionary's family included, it is 46. This is a significant jump in attendance. At the same time, membership, whether by adult baptism, confession of faith, or transfer, is not a process that we are to unduly hasten. The Lord willing, we will see the addition of these families also to the Fellowship over the course of 2009. The official confessing membership list still stands at five and a third families, using the figure that synod uses, and ten baptized children, with one to be added in a few weeks. The present growth in attendance underscores the need in our mission work to wait upon the Lord in the work of gathering His church.

It is not by the power of man but by grace that God in Christ gathers and builds His church in His wisdom.

Request for organization

With the maturing of the Fellowship, I recommended to the Loveland consistory and the Mission Committee that we consider the organization and institution of a church here in Spokane. I made this recommendation in May. Over the course of the summer and fall this was reviewed and discussed. The core group in December requested such organization. In January both Loveland and the Mission Committee agreed, and this request was forwarded to Classis West for their approval. Spokane has sufficient men to form a consistory, with some room for rotation, and the men are well qualified to serve in the offices and sit at our ecclesiastical assemblies.

We have precedents for organizing a congregation of this size. The continued growth of the field commends it as well. The need of the Fellowship at this point is for their own local officebearers and their own supervision. That we are at this point in the labor here is a rich blessing of God's grace.

At the March meeting of Classis West this request was approved, with the concurrence of the representatives of synod from the east. This is a matter of great joy. By the time synod meets, a new congregation will have been formed in Spokane.

Activities and conferences

2008 has also been a rather busy one from the standpoint of visits and conferences. As missionary I was at a missions conference in California in January, the AIM conference in June, together with synod, and the September missions conference. The Mission Committee visited the field, and the elders from Loveland on three occasions. Add in vacation time, and this is a lot of coming and going. The result is that I attended more conferences than we were able to sponsor in Spokane. Much of this was connected with the request for organization, as meetings were also held in conjunction with these absences and conferences. I was thankful for the opportunity to make a presentation to the synod as well about the work here.

In early October Spokane also held a seminar on the doctrine of the covenant. Professor Herman Hanko gave four sermons over two weekends, on Friday and Sunday. This was promoted in various radio ads and direct mailings. This was a rich blessing for the Fellowship. One church group came to the conference. Some of those who attended have been at some of our lectures before. Both direct mail and radio elicited calls and requests for tapes and CDs of the conference. It has been used as

the means to initiate contact with some of those who have now begun to attend in January.

We continue to derive contacts from the web site that I maintain. The contacts that are currently being developed in Tucson were initiated, in part, through the Spokane web site. Another contact is a family moving to the nearby air base, which has indicated they will be coming sometime in March. They come from the PCA.

We are now also on Sermon Audio. We also mail tapes and CDs to a number of individuals or families in other parts of Washington. With the move to online access to sermons, the number of hard copies, tapes, and CDs has been reduced somewhat. We have individuals who send contributions to the work, not only from Washington, but also one in Nevada.

We receive calls also through our radio advertising. This advertising is connected with the Reformed Witness Hour we broadcast. The station change in 2008 has proved to be a good move. The program is now at 9:00 A.M., a better time than our prior evening slot. I have received a number of calls through the radio ads connected with it, and we are reaching a larger audience by the change. Our radio ads all point people not only to the church but to the web site.

I have also a number of individuals or families that I work with through the limited means of phone contact. This includes a family now living outside of Seattle and another in Springfield, Missouri. In some cases, like the one in Nevada, there is a long-term intention to move to the Fellowship or one of our churches, when circumstances permit them to do so.

We also see a diverse group of visitors to the services. Some come out of curiosity. Some of them come simply to find out what the Reformed faith is. We have a variety of visitors from the nearby Roman Catholic university, Gonzaga, who come more out of historical curiosity. The signage on the building has also elicited visits and calls over the past year.

In all, the Lord continues to bless the work, that it should bear fruit in His season unto the gathering of His church.

In Christ's service,
Rev. Thomas Miersma
Home Missionary based in Spokane

Appendix 6
Annual Report of First Protestant Reformed Church,
Edgerton, MN

March 5, 2009

Dear Brethren,

The council of First Protestant Reformed Church, Edgerton, MN forwards

its report, summarizing the work that has taken place in the Domestic Mission Field in Sioux Falls, SD, the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship (HPRF) to Synod 2009. This report is a summary of the work and activities that have taken place since Synod 2008 with HPRF and Rev. Allen Brummel.

Rev. Brummel continues faithfully to preach the Word of God to the members of the Fellowship as well as visitors, including, notably, non-Protestant Reformed people who come almost every Sunday. He provides spiritual leadership to the group by leading its monthly Steering Committee (SC) meetings. He leads the HPRF's Bible Study that meets every other Monday. He has also been faithfully following up on visitors who come to the worship services of the HPRF—by way of visits, letters, and phone calls. The HPRF continues steadily to receive visitors from within and also from without our denomination. Letters have been mailed out to people who have moved recently to Sioux Falls, and Rev. Brummel has recorded several messages for TV advertising of the HPRF in the Sioux Falls area. In addition, as a result of interest in the distinctive Reformed faith of our churches from saints in Tucson, AZ, Rev. Brummel has since made two trips there to investigate the field, and then also to provide pulpit supply there. He has also visited the Berean Protestant Reformed Church in the Philippines, from November 6-17, 2008, together with an FMC member, Ike Uittenbogaard, and supplied the pulpit there. Finally, in terms of training and development as a missionary, Rev. Brummel has attended a missions class at a local Seminary in Sioux Falls; attended our denomination's Missions Conference in September 2008; and continues to subscribe to and read a number of mission periodicals.

In summary, Rev. Brummel has labored energetically and diligently as missionary. And the Lord has been blessing those labors at HPRF.

If two words were to be chosen to sum up the year that the HPRF has had from God through the leadership and labors of Rev. Brummel, we believe that they would be "*growth*" and "*stability*."

One, there has been *substantial numerical growth*, and there is very good potential for more numerical growth in the near future. In March 2008, we reported that HPRF's membership stood at 5 families and 7 individuals (18 confessing members and 6 baptized children). A year later, today, HPRF's membership has more than doubled—to 11 families and 4 individuals (27 confessing members and 6 baptized members). This growth has come from good young men and women from our neighboring sister-congregations marrying spouses who have been led and instructed capably by Rev. Brummel to embrace the distinctive Reformed faith of our denomination. Therefore, there is great potential for internal growth. And there is potential for external growth. There continues to be interest in the HPRF from people who live in Sioux Falls and also outside of Sioux Falls.

And two, along with substantial numerical growth, there has been good *spiritual growth and stability* in the HPRF. Significantly, and first, in the judgment of the Edgerton Council and with concurrence of the DMC, HPRF has matured to the point where she was ready to have Baptism/Confession of Faith at its worship services. This, we believe, is in keeping with decisions of past synods. First, Synod 1981, Article 30, the decision regarding baptism on the mission field. Second, Synod 2000, Article 39, and Synod 2002, Article 38, the decisions regarding confession of faith on the mission field. One of HPRF's young adults has made confession of faith in September 2008, and infant baptism has been administered in March 2009. Then second, there is also the good work of the SC. The SC, comprising four men, has done its work well throughout the year, demonstrating good judgment with the handling of funds it had for TV advertising and, more recently, in continuing its mission-minded focus for HPRF by choosing, with the approval of Edgerton Consistory, "Letting Our Light Shine in a Dark World" (Matt. 5:14-16) to be the theme of its Family Visits conducted very recently in January and February 2009. The SC also decided, with Edgerton Council's approval, to rotate the men on the SC, at its late September 2008 meeting, and has, since January 2009, welcomed a new member into its midst. This, we believe, not only allows other men to serve on the SC, but also, in this way, helps to solidify in the mind of the Edgerton Council the spiritual maturity of all the men who serve in the SC and who do such a good job at it. Third and finally, with all the new marriages and members in the group, there is and continues to be not only stability with the group, but also a thriving spirit of peace, union, and communion among the saints there—evident by the Bible Study attendance, the group outings, and by gestures of love shown to one another.

We give praise to our heavenly Father for the great blessings He has given to Rev. Brummel and the HPRF. With such good numerical and spiritual growth with the HPRF, we as calling church deem that there is a real possibility that the field could be organized into an established congregation in the very near future, possibly even before 2009 is concluded, the Lord willing.

Council of First Protestant Reformed Church, Edgerton, MN
James Ver Hey, Clerk.

Appendix 7
Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship
Proposed Budget

	2009	2010
	Approved Budget	Proposed Budget
Salary	\$35,500	\$36,500
Child Allowance	13,500	13,500
Housing Allowance.....	<u>5,000</u>	<u>5,000</u>
Total Salary	54,000	55,000
 Housing Maintenance	3,000	3,000
Parsonage Insurance.....	1,500	930
Parsonage Utilities	6,200	5,000
Medical Insurance.....	15,000	15,000
Travel	6,000	4,000
Advertising.....	10,000	18,000
Social Security	10,000	9,000
Miscellaneous	2,000	2,400
Office Supplies and		
Equipment.....	1,500	1,200
Worship Center Rent.....	8,700	9,480
Special events.....	4,000	2,000
Total expenses.....	\$121,900	\$125,010
 * Heritage PR Fellowship Pledge	24,000	27,000
Total to be provided by synod.....	\$97,900	\$98,000

*The amount of the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship pledge for 2009 was increased from \$18,000 to \$24,000.

Appendix 8
Rev. Brummel's Report to Synod

March 2, 2009

Dear Brethren,

With thanksgiving to God I present my annual report to synod. The past year has seen steady growth in the membership of the Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Sioux Falls, SD. Most of that growth came through courtship and weddings. We celebrated four weddings in the past year and a half, and we look forward to two more weddings in the coming months. Without the missionary family, our membership is now 11 families and 4 individuals, for a total of 27 confessing members and 6 baptized children.

As we labor toward the goal of organization, we recognize the need

to be a congregation of Jesus Christ that will be self-governing, self-propagating, and self-supporting. Good progress is being made in each of these areas. The Fellowship was thrilled to have the Edgerton consistory meet with them in February to initiate consideration of organization in the near future. While enthusiastic about the prospect of proposing a request for organization to Classis West in September of 2009, the Fellowship is cautious about proceeding to organization so quickly and will be giving careful consideration to the subject over the next months.

Toward the view of being self-governing, we are making efforts to include some of the younger men in the Steering Committee. There is, among the men in general, evidence of good spiritual maturity and leadership. Kevin Westra took the place of Ron Streyle on the committee as of the beginning of January. We are thankful for the leadership that Ron demonstrated on the committee from the beginning. We will retire another man in July and will replace him with another of the younger men. In this way we can give some of the younger men an opportunity to be involved in the work.

Edgerton Consistory desired that there be a way in which the men of the Fellowship could be trained and prepared for office. Rather than take up that training in the Steering Committee, where two of the men had already served as elders in our churches, we decided to study the Church Order after our Bible studies. The instruction and discussion has been profitable as we grow together in our knowledge of good church polity.

The Fellowship continues to be reminded of the need for zeal in being self-propagating. I enrolled in and attended a class last June at Sioux Falls Seminary on the subject of missions. While the subject matter of the class required much discretion, I learned valuable information about missions in general, as well as Sioux Falls in particular. One emphasis of the professor was on the effectiveness of personal witnessing. It was pointed out that over 80% of church growth will come from personal contacts and invitations from the members. Only about 1% of growth comes through the influence of a minister or missionary, and less than 1% through advertising or special evangelistic efforts. We have witnessed these statistics ourselves, as the majority of our growth has been through young men or women inviting their friends, setting up meetings with me, and then joining the Fellowship and being united in marriage. I preached a number of sermons on the importance of this personal witness that were well received. The Steering Committee, in connection with the Edgerton Consistory, chose the subject of "Shining as Lights in a Dark World," based on Matthew 5:14-16, for our family visitation subject this winter. Thirteen family visits were made over the course of four evenings, with me leading the visits, accompanied by one of the three elders from Edg-

erton and Rev. Lee. All the visits went well, giving evidence of maturity and growth in the faith, an appreciation for the work of Edgerton and the missionary in Sioux Falls, as well as a desire to be shining lights here in Sioux Falls.

We continue to make our presence known in Sioux Falls through various mediums, including our redesigned web site—www.reformed-siouxfalls.org, two yellow-page ads, the Argus Leader newspaper, the RWH local radio broadcast, and television ads. I attended a seminar on advertising with a member of the Steering Committee, and we were given a lot of good ideas as to how to get our presence established in Sioux Falls. In July we entered into a one-year-contract with KSFY(abc) TV to air forty-two 30-second commercials each month at a cost of \$1,320 per month. The creative design team met with us to discuss our mission work, the message we wanted to send, and the people that we were seeking to target. After analyzing our situation, the KSFY team proposed that I be aired in the spots with a brief biblical message, believing that what made our mission stand apart in Sioux Falls was our expository preaching. Thirty seconds goes fast! With the help of the KSFY production team, we made two advertisements, each containing a brief biblical message and promoting our Fellowship. While we have not seen responses from these ads in the way of people attending our worship services, we have received numerous comments concerning them. People are seeing them, and people in the community are beginning to recognize me and identify me with Heritage Protestant Reformed Fellowship.

While we would desire more local visitors, we are much encouraged by the prospects for growth going forward. Last year I reported that a couple of families were working toward relocating to Sioux Falls. Neither of the families was able to make the move last year. One of the families, from Minneapolis, MN, continues prayerfully to look for employment in Sioux Falls and to work toward that goal. The interest from individuals from our sister congregations who currently work in Sioux Falls or are looking for work in Sioux Falls but live in and commute from Northwest Iowa has been encouraging.

In September we moved to a larger room in the Holiday Inn, which is serving us very well. Attendance at our worship services has been between 35 and 55 people. We are now able to leave all our Psalters/Bibles and other literature during the week in a storage room off the meeting room. The Steering Committee has started looking at pieces of property and existing buildings for a future place of worship, but for now the cost has been prohibitive. I am much encouraged by the desire of the men of the Fellowship to find a building that could also be used as a Christian school at such a time as we would be able to start our own school in Sioux Falls.

With the generous assistance of AIM, we have begun producing DVDs of our worship services. Our goal is to use these DVDs for local outreach as well as for those among us who are not able to attend the worship services. The DMC also desires to make use of the DVDs in the work in Tucson, Lord willing.

The Edgerton Consistory, along with the DMC, gave approval to proceed with confession of faith and baptism on the mission field. We celebrated our first confession of faith on September 7, 2008 and our first baptism on March 1, 2009. With thanksgiving to God we anticipate more baptisms in the coming months, as our young families are taking seriously the calling to bring forth covenant seed.

The Fellowship continues to work as diligently as possible toward the goal of being self-supporting. The giving over the course of the past year was very generous, resulting in 2008 year-end fund balances as follows: General: \$20,841.05; Benevolence: \$6,349.25; Building: \$23,199.01. There has been no activity out of the Benevolence Fund. We raised the amount that the Fellowship expects to contribute for 2009 from \$18,000 to \$24,000 in order to reflect this generous giving.

Adding to my labors is the fact that the DMC has also involved me in the work in Tucson, AZ. I made a trip with Rev. Van Overloop and Dave Rau in September and another trip on my own in February, when I preached for two Sundays and stayed one week. Four families came into contact with our churches and requested a missionary to work with them around July of 2008. Rev. Rodney Kleyn provided the group with DVDs until September of 2008, when the DMC was able to send a delegation to evaluate the situation. As of my latest visit, a couple more families have expressed interest in a solid, Reformed work in Tucson. I, along with the other men who have visited Tucson, have been encouraged by the visits and contact with the families. In accordance with the will of the DMC, I have worked with the men in Tucson to establish a steering committee in order to provide more organization to the group. While they desire a missionary to labor in Tucson, for the present we are working toward the goal of making use of the DVDs from Sioux Falls in Tucson. And I have sent them DVDs of doctrine classes produced by Rev. Bruinsma that they are making use of for their midweek meeting. Pulpit supply has been set up for the next five months for approximately two Sundays per month, making use primarily of ministers from the DMC. We are thankful to God for this opportunity to bring His Word to this area of the country, where we presently have no congregations.

Although I feel unqualified and ill equipped for the work, I am confident that He who has called me will also continue to equip me unto the work. I am thankful to God for the place that He has given me and my

family here in Sioux Falls laboring on behalf of Christ and His church. I take this opportunity also on behalf of my wife and family to thank the churches for your generous provision for our physical needs. “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” Philippians 4:23

God’s richest blessings,
w.s. Rev. Allen Brummel

Appendix 9
Council of First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI
Reformed Witness Hour Committee

March 10, 2009

Report to the Domestic Mission Committee
PRC Synod of 2009

Dear Brethren,

The Reformed Witness Hour Committee (RWH) is thankful to our heavenly Father for being used by Him this past year in broadcasting our distinctively Reformed truths through the radio, Internet, audio requests, and booklet distribution. The RWH would also like to thank the council and congregation of Georgetown PRC for giving Rev. Haak the time to continue his labors on behalf of the RWH. We are very aware of Rev. Haak’s busy schedule and have re-broadcasted past messages as needed. Rev. Bruinsma was able to prepare twelve messages last summer, and Rev. R. Kleyn also helped by preparing messages for the first part of this year. The RWH prays that God will continue to give Rev. Haak the strength needed as pastor of a large congregation and as our radio pastor.

Three of the stations sponsored by the DMC—WORD in Pittsburgh, PA; KWSN in Sioux Falls, SD; and KGA in Spokane, WA—continue to generate response. KQTH in Tucson, AZ has been broadcasting for too short of a time to generate much response. This particular station was chosen after conferring with members of the Tucson group and assessing the station’s format and broadcast coverage. We currently have a 7:00 A.M. program time on KQTH, but we are first in line for the 8:00 A.M. slot when it becomes available. The RWH holds the contract for three of these stations, while the contract for KWSN in Sioux Falls is held by the local group. They pay the station directly and bill the RWH, which in turn submits the expense to the DMC for reimbursement. While somewhat cumbersome, this has been workable to date. Regrettably, a lack of available funds has not allowed the RWH to meet the request the DMC made to continue the broadcast on WFNC in Fayetteville, NC for 2009.

The RWH would like to encourage local groups and missionaries to make full use of broadcasts by keeping local announcements cur-

rent, getting to know station managers, asking for program advertising, and informing stations that our missionaries are available for interview programs. Communicating the availability of missionaries is important, since many stations need to show how much local programming they run when reapplying to the FCC for their licenses. While the RWH is able to produce and distribute the weekly program, it is up to local groups to promote and use the RWH as an evangelism tool.

Last June, the RWH was asked to present a sectional at the Mission Awareness Day held at Georgetown PRC. This gave us the opportunity to prepare a presentation about our history, our program production method, and, most importantly, the intended audience for our weekly program. In January 2009, the RWH was able to give this same presentation in First PRC of Grand Rapids after a special evening worship service led by Rev. Haak. We are making this presentation available to all of our churches and mission areas to promote the RWH as a local evangelism tool.

The correspondence that we receive continues to be very encouraging. The RWH sends some of the notes we receive along with the cited program topics to the geographically closest church or mission station based on the author's location. The RWH has received about the same number of requests for copies of the program throughout this past year as it received the previous year. However, the use of our Internet site by listeners has continued to increase. The RWH has its own web page (www.reformedwitnesshour.org), which is active even while still under construction. Having our own web page allows the RWH to monitor the Internet traffic to our site, which shows a weekly trend of increased traffic for each week's message. The RWH continues to make our programs available on the Internet to the Philippines on the behalf of the FMC. Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore has created a very nice web site for the programs that not only explains each program, but makes them available for downloading. We are also broadcasting in Northern Ireland, which is paid for by the Covenant PRC of Ballymena.

In closing, we would like to thank the council of First PRC of Grand Rapids for their oversight and guidance of the RWH. We especially thank God for the continued opportunity to produce and distribute the RWH program and covet your continued prayers for this endeavor.

In Christ,
Bruce J. Klamer, Chairman

SUPPLEMENT 15
Domestic Mission Committee
Supplemental Report (1)

June 3, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

The DMC presents the following advice relative to Western Home Missions:

A. Information

1. In light of the fact that the mission labors in Spokane have come to a conclusion, Loveland is requesting that they be replaced as calling church for Western Home Missions (Supplement 14, p. 142).
2. Loveland PRC presented in the Agenda a proposed budget for Western Home Missions for 2010 (Supplement 14, p. 157), and the DMC recommended in the Agenda the approval of this budget (Supplement 14, p. 142). In light of Loveland's request to be replaced as calling church, the DMC is withdrawing this recommended budget.
3. Loveland PRC is presenting a letter to synod requesting that Rev. T. Miersma be declared temporarily emeritus until he receives a call from one of our churches (cf. Appendix 2, p. 171). Included in this letter is a proposed budget for the support of Rev. Miersma from the Emeritus Fund. The DMC has concurred with this request.
4. Since Loveland is requesting to be replaced as calling church, the DMC has made work of finding a suitable PRC congregation to take over this work. After some discussion and a meeting with representatives of the DMC, the council of Hope PRC of Redlands has agreed to serve the churches in this capacity (Appendix 1, p. 171).
5. Rev. R. Kleyn has accepted the call to the Covenant of Grace PRC in Spokane, WA, and so his name should be removed from the nominations for DMC members.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod honor Loveland's request that they be replaced as the calling church for Western Home Missions of our denomination, and that they be thanked for serving our denomination's mission work in this capacity since 1994.

2. That synod concur with Loveland's request that Rev. T. Miersma be declared temporarily emeritus until he receives a call from one of our churches.
3. That synod approve the following budget for Rev. T. Miersma's support from the Emeritus Fund for 2009 and 2010.

	Jul - Dec 2009	2010
Salary and Child Allowance	21,750	44,500
Housing Allowance/Rent	9,000	18,000
Housing Expenses (insurance, maintenance, filing fees, etc.)	2,000	4,000
Parsonage Utilities	3,250	6,500
Medical Insurance	9,000	18,000
IRA	<u>5,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
Total	50,000	101,000

4. That synod designate Hope PRC (Redlands) to replace Loveland PRC as the calling church for Western Home Missions, with the missionary working initially in Tucson, AZ.

Grounds

- a. This is in keeping with previous decisions of synod (Acts 1994, Art. 15; Acts 1998, Art. 22).
- b. With the decision of Loveland asking synod to replace them, we no longer have a calling church for Western Home Missions.
- c. Redlands has agreed to serve our denomination in this capacity.
- d. The best base for initial labor in the western USA at this time is the four-family group in Tucson, AZ. They have heard the PRCA preaching for more than a year, are earnestly desirous to see a PRCA congregation established in Tucson, and have given evidence of being active in witnessing to others.
5. That synod approve the following budget for Western Home Missions for 2010

1. Base salary	40,000
(+1,500/child)	
2. Housing	18,000
3. Housing Insurance	1,000
4. Parsonage Utilities	6,500
5. Medical Insurance	15,000
6. Travel	8,000
7. Advertising	15,000

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8. Worship Facility		12,000
9. Office Supplies/Equipment		2,500
10. Miscellaneous		2,000
11. IRA		10,000
Total.....		130,000

6. That synod give permission to the DMC and the Board of Trustees to purchase a home for the missionary in Tucson should the DMC and calling church judge this necessary and fiscally responsible for our denomination (plans are initially to lease a property).

In Christ's service,
w.s. Rev. Rodney Kleyn, Secretary

Appendix 1
Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands

May 28, 2009

Domestic Mission Committee of the PRC in America
c/o Rev. Rodney Kleyn
3409 VanBuren St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426

Dear DMC,

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord. At our special council meeting last night, the Redlands council made the following decision:

Article 4: A motion is made and supported to agree to be calling church for western home missions, upon approval of synod.

Article 6: The motion of Article 4 is voted on. Motion carries.

We look forward to hearing from you following the meeting of synod in June.

We pray for God's blessing upon the members of the work of the Domestic Mission Committee and the upcoming meeting of synod.

In His service,
w.s. Glenn Feenstra, Clerk

Appendix 2
Loveland Protestant Reformed Church

May 21, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches 2009

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

As a result of the organization of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, WA, and because Loveland will be replaced as calling church of the Western Home Missionary, and due to the fact

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that this will end Rev. T. Miersma's status as Western Home Missionary, we ask that synod declare Rev. T. Miersma temporary emeritus.

We understand this was also done with Rev. Mahtani when the Houston church was closed. We propose the following budget:

Proposed 2009 and 2010 Emeritus Budget for Rev. T. Miersma

	Jul-Dec	
	2009	2010
Salary and child allowance	\$21,750	\$44,500
Housing allowance, housing rent.....	9,000	18,000
Housing (insurance, filing fees, Maintenance)	2,000	4,000
Parsonage utilities	3,250	6,500
Medical insurance	9,000	18,000
IRA	<u>5,000</u>	<u>10,000</u>
Total	50,000	101,000

May the Lord guide you as you consider this request.

Loveland PRC Consistory
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

SUPPLEMENT 16
Domestic Mission Committee
Supplemental Report (2)

August 12, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to reconvene August 25, 2009
at the Georgetown PRC

Brothers in the Lord,

The DMC herewith presents its report on the material that was recommended to us for further consideration.

I. Information

A. The DMC with Loveland PRC came to Synod 2009 with recommendations re the calling church and the status of the Western Home Missionary, Rev. Tom Miersma.

1. That synod honor Loveland's request that they be replaced as the calling church for Western Home Missions for our denomination, and that they be thanked for serving our denomination's mission work in this capacity since 1994.
2. That synod declare Rev. T. Miersma temporarily emeritus.

3. That synod designate Hope PRC (Redlands) to replace Loveland PRC as the calling church for Western Home Missions.
 4. That synod approve Hope PRC (Redlands) calling a missionary for Western Home Missions, initially focusing his labors in Tucson, AZ.
- B. In response, Synod 2009 took the following decisions:
1. Synod referred back to the DMC the matter of Loveland's request to be relieved as a calling church for Western Home Missions, and the matter of Rev. T. Miersma's status (Acts 2009, Article 72, B, 1, p. 56).
Grounds:
 - a. Loveland's reason for its request is not sufficient. Loveland's reason for being relieved of its responsibility is that the work in Spokane has come to a conclusion. This reason does not reckon with the fact that Loveland was appointed as the calling church because "Loveland is centrally located and, with modern communication and travel, is a convenient location for the calling church" and with the fact that our western home missionary was called with the understanding that "he shall be used also to labor in other areas" (Acts 1994, Article 15).
 - b. Loveland, in consultation with the DMC, must face the question of what implications Loveland's being relieved as a calling church has for the missionary whom it called on behalf of the churches.
 - c. Loveland's request for temporary emeritation in accordance with Article 13 of the Church Order does not satisfy the requirement of Decision A pertaining to Article 13.
 - 1) Loveland initiated the request for temporary emeritation, rather than Rev. Miersma himself initiating it. The decision says: "the minister...may apply..."
 - 2) Loveland brings the request directly to synod. The decision pertaining to Article 13 says: "This shall not be done, however, without the approbation of the classis and the deputies of synod."
 2. Synod also postponed action on calling a Western Home Missionary for Tucson, and designating Hope Redlands as the calling church, until the DMC reports back regarding Loveland's request.

Ground: The original motion speaks of Hope Redlands replacing Loveland as the calling church. Until Loveland is relieved of its status as calling church for Western Home Missions,

it cannot be replaced (Acts 2009, Article 72, B, 2, p. 57).

3. Synod instructed the DMC that if the DMC wishes the continuing session of Synod 2009 to finish treating this matter, the DMC should distribute its recommendations to the delegates by the week prior to synod reconvening (Acts 2009, Article 72, B, 3, p. 57).

C. The DMC has through its sub-committee discussed these matters at length with Rev. T. Miersma and with members of the consistory of Loveland PRC.

1. Concerning Loveland's request to be relieved of the duty and responsibilities of being the calling church for Western Home Missions.

a. First, Loveland has served well in this capacity for the past fifteen years—since Synod 1994. Loveland has taken on the demands of being a calling church as a consistory and congregation for all these years and has served well, with the necessary enthusiasm and with wisdom. During this time they have had three different pastors assisting them in this calling, along with several different elders. They have guided the work of the missionary in many different parts of the country, but have concentrated their attention first in the San Luis Valley in southern Colorado and then in Spokane, Washington. They oversaw the work in southern Colorado until they believed that the missionary had to be moved and the worship services there cease. They also oversaw the labors in Spokane during a most difficult time and during times in which the work reached the fruition of an instituted congregation. And in all these years, they labored most cooperatively with the Domestic Mission Committee.

b. Synod 1994 was correct to note that "Loveland is centrally located and...is a convenient location for the calling church." However, with modern methods making communication increasingly quick and easy, obstacles created by distance are not as great as what they were.

c. Whereas it is not to be desired that a calling church cease serving our denomination in this capacity, on the other hand it is not to be expected that a local church and its consistory would do this "forever."

1) They should be allowed an "out." Additionally, why would synod "force" a congregation to continue to do this work (a work that requires enthusiasm) when it desires to cease?

- 2) And why would synod ask another congregation to serve in this capacity when there is no “exit”? From a practical perspective, a church might be hesitant to be considered as a calling church if they thought this assignment was permanent.
 - 3) In addition, an autonomous congregation has the right to end its service as calling church (and synod does not have the authority to make her continue as calling church).
 - d. It should be recognized that Loveland is asking to be replaced as calling church for Western Home Missions at a time of transition. They did not make this request while labors were continuing in Spokane, but when the work was brought to a happy end.
 - e. Loveland’s consistory recognizes their calling to continue to hold the ministerial credentials and to oversee the work of Rev. Tom Miersma. This they do, not reluctantly, but willingly, and with the same commitment to his care that has characterized all their oversight for fifteen years. This they will do until the Lord calls him to serve elsewhere—either by another calling church for home missions or by a congregation to serve as their pastor.
2. Concerning the status of Western Home Missionary, Rev. Tom Miersma.
- a. It could be said that in making its two decisions to ask of Synod 2009 that they cease serving as calling church for our denomination’s western home mission work and to recommend Rev. Tom Miersma to the churches for a call to serve elsewhere, Loveland PRC acted a bit hastily. These decisions were taken the evening prior to their delegation flying to Spokane for the organization of the mission group into a congregation. They had had some contact with the DMC and with the missionary, but not as much as such major decisions should require.
 - b. Much discussion with the missionary indicates a most cooperative spirit—a repeatedly expressed desire to serve Jesus Christ and His church wherever He wills.
 - 1) He has expressed a desire to get a call to labor as a pastor of a small congregation, but also is willing to continue to serve the churches as home missionary, if that be the Lord’s will, which would be expressed through a call from another calling church.

- 2) He has stated that he is not opposed to Loveland's decision to cease its work as the calling church for Western Home Missions, and thus understands that his work as the Western Home Missionary as called by Loveland has also come to its conclusion.
- 3) His concern is that if he were simply made eligible for a call and has to wait with nothing meaningful to do, then he would rather do "new field work."
- 4) He appreciates that Loveland "recommended him for a call," which he desires be repeated after synod meets.
- c. Rev. Miersma has expressed himself as being in favor of requesting that he be declared temporarily emeritus—a minister "who through no fault of his own has been left without a fixed charge" (Article 13 of the C.O.).
- D. With regard to our Western Home Missions:
 1. The DMC wishes to inform synod that, at this time, it is withdrawing its recommendation that Hope PRC (Redlands) be appointed calling church for Western Home Missions and that they be authorized to call a missionary whose labors will initially focus in Tucson, AZ. Our ground for doing so is the present number of local congregations that are without a pastor and the already substantial increase made in synodical assessments for 2010.
 2. The DMC plans to continue to work as diligently as it can with the saints in Tucson, AZ with the assistance of the Council of Hope PRC (Redlands).
 3. The DMC informs synod that the 2010 budget for Western Home Missions can be reduced to \$30,000, instead of the \$130,000 adopted in Article 72, B, 4.
 4. The DMC asks Synod 2009 to give permission to the DMC, along with the Board of Trustees, to sell the parsonage in Spokane at such a time as it deems wise (cf. Art. 58, B, 2 of 1996 Acts).
- II. Recommendations
 - A. That synod honor Loveland's request that they be replaced as the calling church for our denomination's Western Home Missions.

Grounds:

 1. They have the right to cease this calling, especially after laboring so honorably for fifteen years. And they desire to be relieved of this responsibility at this time.
 2. The timing is right, as it does not leave a field of labor prior to its being organized or disbanded.

3. They intend to continue to hold and supervise the work of Rev. Tom Miersma.

B. That synod honor the request of Rev. T. Miersma that he be temporarily emeritus (cf. Decision A pertaining to Article 13 of the Church Order).

Grounds:

1. With regard to the status of Rev. T. Miersma.
 - a. Whereas the field of Western Home Missions remains, it is basic Reformed church polity (cf. Articles 4-7 of the Church Order) that the call to a specific place of labor (as pastor in an instituted congregation or as missionary in an area) arises out of the local church when it extends the call.
 - b. Therefore, Rev. Tom Miersma's call to be Western Home Missionary is now ended with the calling church ending its role as calling church for the denomination. Also Rev. Miersma's call cannot be "transferred" to another church, without that consistory and congregation freely and willingly (by congregational vote or by congregational approbation) extending that call to him.
 2. With regard to temporary emeritation. It was a change in the status of the church that called him that occasioned Rev. H. Veldman being declared temporary emeritus. So Rev. T. Miersma may be declared temporary emeritus because the state of the calling church has changed—his calling church is no longer the calling church for Western Home Missions.
 3. With regard to the procedure:
 - a. Rev. Miersma is initiating this request as required in Article 13 A of the Church Order.
 - b. Rev. Miersma has received the approval of the church holding his ministerial credentials.
 - c. Because Rev. Miersma's request is coming directly to synod, the required approbation of the "deputies of synod" is unnecessary. And because Rev. Miersma is a denominational missionary and not a local pastor, the required approbation of classis is unnecessary—with regard to a local pastor the classis is an objective body the more closely acquainted with the situation in order to give the best advice to synod, but this is not necessary in the case of a denominational missionary who has received the approbation of the calling church and appropriate denominational mission committee.
- C. That synod give permission to the DMC, along with the Board of

Trustees, to sell the parsonage in Spokane at such a time as it deems wise (cf. Art. 58, B, 2 of 1996 Acts).

D. That synod rescind the motion of Art. 72, B, 4 [p. 57], and instead adopt a budget of \$30,000 for Western Home Missions.

Our prayers continue for God's guidance upon the labors of synod.

Rev. J. Kortering, Secretary

P.S. Please find attached the following documents:

1. Letter from Loveland in which they ask to be replaced as calling church for WHM (Appendix 1).

2. Letter from Rev. T. Miersma in which he expresses his desire to be temporarily emeritus (Appendix 2).

Appendix 1

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church

July 27, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches 2009

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask that synod replace Loveland as the calling church of the Western Home Missionary.

Grounds:

1. The Western Home Missionary work in Spokane is complete with the organization of the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church.

2. Loveland has been the calling church for the Western Home Missionary for over 15 years. Loveland is still committed to mission work and is willing to continue as calling church of the Western Home Missionary. However, future work will likely be done in other areas closer to other PR churches. And it is our understanding that other churches have expressed an interest in being more involved in the mission work in those areas. Because of that interest and closer location, Loveland is willing to be replaced as calling church of the Western Home Missionary.

We also agree with Rev. T. Miersma's request for temporary emerition. We understand this was also done with Rev. Mahtani when the Houston church was closed. Loveland will also continue to hold Rev. T. Miersma's credentials and will continue to oversee his labors until the Lord calls him to labor elsewhere.

May the Lord guide you as you consider this request.

Loveland Protestant Reformed Church Consistory,
Victor Solanyk, Clerk

Appendix 2**Letter from Rev. Thomas Miersma**

July 20, 2009

To the Synod of the PRCA
Loveland Consistory
and the Mission Committee

Dear Brethren,

I am writing as missionary by way of response to synod's request for more information respecting the request of Loveland to be released as a calling church and my status as a missionary. While Loveland, the DMC, and the missionary have discussed these issues orally, I am writing this particularly for the sake of synod, so that matters that have been discussed may be more formally represented to the synod.

1. With respect to Loveland's request to be released as a calling church, I would indicate that, while the manner in which Loveland's request came was somewhat sudden in form, it was not one which was unexpected, given our discussions. I would indicate to synod that I concur with that request.

Loveland has now served fifteen consecutive years as the calling church for home missions in the West. The nature of the work, at least for the past ten years, has been at a significant distance from Loveland, partaking more of the character of supervising a foreign mission work as to the demands placed upon the consistory in supervising the work. With the exception of the supervision of Jamaica by First Church Grand Rapids, this is one of the longest periods of consecutive labor.

It is appropriate at this time, when the work in Spokane is finished, to make such a request at a time of transition. It is also not inappropriate that a calling church make such a request. We have a procedure for allowing missionaries to take a call, but there is currently no means other than such a request to release a calling church.

It will better serve the mission work if a calling church that has borne the burden of the work for a considerable period of time be allowed at some point to retire, as ministers do, and to lay aside the burden of being a calling church for a season. It will also serve the mission work of the churches if a calling church can be replaced with one that is fresh, and comes with new ideas and enthusiasm. This is not unlike the analogy of a minister taking a call. Mission work is demanding of the calling churches. A procedure that allows for "passing the torch," so to speak, to another congregation will better serve the churches as a whole in our labor in missions.

2. I would also concur with the recommendation that Redlands be considered as the replacement calling church. While Loveland is geographically centrally located, we should rather look at the work demographically as to where the population centers are. Demographically the work in the west is really southwestern missions as far as an initial base in Tucson is concerned. The main population centers, with the exception of Denver and Utah (which is Mormon-dominated) in the western USA, run from southern California through Tucson and Arizona and New Mexico to Texas. Redlands is well situated to care for such southwestern mission work.

We should perhaps look eventually at the other demographically significant area that, with Portland and Seattle added, really runs along the Canadian side of the border from Vancouver through Calgary to Winnipeg. A Canadian calling church for what would be northwestern missions would be more appropriate. As we do not have, at present, contacts in this area but do have them in Tucson, I believe that asking Redlands to serve in what is demographically a southwestern area is appropriate.

3. With respect to my status as a missionary, since we have not addressed the question of releasing a calling church before, there is no set procedure that would define my status. Loveland's recommending me for a call at this point is appropriate. I have been eligible for a call for many years. Since a genuine release of the calling church requires more than this, I have had a thorough discussion of this with the DMC.

a. Procedure: With respect to the Church Order, the only procedure that appears appropriate is to draw an analogy from Article 13 A of the Church Order. The article addresses ministers without a charge, in the context of a church disbanding, "who through no fault of their own have been deprived of a congregation." Drawing an analogy from a church disbanding to a calling church being released is at least appropriate in the situation.

The procedure under Article 13 A of going to classis and then to synod does not, however, fit the situation, as synod indirectly notes. Mission work is the work of the churches in common through synod and the DMC. If an analogy is drawn to this article it should rather come to synod through the mutual concurrence of the DMC, calling church, and the missionary. This is, in effect, the request being brought to synod to declare my status as that of a minister who is temporarily emeritus. The intent in taking this approach is also to honor the principle of the lawful call.

As a missionary is supported by the denomination in his

labors through the calling church, this approach would also place the support of the missionary/minister who is declared temporarily emeritus upon the churches by placing him under the care of the emeritus fund. This procedure also would bypass, in certain respects, the ordinary requirements of Articles VII, IX of the constitution of the Emeritus Committee.

I would indicate to synod that I concur with the DMC that this is perhaps the best approach to the question of the missionary's status, my status, which would allow for the release of the calling church. I would note that in the constitution of the Emeritus Committee, those who were called to the special calling of professor retain the honor and dignity of that special calling though they no longer teach in the seminary. Synod ought to consider also whether a missionary ought to likewise retain the same honor and dignity of a missionary, though he is no longer actively engaged in such special labor by temporary emeritation.

b. Perspective: With respect to my personal status, I have now labored on behalf of the churches as a missionary for almost fifteen years. I am almost fifty-nine. I am willing to wait upon the Lord in His leading me to further work in the churches. It may be that it would be good to return to the regular work of a pastor, though I am willing also to continue in mission work if that is the Lord's will. In God's providence my labors as a pastor and a missionary have always been in the context of a small congregational setting. When considering many of our larger congregations, I believe that perhaps going the way of temporary emeritation, with some flexibility in taking a call, may be the appropriate way to go at this point.

A new calling church should be free, in consultation with the DMC, to consider the labor and needs of the work in calling a missionary. It may also be good for a younger man to take up the continuation of these labors. I am willing therefore to leave the direction of my labors in the Lord's hands. Given the needs of our churches at present, there is plenty of labor by way of pulpit supply to be done and I can continue to assist in missions, where desirable, in new field work. It would serve the interests of my family and its stability if I could continue to reside in the mission field house in Spokane in the interim until I receive a call.

I would therefore request, in the light of the above points, that I be declared temporarily emeritus as a missionary by synod.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Thomas Miersma
Home Missionary

SUPPLEMENT 17
Emeritus Committee

March 19, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren:

1. On September 3, 2008, we received a request from Southeast PRC requesting an additional \$3,000 for unexpected medical expenses for Rev. Dale Kuiper. We conferred via e-mail and approved the request and instructed the synodical treasurer to remit the payment on September 10, 2008.
2. In December 2008, we sent out the "Form to Establish Need," with a cover letter, to all the consistories that have emeritated ministers.
3. We have received the following requests for emeritation support (showing last year's amounts for information).

		2009	2010
1.	First, GR..... Prof. D. Engelsma	\$19,500.00.....	\$20,280.00
2.	Georgetown ... Rev. W. Bekkering	36,000.00.....	37,000.00
3.	Georgetown Prof. R. Decker	19,500.00.....	20,280.00
4.	Georgetown ..Rev. B. Woudenberg	24,000.00.....	24,000.00
5.	Grandville..... Rev. J. Kortering	19,500.00.....	20,280.00
6.	Hope, GR..... Prof. H. Hanko	36,000.00.....	39,000.00
7.	Peace..... Rev. S. Houck	*39,833.33.....	47,800.00
8.	Southeast Rev. P. Breen	19,500.00.....	20,280.00
9.	Southeast Rev. D. Kuiper	39,066.00.....	37,200.00
10.	South Holland..... Mrs. G. Lanting	25,900.00.....	25,900.00
11.	Trinity Rev. G. VanBaren	19,500.00.....	20,280.00

*(Note: The 2009 emeritation for Rev. S. Houck was approved and forwarded to us by the 2009 Classis West and has been implemented as of March 1, 2009.)

4. We forward these requests to Synod 2009 with our approval.
5. The EC has reviewed the defined amount for "no questions

asked” and have decided to leave it at the amount of \$20,280.00 for the year 2011.

Grounds:

- a. The economy is in a very depressed state.
 - b. The CPI (government Consumer Price Index) for 2008-2009 was down to 0%.
6. We wish to include in our report to synod that we have concerns regarding the implementation of the guidelines set forth by Synod 1997 (Acts 1997, pp. 53-55, Art. 60, B, 3, a, b, c, d).
7. The terms of Leon Uittenbogaard, *primus*, and Steve Kooima, *secundus*, expire this year. We present the names of Leon Uittenbogaard and Brian Kroese as *primi*, and Steve Kooima and Henry VanMaanen as *secundi* nominees.

May God bless you in your deliberation.

Emeritus Committee
Leon Uittenbogaard
Warren Boon,
w.s. Andrew Brummel

SUPPLEMENT 18 Expenses of Synod

A. Synod incurred the following expenses for the session of June 9-16, 2009:

- 1. Delegate Expenses.....\$6,530.87
 - a. Elder Henry Ferguson: \$865.85
 - b. Elder Loren Gritters: \$1,175.00
 - c. Elder Cal Kalsbeek: \$420.00
 - d. Rev. S. Key: \$600.00
 - e. Rev. D. Kuiper: \$812.60
 - f. Rev. R. Miersma: \$525.00
 - g. Elder Jack Regnerus: \$1,130.00
 - h. Elder Fred Tolsma: \$600.00
 - i. Rev. M. VanderWal: \$412.42
- 2. Catering Expenses 1,459.62
- 3. Janitor Expenses (5 days at \$65.00/day) 325.00
- Total.....\$8,315.49

B. Synod incurred the following expenses for the session of August 25, 26, 2009:

Supplements	19-Finance	Acts of Synod 2009
1.	Delegate Expenses.....	\$6,004.53
	a. Prof. Cammenga: \$19.35	
	b. Elder Henry Ferguson: \$852.48	
	c. Elder Loren Gritters: \$560.00	
	d. Elder Cal Kalsbeek: \$140.00	
	e. Rev. S. Key (3 delegates): \$852.98	
	f. Rev. S. Key (Committee 1): \$1,261.12	
	g. Rev. D. Kuiper: \$406.10	
	h. Rev. N. Langerak: \$195.00	
	i. Elder Jack Regnerus: \$560.00	
	j. Elder Fred Tolsma: \$710.50	
	k. Rev. M. VanderWal: \$447.00	
2.	Catering Expenses	\$546.25
3.	Janitor Expenses	\$130.00
	Total.....	\$6,680.78

SUPPLEMENT 19

Finance Committee Report

April 14, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

Three matters were brought to the attention of the Finance Committee since the meeting of Synod 2008.

I. Information

A. Classis East, at its October 21, 2008 meeting, received from Kalamazoo a “request for a reduction in the synodical assessments in 2008” (Art. 14 of Sept. 11, 2008 consistory meeting). Kalamazoo PRC informed Classis East that their “congregation has lost three families during 2008”—the last in July 2008. Their 2008 family count dropped from 22 to 19, thus exceeding the 10% loss required by the Rules of Synod. They requested that the reduction be retroactive to August 1, 2008.

1. Classis East approved Kalamazoo’s request and forwarded this request to the Finance Committee of Synod (Article 27, October 21, 2008).

2. The Finance Committee granted this request because it met the rules established by synod and so informed the synodical treasurer.

B. Your committee received a request from Doon PRC, dated No-

vember 3, 2008, that their synodical assessments be reduced because “as of the third quarter, six of our fifty families left Doon’s membership.” Specifically, they requested that their “synodical assessment be decreased by \$2,469.”

1. The Classical Committee of Classis West “approved the request of Doon PRC for a reduction of their synodical assessments, as their request meets the 10% loss of members rule according to the Rules of Synod.”

2. The Finance Committee granted this request because it met the rules established by synod and so informed the synodical treasurer.

C. Grace PRC submitted to Classis East’s January 2009 meeting a request for financial relief amounting to \$60,000 from the Needy Churches Fund for 2009. This is due to the fact that they are supporting two ministers, at least for the time being. Their total budget went from roughly \$59 per family per week to \$81. The balance in their General Fund was approximately 9% of their total budget. The amount requested is not for the full support of an additional pastor, but for only a part of that support.

1. Classis East forwarded this request to Synod 2009 with its approval, and they forwarded it to the Finance Committee for immediate action, due to the fact that Grace’s General Fund balance was low.

2. The Finance Committee approved this request and informed the synodical treasurer.

II. Recommendations

A. That synod approve the action of the Finance Committee in allowing a reduction in the synodical assessments in 2008 of Kalamazoo PRC from 22 to 19 families, beginning on August 1, 2008.

Grounds:

1. Kalamazoo’s loss of families exceeds the minimum 10% reduction required by the rule (Rules for Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), a)).

2. This is in harmony with the rule that allows our decision to be retroactive up to three months (Rules of Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), b)).

B. That synod approve the action of the Finance Committee in allowing a reduction in the synodical assessments for the last half of 2008 for Doon PRC.

Grounds:

1. Doon’s loss of families exceeds the minimum 10% reduction required by the rule (Rules for Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), a)).

2. This is in harmony with the rule that allows our decision to be retroactive up to three months (Rules of Synod, VIII, 7, c, 2), b)).

C. That synod approve the action of the Finance Committee in granting Grace PRC's request for subsidy for the first part of 2009.

Ground: The need was immediate; their General Fund balance was low; and historically the amount collected during the first quarter falls below expenditures.

We pray that the Lord of the church will bless you.

In His service,
Synod's Finance Committee,
Rev. James Laning
Rev. Ronald Van Overloop

SUPPLEMENT 20

Foreign Mission Committee Report

April 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on Tuesday, June 9, 2009
in Georgetown PRC in Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brethren,

We present our annual report to synod concerning our labor during the past year on behalf of the churches. Our work during the last year was devoted to the work in the Philippines with the Berean Protestant Reformed Church (BPRCP).

The calling church of Doon PRC has also submitted their annual report, which is included. We thank them for their faithful labors, especially in light of the absence of a missionary to lead the work in the BPRCP.

As we began our work following Synod 2008, we welcomed Seminarian Cory Griess to attend our meetings as he began his six-month internship in Hull PRC.

Already in June, the BPRCP informed us of their concurrence with synod's decision to authorize Doon PRC to call two men to the field: "We are more than happy to have two missionaries in our midst. The consistory as well as the membership of the BPRCP are not opposed to this—knowing that this is the normative practice in foreign missions of the PRCA and will definitely be beneficial to us." This therefore answered the concern of Synod 2008 in Article 61, B, 2, that the FMC and Doon implement the decision of calling a second missionary only after obtaining a favorable response from the Berean PRCP.

Therefore, the main focus of our work became twofold: 1) development of guidelines in the calling of a second missionary, along with a division of labor, and 2) laying out a rigorous program for the training of a missionary to the Philippines. Both of these have been done, and are now being implemented.

As we implemented synod's decision in Article 61, B, 3 to provide the Berean congregation with more frequent pulpit supply, we, along with our brethren in the Philippines, were encouraged by the ministers, professors, and retired ministers/professors who provided preaching and instruction on the field this past year. A hearty thanks to these men, as well as to their congregations, in the commitment to our work as churches to bring the Good News overseas.

With thanksgiving to God, we report that Rev. Richard Smit has accepted the call to be a missionary to the Philippines. Rev. Smit, Tricia, and their eight children moved to a rented home in Hull in early February, where he presently labors in the program of training for his work on the mission field. This also has enabled him to work closely with Doon and the FMC during this time of transition. Plans are, the Lord willing, for the Smit family to move to the Philippines in July, assuming that all the necessary visas are received by that time. Not only Rev. Smit, but his wife and family as well, eagerly anticipate taking up the work in the Philippines. We are excited to be able to work with Rev. Smit, as we know his capabilities and commitment to this work. He is not a novice to this work, having previously served as minister of the calling church and a member of the FMC.

Doon continues the calling process in the attempt to find a co-laborer for the work in the Philippines. Truly, God has blessed the Berean Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines. We earnestly desire that God give us a second missionary to further the work in the Philippines.

Finally, the FMC responds to the following decisions of Synod 2008:

Article 58, B, 2. Because synod adopted our recommendation that sending missionaries two by two is a normative rather than principle practice, the answers to synod's questions derive from that.

1) The first missionary will be sent before a second, but the calling process will continue (and has continued) to seek the second missionary. We might add that, because of the program of preparation for a missionary, we would anticipate that the first missionary would labor on the field alone for up to a year, while the second missionary is preparing for his labors before being sent.

2) In our work in the Philippines it is not necessary that another officebearer labor on the field in the interim, because our work at

present is centered in an established congregation, the Berean PRC, which already has officebearers who will assist the missionary.

3) Because the decision of conducting foreign missions with two missionaries was based on norm rather than principle, we would not close a field simply on the grounds of being unable to obtain a second missionary.

Article 61, B, 4. The FMC does not object to the desired instruction of synod to have as many members as possible from Doon's Council and the FMC visit the field. We would have synod, however, understand the following:

1) That since the inception of the work in the Philippines, and especially with the Bereans, many members of both Doon and the FMC have traveled to the Philippines in recent years and have gained a firsthand understanding of the field and an acquaintance with the members of the Berean PRCP and the many contacts we have in the Philippines. Because the situation there has remained rather static and stable, both Doon and the FMC have been able, with that firsthand understanding, to exercise the careful oversight necessary to such a field without frequent travel there.

2) Synod must remember that the common practice in our foreign (and domestic) fields has been to send a delegation to the field once a year. If we are going to use ministers to join with the missionary in holding teaching conferences during such annual visits, as has been done in the past, we cannot have as many members of the FMC and Doon travel as we perhaps would like. If synod wants to bear the expense of more frequent delegations, it must instruct us how many delegations each year we ought to send. Synod's decision instructing the men of the FMC and calling church "to visit personally the field more frequently" was not helpful in that it does not tell us how often we should send delegations to the field.

3) Synod must also understand that, for various reasons, not all members of Doon's Council or the FMC are able to travel to the Philippines. We do not send delegations for a weekend trip, as is commonly done by the Domestic Mission Committee. Our delegations normally go for approximately two weeks. Not all men are able to take that amount of time off work, although some have used vacation time for this work of the churches. In addition, Rev. Lee has not been able to travel out of the country because of his present immigration status, and Rev. Key has not been able to go (although he is scheduled in April) because of his extensive travels and labors on behalf of the churches as a church visitor in Classis West, and the demands upon his time in the large congregation of Hull.

May God bless synod in its deliberations also concerning the labors of foreign missions.

Respectfully submitted,
Gene Van Bommel, Secretary of the FMC

I. Philippines

A. Information

1. Labors in BPRCP

- a. delegation consisting of Rev. Richard Smit (Lacombe, AB) and Deacon Peter Smit (Redlands, CA) visited the field in August 2008. Their work consisted of preaching and counseling. They also developed a fact/data document that proved useful to other visiting ministers that followed.
- b. A delegation consisting of Rev. Allen Brummel (Sioux Falls, SD) and Leon Uittenbogaard (from the FMC) visited the field in November 2008. The lively preaching of the Word and working with the Council of the BPRCP on other contacts in the Philippines was the focus of this delegation.

2. Doon Council presents a proposed budget for 2010 in the amount of \$146,500 for one missionary and \$261,250 for two missionaries.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve the sending of the delegations and the work performed by Doon and the FMC on behalf of the churches.
2. That synod adopt the proposed budget for the Philippines.

II. Membership

A. Information

1. Current members with the year term expires:

- a. 2009: Andrew Brummel (Edgerton), Brian Kroese (Hull), Rev. Steven Key (Hull)
- b. 2010: Ron Brands (Edgerton), Gene Van Bommel (Hull), Rev. Dennis Lee (Edgerton)
- c. 2011: Alan Van Bommel (Doon), Leon Uittenbogaard (Calvary), Rev. David Overway (Doon)

B. Recommendations

1. That synod elect two from the following nominations to replace Andrew Brummel (Edgerton) and Brian Kroese (Hull): Andrew Brummel (Edgerton), Glenn Gunnink (Edgerton), Brian Kroese (Hull), and Don Ver Meer (Hull).

2. That synod reappoint Rev. Steven Key to a three-year term.

III. Finances

A. Information

1. In 2008 personal gifts and church offerings for foreign missions amounted to \$29,858.71. The Philippine Building Fund amounted to \$11,116.57. We also received \$5740 in the sale of assets on the field after Rev. Spriensma moved back to the States.
2. In 2008 the FMC spent \$589.50 on literature and tape distribution. We had operating expenses of \$724.20. We had miscellaneous expenses of \$1020.25.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod approve a 2010 budget of \$16,000 for committee expenses.
 - a. Literature distribution: \$1000.
 - b. Operating expenses: \$2000.
 - c. Miscellaneous: \$1000.
 - d. Emergency travel expense: \$6000.
 - e. Investigating new fields: \$6000.
2. That synod ask our churches to designate four offerings in 2010 for foreign missions.
3. That synod ask our churches to designate one offering in 2010 for the Berean Building Fund.

Appendix 1

Doon Protestant Reformed Church Annual Philippine Mission Field Report

March, 2009

Foreign Mission Committee and
Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in the Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of our risen Lord!

The following is our annual report as calling church for the Philippine Mission Field.

Prior to Synod 2008 efforts were made to have ministers visit the field for two to three months to bring the Word and also to keep us informed of the state of the field. By April of 2008 several ministers had agreed to

our request, but for shorter periods of time. Synod 2008 instructed Doon and the FMC to arrange pulpit supply for shorter periods (3-4 Sundays). This method has proved fruitful and has also led to opportunities for men of the FMC to go to the field.

In May of 2008 a delegation of Rev. W. Langerak (Southeast) and Rev. Spriensma (Kalamazoo) visited the field. The main purpose of the visit was for Rev. Langerak's experience as he considered the call that Doon had extended to him. Rev. Langerak's wife joined him for part of the visit, and Rev. Spriensma volunteered to accompany him for the other part of the visit. Rev. Spriensma reported back to us concerning the state of the field. He reported that "the BPRCP is doing well spiritually and physically." He also confirmed the hard work and godly dedication of the Berean Council in their dealings with the congregation.

In July of 2008 Prof. Gritters agreed to visit the field with Seminarian Vernon Ibe and his wife. The highlight of the visit was a two-day conference based on "The Family Foundations Are Shaking" series. Prof. Gritters gave a favorable report concerning the spiritual well-being of the BPRCP and also gave some helpful insights into missionary preparation.

In August of 2008 Rev. Richard Smit (Lacombe) and Mr. Peter Smit (Redlands) visited the field. Doon and the FMC sent a hefty list of mandates with this delegation, such as visiting former contacts. We also received information concerning the feasibility of having a missionary family on the field. The delegation reported that the BPRCP "could answer affirmatively the question...whether the congregation enjoys peace, unity, and love in the Lord Jesus Christ." The delegation supplied us with a large amount of information that has been very helpful for men traveling to the field and for missionary preparation.

In September of 2008 Prof. Hanko, his wife, and Mrs. Elaine Bos traveled to the Philippines on the last leg of a multi-country trip. The highlight of the trip was a one-day conference on the topic of "The Sanctifying Power of Suffering." Prof. Hanko reported: "We thoroughly enjoyed the fellowship of the saints there. They are knowledgeable in the Reformed faith and covet earnestly the preaching." He also informed us of a visit he had with the Bastion of Truth Churches and encouraged us to continue to work with them.

In November of 2008 Doon and the FMC sent a delegation of Rev. A. Brummel (Sioux Falls) and Mr. & Mrs. Ike Uittenbogaard (FMC, Hull) to the Philippines. The delegation reports: "We are thankful to report that although there are many struggles in the small congregation, and crosses being born by virtually every family, there is evidence of God's blessings upon His small flock here in metro Manila. God has given the congregation good officebearers."

In December of 2008 Rev. W. Langerak (Southeast) and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Langerak (Hope) travelled to Manila. They and the Bereans enjoyed a time of fellowship over the holiday season. Using funds provided by AIM and the oversight of Rev. Langerak, the Bereans were able to purchase a laptop and projector system, so they are able to show DVD sermons. Doon has sent a collection of sermons to them for this purpose.

In January of 2009 Rev. R. Van Overloop (Grace) and Mr. Tom Schimmel (Georgetown) visited the BPRCP. Rev. Van Overloop submitted a brief report concerning a group that he had contact with in Manila.

Rev. Dale Kuiper and his wife also visited the field in March for three weeks.

The above trip details are highlights of each visit. Every delegation had a general mandate to preach in the BPRCP on Sunday (including Heidelberg Catechism preaching) and lead the saints in between-services catechism instruction. Many of the visitors also chose to visit Gabaldon, a church extension work of the BPRCP, and enjoyed fellowship with the saints there.

All of the reports received from the delegations had similarities. All reported that the church services and conferences had good attendance by visitors from other churches. They all reported also that the spiritual health of the BPRCP is good, but they are still a growing and maturing congregation. For these reasons it is evident that the work in the Philippines must be diligently continued.

For those reasons also we are thankful to God that He has graciously called a man to the mission field. Rev. Richard Smit accepted the call to be missionary in the Philippines on January 18, 2009. He and his family arrived in Hull, Iowa on February 13 and began preparations for their move to the Philippines. His installation service was held on March 19, 2009. Rev. Smit plans to leave for Manila on July 7, 2009.

Although much preparation is taking place for Rev. Smit to take up the labors in the Philippines, Doon and the FMC still have a number of visits planned between now and then. Rev. Steven Key (FMC, Hull) and his wife will be traveling to Manila for three weeks in April. Rev. Andrew Lanning (Faith) and Mr. Gary Kaptein (Faith) will be visiting the field in May for three weeks.

The BPRCP is also hosting a three-day-conference scheduled for late July. Prof. Engelsma will be giving 13 speeches on the topic of “Rekindling the Fire of the Reformed Traditions: The Five Points of Calvinism and the Covenant of Grace.” He plans to stay in the Philippines for a few weeks following the conference.

A delegation from Doon will be heading to Manila in the Fall of 2009 to visit the missionary, his family, and the BPRCP, D.V.

In light of Synod 2008’s decision to call two missionaries to the field, Doon began calling a second missionary on March 29.

The Berean Protestant Reformed Church Philippines has the following statistics:

Families.....	18
Communicant Members.....	28
Total Membership.....	63
Consistory	2 Elders and 1 Deacon
Elders: Rodolfo Bongat, Crisanto Umali	
Deacon: Rodrigo Espiritu	

We propose the following recommendation to synod, along with the accompanying budget.

1. That synod ask the churches to continue taking collections for the Berean PRCP building fund.

2. Proposed budget

	Adopted 2008	Actual 2008	Adopted 2009 1 miss.	Adopted 2009 2 miss.	Proposed 2010 1 miss.	Proposed 2010 2 miss.
Base Salary.....	43,500		44,500	89,000	44,500	89,000
Child Allowance (\$1,500/child).....					12,000	18,000
Social Security	6,500		10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000
Medical Insurance**	7,000		10,000	20,000	1,000	11,000
Missionary training	5,000		4,000	8,000	2,000	4,000
Furlough***	6,000		7,000	12,000	15,000	20,000
Tuition Allowance (\$2,000/child).....					12,000	20,000
Living and Field						
House Rental	10,000		10,000	20,000	10,000	20,000
Utilities/Telecom	3,500		4,000	8,000	4,000	8,000
Office Supplies.....	1,000		1,500	3,000	1,500	3,000
Auto (maintenance and replace).....	6,000		6,000	12,000	6,000	12,000
Field travel/conf	2,000		2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Advertising/radio	1,000		2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Literature.....	500		500	500	500	500
Visa/Immigration	1,000		2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Miscellaneous	500		500	750	500	750
FMC/Doon visits (2)	12,000		14,000	14,000	14,000	14,000
Move new missionary	5,000		7,500	15,000	7,500	15,000
Missionary re-establishment						
Move missionary home						
Total	111,000	36,305.35	125,500	228,250	146,500	261,250

** Smits receiving health insurance through Alberta for no charge until 2013. \$1,000 covers temporary insurance that he is using in Hull now and on furloughs.

*** Figures in 2010 not double because no pulpit supply needed with two missionaries.

SUPPLEMENT 21
Foreign Mission Committee
Supplemental Report (1)

May 19, 2009

Dear Brethren,

Greetings in the name of the Lord of the harvest!

With joy in our hearts and thanksgiving to our God, we report that Rev. Daniel Kleyn has accepted the call from the Doon PRC to labor as our missionary in the Philippines along with Rev. Richard Smit.

Rev. Kleyn plans to preach his farewell sermon at First PRC in Holland, MI on May 24. Installation is scheduled for June 24th at Doon PRC. All, the Lord willing.

We stand humbled at the Lord's work in providing a second man so soon. And as we rejoice, we remember the saints at First PRC in Holland and Immanuel PRC in Lacombe, who are now without an undershepherd. We trust that the Lord will also supply their needs.

We now stand ready to send two men to labor in the Philippines. May our prayers include Rev. Daniel and Sharon Kleyn as well as Rev. Richard and Tricia Smit with their eight children. May they be used in Christ's service as they minister to the saints in the Philippines!

Finally, we call your attention to an error in synod's Agenda with regard to the election of men for the FMC. It lists the names of the two Edgerton men (choose 1), and then the two men from Hull (choose 1). The FMC listed the four men, and would have synod simply choose two of the four.

May the Lord bless the labors of Synod 2009.

On behalf of the FMC,
Gene Van Bommel, Sec'y

SUPPLEMENT 22
Foreign Mission Committee
Supplemental Report (2)

August 22, 2009

Dear Brethren,

Greetings on behalf of the Foreign Mission Committee!

We present information regarding the visa expenses on the Philippine mission field. A recent report from our missionary, Rev. Smit, provides the details:

We have begun our immigration process. What direction we are taking in this regard is different than what we had expected. We had

expected to apply for a missionary 9(g) visa, but we are actually applying now for a permanent visa, which is comparable to the US or Canadian permanent resident card. The reasons for this approach to our immigration visas are as follows:

First, the application for a permanent visa avoids the complicated problem of having to get our marriage license and birth certificates authenticated. This involves sending the Canadian birth certificates to the Philippine consulate in Vancouver, B.C., Canada and the US birth certificates to the Philippine consulate in Chicago. There the documents can be authenticated by a Philippine government official. In addition to that, once the documents are authenticated they will become invalid because authentication involves puncturing the document with holes. Most birth certificates state on the front that any alterations will render the birth certificates invalid and void. This requires one to purchase anew birth certificates for the family. Because the document authentication requirement for the missionary 9(g) visa is both logistically difficult and costly, the application for a permanent visa is preferable since it does not require document authentication.

Second, the permanent visa is an attractive option because it presents potential future cost savings. However, the initial cost is shocking. The initial cost is P250,000 per person (\$5,263), as opposed to the 9 (g) cost of P50,000 per adult (\$1,053) and P40,000 per child (total is \$11,064). That includes a P10,000 per person (\$210) cost for the 9 (g) visa because the process will take longer than 6 weeks, resulting in the need to extend our tourist visas at least once. However, keep in mind that the 9 (g) visa must be renewed yearly at another P30,000 (\$638) per person. In addition to that, at the end of 5 years, the whole process would begin anew for a subsequent 9(g) visa. In addition to that, there is a political factor that affects our consideration of the permanent visa costs. Next year, a new president will be elected, and it is expected that immigration fees will rise again next July or August as they did substantially (almost 50% higher) when the current president came into power in 2005. As a result, there may be a potential cost savings for the permanent visa from that perspective. The agent at the Christian Missionary Service advises that after 4 years it will be cheaper for the missionary and his family to have a permanent visa. Therefore, initially the permanent visa is more painfully expensive, but over the long-term (4 years and beyond) it becomes cheaper, the Lord willing. One other additional note that since I can apply for this permanent visa as a Canadian, I am able to get a significant discount (~10%) because of the Christian Missionary Service agent's connections.

Third, there are advantages for a permanent visa. Our children will be able to work in metro Manila without restrictions under their permanent visa. They will have access to the colleges and universities of the area after high school.

Fourth, the permanent visa eliminates the hassle of yearly renewals.

Fifth, the permanent visa promotes the necessary perspective in the missionary and family and in the minds of the mission groups, contacts, and churches on the field that the missionary is committed to a long-term labor, the Lord willing.

Finally, the permanent visa promotes the planning of bi-yearly furloughs without the need to stagger furloughs so that normally one of them falls at the end of the 5-year visa, resulting in furloughs after 2 years and then 3 years, or vice-versa.

In light of this information, the FMC took the following decision at our August 18th meeting Article 11.

A. Approve Rev. Smit and his family acquiring their permanent visas.

Grounds:

1. Avoid having to get birth certificates and marriage license authenticated.
2. Future cost savings. (Permanent visa and 9g visa costs are equal after 5 years; 9g continue to cost more after 5 years.)
3. Children have access to jobs and higher education.
4. No yearly renewals.
5. Promotes perspective of long-term labor on the field.
6. Promotes bi-yearly furloughs.

Carried.

B. Approve reimbursement to Rev. Smit for balance of \$32,400 (\$43,478 less \$11,078 from expense report) for Rev. Smit's family's permanent visas. Carried. Sec'y to draft supplemental report to Synodical Clerk to be treated at Synod 2009 meeting on August 25, also noting that the Kleyns will also be obtaining permanent visas.

Recommendations:

- 1) That synod approve the FMC decision with grounds to reimburse Rev. Smit the cost of acquiring permanent visas for himself and his family at the cost of \$43,478 and adjust the 2009 synodical budget accordingly.
- 2) That synod approve the FMC decision to have Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Kleyn acquire permanent visas upon arrival in the Philippines at an approximate cost of \$10,600 and adjust the 2010 synodical budget accordingly.

May the Lord bless the labors of Synod 2009.

On behalf of the FMC,
Gene Van Bommel, Sec'y

SUPPLEMENT 23
Praeparatoir Examination

**Report of Sermon Critic Committee
for Mr. Cory Griess**

Brethren,

Having heard the sermon of Seminarian Cory Griess, an exposition of I Corinthians 1:18, we with gratitude acknowledge that the brother demonstrates the gifts necessary to preach the gospel of Christ crucified. The brother's sermon was expository, Reformed, lively, and applicable to the spiritual life and needs of God's people.

Mr. Griess' sermon gave evidence of his ability to exegete the original languages, of his believing the full authority of the Scriptures, of his being confessionally Reformed, and of his being able to apply God's Word to the life and needs of Christ's church.

We recommend that synod approve the sermon and proceed with the brother's examination.

w.s. Rev. Kenneth Koole
w.s. Rev. Rodney Miersma

**O.T. Translation and Exegesis
of Mr. Cory Griess**

Brethren of Synod,

We have reviewed Mr. Cory Griess' parsing and translation of Psalm 1 and have carefully read his written exegesis of Psalm 1:1-3. This work demonstrates that the brother has the God-given abilities to work with the Hebrew of the Old Testament and to exegete the Old Testament Scriptures. His work demonstrates an ability to prepare sermons from the Old Testament that are biblical, Reformed, and edifying for God's people. Therefore, we recommend that synod approve Mr. Griess' written Old Testament translation and exegesis.

Respectfully submitted,
w.s. Rev. G. Eriks
w.s. Rev. Nathan Langerak

**N.T. Translation and Exegesis
of Mr. Cory Griess**

Brethren of Synod,

Report of committee appointed to examine the translation and exegesis of the New Testament Scripture by seminarian Cory Griess:

The brother was requested to parse and translate Ephesians 6:10-13 and to exegete Ephesians 6:10, 11.

The committee has examined this work of seminarian Greiss and recommends it be approved by the synod. The committee appreciates especially his emphasis on the sovereignty of God as the sole source of the believer's power, on the reality and truth of Satan and his methods, and on the application of the text.

w.s. Rev. Martin VanderWal
w.s. Rev. Carl Haak

SUPPLEMENT 24
Psalter Distribution Committee Report

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

Sales of Psalters can, of course, vary considerably from one year to the next. Last year we filled a relatively high number of orders. But with some 2,700 Psalters still in stock, our current inventory should last another three years.

In Christ's service,
Psalter Distribution Committee
w.s. H.J. Kuiper, Chairman

SUPPLEMENT 25
Stated Clerk's Report

April 22, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, MI

Dear Brethren,

All of the material for synod was again submitted on time. And, again, there was a lot of it. More than last year. But, as it looks now, we'll probably be able to meet the May 5 deadline for mailing the Agenda to the churches.

Family counts, as reported by our various churches, totaled 1,889 at the beginning of 2009, compared to 1,887 a year ago.

Yours in His service,
w.s. Don Doezema

SUPPLEMENT 26
The Student Aid Committee Report

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
at Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church

Dear Brethren,

- I. The Student Aid Committee brings the following for information:
 - A. Committee officers elected:
 1. President: Daniel Pastoor
 2. Secretary: Stefan Engelsma
 3. Vice-All: Keith Noorman
 4. Treasurer: Mark Ophoff
 - B. Of the \$43,000 budgeted for student aid, all was disbursed.
 - C. The \$7,500 budgeted for intern expenses was also disbursed.
 - D. Funds have been received throughout the year for the Seminary Student Assistance Fund. \$13,590.06 has been disbursed through December 31, 2008, and the balance in the fund as of December 31st, 2008 is \$65,967.04. Per the request of synod, details of these disbursements are included in the supplemental report to be dealt with in closed session.
 - E. Per synod's request, it is the recommendation of the Student Aid Committee that the dollar amount to be budgeted by synod remain at the current \$10,000 per student.
- II. The Student Aid Committee presents the following for action by synod.
 - A. We ask synod to budget \$50,000 in student aid for the 2009-2010 school year. Specifics are found in the supplemental report to be treated in closed session.
 - B. We ask synod to budget \$4,500 in internship expenses for the 2009-2010 year.
 - C. The committee brings the following names for nomination: Dan Bodbyl, Daryl Bleyenbergh.

Sincerely,
The Student Aid Committee
Stefan Engelsma, Secretary

SUPPLEMENT 27

Subsidy Chart

	Bethel	Edmonton	Kalamazoo	Spokane	Wingham
Request '10	56,000	20,397(CN)	35,000	135,146	36,000(CN)
Request '09	35,000	17,604(CN)	25,000	87,735	30,000(CN)
Request '08	32,000	22,588(CN)	16,500		32,000(CN)
Request '07	40,500	25,737(CN)	19,000		34,000(CN)
Request '06	26,000	26,195(CN)	20,000		37,000(CN)
Pastor's Salary	59,536	55,900(CN)	57,475	62,760	51,000(CN)
Ch. Bldg. Exp.	15,411	1,040(CN)	2,500	22,200	19,000(CN)
Parsonage Exp.	275	1,040(CN)	12,162	19,200	7,000(CN)
Utilities, etc.	42,495	16,036(CN)	12,362	26,710	14,350(CN)
Misc./Syn.Ass.	23,625	39,981(CN)	23,620	25,276	22,000(CN)
'10 Tot. Budg.	141,342	113,997(CN)	108,119	156,146	113,350(CN)
Families	18	25	22	5	13
'08 av. wk.					
fam. contr.	93.60	66(CN)	67.98	70.28	91.51(CN)
Proposed '10					
wk. budg.	91.04	72(CN)	70	76.19	114.42(CN)
2008					
Year-end bal.	14,073	10,370(CN)	24,727	0	19,165.74(CN)

SUPPLEMENT 28

Synodical Deputies, Classis East, Report (1)

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches

to convene on June 9, 2009

in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Esteemed Brethren,

The undersigned humbly submit the following report of their activities as Delegates Ad Examina of Classis East, during the meeting of Classis West, September 5, 2007, convening in Lynden WA.

While attending said meeting of classis, and serving in our capacity as the lawfully appointed synodical deputies, we concurred with the decision of the classis, made during said meeting, to approve the organization of the Calvary Protestant Reformed Church of Hull, IA.

Further, we joined with Classis West in thanksgiving and prayer for the Lord's blessing upon this newly formed manifestation of the Body of Christ.

Your servants,
Rev. Rodney Kleyn
Rev. Daniel Kleyn
Rev. Carl Haak

SUPPLEMENT 29
Synodical Deputies, Classis East, Report (2)

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brethren,

The undersigned synodical deputies of Classis East attended the meeting of Classis West on March 4, 2009 in Edgerton, MN. At this classis we were called upon to give our approval to two matters.

The first concerned Rev. S. Houck's emeritation. The Council of Peace PRC presented a request concerning this, and Classis West gave its approval. As synodical deputies, we concurred with this decision and its grounds. We also expressed our gratitude for Rev. Houck's many years of faithful service in our denomination.

The second matter was Loveland's request that the Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Spokane, Washington be organized into a church in our denomination. Classis West gave its approval, and we expressed our concurrence. We thank the Lord for this evidence of His blessing upon the missionary labors in Spokane.

In Christ's service,
w.s. Rev. Daniel Kleyn
Rev. Kenneth Koole
Rev. James Laning

SUPPLEMENT 30
Synodical Deputies, Classis East, Report (3)

May 22, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, MI

Esteemed Brethren,

The undersigned Synodical Deputies of Classis East were called upon to attend a special meeting of Classis West on May 6-7, 2009 to treat the decision of the Bethel PRC consistory to release its pastor, Rev. J. Mahtani, under Article 11 of the Church Order.

Classis West decided not to approve Bethel's decision to release Rev. Mathani under Article 11 of the Church Order. Instead the Classis

instructed the Bethel consistory, with the help of a special committee of Classis, to labor pastorally with Rev. Mahtani, directing him to seek release from the ministry under Article 12 of the Church Order and to report to the September 2009 meeting of Classis.

Having heard the deliberations of the Classis, we concurred with Classis' decision on the basis of the grounds presented.

Due to the unusual nature of Classis' decision, synod may desire to be informed of the grounds for these decisions. These will be made available to synod, should synod so desire. However, because of the confidential nature of this material and because this matter has not yet been finished, this material should be treated in closed session.

In Christ,
Rev. K. Koole
Rev. J. Laning
Rev. J. Slopsema

SUPPLEMENT 31

Synodical Deputies, Classis West, Report

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brethren in Christ,

The undersigned attended Classis East's classical examination of Mr. Heath Bleyenbergh on October 21, 2008.

After hearing the brother's sermon and witnessing his examination, we concurred with the decision of Classis East to approve his examination, and to advise Providence PRC to proceed with his ordination into the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

We give thanks to God for His gift of pastors and teachers, and particularly for providing us with this new pastor.

w.s. Rev. Steven Key
w.s. Rev. Nathan Langerak
w.s. Rev. Douglas Kuiper

SUPPLEMENT 32
Theological School Committee Report

April 15, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brothers:

The Theological School Committee submits the following as its annual report to synod. The report is divided into two parts: A) Items for the information of synod, and B) Items requiring the action of synod.

A. For Synod's Information

1. Committee Organization
 - a. Membership (with year terms expire)
2009: A. Brummel, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. J. Laning,
T. Pipe
2010: Rev. A. denHartog, E. Hekstra
2011: J. Huiskens, J. Kalsbeek, Rev. W. Langerak,
Rev. R. VanOverloop
 - b. Officers
President: Rev. K. Koole
Vice-President: Rev. R. VanOverloop
Secretary: J. Huiskens
General Adjunct: Rev. W. Langerak
 - c. Standing Committees
Academic Affairs: Rev. R. VanOverloop, Rev. A. denHartog,
T. Pipe
Building: T. Pipe, E. Hekstra, Rev. W. Langerak
Convocation: Rev. J. Laning, Rev. W. Langerak
Equipment: J. Huiskens, J. Kalsbeek
Finance: A. Brummel, J. Kalsbeek, Rev. K. Koole
2. Students
 - a. Cory Griess is in his final year of study. Cory served his internship at the Hull PRC under the mentorship of Rev. Steven Key. Cory will be appearing at Synod 2009 for his synodical examination.
 - b. Daniel Holstege and Martyn McGeown are in their third year of study. Internships have been arranged for fall semester with Rev. Doug Kuiper, Randolph, for Daniel Holstege and with Rev. Daniel Kleyn, Holland, for Martyn McGeown.
 - c. Nathan Decker, Brian Huizinga, and Jonathan Mahtani are

in their second year of study. Stefan Griess and David Mahtani are in their first year of study.

d. David Torlach from the EPC-Australia is in his final year as a three-year special student and will return home this summer. Vernon Ibe from the Berean PRC, the Philippines, is in his second year as a four-year special student.

3. Faculty Activities

a. Prof. Russell Dykstra is teaching a full course load this year. Prof. Dykstra serves on the denominational Contact Committee and serves as one of the editors of the *Standard Bearer*. Work continues on his Th.M. thesis.

b. Prof. Barry Gritters teaches a full course load for this academic year. Prof. Gritters was awarded his Th.M. from Calvin Seminary this past summer. Prof. Gritters serves as one of the editors of the *Standard Bearer* and also serves on the Contact Committee.

c. Prof. Ronald Cammenga is teaching a full course load for the academic year 2008-09. He has finished his course work for the Th.M. and continues his work on his Th.M. thesis. Prof. Cammenga also serves as editor of the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*.

4. School Visits

Regular monthly visits were made by the members of the TSC to the seminary classrooms. Written reports are submitted by the committees who make the visits. We are grateful to God for the excellent faculty that we have and for the diligence of our students.

5. Fall Convocation

Fall Convocation was held on September 3, 2008 at the Trinity PRC. Prof. R. Dykstra was the speaker.

6. Building and Grounds

a. The building and grounds were properly maintained this past year.

b. The Building Committee of the TSC continued its evaluation of the condition and adequacy of the internal spaces in the building. A recommendation concerning this project is presented below.

7. Archives

The denominational archives collection continues to grow. There have been no major accessions during this past year, but documents continue to be collected that document the history of the denomination and of our local congregations.

Mark Hoeksema has been conducting a series of oral interviews

with members of our churches. These interviews will be transcribed and will eventually become part of our archival collection. We're grateful to Mark for his willingness to be involved in this oral history project.

The archivist is always looking for historical documents, pictures, etc. that may be of worth to keep there. Churches are also encouraged to care for their own archives, so that individual histories of our congregations will also be available. Personal papers both of clergy and others in the denomination would be welcome additions to this collection.

We continue to use the services Dr. Richard Harms, Archivist of Calvin College, to process and index our archival materials. Dr. Harms has done superlative work, for which we are grateful.

8. Dr. Theodore Letis Library

Charles Terpstra has been hired to sort and classify the Letis Library. Some progress has been made in this regard. The TSC authorized the purchase of cataloging software to make this collection more accessible in the future. The plan is to put the entire library catalog in computer-accessible form.

9. Rector's Report

A report from the rector will come to synod later by way of a supplemental report.

10. Bequests Received

- a. An anonymous, undesignated bequest of \$39,476.51 was received. This money has been placed in the seminary's Bequest Fund.
- b. A bequest of \$32,162.35 was received from the Richard G. Houskamp, Sr. estate for the purpose of supporting the purchase of books for the library. The family requested that a separate fund, called the Richard and Julia Houskamp Fund, be established, with the annual proceeds of the fund transferred to the Seminary Library Fund for the purchase of books. The synodical treasurer has been asked to establish this fund.
- c. Smaller gifts have been received from churches and individuals. These gifts have been placed in the Library Fund.

11. Conferences

- a. The faculty and a committee from the TSC are working on the details of a conference to be sponsored by the seminary commemorating the 500th birthday of John Calvin. The dates of the conference have been set for September 3-5, 2009. Southwest PRC's Evangelism Committee has agreed to serve as the facilitators for this conference. The TSC is grateful for their work on the seminary's behalf.

b. Faculty and students attended the Bavinck Conference at Calvin College in September 2008 and the Philadelphia Conference held in Byron Center in March 2009.

B. For Synod's Action

1. Proposed Budget for 2010—cf. Appendix 1 (p. 220).
The TSC recommends adoption of the proposed budget for 2010.

2. New Seminary Students for 2009-10

a. Karl Dykstra

Karl Dykstra appeared at our meeting of March 26, 2009 to be interviewed for admission to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009. Karl will receive his Bachelor of Arts degree in history in May 2009 from Grand Valley State University. Karl is a confessing member of the Southeast PRC. Karl's pre-seminary requirements, with the exception of second-year German, have been met. The TSC approved Karl Dykstra's admission to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009.

Recommendations: 1) That Karl Dykstra be admitted to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009. 2) That Karl Dykstra's pre-seminary requirement of second-year German be waived.

b. Erik Guichelaar

Hindirk (Erik) Guichelaar appeared at our meeting of March 26, 2009 to be interviewed for admission to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning with the Fall Semester 2009. Erik is a confessing member of the Wingham PRC. Erik finished his Bachelor of Arts degree in English and philosophy at the University of Western Ontario in May, 2008 and has been attending Calvin College to finish his pre-seminary requirements. Erik has satisfied all the pre-seminary requirements with the exception of second-year Dutch. The TSC approved the admission of Erik Guichelaar to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning Fall Semester 2009.

Recommendations: 1) That Hindirk (Erik) Guichelaar be admitted to the seminary as a diploma pre-licentiate student beginning Fall Semester 2009. 2) That Erik Guichelaar's pre-seminary requirement of second-year Dutch be waived.

3. Examination Schedule for Cory Griess

The faculty recommends that Cory Griess be examined by synod with a view to being declared a candidate for the ministry of the gospel in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The following examination schedule is presented for synod's adoption:

- a. Synodical Sermon (45 minutes maximum)

Texts: Isaiah 55:1 or I Corinthians 1:18

- b. Oral Examination

Intro to Dogmatics	20 minutes	Prof. R. Cammenga
Six loci of Dogmatics	30 minutes each	Prof. R. Cammenga
Church History	45 minutes	Prof. R. Dykstra
Church Polity	45 minutes	Prof. Gritters
O.T. History	45 minutes	Prof. Gritters
N.T. History	45 minutes	Prof. Cammenga
Practica	20 minutes	Rev. C. Haak

- c. Written Examination

Hebrew: Parse and translate: Psalm 1

Exegete: Psalm 1:2, 3

Greek: Parse and translate: Ephesians 6:10-13

Exegete: Ephesians 6:10, 11

4. Commencement Program for Cory Griess and David Torlach

The Theological School Committee proposes the following Commencement Program for Cory Griess and David Torlach:

Date, Place, Time: Thursday, June 11, 2008, 7:30 P.M., Georgetown PRC

Opening Devotions: Rev. K. Koole, TSC President

Special Musical Number:

Commencement Address: Prof. R. Cammenga

Presentation of Diploma: Prof. B. Gritters, Rector;

Rev. K. Koole

Psalter No. (chosen by speaker)

Closing Prayer: President of Synod 2009

5. Proposal Regarding Remodeling the Seminary Building

a. Introductory Information: The TSC submits two proposals for consideration.

1) They are the result of work begun almost two years ago when we began discussing three issues: 1) the need to upgrade the furniture in the assembly/multi-purpose room and in the classrooms; 2) the need to plan for major maintenance and remodeling of a 35-year old building; 3) the desire to explore ongoing uses for the substantial monies being donated to the seminary.

2) We are seeking adoption of conceptual long-range plan of various improvements we expect the next 20 years

(Proposal A), and adoption of an initial remodeling phase to be completed in the next two years (Proposal B).

3) These proposals are based on input from a wide range of sources and a thorough analysis of our facility and finances. What follows is a brief chronology of our work, a summary of our evaluations, conclusions, and then the proposals themselves.

b. Chronology:

1) *Summer, 2007:* The TSC decided that, before any major work or purchases at the seminary, a comprehensive analysis of the facilities, finances, and expected growth be performed and incorporated into a long-range plan to help budget projects, make informed decisions, and insure future work is consistent, cost-effective, and cohesive.

2) *Fall-Winter, 2007-08:* Staff, professors, and students (former and current) are interviewed, visits to other seminaries made, and an extensive evaluation conducted. Results are incorporated into an initial long-range plan. Several architects are interviewed and Craig Architects hired to prepare preliminary drawings and budget.

3) *Spring, 2008:* Synod is presented with a two-part proposal, 1) to spend \$30,000 to upgrade furniture; 2) to remodel the building at an approximate cost of \$600,000 in phases, using existing funds and donations as they become available. Part 1 passes, but part 2 is rejected on the ground synod had not seen details in sufficient time.

4) *Summer, 2008:* \$5,000 of the \$30,000 approved is spent for immediate furniture needs, but other purchases are deferred until a comprehensive plan is adopted.

5) *Fall-Winter, 2008-09:* The plan presented to Synod 2008 is reevaluated based upon further review of our needs, resources, and input from staff, professors, and students.

c. Summary evaluation of building and use of space:

1) *Space requirements due to expected growth:* In general, we believe the facilities will accommodate anticipated growth the next 20 years without a major building addition, as long as all existing space is fully utilized by creative solutions and reconfiguration.

a) *We expect modest but steady growth in the PRC:* Based on past averages, we project by 2029, membership of 11,000 (+1.8%/yr), communicants of 7,000 (+2.2%/yr), catechumens of 2,400 (+1.1%), and 36 congregations (+1%/yr).

b) *Classrooms*: Based on projected church growth and retirement of 18-20 ministers, we expect no more than 10 students/year in classes of 3-8 through 2029.

(1) There are four classrooms with capacity of 12-15: Three are currently used for classes. One is being used as the professors' lounge/meeting room.

(2) There is a "multi-purpose room" with capacity of 30+: It will continue to work well in its primary use as a lecture hall for large combined classes. If a higher capacity room would be desired for some reason, or one more suitable for practice preaching, it would have to be built (estimated cost \$200,000).

c) *Professor offices*: We have four well-proportioned private offices. Three are currently used by active professors. If, in the future, we provide private offices for all retired professors, these would have to be built (estimated cost \$150,000).

d) *Staff office*: It is possible 1-2 office personnel are added for various duties, but there should still be enough room in the existing office. However, it will probably require reconfiguration in order to maximize space, assist transition when our existing staff retires, and accommodate possible future changes in job function.

e) *Library*: Overall size should be sufficient for future growth but will probably need to be reconfigured at some point in order to make room for more study carrels and bookshelves. Bookshelves can be rearranged to make space. New shelving could be added along outer walls if carrels are relocated or a 2nd story mezzanine/catwalk built along the outer walls (estimated cost \$100,000).

2) *Use of existing space*: In general, the facilities function very well as an institution of higher theological learning. However, we have identified some modest improvements to the seminary that could be made by remodeling of existing space.

a) *Traffic flow*: A wider, open kitchen would ease break-time traffic. Some glass in classrooms could be eliminated to minimize distractions. Distance from main study areas to restrooms, kitchen, and classes could be shortened and more direct.

- b) *Technology*: Students, staff, and visitors, especially those with laptops, would benefit from high-speed wireless Internet. Audio-visual capabilities and overall use in the classrooms could be improved by better connectivity and ease-of-use.
- c) *Classroom furniture*: Seating is a bit uncomfortable given its use 4-5 hours per day. Also, weight and bulk of classroom desks make them difficult to move for cleaning, interaction, or meetings, and damages the carpets when it is done.
- d) *Student study*: Carrels would be improved by added surface area and storage, more plugs for laptops, and better lighting (currently from bulbs 18 feet above).
- e) *Energy efficiency*: Energy is being lost through some unnecessary, large, and older windows/doors, poor insulation in places, and lack of an air-lock in entryway. Lighting is from older, inefficient, standard-output fluorescent fixtures.
- f) *Aesthetics*: As our most visible and visited tangible asset, the seminary reflects upon the PRC. Built 35 years ago, the building is become somewhat outdated and could use freshening up. Little can be done to alter exterior style, but a modest change to the entry would improve its overall appearance. Interior definition of space, style, and visual warmth could be enhanced by a unified design plan.
- g) *Add a conference room*: Several denominational committees use the seminary for meetings. Currently, classrooms or multi-purpose room are used, but furniture must be reconfigured each time, which is time-consuming and damages carpets.
- h) *Add student-professor lounges*: There is no student lounge; professors use a spare classroom. When students and professors break together, they use the multi-purpose room. Note: A conference room, if added, could double as a lounge.
- i) *Add library features*: 1) a multi-user computer lab—especially important when our catalog is digitized; 2) a research, study, and seating area for visitors; 3) a librarian desk area. Note: There should be enough existing space for these.
- j) *Reclaim underutilized space*: Considerable sq. foot-

age for many improvements listed above can be gained by redesigning or reconfiguration of certain existing areas that are oversized, poorly laid out, misplaced, or underutilized.

k) *Basement*: There is abundant space in the basement, but its use is restricted due to: a) distance from common areas; b) cost to bring up to building/handicap code.

3) *Miscellaneous issues*:

a) *Future major maintenance*: Carpeting, wall coverings, and ceiling tiles will need replacement in the near future. Some walls will require re-painting. Exterior steel fascia and skylights are peeling, faded, and bent in places. Roof is new.

b) *Rare book protection and use*: We have an extensive and growing collection of rare, valuable, and fragile books, especially with the addition of the Letis library. Current storage is in a beautiful wood cabinet, but it will eventually be too small, and leaves books unprotected from fire and interior air that dries out materials.

c) *Archive storage*: The archives room contains confidential, valuable, and fragile documents that must be climate controlled, be reasonably fireproof, and have controlled-restricted access. There are three main issues identified:

(1) Location is not conducive to convenient and secure research: Archives are stored in the basement, a considerable distance from the study areas or library. Yet, if removed for research, archives are then unprotected and unsecured.

(2) Risk of total loss due to first floor collapse in a major fire: We believe this risk is real since no fire suppression exists on first floor; a heavy library is stored above basement; and the halon will suppress only a fire in archive room itself.

(3) Storage may be insufficient for future growth: This is especially a concern if more consistories archive their records. Also, space could be added for a work room inside or very near the archives to process incoming records securely.

d) *Research center*: Since acquisition of the Letis Library, there is a desire for a research center dedicated

to accumulating materials on subjects dear to the PRC in order to encourage their study. We believe this idea has merit if it is combined with solving other problems such as rare book storage, providing a common study area for visitors, or building a better archive room. However, this would require new construction near the library (estimated cost \$200,000).

d. Finances: The seminary continues to receive substantial monies from generous donors. In the last four years alone, we received over \$120,000 and have over \$250,000 on hand. We believe that capital improvements to the seminary building would be a wise and proper use for unrestricted donations to the seminary, even in the present depressed economy.

1) *Use of these funds is limited:* At their discretion, donors give their money to the seminary because they expect it to be spent there. Some is restricted to specific projects. But even when donations to the seminary are unrestricted, we believe it inappropriate to use them to fund general seminary operations (otherwise donors, presumably, would have given their money to the synodical general fund instead) or to spend these monies on other denominational needs (even if we judge them more worthy).

2) *It eliminates the need to use synodical monies or raise synodical budgets:* All future improvements, as outlined above, could be completed over time as money became available, as long as they are part of a long-range master plan.

3) *It provides on-going use for donations:* Based on history, we expect them to continue.

4) *In the present economy, spending funds to remodel might be better than saving them:*

a) A building project could employ skilled PRC tradesmen, many of whom presently struggle to pay tuition, budget, and support families in a depressed industry.

b) Fund balances have dropped dramatically, presumably from investment losses.

e. Conclusions: Based upon the above evaluations, the TSC decided the following:

1) *To continue plans to remodel the seminary:* We believe capital investment as outlined above can be justified, could be done cost-effectively without synodical money, and is a wise and proper use of existing donations, even in a depressed economy.

2) *To present to synod a revised long-range conceptual plan as follows:*

- a) Discontinue plans for new construction in the basement, new construction of a larger multi-purpose room, and plans for private offices of retired professors. We believe the benefit of such improvements would not justify anticipated costs.
- b) Continue plans to construct a new entrance, and archive/rare book/research room.
- c) Change the layout of remodeling plans for the library, classrooms, staff offices, and common areas in order to incorporate most of the suggestions listed above.

3) *To present to synod a "first-phase" remodeling project:* This phase should be one that best serves as the basis for future remodeling plans, be able to be completed as much as possible with existing funds, and be completed during summer breaks.

PROPOSALS

a. That synod approve the long-range master plan of the TSC for future remodeling of the seminary building.

1) *Note:* This plan is not intended to be unchangeable, nor commit us to all or any specific details or projects, but is to help communicate, budget, and plan for the major, basic concepts of future remodeling projects.

2) *Grounds:*

- a) It would help plan, budget, organize, keep cohesive and cost-efficient all future remodeling projects, as well as provide direction for future members of the TSC.
- b) It represents a reasonable, cost-effective, and efficient way to meet most expected future requirements and improvements of the seminary the next 20 years.
- c) It incorporates a wide spectrum of advice from all involved with the seminary.
- d) It provides a long-term vision for those interested in contributing to the seminary, and an on-going tangible avenue for unrestricted funds contributed in the future.

b. That synod approve \$248,000 of available seminary funds for architectural prints and remodeling of the classrooms, administrative offices, and front entrance.

- 1) *Synopsis of work:*
 - a) Construct a new lobby area: An airlock area would be created to keep the weather from directly affecting interior temperature. Oak wainscoting on the walls, oak archways and pillars, new tile flooring, carpeting, ceiling coffer, crown-molding, and new lighting would be added to create a warm and pleasant aesthetic to the entrance and overall building. New seating and space would be added to allow congregating and conversation of visitors.
 - b) Reconfigure administrative offices: Plans are to improve efficiency and use of space for future growth through reconfiguration with input from staff. A private office would be built for the registrar, and a reception area added to provide security and more direct contact with visitors. New carpet, furniture, lighting, and cabinets would be installed to enhance usability and aesthetics.
 - c) Relocate the multi-purpose room: It would mainly make use of existing unused space and retain natural light from skylight. It would be slightly larger than the existing room, add storage for desks and chairs (now lacking), and allow for future relocation-construction of new lounges/kitchen, with corridor giving close, direct access to the library and offices (future phase 2). Privacy of other classrooms would also be improved. New carpeting, lighting, wall coverings, audio-visual, and dais would be installed. Style effects, i.e., wainscoting, moldings, arches, and pillars from entry, would be carried throughout.
 - d) Update other classrooms: Placement and dimensions of classrooms remain basically the same, with one exception. In order to replace the “north” classroom lost by construction of the new-multipurpose room, classroom “3,” which is currently used as a faculty lounge, would again be used for a classroom (as it was designed), and the faculty lounge temporarily relocated to the old multi-purpose room. Classroom entrances will be improved, and one entrance relocated. New furniture, carpets, wall coverings, ceiling tiles, and lighting will be installed in each room, as well as new audio-video capabilities added.
 - e) To avoid interruption of classes, work would be

completed over the next two years during summer recess. Initial work on the entrance and part of the office would begin immediately, and the remaining work finished the summer of 2010.

2) *Finances*: There is approximately \$185,000 of unrestricted funds available now, which covers all the work in 2009, and all but \$63,000 to complete the project in 2010. If donations are not received by the summer of 2010 to make up the difference, there are existing restricted seminary funds that can be borrowed from short-term.

3) *Grounds*:

a) It addresses key issues identified in our evaluation: Space requirements due to expected growth (5, c, 1)); Use of existing space (5, c, 2), b), c), e), f), j)).

b) From a construction point of view, this phase is the necessary first step of remodeling according to the long-range master plan, i.e., this phase makes it possible for us to make many other improvements in future remodel phases.

c) The poor economic conditions have created a great opportunity for better pricing, and this project can provide needed work for qualified PR tradesmen, who will be given priority as much as possible.

4) *Notes*:

a) Architect's drawings of the current floor plan and of the proposed section to be remodeled are attached to this report. The architectural drawings also include phases that may be proposed in the future.

b) Members of the TSC will be present at synod at the time that these proposals are considered. The TSC requests that these members be allowed to speak to these proposals and answer questions that arise in the discussion of these proposals.

6. Proposal Regarding the Dutch/German Pre-Seminary Requirement

a. Information

1) Synod 1991, when deciding to discontinue teaching all pre-seminary courses at our seminary, made an exception of Greek and Dutch grammar and reading (theological Dutch (Art. 38, B, 3, and 4). The grounds for this were:

a) "We have learned from experience with students who have taken these courses at existing colleges that

- these students are not...capable of reading theological Dutch (Bavinck, Kuyper, et. al.)”
- b) “We are able to train our students intensively and thoroughly in these languages.”
- 2) Synod 2003 (Art. 50, B, 4) gave pre-seminarians “the option of taking either two years of German or two years of Dutch, with the Dutch to be preferred.
- Grounds:
- a) It is very difficult for aspiring seminary students to get a solid Dutch grammar course.
- b) German is more readily available and it is a valuable background for seminary study.”
- 3) The TSC came to Synod 2008 with the recommendation “that the pre-seminary requirement of two years of college-level Dutch or German be eliminated” (Art. 42, A, 2, f).
- a) Synod 2008 decided (Art. 42, B, 7) not to “adopt the TSC’s recommendation to eliminate the pre-seminary requirement of two years of college-level Dutch or German” on the grounds:
- (1) “The inability of our faculty to teach Dutch at this time is a reason, not for dropping the prerequisite entirely, but for waiving it temporarily.”
- (2) “The TSC provides no grounds for dropping the German prerequisite.”
- b) Secondly, Synod 2008 decided (Art. 42, B, 8) to “advise the TSC to waive the Dutch requirement for the time being and to explore the possibility of reintroducing it.” Grounds:
- (1) “Theological Dutch is an important part of our heritage.”
- (2) “Currently there is no theological Dutch training available in other institutions.”
- c) Further, Synod 2008 (Art. 42, B, 9) instructed “the TSC to investigate the possibility of eliminating German as the alternative to Dutch as a prerequisite for admission to the seminary.”
- d) And Synod 2008 instructed “the TSC to explore the possibility of providing two years of Dutch reading” (Art. 42, B, 10).
- e) Finally, Synod 2008 (Art. 42, B, 11) advised “that the practical problems that will surely persist with such a prerequisite be resolved by waiving it for some students,

not by dropping it for all. Ground: If the PRC are serious about their expressed desire that ‘if at all possible...theological research in Dutch writings will still be possible by at least some ministers’ (seminary catalog, p. 11), our seminary should make the provision necessary to ensure that that can and in fact does happen.”

- 4) A sub-committee of the TSC did some investigating.
 - a) First, they conducted a survey among the PRCA clergy asking how much instruction in Dutch they received, how valuable this has been in their ministry, and their judgment of the value of Dutch instruction in our seminary.
 - (1) All of our present clergy (with one exception) received some instruction in Dutch, most from our seminary. But only one of our present clergy can read the Dutch regularly and profitably in his ministry, but he was raised in a Dutch-speaking home and did not receive Dutch instruction in our seminary.
 - (2) Nevertheless, all who responded considered continued Dutch instruction in our seminary to be valuable either as a way to make use of the writings in theology and church polity available only in the Dutch or to maintain the Dutch Reformed heritage.
 - b) Also some research was done to learn about the instruction in Dutch at other institutions.
 - (1) There are very few institutions that give such instruction (obviously because the Dutch language is spoken by only a relatively small group of people today), but all these courses are of very limited value for the purpose of training men to read Dutch theology or church polity.
 - (2) We investigated some on-line programs and some self-taught programs, but they were judged to be of little value for our purposes.
 - c) Conclusions from our study.
 - (1) Even though many of our clergy received good, but limited (to one year of reading) instruction in Dutch, they are able to read the language only with great difficulty. They confessed to doing little reading in the Dutch during their ministries.
 - (2) To train to the level of proficiency that would

benefit one's ministry would require solid instruction in Dutch grammar and at least two years of reading theological Dutch.

(3) For one of the current professors to teach Dutch at the level necessary, it would require extensive training, and given the load they all presently have, it is very doubtful they will be able to take on this responsibility.

(4) Thus there is no "normal" way (in our seminary) one could be trained in order to teach Dutch at the desired level. And given the lack of good instruction in the Dutch language available in the U.S., it is believed that proper training would require that some time be spent in the Netherlands.

b. Recommendations

1) In response to the instruction of Synod 2008 to "investigate the possibility of eliminating German as the alternative to Dutch as a prerequisite for admission to the seminary" (Art. 42, B, 9), the TSC recommends that synod 2009 drop German as an alternative to Dutch as a prerequisite for admission to the seminary.

Grounds:

a) The grounds adopted by Synod 2003 give only minimal proof that German, instead of Dutch, is of value for the work of a minister in the PRCA.

(1) Synod's grounds were:

(a) "It is very difficult for aspiring seminary students to get a solid Dutch grammar course."

(b) "German is more readily available and it is a valuable background for seminary study."

(2) The grounds provided by the TSC added only a little:

(a) "There is some value for a Reformed minister to know the German language. Not only are there theological writings in German, but the Heidelberg Catechism was originally written in German."

(b) "German is more readily available in colleges, and those living outside of Grand Rapids would be able to fill this requirement."

b) The quality of German instruction in other institutions is also inadequate to equip one with the level of

competency to read theological German. None of our current ministers is able to read theological German.

c) Our emphasis has been and is still on taking Dutch, for two reasons:

(1) Our denomination's heritage (in both theology and in church polity) is most emphatically in the Netherlands and not in Germany.

(2) The volume of good, theological Reformed material in the German language is not nearly as great or as significant as that which is in the Dutch language.

2) In response to the instructions of Synod 2008 "to waive the Dutch requirement for the time being and to explore the possibility of reintroducing it" and "to explore the possibility of providing two years of Dutch reading" (Art. 42, B, 8, 10), the TSC recommends that Dutch instruction in our seminary be discontinued and that the prerequisite for entrance into our seminary be eliminated.

Grounds:

a) It is not realistic to expect that our present faculty will be able to take on the training required to teach Dutch grammar and reading in light of their present responsibilities.

b) The reality is that we would have to waive the requirement year after year (for at least the next 15 years) if we do not eliminate it.

c) The two years of Dutch reading, which is what is really needed, would make the load of prerequisites too heavy. The load of a four-year bachelor's degree with a major and with the pre-seminary requisites is already too much for some to complete in four years, without taking summer courses.

d) The requirement of Dutch for all pre-seminarians would require that they be located in the Grand Rapids area in order to be taught it at our seminary—something that is almost impossible for some while they are getting their bachelor's degree.

3) In response to the decision of Synod 2008 (Art. 42, B, 11) "that the practical problems...be resolved by waiving it for some students, not by dropping it for all"—so that "theological research in Dutch writings will still be possible by at least some ministers" (seminary catalog, p. 11), the TSC recommends that Synod 2009 declare itself in favor

of the concept of an incentive (financial) to be provided for a pre-seminarian or a seminarian who has the interest and ability to develop a high level of competency in the Dutch, and mandate the TSC to come to Synod 2010 with a well-worked-out recommendation.

Grounds:

- a) This would better satisfy the desire expressed in the seminary catalog.
 - b) This would better serve to encourage some to equip themselves with the ability to learn the Dutch, so they might be able to translate when it is necessary or beneficial for consistories, classes, or synods.
7. Election of New Members
- a. The terms of A. Brummel, Rev. K. Koole, Rev. J. Laning, and T. Pipe expire.
 - b. Nominations:
Ministers: Rev. K. Koole, Rev. J. Laning
Elders: A. Brummel, T. Pipe

Respectfully submitted,
Theological School Committee
Jon J. Huiskens, Secretary

Appendix 1 Proposed Budget for 2010

	2007 actual expenses	2008 approved budget	2008 actual expenses	2009 proposed budget	2010 proposed budget
Faculty Expenses	364,643.40	358,125	355,452.96	309,412	293,857
Salaries	168,060.00	154,270	154,270.00	130,200	128,700
Prof. Cammenga	42,900.00	43,300	43,300.00	44,400	44,400
Prof. Dykstra	42,900.00	43,300	43,300.00	42,900	41,400
Prof. Engelsma	39,360.00	25,870	25,870.00		
Prof. Gritters	42,900.00	41,800	41,800.00	42,900	42,900
Housing	73,987.00	73,335	75,835.00	62,500	62,500
Prof. Cammenga	18,750.00	20,000	22,500.00	22,500	22,500
Prof. Dykstra	18,750.00	20,000	20,000.00	20,000	20,000
Prof. Engelsma	17,737.00	13,335	13,335.00		
Prof. Gritters	18,750.00	20,000	20,000.00	20,000	20,000
Tuition Allowance	33,148.00	29,885	29,716.00	25,985	17,500
Rector's Stipend	600.00	600	600.00	600	600
Social Security/IRA	33,784.00	37,135	37,546.00	31,457	31,457
Faculty Development	0.00	2,500	20.00	2,500	2,500
Health Insurance	55,064.40	60,400	57,465.96	56,170	50,600
Student Expenses					
Health Insurance	11,531.88	21,000	9,709.17	23,000	10,000
Extra-curricular Activities					2,500

Acts of Synod 2009	33-Rector			Supplements	
	2007 actual expenses	2008 approved budget	2008 actual expenses	2009 proposed budget	2010 proposed budget
Personnel	49,334.25	56,105	51,521.14	69,392	65,192
Salary (Registrar).....	12,000.00	12,360	12,360.00	12,700	12,700
Salary (Secretary).....	20,450.00	21,065	21,065.00	21,600	21,600
Social Security.....	2,482.43	2,560	2,556.97	2,822	2,822
Health Insurance.....	5,269.32	6,200	4,773.14	4,200	
Librarian.....	4,357.50	6,000	5,490.00	20,000	20,000
Archivist.....	0.00	3,000	356.03	3,000	3,000
Janitor.....	4,775.00	4,920	4,920.00	5,070	5,070
Supplies	12,603.71	9,400	10,055.84	11,000	11,000
Printing and mailing.....	11,284.82	7,000	8,481.98	8,600	8,600
Office/Custodial supplies.....	1,296.89	1,400	1,239.35	1,400	1,400
Archives.....	22.00	500	186.47	500	500
Furnishings.....	0.00	500	148.04	500	500
Building	32,115.11	32,500	29,153.80	32,000	32,500
Building maintenance.....	6,539.53	6,000	6,230.93	7,000	7,000
Grounds maintenance.....	4,876.88	5,000	5,061.35	5,000	5,500
Utilities.....	11,709.70	17,000	12,285.52	15,000	15,000
Insurance.....	8,989.00	4,500	5,576.00	5,000	5,000
Miscellaneous	592.00	1,000	4,089.77	1,000	1,500
Major Building Repair	5,000.00	5,000	5,000.00	10,000	10,000
Total	475,820.35	483,130	464,982.68	455,804	426,549

SUPPLEMENT 33 Rector's Report to Synod

May 22, 2009

Synod of the PRC
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brothers,

By the grace of God and the Spirit of Christ, the seminary carried out the work the churches have called us to do in this past year. Because the goal of all our work is preparing men for the gospel ministry, we rejoice in the blessings God has provided in the students, and report on them first.

Students

We heartily recommend senior seminarian Cory Griess for examination before synod with a view to his becoming a pastor in the churches. Mr. Griess' internship in Hull, IA, under Rev. Steven Key's supervision, was profitable. Even though the premature birth of their twins in Sioux Falls was great trial and put a strain on the internship, the work of the internship was carried out with success.

Dr. David Torlach of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Australia has completed the three years of training the EPCA asked for him. The faculty heartily recommend him to the EPC for the internship planned for him. The synod may know the great blessing to the seminary—both students and faculty—when we have the privilege to train men from the EPC.

The third-year students have been assigned internships from July through December, 2009. Mr. Daniel Holstege will do an internship in Randolph, WI, PRC, under the supervision of Rev. D. Kuiper and Randolph's elders. Mr. Martyn McGeown, of our sister church in Northern Ireland, will do an internship in Southwest PRC, Grandville, MI, under the supervision of Rev. A. denHartog and Southwest's elders. We express gratitude to the various pastors, consistories, and congregations, for their willingness to cooperate in the training of pastors.

The faculty licensed the second-year students to speak a word of edification in the churches. Mr. Nathan Decker, Mr. Brian Huizinga, and Mr. Jonathan Mahtani are already scheduled to speak in many of the churches in the denomination this summer.

All of the students have been faithful in their work. (Transcripts of the students' grades are attached to this report for the information of synod.) The Lord answers our prayers for students, and for students who are faithful. The diverse student body—men from Australia, Northern Ireland, the Philippines, and the US—reflects the work the Lord gives the PRC. Along with two graduates, the Lord provides two new students.

Faculty

The professors are also thankful for the grace to labor together in a spirit of cooperation. We are determined to stay the course, at the same time seeking to improve the training in ways that we can. In addition to the regular course, two pre-seminary Greek courses were taught this past year to four pre-seminary students.

Prof. Cammenga ably edited the Protestant Reformed Theological Journal and enabled the faculty to publish two issues this past year.

Prof. Dykstra is the faculty librarian, who with the capable work of Darrel and Bonnie Huiskens has overseen the continued growth of the library. Mr. Charles Terpstra continues to work on the cataloguing of the recently acquired Letis library. We are thankful for the gracious donations for the seminary, many of which are needed for the continued improvement of the library.

Plans proceed for the Calvin Conference in September. Speakers are lined up. Advertising is being done. We are grateful for the generous and energetic help of Southwest PRC's Evangelism Committee for assistance

in planning and advertising this important conference, and to the committee of teachers organizing and overseeing the writing contest.

Staff

No rector's report would be complete without acknowledgment of the capable work of Mr. and Mrs. Don Doezeema. If the work done here goes smoothly, much of that may be attributed to the conscientious and tireless labors of these servants of the churches.

We covet the prayers of the churches for the important work of "committing to faithful men" the biblical doctrine of the Reformed faith, and training them to be courageous soldiers of Christ and humble servants of the churches.

Cordially in Christ,
Prof. Barrett Gritters
(for the faculty)

SUPPLEMENT 34 **Treasurer's Report and Financial Statements**

April 5, 2008

To Synod 2009
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dear Brethren:

Enclosed are the Statements of Financial Position and Statements of Activities of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America for the years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007, together with notes and other financial data related thereto. These financial statements have been reviewed by Kaptein, Dykstra & Company, P.C., Grandville, Michigan and found by them to be presented in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

The assets of the PRCA totaled \$4,840,043 at December 31, 2008, a decrease of 2.9% for the year. Expenditures exceeded our revenues by \$177,749 in 2008, which is shown as "change in net assets" on the Statement of Activities report on page 4. Revenues were lower in 2008 primarily because of net losses incurred on investments, a reduction in gifts and bequests, and lower church collections. Expenditures in 2008 were higher than in 2007 primarily because of higher mission field expenses, increased aid to students, and increased support for foreign students.

A large percentage of the assets of the PRCA continue to be held in bank or investment accounts (about 77%), which make them very liquid resources to support our activities. Other assets include property and equipment that support our Theological School and mission activities, and the cash value of life insurance owned by the PRCA.

The Emeritus Fund has both restricted and permanently restricted portions (see Note F), and totaled \$1,851,802 at December 31, 2008. The Fund decreased by 9.5% in 2008, primarily due to the net losses on investments. In addition, emeritus payments did increase in 2008 by about \$6,000 over the amount that was budgeted.

The current balance in the Emeritus Fund is approximately 98% of the projection prepared in 2003. During the last five years, assessment income (net of retirement payments) added significantly to the Fund balance. However, collections, gifts, interest, and market value changes were below projection. A revised long-term projection has recently been prepared and is being presented to synod for its review and consideration.

We thank the Lord for His continued blessings on our denomination. May He also guide synod again this year in all of its labors.

In Christ's service,
w.s. David M. Ondersma, Treasurer

Accountants' Review Report

April 30, 2009

To the Board of Trustees
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Grand Rapids, Michigan

We have reviewed the accompanying statements of financial position of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (a non-profit organization) as of December 31, 2008 and 2007, the related statements of activities and cash flows, for the years then ended, in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services established by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants. All information included in these financial statements is the representation of the management of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America.

A review consists principally of inquiries of the synodical treasurer and analytical procedures applied to financial data. It is substantially less in scope than an audit in accordance with generally accepted auditing standards, the objective of which is the expression of an opinion regarding the financial statements taken as a whole. Accordingly, we do not express such an opinion.

Based on our review, we are not aware of any material modifications that should be made to the accompanying financial statements in order for them to be in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Our review was made for the sole purpose of expressing limited assurance that there are no material modifications that should be made to the financial statements in order for them to be in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles. The information included in accompany-

ing schedules is presented only for supplementary analysis purposes. Such information has been subjected to the inquiry and analytical procedures applied in the review of the basic financial statements, and we are not aware of any material modifications that should be made to it.

w.s. Kaptein Dykstra & Company P.C.

Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Statements of Financial Position

December 31, 2008 and 2007

	2008	2007
ASSETS		
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents (Note B)	\$497,284	\$448,413
Current portion of note receivable	-	<u>1,740</u>
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	497,284	450,153
FIXED ASSETS		
Office equipment	43,766	53,001
Buildings (Note C)	1,505,345	1,476,334
Land improvements	27,043	27,043
Less accumulated depreciation	<u>(450,786)</u>	<u>(423,588)</u>
	1,125,368	1,132,790
OTHER ASSETS		
Flex Plan Insurance Deposit	1,000	-
Cash value of life insurance (Note D)	229,582	195,723
Note receivable — net (Note E)	-	1,640
Investments (Note F)	<u>2,986,809</u>	<u>3,201,984</u>
	<u>3,217,391</u>	<u>3,203,624</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>4,840,043</u>	<u>4,982,290</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
CURRENT LIABILITIES		
Accrued expenses	<u>16,599</u>	<u>450</u>
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	16,599	450
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES		
Funds held in trust (Note G)	<u>194,767</u>	<u>175,423</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	211,366	175,873
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	1,918,437	1,857,460
Temporarily restricted	2,403,232	2,649,162
Permanently restricted	<u>307,008</u>	<u>299,795</u>
	<u>4,628,677</u>	<u>4,806,417</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	<u>\$4,840,043</u>	<u>\$4,982,290</u>

Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Statements of Activities
Years Ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

	2008			TOTALS	
	Temporarily		Permanently	2008	2007
	Unrestricted	Restricted	Restricted		
REVENUES					
Assessments	\$1,240,321	\$300,119	\$ —	\$1,540,440	\$1,395,625
Special collections	62,273	81,241	—	143,514	156,329
Other churches	—	40,623	—	40,623	20,563
Tuition	1,100	—	—	1,100	—
Sale of books/DVDs	10,306	845	—	11,151	17,167
Interest and dividends	23,917	78,427	4,436	106,780	134,396
Bequests and gifts	500	1,050	—	1,550	44,893
Life insurance—cash value	—	33,859	—	33,859	31,724
Miscellaneous	5,740	—	—	5,740	5,900
Unrealized gain (loss) on investments	(30, 551)	(340,822)	2,777	(368,596)	(17,561)
TOTAL REVENUES	1,313,606	195,342	7,213	1,516,161	1,789,036
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and benefits	513,705	2,259	—	515,964	513,985
Subsidies to churches	132,253	—	—	132,253	103,103
Emeritus payments	—	246,866	—	246,866	234,415
Insurance—long-term care	—	49,231	—	49,231	48,276
Mission field expenses:					
Eastern home missions	56,714	367	—	57,081	47,765
Western home missions	55,824	—	—	55,824	41,829
Sioux Falls Mission	58,256	—	—	58,256	61,544
Philippines mission field	36,305	—	—	36,305	9,300
Northern Ireland field	—	—	—	—	49,201
Exploration of new fields	9,842	—	—	9,842	6,826
Radio—Ref'd Wit. Hour	35,960	—	—	35,960	27,381
Denom. com. gen'l exp.	17,288	—	—	17,288	18,702
Assistance to N.I.	46,354	—	—	46,354	—
Theological School expenses:					
Health insurance	71,948	—	—	71,948	71,866
General insurance	5,576	—	—	5,576	8,989
Building/prop. main.	11,292	2,585	—	13,877	11,416
Supplies	10,056	—	—	10,056	12,604
Utilities	12,286	—	—	12,286	11,710
Classical expenses	44,763	—	—	44,763	39,713
Synodical expense	17,874	—	—	17,874	15,396
Depreciation	40,669	—	—	40,669	35,467
Foreign student support	—	100,034	—	100,034	77,074
Student aid payments	48,835	13,590	—	62,425	44,745
Professional fees	2,850	—	—	2,850	2,850
Printing	18,398	148	—	18,546	35,545
Miscellaneous	14,017	17,756	—	31,773	29,761
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	1,261,065	432,836	—	1,693,901	1,559,463
CHANGE IN NET ASSETS	52,541	(237,494)	7,213	(177,740)	229,573
NET ASSETS					
Beginning of year	1,857,460	2,649,162	299,795	4,806,417	4,576,844
Transfers & adjustments	8,436	(8,436)	—	—	—
End of year	\$1,918,437	\$2,403,232	\$307,008	\$4,628,677	\$4,806,417

Protestant Reformed Churches in America**Statements of Cash Flows****For years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007**

	2008	2007
Cash Flows From Operating Activities:		
Change in net assets	\$(177,740)	\$229,573
Adjustments for expenses not requiring cash:		
Depreciation	40,669	35,467
Changes in assets and liabilities:		
(Increase) decrease in deposits	(1,000)	-
(Increase) decrease in cash value		
of life insurance	(33,859)	(31,725)
Increase (decrease) in		
accrued expenses	16,149	450
Interest and dividends restricted		
for reinvestment	(4,436)	(4,166)
Interest and dividends		
used for investments	(106,780)	(134,396)
Unrealized (gain) loss		
on investments	<u>368,596</u>	<u>17,561</u>
Total Adjustments	(279,339)	(116,809)
Net Cash Provided (Used)		
by Operating Activities	101,599	112,764
Cash Flows From Investing Activities:		
Net purchase of investments	(33,169)	(90,446)
Purchase of fixed assets and		
leasehold improvement	(46,719)	(246,932)
Collections of notes receivable	<u>3,380</u>	<u>1,740</u>
Net Cash Provided (Used)		
by Investing Activities	(76,508)	(335,638)
Cash Flows From Financing Activities:		
Interest and dividends restricted		
for reinvestment	4,436	4,166
Increase (decrease) in monies		
held in trust fund	<u>19,344</u>	<u>57,052</u>
Net Cash Provided (Used)		
by Financing Activities	<u>23,780</u>	<u>61,218</u>
Net Increase (Decrease) in		
Cash and Cash Equivalent (48,871)	(48,871)	(161,656)
Beginning cash and cash equivalents	<u>448,413</u>	<u>610,069</u>
Ending cash and cash equivalents	\$497,284	\$448,413

Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Notes to Financial Statements
for the years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

Net Assets and Purposes of Net Assets

Unrestricted Net Assets include the cumulative receipts and expenses of various funds that are used for the following purposes:

Catechism Books Fund — the printing and distribution of catechism books for use in the churches.

Classis Fund — the periodic meetings and operations of Classis East and West.

Contact Churches Fund — the establishment and maintenance of contact with churches outside of the denomination.

Domestic Missions Fund — the development and maintenance of mission fields under the supervision of the Domestic Mission Committee (DMC).

Foreign Missions Fund — the development and maintenance of mission fields under the supervision of the Foreign Mission Committee.

Needy Churches Fund — the support of the financial operations of certain congregations who request help and who show financial need.

Student Aid Fund — the financial support of men who are studying to become ministers in the Protestant Reformed Churches and who show financial need.

Synodical Fund — the operations and annual meeting of Synod.

Theological School Fund — the operations of the Theological School in Grandville, Michigan.

Temporarily Restricted Net Assets include the cumulative receipts and expenses of certain funds that are temporarily restricted for the following purposes:

Emeritus Fund — the support of retired ministers and their surviving spouses.

Seminary Student Assistance Fund — the support of seminary students who show financial need in excess of that provided by the Student Aid Fund.

Foreign Student Assistance Fund — the partial support of living expenses of students sent to the PR Seminary from foreign countries by churches with whom we have significant contact.

DMC Major Building Fund — the major repairs of mission properties and their grounds.

DMC Special Mission Fund — the support of unbudgeted projects of the Domestic Mission Committee.

Pastor Training Fund—Foreign Lands — the theological training of pastors and missionaries of foreign countries.

Life Insurance CSV Fund — the accumulation of cash surrender value on life insurance policies owned by the PRCA.

Theological School Committee (TSC) Mission Fund—the training of seminarians specifically for the work of missions.

TSC Major Building Fund—the major repairs of the seminary building and its grounds.

TSC Bequest Fund—the holding of gifts and bequests that have not yet been designated as to their use by the TSC.

TSC Research Center Fund—the study of the historical and theological development of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Permanently Restricted Net Assets include the cumulative receipts and expenses of a certain fund that is permanently restricted to the following purpose:

Emeritus Fund—the generation of investment income to support retired ministers and/or their surviving spouses. The donor of these monies stipulated that 30% of the interest derived from investments in this fund must accumulate in the fund to increase its principal. The remaining 70% is transferred annually to the temporarily restricted Emeritus Fund to fund current retirement needs.

NOTE B — CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

Cash consists of an interest-bearing checking account for the general operating purposes of the PRCA, which had a balance of \$314,207 as of December 31, 2008, and another deposit account consisting of excess funds which had an aggregate balance of \$183,077.

For purposes of the Statement of Cash Flows, cash equivalents include time deposits, certificates of deposit, and all highly liquid debt instruments with original maturities of three months or less.

NOTE C — BUILDINGS AND LAND IMPROVEMENTS

The building and land improvement account reflects fixed assets held by the PRCA. It includes the original cost of the construction of the seminary building, plus costs in later years for a major remodeling project and replacement of the seminary roof. Also included are the costs of four homes which are used by missionaries in their respective fields and a church building used as a mission site in Pittsburgh, PA.

NOTE D — CASH VALUE LIFE INSURANCE

The PRCA is the owner of two Joint-Life Protection Policies donated in 1998 and 2002, the premiums of which are paid by the donors. One is a \$1 million benefit from Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company, and the other is a \$1 million benefit from John Hancock Life Insurance Company. The policies are payable upon the death of the second donor

Supplements 34-Treasurer Acts of Synod 2009

spouse insured, and had a cash surrender value of \$229,582 and \$195,723 as of December 31, 2008 and 2007, respectively.

NOTE E — NOTE RECEIVABLE

A loan of \$35,000 was made to Professor David Engelsma on April 15, 1989. This loan is being retired at a rate of \$145 per month without interest. The balance sheet on December 31, 2007, reflected the current and non-current portions of this note receivable. As of the date of Professor Engelsma's retirement on August 31, 2008, this loan was paid off.

	2008	2007
Balance due at Dec. 31	\$ —	\$3,380
Less current portion	—	(1,740)
Long-term balance due	\$ —	\$1,640

NOTE F — INVESTMENTS

Investments as of December 31, 2008 are summarized as follows:

	Fair Market Value
Unrestricted:	
Excess Funds	\$358,165
Temporarily restricted:	
Emeritus Fund	\$1,544,794
Pastors Training Fund—Foreign Lands	290,864
Theological School Committee Funds	192,671
DMC Funds	200,913
Contact Committee Funds	26,010
Seminary Student Assistance Fund	66,384
Permanently restricted:	
Emeritus Fund	\$307,008
Total	\$2,986,809

The following schedule summarizes the investment return and its classification in the statement of activities for the year ended December 31, 2008:

	Unrestricted	Temporarily Restricted	Permanently Restricted	Total
Interest and dividends	\$23,917	78,427	4,436	106,780
Market value gains (losses)	(30,551)	(340,822)	2,777	(368,596)
Total investment return	\$(6,634)	(262,395)	7,213	(261,816)

NOTE G — FUNDS HELD IN TRUST

Certain funds being held by the PRCA for investment purposes are being held in trust only and are not included as part of the net assets of the PRCA. These funds are segregated and held as long-term liabilities of the PRCA since monies in these funds will eventually be paid to the organizations to which the funds belong. Funds held in trust as of December 31 were as follows:

Acts of Synod 2009	34-Treasurer	Supplements
	2008	2007
Covenant PRC, Northern Ireland (Building Fund)	\$168,758	\$143,413
Berean PRC, Philippines (Building Fund)	26,009	14,022
Special Projects (Southeast Asia)	—	<u>17,988</u>
Totals	\$194,767	\$175,423

NOTE H—ASSESSMENTS

Each individual congregation is assessed a fixed amount (\$823 per family in 2008 and \$750 in 2007) that is determined by synod based on the number of families in each congregation. The assessments are established at synod in June and are recognized as income the following year. The offsetting credits made to the various funds were allocated by the synod as follows:

Funds	Allocation Basis	
	2008	2007
Classis	\$ 18	\$ 16
Contact Churches	—	4
Domestic Missions	326	130
Emeritus	155	186
Foreign Missions	—	26
Needy Churches	30	79
Student Aid	32	19
Synod	3	30
Theological School	<u>259</u>	<u>260</u>
Totals	\$ 823	\$ 750

All assessments were paid in full as of December 31, 2008 and 2007.

NOTE I—EMERITUS BENEFITS

There were ten households who received financial support in the form of emeritus benefits during 2008. The amount of each benefit is determined by need based on the requests of the beneficiaries.

Current funding for this support comes from assessments from congregations in the PRCA. In addition, funding is also available from the emeritus restricted funds on hand and invested in the amount of \$1,851,802.

This account is reviewed annually and no liability has been recognized for future costs. Retirement benefits paid for the years ended December 31, 2008 and 2007 are \$246,866 and \$234,415, respectively.

Supplementary Information
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Detail of Statement of Activities
For the Years Ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

Description	December 31, 2007	December 31, 2008	Catechism Books	Classis	Contact Churches
Fund Balances, January 1	4,576,843.80	4,806,416.75	2,696.19	(9,177.89)	126,515.77
REVENUES					
Assessments	1,395,625.00	1,540,440.05	—	33,691.28	—
Special collections	156,329.39	143,513.88	—	—	—
Other Churches	20,562.95	40,622.95	—	—	—
Tuition	—	1,100.00	—	—	—
Sale of books/DVDs	17,166.92	11,151.26	4,294.15	—	—
Interest and Dividends	134,396.02	106,779.58	—	—	—
Bequests and Gifts	44,893.11	1,550.00	—	—	—
Life Insurance — Cash Value	31,724.45	33,859.35	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	5,900.10	5,740.00	—	—	—
Unrealized Gain on Invest.	(17,562.26)	(368,595.65)	—	—	—
Total Revenues	1,789,035.68	1,516,161.42	4,294.15	33,691.28	—
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Benefits	513,984.56	515,963.76	—	—	—
Subsidies to Churches	103,102.93	132,252.60	—	—	—
Emeritus Payments	234,415.00	246,866.00	—	—	—
Insurance—Long-Term Care	48,276.00	49,230.00	—	—	—
Mission Field Expenses:					
Eastern Home Missions	47,765.32	57,080.63	—	—	—
Western Home Missions	41,829.40	55,824.00	—	—	—
Sioux Falls Mission	61,544.03	58,256.17	—	—	—
Philippines Mission Field	9,300.71	36,305.35	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Field	49,201.44	—	—	—	—
Exploration of New Fields	6,826.25	9,841.99	—	—	—
Radio—Reformed Witness Hour	27,380.90	35,960.30	—	—	—
Committee General Expenses	18,702.63	17,287.91	—	—	8,035.26
Assistance to Northern Ireland	—	46,354.17	—	—	46,354.17
Theological School Expenses:					
Health Insurance	71,865.60	71,948.27	—	—	—
General Insurance	8,989.00	5,576.00	—	—	—
Building/Property	11,416.41	13,877.28	—	—	—
Supplies	12,603.71	10,055.84	—	—	—
Utilities	11,709.70	12,285.52	—	—	—
Classical Expenses	39,713.25	44,763.50	—	44,763.50	—
Synodical Expenses	15,395.98	17,873.99	(21.12)	—	85.92
Depreciation	35,466.53	40,669.25	—	—	—
Foreign Student Support	77,073.64	100,033.79	—	—	—
Student Aid Payments	44,745.00	62,425.06	—	—	—
Professional Fees	2,850.00	2,850.00	—	—	—
Printing	35,545.34	18,546.19	8,710.00	—	—
Miscellaneous	29,759.40	31,773.08	—	—	—
Total Expenditures	1,559,462.73	1,693,901.45	8,688.88	44,763.50	54,389.43
Net Income	229,572.95	(177,740.03)	(4,394.73)	(11,072.22)	(54,389.43)
Transfers and Adjustments	—	—	—	—	—
Fund Balance	4,806,416.75	4,628,676.72	(1,698.54)	(20,250.11)	72,126.34
Unrestricted Funds—Dec. 31	1,857,460.24	1,918,437.41	(1,698.54)	(20,250.11)	72,126.34
Temporarily Restricted—Dec. 31	2,649,161.66	2,403,231.39	—	—	—
Permanently Restricted—Dec. 31	299,794.85	307,007.92	—	—	—

Supplementary Information
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Detail of Statement of Activities
For the Years Ended December 31, 2006 and 2005

	Domestic Missions	Foreign Missions	Needy Churches	Student Aid	Synodical
Fund Balances, January 1	464,553.41	416,275.72	178,855.19	5,020.52	103,589.76
REVENUES					
Assessments	605,186.46	—	56,152.13	59,895.60	5,615.21
Special collections	31,135.77	31,137.09	—	—	—
Other Churches	—	—	—	—	—
Tuition	—	—	—	—	—
Sale of books/DVDs	—	—	—	—	6,012.11
Interest and Dividends	—	—	—	—	23,917.42
Bequests and Gifts	—	—	—	500.00	—
Life Insurance — Cash Value	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	5,740.00	—	—	—
Unrealized Gain on Invest.	—	—	—	—	(30,551.12)
Total Revenues	636,322.23	36,877.09	56,152.13	60,395.60	4,993.62
EXPENDITURES					
Salaries and Benefits	161,425.00	—	—	—	7,544.76
Subsidies to Churches	—	—	132,252.60	—	—
Emeritus Payments	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance—Long-Term Care	—	—	—	—	—
Mission Field Expenses:					
Eastern Home Missions	56,713.13	—	—	—	—
Western Home Missions	55,824.00	—	—	—	—
Sioux Falls Mission	58,256.17	—	—	—	—
Philippines Mission Field	—	36,305.35	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Field	—	—	—	—	—
Exploration of New Fields	9,841.99	—	—	—	—
Radio—Reformed Witness Hour	35,960.30	—	—	—	—
Committee General Expenses	6,918.70	2,333.95	—	—	—
Assistance to Northern Ireland	—	—	—	—	—
Theological School Expenses:					
Health Insurance	—	—	—	—	—
General Insurance	—	—	—	—	—
Building/Property	—	—	—	—	—
Supplies	—	—	—	—	—
Utilities	—	—	—	—	—
Classical Expenses	—	—	—	—	—
Synodical Expenses	—	—	—	—	17,895.11
Depreciation	23,709.29	—	—	—	—
Foreign Student Support	—	—	—	—	—
Student Aid Payments	—	—	—	48,835.00	—
Professional Fees	—	—	—	—	2,850.00
Printing	—	—	—	—	9,688.19
Miscellaneous	—	—	9,006.55	—	920.61
Total Expenditures	408,648.58	38,639.30	141,259.15	48,835.00	38,898.67
Net Income	227,673.65	(1,762.21)	(85,107.02)	11,560.60	(33,905.05)
Transfers and Adjustments	—	—	—	—	—
Fund Balance	692,227.06	414,513.51	93,748.17	16,581.12	69,684.71
Unrestricted Funds—Dec. 31	692,227.06	414,513.51	93,748.17	16,581.12	69,684.71
Temporarily Restricted—Dec. 31	—	—	—	—	—
Permanently Restricted—Dec. 31	—	—	—	—	—

Supplementary Information
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Detail of Statement of Activities
For the Years Ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

	Theological School	Unrestrict. Fund Total	Emeritus	Seminary St. Assist.	Foreign Student	DMC Maj. Bldg.
Fund Balances, January 1	569,131.57	1,857,460.24	1,747,853.22	54,311.32	46,730.06	—
REVENUES						
Assessments	479,780.04	1,240,320.72	290,119.33	—	—	5,000.00
Special collections	—	62,272.86	28,968.69	23,980.69	28,291.37	—
Other Churches	—	—	—	—	40,622.95	—
Tuition	1,100.00	1,100.00	—	—	—	—
Sale of books/DVDs	—	10,306.26	—	—	—	—
Interest and Dividends	—	23,917.42	56,055.57	265.09	—	—
Bequests and Gifts	—	500.00	—	1,000.00	—	—
Life Insurance — Cash Value	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	5,740.00	—	—	—	—
Unrealized Gain on Invest.	—	(30,551.12)	(282,106.22)	417.30	—	—
Total Revenues	480,880.04	1,313,606.14	93,037.64	25,663.08	68,914.32	5,000.00
EXPENDITURES						
Salaries and Benefits	344,735.00	513,704.76	—	—	—	—
Subsidies to Churches	—	132,252.60	—	—	—	—
Emeritus Payments	—	—	246,866.00	—	—	—
Insurance—Long-Term Care	—	—	49,230.80	—	—	—
Mission Field Expenses:						
Eastern Home Missions	—	56,713.13	—	—	—	—
Western Home Missions	—	55,824.00	—	—	—	—
Sioux Falls Mission	—	58,256.17	—	—	—	—
Philippines Mission Field	—	36,305.35	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Field	—	—	—	—	—	—
Exploration of New Fields	—	9,841.99	—	—	—	—
Radio—Ref. Witness Hour	—	35,960.30	—	—	—	—
Committee General Exp.	—	17,287.91	—	—	—	—
Assistance to Northern Ireland	—	46,354.17	—	—	—	—
Theol. School Exp.						
Health Insurance	71,948.27	71,948.27	—	—	—	—
General Insurance	5,576.00	5,576.00	—	—	—	—
Building/Property	11,292.28	11,292.28	—	—	—	—
Supplies	10,055.84	10,055.84	—	—	—	—
Utilities	12,285.52	12,285.52	—	—	—	—
Classical Expenses	—	44,763.50	—	—	—	—
Synodical Expenses	—	17,873.99	—	—	—	—
Depreciation	16,959.96	40,669.25	—	—	—	—
Foreign Student Support	—	—	—	—	68,863.44	—
Student Aid Payments	—	48,835.00	—	13,590.06	—	—
Professional Fees	—	2,850.00	—	—	—	—
Printing	—	18,398.19	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	4,089.77	14,016.93	—	—	—	—
Total Expenditures	476,942.64	1,261,065.15	296,096.80	13,590.06	68,863.44	—
Net Income	3,937.40	52,540.99	(203,059.16)	12,073.02	50.88	5,000.00
Transfers and Adjustments	8436.18	8436.18	—	—	—	—
Fund Balance	581,505.15	1,918,437.41	1,544,794.06	66,384.34	46,780.94	5,000.00
Unrestrict. Funds—Dec. 31	581,505.15	1,918,437.41	—	—	—	—
Temporarily Restrict.—Dec. 31	—	—	1,544,794.06	66,384.34	46,780.94	5,000.00
Permanently Restrict.—Dec. 31	—	—	—	—	—	—

Supplementary Information
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Detail of Statement of Activities
For the Years Ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

	DMC Mission	Special Train-For.	Pastors Cash Value	Life Ins. Cash Value	TSC Mission	TSC Maj. Bld.	TSC Bequest
Fund Balances, January 1	36,879.85	313,917.33	195,722.65	54,006.78	10,953.44	185,640.67	
REVENUES							
Assessments	—	—	—	—	5,000.00	—	—
Special collections	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Other Churches	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Tuition	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sale of books/DVDs	845.00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Interest and Dividends	1,722.30	14,307.99	—	1,225.35	272.40	4,500.14	—
Bequests and Gifts	50.00	—	—	—	—	—	—
Life Insurance—Cash Value	—	—	33,859.35	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Unrealized Gain on Invest.	(2,700.01)	(6,190.86)	—	(9,923.31)	(2,266.13)	(37,398.08)	—
Total Revenues	(82.71)	8,117.13	33,859.35	(8,697.96)	3,006.27	(32,897.94)	
EXPENDITURES							
Salaries and Benefits	—	—	—	—	—	2,259.00	—
Subsidies to Churches	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Emeritus Payments	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insurance—Long-Term Care	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mission Field Expenses:							
Eastern Home Missions	367.50	—	—	—	—	—	—
Western Home Missions	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Sioux Falls Mission	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Philippines Mission Field	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Field	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Exploration of New Fields	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Radio—Ref. Witness Hour	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Committee General Expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Assistance to Northern Ireland	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Theological School Expenses:							
Health Insurance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
General Insurance	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Building/Property	—	—	—	—	2,585.00	—	—
Supplies	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Utilities	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Classical Expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Synodical Expenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Depreciation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Foreign Student Support	—	31,170.35	—	—	—	—	—
Student Aid Payments	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Professional Fees	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Printing	—	—	—	148.00	—	—	—
Miscellaneous	9,274.91	—	—	7,266.24	—	1,215.00	—
Total Expenditures	9,642.41	31,170.35	—	7,414.24	2,585.00	3,474.00	
Net Income	(9,725.12)	(23,053.22)	33,859.35	(16,112.20)	421.27	(36,371.94)	
Transfers and Adjustments	—	—	—	—	—	—	(8,436.18)
Fund Balance	27,154.73	290,864.11	229,582.00	37,894.58	11,374.71	140,832.55	
Unrestricted Funds—Dec. 31	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Temporarily Restr.—Dec. 31	27,154.73	290,864.11	229,582.00	37,894.58	11,374.71	140,832.55	—
Permanently Restr.—Dec. 31	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Supplementary Information
Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Detail of Statement of Activities
For the Years Ended December 31, 2008 and 2007

	TSC Research Cent.	Temporarily Restrict. Total	Emeritus Perm. Restrict.
Fund Balances, January 1	3,146.34	2,649,161.66	299,794.85
REVENUES			
Assessments	—	300,119.33	—
Special collections	—	81,2441.02	—
Other Churches	—	40,622.95	—
Tuition	—	—	—
Sale of books/DVDs	—	845.00	—
Interest and Dividends	77.66	78,426.50	4,435.66
Bequests and Gifts	—	1,050.00	—
Life Insurance—Cash Value	—	33,859.35	—
Miscellaneous	—	—	—
Unrealized Gain on Invest.	(654.63)	(340,821.94)	2,777.41
Total Revenues	(576.97)	195,342.21	7,213.07
EXPENDITURES			
Salaries and Benefits	—	2,259.00	—
Subsidies to Churches	—	—	—
Emeritus Payments	—	246,866.00	—
Insurance—Long-Term Care	—	49,230.80	—
Mission Field Expenses:			
Eastern Home Missions	—	367.50	—
Western Home Missions	—	—	—
Sioux Falls Mission	—	—	—
Philippines Mission Field	—	—	—
Northern Ireland Field	—	—	—
Exploration of New Fields	—	—	—
Radio—Ref. Witness Hour	—	—	—
Committee General Expenses	—	—	—
Assistance to Northern Ireland	—	—	—
Theological School Expenses:			
Health Insurance	—	—	—
General Insurance	—	—	—
Building/Property	—	2,585.00	—
Supplies	—	—	—
Utilities	—	—	—
Classical Expenses	—	—	—
Synodical Expenses	—	—	—
Depreciation	—	—	—
Foreign Student Support	—	100,033.79	—
Student Aid Payments	—	13,590.06	—
Professional Fees	—	—	—
Printing	—	148.00	—
Miscellaneous	—	17,756.15	—
Total Expenditures	—	432,836.30	—
Net Income	(576.97)	(237,494.09)	7,213.07
Transfers and Adjustments	—	(8,436.18)	—
Fund Balance	2,569.37	2,403,231.39	307,007.92
Unrestricted Funds—Dec. 31	—	—	—
Temporarily Restr.—Dec. 31	2,569.37	2,403,231.39	—
Permanently Restrict.—Dec. 31	—	—	307,007.92

SUPPLEMENT 35 PRCA Fund Balances and Projected 2010 Budget

	Fund Balance 12/31/08 (1)	Non-Cash Adjustments (2)	Fund Cash Balance 12/31/08 (3)	Projected 2009 Changes (4)	YE 2009 Est. Cash Balance (5)	Budget 2009 Proposed (6)	Adjustments (7)	Adjusted Budget (8)	2010 Rate/Family (1,909 Families) Adjusted (9)
Catechism	-1,699	0	-1,699	1,000	-699	0		0	0
Classes (E&W)	-20,250	0	-20,250	5,200	-15,050	55,000		55,000	29
Contact Committee	72,126	0	72,126	300	72,426	61,250		61,250	32
Domestic Missions	692,227	-731,038	-38,811	67,800	28,989	446,890			
Mission pledges						-51,000			
Church Collections						-32,000			
Total Domestic Missions						363,890	-100,000	263,890	138
Emeritus General	1,544,794	-1,544,794	0	0	N/A	463,300		463,300	243
Emeritus (Restricted)	307,008	-307,008	0	0	N/A	0		0	
Foreign Missions	414,514	0	414,514	-10,050	404,464	277,250			
Church Collections						-33,000			
Net Total Foreign Missions						244,250	-96,000	148,250	78
Needy Churches	93,748	0	93,748	-157,600	-63,852	273,464		273,464	143
Student Aid	16,581	0	16,581	-9,800	6,781	54,500		54,500	29
Synodical	69,685	0	69,685	-10,000	59,685	15,000		15,000	8
Theological School	581,505	-394,330	187,175	1,804	188,979	426,549		426,549	223
Totals	3,770,239	-2,977,170	793,069	-111,346	681,723	1,957,203	-196,000	1,761,203	923

Supplements

35-Fund Balances

Acts of Synod 2009

FUND BALANCE REPORT COLUMN DESCRIPTIONS

(1) **Fund Balance: December 31, 2008** the financial balances in the various funds maintained by synod at the end of the last fiscal year (see 2008 YE Financial Statements – Supplementary Information).

(2) **Non-Cash Adjustments:** not all of the balances in the various funds are represented by cash equivalent holdings. A portion of the fund balance may have arisen from non-cash assets (e.g., properties and other fixed assets) or from restricted assets that are not readily available to be used (e.g., receivables that must still be collected). Since synod must budget according to the cash flow that is available to it, the fund balances are adjusted to reflect only those amounts that are liquid cash assets. The following adjustments have been made as of YE:

Domestic Missions: undepreciated values of parsonage in NI (\$66,000); parsonage in Pittsburgh (\$163,305; church building in Pittsburgh (\$150,866); parsonage in Spokane (\$118,756); parsonage in Sioux Falls (\$224,690); video-conferencing equipment in Pittsburgh (\$7,421). Total adjustment: \$731,038.

Emeritus: balances deemed by synod or a donor to be restricted to the purpose of supporting our retired ministers (General Emeritus: \$1,544,794 and Emeritus Restricted \$307,008).

Theological School: seminary building, improvements and equipment, net of depreciation (\$394,330).

(3) **Fund Cash Balance:** that portion of the fund balance at December 31, 2008 representing cash assets available to be used by synod for budget purposes.

(4) **Projected 2009 Changes:** those increases (decreases) in the fund cash balances expected to occur from activity during 2009. Schedule 4 analyzes this activity and calculates the expected fund changes.

(5) **YE 2009 Estimated Cash Balance:** net cash balances in each fund estimated to be available for budget purposes by Synod 2010.

Proposed Budget 2010:

(6) Proposed: budgets proposed in the agenda by each committee, and summarized in Schedule 3.

(7) Adjustments: decisions of synod to change original budgets or to use excess fund balances.

(8) Adjusted Budget: budgets as adjusted and presented for adoption.

2010 Assessment Rate per Family: the budget is divided by number of families recorded in the agenda, as of January 2009 (see Stated Clerk's report on page 199):

(9) Adjusted Budget: Assessment rate as adjusted and presented for adoption (see column 8).

SUPPLEMENT 36

Appeal: Rev. M. Dick

April, 2009

Brethren and Delegates of the Synod of the
Protestant Reformed Churches, 2009:

I hereby appeal to synod regarding the decision of the May 14, 2008 Classis East not to sustain an aspect of the protest I made to it concerning some of the decisions of the January/February 2008 assembly of Classis East.

Specifically, I believe that the May 2008 Classis was in error in not sustaining my protest of the decision of the January/February 2008 Classis East to enter into the matter of the validation of my reasons for homeschooling, by which, as I contend, it overstepped its bounds of authority.

I urge the synod to declare the May 14, 2008 Classis in error for not sustaining that aspect of my protest, and to uphold, therefore, my protest of the January/February Classis 2008 in this matter.

Some material that is pertinent to my case is already published in the Acts of Synod 2008. This includes: Pertinent decisions of September 2007 Classis East (Acts, pp. 146-149; 161, 162; 173-176; 204-206; 211-215); the Position Paper of Grace Consistory on homeschooling (Acts, pp. 126-131); correspondence of Grace Consistory with those who protested the Grace Consistory to the September 2007 Classis (Acts, pp. 131-143; 181-203).

In addition to this, included with my appeal for the consideration of the delegates of Synod 2009 are the following: the November 2007 letter of the Grace Consistory to its congregation (Appendix 1, p. 254); Grace Consistory's protest to the January/February 2008 assembly of Classis East (Appendix 2, p. 261); the response of the assembly of the January/February 2008 Classis (Appendix 3, p. 286); my protest to May 14, 2008 meeting of Classis East (Appendix 4, p. 295); the response of the Classis to my protest (Appendix 5, p. 322).

Before I present my appeal, proper, I would like, if I may, to present the following as a preface.

First, I would like to apologize for whatever confusion may have been caused at the last year's synod by my withdrawing an appeal I had intended to make there. The reason I withdrew the appeal was because I was made aware, while I was making appeal to the May 14, 2008 Classis, that it was not proper procedure for me to have lodged an appeal with synod about the very matters that were not yet finished at the classical level. So I withdrew my protest. Since, however, the May 14, 2008 Classis did not, in my opinion, satisfactorily answer my protest of certain of its previous decisions, I feel compelled, at this point, to present my case before the synod of our churches.

Second, I believe that a recounting of the highlights of the history of my case will be beneficial to the delegates of the synod, many of whom may not be so well acquainted with what has gone on at Grace PRC and in the deliberations of Classis East concerning my homeschooling. So I present this history to the synod. The first part is taken, verbatim, from the protest of Grace Consistory to the January 2008 assembly of Classis East. What has occurred subsequent to the events summarized by Grace Consistory is summarized in my own words.

Third, I would like, as well, to set forth, by way of introduction, certain matters of interpretation of the Church Order, consideration of which, I believe, is important for the synod in its deliberations concerning my case.

History

Grace Consistory has taken the position, set forth in its Position Paper on Homeschooling, January 2007, that Rev. Dick has the right to educate his children at home. Scripture grants, and the Reformed faith acknowledges, this right to him as a parent. Further, it is Grace Consistory's position that Rev. Dick may exercise his parental right to homeschool, though he is an officebearer in the church, for neither Scripture nor the Reformed faith prohibits or regards unfavorably an officer's educating his children at home, nor does Scripture and the Reformed faith favor and promote any one kind of Christian education for any of the children of the church. Grace's Consistory understands that Rev. Dick, in so educating his children at home, is seeking to address the needs of his family; he is convicted that for his house to be "ruled well," and his children's needs to be met, he must educate them, at this time, primarily at home. Grace Consistory recognizes, as well, that Rev. Dick is willing and able to minister to the needs of the church family at Grace, also in regards to the education of all of the children of the flock.

Concerning the homeschooling of Rev. Dick, certain members of the Grace congregation had sought to persuade the consistory to compel Rev. Dick to stop homeschooling his children and instead to send them to

the schools where most Protestant Reformed parents send their children. Failing to persuade the Grace Consistory, the members appealed to Classis East. Two such appeals were treated at the assembly of Classis East of September 12, 26, 2007. Classis did not uphold the two protests that were before it. In so doing, classis upheld, as has Grace Consistory, the inherent biblical right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home. It also acknowledged, by this, as has Grace Consistory in its position paper, that neither the Scriptures nor the Reformed faith demand of anyone, though he be an officer in the church, the use of certain Christian schools (Committee of Pre-Advice, hereafter COPA, II, A, B).

Classis, however, though it did not uphold the appeals and their grounds, and though it acknowledged the right of the Rev. Dick to homeschool, nevertheless refused to uphold the decision of Grace PRC Consistory to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home. Classis took this decision because it disagreed, in the first place, with Grace Consistory's interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order. Second, classis did not believe that Grace Consistory had satisfactorily validated Rev. Dick's homeschooling: both for itself and for the sake of the congregation.

In addition to expressing its disagreement with Grace Consistory, classis advised Grace Consistory to follow a certain course of action concerning Rev. Dick's homeschooling. Grace Consistory complied with the advice of classis, and communicated this to the January 2008 Classis as follows:

Compliance with the Advice of Classis

Grace Consistory has complied with the advice of the classis, as follows:

1. Consistory sought and received help from the special committee of classis that was appointed to help us implement the recommendations of classis.
2. Consistory has again discussed with Rev. Dick his reasons for homeschooling, and has reconfirmed that they are indeed valid.
3. We are endeavoring to find a way for the children of Rev. Dick to attend, if possible, the existing Christian schools.
4. We have communicated to the Grace congregation, by letter, the nature of the reasons for Rev. Dick's homeschooling, and that we are endeavoring to find a way for the children of Rev. Dick to attend, if possible, the existing Christian schools.
5. In addressing the Grace congregation, the Grace Consistory spoke, as well, of how the Lord Himself validates the legitimacy of the parenting of an officer in the church, and of how consistory

has recognized and acknowledges the legitimacy of the homeschooling of Rev. Dick. We then outlined for the congregation a way forward for our peace and unity: the way of the Word of God; the way of honoring the elders and Rev. Dick; and the way of love.

Grace Consistory, though it followed the advice of the September 2007 Classis, nevertheless protested the decisions of the September 2007 Classis to the January 2008 assembly of Classis East. It prefaced its lengthy protest to the classis in this summary form:

- I. Classis' decision to enter into matters that concerned more than the two appeals that were legally before it, and its adjudication, pronouncements, and recommendations regarding the homeschooling of Rev. Dick and Grace Consistory's support of it, violate Article 30 of the Church Order.
- II. Classis' decision not to uphold Grace Consistory's position and the right of the Rev. Dick to homeschool is based on erroneous grounds, which grounds are fallacious, contrary to the Reformed understanding of Article 21 of the Church Order, and in conflict with the Word of God.

Classis East, which deliberated in two sessions in January and February 2008, did not sustain the protest of the Grace Consistory. Nor did Classis East sustain the protests of several others who had objected to the rulings of the September 2007 assembly of Classis East.

Upon consideration of the decisions of Classis East not to sustain its protest, the Grace Consistory decided to acquiesce to the decisions of classis. The Grace Consistory, however, and because it did not agree with the decisions of the classis, did *not* comply with the classis, which had required of the Grace Consistory that it communicate to the congregation of Grace that Rev. Dick's reasons for homeschooling were not valid. Instead, due to the unrest at Grace Church, and because the decisions of classis not to support the Grace Consistory and Grace's pastor had inflamed this unrest, the elders of Grace decided, reluctantly, to dismiss Rev. Dick from his position as pastor of Grace PRC.

No longer girded by anything but the moral support of the Grace Consistory, and yet, by grace, convicted by the testimony of a good conscience, I then protested to the May 14, 2008 assembly of Classis East. Classis did not sustain my protest. So I appeal now to the synod.

Interpretation of a Church Order

How this must be done

The crux of the matter before us in regard to my homeschooling is

this: the proper interpretation and application of Article 21 of our Church Order. Article 21, as many have now memorized, reads:

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

Being as this article is one of the articles of our Church Order, we do well to remember that it is one of those articles written and adopted by Reformed churches in order to promote the “lawful order” of our churches as a whole, and of the conduct of the individual congregations and persons themselves in our denomination as they fulfill their callings personally and together. We do well to remember, as well, that there is a limitation to the regulatory power and application of the Church Order. That is, of course, the Word of God. Thus, no article of the Church Order may either be formulated, adopted, interpreted, or applied in such a way as to contradict the Word of God or to bind the consciences of men (Belgic Confession, Article 32) either in matters of principle or in matters that are non-essential either to the faith or to the life and unity of the people of God. Thus understood and applied, that is, *biblically*, the Church Order is a proper regulator of our churches together, and at the same time, and just as important, a proper servant of the local churches and individuals and families in the denomination and a humble respecter, defender, and champion of their prerogatives and liberties within the parameters of the Word of God. When not so biblically understood and applied, the Church Order may be, on the one hand, disregarded and ignored, or, on the other hand, used as a club in the hands of tyrants, or a wedge between brethren.

With regard to Article 21 itself, we are all aware that many are the differences of opinion concerning this article. In one way or twenty these all have been discussed in connection with the present homeschooling controversy. I will not mention all these differences, except to say, at the outset, that there are *cries out* for a new formulation, and/or a clear and official explanation of this article appended to the Church Order of our churches. For the articles of church orders are meant to be clearly understood, to serve us all in the truth and work of the gospel, and to unite and not to divide. But Article 21, as it stands, and with no official explanation of what we as churches mean by it (except now for the recent decisions of classis and synod, which still are being contested), is not, in my opinion, either clear, or serving the good purpose that it ought to among us. One of these days, and rather sooner than later, the article ought to be “altered, augmented, or diminished,” in the lawful way, by overture to synod, and

as the Church Order itself allows, since, in my opinion, the profit and unity of our churches clearly now demand it (Article 86).

As to the matter of the interpretation and application of Article 21, which, as I see it, is crucial, it is apparent that there are not only differences of opinion concerning what the article is saying, but also, and more fundamentally, there are differences of opinion concerning *just how to determine what the article is saying*. I would urge the synod to consider and employ only proper guides for interpretation of Article 21. This, lest things like mere custom, or raw emotion, or ungrounded fears rule the day and govern our decisions. What then are the “proper guides”? Certainly: Scripture itself is the ultimate guide. Nothing we say of Article 21 may contradict our Savior’s Word! And then: the Reformed faith must be our guide: the substance of it, and the creeds to which we subscribe and the forms we use (such as the Baptism Form), which might shed light on the Church Order. Then, of course, we must interpret Article 21 in light of itself: its words, its basic meaning, its incidental elements, the history of the formulation and (in the case of Article 21) reformulation of the Article (in 1914) which might shed light on the intention of the fathers in this article.

In connection with that, it is very important in regard to our churches’ consideration of Article 21 that we *not* be swayed either by present practice in certain geographical areas of our churches, by emotions, or by private opinions. The present practice in most areas of our churches is that most PR parents send their children to certain instituted liberal arts schools. But present practice does not principle make. Nor does it justify, all by itself, an interpretation of Article 21 which would be (all but) to the exclusion of alternative means of good Christian education, which would threaten a man’s ministry in the churches, and which might prevent qualified men from serving as elder if, by a certain interpretation of Article 21, they are compelled to choose between fulfilling their parental vows and being an officebearer. As well, there are some very strong opinions about the matters of Christian education—as if homeschooling was against God’s covenant and somehow selfish individualism. These opinions have been published, either in books or articles. These opinions have even been preached, as if Joshua, Isaiah, or the Holy Spirit Himself were inspiring them. But these opinions are not based on God’s Word, nor are they the official position of the Reformed churches, nor of our own Protestant Reformed Churches.

Two different opinions of Article 21

On the matter of the interpretation of Article 21, Grace Consistory and classis agree on the following :

*Consistories are called to uphold Article 21.

*Article 21 calls for the promotion of good Christian education and schools.

*Attendance at certain schools is a matter of Christian liberty and a parental decision as they seek, before God, to raise their children according to the demands of the covenant.

*Article 21, therefore, does not require of anyone, whether officer or not, attendance at certain schools.

The disagreement between Grace Consistory and classis revolves, basically, around the question of just what constitutes “good Christian schools,” and the “schooling” and the use of the schools, therefore, of which Article 21 speaks.

Grace Consistory’s position is that the “basic thrust” of Article 21, that is, Christian education, is what must shape one’s interpretation of the “schools” referred to. According to Grace Consistory, no particular “form” or “kind” of good Christian education is being advanced by the article. The reformulation of Article 21 by the CRC in 1914 to include “schools” instead of “schoolmasters” was to advance Christian education, then done primarily in Christian day schools by parents, versus public schools and schooling. This means, according to Grace Consistory, that “homeschooling,” now increasingly an option for parents, is certainly a viable alternative for parents, including officebearers, in the covenant community. “Good Christian schools,” according to Grace Consistory, includes “good Christian home schools.” This, according to Grace Consistory, is certainly in harmony with the Scriptures, the Reformed faith, and the cause of God’s covenant.

The position of classis, on the other hand, is that because “schools” are mentioned in Article 21, and because the referent in the 1914 reformulation of the article was instituted day schools, attendance at day schools is the *rule* of the Church Order, and homeschooling may be allowed in *only rare exceptions*, especially for the officers who are called to promote Article 21. In fact, if an officer in the church is to homeschool, he must be able to provide good reasons, that others (the congregation, the consistory, or perhaps the classis and synod) consider legitimate, if he would not jeopardize his office.

A summary of my protest of the decisions of the Jan/Feb 2008 assembly of Classis East, of the responses to my protest by the May 14 assembly of Classis, and my arguments, briefly stated, as to why the decision of the May Classis not to sustain my protest is in error.

My protest to the May 14, 2008 Classis and Classis’ response are attached (p. 405). For the sake of clarity I here present my appeal to synod,

in summary form: first summarizing what I protested to the May 14 Classis; then offering a summary of the response of classis; then offering a brief rebuttal of the responses of the classis with which I disagree.

A. My protest of decisions of the Jan/Feb 2008 Classis is that by passing judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick's "withdrawing" all of his children from two "good Christian schools" and homeschooling them instead, classis has overstepped the bounds of its authority.

1. My first objection to the ruling of the Jan/Feb Classis on the validation of my reasons for homeschooling is that in this the classis has violated Article 30 of the Church Order. This article states that "in major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common."

a. A summary of the grounds I have presented to classis:

1) The matter of the validation of the reasons of Rev. Dick's homeschooling was "finished" when the September 2007 Classis left this validation in the rightful and able hands of the Grace Consistory, and when the consistory then validated those reasons and communicated the nature of those reasons to the Grace congregation.

2) The committee appointed by classis to help Grace Consistory implement its decisions went beyond its mandate, and acted as a protestant itself when it took upon itself, without warrant from classis, and over and against the protests of Grace Consistory, to judge the validity of the reasons of Rev. Dick's homeschooling.

3) The classis, when it considered the judgment of its committee, and then rendered its own judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick's reasons for homeschooling, was not only deliberating upon matters "finished" at the consistorial level, but deliberating on matters, as well, that certainly do not pertain to the churches in common. For the assessment of a family and its needs, and passing judgments on how parents might best meet the needs of its family, is certainly not within the realm of the authority of a classis, but rightly ought to be left as a parental and consistorial matter.

b. The response of the May 14, 2008 Classis to my contention that the Jan/Feb Classis violated Article 30 of the Church Order is that "the Grace consistory made the validation of

its pastor's reasons for homeschooling the business of the classis and thus a matter that pertains to the churches of the classis in common."

- 1) By the inclusion in its protest to the January 2008 Classis of a letter to the Grace congregation explaining its reasons for validating Rev. Dick's decision to homeschool.
 - 2) By giving to the special committee of classis the letter of Rev. and Mrs. Dick detailing their reasons for homeschooling and asking for advice.
 - 3) According to classis, "what is presented to the classis is properly under the review of classis."
- c. My rebuttal of the response of the May Classis:
- 1) The Grace Consistory included in its protest to the January 2008 Classis a letter to the Grace congregation *not for the classis to assess the validity of the reasons for Rev. Dick's homeschooling*, but out of respect for the classis, and to confirm to the classis that the Grace Consistory had done what the September 2007 Classis had requested it to do.
 - 2) As I state in my protest, the committee appointed by classis to help Grace Consistory went beyond its mandate of classis not only, but acted contrary to the Grace Consistory, which is on record as not seeking the committee's help to validate the reasons of Rev. Dick's homeschooling, but as seeking help to communicate the nature of these reasons to the congregation of Grace. Both the January Classis and the committee of classis *dishonored* the consistory of Grace by making decisions it ought not to have made. It also acted contrary to the decision of the September 2007 Classis, which the January Committee of Pre-Advice #2 is on record as saying "honored the right of the consistory [of Grace] to make *whatever judgments of the pastor's conscience it deems possible, necessary, and appropriate in determining whether Rev. Dick can homeschool his children as Grace's pastor*" (italics mine, MD; COPA 2, II, B) 2) (b)).
 - 3) As I state in my protest, the classis, by entering into matters that concern *the personal reasons of parents* with regard to the nurture and instruction of their children, certainly entered into affairs that *decidedly*

do NOT pertain to the churches in common! Classis does not respond to this argument of mine. Nor does it offer any justification for its imagining that it has the right, with no standard of validation other than its own private opinion (for there is surely no *officially sanctioned position regarding these things!*) as to what constitutes “valid” reasons, and what are not—for Rev. Dick’s children, or for anyone’s children.

2. My second objection to the Jan/Feb Classis ruling on the validity of my reasons for homeschooling and *overruling* the judgment of the Grace Consistory is that this has involved classis in a violation of the autonomy of the local church.

a. Summary of my grounds for this objection:

1) Reformed church polity guards carefully against any infringement upon the autonomy of the local church, and so much so that Article 84 of the Church Order says that “No church shall *in any way* (italics mine, MD) lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons,” and our own churches state the inviolate principle of “the autonomy of the local church” as an article in our Declaration of Principles.

2) It is difficult to see how classis, as I state, “in assuming to itself the authority and position of Judge in relation to a matter that is clearly a matter of a parent and his family and a consistory and its family (a local congregation)” has not, in fact, violated this principle.

b. The response of the May 14, 2008 Classis was as follows:

1) Article 36 of the Church Order grants to broader assemblies “a certain jurisdiction or authority over the local congregation....”

2) Classis maintained the autonomy of the local congregation and exercised the authority delegated to it in ruling on a matter, namely, the validation of Rev. Dick’s reasons for homeschooling, that was legally before it.

c. My rebuttal of the response of the May Classis:

1) As shown in my first point of protest, the matter of the validation of Rev. Dick’s reasons for homeschooling *was not legally before the classis*. The Grace Consistory had already exercised its right, which the September 2007 Classis had honored, to judge the validity of the reasons.

- 2) Therefore, classis cannot maintain that Classis East did not violate the autonomy of the Grace Consistory.
3. The third reason why I contend that the Jan/Feb Classis of 2008 overstepped its authority is that, in its thinking that it had the authority and the ability to pass judgment concerning the reasons parents give for educating and nurturing their children in one good Christian school and not another, the classis has “intruded upon and indeed attempted to usurp the authority of parents.”
 - a. Summary of my grounds:
 - 1) Scripture gives parents the right and responsibility to educate and nurture their children (Deut. 6; Eph. 6).
 - 2) Classis offers no proof that it has the right or ability to assess the needs of the children of parents—be they officers in the church or not.
 - b. The response of the May Classis was to say that the Jan/Feb Classis did honor the authority of Rev. and Mrs. Dick as parents to determine the education and nurturing of their children. Summary of grounds:
 - 1) The Jan/Feb Classis did not forbid the Dicks from homeschooling their children.
 - 2) Classis’ ruling “rather addressed the ability of Rev. Dick to carry out his duties as the pastor of Grace PRC with the reasons he gave for homeschooling his children.”
 - c. My rebuttal of the response of the May Classis is that if the authority of parents is truly to be honored, as God in His Word so does, then:
 - 1) Parents who raise their children according to God’s Word and in a godly way and according to the convictions of their conscience do not have to have their reasons subject to “validation” by anyone or any group of people if those persons bring not the Scripture to justify their demands for reasons. This is the nature of parental authority: there is a sphere sovereignty which, if violated, is to the dishonor of the home and family, the most basic institute of church and society (Deut. 6; Eph. 6).
 - 2) Contending that honor is given to parents, even while at the same time questioning their ability to be an officebearer in the church of Jesus Christ as the parents rule their house well as convicted by God, is not at all

to honor parents, but it is to *play off* parental honor and the right and responsibility of a parent over and against the honor and responsibility of an officebearer. This dishonors, it cheapens, parenting. It also shows a lack of appreciation for the biblical teaching that a man must be a good parent *first*, before he can be an officer: for a bishop, says the inspired apostle Paul, must first rule his own house well before he can govern the house of God (I Tim. 3:4, 5). But if that is the case, then doing what it takes to rule one's own house well can never, in itself, be used to suggest, as classis has done, that an officer cannot rule well in the church of Jesus Christ, be an example to the flock, and support the congregation in its efforts to educate its children!

4. The fourth contention I make to demonstrate that the Jan/Feb Classis overstepped its authority in passing judgment on my reasons for homeschooling is that it has done so, as I put it, "without one word from Scripture."

a. Summary of grounds:

1) Article 30 speaks of the assemblies conducting their business "in an ecclesiastical manner." This implies the principle, as Prof. Hanks notes in his syllabus on the Church Order, "that the authority of the church is limited to the power of the Word of God, which is the rule of the faith and life of the saints," and that "the persuasive power of the assemblies must be conviction on the basis of Scripture."

2) Classis, such is my protest, "with no Scripture, confessions, or Church Order," has thought it had the right to "pass judgment upon a consistory and a father, a judgment which represents an attempt to bind the conscience of that father," and all *over a determination clearly parental and private*, of what are "good reasons" for one kind of good Christian education or another.

b. Summary of the response of the May Classis:

1) The Jan/Feb Classis, according to the May Classis, exercised a proper authority in passing judgment on the reasons for Rev. Dick's homeschooling "although it did not cite Scripture."

2) The determination of the validity of the reasons which would allow Rev. Dick to carry out the obligations of Article 21 "is not a matter," according to the

May Classis, “of searching Scripture but applying sanctified common sense.”

3) Just as Grace Consistory did not provide Scripture to the Grace Congregation in its letter to them in which it expressed its validation of the nature of the reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling, so the classis did not need to provide Scripture in declaring those reasons invalid.

c. My rebuttal of the response of the May Classis:

1) Classis interpreted my protest incorrectly—as if I desired from the Jan/Feb Classis the citation of particular Scripture passages to prove their points. I never said I desired that. All that is needed is, if not explicit Scripture itself, arguments derived from Scripture in order that the “common sense” and reasoning of arguments might be clearly known to be “sanctified.” For, after all, our reasons and judgments, as are we ourselves, are only sanctified by the truth (John 17:17). In this connection, classis’ statement is peculiar: “the determination of whether these reasons are such to allow Rev. Dick to carry out the obligations of Article 21 is not a matter of searching Scripture but applying sanctified common sense.” For indeed, if classis had “searched Scripture” more carefully, it would have truly given advice that was “sanctified common sense.” As it is, we have a common opinion. But it is not sanctified by the Word of God, and it lacks, therefore, “the persuasive power” of a biblical argument.

2) Fact is, classis did not either cite *or reason from* Scripture in its judgments of the reasons for my homeschooling. As follows:

*Classis offers no Scripture or reasonable deductions, arguments that lead to “good and necessary consequences” from Scripture, that a parent must give reasons to a classis, which reasons his consistory has already “validated,” to justify the home as a legitimate place of the education of his children.

*Classis gives no Scripture or reasonable deductions to justify its overruling a God-ordained body of elders to whom alone is given the oversight of a local congregation and who alone have the authority and ability to make a lawful and proper assessment of the personal, parental needs of a parent, and that parent’s qualification to lead the flock.

*Classis offers no Scripture or reasonable arguments from Scripture that prove that the Church Order and the Reformed faith itself require of parents and officebearers what classis would.

*Classis offers no Scripture or reasonable deductions that prove that anyone or group can question a man's integrity, his selflessness, or his ability to lead a congregation as he fulfills his vow to raise his family....

*Classis brings no Scripture and offers no biblical arguments to prove that an officer in the church can only set a good example to the flock by using certain liberal arts schools that others of the flock go to, even if it is against his conscience—as if the Head of the church requires a compromise of conviction as parent for officers.

B. Concerning the assessment by the Jan/Feb Classis of the reasons themselves that Rev. Dick has for homeschooling, I have protested that the assessment of that classis that my reasons for homeschooling were inadequate and that they make it impossible for me to comply with Article 21 of the Church Order is erroneous.

1. A summary of my protest to the Jan/Feb Classis:
 - a. I contend that classis, which states that the reasons that I give for homeschooling “make it impossible” for me to comply with Article 21 of the Church Order, has not offered any proof, whatsoever, to defend this bold accusation.
 - b. I contend that classis erred in declaring that my reasons for withdrawing my children from certain schools were “inadequate” in suggesting that I had not tried to resolve issues, and in stating that I have not presented any unique needs of my children, because classis has itself offered no proof that my reasons are inadequate, that the needs of my children are not “unique” enough to have them taught at home, that I have not tried to resolve issues, etc....
2. The response of the May Classis:
 - a. Classis contends that because, allegedly, “the reasons Rev. Dick gives for withdrawing his children from the PR Christian schools focus on the weaknesses of the schools,” he brings the message to the Grace congregation that the schools they use are not, in fact, “good Christian schools,” and this, therefore, makes it “impossible for Rev. Dick to comply with Art. 21 of the CO.”

- b. Classis contends that Rev. Dick “has not demonstrated the unique needs of his children that require removing them from the PR Christian schools to homeschool them, as Grace’s pastor.”
3. My rebuttal of the response of the May Classis is that it has not at all engaged my arguments against the Jan/Feb Classis, but simply repeats, in so many words, the arguments of the Jan/Feb Classis!

Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to say that by our decision to homeschool, my wife and I do not believe we are in violation of our Church Order, that we have deviated from the truth of Scripture, or of the Reformed faith. We want to say, as well, that we have not sought to hurt people’s feelings, or to cause offense. We are not seeking to “make a statement” about certain existing liberal arts institutions and the use of them by other parents. And we wholeheartedly support *all* the parents in the churches as they seek to fulfill their vows and to raise their children in the love and truth of God.

In the education of our children we are simply seeking to do what is right before God. Attendance to our children’s spiritual, emotional, and mental needs requires that they not use, at this time, and full-time, certain existing liberal arts institutions that other parents might use, but that they instead be educated and nurtured at home. If we do not do this, we compromise our baptism vows, which require that we piously and religiously educate and nurture our children to the best of our abilities. If we would be compelled to use certain liberal arts institutions, we would be sinning against our conscience.

We are very much saddened that a classis of our churches would, as we have contended to the May Classis, and as we now contend before synod, intrude into the affairs of our home and of Grace Church. This action has indeed put my ministry in our churches in jeopardy. It has occasioned the slander of my good name, and of that of the elders of Grace. It has led some to conclude that we have been poor examples to the flock, and have been negligent in the care of the members of the body of Christ. And it has occasioned division.

Though now dismissed from my charge at Grace, I continue to preach and to teach in our churches as I am given opportunity. It is my prayer, however, that one day I again might receive a charge in our churches, if that be God’s will.

Meanwhile, it is my prayer that the body of Christ may continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, and to live out of that gracious knowledge, with great love for God and the neighbor, in pressing

on, *all together in the school of grace*, in the good and glorious cause of the education of each and every member of the household of God.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Mitchell Dick

Appendix 1: Letter to Grace Congregation

November 18, 2007

Dear Congregation of Grace,

Greetings in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, God's precious way and truth and life, the author and finisher of our faith, our peace, our joy, and our hope!

With this letter we would communicate to you some things that relate to the homeschooling of our pastor's children, the recent decisions and recommendations of Classis East, and the "way forward" that we believe will be for peace and blessing among us. We urge you to receive our communication as Israel of old: in the light of "the law and the testimony" of God's own Word (Isaiah 8:20), and as those noble New Testament Bereans who searched the Scriptures to see if these things were so (Acts 17: 10-12). As well, we urge the congregation to receive our communication (as we bring the Word, but in the weakness of human and sinful flesh) with all the meekness, charity, grace, and wisdom of our Savior Himself. And have good faith too, beloved, as you receive and think upon our letter, in our heavenly Father's good, wise, and gracious leading through the officebearers He has providentially appointed. We seek, as ever, to promote God's great glory, to uphold His saving gospel, and to build up and to heal Christ's lovely and yet hurting body.

Since the main recommendation of the recent assembly of Classis East had to do with what it called the "validation" of pastor's reasons for homeschooling, we would address this matter at length.

1. As we have set forth to you in our position paper of January 2007, we firmly believe that the "validation" of the way parents seek to fulfill their baptism vows to "raise their children to the best of their ability" is, and must be, ultimately *from the Lord*. For, as we all believe and agree: it is, according to God's Word (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Ephesians 6:4), the right and responsibility of the parents to care for and faithfully to nurture the children God gives them. This means that *God Himself assures faithful parents of the righteousness and legitimacy of their actions as parents*. That is His "validation" of parents. It is God's confirmation to parents, as well, that His blessing is upon them as they raise the children He has entrusted to them.

2. How does God “validate” this work of parenting? He does this in three ways.

a. First, by His written Word. If we are parenting according to the truth of the Word, then that Word, *our guide and standard*, will speak to us of the righteousness of our actions.

b. Second, God validates parents in their parenting by the testimony of the Spirit in their hearts. For there are certain, even many, “details” of parenting that God’s Word does not address directly and specifically. But as parents seek to do God’s will in their parenting, He assures and convicts them by His Spirit in their hearts that they are doing well.

c. Third, God validates the parenting of parents in the context of the church, and in the communion of the saints. In other words, God validates us as parents who are concerned to raise our children properly, and who, at the same time, consider the needs of the body of Christ *as a whole*. In this corporate consideration we acknowledge that the body of Christ is made up of many families, but is also one single Family. God validates our *personal parental* efforts as we support and encourage *one another* as parents.

3. It is especially true with respect to an officebearer in the church of Christ who is also a parent, that his parenting must be validated by the Lord. Paul makes this very clear in his letter to Timothy, chapter 3, verses 4 and 5, when he says that a bishop must “rule well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity.” Thus, by the light of the Word; according to the testimony of the Holy Spirit in his heart; and in the context of the church and his consideration of the needs of the church, an officer-parent’s parenting must be validated by the Lord. As well, and because of the officer-parent’s *special place of leadership in the church, this validation of the Lord must be recognized by the church*. Elders, who have the oversight of the congregation, must confirm the Lord’s validation of an officer’s parenting. The congregation, which must receive the Word through an officer’s ministry, must be assured also that the parenting of a leader is truly biblical, and truly exemplifies a good parent’s care of his own family and a good shepherd’s care of the entire congregation. Because of this, and because our pastor has decided upon a method of education and parenting that is quite different than that to which most of us are accustomed, and because this method of education appears, to a significant number of people, to be illegitimate, we agree with

classis that further explanation of the reasons for our pastor's homeschooling his children is needed at this time.

4. We, the elders of Grace PRC, appointed and qualified of God to "watch for the souls" of the flock of Grace (Heb. 13:7, 17), inform the congregation that we have found, in light of God's way of validation described above, and in light of all of God's Word, that Pastor Dick's reasons for homeschooling his children at this time are indeed valid.

a. The Word of God grants him this right and responsibility as a parent.

b. The Word of God nowhere says or implies that officebearers who themselves are also fathers can only be an example to their flock and effective in their ministry by educating and nurturing their children using the same methods and schools as others of their flock.

c. The Reformed faith does not mandate one kind of good Christian education over another—for any and all parents and for any and all officers, nor does it require that all parents, including officers, must educate and nurture their children *together*—in the same way, and in the same liberal arts educational institutions.

d. The educational/spiritual needs of the Dick children warrant this type of education, and it is pastor's conviction, the testimony of Christ's Spirit in his heart, that these needs can only be met, at this time, in the education of their children primarily at home.

e. There is no indication whatsoever that pastor is not "ruling well his own house," and not considering and seeking to minister to the needs, also, of the house and family of God. The pastor and consistory continue *and shall continue* to show their support of the education and nurture of the entire flock.

5. In accord with the recommendation of classis, and so that the congregation can be assured, not only of the legitimacy of pastor's homeschooling, but of the schooling of their own children, we would communicate to you now the *nature* of the reasons why pastor and his wife seek to educate their children at home, with some explanations of the same. The reason is basically this: Pastor and his wife are convicted that proper attendance to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of their children requires more of their own parental day-to-day care and supervision than is possible when their children are enrolled full-time

in the existing Christian day schools. The Dicks have analyzed and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of their children, the level of their maturity, and their abilities to deal with their peers in a godly manner. They are persuaded that, at this time, full-time parental care by them is needed so that the needs of the individual children, and of the family as a unit, might best be addressed. The Dicks have always assured the elders, and they and we would hereby assure the congregation once again, that by their not using the existing schools, the Dicks are not making a judgment about the worth of the schools; and they are certainly not saying that parents who use the existing schools are not keeping their baptismal vows. Nor is it the case that pastor and his family are “running” from problems instead of dealing with them. Rather, their motive is to provide what they are convicted is the best “setting” and environment (at this time, their own home) *for their children, in order to meet their children’s specific needs and to nurture them as God Himself would have them.* This “homeschooling” the pastor and his wife see as the way they can fulfill their vows at this time to raise their children “to the utmost” of their abilities.

6. The consistory also wants the congregation to know our intentions as we go forward together.

- a. We will be giving ourselves to prayer (Acts 6:4), confident that our Savior, “who ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Heb. 7:25), shall mediate for us and bless us as we seek to walk together as His flock in the way of peace.
- b. We shall continue to “preach the Word” in season and out (Acts 6:4; II Tim. 4:2). That Word and its preaching and ministry are vital for our life and unity as congregation. At this time, the consistory believes it wise to have our pastor off the pulpit for a time in order that he himself can have a break, so that emotions can calm down, and we can receive Christ’s Word with a good, humble, and thankful spirit. Pastor will preach next when we partake together of the Lord’s Supper.
- c. We shall seek to minister the Word as we continue to care for the particular needs of the flock at Grace, on behalf of the Good Shepherd, and with wisdom, grace, and humility.
- d. We want to stress to the congregation that we are taking heed to the recommendations of the past classis. We have already begun the process of exploring ways that might

allow Rev. Dick to return some or all of his children to the Christian day schools. In fact, our primary focus at this time is to work on this aspect of classis' recommendations.

e. The consistory apologizes to the congregation. The consistory (pastor and elders) has not been anywhere near perfect in our handling of these matters. We admit that, for some of you, we have misjudged how much information and communication was needed; we have spoken too little. We acknowledge that we did not anticipate the depth and magnitude of the hurt that some have felt. At this time, beloved, your pastor and elders sincerely apologize to you for the part that we have had in occasioning the hurt and the lack of trust that some are feeling. We apologize, as well, for not always listening to you and hearing you, as you conveyed your thoughts and concerns to us, with the perfect sympathy and understanding of our Good Shepherd Christ Jesus. We also realize that we have failed, at times, to work with you as wisely and tenderly as we could have. We are sorry. Please forgive us.

7. The consistory believes that we can and must go forward together in a way that would please and honor Christ.

a. The way forward together, the way of blessing and honor, is *the way of the Word of God*.

1) This is crucial for any congregation, for the church of Christ is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15). She makes her decisions in the light of the Bible. She ministers the Word. She stands on that Word. She understands her unity to be in the "one faith" (Eph. 4: 1-6) of Jesus Christ. She appreciates that the unity of the body is a unity of diverse members (I Cor. 12). She understands that the truth of the Word is the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: the truth that saves, the truth that comforts, the truth that guides, the truth that sanctifies, the truth that unites, and the truth that sets us free (John 8: 32). This truth alone is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and for the thankful and godly life of good works (II Tim. 3: 16, 17). Let us cherish that truth—as it is in Jesus! Let us *listen* to that Word. Let us faithfully declare that Word from our pulpit. Let us minister that Word to catechumens and from house to house. Let us study that Word at home and in our

societies. Our one desire, dear fellow pilgrims, is that the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly (Col. 3: 16a), and so that we *and others* can know God's blessing upon us *as we honor His Word!*

b. The way forward together, the way of blessing and honor, is *the way of honoring those whom Christ has chosen, through you, to lead this flock.*

1) Honor them by respecting this decision and validation, and by submitting to their continued government of Grace Church as they seek earnestly, by the grace of God, to lead in the one way the Lord gives: by the Word and in the love of Christ. There will continue to be different opinions about the education of children. But we can live with that, and be at peace—as long as we are peaceful and charitable with regard to our differences, and as long as we show respect for one another and those whom God has put in authority over us. Consider also that the Bible teaches that the Lord is displeased when dishonor is shown towards those whom the Lord appoints to lead His people. Honor and submit to the leaders of Grace: who love the Lord and who love you! This way is the way forward: for the guarding, the care, and the peace of our souls and of the heart and soul and work and witness of our beloved and God's beloved Grace Protestant Reformed Church (I Thess. 5: 12, 13)!

c. The way forward together, the way of blessing and honor, is *the way of loving one another.*

1) This too is vital. At a time when people in the congregation disagree about matters that are important to us all, and about which there certainly may be disagreement: what kind of attitude and spirit are we going to show? How are we going to handle this and react to this? May it not be that we wrangle with one another. May it not be that we merely tolerate, or maybe avoid each other, *but rather that we love, and give, and love some more!* For “above all these things,” the apostle says, *above whatever you can think of*, we are to put on charity, that lovely bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). Without this love, this thinking well of each other, this being kind to each other, this speaking well of each other, we are nothing (I Cor. 13). In loving one another we truly show

we love the Lord, and that He loves us, and that love is not just a theory, but something adorning our words and our deeds and shaping our fellowship. By love, Christ's love, we show our true unity, which is Christ alone. We esteem each other highly, and promote the other's advantage. We bear with one another's faults. We can, with longsuffering and honor, follow the lead of Christ, who Himself has chosen very weak and earthen vessels to lead us. We can forgive. We can agree to disagree in matters in which God's Word makes no pronouncement of "right" or "wrong." We can go forward together, though the whole world and our own sins be against us, in the almighty power and wonderful love of Christ!

In these ways, beloved congregation, we shall go forward! We might also add that the way forward is the way of thanks: for God has given us so much at Grace, and blessed us beyond what we could ask for or even imagine! We might also add that the way forward is the way of faith: reminding ourselves that God, who has begun His good work in and among us, shall surely prosper us as we walk, and even now through deep distress, in the light and promise of His Word!

Indeed! It shall be in the way of the Word, the way of honor, the way of love, the way of thanks, and the way of faith *that we shall be blessed, and we shall be honoring God!* That, above all, is what we all desire, and for which we should all be striving. Let us seek to honor God and His cause, for He and His cause are far greater than we are. We are so very little, but so great is our God in His grace! Surely He shall continue to grace us, and to give us faith to carry on as a congregation that bears the name of a goodly heritage, even Protestant Reformed, and of a grace *at our beloved Grace Church* that saves, unites, and builds us up together—even the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we beseech you, receive our letter, and Christ's love and ours with it. Consider it in God's light. Talk about it in His love. Know and pursue that truth and love and faith which is ours together, and which is and shall be for our peace. We conclude with the words of our precious Savior found in I Thessalonians 5: 12-23:

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We remain humbly yours in His service and yours,
The Consistory, Grace PRC

Appendix 2: Grace Protest to January 2008 Classis

The Consistory of Grace PRC, Grand Rapids, MI, hereby protests the decision, with its advice and grounds, of Classis East, September 12, 2007 as stated in the minutes, Articles 43-47, 50-52. We request that classis rescind and revoke this decision.

Introduction

History

Grace Consistory has taken the position, set forth in its position paper on homeschooling, January 2007, that Rev. Dick has the right to educate his children at home. Scripture grants, and the Reformed faith acknowledges, this right to him as a parent. Further, it is Grace Consistory's position that Rev. Dick may exercise his parental right to homeschool though he is an officebearer in the church, for neither Scripture nor the Reformed faith prohibits or regards unfavorably an officer's educating his children at home, nor does Scripture and the Reformed faith favor and promote any one kind of Christian education for any of the children of the church. Grace's Consistory understands that Rev. Dick, in so educating his children at home, is seeking to address the needs of his family; he is convicted that for his house to be "ruled well," and his children's needs to be met, he must educate them, at this time, primarily at home. Grace Consistory recognizes, as well, that Rev. Dick is willing and able to minister to the needs of the church family at Grace, also in regards to the education of all of the children of the flock.

Concerning the homeschooling of Rev. Dick, certain members of the Grace congregation had sought to persuade the consistory to compel Rev. Dick to stop homeschooling his children and instead to send them to the schools where most Protestant Reformed parents send their children. Failing to persuade the Grace Consistory, the members appealed to Classis East. Two such appeals were treated at the assembly of Classis East of September 12, 26, 2007. Classis did not uphold the two protests that were before it. In so doing, classis upheld, as has Grace Consistory, the

inherent biblical right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home. It also acknowledged, by this, as has Grace Consistory in its position paper, that neither Scripture nor the Reformed faith demand of anyone, though he be an officer in the church, the use of certain Christian schools (Committee of Pre-Advice, hereafter COPA, II, A, B).

Classis, however, though it did not uphold the appeals and their grounds, and though it acknowledged the right of the Rev. Dick to home-school, nevertheless refused to uphold the decision of Grace PRC Consistory to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home. Classis took this decision because it disagreed with Grace Consistory's *grounds* for its position (COPA, II, C). Classis expressed disagreement, in the first place, with Grace Consistory's interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order. Second, classis did not believe that Grace Consistory had satisfactorily *validated* Rev. Dick's homeschooling: both for itself and for the sake of the congregation.

In addition to expressing its disagreement with Grace Consistory, classis advised Grace Consistory to follow a certain course of action concerning Rev. Dick's homeschooling.

Compliance with the Advice of Classis

Grace Consistory has complied with the advice of the classis, as follows:

1. Consistory sought and received help from the special committee of classis that was appointed to help us implement the recommendations of classis.
2. Consistory has again discussed with Rev. Dick his reasons for homeschooling, and has re-confirmed that they are indeed valid.
3. We are endeavoring to find a way for the children of Rev. Dick to attend, if possible, the existing Christian schools.
4. We have communicated to the Grace congregation, by letter, the nature of the reasons for Rev. Dick's homeschooling, and that we are endeavoring to find a way for the children of Rev. Dick to attend, if possible, the existing Christian schools.
5. In addressing the Grace congregation, the Grace Consistory spoke, as well, of how the Lord Himself validates the legitimacy of the parenting of an officer in the church, and of how consistory has recognized and acknowledges the legitimacy of the homeschooling of Rev. Dick. We then outlined for the congregation a way forward for our peace and unity: the way of the Word of God; the way of honoring the elders and Rev. Dick; and the way of love. Since these matters pertain to Grace Church's position in

re home schooling and to the deliberations of classis, we enclose this communication to the Grace congregation for the information of classis [cf. Appendix 1, p. 254].

Grace Consistory Protest

Though Grace PRC Consistory has followed the advice of classis, nevertheless, we must protest the decision of classis (September 12, 2007, Arts. 43-47, 50-52, COPA II, C, D), and for the following reasons, in summary form:

I. Classis' decision to enter into matters that concerned more than the two appeals that were legally before it, and its adjudication, pronouncements, and recommendations regarding the homeschooling of Rev. Dick and Grace Consistory's support of it violate Article 30 of the Church Order.

II. Classis' decision not to uphold Grace Consistory's position and the right of the Rev. Dick to homeschool is based on erroneous grounds, which grounds are fallacious, contrary to the Reformed understanding of Article 21 of the Church Order, and in conflict with the Word of God.

I. Classis' decision (Art. 44) to enter into matters that concerned more than the two appeals (with their grounds) that were legally before it, and its adjudication, pronouncements, and recommendations regarding the homeschooling of Rev. Dick and Grace Consistory's support of it (COPA II, C, and D) are in violation of Article 30 of the Church Order.

A. Article 30 of the Church Order.

1. Article 30 reads: *In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.*

2. Pertinent quotes and explanations:

a. Concerning Article 30 in general:

"Article 30 is one of the fundamental articles of this section dealing with the general rules of ecclesiastical assemblies. It touches upon the basic and all-important question of what matters rightly belong at ecclesiastical assemblies; i.e., what matters are of the sphere of the church of Christ and what matters legally belong before assemblies which represent Christ's church" (Prof. H. Hanko, *Notes on the Church Order*).

b. Concerning the "ecclesiastical matters" of which the Church Order speaks:

“Ecclesiastical matters are *principally matters which pertain to the official calling of the Church* (italics ours)—the ministry of the Word, the administration of the sacraments, the exercise of discipline, and (as becomes evident in subsequent articles) the regulation of divine worship services.... In addition to the above is also to be included matters which pertain to the spiritual walk of the saints... this walk of the saints includes the whole of their life in every sphere: socially, politically, economically, etc. But nevertheless, this is true only insofar as this walk is spiritual. *Only this spiritual aspect of the walk of the saints can become the proper business of the ecclesiastical assemblies* (italics ours). For example, the church may not busy herself in the internal affairs of the Christian day schools. But if a teacher teaches false doctrine, the church must make this her concern” (Hanko, *Notes*).

c. Concerning the “ecclesiastical manner” in which the Church Order says all ecclesiastical matters must be transacted:

“The principle involved here is that the authority of the church is limited to the power of the Word of God, which is the rule of the faith and life of the saints. This Word of God is therefore the only power which ecclesiastical assemblies have.

“Positively, the only power in the church is the persuasive power of the Word of God, which is of sole authority in the church. All decisions must therefore be taken by means of consideration of all matters in the light of Scripture, our confessions, and the Church Order. The persuasive power of the assemblies must be conviction on the basis of Scripture. Through mutual consultation, consideration, and admonition the assemblies must be brought to bow together before God’s Word. The willingness to bow before God’s Word is the only proper spirit of an ecclesiastical assembly” (Hanko, *Notes*).

d. Concerning the phrase “In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies”:

“In fact, Reformed Church polity knows of only one type and degree of authority: that vested in the local congregation or its ruling body, the Consistory. The authority exercised by the major assemblies is no higher and greater essentially,

but merely the sum-total of the authority exercised by the individual Consistories meeting as Classis or Synod....

“The Reformed system...maintains that each local congregation is a complete Church, a complete manifestation of the body of Christ. In that sense and in so far each Church or congregation is independent in essence (*zelfstandig*). Local Churches can even exist without denominational federation, but a denomination cannot exist without local Churches. The real unit is therefore the individual Church. And the local Churches do not exist for the sake of the denomination, but the denominations exist for the sake of the local and individual Churches.

“Bearing the foregoing in mind it is not difficult to see why Article 30 limits the scope of authority of major assemblies, and safeguards the rights of all the Churches” (VanDellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*, on Art. 30, pp. 138, 139).

e. Concerning which matters pertain to “the Churches in common”:

“In general, as Bouwman states (*Gereformeerd Kerkecht*, 1934, II, 37), this phrase concerns matters mutually agreed upon by the Churches, and which concern continued denominational fellowship and the maintenance of principles set forth in the Bible, and (consequently) in the Confessional Standards and Church Order....

“All matters thus regulated in the Church Order pertain to the Churches in general, and the major assemblies may take action regarding them directly as far as their general aspect is concerned. *But no Classis or Synod may take to hand a matter which is clearly the affair of a certain Consistory, though it should concern a matter regulated for all the Churches in the Church Order*” (italics ours). (VanDellen and Monsma, *Commentary*, p. 140.)

B. Grace Consistory considers the recent decision of classis in re the homeschooling of Rev. Dick to be in violation of the Church Order, Article 30.

1. Grace Consistory did not request that classis uphold its decision and grounds as set forth in its position paper *except as it pertained to the right of Rev. Dick to homeschool*, and that *only as that was being challenged by the appellants*. When classis decided, therefore, not to uphold the appeals on the basis of the grounds that the appellants gave, and when classis declared, *against the appellants*, that Rev.

Dick did indeed have the biblical right to homeschool, *the business of classis was finished*. The “major assembly” (classis) dealt correctly, in the matter of the appeals, with matters that could not be finished in the “minor assembly” (consistory).

2. When classis “took to hand” to express, formally, its disagreement with Grace Consistory in re the interpretation of Article 21, we grant that it had that right, to a limited degree, for surely Article 21 is a matter “of the churches in common.” But classis erred when it went on to make inferences and conclusions, based on its interpretation of Article 21, *in application to the particular situation at Grace*. In doing so, it rendered unauthorized and inadequately-informed pronouncements and gave unsolicited and unauthorized recommendations on matters that are “clearly the affair” of Grace Consistory, and not that of classis. So, for examples, when *Classis ventured to question* the manner in which Grace Consistory came to its conclusions in re the legitimacy of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling (*assuming, without any proof*, that Grace Consistory was not acting properly), *to suggest* that Grace Consistory had not satisfactorily informed the congregation of the validity of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling, *to mention* the possibility that Rev. Dick’s conscience may be defiled by sin or weak due to lack of knowledge, and *to state*, in so many words, that *until* Rev. Dick’s reasons for homeschooling were “validated” he was not being a good example to the flock, classis overstepped its bounds and spoke of things about which it has inadequate knowledge and no authority. By its venturing into what is properly a consistorial matter, and deciding against Grace Consistory, classis, in effect, became an “appellant,” but in this case, an unauthorized and uninformed appellant, siding, without authority or right knowledge of the case, against Grace Consistory. Classis, therefore, in so venturing into consistorial matters, was no longer acting as an impartial classis. It was, as well, no longer acting in the proper “ecclesiastical manner,” under the authority and guided by the light of the Word of God.

3. Classis, in venturing into these consistorial, parental, and educational matters with regard to the homeschooling of Rev. Dick, erred, in principle, in the same way that the Lynden Consistory erred when “it improperly involved itself in the matters of the Covenant Christian School” in disciplining a member of the congregation for not using the schools to which most PR people sent their children.

a. Classis West (September 7-10, 1983) ruled that the Lynden Consistory erred in censuring a member for not sending his children to the local PR Christian School.

Grounds:

1) “The Church Order, Article 30, which states that ‘in these assemblies ecclesiastical matters *only* shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner.’

2) “The education of children is the calling and responsibility of the *parents* (Eph. 6:4).”

b. Classis West, in regard to this, advised the Lynden Consistory to rescind and revoke its “radical decision” that “one must be, regardless of circumstances, a supporter of Covenant Christian School to qualify for office in the church” (Minutes of Classis West, Arts. 77-84, Report of Committee IV, I, B, 4, b, 3)

II. The decisions and recommendations of Classis East (Arts. 43, 45, 46, 47, 50-52, COPA, II, C, 1, 2, 3, D) are based on erroneous and unbiblical grounds.

A. In General.

1. Ground #1 of Recommendation C of classis (COPA II, C, 1) involves classis in a contradiction with itself. For Ground #1 is in contradiction with the two other Recommendations, A and B, which classis approved. (Thus: COPA II, C, 1, contradicts COPA II, A, and B.)

a. Classis in COPA II, A, and B, in not upholding the appeals that urged classis to compel the Grace Consistory to require that Rev. Dick re-enroll his children in the existing Christian day schools, states:

1) COPA II, A: Article 21 does not mean “that all parents must send their children to the schools that the consistory acknowledges as ‘good Christian schools’ so that parents who do not use these schools must be worked with until their children attend them,” and

2) COPA II, B: “Rev. Dick’s position of conscience to homeschool his children is his biblical right because homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty,” and “No member, not even an officebearer, may be required to act against his conscience on a matter of Christian liberty (Rom. 14), though in certain instances an officebearer’s holding to his conscience may jeopardize his office.”

- 3) In COPA II, A and B, classis, in its granting that Article 21 does not dictate attendance at certain “good Christian schools” (so that one *must* attend them), and that homeschooling (and, as is necessarily implied, *all* schooling, so long as it is “good” Christian schooling) “falls within the area of Christian liberty,” expresses principle agreement with what Grace Consistory says about Article 21, namely, that Article 21 “allows room for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative” to the existing Christian day schools.
- b. Classis in COPA II, C, 1, b, however, states that Grace Consistory’s position “*is in error*” (italics ours), when it teaches that Article 21 allows “room for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative to our Christian schools for our parents” (COPA II, C, 1, a). This conclusion is in contradiction with COPA II, A, and B.
2. Grounds #2 and #3 (COPA II, C, 2, 3) are based not on facts, but on an unproven assumption. They cannot, therefore, be adduced to support the position of classis.
- a. The unproven assumption classis makes is this: Classis assumes that no valid reasons have been given for the homeschooling of the Rev. Dick. This assumption, and the fact that it is unproven, are evident as follows:
- 1) In COPA II, C, 2 classis pronounces that the decision of Grace Consistory is based on the “error” of “not recognizing the principle that a consistory member is bound to observe Article 21 of the Church Order.” In ground “b” of #2 classis then states that “an office-bearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so that the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21.” But classis offers no proof to support its assumption that Grace Consistory did not know of and had not validated the reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling.
- 2) In COPA II, C, 3, b classis states that “the consistory errs because the deciding factor should be the reason (s) why Rev. Dick does not use the good Christian schools (which reasons are judged to be valid by the consistory), and not that his decision is one of conscience.”

Classis again gives no proof for its assumption that the consistory did not know and approve the reasons why Rev. Dick is not using the good Christian schools.

3) In COPA II, D, 1 classis advises Grace Consistory to “require of Rev. Dick his reason(s) for not sending his children to the good Christian schools (in this case, the existing PR parental Christian schools) and to judge whether these reasons are valid” and gives as grounds for this recommendation that: a. “Article 21 of the Church Order requires the consistory to learn these reasons and to judge the validity of them,” and b. “Rev. Dick’s appeal to the conscience does not give him the right to withhold from the consistory the reasons for his decision.” Again: Classis gives no proof for its assumption that Grace Consistory did not and does not know and approve the reasons why Rev. Dick is not using the schools, and classis gives no proof, either, for its assumption that Rev. Dick somehow has “withheld” from the consistory the reasons for his decision.

b. The truth is, Grace Consistory had indeed validated Rev. Dick’s reasons for homeschooling. And this “validation” had indeed been communicated to the congregation of Grace.

1) This is clear from the fact that in its position paper on homeschooling, III, A (p. 37 of the agenda of Classis, September 12, 2007), Grace Consistory communicated to the Grace congregation that “the consistory has discussed at length with Rev. Dick several aspects of his decision to homeschool his children” and that, from this discussion, it was able to draw several conclusions concerning the legitimacy (validity!) of this homeschooling (cf. III, A, 1-4).

2) This is also clear from the fact that Grace Consistory, in its position paper on homeschooling, is on record as stating that officebearers in Christ’s church, being especially accountable for either double honor or condemnation, “must take extra care in what they do and where they lead” (II, B, p. 36 of the agenda of Classis). Surely, classis should have believed of Grace’s Consistory, that as elders of Grace Church they themselves were “taking extra care” in what they were doing and where they were leading when they considered the matter of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling and his convictions about this!

c. Classis errs, therefore, when it states, without proof, that the decision of Grace Consistory was based on the error of “not recognizing that officers are bound to observe Article 21 of the Church Order,” and on “the error of allowing Rev. Dick’s appeal to his conscience to be decisive in their decision,” as if no reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling had been discussed and no reasons had been acknowledged as valid. Classis either has overlooked or ignored the position paper and the correspondence of Grace Consistory in this very important matter.

B. Classis’ interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order is not, in fact, based on anything stated or implied in Article 21.

1. In the first place, classis bases its interpretation *on an argument from silence*.

a. Grace Consistory is on record as saying that Article 21 does not address the matter of the “form” or “kind” of Christian education, and that it indeed “allows room” for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative. Classis is on record as declaring this interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order to be “in error” (COPA, II, C, a, b). Its main argument, that on which every one of its arguments depends, is this: “Article 21 of the Church Order, neither in its original form (“schoolmasters”) nor in its present form (“schools”) had in mind homeschooling as ‘one kind’ of Christian school” (COPA II, C, 1, b, 2). Therefore, such is the implication, according to classis, “homeschooling” is *not* a “legitimate alternative.”

b. But classis is guilty, here, of making the error of logic called “an argument from silence.” The error is the conclusion that since the article does not mention homeschooling, it therefore condemns it as “not a legitimate alternative.” But this *does not follow*. One cannot say that when an article in a Church Order or even a passage from Scripture is *silent* about certain matters, it is, nevertheless, *speaking, even loudly*, by its silence either to condemn or to promote that on which it is silent. From *silence*, therefore, one cannot claim that Article 21 is promoting any one kind of Christian education and forbidding any or all others.

2. In the second place, classis has “injected meaning” into Article 21 that is simply not there, and has drawn inferences that are not implied logically: that is, by good and necessary consequence, from the Article itself. As follows:

a. Classis defines, without proof from the Article itself, “*good Christian schools*” as, “in this case, the existing PR parental Christian schools” (COPA II, D, 1). But “good Christian schools” may be, according as parents seek to fulfill their baptismal vows, and as local consistories acknowledge their necessity and quality, “good Christian homes.” For the article itself does not define what makes for “good” Christian schools. Nor is it declaring that home schools are *not* good Christian schools or are *bad* Christian schools, or are contrary to the thrust of the entire article and its aim to promote good and godly Christian education for the children of the parents of the church.

b. Classis implies that the “*use of the good Christian schools*” is all but required for all (except, apparently, in highly unusual circumstances), as expressive of our obligations to one another in the covenant community, and in fulfillment of “the demands of the covenant.” Thus, in COPA II, C, b, 2), classis states that Article 21 “...mandates consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools established and maintained *by the community of Reformed believers*” (italics ours), and also requires that “consistories see to it that the parents have their children instructed in these schools *according to the demands of the covenant*” (italics ours). As well, in COPA II, C, 2, a classis states that Article 21 “requires of every minister and elder to promote the establishment and use of good Christian schools *in community with other Reformed believers*” (italics ours). This interpretation of Article 21 is not warranted. It has Article 21 saying what it, in fact, does not, namely that, in effect, *all* the parents of any given community of Reformed believers must use whatever schools other parents have established and consider “good” for their fulfillment of their baptismal vows. Those who do not use them are under suspicion, by that very fact, and unless they give good reasons, as being uncooperative in the covenant endeavor. In addition, this interpretation of Article 21 wrongly implies that “the attendance of all” at the existing good Christian schools is an expression of each parent’s fulfillment of “the demands of the covenant.” Thus, those who do not choose to use certain liberal arts schools with others must give good reasons for doing so, *as others determine these good reasons*, lest they be found to be not only in violation of a (certain interpretation of a) Church Order, but

also guilty before God. The thrust of classis, on this point of the “use” of the Christian schools, is to say that we all must, as a covenant community of believers, work together and support one another by all using the same kinds of schools. Fulfilling “the demands of the covenant” is interpreted as all joining together in the covenant community to use the same schools. The implication, in light of the classis’ position that home schools are not “legitimate alternatives,” is that home schools are a “threat,” and even detrimental to the cause of the covenant community and the cause of Christian education. But Article 21 cannot and may not be used in support of such a position. The article itself does not say just what kind of good Christian schools are to be established. Nor does Article 21 teach just how Reformed believers are to express their obligations of “community” and cooperation as the body of Christ in covenant education. Classis seeks to find support for its contentions when it cites VanDellen and Monsma in their *Church Order Commentary*. Classis cites VanDellen and Monsma “as correctly interpreting” Article 21 to mean that “our Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian Day Schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God entrusted children, if at all possible” (pp. 94, 95). “Consequently, it becomes the plain duty of the Church to promote good Christian Schools, and to urge parents to use these schools if at all possible” (p. 95). But VanDellen and Monsma do not, in fact, give the very narrow interpretation of the Church Order that classis gives—an interpretation that favors a certain sort of schooling and disfavors another; and an interpretation that claims a man’s qualification for and effectiveness in office depend, apparently, in all but unusual circumstances, and when there are others in the Reformed community using certain schools, upon his children’s attendance of them. For VanDellen and Monsma nowhere speak, as does classis, in favor or disfavor of one method of Christian education over another; nor do they say that the Church Order and the Reformed faith demand that special “valid reasons” must be given if one opts for a certain kind of good Christian education over another.

c. Further, classis interprets *consistories*’ “*seeing to it*” that *there are good Christian schools* in which the parents have

their children instructed as implying that especially consistory members must use the schools (except, apparently, in highly unusual circumstances that the consistory must acknowledge as legitimate and which must be known by the congregation). In addition, classis states that an officer in Christ's church can only be an "example" to the congregation, by so using the existing Christian day schools (COPA II, C, 2, a, b). This implication of Article 21 in re officers is not warranted by the article itself, and classis itself makes no attempt to prove that this is a warranted inference.

C. Classis' interpretation of Article 21 is not in the Reformed tradition, and indeed, seriously narrows and distorts the basic thrust and primary purpose of the article.

1. Ever since the days when Luther declared that "schools rule the world" (NOTE: For the importance which this great champion of the Reformation ascribed to Christian education and schools, see his two great works on that subject: "Letter to the Majors and Aldermen of the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools," and his "Sermon on the Duty of Sending Children to School."), and labored with might and main to establish and promote them, the Reformation and Reformed heritage has included a high esteem for Christian education and Christian schools outside of the home as aids to help advance that education. Whenever Christian parents, the church, and even governments have sought to promote schools, it must be borne in mind that in the Reformed tradition schools have been regarded as only "tools" of Christian parents who themselves have sought to fulfill their vows to raise their children in the knowledge and fear of the Lord. Indeed, the Reformed view has always been that the family is the fundamental "school" for the nurture and education of children, and that all schooling for the children and youth of believers, if it be faithful to its purpose, is some form of "homeschooling" or another, and that the parents were the ones who were, even if they delegated teachers to help them, primarily responsible for the education of the children. Luther himself, for example, though keen on the promotion of Christian schools in his age of ignorance, and that with their aid children might gain a right knowledge of the Word of God and of God's world in order to be of service in God's kingdom, would preach: "there is no greater authority on earth than that of father and mother" (*Sermon on John 2, 1-11*, in Prof. P.E. Kretzmann's, *Luther on Education in the Christian Home and School*, p.14). And of the

home Luther would preach: “Father and mother here become like God, for they are rulers, bishops, pope, doctor, minister preacher, schoolmaster, judge, and lord. The father has all names and the office of God over his children; and just as God cares for us, nourishes us, protects and defends, teaches and instructs us, thus also a father teaches his child, nourishes it, and cares for it” (*Sermon on Ex. 20, 12*, in Kretzmann, p. 18). Indeed, the feeling of the Reformed has always been, as one J. H. Kok writes, that “the family is the educational institute par excellence. No school, no barracks, no home care centers, no reformatory-school can take the place of the family or compensate it” (From his book *Christelijk Huisgezin*, pp. 138, 139, as quoted and translated in an article by S. Le Cornu entitled “Covenantal Home Schooling: As Seen in a Scriptural, Confessional, and Historical Perspective”).

2. Bearing that in mind, the basic thrust, the primary purpose of Article 21 of the Church Order is readily apparent: it is to promote Christian education. In fact, it is written to promote the Christian nurture and education of the children of the church and serves to encourage and even to admonish parents and the leaders of local churches to pursue this most noble calling with vigor, faithfulness, and hope. To use the language of the article, Article 21 is all about consistories encouraging and exhorting parents to see to it that the parents of their churches raise and educate their children “according to the demands of the covenant.” Other aspects of Christian education pertaining to the form or type of education, and to the other details of that education, are not addressed by Article 21 and are to be considered as subordinate to the primary purpose of promoting good Christian education. Understandably, while in the Reformed tradition the principle, the “basic thrust,” the primary purpose, of Article 21 has invariably been the goal, the means to attaining this goal have differed from time to time and place to place. So, for example, “good Christian schools” looked a lot different back in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. You might not see girls, for example, mixed in the same classes with the school boys. And some or many of the children might be in school, as Luther envisioned, for example, perhaps only a few hours a day, and then sent back home to learn a trade. (NOTE: Luther, in his “Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of all the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools,” writes: “My idea is that boys should spend an hour or two a day in school, and the rest of the time work at

home, learn some trade and do whatever is desired, so that study and work may go on together, while the children are young and can attend to both.” “In like manner,” Luther writes, “a girl has time to go to school an hour a day, and yet attend to her work at home....” “But the brightest pupils,” according to Luther, “who give promise of becoming accomplished teachers, preachers, and workers, should be kept longer at school, or set apart wholly for study” [in *Luther on Education*, by F.V.N. Painter, pp. 199, 200].) As well, different subjects would have been taught in schools than are today: not volleyball, for example, but certainly the Catechism. Besides, not all of the children would have attended these schools. Some, if not many, were, in fact, taught at home by tutors. As well, in those days when and for a long time after Article 21 was adopted, “good Christian schools” were those established and maintained by the government. They were also, however, to a large degree “parochial”—consistories and churches superintended the schools, including the vital matter prescribed by Dort, that of seeing to it that there were good Christian “schoolmasters.” (NOTE: The schools of the Christian Reformed Churches in North America were, for example, primarily “church schools” until about 1900: cf. *The Christian Reformed Church and Her Schools*, by George Stob.) Thus, the “ways and means” that Reformed people and churches have chosen and employed to pursue the goal of Christian education have necessarily differed from age to age, from culture to culture, and from community to community (and also *within* each age, culture, and community), and according to the needs of the parents, the resources available, etc. They are the *different* ways that parents, and churches as well, as individual parents and covenant communities, have sought and continue to seek *the one* goal: the covenant nurture and education of the children of believers.

3. It is a failure to grasp this “basic thrust” or “primary purpose” of Article 21 of the Church Order, and to focus instead on the “form” which good Christian education should take (a “form” that ought to be regarded as variable and subordinate to the main cause of parents raising and educating children “according to the demands of the covenant”), that has caused classis to misread the significance of the insertion of the phrase “good Christian schools” into the Church Order in 1914 and to say that by mentioning “schools” Article 21 leaves “no room for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative.” Classis has, in effect, sought to narrow and define the phrase “good

Christian schools,” and to justify and compel a certain compliance with the article according to a certain cultural tradition, and *not* in the light of the basic principle of Article 21 and the Reformed faith.

a. In the entire history of the Reformed churches, *never* have these churches “gone on record” officially as either specifying, prescribing, or even favoring a certain method of Christian education over another for all time and for every community and parent. Just so, at the Christian Reformed Synod of 1914, when the word “schools” was added to the Church Order, the CRC was seeking to abide in the Reformed tradition, and to do justice to the thrust of Article 21. The Christian Reformed Synod in 1914 was *not* giving official sanction to, prescribing, or even making some kind of official statement favoring “one kind” of Christian education or schooling over another kind of Christian education or schooling; and it was certainly not condemning homeschooling. The CRC Synod of 1914 was simply responding to the need of Christian schools *over against the public schools*. *And it was faithfully seeking to uphold the abiding principle of the article: to promote parents raising their children in fulfillment of covenant demands!* This is plain from VanDellen and Monsma’s commentary. Indeed, as classis notes (COPA II, C, 1, b), VanDellen and Monsma speak of the revised Article 21 as referring to “parental Christian Schools” (p. 93) and “Christian Day Schools” (pp. 95, 96). They speak of the plain duty, as well, of the church to promote good Christian schools, and to urge parents to use these schools “if at all possible” (p. 95). But what is being urged upon the consistories and parents is simply this: good *Christian education vs. public education*. There is no indication *whatsoever* that the Christian Reformed Church, when revising the Article in 1914, was speaking of a certain kind of good Christian education as more favorable than another, or, that if there had been those then who had good Christian *home* schools, that consistories would have been compelled to “urge” even *good Christian homeschoolers* to use whatever good Christian school others might establish. The one and only kind of schooling that was being advanced was *good Christian schooling vs. bad public schooling*. The following quotes from VanDellen and Monsma prove this:

Can the charge of this article in any case be applied to our public schools?

We would answer in the negative inasmuch as all states, to the best of our knowledge, have laws prohibiting sectarian instruction in the public schools (p. 97).

Should Consistories discipline parents who fail to give their children Christian day school instruction though it be within their power to do so?

There may be cases in which parents refrain from sending their children to a Christian school for reasons which they consider valid before God, although others question or deny the validity of their position. In all such cases the matter must be left to the consciences of the parents concerned, although the Consistory should urge prayerful reconsideration repeatedly.

There may be other parents who simply do not feel the need of Christian day school instruction. Their confession may be blameless as well as their consecration of life. And their Christian conduct regarding other matters may be altogether proper and unoffensive. But there is something present or lacking in their make-up and outlook which causes them *to prefer the public school for their children* (italics ours). The position of such parents is grossly inconsistent to put it mildly (p. 98).

b. But what about VanDellen and Monsma's comments on the ability of church officers to serve in office if they oppose Christian schools? VanDellen and Monsma ask: "Can one who is opposed to Christian schools serve as Consistory member?" Their answer: "Not very well. Those who serve in Consistory pledge themselves to uphold the doctrine and government of our Churches. (cf. Form of Subscription.) Now, the Church Order, according to which they help to govern the Church, requires that they promote and sponsor Christian schools. Therefore one who is opposed to these schools cannot serve in the Consistory. He cannot do what is expected of him. Even those who assume a lukewarm attitude toward the Christian school movement are not desirable candidates for the Consistory" (p. 99). That VanDellen and Monsma, when speaking of those who cannot serve in office "very well" are clearly referring to those who oppose or are lukewarm towards Christian schools and who instead *tolerate, promote, or even use public schools* is clear from the following:

- 1) The historical occasion for the revision of Article 21, some twenty-seven years before VanDellen and Monsma first published their commentary in 1941, and which was still an issue in the CRC at the time: public schools or Christian schools.

2) The landmark case in the CRC in 1934, of which VanDellen and Monsma were no doubt very much aware, concerning the eligibility for office of those who were opposing the Christian schools and even using the *public schools instead*. (NOTE: The CRC Synod of 1934 decided that the support of the Christian schools should be given “weighty consideration,” but that whether or not officebearers send their own children to Christian schools cannot in itself determine their eligibility. Cf. the study entitled “Equipping the Saints: a church political study of the controversies surrounding ecclesiastical office in the Christian Reformed Church in North America, 1857-1982,” by Hendrinus de Moor, 1986.)

4. The writings of Reformed church-political experts reveal that classis’ interpretation of Article 21 is not in the Reformed tradition, as well, when classis suggests (but does not prove) that a minister’s ability to fulfill his duties in re Article 21 of the Church Order is hindered, and that he cannot be a good example to the congregation unless he has and can give good reasons to consistory and congregation for employing a different educational “model” or “method” to raise his children than do others in any given community of Reformed believers who, though they use different methods, are nevertheless pursuing the same goal. We offer two examples:

a. Speaking to the matter of the eligibility of a deacon who sent his child to the *public* school, S. Le Cornu summarizes Prof. Dr. F.L. Rutgers, “the expert in canon law,” as saying: “Such brothers must be seriously admonished to consider Christian education for their child(ren), but the parents may not be forced, for that could harm Christian education. Each case should be judged individually, for it is possible that the Christian school is a good school, but not necessarily good for all children, and the parents must know what will be best for their child. So the parent has the ultimate authority (under God), to decide what is best for the child, not the Church, State or society. Only when it appears the parents are against the fact that the school is Christian and do not want to give their child a Christian upbringing, then it is an altogether different case” (Rutgers, in his *Kerkelijke Adviezen*, pp. 136-140, as summarized by Slabbert Le Cornu

in his article *Covenantal Home Schooling: As Seen in a Scriptural, Confessional and Historical Perspective*).

b. Addressing the matter of just who decides what in the education of the children, and also touching upon how members of the covenant community are to cooperate, the distinguished Dr. H. Bouwman, in his massive book on the Church Order, writes “The rule must be that the school originates with the parents. According to God’s ordinance, the complete task of education rests first of all on the parents. Although the community in which we live, the Church, the society, and the State have a calling to give direction concerning the education of the child, so the child can presently take up a worthy place in society, *nevertheless, that calling may not infringe upon the right of parents to instruct their children* (italics ours). To the many helpful resources the parents have at their disposal belongs especially the school. The school takes over a part of the task of the parents. In the matter of instruction the school itself decides, *but the parents determine what and in what spirit it must be instructed* (italics ours). It follows that the school must be based on the same foundation as the Christian family, that is to say, the basis of the covenant, and there must be co-operation between school and family, between parents and teachers” (*Gereformeerd Kerkrecht* p. 520, as we have translated from the Dutch).

D. Classis’ interpretation of Article 21 brings itself and Article 21 into conflict with Scripture.

1. Classis has interpreted Article 21 to limit and define the “good Christian schools” of covenant communities, where, according to classis, parents ought to send their children in fulfillment of the demands of the covenant, in a way that adds to the Scriptures.

a. Classis defines the “good Christian schools” which, with rare exception, all in a given covenant community must use to fulfill their covenant obligations, as follows:

- 1) They are *schools*: that is, institutions of learning, outside of the home, where children are educated at the feet of delegated, professional teachers.
- 2) These schools are the existing “liberal arts” schools.
- 3) They are institutions of learning that “the covenant

community” establishes and maintains, and which the children of that community attend.

4) Home schools, according to classis, are not, therefore, a “legitimate alternative” for (most of) those in the covenant community. Home schools are not considered to be “good Christian schools” where people can fulfill their covenant obligations as part of a community of Reformed believers.

5) So “good” and necessary are “the good Christian schools” as defined by classis, that, according to classis, the status and effectiveness of an officebearer is in jeopardy if he does not have his children attend these schools except for good reasons that must be validated by his consistory and told to the congregation.

6) That this is the position of classis is clear from COPA II, C, 1, a, b; COPA II, B, 2. What is equally clear, from the position of classis with grounds, is that *classis has cited no Scripture and adduced no scriptural principles to prove its interpretation of Article 21.*

b. Classis’ interpretation of the “good Christian schools” mentioned in Article 21, its condemnation of home schools, and its position that attendance at these “good Christian schools” (and not home schools) is all but necessary (except in unusual circumstances) when these schools have been established in order to fulfill “the demands of the covenant,” adds to the Scriptures.

1) Scripture nowhere sanctions or condemns, favors or disfavors, much less prescribes or warns against one “form” of good Christian education or another.

2) Scripture nowhere says that the church of God is and ought to be a covenant community of believers who cooperate to such an extent in the liberal arts training of their children, that less than full participation in this liberal arts training is not only a (very) rare exception, but is suspect, and even frowned upon.

3) Scripture nowhere promotes one “form” of liberal arts training for the covenant community that is so “good” and necessary that people, or consistories or churches or the *Scripture itself* would disqualify or call into question the integrity of an officer who chooses not to have his children participate in that form of education even for reasons, perhaps, known only to himself and to his God.

2. Classis' decision and interpretation of Article 21 undermines the authority that Scripture gives to parents in the nurture of their children.
 - a. The position of classis, as we understand it, is basically this:
 - 1) The "covenant community" is best served when all the parents (with a few legitimate exceptions) have their children participate fully in the liberal arts institutions of that community. It is threatened when parents, for no reason that is satisfactory to the community, do not have their children participate.
 - 2) Consistories not only must urge all the members of the congregation to support the schools by sending their children to the existing schools in the covenant community, but must also admonish those who, though they otherwise show themselves to be good Christians, nevertheless do not show that their not sending their children to the schools is due to unusual circumstances.
 - b. This position is contrary to Scripture.
 - 1) Scripture nowhere says either that "the covenant community" or "the consistory" or anyone else is the ultimate authority in matters of the care of the children of the church or that other people or governing bodies must be given "reasons" (to justify their actions) by parents who choose to educate their children in a different (and yet righteous) way. Parents alone are given the authority and the responsibility by God to "see to it" that their children are raised uprightly. This is abundantly clear from Scripture: Deuteronomy 4:9; 6: 5-7; Joshua 4: 21, 22; Psalm 78: 3-5; Ephesians 6:4; 2 Timothy 1:5.
 - 2) The Bible teaches that *parents*, therefore, are to determine, in light of God's Word and the needs of their children, and without intimidation from, but with due respect to the needs of the covenant community, just what schooling and nurture is "good" for their children and how this will help them serve the church and society in which they live.
3. Classis' position and interpretation of Article 21 portrays an unbiblical view of "covenant cooperation" in the matter of Christian education.

a. Classis implies that fulfilling “the demands of the covenant” of which Article 21 speaks means that all in the community of Reformed believers (with rare exceptions) must use the existing PR Christian day schools.

b. Scripture speaks of no such “demands of the covenant” that would require that (almost all) parents in a particular covenant community use the same kinds of schools to promote the “good Christian education” of the children. Rather, Scripture gives other instruction.

1) The biblical principle guiding and shaping “covenant cooperation” in regard to everything from benevolence to worship to education is described in I Corinthians 12 as “the body,” and the recognition, appreciation, love, and respect of the members of the body of Christ of and for one another. We quote the relevant verses:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And if they were all one member, where were the body?

But now are they many members, yet but one body.

And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you.

Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary:

And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness.

For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked:

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. (I Corinthians 12: 12-25)

- 2) Scripture would have us apply this truth of the “body” to the realm of the education and nurture of the children of God’s people. In the education and nurture of the children of the church the individual parents express themselves, and Christ’s own life in them, in their place in the body. They also express themselves in their caring, in love, for the other members, and for the whole of the body, and the education and nurture of the children of all. No outward compulsion forces them, except the Word of God. One inward compulsion moves them: the love of Christ (I Cor. 13). There are no “models,” much less details, that Scripture gives for covenant cooperation in the education of children, or for the kind of education which itself would meet the needs of any or of most or of all in any given time and place. By the Word and love of Christ *only* does His body “find the way”—in and with all its members, to meet the educational, spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical needs of each and of all. Just like Israel of old. God calls Israel to teach the children. And parents of Israel to teach their sons. The whole, Israel, and the individual members, the parents—they are and work together in the cooperative work. Together, in truth and in love, they find the way to pass the truth on to the generations. Their love for one another, for the whole body, and for the cause of God’s covenant flows from their love to God (Deut. 6: 1-9). And that love itself flows from the heart of God to them.
4. Classis has added to the Bible a requirement for officebearers.
- a. Classis suggests that an officer in the church cannot (except in unusual circumstances) fulfill his duties as an officer and be an example to the congregation unless he also uses certain Christian schools. Classis goes so far, even, as to imply that even if one is convicted that he must homeschool his children, that his reasons for homeschooling, even if they are righteous in themselves, might not be satisfactory, so that his homeschooling jeopardizes his office (COPA II, B, 2).
- b. But Scripture does not mention this kind of qualification when speaking of qualifications for office.
- 1) I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 are the main pas-

sages in Scripture outlining the qualifications for elders in the church. None of these passages nor any other Scripture calls officers to send their children to certain schools, or suggests that officers in the church can only be examples for the congregation in the matter of the education of the church's children by using the schools some or many others do.

2) In fact, I Timothy 3:4, 5 requires of an elder that he *first rule his own house well*, if he would be able to care for the church of God. He must, in fact, *be an example* in this "ruling well" of his own house first.

5. Classis has done injustice to the biblical principle of "conscience," and has dealt neither biblically, nor charitably, we fear, in its consideration of the conscience of Rev. Dick.

a. Classis has recognized that the homeschooling of Rev. Dick is a matter of "conscience" for him. At almost every turn, however, classis either makes light of this fact, questions the legitimacy of this fact, or thinks to alter this fact. In other words, it is quite obvious that classis is of the opinion that Rev. Dick is convinced, *wrongly*, that he must homeschool. It appears as if classis cannot even *conceive* of a minister (especially in Grand Rapids) doing this, so that classis has been compelled all along, by that preconception, to believe/suspect that Rev. Dick's conscience, along with his homeschooling, are illegitimate and hinder his effectiveness in office and jeopardize his holding office.

1) Thus, classis, granting that one may not be compelled to act against his conscience, nevertheless has felt compelled, itself, to go on record as saying: "In certain instances an officebearer's holding to his conscience may jeopardize his office" (COPA II, B, 2).

2) And classis, in COPA II, C, 3, b; and II, D, 1, b, suggests that Rev. Dick's appeal to conscience has been some kind of "refuge" to which he has stubbornly retreated, so that he has even "withheld" his reasons for his convictions.

3) Classis even entertains the fact, and by its publication of the same has, however unwittingly, put the thought in the heads of others, that Rev. Dick's conscience "may not be decisive because the conscience (Read: 'Rev. Dick's conscience') may be weak for lack

of knowledge (I Cor. 8: 7) or it may be defiled by our sinful natures (Titus 1: 15).” (COPA II, C, 3, b).

4) And finally, the recommendations in COPA II, D, 2, 3 both show that classis is of the view that Rev. Dick’s “conscience” has been shaped by certain unresolved “issues.” Just resolve the issues, such is the thinking of classis, and Rev. Dick’s conscience will change and he can find his way to send his children back to school. Never is there mention of the possibility that Rev. Dick may not have any “issues” to resolve, and yet may still be convicted of the need to homeschool, and that he, though he continue to homeschool, may still remain an effective and exemplary minister of the Word of God and of the sacraments for the congregation at Grace.

b. But “conscience,” and a man’s appeal to his conscience, are not to be treated so lightly!

1) This is true especially when *there is no reason to doubt* the integrity of the man and the legitimacy of the reasons for his convictions. And especially when Rev. Dick’s elders attest to his integrity and to the legitimacy of those convictions. And especially also when there is no Word from God that informs *anyone* that homeschooling and his homeschooling are illegitimate.

2) This is true, as well, because as Rev. John A. Heys points out: “A man’s conscience is that activity or faculty of his heart and of his mind according to which he has a certain knowledge, assurance, or consciousness of, and whereby he agrees with, *God’s judgment of his works according to their ethical and moral value.*” And a “good” conscience, according to Heys, is one “that gives a good testimony; that testifies to the subject that he is good in God’s sight, as we read of Enoch: ‘Before his translation he had this testimony that he pleased God’ (Heb. 11:5).” (These quotes taken from a speech by Rev. Heys, now published in pamphlet form, entitled *The Christian and His Conscience*). A man with a good conscience, therefore, knows and enjoys, by the objective testimony of God’s Word, and by God’s Spirit witnessing in the heart, *God’s own assessment that He is pleased with his servant.*

6. It is good for all of us to be reminded of the warnings found in Scripture and the confessions, and studiously to avoid any

rules or judgments that might add to or conflict with the rule of Scripture. Belgic Confession, Article 32:

In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God....

Conclusion

We therefore urge classis to rescind and revoke the decision and position taken, with its grounds, by the September 12, 2007 Classis. The issue is vital. It concerns the standard of righteousness, God's Word, as it pertains to the matter and method of Christian education. It concerns the righteous way of individual parents and the covenant community together in pursuit of a shared goal as the body of Christ: God's glory in the education and nurture of all the members of that body. It concerns, indeed, the present *and the future* of the churches and church we love, as we seek to ensure, God's way, and God helping us, that the covenant children and youth, for generations to come, will indeed be nurtured and educated in the truth and love of Christ, and equipped for service in the kingdom of heaven.

In love for Christ and His truth, Grace Church and her members, and the good Christian education that serves the needs of all, and in honor of our esteemed brethren, the delegates of Classis East, we submit our protest and would deliberate with you in God's light and brotherly love upon these weighty matters.

The Consistory of Grace PRC

Enclosures:

Position Paper re: Home Schooling January 7, 2007

Letter to the Congregation November 18, 2007

Appendix 3: Classis' Response to Grace Protest

Committee of Pre-advice #1 (Classis East, convened January 9, 2008):

I. Information:

A. Grace Consistory protests:

Classis' decision (Art. 44) to enter into matters that concerned more than the two appeals (with their grounds) that were legally before it,

and its adjudication, pronouncements, and recommendations regarding the homeschooling of Rev. Dick and Grace Consistory's support of it (COPA II, C and D). Ground: [They] are in violation of Art. 30 of the Church Order (Agenda, I, p. 49).

B. Grace Consistory makes the following arguments to support their case (Agenda, p. 50, 51, I, B, 1-3):

1. "When classis declared *against the appellants* that Rev. Dick did indeed have the biblical right to homeschool, *the business of classis was finished*" because "Grace Consistory did not request that classis uphold its decision and grounds as set forth in its position paper, *except as it pertained to the right of Rev. Dick to homeschool*, and that, *only as that was being challenged by the appellants*" (I, B, 1).
2. Classis "rendered unauthorized and inadequately informed pronouncements...on matters...that were clearly the affair of Grace Consistory, and not classis," when it made statements "based on its interpretation of Art. 21, *in application to the particular situation at Grace*" (I, B, 2).
3. "Classis, in venturing into these consistorial, parental, and educational matters...erred, in principle, in the same way [that Classis West 1983 ruled] that the Lynden Consistory erred" (I, B, 3).

II. We recommend classis reject point 1 of Grace Consistory's protest that "Classis' decision (Art. 44)...adjudication, pronouncements, and recommendation...[are] in violation of Art. 30 of the Church Order."

Grounds:

A. Grace errs in its contention that "when classis declared against the appellants that Rev. Dick did indeed have the biblical right to homeschool, the business of classis was finished" (I, B, 1).

1. The consistory made no such request to limit the material as it claims (I, B, 1):
 - a. The actual request Grace Consistory made was this: "We request classis *to uphold the decision* of Grace Consistory, *and* to uphold the right of Pastor Dick to educate his children at home. *The Consistory's position and grounds for its decision can be found in the 'Position paper'* (dated January 7, 2007)" (Agenda, Sept. 12, 2007, p. 61).
 - b. It should be noted, even if the consistory had sought to place such a limitation upon classis, a classis is under no

- obligation to comply if it judges the material is relevant, especially when it is included in the Agenda, and used to support the decision classis is being asked to uphold.
2. The consistory too narrowly defines the issue before classis as simply whether or not Rev. Dick has the biblical right to homeschool his children.
 - a. When treating a matter brought legally by way of appeal, classis has the right and obligation to consider not only the appeal itself, but also the decision being appealed with its grounds and defense, especially when classis is being asked “to uphold the decision.”
 - b. The issue before classis was whether or not Rev. Dick had the right to homeschool his children *in light of the circumstances and facts in the decision*, i.e., in light of the Church Order, the report of the church visitors, the unrest the decision caused, Rev. Dick’s position as minister within the denomination, and the reasons the consistory gave for allowing him to homeschool.
 - B. Grace errs in its charge that classis “rendered unauthorized and inadequately-informed pronouncements” that were “clearly the affair of Grace Consistory, and not that of classis” (I, B, 2).
 1. The consistory fails to prove its charge because the examples given (I, B, 2, pp. 50, 51) are in reality objections to the advice of classis itself, not the legality of classis’ giving the advice.
 2. The charge is contrary to fact as regards classis’ authority. Classis, in fact, *was* authorized to make statements “based on its interpretation of Article 21 *in application to the particular situation at Grace.*”
 - a. Classis did not “take to hand” this matter, but was *specifically* asked “to uphold the decision of Grace PRC....” Classis only ruled on the application of Article 21 to the particular situation at Grace that Grace Consistory had already made (Agenda, Sept. 12, 2007, pp. 8, 46, 54).
 - b. The protestants appealed to Article 21 and objected to the consistory’s interpretation of it.
 - c. Because Article 21 is an ecclesiastical ordinance, the *prior* interpretation and decision of Grace Consistory regarding Article 21 affects not simply Grace PRC, but the churches in common.
 3. The charge is contrary to fact as regards classis’ knowledge.
 - a. This charge is based on the false assertion that classis

was limited only to certain materials in the Agenda and simply to the issue of whether or not Rev. Dick has the biblical right to homeschool.

b. Classis made no so-called “pronouncements” on new material as Grace suggests (without proof), but gave advice only on the information supplied by the appellants and by the consistory itself in the Agenda. For example, classis is alleged to have “ventured to question the manner in which Grace Consistory came to its conclusions in re the legitimacy of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling.” Classis did no such thing, but merely ruled on the legitimacy of the consistory using his appeal to conscience as one of the main grounds for its decision. Classis had adequate knowledge of this fact, because the consistory itself informed us of it (Agenda, Sept. 12, 2007, III, A, I, p. 8).

C. Grace errs in its assertion that Classis East made the same error, in principle, as the Lynden Consistory.

1. Grace Consistory misrepresents the 1983 Classis West decision against Lynden Consistory.

a. As a matter of record, Classis West never ruled, as Grace alleges, “that Lynden Consistory erred when it ‘improperly involved itself in the matters of the Covenant Christian School’ *in disciplining a member for not using the schools....*” Rather, Classis West listed specific actions it judged improper. “Disciplining a member for not using the schools” is not among them.

b. As a matter of record, Classis West never ruled, as Grace alleges, “that the Lynden Consistory erred in censuring a member for not sending his children to the local PR Christian school.” The two grounds Grace cited were only used by Classis West for their decision that Lynden Consistory “improperly involved itself in the matters of the Covenant Christian School” and not for a matter of discipline.

2. Grace Consistory misunderstands the error of Lynden Consistory as judged by Classis West, and thus misapplies it to the decision of Classis East.

a. Grace wrongly assumes a “parental and educational” matter cannot also be an ecclesiastical matter.

1) Ecclesiastical matters also include “*the promotion of sound doctrine and vital spiritual living*” (VanDellen and Monsma), and the “*spiritual walk of the saints... [which] includes the whole of their life in*

every sphere: socially, politically, economically, etc.”
(Hanko).

2) Our ecclesiastical ordinances (C.O., Articles 21, 41, and 44) demonstrate that “parental and educational matters” are also considered vital ecclesiastical matters.

b. The error of Lynden Consistory was not its involvement in “parental and educational matters,” per se, but the radical manner in which it did so. This is evident from the numerous qualifying statements in the Classis West decision:

1) They objected to the *improper* involvement of Lynden Consistory, not *any* involvement.

2) They did not object to admonishing someone for removal of his children from the good Christian school, but “admonishing...*without first inquiring his reasons for doing so.*”

3) They did not judge as radical the decision that one must be a supporter of good Christian schools to qualify for office, but the decision “that one must be, *regardless of circumstances....*”

c. Classis East did not involve itself in the matters of Christian education in any such radical manner as did Lynden Consistory. Rather, in remarkable harmony with the decision of Classis West 1983, Classis East pointed Grace Consistory to the necessary importance of the reasons or circumstances in making their decision.

Committee of Pre-advice #3
(Classis East, reconvened February 13, 2008)

I. Information

A. Grace PRC Consistory protests the decision of Classis East in Articles 43 and 45 of its September 26, 2007 meeting to deny the request of the Grace Consistory to classis “to uphold the decision of Grace PRC Consistory and to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home” and the decisions and recommendations of Articles 47, 50-52 of its September 26 meeting to take certain actions re Rev. Dick’s reasons for not using the good Christian schools and for homeschooling his children instead.

B. Grace PRC Consistory contends that:

1. “The decisions of Classis East (Arts. 43, 45, 46, 47, 50-52) are based on erroneous and unbiblical grounds” (Agenda, pp. 51-53).

a. Classis contradicts itself in the first ground of this deci-

sion. On the one hand, classis says that homeschooling is Rev. Dick's biblical right because it falls within the area of Christian liberty. On the other hand, classis says that Article 21 cannot be used in support of homeschooling because it never had in mind homeschooling as one kind of Christian school.

b. Classis bases its decision on the unproven assumption that Grace Consistory did not know of and had not validated the reasons for Rev. Dick's homeschooling.

2. "Classis' interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order is not, in fact, based on anything stated or implied in Article 21" (Agenda, pp. 53-55).

a. Classis bases its interpretation on an argument from silence.

b. Classis has injected meaning into Article 21 that is not there.

3. "Classis' interpretation of Article 21 is not in the Reformed tradition, and indeed seriously narrows and distorts the basic thrust and primary purpose of the article" (Agenda, pp. 55-59).

4. "Classis' interpretation of Article 21 brings itself into conflict with Scripture" (Agenda, pp. 59-64).

a. Classis has defined "good Christian schools" in a way that adds to the Scriptures.

b. Classis' decision undermines the authority that Scripture gives to parents in the nurture of their children.

c. Classis' position portrays an unbiblical view of "covenant cooperation" in the matter of Christian education.

d. Classis has added to the Bible a requirement for officebearers.

e. Classis has done injustice to the biblical principle of "conscience."

II. Recommendation

A. We recommend that classis read: Introduction on pages 47, 48; II, A, 1, 2; B, 1, 2; C; D, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; and conclusion.

B. We recommend that classis not sustain the protest of Grace PRC Consistory.

Grounds:

1. Grace Consistory's protest, in important places, does not deal directly with the decisions of Classis East, but instead speaks against perceived "implications" of the decisions. Furthermore, some of these implications in themselves are inaccurate.

a. Grace says, "Therefore, such is the *implication* [our

emphasis], according to classis, ‘homeschooling’ is not a ‘legitimate alternative’” (II, B, 1, a). This misrepresents classis’ decision because classis never said that homeschooling is not a legitimate alternative, in some instances, for the education of covenant children, but only that Article 21 of the Church Order neither in its original form (“schoolmasters”) nor in its present form (“schools”) had in mind homeschooling as “one kind” of Christian school. VanDellen and Monsma make it clear that the reference was only to “parental Christian Schools” (p. 93) or “Christian Day Schools” (pp. 95, 96).

b. Grace says, “This interpretation of Article 21 wrongly *implies* [our emphasis] that the ‘attendance of all’ at the existing good Christian schools is an expression of each parent’s fulfillment of the ‘demands of the covenant,’” and further along, “The *thrust* [our emphasis] of classis, on this point of the ‘use’ of the Christian schools, is to say that we all must, as a covenant community of believers, work together and support one another by all using the same kinds of schools. Fulfilling ‘the demands of the covenant’ is interpreted as all joining together in the covenant community to use the same schools” (II, B, 2, b). And again, “Classis *implies* [our emphasis] that fulfilling ‘the demands of the covenant’ of which Article 21 speaks means that all in the community of Reformed believers (with rare exceptions) must use the existing PR Christian day schools” (II, D, 3, a). These statements misrepresent the decision of classis, because classis did not say that the expression “demands of the covenant” has reference to the “covenant community.” In fact, classis did not offer an interpretation of the last phrase of Article 21.

c. Grace says, “The *implication* [our emphasis] in light of classis’ position that home schools are not ‘legitimate alternatives,’ is that home schools are a ‘threat’ and even detrimental to the cause of the covenant community and the cause of Christian education” (II, B, 2, b). And again, “The position of classis, *as we understand it* [our emphasis], is basically this, the ‘covenant community’ is best served when all the parents (with a few legitimate exceptions) have their children participate fully in the liberal arts institutions of the community. It is threatened when parents, for no reason that is satisfactory to the community, do not have their children participate” (II, D, 2, a). These statements again misrepresent classis because classis neither said that homeschooling

in general nor that Rev. Dick's homeschooling in particular are a threat to the cause of the Christian schools.

2. Grace Consistory's protest fails to see that, although Article 21 does not speak to the question of whether homeschooling is right or wrong, it does require the promotion of the existing Christian day schools by the consistory as a whole and by the consistory members in their individual office where this is possible.

a. Article 21 is very definitely speaking about the establishment, promotion, and support of Christian day schools, not home schools, by the consistories, not only for those who might "need" them, but for all the families of the congregation. This in no way injects meaning into Article 21.

b. Therefore, classis is correct to conclude from this that "a consistory member is bound to observe Article 21 of the Church Order" and that a minister, who must be an example to the congregation, "cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21" if he withdraws his children from the existing Christian schools without giving valid reason to the congregation (Arts. 43 and 45 of September 26).

3. The decisions of classis which Grace is protesting do not conflict with Scripture and the Reformed tradition.

a. In its definition of "good Christian schools" classis did not add to the Scriptures but only identified those schools to which Article 21 refers.

b. Classis' decisions do not take away the primary responsibility and right of educating children from individual believing parents, but rather simply recognize that, in addition to this parental responsibility, Article 21 declares that also consistories have a responsibility toward the education of the children under their care. Article 21 gives consistories the responsibility to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation (rather than the rights of the individual), by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible.

c. Classis' decisions do not add an extra requirement for officebearers, but rather simply follow the Scriptures and the Reformed tradition which do put extra requirements on the officebearers, such as,

1) The officebearer is bound to maintain the Church Order by his signing of the Formula of Subscription.

- 2) The officebearer must be an example to the flock (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; II Thess. 3:7).
- 3) The officebearer must be careful not to act in a way that is detrimental to the peace of the church (I Cor. 10:23).
- d. Classis does not treat lightly the matter of Rev. Dick's conscience, but only says that the officebearer's position in the church puts limitations on the exercise of his conscience. Every officebearer must be willing to open his conscience up to being instructed and informed by Scripture and the Church Order, the multitude of counselors, the traditions of the church he serves, and the interests of the congregation. Apart from these considerations, he ought not to follow a course of action based only upon his conscience.
4. Grace Consistory's original position paper of January 2007 and their protest to this classis fail to take into account the following important concerns which their decisions have raised:
 - a. The fact that their pastor did not merely decide to homeschool, but withdrew his children from two of our good Christian schools.
 - 1) It is difficult for many members of the congregation to understand how the pastor can promote the schools used and supported by all the other members of the congregation when he has withdrawn his children from two of those schools without explanation to them.
 - 2) In the absence of an explanation, the impression is left that our schools are not of a high enough standard (morally and/or educationally) for the education of his children.
 - b. The importance of maintaining peace and unity in the church.
 - 1) Nowhere in the protest is mention made of the welfare of the congregation, except in the attached letter to the congregation that acknowledges disharmony.
 - 2) Every pastor and officebearer must be willing to make adjustments in his own life so that peace may be maintained in the congregation (Acts 16:3; I Cor. 9:20, 21; 10:23).
 - 3) The focus of the work of the consistory ought to be on the well-being of the whole body, rather than on the rights of the individual members (Eph. 4:12).

Appendix 4: Rev. Dick Protest to Classis East

April 14, 2008

Brethren and Delegates of Classis East,

I hereby protest the decision of Classis East, February 27, 2008, to adopt the advice and make the recommendations suggested by the Committee of Pre-Advice of Classis East, which committee was appointed at the February 14, 2008 meeting of classis (cf. Art. 82 of the minutes. Hereafter, COPA-82). I protest, as well, the recommendations of COPA #3 with their grounds as they were approved on February 13, 2008. I protest, as well, a ground of one of the recommendations of COPA #2 as that was adopted by classis on February 13, 2008. I ask that classis rescind their approval of these recommendations, and to declare them in error.

Enclosed is the pertinent material, including:

- *The decisions and recommendations of the September, 2007 Classis.
- *The protest of Grace Consistory to the January, 2008 Classis.
- *The reports and recommendations of the COPAs whose recommendations we protest.

I. I protest COPA-82, II, A in which classis declares that “Grace PRC’s consistory erred when they judged valid Rev. Dick’s reasons for withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them, as reported in their November 12, 2007 letter to the Special Committee.” Grounds for my protest:

A. By passing judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick’s “withdrawing” all of his children from two “good Christian schools” classis has overstepped the bounds of its authority.

1. Classis, according to our Church Order, Article 30, may only consider such matters “as are not finished in minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assemblies in common.”

a. It is clear that the matter of the validation of the reasons of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling was “finished” at the September 2007 Classis—having been left in the rightful and able hands of Grace Consistory.

1) Classis recommended that the Grace Consistory, *and only the Grace Consistory*, judge whether Rev. Dick’s reasons are valid (COPA II, D, 1).

2) Realizing that this was within its authority, and no one else’s, and in submission to the rule of classis, Grace Consistory (hereafter GC) reported that it had “reconfirmed” that the reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling

were indeed valid (p. 48 of the agenda of the January 2008 Classis), and that it had communicated the nature of these reasons to the congregation of Grace.

b. The committee appointed to “help” Grace Consistory implement *Grace Consistory’s* decision to validate (or invalidate) was appointed simply for that: to “help” GC and not to make any decisions *for* GC, and certainly not to be a sort of “watchdog” committee—as if appointed to make sure that GC did what classis wanted it to do. This is clear from the fact that nothing of the kind was said about the duty of the committee, other than that it was to help, and also from the fact that the use of this committee was optional: the committee was appointed to help GC implement these decisions only “should the consistory desire such help” (COPA II, E).

1) In the very first meeting with the committee it was made clear by the consistory to the committee that the consistory was not seeking help in validating Rev. Dick’s reasons, but only in the implementation of the recommendations of classis in light of Grace’s validation of the reasons; the committee understood this, and agreed with GC as to the mandate and purpose of the committee.

2) When the committee informed GC that it recommended that we *not accept* the reasons given by the pastor, we informed them that we did not agree with their recommendation—both the fact that the committee would attempt to make such a judgment of their validation, and also the contents of their recommendation. GC, in fact, took a decision concerning this committee’s advice, as follows (November 30, 2007 minutes):

Consistory goes on record as disagreeing unanimously with the conclusions of the committee appointed by Classis East to help us to implement the decisions of classis in re the homeschooling of our pastor. Committee has indicated in a report to us that pastor’s reasons for homeschooling are “invalid.” We disagree. Therefore, we cannot follow its recommendations. Further, we object to the committee’s conclusions and suggested recommendations, not only because we disagree with the substance of them, but also for the following reasons:

- a. We did not ask this committee to pass judgment on pastor’s homeschooling, to “validate” our validation.
- b. The “validation” of pastor’s homeschooling was acknowledged by

classis to be the right and responsibility of Grace Consistory; it was not the mandate of the committee appointed by Classis to help us.

c. The committee is not, in fact, in a position to “validate” pastor’s homeschooling because they do not know all the facts of the case, nor the needs of the pastor and his family.

c. On the basis, not only of the recommendations of the September Classis itself, in which GC *alone* was called to judge the validity of the reasons of Pastor Dick’s homeschooling, and also on the basis of Article 30 of the Church Order, it was improper for classis itself to render judgment on this matter of the reasons of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling.

1) What has occurred, by this, is that the committee of classis, supposed to represent classis, has not only gone beyond its mandate, but has offered *its own private opinion* concerning the validation of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling, in the attempts of “furthering a case” which classis, because it had no further recommendations with regard to Grace and no other protests legally before it, would have considered “closed” upon the validation of the reasons by the proper and duly recognized authority in this matter—the Grace Consistory.

2) It must be underscored—the classical committee has indeed offered *a private opinion* on this matter. It has not legitimately represented classis—for classis, *nowhere*, has expressed itself, officially, on just what is the standard for the validation of any or all homeschooling, also that of an officer, and certainly not of any particular officer and his circumstances. Instead, the committee has become a sort of self-appointed “appellant.” But committees, especially committees that were not appointed to be either appellants or prosecuting attorneys, may not be appellants or prosecuting attorneys. And if certain individuals have a problem with a consistory’s judgments, decisions, or actions, they should not be taking their case to classis until they take their gravamens to the consistory, privately and respectfully, so that the matter can be properly considered and finished at the consistorial level.

3) For the classis, therefore, even to *consider* this *private opinion*, and that, of a committee that has gone beyond its mandate, and then to adopt this private opinion as its own, is altogether improper.

d. In addition, it may not be argued that the classis is free to deliberate upon this matter of the reasons of Rev. Dick's homeschooling and to judge their validity on the grounds that this is a matter "that pertains to the churches of the major assemblies in common." For:

1) Limited involvement of the September Classis in the matter of Grace Consistory's allowing Rev. Dick to homeschool, also after the protests against Grace Consistory were dealt with, may indeed have been warranted. That was because the matter concerned a certain interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order.

2) For at least three reasons, however, it is clear that *passing judgment on the reasons* for the homeschooling of Rev. Dick's family, is *not* a matter that pertains to the churches in common. First, this is not a matter of an article and its interpretation, but of a *family and its needs*. Second, as classis has said, the education of children is a matter of Christian *liberty*, a liberty that is that also of an officebearer, and Article 21, according to classis' own decision, may not be used to impose a certain kind of schooling on any parent. Third, since this matter concerns the *reasons* for a particular officebearer-parent choosing to educate his children at home and not to employ certain schools, at this time, as he seeks to fulfill his baptismal vows, neither the "churches in common" nor a "classis," nor a "committee of classis" is at liberty or able to judge these reasons—only the consistory that God has appointed over families and children, the souls of a flock, can properly treat these matters (Heb. 13:7, 17).

2. It is difficult to see how classis, in assuming to itself the authority and position of Judge in relation to a matter that is clearly a matter of a parent and his family and a consistory and its family (a local congregation) has not, in fact, not only violated Article 30 of the Church Order, but also violated the principle of the autonomy of the local church. So important is this for proper church government and denominational cooperation, also in our own ecclesiastical history, that much has been written to safeguard against this grievous error.

a. Our very own Declaration of Principles, for example, includes among the Reformed and biblical distinctives delineating what we "believe and maintain" as PRC, "the

autonomy of the local church” (Head IV). Proof that is cited is the Belgic Confession, Article 31; the Church Order, Articles 36 and 84; and the Form for the Installation of Elders and Deacons.

b. Article 84 is especially to the point. It reads: “No church shall in any way lord it over other churches, no minister over other ministers, no elder or deacon over other elders or deacons.” Commenting on this, VanDellen and Monsma, writing of the origin of this Article in the Wezelian Convention in the Netherlands, 1568, say this:

In Chapter V, Article 19 this same Convention definitely limits the authority of Classes and safeguards the rights of the individual church. We read: “Nevertheless we do not here acknowledge the classical gatherings to have jurisdiction (*recht*) over any Church or its offices, except these shall permit it of their own accord, in order that the Churches may not be robbed against their will of their jurisdiction (*recht*) and authority (*gezag*)” (p. 341).

And further on:

From all these early expressions it is plain that the churches set themselves to safeguard the rights and individuality of the particular churches. They made it clear that they were aiming at denominational co-operation, not a unification of many particular churches into one super-Church, vested with supreme jurisdiction over its various subdivisions (cf. pp. 342, 343).

3. Classis, in its thinking it has the authority and the ability to pass judgment concerning the reasons parents give for educating and nurturing their children in one good Christian way in distinction from another good Christian way, has intruded upon and indeed attempted to usurp the authority of parents.

a. Scripture gives to parents the right and responsibility to educate and nurture their children. This is Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6: 1-4.

b. Classis neither offers nor can offer any proof whatsoever, from Scripture or the Reformed faith and tradition, that it has the right either to establish some sort of “general standard” or list of “adequate” or “valid” reasons for all and any parents who would homeschool, be they officebearers or not (except whether they be “good” and “Christian” home schools), or to ascertain just what would be adequate

or valid reasons for the Dick family or the next family to homeschool.

4. In its decision with grounds (COPA II, A, 1, 2) classis has overstepped its authority also and especially in that it has passed judgment on the reasons of Rev. Dick without one word from Scripture.

a. This is contrary to the “ecclesiastical manner” in which all ecclesiastical matters in the churches must be transacted. Writing of this, Prof. Hanko writes:

The principle involved here is that the authority of the church is limited to the power of the Word of God which is the rule of the faith and life of the saints. This word of God is therefore the only power which ecclesiastical assemblies have.

Positively, the only power in the church is the persuasive power of the word of God, which is of sole authority in the church. All decisions must therefore be taken by means of consideration of all matters in the light of Scripture, our confessions, and the Church Order. The persuasive power of the assemblies must be conviction on the basis of Scripture. Through mutual consultation, consideration, and admonition the assemblies must be brought to bow together before God’s Word. The willingness to bow before God’s Word is the only proper spirit of an ecclesiastical assembly (*Notes on the Church Order*; Art. 30).

b. With no Scripture, confessions, or Church Order, classis would pass judgment upon a consistory and a father, a judgment which represents an attempt to bind the conscience of that father. This has been done even though this judgment results in the casting of a long and dark shadow on the reputation of elders and a pastor, and also threatens to jeopardize the ministry of a servant of God, and to create schism in Grace Church—and all *over a determination, clearly parental and private*, of what are “good reasons” for one kind of good Christian education or another! This is unconscionable and shameful.

B. With regard to classis’ assessment itself of the reasons themselves that Rev. Dick has for homeschooling his children, as follows.

1. I want to set the record straight, once and for all, and publicly, about our reasons for homeschooling our children.

a. First of all, my wife and I, as all know, did not choose to homeschool right away. For some five or six years we used the existing Christian day schools that most of the PR people use. Little known to most people, perhaps, is that

we did not ever use the kindergarten program of the schools, thinking it unnecessary for our children to be sent away from our home at such a young age. After some years using the schools, after which we had four children enrolled, we were called to work for five months on the mission field in North Carolina. While there we homeschooled the children, and enjoyed it very much. After we came back to Grace and Grand Rapids, and after having re-enrolled our children in Hope School, we chose not to send one of our children, one year, but instead to teach him at home. After that is when we transferred (not “withdrew”) to Eastside School since we liked the idea of its being smaller, and the classes “multi-grade,” so that our children might receive closer attention from the teachers and even, for some of our children, be in class with their siblings.

b. We did not re-enroll in Eastside, after coming to the conclusion that the existing day schools and ourselves just did not seem to be a good “fit,” and that we had needs in our family that could only be addressed, at this time, in the home environment a home school affords. We had no problem with the “academics” and the Christian perspective that the teachers have given. We simply have wanted more adequate reinforcement of what we were teaching in our home with regard to the spiritual, emotional, and social aspect of our children’s care and development. We have thought and do think that things like proper respect for authority, proper handling of sinful behavior and conflict, dealing with peer pressure, etc...need to be taught to our children, for now, in a home setting. We have wanted, as well, our children to be kept, as much as possible, from either bullying or being bullied, from cliques, and from worldliness. And this protection, we believe, we need to offer in our home.

c. Now all this (above in “b”) my wife and I wrote, in so many words, in a letter to the consistory in October of 2007 as consistory was in the process of “reaffirming” its validation of our reasons for homeschooling. It was a private letter, meant to convey to the consistory, in writing, that of which we had already spoken to them. The letter contained no specifics of our experiences in the two schools we attended. Nor did it mention any of the needs of our children in specific, nor any of the abuse some of them have suffered. We wanted to keep these specifics private (that is,

mentioned only in conversation between ourselves and the consistory) in order to protect our children, and also to guard against unjust criticism of the schools. This private letter was made available to the special committee that the September 2007 Classis appointed to help us. It was not intended, as we told the committee, to be information from which we expected or wanted them to help “validate the validity” of our reasons for homeschooling. Nor was it intended, in any form, quoted or summarized, to be made public (even in a closed session of classis!) as the committee has thought it had the right to do. Be that as it may, we think it proper here to quote that part of the letter the special committee all but passed by in its summary of our reasons to the classis. That part we quote as follows:

We would like to emphasize that in our choosing not to use the existing day schools, and for the reasons we give above, we are not saying that the problem lies in the schools all by themselves, or in other people all by themselves. By no means! Our own children, and we ourselves, with all our weaknesses and limitations, are a part of the problem! We have, in fact, assessed the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs of our children, and the needs of ourselves, as parents, as well. We have analyzed our own children’s abilities to handle the peer pressure, to resist the worldliness, and to work through conflict. We have observed their weaknesses and the level of their maturity. In light of our prayerful consideration of these things, we are convinced that our children require more parental supervision, nurture, and discipline, and less peer pressure than enrollment at the existing schools affords. We are not seeking to “run away,” or to “avoid” problems. Rather, we are seeking to pursue the best course for the welfare of our children, and the best course for them to deal in a godly way, as they grow under our care, with life’s challenges and problems.

In no wise do we want to leave the impression that our not using the schools implies that we think other parents are remiss by sending their children to the schools. Not at all! We honor completely the choice that parents make to use the schools to help them fulfill their calling to raise their children to the utmost of their power. We sincerely respect and honor as well the noble goals that Christian fathers have sought to achieve in the establishment of Christian day schools. We recognize, as well, the calling of consistories to see to it that there are Christian schools that will help parents raise their children according to the demand of the covenant. We are only saying, by our homeschooling, that this is the best option for us, and indeed the only one, at this time, that we can in good conscience consider.

Since we respect and love the parents and children who use the ex-

isting Christian day schools, we certainly will continue to support these schools, and these parents and their children! We will continue to pray, in private and in public, for the schools commonly used among us. We will continue to contribute to them monetarily. We will not “shelter” our children from those who use the schools, but will continue to encourage our children and the church’s children in their friendships and in their growth in the Lord. *Our homeschooling will in fact, we believe, help* us in our support of the church’s families!

So little do we consider that the schools, “all by themselves,” or that other people, “all by themselves,” are to fault for our not using the existing schools, that we can foresee a time, perhaps very soon, when some or most of our children might attend the Christian schools, at least part time. Our problem at this time *is the amount of time away from home that attendance at the Christian schools requires*. If we can work out something with the schools and school boards that would enable us to use the schools part time, we would consider that option, and seek to show our support of the schools in that way. At the same time, if such flexibility were allowed, we ourselves would be encouraged by the “support” and consideration that the schools would be giving to us.

- d. To show that we have indeed communicated, as classis advised, the nature of these reasons to the congregation of Grace, we offer this excerpt of a letter to Grace dated November 18, 2007:

In accord with the recommendation of classis, and so that the congregation can be assured, not only of the legitimacy of pastor’s homeschooling, but of the schooling of their own children, we would communicate to you now the *nature* of the reasons why pastor and his wife seek to educate their children at home with some explanations of the same. The reason is basically this: Pastor and his wife are convicted that proper attendance to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of their children requires more of their own parental day-to-day care and supervision than is possible when their children are enrolled full-time in the existing Christian day schools. The Dicks have analyzed and assessed the strengths and weaknesses of their children, the level of their maturity, and their abilities to deal with their peers in a godly manner. They are persuaded that, at this time, full-time parental care by them is needed, so that the needs of the individual children, and of the family as a unit, might best be addressed. The Dicks have always assured the elders, and they and we would hereby assure the congregation once again, that by their not using the existing schools, the Dicks are not making a judgment about the worth of the schools; and they are certainly not saying that parents who use the existing schools are not keeping their baptismal vows. Nor is it the case that pastor and his family are “running” from problems instead of dealing with them. Rather, their motive is to provide what they are convicted

is the best “setting” and environment (at this time, their own home) *for their children, in order to meet their children’s specific needs and to nurture them as God Himself would have them.* This “homeschooling” the pastor and his wife see as the way they can fulfill their vows at this time to raise their children “to the utmost” of their abilities.

2. About *the assessment* the classis gives of our reasons for homeschooling:

a. COPA II, A, 1 states that “Rev. Dick’s reasons, as presented in the special committee’s report, make it impossible for him to comply with Article 21 of the Church Order. These reasons make it impossible for him to encourage and promote the use of the good Christian schools by other members of his congregation.” But this “impossibility” of Rev. Dick’s compliance with Article 21 and the “impossibility” of him encouraging and promoting the use of the good Christian schools by others *is nowhere proven.* What makes it impossible? On such an important point as this, one would think classis might elaborate, define terms, give reasons. But nothing. It is impossible for a classis to make a just decision with regard to these matters unless careful and well-reasoned arguments are given to make a case for it.

b. COPA II, A, 2 states that “the reasons which Grace’s consistory accepted from their pastor for withdrawing all his children from two PR Christian schools are not adequate.”

1) Ground “a” reads: “The weakness that he sees in the good Christian schools affect, not only his children, but also all the children of his flock.” But one fails to see how this makes Rev.’s reasons for not using the schools “inadequate.” For the weaknesses one sees may affect his children differently than others. The needs of his children may require a different environment than others.

2) Ground “b” reads: “As the pastor of the flock, the course of action he should pursue (for the sake of all the children in the flock) is to address, in a wise and persistent way, the issues of concern and work toward resolving the issues. Withdrawing his children from the schools keeps him from being able to deal with and address these weaknesses.” But this assumes that “as the pastor of the flock” the pastor has not only the right but the duty and also the ability to resolve certain issues

in the schools. This assumes, also, that certain things, perhaps nothing at all, has been addressed in a wise and persistent way. What this ground fails to reckon with is that it may simply be the case that one kind of Christian education that is good for one group of parents may not be what is needed for another group of parents.

3) Ground “c” reads: “The pastor did not present any unique needs of his children that make it necessary for him to withdraw all of them from these schools.” This ground fails to consider that each child on the planet is unique. Each child, though perhaps not what we would call a “special needs” child, is nevertheless born with “unique needs”—spiritual, mental, emotional, physical, and social. It is for parents to assess those needs. We have assessed our children’s needs. They need to be educated and nurtured at home, and without, at this time, the full-time use of certain existing day schools.

4) All these grounds fail also to consider that it may be that other “good Christian schools,” such as, for example, parents among us have always been free to establish at any time, and without any question from or supervision from any consistory or classis, so long as they are “good” and “Christian” can not only aid persons in fulfilling their baptismal vows, but also be established by parents without for a minute abandoning the support and encouragement of other schools other parents choose to use.

II. I hereby protest certain decisions of the January/February 2008 Classis concerning Article 21 of the Church Order, the homeschooling of the pastor of Grace PRC, and the support of that homeschooling by the consistory of Grace. These decisions were adopted on the basis of two Committees of Pre-Advice: COPA #3 and COPA #2.

A. COPA #3 has not fairly and adequately considered the arguments of the Protest of the Grace Consistory (hereafter “GC”) concerning the September 2007 Classis ruling on Article 21 and also GC’s upholding of the homeschooling of its pastor.

1. COPA #3 does not respond *at all* to this objection of GC: that *classis has contradicted itself* (pp. 51, 52, Agenda of the January/February Classis, hereafter “Agenda”).

2. COPA #3 does not respond *at all* to this objection of GC: that two grounds supporting the decision of the September 2007

Classis are based not on facts, but on the *unproven assumption that Rev. Dick offered to his Consistory no reasons for his homeschooling (which he, in fact, had done)* other than that he was conscience bound to do so, and that the GC made its decision to uphold his homeschooling without any discussion of and concurrence with the reasons he gave (pp. 52, 53 of Agenda).

3. COPA #3 has not adequately considered this objection of GC: that classis' interpretation of Article 21 is based on *an argument from silence* (pp. 53, 54, Agenda).

a. COPA #3 seems to attempt, at least, to grapple with this objection of GC, when it says, II, B, 2: "Grace Consistory's protest fails to see that, although Art. 21 does not speak to the question of whether homeschooling is right or wrong, it does require the promotion of the existing Christian day schools by the consistory as a whole and by the consistory members in their individual office where this is possible."

b. But this is not an adequate response to the objection, for:

1) GC is not arguing *against* the promotion of the existing Christian day schools, but only *for* the legitimacy of the homeschooling of its pastor. GC's argument is that Article 21, *exactly because it does not speak to the question of whether homeschooling is right or wrong*, may not be used either to say that homeschooling is wrong, or that existing schools are the "standard" of what is good and Christian. Nor may it be argued from Article 21 that "new" good Christian educational opportunities and forms may not be considered and employed, or that those parents who opt for them have to appear before a consistory and then a classis to get permission to use them, so that until so doing, they are suspect of being in violation of Article 21, guilty until proven innocent of transgression of Christian decency and charity, and so that officers who so avail themselves of different educational opportunities for their children, are considered, until this proper validation is given, to be unable to be an example to the flock!

2) I beg the classis seriously to consider this argument of GC! Classis, in speaking where Article 21 does not, is not, in fact, interpreting the article. It is, as GC has contended, "injecting meaning" that is simply not there in Article 21, and has "spoken loudly" where the Church

Order is silent. *And yet on this fallacious argument rests the entire classical decision!*

4. COPA #3 has not adequately considered this objection of GC: that classis has “injected meaning” into Article 21 that is simply not there, and has drawn inferences that are not implied logically: that is, by good and necessary consequence, from the article itself (GC II, B, 2).

a. GC has argued that:

1) Classis is in error when it defines, without proof either from Article 21 itself, the Reformed faith, or the Word of God, that the “good Christian schools” of which the article speaks are “in this case, the existing PR parental Christian schools” (September 2007 COPA II, D, 1) *as if these existing good Christian schools were the **only** institutions representing the **only** kind of Christian education a Consistory must promote and every parent, with rare exceptions, must employ.*

2) Classis is in error in its ruling, without proof either from Article 21 itself, the Reformed faith, or the Word of God, that the “use of the good Christian schools” of which the article speaks, is all but required for all (except, apparently, in highly unusual circumstances) as expressive of our obligations to one another in the covenant community and in fulfillment of “the demands of the covenant” (September 2007, COPA II, C, 2, a, b).

3) Classis is in error in its ruling, without proof either from Article 21 itself, the Reformed faith, or the Word of God, that what Article 21 means when it speaks of a consistory’s seeing to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant is that especially consistory members must use certain existing day schools (except in highly unusual circumstances), and that an officer in Christ’s church can only be an “example” to the congregation (except in certain circumstances) by so using the existing Christian day schools (September 2007, COPA II, C, 2, a, b).

b. COPA #3 makes no attempt to engage the arguments of GC (COPA #3, B, 1).

5. COPA #3 does not adequately deal with the argument of GC that “Classis’ interpretation of Article 21 is not in the Reformed

tradition, and indeed seriously narrows and distorts the basic thrust and primary purpose of the Article” (pp. 55-59).

a. GC has argued that:

1) The basic intent of Article 21 is to promote Christian education.

2) History shows that the “form” or “kind” of good Christian education has varied throughout history, and that parents and churches have sought to see that children are nurtured and educated according to the demands of the covenant in different ways, depending on a lot of factors.

3) Never in the history of the Reformed churches have these churches officially specified, prescribed, or even favored a certain method of Christian education over another; this is true also with regard to the formulation of Article 21 of the Church Order of Dordt: nowhere is there record that this article was a Reformed confessional statement concerning the form or kind of liberal arts education and schooling which all parents everywhere and for all time were required to use.

4) The occasion of the amending of the article in 1914 by the CRC clearly shows that by the insertion of the word “schools” the CRC was addressing the need that there be good Christian schools, so that Christian parents would not be tempted to use bad public schools but could instead educate their children in all subjects from the perspective of the Word of God and the Reformed faith. There is no indication, from this history, and from VanDellen and Monsma and others who have reflected on this article, that the CRC was making some sort of statement as to the form and kind of Christian education, or that all Christian parents in any given community are somehow “bound” by the Church Order, or even to commit themselves “freely” (with only certain exceptions) to use the *same* good Christian schools in expression of their covenant community and in fulfillment of their covenant obligation.

b. COPA #3 has not dealt with these arguments of GC.

6. COPA #3 has not dealt adequately with the contention of GC that classis’ interpretation of Article 21 brings itself and Article 21 into conflict with Scripture (pp. 59-64, Agenda).

a. COPA #3, II, B, 3, a represents an attempt of classis to

deal with the argument of GC about the definition of “good Christian schools.” The attempt, however, fails. For classis says here, merely that “in its definition of ‘good Christian schools’ classis did not add to the Scripture but only identified those schools to which Article 21 refers.” But this does not deal with GC’s argument, for:

- 1) GC contends that so to identify “good Christian schools” of Article 21 as classis has done is to bring itself and the article into conflict with Scripture.
 - 2) Classis does not engage this argument.
- b. COPA #3, II, B, 3, b represents classis’ attempt to deal with GC’s argument that classis’ decision and interpretation of Article 21 undermines the authority that Scripture gives to parents in the nurture of their children. Classis, however, does not satisfactorily answer this argument of GC, for:
- 1) Classis merely “plays off” the parental responsibility and the right of educating children that parents have from the Lord, and the corporate responsibility that consistories have to promote and urge the use of Christian day schools where possible. It is clear, as well, from this play, that classis has made “corporate responsibility” the main thing, and “parental responsibility” and parents themselves lackeys of this corporate responsibility and of certain existing Christian day schools. This is clear from the words of COPA #3 II, B, 3, b, that such promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible is the responsibility of the consistory as it pursues “the well-being of the whole congregation (*rather than the rights of the individual*) (my emphasis, MD).”
 - 2) Therefore, the “corporation,” that is, “the whole,” is set, in this matter of the liberal arts education of children, *over against* the individual parents of the corporation who might homeschool and who therefore must give “adequate reasons” for their homeschooling. If they do not do this, if the “whole” does not judge the reasons of homeschooling parents “adequate,” they are, such is the irresistible (and yet ugly) implication, being selfish.
 - 3) But this is clearly unbiblical and uncharitable, and indeed, however classis may deny it, an undermining of the good Christian home and the authority of parents.

Scripture's homes trump man-made institutions. Scripture's parents may not be considered "selfish," nor may it be suggested that consistories are promoting selfish parents and a kind of American, narcissistic "independentism" and not pursuing the well-being of the whole congregation should certain parents opt to homeschool. For Scripture knows of no inherent conflict or threat of certain individual parents raising their children to the best of their abilities and other parents raising their children to the best of their abilities—though these different parents do this in different "good Christian" ways, or with the help of different "good Christian" institutions. Rather, it recognizes diversity, and urges loving cooperation of (not the stifling of) the members of the body of Christ, and not conflict among the members (including the officebearers) over non-principle matters (as set forth by GC, pp. 61, 62, Agenda).

c. COPA #3 II, B, 3, c represents classis' attempt to refute GC's contention that classis, in its interpretation of Article 21, has added to the Bible a requirement for officebearers. The arguments of classis, however, do not hold up, for:

1) Classis simply states the obvious without engaging the arguments of GC. "The obvious" is that officebearers are bound to maintain the Church Order; that officebearers must be an example to the flock; that officebearers must be careful not to act in a way that is detrimental to the peace of the church.

2) What GC is contending, however, is that such a narrow interpretation of Article 21, such that an officer in the church cannot (except in unusual circumstances) fulfill his duties as an officer and be an example to the congregation unless he also uses certain Christian liberal arts schools, and that he, in fact, even if he had reasons righteous in themselves for homeschooling, might jeopardize his office if he homeschooled... *that this* interpretation and application of Article 21 is unbiblical and not only an addition to Scripture, but *in conflict* with Scripture.

3) For the Bible speaks, when addressing the qualifications of officers, of *spiritual qualifications*, and not of "attendance at certain man-made institutions" kind of qualifications. The Bible, as well, as GC has

pointed out, speaks of the fact that a man who would be an officer in the church must *first* rule well his own household. An officer must, in fact, be an “example” to the flock in his *first* ruling well his own “little flock” at home, if he has any hopes of being an example to the flock of his congregation.

4) It is difficult to see how the classis, by so interpreting Article 21 as it does, is not falling into the trap similar to that of Roman Catholicism and its imposition of monastic vows upon its priesthood (something Rev. N. Brummel has ably pointed out in his protest). Really, is not every creature of God (including marriage, meats, and homeschooling) good, and nothing to be refused if it be received with thanksgiving and because it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer (I Tim. 4:4, 5)? Why would we then so interpret a reformational Reformed Church Order to suggest that we ought to be passing judgments upon certain kinds of good Christian education in the hopes, by this, of being “examples to the flock” and pious pursuers of peace? Is not one who brings the gospel, one who is all things to all men without the compromise of his conscience, and without seeking merely to please men, the one who is a true example to the flock and a true peacemaker?

5) So much is classis’ interpretation of Article 21 in conflict with Scripture on this point of the qualifications of officers, that it has really gotten itself into conflict with the “vow” or promise that every officer must take when he is installed into office. For the vow we take at that time calls us to uphold and be faithful ministers of the Word of God as, that is, the doctrines of the faith as set forth in the Three Forms of Unity, which are based clearly on Scripture. But classis has now added something, some significant something to that which we vow as officers, something, *in addition to the doctrines of the Reformed faith and which has nothing whatsoever to do with the doctrines of the Reformed faith*, and so much so that its decision threatens to bind a man’s conscience and jeopardize his office by its certain interpretation of a Church Order.

d. COPA #3 in II, B, 3, d represents the attempt of classis to refute GC’s contention that classis has done injustice to

the biblical principle of “conscience,” and has dealt neither biblically, nor charitably, we fear, in its consideration of the conscience of Rev. Dick (pp. 62-64, Agenda). But classis fails in its attempt, for:

- 1) What classis says is that Rev. Dick must “open up” his conscience and allow it to be “instructed and informed by Scripture and the Church Order, the multitude of counselors, the traditions of the church he serves, and the interests of the congregation.” In other words: Classis now contends, as it before suggested was the case in September 2007, that Rev. Dick’s conscience is either “weak” or “defiled” (COPA, September 26, 2007, II, C, 3, b).
- 2) But this proves the point that GC has made: Classis, even in September when it was not aware of the reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling, and especially now that it has rejected his reasons for homeschooling, *refuses* to recognize the legitimacy of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling. Therefore, classis contends, *there is something wrong with the conscience* of Rev. Dick. It is either weak. Or it is defiled. There is certainly something “wrong enough” about his conscience to jeopardize his being an officer. Truth is: Rev. Dick has been and is being “instructed and informed by Scripture and the Church Order, the multitude of counselors, the traditions of the church he serves, and the interests of the congregation.” And classis has not proven otherwise! With no Scripture, by an unwarranted and novel interpretation of a Church Order (on a matter that is, as classis has admitted, clearly a matter of Christian liberty), and suggesting that Rev. Dick has not had the interests of the congregation in mind (that is, suggesting that Rev. Dick is not doing what is *right*, but only selfishly exercising his “rights”), classis now seeks to bind Rev. Dick’s conscience by either pummeling it into submission, purging it of all sinful self-interest, or annihilating it altogether.
- 3) This one other thing must be said about “conscience.” Classis interjects that Rev. Dick must be instructed and informed by “the traditions of the church” he serves. Rev. Dick has always understood the traditions of the church he serves to be gospel traditions. He has never been interested in acting contrary to custom or tradition when these have been good servants of the

church, and in matters that are indifferent. But he has ever been militant, by the grace of God, to stand against the imposition of private opinions, rules, and traditions of men that are no longer servants but Masters. He has ever been for peace, but only in the communion of the Holy Ghost, that is, in the light of the Word and in the life of the love and liberty unto which our Lord Jesus has received us.

B. I protest the decisions of classis to adopt one of the main grounds on which the advice of Jan/Feb 2008 Classis COPA #2 is based. I agree with the decision not to uphold the protest of Mr. Kamps. I disagree with one of the grounds for that decision. That ground is I, B, 2.

1. Classis seeks, in I, B, 2, to answer the contention of Mr. Kamps that “declaring homeschooling to be a matter of Christian liberty leaves Article 21 of the Church Order with no biblical basis and precludes all preaching that would promote our Protestant Reformed Christian schools.” Classis offers this explanation:

a. Article 21 is comparable to other ecclesiastical ordinances such as pertain to the singing in the church, observance of special days, the use of forms, etc... which, though these are not prescribed by Scripture, are “the application of biblical principles for the government and life of the church.”

b. These kinds of regulations, including that which pertains to our Christian schools, are and should be promoted by the preaching, not because they are demands of Scripture, “but as wise applications of Scripture which the church has made and to which membership in the church is a voluntary commitment.”

2. I protest this ground that classis gives, as follows:

a. Article 21 is not being discussed in a vacuum here. There has been a certain interpretation of Article 21 offered by the classis in September 2007 in connection with the homeschooling of Rev. Dick. That certain interpretation is that the schools of Article 21 are decidedly not home schools. And therefore one who homeschools, especially if he is an officebearer, must have quite exceptional reasons for doing so. Otherwise it is impossible for him to uphold Article 21 of the Church Order. But this is not what Article 21 *says*. Article 21 merely speaks of “good Christian schools,” but it does not speak of a *certain kind* of good Christian school or education as preferable over another, and of a *certain kind*

of good Christian school or education which consistories are to promote and parents are to employ. The interpretation of Classis is *a private and novel interpretation* of Article 21. Perhaps it reflects, and it undoubtedly does, the opinion of many. But there are *many others also in the PRC* who have different opinions about the meaning of Article 21—both to the left and to the right of classis. But classis’ opinion is not the Reformed Church Order itself. Nor has it ever been the official Protestant Reformed stance on the Church Order.

b. Now classis has declared that Article 21, which, according to its interpretation, calls for the establishment and promotion of certain existing Christian day schools, and these *exclusively*, and which, therefore, means that homeschooling is not a legitimate option (except in unusual circumstances, which must be validated and verified by who knows whom), *is like unto a regulation concerning the preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism*. And to this we all “voluntarily commit” ourselves. I protest this. When I and many others became members of the PRC, and when I vowed to uphold the formula of subscription, I pledged to “play by the rules,” as a lover of good order and decency. I did not, and do not, however, “voluntarily commit” myself to a certain unfounded and novel *interpretation* of the Church Order, now codified for the first time in the history of the churches, and twenty-six years after I became PR, and sixteen years after I became a minister. Classis, here, if it wants to make its own interpretation of the Church Order, a “new” regulation to which we all must submit, must go the way of the Church Order itself, and overture Synod to change the Church Order. Until then, this article must not be “altered, augmented, or diminished”—either by a changing of the words of the article or by a radical and narrow interpretation never before officially sanctioned by Reformed churches and also the PRCNA. For “no particular congregation or classis shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod” (Art. 86). Only then will there be, according to the Church Order itself, a regulation and interpretation thereof which is “adopted by common consent.” Until then, if classis does not rescind its interpretation of the Church Order, many in the PRC will not be among the crew that voluntarily submits to this ordinance. At best it will be an

involuntarily submission. Worse, men's consciences will be bound. Worse, people will be compelled to leave or to refuse to join our churches.

c. The danger of making a certain interpretation of Article 21 by the classis the ecclesiastical regulation to which we all "voluntarily commit" ourselves is seen if one compares what classis has done with what a future classis might do, based on the liberties this classis has taken with Article 21, with any other article of the Church Order. Consider, for example, the regulation concerning Heidelberg Catechism preaching. That is a regulation to which we all gladly subscribe. It is conceivable, however, that "private opinions" of Heidelberg Catechism preaching would so begin to prevail in our churches that *the manner* in which the Catechism ought to be preached (whatever that might be) is then "made official" by some decree of classis. To that *interpretation* of the Church Order we could not all gladly subscribe.

d. The narrow interpretation classis gives on what are the "good Christian schools" of Article 21 makes its comparison of Article 21 to other ecclesiastical regulations problematic. For Article 21 deals not only with ecclesiastical matters, but especially with *parental matters*. But classis, in its narrowing of the definition of the "good Christian schools" which consistories are to encourage and promote has, in a very significant way, made schooling not first of all a parental matter, but an ecclesiastical one. For classis, by its interpretation, has ventured to guess just what "good Christian schools" ought to be, and also dared to dictate what "good Christian schools" *should be for all and any parents, with rare exceptions, and especially for officebearers who can only be effective in their ministry, with rare exception, if they use what classis has decided are good Christian schools!*

e. Classis, in seeking to regulate now just *what kind* of good Christian schools are promoted, and the use of them, has, as well, taken the "liberty" out of the Christian liberty it acknowledges this matter of schooling and even homeschooling really is. That this is true is clear from the decision classis has now taken to declare a man's reasons for homeschooling "inadequate" and "invalid." No one has said that the reasons are "unrighteous" or "unbiblical." And the father is convicted that his children's needs require that they be homeschooled, for now, without the full-time

aid of certain Christian schools. But that is not enough. Attendance at the “good Christian schools,” the ones, and only the ones, the *classis* says are “good and Christian,” has become now *exactly not* a matter of a Christian’s “voluntarily” committing himself to this sort of regulation, nor even a matter of forgoing one’s liberty. It has become a case of a broader assembly binding the conscience of those who are not persuaded that whatever *classis* decides are “good Christian schools” are the “good Christian schools” or the best good Christian method of education that can meet the needs of his children.

Concluding Remarks

It is the opinion of undersigned, dear brethren, that the issue before us has not been ever, nor is it now, solely, or even primarily, a matter of an interpretation of an article in the Church Order. Rather, it has been a matter of charity, of love. I believe there has been a noticeable, even glaring, lack of love. This is evident, I must say, in the decisions of *classis* themselves. What else explains a *classis* of intelligent and wise elders and pastors being unable to see, in the September 2007 *Classis*, and from the position paper of Grace, that Grace Consistory had indeed discussed with Rev. Dick his reasons for homeschooling and “validated” them? What else explains *classis*, at that time, refusing to hear from the elders and pastor of Grace on the floor of *classis* that we had indeed discussed and approved the reasons for Pastor Dick’s homeschooling? It cannot be explained for lack of knowledge. What can explain the fact that *classis*, while very charitable to protestants and those who are “struggling” at Grace, repeatedly places blame for the unrest at Grace primarily on Rev. Dick’s homeschooling (cf. COPA-82 “information section”), but never once acknowledges that there are indeed *other very significant reasons* for the unrest at Grace, namely: the evil tongue, disrespect, an erroneous view of attendance at the schools as a demand of the covenant, certain sermons that have been preached in the last months advocating an erroneous view of Article 21 and condemning homeschooling, and perhaps the decisions of the recent *classes* as well. This same lack of charity to GC and the pastor of Grace is glaringly evident in Jan/Feb 2008 COPA #3, II, B, 4. There, the *classis* declares that GC, both in its original position paper and in its protest, fails to consider the importance of maintaining peace and unity in the church. It cites as evidence that nowhere in the protest is mention made of the welfare of the congregation—as if a protest to *classis*, which was treating certain matters of contention, ought to include everything about how GC has cared for and continues to care for the flock! Besides,

COPA #3 at this point uncharitably, even slanderously, undermines the integrity and work of the consistory and pastor of Grace in speaking of the “adjustments” officers must make in their lives to be an example to the flock and for the peace and unity of the church, and of the “focus” of the consistory—which ought not to be on the “rights” of pastor, but on the “well-being” of the whole body. This, and the fact that Scripture is cited to give an air, I suppose, of credibility (without any proof that these texts apply to our handling of the matters at Grace!), is simply scurrilous and degrading. In these statements the worse things that can be inferred about a pastor and his consistory are indeed inferred: we have been selfish and uncaring of the flock entrusted to us! (It is to be noted, as well, that COPA #3 at this point basically takes up the case and supports the arguments of the Schimmel protest (September 2007), namely, that because there are people upset in Grace, the pastor and consistory are in error and the pastor ought to send his children back to the schools). Besides all this, where is the love that covers sins and faults in an unheard of continent-wide publication of classis’ decision of Grace Consistory’s perceived “error” and its decision to question whether the pastor of Grace can be effective any longer in his ministry to his congregation? And where is the love of the classis that acknowledges and would help that half of the congregation at Grace that has no difficulty with the homeschooling of the pastor and desires that he continue to minister to them and which will now, very likely, have to “struggle” in their souls with their pastor’s being dismissed from the ministry at Grace Church over such a matter that concerns neither doctrine, nor a man’s walk before God, nor a minister’s qualification for office, nor our unity in Christ, but an educational preference based on a parent’s conviction of the needs of his children!

We need to stop accusing a brother and a consistory of focusing on the rights of an individual and neglecting the needs of the congregation just because the individual is convicted that the needs of his children require that he homeschool them at this time without the full-time aid of certain Christian schools. We need to stop thinking that one officer’s or even ten officers’ thinking that they are an example to the flock by using certain Christian schools means that every officer must follow suit. We all need to stop fighting and bickering about the “form” of good Christian education, as if one size fits all. We need to stop clinging, desperately methinks, to a certain unfounded and novel interpretation of a Church Order out of fear for the welfare of certain schools and the future of our denomination. We need to stop preaching, as well, and tolerating such preaching, that generates more heat than light in making certain unbiblical pronouncements about homeschooling. We need, all of us, brothers in

the Lord, in the truth and love of Christ, to uphold one another in honor, and to remember our true unity in the faith.

This love and honor I hope to have for you, even though I feel my consistory and I have been unjustly treated, my reputation besotted, and my ministry and congregation put at risk by the actions of classis. I hope, also, that you will so treat me in love. I never vowed to be a minister of anything but the gospel. I never thought that vowing to be a minister in the PRC meant vowing to uphold some private interpretation of education, never before codified in any Reformed church, nor in the PRC itself, that would one day cause myself to be subject to such unjust scrutiny and suspicion, though no charge of sin has ever been leveled against me in this matter, concerning my reasons for the way I choose to educate and nurture my children. I never dreamed, as well, that my brothers would so suspect my motives, and my integrity would be so impugned, all because I am following my heart in light of God's Word and the needs of the children God has graciously given, but ever seeking, as well, to do my best for Grace Church. I never thought that so following my heart would lead to the accusation that I was not serving the flock I love and have loved so dearly and have served, however weakly, these last twelve years.

In 2005, the synod of our mother church, the CRC, adopted a massive report on Christian Education, which displays the love which I would preach on the matter of homeschooling and Christian schooling and their co-mingling under one roof. If not according to common grace, at least there is, it seems to me, much common sense and the good and peaceable wisdom of Christ evidenced in this report, such as when it considers "The Challenge of Choice" facing Christian education today, as follows:

The first responsibility of a congregation is to see to it that all its children have the opportunity to receive an education in a Christian school.... Yet even when the opportunity and resources for Christian education are present, some CRC parents will make other choices. In these situations, congregations and parents must support each other. For example, some believe that the best way to carry out their covenantal obligations is to instruct their children at home. Congregations must respect this choice, and support them with prayer and encouragement to teach a Reformed view of the world. They also must encourage cooperation between Reformed homeschoolers and Reformed Christian schools. In the same way that parents who choose Christian day schools need to support homeschoolers, homeschoolers need to support Christian day school education. Christian education of all children in the congregation is a communal task (from the "Outline" of the Report on Christian Education).

This answer of “love” in this matter of the schooling of all the church’s children is, in fact, the answer that the consistory of Byron Center PRC gave to its congregation in the early 1990s when it was considering the nomination of an elder who homeschooled his children. It wrote these words to its congregation:

The consistory has investigated the legality of homeschooling in the state of Michigan, and the requirement of Article 21 of the Church Order. We have decided that homeschooling of one’s children does not disqualify a man from serving in office, and therefore that it reserves the right to nominate for office in the church a brother who homeschools his children. The congregation may be assured that the consistory will nominate men from the congregation on the basis of all the requirements laid out in the Scripture and the Church Order.

The matter of homeschooling is a matter that touches on some of the dearest concerns that the members of the church can have: The concern of the education of our children in the face of the baptismal promises and the covenant demands of God; and the commitment that the people of God have to the good Christian schools they have worked long and hard and with much sacrifice to establish and maintain. The consistory supports these schools with all its might, and strongly and unashamedly encourages the members of the congregation to use them.

Just as strongly (italics mine, MD) the consistory urges the members of the congregation to deal brotherly with each other: those who use the established Christian schools and those who give Christian education to their children in their homes. The demand of Scripture for us is love, patience, humility, dealing in meekness and kindness. Without this, no education of our children will profit to the glory of God and the salvation of our children. Without this dealing in love and humility there can be no blessing of God on the congregation. Beloved, “How good and pleasant is the sight when brethren make it their delight to dwell in blest accord.”

The Grace Consistory has followed a similar course, as outlined in its letter to the Grace Congregation in November 2007:

7. The consistory believes that we can and must go forward together in a way that would please and honor Christ.
 - a. The way forward together, the way of blessing and honor, is *the way of the Word of God*.
 - 1) This is crucial for any congregation, for the church of Christ is the pillar and ground of the truth (I Tim. 3:15). She makes her decisions in the light of the Bible. She ministers the Word. She stands on that Word. She understands her unity to be in the “one faith” (Eph. 4: 1-6) of Jesus Christ. She appreciates that the unity of the body is a unity of diverse members (I Cor.

12). She understands that the truth of the Word is the truth of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: the truth that saves, the truth that comforts, the truth that guides, the truth that sanctifies, the truth that unites, and the truth that sets us free (John 8: 32). This truth alone is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, and for the thankful and godly life of good works (II Tim. 3: 16, 17). Let us cherish that truth—as it is in Jesus! Let us *listen* to that Word. Let us faithfully declare that Word from our pulpit. Let us minister that Word to catechumens and from house to house. Let us study that Word at home and in our societies. Our one desire, dear fellow pilgrims, is that the Word of Christ may dwell in us richly (Col. 3: 16a), and so that we *and others* can know God’s blessing upon us *as we honor His Word!*

b. The way forward together, the way of blessing and honor, is *the way of honoring those whom Christ has chosen, through you, to lead this flock.*

1) Honor them by respecting this decision and validation, and by submitting to their continued government of Grace Church as they seek earnestly, by the grace of God, to lead in the one way the Lord gives: by the Word and in the love of Christ. There will continue to be different opinions about the education of children. But we can live with that, and be at peace—as long as we are peaceful and charitable with regard to our differences, and as long as we show respect for one another and those whom God has put in authority over us. Consider also that the Bible teaches that the Lord is displeased when dishonor is shown towards those whom the Lord appoints to lead His people. Honor and submit to the leaders of Grace: who love the Lord and who love you! This way is the way forward: for the guarding, the care, and the peace of our souls and of the heart and soul and work and witness of our beloved and God’s beloved Grace Protestant Reformed Church (I Thess. 5: 12, 13)!

c. The way forward together, the way of blessing and honor, is *the way of loving one another.*

1) This too is vital. At a time when people in the congregation disagree about matters that are important to us all, and about which there certainly may be disagreement: what kind of attitude and spirit are we going to show? How are we going to handle this and react to this? May it not be that we wrangle with one another. May it not be that we merely tolerate, or maybe avoid each other, *but rather that we love, and give, and love some more!* For “above all these things,” the apostle says, *above whatever you can think of*, we are to put on charity, that lovely bond of perfectness (Col. 3:14). Without this love, this thinking well of each other, this being kind to each other, this speaking well of each other, we are

nothing (I Cor. 13). In loving one another we truly show we love the Lord, and that He loves us, and that love is not just a theory, but something adorning our words and our deeds and shaping our fellowship. By love, Christ's love, we show our true unity, which is Christ alone. We esteem each other highly, and promote the other's advantage. We bear with one another's faults. We can, with longsuffering and honor, follow the lead of Christ, who Himself has chosen very weak and earthen vessels to lead us. We can forgive. We can agree to disagree in matters in which God's Word makes no pronouncement of "right" or "wrong." We can go forward together, though the whole world and our own sins be against us, in the almighty power and wonderful love of Christ!

In these ways, beloved congregation, we shall go forward! We might also add that the way forward is the way of thanks: for God has given us so much at Grace, and blessed us beyond what we could ask for or even imagine! We might also add that the way forward is the way of faith: reminding ourselves that God, who has begun His good work in and among us, shall surely prosper us as we walk, and even now through deep distress, in the light and promise of His Word!

Indeed! It shall be in the way of the Word, the way of honor, the way of love, the way of thanks, and the way of faith *that we shall be blessed, and we shall be honoring God!* That, above all, is what we all desire, and for which we should all be striving. Let us seek to honor God and His cause, for He and His cause are far greater than we are. We are so very little, but so great is our God in His grace! Surely He shall continue to grace us, and to give us faith to carry on as a congregation that bears the name of a goodly heritage, even Protestant Reformed, and of a grace *at our beloved Grace Church* that saves, unites, and builds us up together—even the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we beseech you, receive our letter, and Christ's love and ours with it. Consider it in God's light. Talk about it in His love. Know and pursue that truth and love and faith which is ours together, and which is and shall be for our peace. We conclude with the words of our precious Savior found in I Thessalonians 5: 12-23:

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

May the classis follow that course prescribed in God's Word, and ours the privilege to pursue: the way of righteousness, honor, love, and peace.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Mitchell Dick
Grace PRC

Appendix 5: Classis' Response to Rev. Dick Protest

Committee of Pre-advice #4

Protests of Rev. Dick

I. Rev. Dick protests the decision of Article 96 of the January 2008 Classis.

A. Information

1. The January 2008 Classis declared that Grace PRC's consistory erred when it judged valid Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them, as reported in their November 13, 2007 letter to the special committee.

2. Rev. Dick protests this decision on the following grounds:
a. By passing judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick's 'withdrawing' all his children from two "good Christian schools" classis has overstepped the bounds of its authority.

1) Classis has overstepped the bounds of its authority as defined by Article 30 of the Church Order: "In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in the minor assemblies, or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common."

a) The validation of Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children from the area PR Christian schools was finished.

(1) The September 2007 Classis properly gave to the Grace Consistory the responsibility of validating Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children from the area PR Christian schools. The consistory validated

Rev. Dick's reasons, so that the matter was finished.

(2) Consequently, the special committee of classis overstepped the bounds of its authority when it judged Rev. Dick's reasons to be invalid and brought its judgment to classis. The classis also overstepped its bounds by entering into this matter.

b) The validation of Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children from the area PR Christian schools was not a matter that pertained to the churches in common.

2) Classis violated the principle of the autonomy of the local church (Article 84 of the Church Order).

3) Classis intruded upon and attempted to usurp the authority of parents.

4) Classis overstepped its authority in that it passed judgment on the reasons of Rev. Dick without one word from Scripture.

b. The grounds classis gave for its decision are without proper explanation and do not take into consideration the unique situation of each family and child.

B. Recommendations

1. We recommend that classis read the protest of Rev. Dick on pp. 48-56 of the agenda.

2. We recommend that classis not sustain the protest of Rev. Dick against the decision of Article 96 of the January 2008 Classis.

Grounds:

a. Contrary to the contention of Rev. Dick, classis acted within the bounds of its authority.

1) The Grace Consistory made the validation of its pastor's reasons for homeschooling the business of classis and thus a matter that pertains to the churches of the classis in common (Article 30 of the CO) when:

a) It included in its protest to the January 2008 Classis the November 18 letter to the Grace congregation explaining its reasons for validating Rev. Dick's decision to homeschool (cf. p. 109, Agenda May 2008).

b) It gave to the special committee of classis the letter of Rev. and Mrs. Dick detailing their reasons for homeschooling and asked for advice. What is

presented to the classis is properly under the review of classis.

- 2) The classis maintained the principle of the autonomy of the local congregation when it advised the Grace Consistory that Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children from the PR Christian schools to homeschool them were not valid.

- a) Article 36 of the Church Order gives the broader assemblies a certain jurisdiction or authority over the local congregation that the local congregation, by reason of its membership in the federation of churches, delegates to the broader assemblies.

- b) The broader assemblies maintain the autonomy of the local congregation, when in the exercise of this jurisdiction they adjudicate matters that are legally before them.

- c) The validation of Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children were legally before classis.

- 3) Classis' decision honored the authority of Rev. and Mrs. Dick as parents to determine the education and nurturing of their children.

- a) Classis' ruling did not forbid the Dicks from homeschooling their children.

- (1) Classis gave as its ground for not upholding the appeal of Gilbert and Grace Schimmel, "The appellants ask that the Grace Consistory improperly require Rev. Dick to act against his conscience. 1) Rev. Dick's position of conscience to homeschool is his biblical right because homeschooling falls within the area of Christian liberty" (Art. 35, September 2007 Classis minutes).

- (2) In response to Marvin Kamps' protest, Classis January/February 2008 has said, "that the Christian schools of Art. 21 as well as homeschooling are a matter of Christian liberty."

- b) Classis' ruling rather addressed the ability of Rev. Dick to carry out his duties as the pastor of Grace PRC with the reasons he gave for homeschooling his children.

- (1) In September 2007, Classis East states that “an officebearer who does not send his children to the good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation: I Corinthians 4:6; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; II Thessalonians 3:7” (Art. 43, 45; COPA II, C, 2, b).
- (2) This is the very issue addressed in Article 96, ground 1, of the recommendation, which says, “Rev. Dick’s reasons, as presented in the special committee’s report, make it impossible for him to comply with Article 21 of the Church Order. These reasons make it impossible for him to encourage and promote the use of the good Christian schools by the other members of his congregation.”
- 4) Classis rightly exercised its authority in passing judgment on the reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling although it did not cite Scripture.
- a) Classis’ decision dealt with the proper application of Article 21 of the Church Order to the specific case of Rev. Dick removing his children from the PR Christian schools to homeschool them for various reasons.
 - b) The determination of whether these reasons are such to allow Rev. Dick to carry out the obligations of Article 21 is not a matter of searching Scripture but applying sanctified common sense.
 - c) In keeping with this, the Grace Consistory did not provide Scripture in section 5 of its November 18, 2007 letter to the congregation, in which it expressed its validation of the nature of the reasons for Rev. Dick’s homeschooling (cf. Agenda pp. 110, 111).
- b. Contrary to the claim of Rev. Dick, classis properly assessed that his reasons for withdrawing his children from the PR Christian schools to homeschool them were inadequate.

1) The reasons Rev. Dick gives for withdrawing his children from the PR Christian schools focus on the weaknesses of the schools (cf. report of the special committee of classis, dated October 30, 2007).

a) This brings the message to the Grace congregation that the Christian schools they use are not in fact “good Christian schools” (Art. 21 of the CO).

b) This makes it impossible for Rev. Dick to comply with Article 21 of the CO.

2) Although it is true that each child is unique and has unique needs, Rev. Dick has not demonstrated the unique needs of his children that require removing them from the PR Christian schools to homeschool them, as Grace’s pastor.

II. Rev. Dick protests the decision of Articles 59 and 62 of the January 2008 Classis.

A. Information

1. In Articles 59 and 62 the January 2008 Classis did not sustain the protest of the Grace PRC Consistory against the decisions of Articles 43, 45, 47, and 50-52 of the September 2007 Classis.

a. The September 2007 Classis denied the request of the Grace Consistory to classis “to uphold the decision of the Grace PRC Consistory and to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home and advised the Grace Consistory to take certain actions re Rev. Dick’s reasons for not using the good Christian schools and for homeschooling his children” (cf. Articles 43, 45, 47, 50-52).

b. In Articles 59 and 62 the January 2008 Classis did not sustain the protest of Grace Consistory against these decisions.

2. Rev. Dick protests the decisions of Articles 59 and 62 of the January 2008 Classis on the grounds that classis did not fairly and adequately consider the arguments of the protest of the Grace Consistory,

a. Classis did not respond at all to the objection of GC that the September 2007 Classis had contradicted itself.

b. Classis did not respond at all to the objection of GC that the September 2007 Classis had based two grounds supporting its decision on the unproven assumption that Rev. Dick offered to his consistory no reasons for his homeschooling.

- c. Classis did not adequately consider the objection of GC that classis' interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order is based on an argument from silence.
- d. Classis did not adequately consider the objection of GC that classis has injected meaning into Article 21 that is simply not there and has drawn inferences that are not implied logically.
- e. Classis did not adequately deal with the argument of GC that "Classis' interpretation of Article 21 is not in the Reformed tradition, and indeed seriously narrows and distorts the basic thrust and primary purpose of the article."
- f. Classis did not deal adequately with the contention of GC that classis' interpretation of Article 21 brings itself and Article 21 into conflict with Scripture.

B. Recommendations

1. That classis read pages 56-62 of Rev. Dick's protest (II, A).
2. That classis not uphold the protest of Rev. Dick against Articles 59 and 62 of the January 2008 Classis.

Grounds:

- a. The two arguments that classis did not address in its decision have no validity.

- 1) Classis did not contradict itself.

Explanation:

- a) Grace's Consistory identified home schools as a "legitimate alternative" to Christian day schools:

(1) "Grace Consistory is on record as saying that Article 21 does not address the matter of the 'form' or 'kind' of Christian education, and that it indeed allows room for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative" (Grace Consistory Protest, Agenda May 2008, II, B, 1, a, p. 76).

(2) "The consistory states that Article 21 of the Church Order does not address the matter of homeschooling; nor does it favor 'one kind' of Christian education over another..." (Arts. 59 and 62, II, C, 1, a, 2 of COPA Sept. 2007).

- b) This is not what classis said or implied in answer to the appeals of Mr. Kleyn and Mr. and Mrs. Schimmel when declaring that homeschooling falls into the area of Christian liberty.

- 2) The matter of whether the Grace Consistory knew the reasons for Rev. Dick's homeschooling his children

is not relevant. What is relevant is what the consistory communicated to the congregation and to classis, namely, that this was a matter of conscience.

b. Rev. Dick does not engage any of the grounds of classis' decision in an attempt to demonstrate that they are wrong.

1) Rev. Dick improperly attempts to make classis demonstrate the validity of its grounds rather than his demonstrating the wrongness of classis' grounds.

2) This is especially evident in grounds 3-6 of his protest, in which he claims the grounds of Grace Consistory's protest were not "adequately considered."

III. We recommend that classis rebuke Rev. Dick for his harsh language toward the classis in his concluding remarks of his protest. Ground: This is contrary to Article 30 of the Church Order. This is not an ecclesiastical manner in which to speak to the classis.

SUPPLEMENT 37

Appeal: Mr. Paul Hoekstra

April 12, 2009

Synod of the PRCA
Mr. Don Doezema
5111 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear Brothers in Christ,

This letter is to inform synod that I am appealing the decision of Classis May 2008 to reject my protest of Classis January 2008. I ask that synod uphold my protest.

Included is the decision of Classis May 2008, my rebuttal of said decision, the body of my protest, and supporting documentation.

In Christ,
w.s. Paul Hoekstra

I appeal the decision of classis, as given in Article 92 of the May 2008 meetings, in which the following recommendation is made and carried:

The committee of pre-advice recommends that classis not uphold the protest of Mr. Paul Hoekstra.

Information:

The grounds given by classis for this decision are as follows:

1. The “interpretation” of Article 21 that allows for home schools as being equally preferable to the day school is novel. Classis on the other hand only consistently presented the “historical reading” of Article 21.
2. Article 21 can only be added to or changed by way of overture.
3. Classis made no broad declarations concerning the propriety of homeschooling.

Rebuttal:

I. In its grounds classis misrepresents the protest and its own position, failing to answer the protest and showing its own position to be untenable.

A. In its grounds classis presents the protest as being narrowly limited to the specific addition of homeschooling to the list of allowed methods of education, per Article 21. This is a misrepresentation and as such does not address the protest.

1. Classis still thinks of Article 21 as necessarily promoting a certain method of education. However, the protest does not ask that homeschooling be included in Article 21 as the classis would envision it, although this would be a small step in the right direction. The protest very clearly points out that Article 21 is not about the *method* of education and indeed cannot be.
2. In fact the protest would not require a change to the article at all. It only changes what classis has interpreted the article as saying.

B. The first ground of classis presents a misnomer of its own position and that of the protest, essentially reversing their roles.

1. Classis terms its own assertion a “reading.” By definition a “reading” is the presentation of the facts of what the article explicitly states. Article 21 only explicitly says “school” and gives no further specification concerning what that school is to look like (i.e., the method of education). However, the assertion of classis is that Article 21 specifies a particular method of education, the day school. In order to get from “school” to “day school” one must perform some interpretation. Thus the assertion of classis is an “interpretation” and not a “reading.”
2. Classis terms the assertion of the protest an “interpretation.” The assertion of the protest is that Article 21 does not include any specification concerning the method of education. Similarly, Article 21 only explicitly says “school” and gives no further specification concerning what that school is to look like (i.e.,

the method of education). Thus the assertion of the protest is a presentation of the ‘reading’ of the article and not an “interpretation.”

3. All of this leads to the fact that classis has termed the literal reading of the article a “novel interpretation” and has changed their “interpretation” into the literal reading. One would logically apply classis’ own ground to itself. If classis wants to change the article to include something new (i.e., the method of schooling), then it must recommend a change to the article, and the burden of proof falls to classis to support its position.

4. In fact the position of classis can hardly even be called an “interpretation,” let alone the “reading.”

a) Classis’ interpretation amounts to taking one historical fact and applying it as the meaning and intent of the article, the one historical fact being the common practice of the day when the article was written. This is not a valid method of interpretation.

b) This interpretation also ignores other historical facts which would clearly negate it as a possible interpretation.

II. The grounds of classis are a mere reassertion of its previously stated position without even an attempt at answering the grounds presented in the protest.

III. Classis incorrectly asserts that it has not made any broad declarations concerning the propriety of homeschooling. The fact of the matter says otherwise.

A. Classis used an article of the Church Order, which governs the operation of the entire PRC, to make declarations concerning the use of homeschooling. This is by definition a ‘broad declaration.’

B. It also stated that the use of homeschooling is not acceptable for an officebearer unless extenuating circumstances apply and a dispensation is granted. This is by definition a declaration concerning the “propriety” of homeschooling.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Hoekstra protest to Classis May 2008

Classis East of the PRCA

Mr. Jon Huiskens

847 Brentwood

Jenison, MI 49428

Dear Brothers in Christ,

This letter is to inform classis that I am protesting the interpretation

of Article 21 of the Church Order given by classis in its September 2007 decision, the subsequent application of said interpretation of this article, and the grounds for the rejection of various protests to these decisions.

Attached is the body of my protest with grounds, as well as supporting documentation.

In Christ,
w.s. Paul Hoekstra

I protest the interpretation given by classis of Article 21 of the Church Order (CO) (September II, C and grounds). I also protest the inclusion of “Good Christian Schools” as a regulation that Article 21 of the CO makes that is not required by Scripture (Committee #2, I, B, 2).

I also protest how this article was applied to the specific case of Rev. Dick, as this article was the basis of grounds used in said case (September II, D and grounds).

Since these matters were also at the heart of the protests of Grace Consistory, Mr. Jason Kuiper, Mr. Ken Feenstra, and Rev. Nathan Brummel, I also protest the grounds given by classis for not upholding said protests. (Committee #1, 1, II, B and grounds; Committee #1, 2, II, B and grounds; Committee #2, II, B and grounds; Committee #3, 1, II, B and grounds; Committee #3, 2, II, B and grounds; Committee #3, 3, II, B and grounds.)

Information:

The interpretation of Article 21 to which this protest is in reference is as follows:

From September 12, 2007 II, C, 2:

- a) Article 21 is binding on all consistories of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It requires of every minister and elder to promote the establishment and use of good Christian schools in community with other Reformed believers (aka day schools - ph).
- b) An officebearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation: I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; II Thess. 3:7.

In summary, classis interprets this article to mean that every consistory member must either 1) use the established good Christian day schools when they are available, or 2) supply the consistory and congregation with

motives for not using said schools to the satisfaction of the consistory and (by extension) of the congregation.

Grounds:

I. The interpretation of Article 21 of the CO given by classis is not biblical, confessional, or after the Reformed tradition.

A. The interpretation of Article 21 of the CO given by classis gives the church authority over the method of education that is used by consistory members.

1. If the consistory member uses the available good Christian day schools, he is put under no scrutiny. If the consistory member chooses not to use said day schools, his reasons are put under the scrutiny of the church. This is a form of coercion, and any form of coercion is, by definition, backed by an implied authority.

2. The ruling would be meaningless if there was no implied authority over the method of education.

B. The method of secular education utilized by a parent has nothing to do with the government and life of the church.

1. It is obvious that the method of education has nothing to do with the government of the church.

2. The life of the church refers to matters that pertain to the order of worship in the church. Examples of such things would be how often communion is taken and what songbook is to be used. Understanding the life of the church as such, it becomes immediately obvious that the method of secular education has nothing to do with this either.

C. The church may not claim authority over matters of Christian liberty except those that have to do with the government and life of the church.

1. This is biblical.

a. In Matthew 7:1 and 2 we are told not to question the actions of others or to pass judgment on these actions when they are consistent with the Scriptures.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.”

Calvin’s Commentary - “These words of Christ do not contain an absolute prohibition from judging, but are intended to cure a disease, which appears to be natural to us all. We see how all flatter themselves, and every man passes a severe censure on others.... *To judge, therefore, means here, to be influenced by curiosity in inquiring into the actions of others.* This disease, in the first place, draws continually along with it the injustice of

condemning any trivial fault, as if it had been a very heinous crime; and next *breaks out into the insolent presumption of looking disdainfully at every action, and passing an unfavorable judgment on it, even when it might be viewed in a good light*” (emphasis mine – ph).

- b. In James 4:11 and 12 God claims the sole authority to rule over the lives of His people. Any who would force others to bow to their own “nod or will” attempts to place himself above the law of God.

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”

Calvin’s Commentary – “There is also another disease innate in human nature, that every one would have all others to live according to his own will or fancy. This presumption James suitably condemns in this passage, that is, because we dare to impose on our brethren our rule of life.... Let us then learn that we are not to judge but according to God’s law.... When he connects the power of saving and destroying with the office of a lawgiver, he intimates that the whole majesty of God is forcibly assumed by those who claim for themselves the right of making a law; and *this is what is done by those who impose as a law on others their own nod or will*. And let us remember that the subject here is not civil government, in which the edicts and laws of magistrates have place, but the spiritual government of the soul, in which the word of God alone ought to bear rule. There is then one God, who has consciences subjected by right to his own laws, as he alone has in his own hand the power to save and to destroy” (emphasis mine – ph).

- c. In Isaiah 33:22 we are reminded that God, who has the power to save and destroy, has the sole authority over the lives of His people.

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; he will save us.”

Calvin’s Commentary – “Hence, also, we ought to observe what is the true Church of God. It is that which acknowledges God to be a ‘Law-giver’ and ‘King.’ With what effrontery, therefore, do the papists dare to boast that they are the Church of God, seeing that they reject that lawful government of it which was enjoined by Moses, and the Prophets, and Christ, and substitute in the room of it inventions and base traffic? They exert a cruel tyranny over consciences, and, by taking away all the liberty which Christ has bestowed on us, they wretchedly harass souls and lead

them to perdition; but God alone has the right to rule the conscience, because he alone is ‘Lawgiver’ and ‘Judge,’ and he alone ought to rule and guide us by his word.”

- d. However, I Corinthians 14:40 does give the church authority to rule in its particular sphere in order to maintain decency and good order.

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Calvin’s Commentary – “...it is a rule by which we must regulate everything that has to do with external polity.... This statement shows that he did not wish to bind consciences by the foregoing precepts, as if they were in themselves necessary, but only in so far as they were subservient to propriety and peace. Hence we gather a doctrine that is always in force, as to the purpose to which the polity of the Church ought to be directed” (emphasis mine – ph).

- e. Of course none of the above passages condemn judging sin to be sin. When sin is involved, there is no question that the church has the authority to, and indeed must, condemn it as such.

2. This is confessional.

- a. The Belgic Confession, Article 32 allows the church to establish rules by which she may be governed. However, it withholds authority from the church to invent laws that bind the conscience. This was directed especially towards practices of Rome which based many elements of church life on traditions which were not addressed in Scripture.

In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God.

3. This is after the Reformed tradition.

- a. Calvin, in speaking concerning the authority of the church, limits that authority by stating that all ruling not

based on the authority of Scripture is an encroachment upon the conscience of God's people.

Everything relating to a perfect rule of life the Lord has so comprehended in his law, that he has left nothing for men to add to the summary there given. His object in doing this was, first, that since all rectitude of conduct consists in regulating all our actions by his will as a standard, he alone should be regarded as the master and guide of our life; and, secondly, that he might show that there is nothing which he more requires of us than obedience. For this reason James says, "He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law." "There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy" (James 4:11, 12). We hear how God claims it as his own peculiar privilege to rule us by his laws. This had been said before by Isaiah, though somewhat obscurely, "The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Is. 33:22). Both passages show that the power of life and death belongs to him who has power over the soul. Nay, James clearly expresses this. This power no man may assume to himself. God, therefore, to whom the power of saving and destroying belongs, must be acknowledged as the only King of souls, or, as the words of Isaiah express it, he is our king and judge, and lawgiver and savior. So Peter, when he reminds pastors of their duty, exhorts them to feed the flock without lording it over the heritage (1 Pet. 5:2); meaning by heritage the body of believers. If we duly consider that it is unlawful to transfer to man what God declares to belong only to himself, we shall see that *this completely cuts off all the power claimed by those who would take it upon them to order any thing in the Church without authority from the word of God* (Institutes, Book IV, Chapter, X, Section 7) (emphasis mine – ph).

He also makes it clear that this does not include those laws which are made for the government and life of the church. Such laws are to be accepted. However, even in this he puts limitations on the application of such laws. First, they must not be required as necessary for salvation, and second, they must not obligate the conscience in matters of walk and life.

...First, then, let us understand, that if in every human society some kind of government is necessary to ensure the common peace and maintain concord, if in transacting business some form must always be observed, which public decency, and hence humanity itself, require us not to disregard, this ought especially to be observed in churches which are best sustained by a constitution in all respects well ordered, and without which concord can have no existence. Wherefore, if we would provide for the safety of the Church, we must always carefully attend to Paul's injunction,

that all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14: 40).

But seeing there is such diversity in the manners of men, such variety in their minds, such repugnance in their judgments and dispositions, no policy is sufficiently firm unless fortified by certain laws, nor can any rite be observed without a fixed form. So far, therefore, are we from condemning the laws which conduce to this, that we hold that the removal of them would unnerve the Church, deface and dissipate it entirely. *For Paul's injunction, that all things be done decently and in order, cannot be observed unless order and decency be secured by the addition of ordinances, as a kind of bonds.*

In these ordinances, however, we must always attend to the exception, that they must not be thought necessary to salvation, *nor lay the conscience under a religious obligation*; they must not be compared to the worship of God, *nor substituted for piety* (*Institutes*, Book IV, Chapter, X, Section 27) (emphasis mine – ph).

- b. The Westminster Confession requires the conscience to be free from the commandments or coercion of men.

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and has *left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are*, in any thing, contrary to His Word; or *beside it*, in matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and *the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also* (Article 20) (emphasis mine – ph).

- c. Prof. Hoeksema writes that nothing can be binding on the conscience.

It is characteristic therefore of confessions that they are *binding*: binding not upon the conscience, because it is part and parcel of the Reformed faith that *there is nothing that can or may bind the conscience*, except the Word of God as we have it in the Scriptures in their entirety (*The Reformed Faith in Crisis*) (emphasis mine – ph).

- d. The authority of the church is limited to ecclesiastical matters. The church does not have sweeping authority over all aspects of life, but only those that pertain to the marks of a true church. This is stated in Article 30 of the Church Order, and Rev. Cammenga gives an explanation of this article.

In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner. In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, or such

as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common (Article 30, CO).

The emphasis of Article 30 is that the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical assemblies is confined to ecclesiastical matters: “In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted....” The boundaries are clearly set.

This means that only those matters which concern the life and calling of the church and her membership are to be the concern of the ecclesiastical bodies. *Strictly speaking, the assemblies are limited to those things that pertain to the preaching of the gospel, the administration of the sacraments, and the exercise of Christian discipline. The assemblies are not to busy themselves in matters which are outside of the sphere of the church: matters political, social, civil, educational, industrial, personal. Any assembly that does, intrudes itself into an area outside of its proper jurisdiction.* For any assembly to do this is to abandon its God-given calling and invite God’s wrath. For, in the end, it is God who limits the jurisdiction of the church.

The sphere of the church is solely things spiritual. Only in as far as there is a spiritual aspect is the church to be involved in a matter. For example, it is not the business of the church to settle financial disputes between brothers. In this case, Jesus’ word in Luke 12:14 applies: “Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you?” But if the sin of fraud or stealing enters in, then it becomes an ecclesiastical matter (*SB*, volume 68, issue 11, “Jurisdiction of Assemblies”) (emphasis mine – ph).

D. If the life of the church is defined broadly enough to include the method of secular education, there is certainly nothing that is excluded from the authority of the church.

1. Such a definition of the life of the church would have to include anything that has to do with the well-being of the body of the church as a whole.
2. This certainly would include many more things than intended. One example from history is the idea that a minister not marry. “He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife” (I Cor. 7:33). How a minister cares for the things of the Lord will certainly impact how he cares for the flock. This of course has to do with the well-being of the body of the church as a whole. Thus to argue this broader definition of the life of the church is to codify the former tyranny of Rome in which they required celibacy of the priests. We would certainly not stand for the idea of an article in the CO that requires a minister to either not marry or submit his motives to the consistory for marrying

so that his motives can be validated.

3. The list of examples could go on, and indeed one could argue that every decision we make has an impact on the body of Christ as a whole; from the method of education to how we invest our (God's!) money.

4. The only instance in which the church may involve itself in a matter not normally under its jurisdiction is when the proper authorities are negligent in their duties, causing harm to the church.

E. In any case it does not resolve the issue to argue that the church is given authority in this matter only over officebearers. Calvin says, "This is just as if a tyrant were to contend that a law is not unjust because its injustice presses only on a part of the state" (*Institutes*, p. 468).

II. All of the grounds that classis uses in its subsequent ruling concerning Rev. Dick rest on said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO. As such these grounds are also not biblical, confessional, or after the Reformed tradition.

A. The ground that an officebearer who does not give valid reasons for removing his children from the established day schools and/or homeschooling his children *cannot be an example* to the flock rests on said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO (Sept., II, C, 2, b; Committee #2 II, B, 4, c; Committee #3, 1, II, B, 2, b; Committee #3, 1, II, B, 3, c, 3; etc.).

1. Classis itself argues in this manner when it says that an officebearer must be an example to the congregation, after it says that an officebearer who does not perform said activities cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of him in Article 21 of the CO.

An officebearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools (obviously meant here is the day schools - ph), when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory, cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation... (Sept., II, C, 2, b).

2. The officebearer in question must be falling short on something specific for it to be said that he is not being a good example. What said officebearer is falling short on is the sending of his children to the good Christian day schools. This is a falling short of said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO.

3. If this interpretation of Article 21 of the CO is shown to be

incorrect, it can no longer be said that the officebearer in question is not being an example to the congregation.

B. The ground that an officebearer who removes his children from the day schools and/or homeschools his children *must have his conscience questioned* rests on said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO (Sept., II, C, 3, b; Committee #3, 1, II, B, 3, d; etc.).

1. Classis itself argues in this manner when it says that an officebearer must be willing to open his conscience up to being instructed by the CO.

Every officebearer must be willing to open his conscience up to being instructed and informed by Scripture and the Church Order, the multitude of counselors, the traditions of the church he serves, and the interests of the congregation (Committee #3, 1, II, B, 3, d).

2. The church does not question the conscience of a member on a whim. It in fact needs a valid reason to question the conscience of a member. Normally this is public sin (Matt. 7:1, 2; James 4:11, 12).

3. The reason that the classis must give for questioning the conscience of the officebearer in question is his falling short of said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO.

4. If this interpretation of Article 21 of the CO is shown to be incorrect, there is no longer a valid reason for questioning the conscience of said officebearer.

C. The ground that an officebearer who removes his children from the day schools and/or homeschools his children must give valid reasons *in order to achieve peace and unity in the church* rests on said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO (Committee #3, 1, II, B, 3, c, 3; Committee #3, 1, II, B, 4, b; etc.).

1. When there is dispute in the church, the first course of action is to consult the Word of God. When that Word is silent, as in a matter of Christian liberty, the biblical way to resolve the issue and attain peace in the church is to remind ourselves of our respective responsibilities to neither despise nor judge one another. For we all recognize that it is so easy for us to demand of our brother that he submit his will to ours “for the sake of peace in the church,” all the while forgetting half of that responsibility lies with ourselves.

Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him (Rom. 14:3).

2. Thus, it becomes apparent that the classis must have other reasons for applying this argument. Said interpretation of Article 21 of the CO would give substance for these other reasons. This interpretation would give credence to the idea that it is a foregone conclusion that a member of the PRC would normally use the available day schools in cooperation with other members. It would thus be natural for members to cry foul when one does not use the available day schools. The one member would indeed be upsetting the natural order of things, and thus the peace of the church.

3. If this interpretation of Article 21 of the CO is shown to be incorrect, then the biblical method for attaining peace in the church on a matter of liberty would be followed.

III. A proper interpretation of Article 21 emphasizes the *content* of the education. That is, the idea of *good Christian* schools over against that which is *not good Christian* schools.

A. This is evidenced by the use of the phrase “according to the demands of the covenant.”

1. The use of this phrase serves to emphasize the purpose of the article.

2. The only part of this article that can be said to be a demand of the covenant is the content of the education. That is, the education given to children of believers must be Christian.

3. Every type of education that meets the demands of the covenant meets the purpose and thus the requirements of Article 21.

B. This is evidenced by the similarities and differences between the original Article 21 and its current reading.

1. The differences between the original and its current reading reside in the method of education. In the original reading, the method of education was state schools. In the current reading, the method of education is parental schools.

2. The similarities between the original and current reading reside in the content of the education. In both readings, the content of the education is to be Christian.

C. Since the church may not claim authority over matters of Christian liberty except those that have to do with the government and life of the church, it becomes immediately obvious that the proper interpretation of Article 21 of the CO is limited as stated.

D. Historically this has been the case.

1. VanDellen and Monsma, in their commentary on the CO, always emphasize that the schools used must be good Christian

ones, over against those schools that are not Christian at all or are at best not very good Christian schools.

2. This article has never been used to decry any other form of secular or vocational training, including the very common use of apprenticeships and tutors. Thus historically it becomes clear that the method of education is not the point of Article 21 but the content of the education.

IV. Since a good Christian home school meets the demands of the covenant by definition, it also meets the requirements of Article 21 of the CO (under the proper interpretation).

V. Although classis is in error on its interpretation of Article 21, it must be noted that this interpretation was applied because of another underlying idea. Classis in fact sets up said interpretation as a means to enforce this underlying idea. Classis believes that the use of the good Christian day school is inherently better than any other method of schooling, including that of the good Christian home school. Given this preconception it is understandable, although still incorrect, that classis would seek to enforce this ideology. However, this preconception remains unproven and is in fact untrue.

A. Classis shows said preconception in its contention that the use of the good Christian day schools must be promoted for the well-being of the congregation/denomination as a whole.

Evidence:

Article 21 gives consistories the responsibility to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation (rather than the rights of the individual), by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible (Committee #3, 1, II, B, 3, b).

Article 21 is very definitely speaking about the establishment, promotion, and support of Christian day schools, not home schools, by the consistories, not only for those who might 'need' them, but for all the families of the congregation (Committee #3, 1, II, B, 2, a).

Article 21 of the Church Order is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible (Committee #3, 2, II, B, 2).

B. This contention is stated as fact and is never proven. It is possible that classis takes it for granted that this is true; however, this practice is not wise when others would so obviously contend to the opposite.

C. Said preconception is in fact incorrect.

1. There are clear advantages and disadvantages to day schools

and home schools alike. Any time there are advantages and disadvantages, a decision becomes an opinion based on the weighting applied. Thus it becomes apparent that one or the other cannot be inherently better.

2. What is good for some members of the body of Christ may not be good for all members of that body. Yet they are still of the same body. Thus both working in their respective duties, the one using the day schools and the other homeschooling, each member of the body supports the other. And each member needs the other member to work in their duty. The eye must see and the ear must hear. And the eye cannot say to the ear, "I have no need of you." The body of Christ is diverse, so that the body may work together as a body, not despising those members that are different.

For the body is not one member but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another (I Cor. 12:14-25).

3. The direct teaching of children by parents, as in a home school, is one of the methods of education that is directly promoted by Scripture.

And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deut. 6:7).

Attachment 2: May 2008 Classis Response to Hoekstra Appeal

June 3, 2008

Paul Hoekstra
5890 Coddington Ln,
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

Dear Brother:

At its meeting of May 2008, Classis East considered your protests against decisions taken at its January/February, 2008 meeting. The first and third protests were declared not to be legally before classis. Classis decided not to uphold your second and fourth protests.

The decisions of Classis East are recorded in the Minutes of Classis East, May 2008, as follows:

Article 90: The committee of pre-advice regarding the protest of Paul Hoekstra (Committee 3) presents its advice (Supplement 21).

Article 91: The protest of Paul Hoekstra is read (pp. 19-26, agenda) (Supplement 22).

Article 92: The committee of pre-advice recommends that classis not uphold the protest of Mr. Paul Hoekstra. Motion to adopt this recommendation, with grounds, of the committee. Carries.

A copy of the report of the committee of pre-advice is enclosed for your reference.

Fraternally in Christ,
w.s. Jon J. Huisken
Stated Clerk

Pre-advice Committee #3

Response to Protest of Paul Hoekstra

I. Information

A. Mr. Hoekstra protests “the interpretation given by classis of Article 21 of the Church Order (September II, C and grounds).” [This was treated and adopted in Articles 43 and 45 of the September 26, 2007 meeting of Classis East.]

B. He also protests the “inclusion of ‘good Christian schools’ as a regulation that Article 21 of the CO makes that is not required by Scripture (Committee #2, I, B, 2).” [This was treated and adopted in Articles 49, 50, 53 of the February 13, 2008 meeting of Classis East.]

C. In addition, Mr. Hoekstra protests “how this article was applied to the specific case of Rev. Dick, as this article was the basis of grounds used in said case (September II, D and grounds).” [This was treated

and adopted in Articles 47, 50, 51, 52 of the September 26, 2007 meeting of Classis East.]

D. Further, Mr. Hoekstra states, “Since these matters were also at the heart of the protests of Grace Consistory, Mr. Jason Kuiper, Mr. Ken Feenstra, and Rev. Nathan Brummel,” he also “protests the grounds given by classis for not upholding said protests (Committee #1, 1, II, B and grounds; Committee #1, 2, II, B and grounds; Committee #2, II, B and grounds; Committee #3, 1, II, B and grounds; Committee #3, 2, II, B and grounds; Committee #3, 3, II, B and grounds).” [The referenced material in the preceding parenthesis were treated and answered in Articles 47, 46, 56, 62, 64, and 68 respectively of the January/February, 2008 meeting of Classis East.]

II. Recommendations

A. Legality. [previously decided in Articles 43 and 44]

B. That classis read Mr. Paul Hoekstra’s protest (pp. 19-26 of the agenda).

C. That classis not uphold the protests of Mr. Paul Hoekstra.

Grounds:

1. When Mr. Hoekstra interprets Article 21 to allow for home schools as being equally preferable to “the good Christian day school,” he is presenting a novel interpretation of Article 21. Classis East has consistently presented only the historical reading of Article 21 when it declared that the “good Christian schools” refers to parental Christian day schools.

2. If he disagrees with this historical interpretation of Article 21, and would like the article to include something new (i.e., homeschooling), he would have to recommend a change to Article 21. The burden of proof in this case would fall on him to support his position.

3. In his protest Mr. Hoekstra expresses concern that classis has made broad declarations on the propriety of homeschooling. This concern is unfounded because classis did not do this in its treatment of the issues at Grace PRC at its September and January/February meetings.

SUPPLEMENT 38

Appeal: Mr. Arjen Vreugdenhil

Dear delegates of Synod 2009,

The following pages contain three protests [pp. 492-510] and three appeals [pp. 344-381] concerning the matter of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling. It is my conviction that Classis East and Synod 2008

were wrong when they ruled that this decision of the pastor was not valid.

This conviction is not merely based on the fact that I have come to know Rev. Dick as a godly man and a passionate pastor. My greatest concern is that the ecclesiastical assemblies have made their decisions rashly, without valid grounds, and without support from Scripture. My first protest, therefore, addresses the interpretation of Article 21 given by the classis and synod. I have collected some evidence that it is not the historical interpretation. I hope at least to convince the synod that Article 21 is not as “plain” as Classis East thought it was.

I am also disturbed by the way in which Classis East and Synod 2008 described the church’s authority to make ecclesiastical ordinances. It seems that our churches are forgetting the precious discovery of the Reformation that our only master is Christ, and that the church institute should not be dominated by man-made rules. My second protest addresses this matter.

Protest three is about the treatment of Rev. Dick’s “conscience” in this context. Classis East and synod have promoted a view in which church members are allowed to judge each other even in matters of Christian liberty.

In my first appeal I bring to the attention of synod the January/February 2008 protest of the Grace Consistory. In May 2008, I protested to Classis East that they had not dealt with this protest in an adequate manner. My primary concern is not that synod vindicate the position of the consistory, but that Classis East is reprimanded for the careless way in which they interacted (or failed to interact) with this protest.

My second appeal concerns my protest of Classis East’s February 2008 decision that Rev. Dick’s reasons for homeschooling are invalid. The classis did not only do injustice to Rev. Dick, but also to his consistory.

Finally, in appeal three I ask synod to right the wrong done by classis when it publicly questioned the effectiveness of Rev. Dick as a minister, even though no charge had been brought against him. This action of classis not only played a factor in the dismissal of Rev. Dick, but also damaged his reputation within the denomination.

I am aware that my protests and appeals give the synod a lot of work to do; however, because of the complexity of the issues and the many unproven and incorrect statements made by the various assemblies, I found it impossible to reduce the text any further.

My prayer is that, when synod considers these matters, the deliberations may be guided by Scripture, by Christian charity, and by reason.

In Christ,
w.s. Arjen Vreugdenhil
(member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church)

I. Concerning the Protest of the Grace Consistory

I appeal to synod my protest III to the May 2008 meeting of Classis East. In it, “I protest the decision, with its grounds, of Classis East of February 2008, ‘not to sustain the protest of Grace PRC Consistory’ (Art. 59). Ground: Classis did not adequately deal with the arguments of this protest.”

Classis East did not uphold my protest. However, I believe that their response was inadequate.

The text of my protest III, as well as the original January/February protest of the Grace Consistory and classis’ response to it, are found in the supplements below.

A. Rebuttal of classis’ response. The following five points are the grounds Classis East gave for not upholding my protest III.

1. “Classis is allowed to repeat its former position on Article 21 without giving any new evidence. Classis is under no burden to prove its interpretation of Article 21, since Article 21 is plain. The protestant’s problem is not with classis’ interpretation of Article 21, but with Article 21 itself. Therefore, the burden of proof rests on the protestant to demonstrate, by way of a gravamen, that Article 21 needs to be changed.”

a. This position is disrespectful toward the Grace PRC Consistory. Classis overruled the consistory’s interpretation of Article 21. This requires valid and adequate arguments, for under Reformed church polity, the consistory is the primary authority in the church of Christ. The burden of proof is therefore on Classis East; the classis should be able to show that the position of the consistory is definitely wrong. If classis cannot do so, it has no right to limit the freedom of the local church to make whatever interpretation and application it sees fit.

b. By stating that its interpretation of Article 21 is identical to the plain meaning of the article, classis arrogantly claimed its position to be beyond scrutiny. This is unacceptable in a Reformed church community.

c. Neither the Grace Consistory nor I have a “problem with Article 21 itself.” We agree that the consistories have the duty to “see to it that there are good Christian schools, in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” We simply are not convinced that the text or intention of this article implies all that the classis said it implies. It is therefore reasonable and valid to demand proof.

d. The insistence of Classis East that it need not give

any new evidence for its position is very strange, given the large amounts of historical and scriptural data presented in the various protests and the very few arguments given by classis, which have been challenged in many ways.

2. “Insisting on the correct interpretation of Article 21 does not disallow all home education, as has been alleged. The fact is, Article 21 clearly allows exceptions for home education in some instances. For example, when good Christian day schools are not available, or when a child has exceptional needs.”

a. Neither the Grace Consistory nor I alleged that Classis East “disallowed all home education.” Classis East had accused the Grace Consistory of saying this: “This misrepresents classis’ decision because classis never said that homeschooling is not a legitimate alternative, *in some instances, for the education of covenant children.*” In point A, 2 of my protest, I addressed this accusation, by showing that the classis had misread what the consistory wrote.

b. In September 2007, the classis had said that it was “wrong” and “in error” to read Article 21 such that homeschooling is “a legitimate alternative to our Christian schools.” In its protest, the Grace Consistory addressed this very point and used the exact same language:

Grace Consistory is on record as saying that Article 21 does not address the matter of the “form” or “kind” of Christian education, and that it indeed “*allows room*” for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative. Classis is on record as declaring this interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order to be “in error.” Its main argument, that on which every one of its arguments depends, is this: “Article 21 of the Church Order, neither in its original form (‘schoolmasters’) nor in its present form (‘schools’) had in mind homeschooling as ‘one kind’ of Christian school.” Therefore, such is the implication, according to classis, “homeschooling” is *not* a “legitimate alternative.”

It is abundantly clear from the context that the consistory, just like Classis East, was talking about homeschooling as a legitimate alternative *for the “good Christian schools” of Article 21.*

c. The very fact that Classis East spoke of “exceptions” confirms that classis believes that, under “normal” circumstances, Article 21 disallows homeschooling as a legitimate alternative. This was precisely the position criticized by the consistory. The consistory correctly pointed out that this

belief is based on the fallacy of *an argument from silence*: the fact that Article 21 does not speak of homeschooling does not imply that it condemns homeschooling as “not a legitimate alternative.” By accusing the consistory of misrepresentation, the classis avoided dealing with this argument.

d. When I protested this matter, I wrote:

Therefore, the protest addresses precisely the claim in the response of classis, namely that “Art. 21...[never] had in mind homeschooling as ‘one kind’ of Christian school,” and that therefore homeschooling may not be allowed as such (A, 2, c).

My limited experience with English idiom caused an unfortunate misunderstanding. When I received a copy of the recommendation of the committee of pre-advice, I noticed this and immediately informed one of the committee members. The pertinent correspondence was as follows:

My e-mail to the committee: I failed to recognize that most English speakers interpret “as such” as synonymous to “in general.” That was not at all by intention. I am well aware of the fact that classis never meant, or said anything, to rule out homeschooling as a valid type of education in general; classis merely meant to say homeschooling is not (and cannot be) the type of schooling that is meant and required by Article 21.

By the phrase “as such” I meant to refer back to the previous quotation, “‘one kind’ of Christian school [as must be promoted in accordance with Art. 21].”

Therefore, as far as I am concerned, point III, B, 2 of the committee’s recommendation is a moot point and only distracts from the real issue. I never intended to “allege” that “insisting on the correct [i.e., classis’] interpretation of Article 21 does not disallow all home education.” I believe that a fair reading of the Grace PRC protest also shows that they did not allege this.

Let me try to formulate what I meant in III, A, 2, c: The “argument from silence” mentioned by Grace PRC was that classis reasoned as follows:

- Article 21 “never had in mind” homeschooling [as the type of school that must be promoted by the consistory]; therefore,
- Article 21 disallows homeschooling [as the type of school to be promoted by the consistory].

This style of reasoning, which is notoriously incorrect, has not been justified by classis. That is the focus of part III, A, 2 of my protest.

Response: Thanks for your explanation. [...] I appreciate the points you raise, and I think it would be good for you to raise them at classis Wednesday.

In spite of all this, the committee and subsequently the classis kept this second ground and, once again, failed to deal with the pertinent argument of the consistory's protest.

3. "The protestant's contention that Article 21 does not require 'of consistory members that they *use* the Christian day schools' is disproved by Questions for Church Visitation, Question #18 to the Full Consistory: 'Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school?' A consistory member cannot see to another parent sending *his* children to a good Christian school, while the consistory member himself will not send *his own* children to school."

a. The "Questions for Church Visitation" are questions, not ecclesiastical ordinances. A "no" is not necessarily wrong. If a consistory answers: "No, some of them actually homeschool," there is no reason for the Church Visitors to be alarmed.

(This can be illustrated by analogy. Question #1 asks: "Do you have preaching services at least twice on each Lord's Day, once from a text the choice of which is left free, an once after the order of the Heidelberg Catechism, so that no Lord's Day is omitted?" Most of the PRC consistories will have to answer something like: "No, we actually skipped the Catechism preaching on Easter Sunday, and a few times when our minister preached elsewhere.")

b. In the light of the history of the churches, this 1922 question should probably be interpreted as asking whether the parents take the responsibility for the education of their children. In response to my protest I, Classis East argued that one can only *send* one's children to a school outside the home; but it is clear that such a literalist approach reads more into a text than it was ever intended to mean.

4. "Whether or not classis in September 2007 showed that more is required of officebearers than the common member is beside the point. The statement of classis that 'the Scriptures and the Reformed tradition... do put extra requirements on officebearers' is correct. This is evident from Article 79 of the Church Order: there are sins repented of which exclude a man from church office but not from church membership."

a. The point of the Grace Consistory was that classis *added* requirements for officebearers which are not found in Scripture. The Scripture lists requirements for officebearers (although it seems more appropriate to speak of "qualifications"). These

requirements, found in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, do not require in any way that an officebearer should send his children to a communal school.

b. The rule of Article 79, which prescribes the deposition or suspension of an officebearer in case of a public, gross sin, is not an “extra” requirement but follows from the scriptural qualification that an elder must be “blameless” (ἀνεπιλημπτος, “beyond reproach”; see I Tim. 3:2).

c. Moreover, Article 79 can hardly be interpreted as an “extra requirement” for officebearers that would not apply to other church members. Both officebearer and the “layman” must live godly lives; neither of them is allowed to commit a public, gross sin. Article 79 therefore does not illustrate a difference in what is *required*, but rather a difference in the *consequences* in case of sin.

5. “Classis is not bound to address only issues that a protestant raises, nor is it bound to address every issue that a protestant raises. Classis is merely bound to answer the protest (Rules of Synod, VI, B, 2: ‘All matters appearing in the Agenda must be dealt with by classis before its adjournment.’) It is left to classis’ discretion whether this will require introducing additional issues or disregarding other issues.”

a. Respect for the calling and authority of the Grace Consistory demands that the classis carefully studies and answers the various parts of their protest.

b. It is strange to claim that “all matters appearing in the Agenda are dealt with by classis” if classis picks and chooses to which parts in a protest it will respond. Disregarding issues brought up in the protests means that some matters appearing in the Agenda have *not* been dealt with.

c. The parts of the consistory’s protest that remained unanswered are not of minor importance; rather, they raise serious questions about the validity of the September 2007 decisions. When classis in its “discretion” decides to disregard these issues, it is obviously failing its duty, and violates the right of a protestant, not only to protest but also to be heard and to be taken seriously.

B. Classis East did not interact with several parts of my protest. One important aspect concerns the way in which it treated Rev. Dick’s conscience.

1. Classis maintained a view of the “conscience” that is foreign to Scripture.

- a. According to this view, the Christian conscience is not sufficient ground for decision making, even in matters of Christian liberty.
- b. However, in Scripture the conscience (συνειδησις) is given a much more positive role. See for instance Rom. 9:1; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Pet. 2:19; 3:21; etc.
2. The classis failed to give any evidence for their view of the Christian conscience. The consistory, on the other hand, quoted the results of study of this topic by a former minister of the PRC. The view with the best arguments must be accepted.
3. When classis stated that, without “being instructed and informed by Scripture” etc., an officebearer “ought not to follow a course of action based only upon his conscience,” it implied that Rev. Dick’s conscience was *not* instructed and informed by Scripture, and so on. This is not true. Rev. Dick’s conscience had been informed by Scripture (which does not forbid homeschooling in any way), by the multitude of counselors (his consistory who approved), and the Reformed tradition (which has never been hostile to homeschooling).
- C. The consistory had given a detailed analysis of VanDellen and Monsma’s *Church Order Commentary*. They showed that when this commentary insists on “good Christian day schools,” etc., it is always meant in contrast to the public schools; therefore it should not be read as an exclusion of home education. If this analysis has any merit, the interpretation of Article 21 by the September 2007 Classis has no valid ground. The classis should have interacted with this analysis, especially because it addresses the very heart of classis’ arguments. Its failure to do this indicates that classis has been insisting on a position it cannot prove or support.
- D. Conclusion: Classis East did not deal properly with the protests of Grace Consistory or with my protest. I ask that Synod 2008 reprimand the classis for taking so lightly the protest of a consistory. I ask that synod uphold my protest, and as a logical consequence advise Classis East to reconsider the protest of the Grace Consistory. If Classis East is unable to defend its position over against the various criticisms in this protest, the classis must rescind its September 2007 decisions and allow the Grace Consistory to judge in the matter of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling.

II. Concerning Rev. Dick’s Reasons

I appeal to synod my protests IV, V, VI [Attachments 5-10, pp. 369-379] to the May 2008 meeting of Classis East. In them, I protested the legality of classis’ continued involvement in the case of Rev. Dick; their

judgment of Rev. Dick's reasons for homeschooling as "inadequate"; and the advice they gave to the Grace Consistory.

A. When Classis East in January/February 2008 judged "that Grace PRC's Consistory erred when they judged valid Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them," they violated the autonomy of the local church and Article 30 of the Church Order.

1. The grounds in my original protest IV make this clear.
2. Rebuttal of the classis' response:
 - a. Classis said: "And the January/February 2008 decision that states that Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children are invalid was an additional decision taken after new material was made known to classis concerning the nature of Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children from our schools."
 - b. A classis does not have the right to make decisions concerning a local congregation simply because "material was made known" to them. The classis may only deal with it if the local church cannot deal with it; that is, if a consistory asks the advice of the classis, or if a member of the congregation appeals to classis to mediate in a disagreement.
 - c. The "new material" of which classis speaks here is a private letter from Rev. Dick to the consistory, in which he summarizes the reasons for his decision to homeschool. This letter was not submitted to classis for evaluation; rather, the consistory had given a copy of this letter to the "Special Committee" to assist the committee in formulating a recommendation to the consistory. The classis became aware of the letter through the report of the special committee. But this letter was never submitted to the classis with the intention that they might judge it.
 - d. The special committee had not been appointed, nor had the authority, to judge the decision of the Grace Consistory, or to bring it to the classis for evaluation. As classis itself said, the classis has the right "to make whatever judgment of the pastor's conscience it deems possible, necessary, and appropriate."
3. A rebuttal of the other reasons for classis' response is not possible here; classis never communicated these reasons to me, except that they are the "same as the first ground given for not sustaining Rev. Dick's protest against the decision of Article 96 of the January 2008 meeting of classis."

B. Classis East judged the reasons of Rev. Dick for homeschooling his children to be “inadequate.” But the grounds for this judgment are invalid. Rebuttal of the classis’ response to my protest V:

1. “Mr. Vreugdenhil’s protest fails to understand the important position of leadership and example that a minister has in a congregation.” (ground A)

a. The problem is not that I don’t understand the important position a minister has; rather, I disagree about what it means for a minister to be an example.

b. A minister must be an example of godliness. But a minister is not required to organize his life, family, and society in the same way as the other members of the congregation. He is not required to use his Christian liberty how others think he should use it.

c. In fact, classis’ understanding of “being an example” is the wrong way around. When it requires a minister to use the same school as other members of the congregation, they are making the *congregation* into an example for the *minister*.

2. “Mr. Vreugdenhil’s protest does not take into account all the facts of the case in question.” (ground B)

a. According to Classis East, I failed “to take into account that the classis in September did ground its explanation of Article 21 of the Church Order in VanDellen and Monsma and in the Scriptures.” This is obviously not true. Rather, I argued that “Classis failed to respond to the arguments given by consistory that support their interpretation of Article 21” (my protest V, ground C, 1, a).

b. The only Scriptures used by Classis East to support their view of Article 21 are I Corinthians 4:16; 11:1; Philippians 3:17; II Thessalonians 3:7. I addressed this in my protest III, ground C, 3, b; I said that “the proof-texts adduced by classis do not speak about officebearers in general; rather, Paul encourages the church to follow his example, *as he follows Christ*.”

c. According to the classis, I present “only the reasons for withdrawal of the children from the schools that the congregation was privy to, and not the full scope of the reasons that the classis had before it when it made this decision.” This is not true. I spoke with Rev. Dick about his reasons for making his decision. What he told me is in full agreement with the account of “the nature of his reasons” in the November

2007 letter from the consistory to Grace Church. It is also in agreement with the October 2007 letter the pastor sent to the consistory. I do not see what other sources of information the classis could have had.

3. “The proper way for an individual (and in this case an officebearer, who must be an example to the flock) to address issues in the school is, not to withdraw one’s children, but to address the problems in the school with love and wisdom, in the way of Matthew 18, and if there is no resolution to also bring it ‘to the church’” (ground C, 2, a).

a. Classis seems to assume that Rev. Dick had not worked with the schools to find ways to keep his children in the school. This assumption is not only uncharitable; it is also simply false. This can be easily proven from the letter from Rev. Dick to his consistory, point B, 3.

b. If the classis is going to involve itself in the (private!) matter between Rev. Dick and the Christian school societies, it would be only fair for classis to investigate whether the schools may have failed to accommodate the pastor’s wishes and attempts to resolve the “issues.” Classis may find that the school societies (rightfully) refuse this interference in non-ecclesiastical matters.

c. Christian parents have no obligation to remain members of a school society. Their only obligation in this respect is their calling to give their children the best education they deem possible. See Herman Hoeksema, “As to Our Moral Obligation (IV)” in a 1944 editorial in the *Standard Bearer*.

d. If a parent believes (as Rev. Dick does) that continued enrollment of his children in a school might be harmful to them, or even that the children will gain more spiritual profit from a different educational approach, it would be *wrong* for the parent to keep his children in that school. Nothing can trump the responsibility of a parent to seek the best for his children.

e. The rule of Matthew 18 does not apply to this case. It speaks of one brother trespassing against another. A school society is not a brother who needs to be rebuked, or whose soul must be saved.

f. Whether Rev. Dick has his children enrolled in the schools or not should play no role in the resolution of conflicts between him and the schools. It would be wrong to fight these things out over the heads of the children.

- g. It should be noted that Rev. Dick was not saying that the problem lies in the schools all by themselves, or in other people all by themselves. Rather, he and his wife assessed the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual needs of their children and are convinced that their children require more parental supervision, nurture, and discipline, and less peer pressure than the existing schools afford. They simply view homeschooling as the best option for *them*, at this particular time.
4. “When there are issues with the schools, the church’s responsibility is not the educational quality or the improvement or fixing of the schools, but rather to address to the school principal and board the doctrinal or moral issues that the staff and board are not addressing. Consistory members should also give instruction, particularly in the preaching, in the areas where the doctrinal and moral standards of the school are threatened” (ground C, 2, b).
- a. There is no disagreement about this. Naturally, the church has no ecclesiastical authority over the school principal and board; they can only try to convince the schools to improve and, if that does not work, encourage the congregants to find a different way of educating their children.
5. “A consistory member (and this would be true also of any member of the church) who withdraws his children from the school for doctrinal or moral reasons gives the appearance that he is unwilling to deal with these issues for the sake of the other children in the congregation.”
- a. Parents are not responsible to work with a school to improve the quality of education for other children in the congregation. Rather, they must do what is best for their children.
- b. Insofar officebearers have a special duty toward the quality of the schools used by members of the congregation, they have this duty *as officebearers*; whether they have any children in the schools does not and should not make any difference.
- C. Classis East advised the Grace Consistory to “take the following course of action as advised by classis in September 2007 (and as set forth by the special committee).” In my protest VI, I protested that the outlined course of action was not at all the advice of the September Classis, and violated the authority of the consistory to make its own decisions. Rebuttal of the classis’ response:
1. “Though the wording of the course of action is different than

in February ('work with the pastor to show him the inadequacy of his reasons') to that of September ('judge whether the reasons for Rev. Dick not sending his children to the existing PR Schools are valid'), the basic course of action is the same."

This is simply not true. The September decision is based on the assumption that the consistory has the right to judge whether Rev. Dick's reasons are valid or not. The February decision is based on the assumption that his reasons are inadequate, even though the consistory disagreed. In September, the consistory could comply with classis' reasons in good conscience (albeit under protest); but the consistory never complied with the February advice.

2. "Mr. Vreugdenhil's interpretation of the course of action advised by classis in September 2007 is too narrow. In the September 2007 decision, classis never intended that the consistory limit itself to judging whether the reasons were valid, but also that that consistory 'address the issues...with a view to resolving' them, and that they report back to classis 'how they intend to proceed'" (ground 1).

a. The full text of the September 2007 decision was: "Should the consistory judge that Rev. Dick's reasons for not using the good Christian schools are invalid and should the consistory not be able to convince Rev. Dick of this and he remains unwilling to use the good Christian schools, the consistory shall inform classis of this fact and of how they intend to proceed" (D, 4).

b. This is a conditional statement. Only *if* the consistory judged the reasons invalid and *if* they should not be able to convince Rev. Dick of this, the consistory was advised to report back to classis.

3. "Through its Special Committee to Assist Grace PRC, classis became aware of a full account of the reasons of Rev. Dick's withdrawing his children (Advice of Special Committee to Grace PRC, Oct. 30, 2007), and with this new information, desiring to help the Grace Consistory, classis fleshed out the advice of September 2007" (ground 2).

But the Grace Consistory had not asked for "help" in judging this information. They had studied "this new information" (i.e., the letter from Rev. Dick concerning his reasons) and unanimously concluded that the reasons were valid. They never asked nor intended classis to evaluate or second-guess their evaluation and validation of these reasons.

Classis was well aware of this. When the committee of pre-advice recommended that the February Classis should declare that the decision of Grace PRC is “in error,” the consistory objected that they did not want the classis to be involved, and that such an involvement is an infringement of their sphere of authority.

The word “help” does not justify this action of Classis East, by which it effectively lorded it over the Grace Consistory.

III. Concerning Questioning Rev. Dick’s Effectiveness

I appeal to synod my protest VII to the May 2008 meeting of Classis East. In it, I protested the public questioning of Rev. Dick’s ability to fulfill his office as slanderous and detrimental to his reputation.

A. Rebuttal of the response by Classis East

1. “It can be demonstrated from the following documents that the unrest in the congregation centers around and goes back to the time that Rev. Dick first began homeschooling all his children.”

a. This unrest may have been the *occasion*, but it is not necessarily where the *fault* is. As I mentioned in my original protest, “unrest can be caused by people who unrightfully take offense.” This was also the judgment of the Grace Consistory.

b. The reports from the Church Visitors include the complaints of several congregants who did not first go to the consistory, and who did not file a protest or appeal so that their arguments against Rev. Dick’s homeschooling can be evaluated. It is wrong for classis to use this as evidence that the pastor must be doing something wrong.

2. “A minister must be sensitive, not to create an impediment in his congregation, and his effectiveness as preacher and pastor will depend on this (1 Cor. 10:32-33; Acts 16:3).”

a. According to 1 Corinthians 10:32-33, and similar passages, one may not give “offense”—this is true for all Christians, not just the ministers; Paul addresses all Corinthians. But each time, the word “offense” (προσκοπος; σκανδαλον) refers to a stumbling block, or, metaphorically, to an occasion for sin.

b. Although we are called to try to please (αρεσκειν) others, nobody has the right to demand another person to please him. Even Paul, who tried to be everything to everybody, often upset people. The fault was theirs, not his; they required things of him which he, in good conscience, could not and would not do.

- c. It would be one thing if members of Grace Church had expressed their dislike of Rev. Dick's homeschooling in an appropriate way, indicating that they would prefer him to use the day schools. Instead, some tried to prove that he should not be allowed to homeschool, while others complained among themselves and stopped coming to church.
- d. In Acts 16:3 we find an example of Paul yielding to the wish of Jews that Timothy be circumcised, even though this is unnecessary. But Paul's behavior shows that we need not always yield; especially not if others try to compel us and restrict our liberty by false arguments.

But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised: And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily *to spy out our liberty* which we have in Christ Jesus, *that they might bring us into bondage*: To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you (Gal. 2:3-5).

Many who objected to Rev. Dick's homeschooling denied that it was his Christian liberty to make this decision; they tried to bring him into bondage to their view that he must use the day schools they used. And like Paul, Rev. Dick refused to yield to such undue pressure. (I am not saying that these congregants were "false brethren"; however, they were mistaken in their conviction that Rev. Dick is not at liberty to choose the best form of Christian education for his children.)

e. Just as Paul's testimony did not become ineffective when he refused to circumcise Titus, Rev. Dick's ministry did not become ineffective when he refused to yield to those who tried to compel him to use the Christian day schools. In fact, the recent events have caused some members of Grace Church to consider the true principles of Christian education. Rev. Dick's actions are a powerful reminder that our unity is in the Lord we serve, not in the schools that we use.

The ineffectiveness (and current inactivity) of Rev. Dick as a preacher is rather due to the inappropriate interference of Classis East in the affairs of the Grace Consistory. By overruling the decision of the consistory twice, they took away the credibility of the elders. Because the ecclesiastical assemblies had negated the position of the consistory, they were no longer able to rebuke those who murmured against Rev. Dick and the decisions of the consistory.

B. Conclusion: I ask the synod to declare that Classis East was in error when they publicly questioned the effectiveness of Rev. Dick as a minister. He had done nothing wrong; his actions had been approved by his consistory; yet the classis presumed to know better than the consistory and decided that Rev. Dick might not be effective in his ministry. Even if the classis had grounds for their concern, it was inappropriate to express them publicly.

Attachments

Attachment 1:

Protest of Grace Consistory, Jan/Feb 2008

[Please cf. Supplement 36, Appendix 2, p. 261.]

Attachment 2:

Classis East's Rejection of the Consistory's Protest

[Please cf. Supplement 36, Appendix 3, p. 286.]

Attachment 3:

Vreugdenhil Protest III to Classis East in May 2008

I protest the decision, with its grounds, of Classis East of February 2008, “not to sustain the protest of Grace PRC Consistory” (Art. 59). Ground: Classis did not adequately deal with the arguments of this protest.

A. In their first ground, classis unjustly chides the Grace PRC Consistory for “speaking against perceived ‘implications’ of the decisions,” some of which “in themselves are inaccurate.”

1. It is a matter of sound logic that if the (logical, necessary) implications of a decision are wrong, immoral, unjust, etc., then the same is true for that decision. Instead of pointing out that the consistory was dealing with “implications,” classis should have shown that these implications do not follow and were not intended by the decision of classis.

2. Ground II, B, 1, a quotes Grace Consistory as saying: “such is the implication, according to classis, ‘homeschooling’ is not a ‘legitimate alternative.’” Classis responded: “This misrepresents classis’ decision because classis never said that homeschooling is not a legitimate alternative, *in some instances, for the education of covenant children.*”

a. But Classis East in September had said that it was “wrong” and “in error” to read Article 21 such that homeschooling is “a legitimate alternative to our Christian schools.” Clearly, the issue was whether ho-

meschooling is a ‘legitimate alternative’ *for the ‘good Christian schools’ of Article 21.*

b. The Grace Consistory spoke explicitly about the interpretation of the “good Christian schools” of Article 21. They mentioned this implication of classis’ decisions as proof that “classis’ interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order is *not*, in fact, based on anything stated or implied in Article 21” (point II, B, 1, a of the protest).

c. Therefore, the protest addresses precisely the claim in the response of classis, namely that “Art. 21...never had in mind homeschooling as ‘one kind’ of Christian school,” and that therefore homeschooling may not be allowed as such.

d. Thus classis unrightfully deflected the criticism of the protest that this interpretation of Article 21 is based on the logical fallacy of “an argument from silence.”

3. Ground II, B, 1, b dismisses the criticism of Grace Consistory on the “communal” aspect of classis’ interpretation of Article 21. The ground is that “these statements misrepresent the decision of classis, because classis did not say that the expression, ‘demands of the covenant,’ has reference to the ‘covenant community.’”

a. The Classis of September 2007 had failed to clarify what they meant by “according to the demands of the covenant” (ground C, 1, b, 2). Moreover, it is a widespread belief in the PR Churches that it is a “demand of the covenant” to organize parental day schools as a community effort. For instance, this view has been defended publicly and forcefully by Prof. Engelsma in his book *Reformed Education/The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*. Now classis says that this was, in fact, not the basis for their interpretation that “good Christian schools” are to be established by the community. But the protesters could not possibly have known from the September 2007 decisions that classis disagreed with the usual interpretation of “the demands of the covenant.”

b. The main point of the protest is not essentially dependent on one or another interpretation of this phrase. “The thrust of classis, on this point of the ‘use’ of the Christian schools, is to say that we all must, as a [covenant] community of believers, work together and support one another by all using the same kinds of schools.... [But] Article 21 [does not] teach just how Reformed believers are to express their obligations of ‘community’ and cooperation as the body of

Christ in covenant education” (point II, B, 2, b of the protest, p. 8ff.).

c. This criticism affects the central point of the grounds of Classis East, because the “community” aspect is the key difference between home schools and parental day schools. By dismissing the whole criticism as a “misrepresentation,” classis failed to address this key aspect.

4. Ground II, B, 1, c criticizes the consistory’s “perceived implication” that home schools are “a ‘threat’ and even detrimental to the cause of the covenant community and the cause of Christian education.”

a. It may be true that in September 2007, “Classis neither said that homeschooling in general nor that Rev. Dick’s homeschooling in particular are a threat to the cause of the Christian schools.”

b. However, classis had clearly implied that Rev. Dick, by homeschooling his children, jeopardizes his ability to “be an example to the congregation” (C, 2, b). His (presupposed) inability and failure to promote “good Christian schools” is definitely treated as a “threat.”

c. That Classis East perceives Rev. Dick’s homeschooling as a threat is even more apparent in the February 2008 decisions. The special committee said that the pastor’s reasons “bring the message to the members of Grace PRC that the Christian schools they use are in fact not ‘good Christian schools’” and that the consistory’s acceptance of these reasons would have “several unacceptable implications (!)” (Information presented by the Committee of Pre-Advice [appointed in Art. 82] to Classis East of February 2008.)

d. Likewise, in response to the protest of Grace Consistory, classis stated that “consistories have a responsibility... to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation... by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible” (II, B, 3, b). Clearly, it is believed that Rev. Dick’s homeschooling is viewed as jeopardizing his ability to do so—that is, his homeschooling is detrimental to the well-being of the congregation with respect to their use of the Christian day schools.

e. Rather than denying that Rev. Dick’s homeschooling is considered a “threat” or “detrimental” to the cause of Christian education, classis should have explained why this homeschooling is a threat; or else, if classis truly believes

that Rev. Dick's homeschooling is "harmless," they should stop criticizing his doing so.

B. In the second ground for not upholding this protest, Classis East repeats its former position, which had been amply criticized by the consistory, without giving any new evidence, and without proof that the criticism is incorrect.

1. According to classis, the consistory "fails to see that... [Article 21] does require the promotion of the existing Christian day schools by the consistory as a whole and by the consistory members in their individual office where this is possible" (II, B, 2). The 'ground' for this claim is that "Article 21 is very definitely speaking about...Christian day schools, not home schools.... This in no way injects meaning into Article 21."

2. But the consistory had presented arguments to the effect that the "good Christian schools" of Article 21 are not limited to "the existing Christian day schools." These arguments were not proven wrong by classis.

3. The only ground Classis East presented in September 2007 to show that the "good Christian schools" in Article 21 are the (existing) Christian day schools was references to VanDellen and Monsma, the interpretation of which was challenged by the consistory (p. 9 and p. 12 of the protest). Classis never even addressed this challenge.

4. Therefore classis fails to do any more than restate the criticized position. But repeating a statement is no evidence that that statement is true. The addition of assurances such as "very definitely" and "in no way" does not make it true, either.

C. In the third ground for not upholding the protest, Classis East claims (over against the consistory) that the protested decisions "do not conflict with Scripture and the Reformed tradition." But the arguments presented are inadequate or incorrect.

1. Ground II, B, 3, a: "In its definition of 'good Christian schools' classis did not add to the Scriptures but only identified those schools to which Article 21 refers."

- a. In February 2008, classis made clear that the requirement of "good Christian (day) schools" they perceived in Article 21 is not a demand of Scripture, but an "ecclesiastical ordinance" to which members of the churches (in particular officebearers) bind themselves voluntarily. See, for instance, the grounds of the decision not to uphold Mr. Feenstra's protest.

- b. On the basis of this view, classis did not "add to the

- Scriptures”; but more than ever this begs the question whether classis’ definition is in agreement *with the Church Order* (i.e., the “Reformed tradition”). If it cannot be proven that Article 21 means to exclude homeschooling from the “good Christian schools,” classis did add to Article 21. This is precisely the claim of the consistory (point II, B, 2), and classis failed to disprove this claim.
2. Ground II, B, 3, b: “Classis’ decisions do not take away the primary responsibility and right of educating children from individual believing parents, but...Article 21 declares that also consistories have a responsibility toward the education of the children under their care. [It gives them] the responsibility to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation...by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible.”
- a. Classis East in September 2007 had said that the decision that “Rev. Dick has the right to educate his children at home is based on the error of allowing Rev. Dick’s appeal to his conscience to be decisive” (C, 3). This clearly *denies* Rev. Dick’s primary right of educating his children the way he believes is best (or at least, it denies his “right to exercise this right,” but that is effectively the same)—unless he can present arguments that are deemed valid and adequate by his consistory, and, as the proceedings of February 2008 show, even by his classis.
- b. It is therefore clear that classis believes that the duties of Rev. Dick *as a consistory member* override (his right to exercise) the right which he has as a parent. He cannot be a consistory member *and* exercise his Christian right and conviction of homeschooling.
- c. Classis never showed that Rev. Dick’s *parental-rightful* decision to homeschool causes him to fail his duty as a consistory member; nor is there any sign that the consistory of Grace Church, because of his homeschooling, has been unable to do what Article 21 promotes. In fact, Classis East of February 2008 had asked the consistory “whether the Christian schools are cared for,” and the answer was satisfactory (Art. 6 of the minutes). The protest of Grace Consistory rightfully challenged the interpretation that Article 21 requires of consistory members that they *use* the Christian day schools (point II, B, 2, c). This challenge was not really addressed by classis.
3. Ground II, B, 3, c: “Classis’ decisions do not add an extra

requirement for officebearers, but rather simply follow the Scriptures and the Reformed tradition, which do put extra requirements on the officebearers....” But the examples given by classis are not really “extra requirements.”

a. “The officebearer is bound to maintain the Church Order by his signing of the Formula of Subscription.” That is simply not true. The Formula of Subscription *only* speaks about agreement with the Forms of Unity, *on the basis that they are fully scriptural*. It is a myth that signing the Formula of Subscription is a signing of the Church Order. Of course, an officebearer is supposed to abide by the Church Order, not in the absolute sense — the Church Order “may and ought to be altered,” Article 86!—but because ecclesiastical matters are to be conducted in orderly fashion. However, this is not an extra-biblical requirement, but a *biblical demand*. The essence of the Church Order, namely the ordering of ecclesiastical matters, is fully scriptural; the details of the Church Order are merely a non-essential substrate of its essential purpose. The consequence for Article 21 is that it must serve to maintain order in the affairs of the church; but it should not be interpreted as making “extra requirements” that do not serve this purpose.

b. “The officebearer must be an example to the flock.” But this “being an example” cannot be used by others to put extra requirements on him. This is clear, for instance, from Articles 79 and 80 of the Church Order, which make clear that officebearers are to be judged and disciplined on the same principles as any other member of the church. The only difference between officebearers and other church members is their extra accountability; see Hebrews 13:17. We may not translate this accountability into requirements that we judge, into “do’s” and “don’ts.” The accountability of officebearers in matters of Christian liberty is to God; Romans 14:12. (The proof texts adduced by classis do not speak about officebearers in general; rather, Paul encourages the church to follow his example, *as he follows Christ*.)

c. “The officebearer must be careful not to act in a way that is detrimental to the peace of the church.” This is true not only for officebearers but for all believers. It is not an “extra requirement.” But it has to be proven yet that the homeschooling by an officebearer is indeed detrimental to the peace in the church. The “unrest” in Grace PRC cannot

be blamed on Rev. Dick's initiative to homeschool without further investigation. There is at least as good reason to believe that the "unrest" originates in the failure of some members of Grace PRC to recognize the pastor's right to rule his own house and the authority of the consistory.

4. Ground II, B, 3, d: "Classis does not treat lightly the matter of Rev. Dick's conscience, but only says that the officebearer's position in the church puts limitations on the exercise of his conscience." This view of one's conscience is not biblical, and classis gives no proof. It completely ignores the discussion of the Christian conscience in the consistory's protest (II, D, 5), and their view that the believer by his conscience has a certain assurance of, and agrees with, *God's judgment of his works according to their ethical and moral value*. Classis continues stating that, without "being instructed and informed by Scripture" etc., an officebearer "ought not to follow a course of action based only upon his conscience." But if this is at all relevant to the case of Rev. Dick, classis implies without proof, and therefore slanderously, that Rev. Dick's conscience was *not* instructed and informed by Scripture, and so on. Whether that implication is intended or not, the claim that Scripture or the Reformed tradition add an "extra requirement" that officebearers should forego their Christian conscience is patently false and unproven.

(Classis also said that an officebearer should have his conscience instructed and informed by the "tradition of the church in which he serves." This appeal to "tradition" is valid only if it is used in the biblical sense, i.e., the "passing on" of the apostolic teachings to the following generations. Any additional "traditions," in the sense of custom or preference, may *not* be decisive in judging matters. This issue was at the heart of the Reformation, and we should be careful to protect it. See for instance Col. 2:16.)

In summary, classis' response fails to show that Scripture and the Reformed tradition have "extra requirements" for officebearers. They certainly fail to show what is necessary to uphold the decision of Classis East of September 2007, namely that Scripture and the Reformed tradition have "extra requirements" for officebearers in regard to the way of educating their children.

D. Classis adduces a fourth ground not to uphold the protest, which has nothing to do with the protest or with the decisions of Classis East of September 2007. This is inappropriate in a decision about a

protest; moreover, the protest contains several incorrect and unproven allegations.

1. Ground II, B, 4: “Grace consistory’s original position paper of January 2007 and their protest to this classis fail to take into account the following important concerns which their decisions have raised....”

a. It is inappropriate to criticize the *absence* of topics in a protest and conclude that the protester was not aware of it.

b. If these concerns were indeed so important, Classis East of September 2007 should be chided for not having realized their importance. Both the decision of the consistory and their position paper were before classis already in September 2007.

2. “The fact that their pastor did not merely decide to homeschool, *but withdrew his children from two of our good Christian schools.*”

a. This is simply irrelevant. Classis East in September 2007 based their decision on the premise that *homeschooling* should not be allowed for Rev. Dick; nowhere did classis criticize his *withdrawing* of his children. As a matter of record, this withdrawal is not mentioned in the minutes or decisions of this classis. Classis East in February 2008 made this “withdrawing” a major point of criticism, but that is a *change* compared to the earlier position of classis; the consistory cannot be expected to have the same change of heart.

b. I will not address the arguments given by classis why this withdrawing should be wrong, as it has no relevance to the protest.

3. “The importance of maintaining peace and unity in the church.”

a. Again, this is a key argument for Classis East in February 2008, but played no role in the decision of September 2007.

b. “Nowhere in the protest is mention made of the welfare of the congregation, except in the attached letter to the congregation that acknowledges disharmony.” But the protest was not about the “welfare of the congregation” but about classis’ decision that the consistory should not have allowed Rev. Dick to homeschool his children.

c. In all its dealings with this matter, the Grace PRC Consistory has been very much concerned about the peace, unity, and welfare of the congregation. It is presumptive of

classis to suppose they failed to take this in account, simply because the protest does not speak of it.

d. I will not address the question whether “peace and unity” have anything to do with Rev. Dick’s decision, as it has no relevance to the protest.

E. Classis failed to deal with several other aspects of this protest, including the following:

1. “Classis gives no proof for its assumption that Grace Consistory did not and does not know and approve the reasons why Rev. Dick is not using the schools, and classis gives no proof, either, for its assumption that Rev. Dick somehow has ‘withheld’ from the consistory the reasons for his decision” (II, A, 2, a, p. 7). This is important because it addresses the objectivity and integrity of classis.

2. “It is a failure to grasp this ‘basic thrust’ or ‘primary purpose’ of Article 21 of the Church Order and to focus instead on the ‘form’ which good Christian education should take...that has caused classis to misread the significance of the insertion of the phrase ‘good Christian schools’ into the Church Order in 1914 and to say that by mentioning ‘schools’ Article 21 leaves ‘no room for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative.’ Classis has, in effect, sought to narrow and define the phrase ‘good Christian schools,’ and to justify and compel a certain compliance with the article according to a certain cultural tradition, and *not* in the light of the basic principle of Article 21 and the Reformed faith” (II, C, 3, p. 11 ff.). Here the protesters appeal to the key principle of sound exegesis, namely that a text must be interpreted in the light of its context (including its purpose, its genre, its history). The serious accusation is here that classis stretched the Church Order article beyond its formulation and intention in order to make a *custom* in our churches into a *requirement*.

3. In the light of the grounds classis had given for its interpretation of Article 21, namely a reference to VanDellen and Monsma, it is mandatory that classis answer the claim made in the protest that VanDellen and Monsma, on the contrary, show that “the one and only kind of schooling that was being advanced was *good Christian* schooling vs. *bad public* schooling” (II, C, 3, a, p. 12). If this claim is true, classis interpretation of Article 21 is without valid grounds.

4. The conclusion of the protest quotes Article 32 of the Belgic Confession, which states that “we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of

God, thereby to *bind and compel the conscience* in any manner whatever. Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God....” This suggests that classis’ view of the conscience of an officebearer is not confessional. If that is not the case, classis should present a clear exegesis of this article to prove that it does not speak to this matter.

Attachment 4:

Classis’ Response to Vreugdenhil Protest III

The protest was not upheld, on the ground that classis did deal with the arguments of Grace PRC’s Consistory.

1. Classis is allowed to repeat its former position on Article 21 without giving any new evidence. Classis is under no burden to prove its interpretation of Article 21, since Article 21 is plain. The protestant’s problem is not with classis’ interpretation of Article 21, but with Article 21 itself. Therefore, the burden of proof rests on the protestant to demonstrate, by way of a *gravamen*, that Article 21 needs to be changed.
2. Insisting on the correct interpretation of Article 21 does not disallow all home education, as has been alleged. The fact is, Article 21 clearly allows exceptions for home education in some instances. For example, when good Christian day schools are not available, or when a child has exceptional needs.
3. The protestant’s contention that Article 21 does not require “of consistory members that they *use* the Christian day schools” is disproved by Questions for Church Visitation, Question #18 to the Full Consistory: “Does the consistory see to it that the parents send their children to the Christian school?” A consistory member cannot see to another parent’s sending *his* children to a good Christian school, while the consistory member himself will not send *his own* children to school.
4. Whether or not classis in September 2007 showed that more is required of officebearers than the common member is beside the point. The statement of classis that “the Scriptures and the Reformed tradition...do put extra requirements on officebearers” is correct. This is evident from Article 79 of the Church Order: there are sins repented of which exclude a man from church office but not from church membership.
5. Classis is not bound to address *only* issues that a protestant raises, nor is it bound to address *every* issue that a protestant raises. Classis is merely bound to answer the protest (Rules of

Synod, VI, B, 2: “All matters appearing in the Agenda must be dealt with by classis before its adjournment.”) It is left to classis’ discretion whether this will require introducing additional issues or disregarding other issues.

Attachment 5:

Vreugdenhil Protest IV to Classis East in May 2008

I protest the legality of the proceedings of Classis East of February 2008, Arts. 76, 81-83, 91-92, 95-101. Ground: Classis violated Article 30 and the Reformed principle of the autonomy of the local church.

A. The matter of Rev. Dick’s homeschooling needed not be transacted any further by Classis East of February 2008.

1. In September 2007, classis has advised the consistory of Grace PRC to “inform Classis” in case a) they decided Rev. Dick’s reasons invalid; and b) he remained unwilling to use “the good Christian schools” (D, 4). But since this was not the case, Grace PRC had no obligation to involve Classis East in February 2008.

2. The “Special Committee” appointed in September 2007 did not have the mandate to judge the consistory’s decision, or to bring the matter back to classis. They were only appointed “to help them implement these decisions, should the consistory desire such help” (Sept. 2007, Art. 53).

3. The consistory implemented the decisions of Classis East of September 2007, as they reported in the introduction to their protest (p. 2). Nobody has challenged this fact. They reported to the special committee that they had “reached a unanimous decision”; clearly, the consistory finished the matter.

B. Classis East in February 2008 (following the lead of the special committee) changed the focus of the discussion so much, that it is fair to say that they discussed a *different* subject than in September 2007, namely, Rev. Dick’s “withdrawing of his children from our good Christian schools.” This “withdrawing” is not mentioned anywhere in the proceedings of the previous classis, nor in the protests brought to classis, nor in the original request of the Grace Consistory to Classis East of September 2007 to uphold their decision of allowing Rev. Dick to homeschool his children.

C. Article 30 of the Church Order implies that classis may only transact ecclesiastical matters which 1) could not be finished in the consistories; or such as 2) pertain to the churches of the classis in common.

1. By complying with the advice of Classis East of September

2007 and reaching a unanimous conclusion concerning the validity of Rev. Dick's reasons to homeschool, the Grace Consistory left no doubt that they had "finished" the matter. The fact that the special committee, or classis, did not agree with these decisions does not affect this.

2. There is no reason to believe that this matter pertains to the churches of the classis in common. The decisions made in Arts. 95-101 only speak of the welfare of, the unrest in, and the schools supported by that congregation. An appeal to the fact that Article 21 of the Church Order pertains to all churches does not work here; if that had been any point of concern, classis should have brought the matter to synod (i.e., in the way of an overture).

D. The welfare of the congregation and the judgment of their minister's decisions in his own home fall within the jurisdiction of the local consistory. Classis in February 2008 admitted as much when they said that "by advising the consistory to require of Rev. Dick his reason(s)...and to judge whether these reasons are valid, the classis honored *the right of the consistory to make whatever judgment of the pastor's conscience* it deems possible, necessary, and appropriate..." (response to Mr. Kuiper, Art. 56, II, B, 2, b). But what classis gave with one hand it took back with the other, when they took the initiative to judge and condemn that very same decision of the consistory.

Attachment 6:

Classis' Response to Vreugdenhil Protest IV

Protest IV (re legality) was rejected on these grounds:

- a. (Same as the first ground given for not sustaining Rev. Dick's protest against the decision of Article 96 of the January 2008 meeting of classis.) (Art. 58)
- b. The September 2007 decision to which he refers still stands. It did not become something else. And the January/February 2008 decision that states that Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children are invalid was an additional decision taken after new material was made known to classis concerning the nature of Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing his children from our schools.

Attachment 7:

Vreugdenhil Protest V to Classis East in May 2008

I protest the decision of Classis East of February 2008 "that Grace PRC's consistory erred when they judged valid Rev. Dick's reasons for withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and

homeschooling them, as reported in their November 13, 2007 letter to the special committee” (Art. 96). Ground (apart from the issue of legality, see IV above): the grounds given by classis are based on unproven claims, unwarranted expectations of an officebearer, and a vague notion of “welfare” and “unity” of the church that is not based on any biblical principle.

A. Classis declared that “Rev. Dick’s reasons...make it impossible for him to comply with Article 21 of the Church Order...to encourage and promote the use of the good Christian schools by the other members of his congregation” (Ground A, 1).

1. Just as in September 2007, classis did not present any argument to prove this claim.
2. It is not true that Rev. Dick is unable to encourage and promote the use of good Christian schools. The claim that something is “impossible,” without further arguments, cannot be maintained if history proves otherwise.
 - a. Classis ignored the report of the consistory of Grace PRC that “the pastor and the consistory continue and shall continue to show their support of the education and nurture of the entire flock” (their Nov. 18, 2007 letter to the congregation, point 4).
 - b. There is no practical evidence that in the past 1½ year, while Rev. Dick was homeschooling, the consistory of Grace PRC (or Rev. Dick individually) failed to support Christian education according to the demands of the covenant, or even the existing PR parental schools.
 - c. In fact, Grace Church gave a satisfactory report to classis that “the Christian schools are being cared for” (Article 41 of the Church Order; Classis East, Jan. 2008, Art. 6).
 - d. The mandate of Article 21, of “seeing to it that there are good Christian schools,” etc., is directed to the consistory as a whole. Not all consistory members need to be equally active in all duties. Even if Rev. Dick’s ability to support the Christian schools were compromised, this need not be a problem because others in the consistory could fulfill this mandate. There would only be a problem if his decision would actively *damage* the cause of Christian education.
3. The reasons given by Rev. Dick, whose nature is reported in the letter to the congregation (Nov. 18, 2007), are no occasion to believe that he fails to encourage and promote the use of good Christian schools in general, or even the two PR parental schools from which he withdrew his children in particular.

a. “Pastor and his wife are convinced that proper attendance to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of their children requires more of their own parental day-to-day care and supervision than is possible when their children are enrolled full-time in the existing Christian day schools” (Point 5 of the letter). Because parents are primarily responsible for the well-being of their children, and because day schools are not always able to give every child all they need, this may be a legitimate decision.

b. “The Dicks have always assured the elders, and they and we would hereby assure the congregation once again, that by their not using the existing schools, the Dicks are not making a judgment about the worth of the schools; and they are certainly not saying that parents who use the existing schools are not keeping their baptismal vows.” Unless one doubts the integrity of the consistory, this makes abundantly clear that Rev. Dick’s actions *may not be interpreted as a negative judgment about the schools, or even a failure on his part to support the schools wholeheartedly*.

c. Rev. Dick did try to enroll his children in the schools part-time, but they have not been willing to accommodate this. This shows that Rev. Dick is not opposed to the use of PR parental schools per se.

B. Gound A, 2: “The reasons which Grace’s Consistory accepted from their pastor for withdrawing all his children from two PR Christian schools are not adequate. a) The weakness that he sees in the good Christian schools affect, not only his children, but also all the children of the flock. b) As the pastor of the flock,...he should...address...the issues of concern and work toward resolving the issues. Withdrawing his children...keeps him from being able to deal with and address these weaknesses. c) The pastor did not present any unique needs of his children that make it necessary for him to withdraw all of them from these schools.”

1. According to the November 2007 letter of the Grace Consistory to the congregation, the main reason for Rev. Dick to withdraw his children from two PR Christian schools was a concern for his children, because of their needs.

a. It is unreasonable to require of a minister that he “presents any unique needs of his children.” First of all, parents (even officebearers) are not accountable to the consistory for the reasons of their parenting decisions. Second, there are no guidelines to determine when children are “special”

or “needy” enough to take them out of a school. Third, all children are unique, but it is often impossible to “diagnose” their uniqueness. Fourth, different parents make different decisions, and are sensitive to different aspects of their children’s personality. But there is no parenting “standard”; the fact that other parents might have kept their children in the schools under the same circumstance does not imply that Rev. Dick was wrong when he decided to take them out of these schools.

b. The Grace Consistory informed the congregation about the needs of Rev. Dick’s children that prompted him to take them out of the schools: “the[ir] strengths and weaknesses, the level of their maturity, and their abilities to deal with their peers in a godly manner.” The decision to homeschool, at this time, is “in order to meet their children’s specific needs.” This is a perfectly valid reason. “Specific” needs do not have to be “special,” but are not less important.

2. This ground suggests that Rev. Dick, *as an officebearer*, is called to work on improving the schools when he encounters weaknesses. But there is no such special requirement for officers.

a. The grounds given by classis seem to assume that consistories are responsible for the quality of the PR parental schools. But they aren’t. “Our” schools are parental schools, and not (officially) affiliated to any church or federation of churches; they are not parochial.

b. Rev. Dick has shown in his preaching and pastoral work that he is concerned for the welfare of the children of the church. But that does not mean that he has to “fix” all the problems he perceives with the schools. Rather, he (and the elders) must encourage parents to seek what is best for their children, whether that means keeping them in a school, changing schools, removing them from a school, or trying to change a school.

c. One need not have one’s children enrolled in a school in order to address weaknesses in that school; nor is it true that a minister is responsible for the weaknesses he encounters in the schools. If that were the case, a minister should have his children enrolled in all schools supported by the congregation simultaneously, in order to be able to address the issues of all these schools.

d. The Grace Consistory made clear that “Pastor Dick

and his family are [not] running from problems instead of dealing with them.”

3. The rest of this ground is based on a gross oversimplification of matters. It suggests that either 1) the schools are good and cannot possibly be an occasion for a father to remove his children, or 2) the schools are so bad that all children are affected in a way that requires the minister (and elders?) to “address the issues of concern.”

a. But it is a matter of fact (and it can be expected in a sin-infested world) that even the “good Christian schools” are far from perfect. Sometimes, particular sinful aspects make it necessary for particular children to be taken out of the school; but that does not mean that all children are in danger, or that the parent must try to improve the school. Not everybody is called to fight in that way.

b. If Rev. Dick recognizes a “weakness” in a good Christian school, and acts on it by removing his children from it, does not imply that he thinks he is “too good” for the school, or that the schools are “too wicked” for him. The consistory, in their letter to the congregation, made clear that this was not the case.

C. Ground A, 3: “The welfare of the congregation will be promoted and unity restored only when it is evident to the congregation:

1. That the consistory has a correct understanding of Article 21 of the Church Order.”

a. This ground is highly questionable because classis failed to respond to the arguments given by consistory that support their interpretation of Article 21.

b. By emphasizing the importance of true Christian education and encouraging the use of the PR Christian schools in the area, the consistory is faithful to their duty under Article 21.

2. “That the consistory is taking into consideration the effect on the congregation of Rev. Dick’s decisions and the consistory’s acceptance of his reasons.”

a. The consistory has been taking into consideration the reaction of the congregation to Rev. Dick’s decision.

b. However, the response by members in the congregation is not and may not be decisive in the consistory’s decision whether Rev. Dick’s reasons are valid. The church is governed by the Word of God, not by opinions, preferences, or protests of the congregation.

3. “That the consistory recognizes that officebearers must be

willing to make adjustments in their own lives so that peace may be maintained in the congregation.”

- a. This is not only true for officebearers, but for all members of the congregation. When Paul wrote, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth [i.e., well-being]” (1 Cor. 10:24), he did not just speak to officebearers. Classis is making an unwarranted distinction between officebearers and other members of the congregation.
 - b. The Christian willingness to yield to the well-being of others is a *virtue* to which we are called, but does not translate into *guidelines* by which we may judge others.
 - c. We *may not* make adjustments in our life which are against our Christian conscience. If Rev. Dick is convinced that the Christian schools, at this moment, are not good for the spiritual health of his children, he *may not* send them there.
 - d. It is not clear how the well-being of the church would be promoted if Rev. Dick “adjusted” his life by sending his children to a day school instead of homeschooling them. The form of education he chooses affects his children, not the other members of the congregation.
 - e. Even Paul, the greatest “officebearer” of the church age, refused to make “adjustments” in his life because others bullied him into it. (Gal. 2:3-5 — It is clear that Paul’s refusal to have Titus circumcised did not contribute to the “peace” with those who thought he had to!)
 - f. The peace that should be maintained in the congregation is the peace of God, in Jesus Christ, whose yoke is light. Peace and unity based on people complying with requirements made by others is not true peace and unity.
4. Classis fails to see that much of the disharmony in Grace PRC may be caused by other factors, which cannot be blamed on the consistory or the pastor.
- a. There continued to be unrest after the consistory ruled on Rev. Dick’s decision to homeschool. This suggests that there are unruly members of the congregation who do not respect the authority of the consistory.
 - b. The fact that classis publicly declared that the consistory erred in the decision they made only aggravates the situation, because it undermines the authority of the consistory over the members who murmur against the decisions of the God-appointed leaders of the congregation.

c. Much of the unrest is probably due to the fact that church members want to decide what type of education Rev. Dick may and may not give to his children. But that is not their business; these people are busybodies and ought to be rebuked, rather than listened to.

d. Many members of the churches are convinced that homeschooling is a violation of the demands of the covenant and that the Christian day schools are required based on biblical principles. This view is, for instance, promoted by a professor in the PRC in sermons, addresses in the PR parental schools, and publications sponsored by our churches. It would help the peace and unity in the church if it would be made clear, publicly, that this is not the correct view, and that Rev. Dick's homeschooling is not unbiblical.

Attachment 8:

Classis' Response to Vreugdenhil Protest V

A. Mr. Vreugdenhil's protest fails to understand the important position of leadership and example that a minister has in a congregation.

1. Mr. Vreugdenhil writes:
 - a. "Not all consistory members need to be equally active in all duties. Even if Rev. Dick's ability to support the Christian schools were compromised, this need not be a problem because others in the consistory could fulfill this mandate."
 - b. This ground suggests that Rev. Dick, *as an officebearer*, is called to work on improving the schools when he encounters weaknesses. But there is no such special requirement for officers.
 - c. In response to the statement of classis that "officebearers must be willing to make adjustments in their own lives so that peace may be maintained in the congregation," he states: "This is not only true for officebearers, but for all members of the congregation. When Paul wrote 'Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth [i.e., well-being]' (1 Cor. 10:24), he did not just speak to officebearers. Classis is making an unwarranted distinction between officebearers and other members of the congregation."
2. But, as classis has shown, the Scriptures do make a distinction between the role and responsibility of an officebearer and the members in general.

- a. This applies also in the area of Christian education, as Article 21 of the Church Order demonstrates: “The consistory shall see to it...,” by which is meant not only the consistory as a whole, but also the consistory members individually.
 - b. For this to be done effectively, there must be a harmony between the example and the instruction that the individual officebearer gives.
- B. Mr. Vreugdenhil’s protest does not take into account all the facts of the case in question.
1. He fails to take into account that the classis in September did ground its explanation of Article 21 of the Church Order in VanDellen and Monsma and in the Scriptures.
 2. He presents only the reasons for withdrawal of the children from the schools that the congregation was privy to, and not the full scope of the reasons that the classis had before it when it made this decision.
- C. Mr. Vreugdenhil misrepresents what the classis meant when it said in February 2008, “As the pastor of the flock, the course of action he should pursue (for the sake of all the children in the flock) is to address, in a wise and persistent way, the issues of concern and work toward resolving the issues. Withdrawing his children from the schools keeps him from being able to deal with and address these weaknesses.”
1. Classis does not mean by this that
 - a. “Rev. Dick, *as an officebearer*, is called to work on improving the schools when he encounters weaknesses,” as though his responsibility rests on the officebearer alone.
 - b. The consistory or the pastor is responsible “for the quality of the PR parental schools.”
 - c. The pastor “has to ‘fix’ all the problems he perceives with the schools.”
 2. Rather, classis means by this:
 - a. The proper way for an individual (and in this case an officebearer, who must be an example to the flock) to address issues in the school is, not to withdraw one’s children, but to address the problems in the school with love and wisdom, in the way of Matthew 18, and, if there is no resolution, to also bring it “to the church.”
 - b. When there are issues with the schools, the church’s responsibility is not the educational quality or the improvement or fixing of the schools, but rather to address to the

school principal and board the doctrinal or moral issues that the staff and board are not addressing. Consistory members should also give instruction, particularly in the preaching, in the areas where the doctrinal and moral standards of the school are threatened.

c. A consistory member (and this would be true also of any member of the church) who withdraws his children from the school for doctrinal or moral reasons gives the appearance that he is unwilling to deal with these issues for the sake of the other children in the congregation.

D. Mr. Vreugdenhil does not explain what he means by “a vague notion of the ‘welfare’ and ‘unity’ of the church that is not based on any biblical principles.”

1. He seems to indicate that classis said that “Peace and unity based on people complying with requirements made by others is not true peace and unity.”

2. But this is not how classis defined unity in its former decisions. Rather, classis expressed a concern for the welfare of the congregation as a whole, as a body of believers, and said that the consistory and pastor should be putting more weight on this than the right that an individual officebearer may or may not have.

Attachment 9:

Vreugdenhil Protest VI to Classis East in May 2008

I protest the decision of Classis East of February 2008 “that Grace PRC take the following course of action as advised by classis in September 2007 (and as set forth by the special committee)” (Art. 97). Ground (apart from the issue of legality, see IV above): the advised course of action is not the “course of action as advised by the classis in September 2007.”

A. Classis East in September 2007 advised the consistory “to judge whether the reasons [of Rev. Dick for not sending his children to the existing PR schools] are valid.” But in February 2008, the advice became that the consistory “work with the pastor to show him the inadequacy of his reasons.” The consistory, *although they officially validated Rev. Dick’s reasons*, are no longer allowed to judge the validity of these reasons. Instead, they are told to act on the basis of a decision classis made for them.

B. The advice of the special committee “that the consistory not accept the reasons given as adequate” goes far beyond the advice of Classis East in September 2007. If it is considered a binding advice

by classis (rather than a helpful suggestion), it violates the consistory's authority to make their own decisions.

Attachment 10:

Classis' Response to Vreugdenhil Protest VI

Protest VI (re the advised course of action) was not upheld on this ground:

Though the wording of the course of action is different than in February ("work with the pastor to show him the inadequacy of his reasons") to that of September ("judge whether the reasons for Rev. Dick not sending his children to the existing PR Schools are valid"), the basic course of action is the same.

1. Mr. Vreugdenhil's interpretation of the course of action advised by classis in September 2007 is too narrow. In the September 2007 decision, classis never intended that the consistory limit itself to judging whether the reasons were valid, but also that that consistory "address the issues ... with a view to resolving" them, and that they report back to classis "how they intend to proceed" (Arts. 50-52).
2. Through its Special Committee to Assist Grace PRC, classis became aware of a full account of the reasons of Rev. Dick's withdrawing his children (Advice of Special Committee to Grace PRC, Oct. 30, 2007), and with this new information, desiring to help the Grace Consistory, classis fleshed out the advice of September 2007.

Attachment 11:

My Protest VII to Classis East in May 2008

I protest the decision of Classis East of February 2008 "that the council of Grace PRC consider whether Rev. Dick can be an effective preacher/pastor to this congregation, and also whether he can lead this congregation out of its present unrest" (Art. 99). Ground: because no grounds have been given to show that Rev. Dick's preaching or pastoral work may be ineffective, this public questioning of his ability to fulfill his office is slanderous and detrimental to his reputation. Moreover, it is not the duty of a pastor to lead a congregation out of its unrest.

A. The first ground given by classis is that "Grace congregation continues to experience great unrest and turmoil" (C, 1).

1. As the Grace Consistory already mentioned in 2007, unrest can be caused by people who unrightfully take offense. It does not necessarily mean that Rev. Dick has given offense, or that his decision is wrong. It certainly is no ground to question his effectiveness as a preacher or pastor.

2. It is unclear how the decision of Rev. Dick with regard to *his* children should cause unrest for *other* members of the congregation.
 3. If the unrest is due to Rev. Dick's preaching or pastoral care, it should be shown what his fault is, or at least what the nature is of this problem.
- B. The second ground: "The congregation of Grace PRC supports and uses the two good Christian schools from which Rev. Dick has chosen to withdraw his children because of criticisms he has of those schools" (C, 2).
1. If it is true that Rev. Dick has criticisms of these schools, they have not been made public to the congregation. Rather, the consistory in their November 2007 letter assured the congregation that his decision was because of what he thought best for his children, and not because of profound criticism of the schools. The congregation should respect this assurance given by the consistory.
 2. Parents are entitled to withdraw their children from schools. Others are not in a position to judge these decisions.
 3. It is not the duty of a pastor to lead a congregation out of its unrest. If there is unrest, the consistory (as a whole) should find out what the causes are of the unrest, and whether members have good reasons to experience unrest. In this case, the question is whether people are rightfully upset about Rev. Dick's decision to remove his children from schools.

Attachment 12:**Classis' Response to My Protest VII**

Protest VII (re the effectiveness of Rev. Dick) was not upheld on these grounds:

1. It can be demonstrated from the following documents that the unrest in the congregation centers around and goes back to the time that Rev. Dick first began homeschooling all his children.
 - a. January 7, 2007 letter from Grace PRC to their congregation.
 - b. March 15, 2007 Church Visitors' letter to Grace PRC Consistory.
 - c. September 11, 2007 Church Visitors' report to Classis East.
 - d. The several appeals to classis in September 2007.
 - e. October 18, 2007 request from Grace Council to the Special Committee of Classis for assistance.

- f. November 18, 2007 letter of Grace PRC Consistory to their congregation.
2. A minister must be sensitive, not to create an impediment in his congregation, and his effectiveness as preacher and pastor will depend on this (1 Cor. 10:32-33; Acts 16:3).
- a. It is not that Rev. Dick's preaching or pastoral work itself may be faulty or the cause of the unrest, but that Rev. Dick has caused an impediment in the congregation that makes his work ineffective by his action of withdrawing his children from the Christian schools without sufficient explanation to the congregation.
- b. Classis had this in mind in September 2007, when it advised the consistory to "inform the congregation of the nature of the reasons and of the work being done to resolve whatever issues hinder Rev. Dick from using the good Christian schools," with the ground: "This is necessary for Rev. Dick to be effective in carrying out his duties as pastor in Grace Church, including the duties that Article 21 lays upon him as pastor" (Arts. 50-52).

SUPPLEMENT 39
Overture: Dr. Roy Slice

March 14, 2009
Roy T. Slice, M.D.
1203 7th Street
Hull, IA 51239

Don Doezeema, Stated Clerk
Synod 2009
4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418

Dear Brethren,

I am forwarding the overture regarding Church Order Article 21 to Synod 2009. Attached are the overture, the decisions of Calvary consistory and Classis West (March 4, 2009), and a supplement containing materials referenced in the overture.

Classis West rejected the overture on the ground "that an overture to change the Confessions or the Church Order must provide clear Scriptural and confessional grounds." The confessions being only an explanation of Scripture, one would require proof from Scripture to change them. The Church Order is based in part on Scripture and part is simply human tradition. For example, someone wishing to change C.O. Art. 2 (there are

three special offices) would need biblical grounds. But what scriptural or confessional grounds could be brought to change Article 63 (frequency of the Lord's Supper)? To require these grounds in this case means that this article can never be changed. The Rules of Synod in the PR Church Order book describe an overture as a "vehicle for initiating something new, i.e., something that has not before been part of the life of the church; or for requesting modification or elimination of an already existing practice...." These Rules of Synod require 'grounds' for an overture, not the 'confessional and biblical grounds' required for a protest. The Church Order Commentary by VanDellen and Monsma makes it clear that there were no confessional or biblical grounds in 1914 for changing Article 21 then, and that the biblical grounds for Christian education apply equally well to Christian homeschooling as to the use of a Christian day school. The parents' choice of how to provide godly education for their children is a matter of Christian liberty. Synod 2008 said that there is no sin in homeschooling. However, they found an interpretation of Article 21 as it was modified in 1914 which they called 'historical,' also without any confessional and biblical grounds. This interpretation said that only officebearers must use the PR day schools (if they are available). There is a biblical principle which does bear on this issue. It warns against the binding of the consciences of believers by non-biblical, human tradition. Article 21 should be changed because the circumstances in the church and the society it exists in are different today. Homeschooling is a suitable alternative to the day school, with both educational endeavors providing what is needed to safeguard the interests of the church and both providing what a secular education ought to have but lacks. Synod 2009 is free to alter this requirement for officebearers using no other grounds than those provided, and I urge you to do so. The issue is an important one. The restriction of families in this area, without scriptural warrant, will not nourish and preserve concord and unity in the church.

I trust that the God of our salvation will give you wisdom and that you will adopt this overture.

Respectfully submitted,
w.s. Roy T. Slice, M.D.

Overture to Synod 2009

Brethren, I am submitting this overture to Synod 2009 to change the current reading of Article 21. Synod 2008 made a decision regarding the meaning of this article based on its understanding of the article's historical meaning. Presently Article 21 states:

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

My proposed change is to add a clarification as follows:

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools, be they parental communal schools or parental home schools, in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

Grounds:

- 1) The calling of the church is to teach the covenant children the doctrine of Scripture in the preaching and the catechism, as well as to have the children taught this doctrine in the home. As instruction in other subjects needs this doctrine to be applied in the education of these children, parents need to be instructed in their calling to properly train up their children (see the third question in the exhortation to the parents in the Form for the Administration of Baptism).
- 2) Although Article 21 may have historically meant communal schools, the calling of the consistory relates to good Christian education and not a specific form of Christian education.
 - a) Decisions of Synod 2008 regarding the appeals of Mr. Kamps and Mr. Kleyn correctly showed that there is no scriptural basis for requiring a family that chooses to homeschool to use the communal school. There is no sin in this situation.
 - b) In the preaching and the teaching of the elders, they must bring the admonition to train the children in godly doctrine by bringing the Word of God, and saying “thus saith the Lord.” It has been advanced as an argument that the consistory member who does not use the communal school himself cannot “see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” As Article 21 is currently understood, the consistory member has only the word of man to bring to a family which has chosen to fulfill their baptismal vow and covenantal obligation by Christian homeschooling their children. What power or authority would a word from a consistory member have when attempting to admonish those who homeschool?
- 3) Christian homeschooling fulfills the covenant obligation of the parents to train up their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord, and so the consistory members are reassured in their oversight of the congregation. (See Ken Feenstra’s protest to Synod 2008.)

4) The proposed change in Article 21 promotes peace in the churches by removing this unnecessary point of contention. It also allows men who disagree with the current reading of Article 21 to serve as consistory members with good conscience. In addition, it allows the several vacant churches to consider calling Rev. Dick, whose disagreement with the current reading of Article 21 is widely known.

5) The churches are not well served by taking positions that may be characterized as legalistic and being an extra-scriptural binding of men's consciences. See Rev. Thomas Miersma's protest to Classis East from 2008, and 2, a and 2, b above.

More could be written but, as some suggest, brevity is a virtue.

Soli Deo Gloria.

w.s. Roy T. Slice, M.D.

Attachment 1:

A Review of the History of Past Decisions in the Protestant Reformed Churches Regarding Article 21

1. Classis West

a. At its September 21-23, 1982 meeting, Classis West considered a request from First PR Church of Edmonton's Consistory for an interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order. This is recorded in the Minutes, Arts. 49-53.

b. At its September 7-10, 1983 meeting (Arts. 77-115), Classis West dealt with an appeal of a member of the Lynden congregation concerning his being placed under discipline for not using the PR Christian school in Lynden.

c. At its September 7, 1988 meeting (Arts. 38-48) and March 1, 1989 meeting (Arts. 37-40), Classis West considered the matter of the pastor of the Houston congregation homeschooling his children, and whether he might do this and still be able to fulfill his duties as a minister of the Word and sacraments.

d. At its September 3, 1998 meeting (Art. 32), Classis West considered an overture presented by the consistory of Edgerton PRC. The overture included a proposed revision of Article 21. Classis passed the overture on to synod with its recommendation that the proposed revision not be approved.

The revision of Article 21 proposed by Edgerton PRC:

The consistories shall do all they can to promote parental, covenant education according to Protestant Reformed distinctives, taking into consideration the feasibility of establishing separate schools while using

godly wisdom in dealing with existing Christian schools and individual differences among families.

Ground: Article 21 is vague and out of touch with the current situations in our churches.

Classis' decision to recommend to synod that the revision not be approved was grounded as follows:

- a. The proposed change is unnecessary.
 - 1) It allows for the possibility of a wide variety of choices for the education of our children contrary to the original article.
 - 2) The last phrase "...while using godly wisdom in dealing with existing Christian schools and individual differences among families" creates vagueness.
 - b. The original article already allows for consistories to promote our own covenant schools.
- e. At its March 3, 1999 meeting, Classis West proposed to recommend to Synod 1999 that a synodical study committee be formed to study the matter of changes to the Church Order, including the revision proposed by Edgerton.
2. Classis East
 - a. At its September 12, 2007 meeting, Classis East (Arts. 43-47, 50-53) considered the appeals of two members of the Grace PRC congregation concerning the matter of the homeschooling of the pastor of Grace. Classis East did not uphold the appellants, but also did not uphold the consistory's position. Central to the whole debate was the interpretation of Article 21.
 - b. Classis East, Jan/Feb 2008, Article 53, reads: "Scripture does not require that this instruction be done in good Christian schools promoted by Article 21 (C.O.)."
 3. At Synod 2000 (Acts, Art. 28, C) Edgerton's proposal to revise Article 21 of the Church Order (presented to the meeting of Classis West, September 3, 1998, see above) was considered.
 - a. The study committee that had been appointed by Synod 1999 recommended that synod not approve the proposed revision of Article 21.

Grounds:

 - 1) The overture does not demonstrate an urgent need for revision nor a lack of clarity in the present wording of Article 21.
 - 2) The ground offered by the Edgerton overture is in fact an opinion and assumes what needs to be proved.
 - 3) The change suggested by Edgerton's overture exemplifies the very vagueness from which Article 21 is alleged to suffer.

- b. Synod approved this recommendation not to approve the proposed revision of Article 21.
4. Synod 2008 (Acts, Arts. 47 and 49) shows that Marvin Kamps' appeal, which in part concerned C.O. Article 21, was, in all parts, rejected. B, 3, a, 3), a), b), and c), page 42, state that God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children. This principle is the one on which the good Christian day school has been established.
5. Synod 2008 (Acts, Arts. 50 and 63) have to do with Nicholas Kleyn's appeal. 3, a, 2), a), page 44, reads: "The demand of the covenant is Christian education. Article 21 (C.O.) calls consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools (day schools) where parents can fulfill this demand. These schools, consistories are to promote and urge parents to use, if at all possible." 3, b, 2), a), i, page 46, reads: "Article 21 of the Church Order requires the consistory to learn these reasons and judge the validity of them [reasons that the officebearer has to not use the Christian day school]." B, 2 and 4, a and b, page 66, says that Article 21 (C.O.) means the officebearer must use the Christian day school unless extenuating circumstances are present.
6. Synod 2008 (Acts, Art. 52) concerns Ken Feenstra's appeal. B, 3, c, page 49 reads, "Home schools, which are not addressed in Article 21 (C.O.) as it stands today, can be added in no other way than by overture." The following section reiterates this idea that the current Article 21 can only mean Christian day schools.
7. Synod 2008 (Acts, Art. 64) B, 1, a, b, and c, explain Article 21 (C.O.) as having "always" meant the good Christian day school, and as being consistent in this way with a question required of church visitation. These findings are involved with the response to Rev. Brummel's appeal.

Analysis of the need to clarify and improve Article 21 (C.O.):

The Synod of 2000 declined to approve Edgerton's proposed change of Article 21. Its first ground was that "the overture does not demonstrate an urgent need for revision nor a lack of clarity in the present wording of Article 21." Now there is indeed "urgent need" for a revision of Article 21.

Clearly synod says there are no scriptural grounds for requiring covenant parents to use the Christian day schools. The historical argument for the current reading of Article 21 thus lacks scriptural support. And so the idea that the officebearer will be required to lead by setting an example only ends up having the officebearer's pleading the goodness of the cause (in the opinion of some) because he cannot bring Scripture to the argument.

Submitted with overture to change Article 21,
w.s. Roy T. Slice, M.D.

Attachment 2:**Response of Calvary Protestant Reformed Church**

December 17, 2008

Dear Brother Slice,

The Consistory of Calvary Protestant Reformed Church has seriously considered your overture (received November 10, 2008) to change Article 21 of the Church Order. After considerable discussion and upon seeking God's guidance we reject your overture and urge you not forward it to Classis West or to Synod 2009.

Grounds:

1. Parental communal schools must be the primary means whereby covenant children are educated. The calling of Article 21 is very specific: *"The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant."* Your ground states "...the calling of the consistory relates to good Christian education and not a specific form of Christian education." That is not true. The one is an institution supported by believing individuals, parents, and grandparents (school societies) agreeing together in faith as understood by the Three Forms of Unity, as interpreted by the Protestant Reformed Churches, who wish to educate their children in obedience to baptismal vows. These societies elect a board of directors to insure that the will of the members is carried out in the administration of the school. This institution puts forth covenant education where all the children are educated in harmony with the parents' beliefs based on the Word of God as set forth by the doctrines of the church. This is made plain in the constitution of every Protestant Reformed Christian school society where there is an article that states that the Holy Scriptures and the Three Forms of Unity will guide, and be the basis for, the education in that school. In such a school, a consistory can be confident that the instruction given therein is in the best interest of its church and her members, and then ought to promote the same in accordance with Article 21. Parental home schools differ in that they are governed by individual parents. These parents are free to educate their children using any guidelines they desire. While these schools may have some of the attributes mentioned above, a consistory would have no way of knowing this. Without this knowledge, a consistory could not in good conscience promote such a school as it would not be in the best interest of its church and her members. A consistory can and must promote only those institutions which it has confidence are in the best interest of its church and her members. Therefore, we believe that the calling of the consistory does relate to a specific form of Christian education and not just Christian education. See Acts of Synod 2008, Article 54, B, 3, a, 1), 2), 3). See also Acts of Synod, Supplement 2, in

citing recommendations adopted by the September Classis East, C, 1, b, 2), page 124.

2. Historically our fathers saw the wisdom and necessity of fulfilling the demands of the covenant in the area of education through the promotion and maintenance of good Christian schools. The intent and calling that is set forth in Article 21 of the Church Order states that consistories have a responsibility to see to it that the children of the congregation are educated in a specific way, specifically, good Christian schools. The proposed change would be detrimental to the well-being of the churches in general as it equates parental home schools with parental communal schools. There is a distinct difference. The heart of the issue is based on a false premise that is set forth in your second ground. Your desire is to equate parental home schools with the good Christian schools referred to in Article 21. This cannot be done.

Cordially in Christ.
Calvary Consistory,
w.s. Alvin Bylsma, Clerk

Attachment 3:
Response of Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches

March 10, 2009

Dear Dr. Slice,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Meeting March 4, 2009, in Edgerton, MN, Classis West treated your overture to Synod 2009 to change the wording of Article 21 of the Church Order. Following are the two decisions that we took in answer to your overture.

Art. 29.

Classis returns to the material of Committee 2 concerning the overture of Dr. Slice (cf. Art. 23) (Supplement 13).

A. It is moved that Classis reject the overture of this brother on the grounds that an overture to change the confessions or the Church Order must provide clear Scriptural and confessional grounds for such a change. This Dr. Slice's overture does not do. **Carries.**

B. It is moved that Classis instruct Dr. Slice to seek the help of the consistory of Calvary PRC in determining from the Rules of Synod, pages 97-98, the requirements for a proper overture as well as the difference between an overture and a protest. **Carries.**

Perhaps you are aware of what our rejecting this overture implies as regards its going to synod. If you wish Synod 2009 to treat this overture,

you must send it yourself. This you have liberty to do. However, the response of the classis implies that if you wish to bring this matter to synod, you would be wise to rework your overture, and then submit it to a later synod after again presenting it to your consistory and to Classis West.

In Christ's service,
w.s. Rev. Douglas Kuiper
Stated Clerk, Classis West

Attachment 4:
Rev. T. Miersma Protest

Rev. Thomas Miersma's protest to Classis East (May 2008) was referenced in the overture. This information is not available generally. (Ken Feenstra's appeal to Synod 2008 can be found in the Acts of Synod 2008, pages 149-160.)

w.s. Roy T. Slice, M.D.

To Classis East of the Protestant Reformed Churches
May 14, 2008
at First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan

April 2, 2008

Dear Brethren,

I protest the decisions of the classis which met from January 9 through February 27, 2008. I do so reluctantly, but the classis must recognize that in treating the specifics of the situation at Grace Church and its pastor, classis is also setting precedents, particularly concerning Article 21 of the Church Order, which affect the churches as a whole and may have serious and, in my judgment as a missionary, detrimental consequences for our mission work or our ability to even do mission work so as to form and establish churches. I would note at the outset that Church Order articles are binding on all our members, not just officebearers, and that includes also members of our churches on the mission field. While I have many other difficulties with your decisions, I specifically protest your treatment of Article 21 of the Church Order in 1) Article 65, your rejection of Ken Feenstra's protest with the grounds for its rejection, and 2) Articles 59 and 62, your rejection of the protest of Grace Consistory with the grounds for its rejection as it pertains to Article 21 of the Church Order.

A. Background

1. Classis' decision respecting the Church Order is found in minutes of September, Article 36, recommitted, Articles 42-53, Supplement 12, II, C, with three grounds. The heart of that decision is II, C.

II, C. We recommend that classis deny the request of the Grace Consistory to classis “to uphold the decision of Grace PRC Consistory, and to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home. The consistory’s position and grounds for its decision can be found in the ‘Position Paper’ (dated January 7, 2007).”

The thrust of the decision is homeschooling and Article 21 of the Church Order as interpreted by classis. This comes out particularly in II, C, 2):

The decision of the Grace Consistory that Rev. Dick has the right to educate his children at home is based on the erroneous position that “there are no principles or biblical reasons that would serve as grounds for the consistory to prohibit officebearers of the church from homeschooling their children even when Christian day schools are available” (cf. II, A of the consistory’s “Position Paper” of January 7, 2007, cf. Agenda, p. 8). The error is that of not recognizing the principle that a consistory member is bound to observe Article 21 of the Church Order.

Under the first ground, classis states its view of the Church Order in the context of the question of homeschooling. II, C, ground 1):

- (b) This interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order is in error.
 - (1) Article 21 of the Church Order neither in its original form (“schoolmasters”) nor in its present form (“schools”) had in mind homeschooling as “one kind” of Christian school. VanDellen and Monsma make it clear that the reference was only to “parental Christian Schools” (p. 93) or “Christian Day Schools” (pp. 95, 96).
 - (2) Article 21 not only mandates consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools established and maintained by the community of Reformed believers but also requires the consistories to see to it that the parents have their children instructed in these schools according to the demands of the covenant. VanDellen and Monsma in their Church Order Commentary correctly interpret Article 21 to mean that “our Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian Day Schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God entrusted children, if at all possible” (pp. 94, 95). “Consequently it becomes the plain duty of the Church to promote good Christian Schools, and to urge parents to use these schools, if at all possible” (p. 95).

By its interpretation classis does the following: (1) It limits the *interpretation* of Article 21 to *only one kind* of school, based

on what it believes the drafters of the Church Order had in mind in 1914 when the present form of the Church Order was adopted, and does so from a Church Order commentary published in 1941. The basis of the decision is strictly the accustomed historical application of the article. (2) It *excludes* from the purview of the Church Order and its interpretation in September 2007 a contemporary form of a good Christian school, though it be biblical and a faithful fulfillment of the demands of the covenant, because it is not the accustomed institutional day school. (3) It understands the words of the Article 21 “**see to it** that there are **good** Christian schools in which...” and the words “promote” and “urge” from the commentary to mean that consistories “**see to it** that the parents **have** their children instructed in **these** schools according to the demands of the covenant” (bolding added). That is, classis has reduced the duties of consistory in promoting Christian education under Article 21 (the questions under Article 41, #3, and the questions for church visitation #18) to the necessity of parents using *one kind* of school. (4) These articles, according to classis, require consistories to promote *only these schools*.

2. Mr. Feenstra’s protest (January 9 agenda, pp. 5-10) addresses the first two grounds of Article 43 of the September Classis, supplement II, C. He states in his protest: “My protest is therefore directed at grounds 1 and 2, because I believe that a good Christian home school is a good Christian school as described by Article 21.” He cites the grounds from II, C as follows:

1. The decision of Grace’s Consistory that Rev. Dick has the right to educate his children at home is based on a **wrong interpretation of Article 21** of the Church Order. (II, C, 1) (Bolding is his.)
2. The decision of the Grace Consistory that Rev. Dick has the right to educate his children at home is based on the erroneous position that “there are no principles or biblical reasons that would serve as grounds for the consistory to prohibit officebearers of the church from homeschooling their children even when Christian day schools are available. The error is that of not recognizing that a consistory is **bound to observe Article 21** of the Church Order.” (II, C, 2) (Bolding is his.)

a. As is indicated by his bolding, Mr. Feenstra’s first difficulty with Classis’ decision is its approach to Article 21. He quotes the literal reading or text of the article in his protest, which speaks of “good Christian schools” and the “demands of the covenant.” He states at the opening of his protest, “The fundamental basis of Classis East’s rejection of Rev. Dick’s right to homeschool

is their consideration of Article 21 and its historical context as explained in the Church Order Commentary by Monsma and VanDellen.” That is, classis is basing its decision and determining that to which an officebearer is bound not by what the article *says* but upon “its historical context as explained in the Church Order Commentary by Monsma and Van Dellen.”

b. Over against classis’ decision he asserts,

Further, a good Christian home school is a good Christian school no matter the location. A good Christian home school in a Protestant Reformed (PR) home is no less a good Christian school than a PR parent sponsored day school (i.e., Adams, Hope, Heritage, etc.).”

He also contends:

I contend (over against Classis East) that a good Christian home school *is* a good Christian school, and meets the demands of Article 21 and the covenant. It follows from this contention that the decision II, C and, by implication, II, D of Classis East fall away.

That is, it is the object of his protest that a good Christian school in a home is consistent with the two elements of the article: 1) the literal reading of the article both as to “good Christian schools” and 2) the doctrinal principle which determines the interpretation of the article, “demands of the covenant.”

That this is his contention is clear from the two grounds he gives:

- A. A good Christian home school is a good Christian school because it meets the demands of the covenant based on its very nature.
- B. A good Christian home school is in accord with the reasons (demands) for having good Christian schools as set forth in Article 21 of the Church Order Commentary of Monsma and VanDellen.

With respect to the issue of Article 21 itself, his point is, negatively, that classis’ decision involves a limitation of the article to one historical application of it and that, positively, it ignores what the article says and the biblical principles on which it is based as they are also found in the Church Order Commentary.

- 3. The protest of Grace PRC Consistory respecting the issues of Article 21 makes essentially the same point as Mr. K. Feenstra.
 - a. Grace PRC Consistory’s protest concerns the literal reading of the article: that the article does not specify a particular kind

or form of a good Christian school and that classis' decision is interjecting meaning into the article. Grace's consistory states:

B. Classis' interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order is *not*, in fact, based on anything stated or implied in Article 21.

1. In the first place, classis bases its interpretation *on an argument from silence*.
 - a. Grace Consistory is on record as saying that Article 21 does not address the matter of the "form" or "kind" of Christian education, and that it indeed "allows room" for homeschooling as a legitimate alternative. Classis is on record as declaring this interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order to be "in error...."
2. In the second place, classis has "injected meaning" into Article 21 that is simply not there, and has drawn inferences that are not implied logically: that is, by good and necessary consequence, from the article itself. As follows:
 - a. Classis defines, without proof from the article itself, "good Christian schools" as, "in this case, the existing PR parental Christian schools" (COPA, II, D, 1). But "good Christian schools" may be, according as parents seek to fulfill their baptismal vows, and as local consistories acknowledge their necessity and quality, "good Christian homes." For the article itself does not define what makes for "good" Christian schools.

Grace's consistory complains:

- b. Classis states that Article 21... "mandates consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools established and maintained *by the community of Reformed believers*" (italics ours), and also requires that "consistories see to it that the parents have their children instructed in these schools *according to the demands of the covenant*" (italics ours).

That is, the classis is injecting into the article and the reference to "good Christian schools" a limitation to *communal* Christian day schools, which is not stated in the article.

- b. Secondly, Grace's Consistory points classis to the principle or biblical basis of the article, which is the demands of the covenant and Christian education in the light of those demands. This is evident from their point C and particularly 2 under it.

C. Classis' interpretation of Article 21 is not in the Reformed tradi-

tion, and indeed, seriously narrows and distorts the basic thrust and primary purpose of the article.

2. Bearing that in mind, the basic thrust, the primary purpose of Article 21 of the Church Order, is readily apparent: it is to promote Christian education. In fact, it is written to promote the Christian nurture and education of the children of the church and serves to encourage and even to admonish parents and the leaders of local churches to pursue this most noble calling with vigor, faithfulness, and hope. To use the language of the article, Article 21 is all about consistories encouraging and exhorting parents to see to it that the parents of their churches raise and educate their children “according to the demands of the covenant.” Other aspects of Christian education pertaining to the form or type of education, and to the other details of that education are not addressed by Article 21 and are to be considered as subordinate to the primary purpose of promoting good Christian education.

That is, the *controlling biblical principle* in interpreting the article is the expression “demands of the covenant,” which has in view Christian education and not a specific form or type of school in implementing this education.

c. Grace’s Consistory complains that classis is narrowing the meaning of the article to a “certain cultural tradition,” that is, to its historical application, rather than being guided by the principles of the article. They state as follows:

C, 3. ...Classis has, in effect, sought to narrow and define the phrase “good Christian schools,” and to justify and compel a certain compliance with the article according to a certain cultural tradition, and *not* in the light of the basic principle of Article 21 and the Reformed faith.

B. Classis’ decision and response to the protests

1. The decisions of classis pertaining to the Feenstra protest are Article 65, supplement 14. It is II, B:

B. We recommend that Classis East not sustain the protest of Ken Feenstra on the following grounds:

1. Mr. Feenstra does not accurately present the positions taken by Classis East.

a. Classis East in September was not talking about home-schooling per se, nor about whether a good Christian home-school education meets the demands of the covenant.

b. Rather, Classis East was dealing with how Article 21 applies in the specific instance of an officebearer withdrawing

his children from two existing Christian day schools without explanation to the congregation in order to homeschool them.

2. While a Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances, Article 21 of the Church Order is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible.

2. The decisions of classis pertaining to Grace PRC's protest and Article 21 are found in Articles 59 and 62 (with amendments), supplement 14. With respect to Article 21 of the Church Order, classis first makes a passing reference to it in ground 1, a, as amended:

...Article 21 of the Church Order neither in its original form ("school-masters") nor in its present form ("schools") had in mind homeschooling as "one kind" of Christian school. VanDellen and Monsma make it clear that the reference was only to "parental Christian Schools" (p. 93) or "Christian Day Schools" (pp. 95, 96).

This is a restatement of II, C, ground 1) (b) (1) of the September decision, and the object of Grace's protest. Classis also makes reference to Article 21 in ground 1, b, in response to a perceived misrepresentation of what classis said concerning "demands of the covenant" in the article. Classis asserts: "In fact classis did not offer an interpretation of the last phrase of Art. 21."

The heart of classis' response respecting Article 21 is in grounds 2 and 3, a, and b. These grounds are as follows:

2. Grace Consistory's protest fails to see that, although Art. 21 does not speak to the question of whether homeschooling is right or wrong, it does require the promotion of the existing Christian day schools by the consistory as a whole and by the consistory members in their individual office where this is possible.

- a. Art. 21 is very definitely speaking about the establishment, promotion, and support of Christian day schools, not home schools, by the consistories, not only for those who might "need" them, but for all the families of the congregation. This in no way injects meaning into Article 21.
- b. Therefore, classis is correct to conclude from this that "a consistory member is bound to observe Article 21 of the Church Order," and that a minister, who must be an example to the congregation, "cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21" if he withdraws his children from the existing

Christian schools without giving valid reason to the congregation (Arts. 43 & 45 of September 26).

3. The decisions of classis which Grace is protesting do not conflict with Scripture and the Reformed tradition.

a. In its definition of “good Christian schools,” classis did not add to the Scriptures but only identified those schools to which Article 21 refers.

b. Classis’ decisions do not take away the primary responsibility and right of educating children from individual believing parents, but rather simply recognize that, in addition to this parental responsibility, Article 21 declares that also consistories have a responsibility toward the education of the children under their care. Article 21 gives consistories the responsibility to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation (rather than the rights of the individual), by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible.

C. The grounds of my protest

1. Classis’ response to the protests conflicts with Article 21 of the Church Order by ignoring the text, introducing an unwarranted exclusion, and failing to approach the article in harmony with its doctrinal foundation. Classis’ response has therefore not genuinely answered either the protests of Mr. Feenstra and Grace PRC or responded to the point at issue in either protest.

a. What is binding in the churches is the literal text of Article 21 of the Church Order and the doctrinal principles upon which it rests. This is the point made by both protests.

1) This is true of all our confessions (Three Forms of Unity), minor confessions (Liturgical Forms), and the text of the Church Order. We are bound by what they say.

2) We are not bound by what we think was in the mind of the revisers of the Church Order in 1914 any more than our understanding of the Catechism is bound by what was in the mind of Ursinus in 1563.

3) We are not bound by a Church Order commentary from 1941 in applying the Church Order in 2008 to a matter it does not address, however helpful that commentary may be, any more than we are bound by Ursinus’ commentary on the Catechism from the 1500s.

4) Classis in its response attempts to elevate what classis perceives as in the mind of the revisers in 1914 and in the minds of the authors of a commentary from 1941 to the status of *being* the Church Order. This is clear from classis’

original decision II, C, with its grounds, and its grounds to both protests: Feenstra: II, B, 2 and Grace's Consistory ground: 2 and 3. This is in error.

b. Historically dated material and its application, which is valid, customary, and traditional, does not *preclude or exclude* a contemporary application from the purview of any confessional statement or the Church Order.

1) Classis violates the principle of the Church Order by *limiting* its application ("legitimate alternative") to an accustomed use on the basis of a traditional application. This is also a point of both protests. The protests are valid; nor has classis answered them. It has simply restated its historically based decision from September in different forms.

a) To illustrate, the Catechism in Lord's Day 42 (eighth commandment) speaks of "unjust weights, ells, measures," etc. This does not mean that that Lord's Day does not address credit-card fraud and identity theft or excludes them, though the idea never entered Ursinus' mind nor could he speak of it in his commentary. To draw that conclusion would be absurd, as it did not exist.

b) Yet classis is attempting to do exactly this in its response to both protests, both by *excluding* direct parental education in a good Christian day school in the home (something which did not exist in 1914 or 1941), despite being explicitly biblical, from the purview of the Church Order and from its decisions (the point of both protests), and by insisting that the Church Order *only* speaks about institutional Christian day schools, formed by parents, as defined in the past. This is also clear from your grounds. This is a misuse of the traditional application of the Church Order and not a genuine response.

2) Classis maintains it is not speaking of the subject of homeschooling per se (response to Mr. Feenstra, ground 1, a). Yet by *excluding* it from the purview of the Church Order, classis *is* making a direct pronouncement about homeschooling that sets precedents in the churches.

3) The churches and our assemblies have not addressed the subject of homeschooling before. It is a different form of a good Christian school. It must be addressed on the basis of its own merits.

c. Classis errs in the treatment of both the Church Order and the historical material it cites by ignoring the doctrinal and principle basis of Article 21, the latter as it is also set forth in the church order commentaries and the history of the article. This is particularly the case in a matter, homeschooling, which the churches have not previously addressed.

1) Historical material is useful, also in matters that are not directly addressed, but it is so by pointing to the scriptural principles on which the article rests. Both protests point this out by an extended discussion of what the historical background of Article 21 is, and its principles, both in the 1930s and as summarized in VanDellen and Monsma. The principle is covenant Christian education according to the “demands of the covenant” and the Word of God, over against public school education.

2) Direct parental education in the home, homeschooling, is consistent with both the Scriptures, the underlying principles of the Church Order, “demands of the covenant,” and the “thrust” of the article and the commentaries. Both Mr. Feenstra and Grace’s Consistory develop this at length. Classis simply ignores this and restates its September decision in another form, particularly in the grounds.

2. Classis’ interpretation of Article 21 and its response to both protests with respect to Article 21 are in direct conflict with the doctrinal principles and requirements embodied in Article 32 of the Belgic Confession of Faith as to the drafting and interpretation of articles of the Church Order.

a. Article 32 stands in a certain context in the Confession of Faith, namely Article 29 and the description of the false church: “As for the false church, she ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit herself to the yoke of Christ.” The Confession of Faith has in view the abuse of the Church Order in the form of Roman Catholic canon law. That abuse consisted of setting human ordinances and traditions above the Scriptures. Article 32 reads:

In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the

worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God.

1) Of particular note as to the principles in Article 32 in the present context of Church Order Article 21 are the following points:

- a) That in both the adoption and interpretation of articles of the Church Order we are “studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted.” That is, articles of the Church Order in their adoption, interpretation, and application are to be biblically grounded in the Word of God. It is the biblical foundation of the Word of God which is the *controlling interpretive principle*.
- b) This is in fact also emphasized in the negative when the confession says, “And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever.” The term translated *worship* in English is, in the French original and in the Dutch, the word *service* (of God), and it embraces all that the Church Order addresses, including Christian education. The point of the article is that we do not shape the life of our churches by human ordinances or traditions.
- c) We are required, as a confessional matter, in our decision-making to compel men to receive our decisions for conscience’ sake because they are manifestly rooted and grounded in sound application of the Scriptures. While this does not necessarily require proof-texting, it does require a scriptural grounding of decisions in the Word and doctrine. (Though it should be noted that ordinarily it has been the practice in our churches that our decisions are grounded in direct references to the Scriptures.)
- d) While it is not my intention to enter into every aspect of your decisions concerning Grace PRC and its pastor, I would point out that the latter part of Article 32 is also relevant: “Therefore we admit only of

that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God.” The “therefore” of the Article must not be overlooked. That is, what nourishes concord and unity is Scripture and its application, not conformity to custom and tradition. Scriptural application leads to unity and keeping all men “in obedience to the Word of God.”

2) With respect to Article 21 of the Church Order, the *controlling interpretive principle* is “the demands of the covenant.” This is the plain statement of Article 21 itself. This is the foundation of calling parents to seek covenant instruction for their children. Article 21 manifestly rests upon the direct parental calling to teach their children in such passages as Deut. 6:7-9 and Eph. 6:1-4, which is not a “right” but a direct immediate divine mandate, command, and calling addressed to parents. It is a “demand of the covenant.” This is also reflected in the baptism form as the third vow parents make before God to instruct their children “to the utmost of your power” when they bring their children for baptism. It is also the foundation of the consistories “**seeing to it**” that the means for that instruction are “**good**.” That is, what makes this an ecclesiastical matter is the spiritual demands of the covenant and a concern for the *spiritual* quality of those means. Interpretations of Article 21 of the Church Order are to be grounded in what the Scriptures teach concerning the demands of the covenant. Article 21 itself demands it, and Article 32 of the Confession of Faith requires it.

3) With respect to the traditional application of the Church Order to institutional day schools, it should also be noted that they meet the demands of the covenant in only one way. That is, we believe that parents may, as a matter of Christian liberty, delegate an aspect of their calling, and it is only an aspect, to a teacher who stands in the place of the parent (*in loco parentis*) and that they may do so in the context of fellow Reformed believers. From the viewpoint of the Scriptures, it is the Christian day school that is a matter of Christian liberty; the mandate applies directly to parents. Mr. Feenstra is correct when he states, “a good Christian home school is a good Christian school no matter the location.” The exclusion of the Christian school in the home destroys the foundation of the corporate “home schools,”

that is, our Christian day schools. Classis is inadvertently undermining the foundation of our Christian schools. In the future, communal Christian schools, formed in newly established congregations as a result of our mission work, will not necessarily take the form they have always taken in Grand Rapids.

b. That your response to the protests is not in accord with Article 32 of the Confession of Faith is manifest from the following points:

1) The grounds given for rejecting the protests are strictly based on accustomed traditional application of the Church Order. You also define Christian liberty from the viewpoint of that accustomed application of the Church Order rather than from the Scriptures. Your decision does not reference any Scripture in connection with Article 21 of the Church Order. Rather, your decision excludes what is biblical on the basis of a customary application.

2) Classis explicitly states that it is not proceeding from the doctrinal principle and scriptural principle of Article 21:

a) Response to Mr. Feenstra, II, B, 1, a, classis is not talking about, “whether a good Christian home school education meets the demands of the covenant.”

b) Response to Grace’s consistory, Ground 1, b, “in fact classis did not offer an interpretation of the last phrase of Art. 21,” that is, “demands of the covenant.”

3) None of your decisions respecting Article 21 and the issues raised by the protests are grounded in Scripture but rather proceed *from custom and tradition alone*, and exactly for that reason they also do not compel the conscience from the Word.

c. Classis is in grave danger of elevating a tradition above the Word of God.

1) Homeschooling is the direct application of the biblical calling; institutional schools are a delegating of that responsibility and are therefore an indirect application. The Christian home, as an educational institution, is the foundation of the institutional day school.

2) The traditional application of the Church Order, institutional day schools, is biblical because it is derived from the home as an indirect fulfillment of the parental calling. When this indirect customary application, however, is set

above its direct biblical basis, the home as the foundation of schooling, so as to *exclude* the schooling of and in the home, it ceases to be biblical. Under Article 32, we may not set a derived application above the direct application. It then becomes a tradition of men being set above the Word of God.

3) That which is biblical, a divine mandate, is by its very nature to be received, and can in no sense of the word be viewed as divisive. Insisting on *conformity* to custom and tradition above this is departing in the direction of human ordinances, against which Article 32 of the Confession of Faith expressly warns. The article was written to keep the churches from doing this.

3. Classis has modified or changed its original decision in its response to the protests, which is not a proper response to them, and in such a manner as to effectively adopt the protests of Mr. G. Schimmel and Mr. N. Kleyn, which classis previously rejected.

a. The decision of classis in Articles 43 and 45 of September was:

We recommend that classis deny the request of the Grace Consistory to classis “to uphold the decision of Grace PRC Consistory, and to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home.”

1) It was a decision not to uphold his homeschooling. The basis for this decision was Article 21 as interpreted traditionally and which is the object of the protests respecting Article 21.

2) Moreover, the classis is aware of the fact that this was a decision to homeschool, and therefore not to enroll his children and thus send them. This is indicated in I, A) of the revised information of September. It is also indicated in the information section concerning the Schimmel protest I, C), 1 and your recommendation concerning it, II, B, by the words “to re-enroll his children.” This is also clear from the issue of conscience under Articles 43 and 45, 3), (a), (1), quoting Grace Consistory “that the pastor’s decision to homeschool...” was made as a matter of conscience. Classis would also require under II, D, 1) “his reason(s) for not sending his children...” that is, to the day school.

b. What was a decision to not uphold homeschooling un-

der Article 21 has now become, in response to the protests, a rejection of his “withdrawing his children.” What was a decision to homeschool and therefore not re-enroll his children and send them, becomes an act of withdrawal which, by its framing, excludes the positive reasons for his decision to homeschool. This is evident from the following elements of classis’ response:

- 1) Classis’ response to Mr. Feenstra, Article 65, Supplement 14, II, B, 1, b: “...how Article 21 applies in the specific instance of an officebearer withdrawing his children from two existing Christian day schools without explanation to the congregation in order to homeschool them.” This is also evidently the reason classis states in II, B, 1, “Mr. Feenstra does not accurately present the positions taken by Classis East.”
 - 2) Classis’ response to Grace Consistory’s protest is found in Article 62, supplement 14, II, B, 2, b. The classis first quotes its decision from September and then adds, after the quote, the following words: “if he withdraws his children from the existing Christian schools without giving valid reason to the congregation.” The classis then cites Articles 43 and 45 of September, though the *addition* was not found in the original decision.
 - 3) Classis further takes up this approach in its further actions in Article 82 and the revised advice, Article 83, supplement 20, E, 2, where the depiction of withdrawal is again portrayed as classis’ original decision under Articles 43 and 45 of September.
- c. This response to the protests is a modifying of your original decision, which essentially reframes the decision.
- 1) Nowhere in your decisions of September in Articles 34, 35, 36 recommitted, 43, and 45, nor in the supplements 10 and 12 does classis ever refer to “withdrawing his children.” It is found neither in the information section, nor in the response to Mr. Kleyn, nor in response to Mr. Schimmel, nor in II, C to Grace Consistory and its pastor.
 - 2) Classis erroneously states that Mr. Feenstra did not “accurately present the position taken by Classis East.” He did accurately present it, as did also Grace Consistory in its protest respecting Article 21 of the Church Order. Classis’ ground 1, b to Mr. Feenstra’s protest is not a proper answer or ground but has the effect of evading the issue he raises

instead of answering it. The same thing is true of the response to Grace Consistory, II, B, 2, b.

3) There are similar elements in other aspects of your decisions, such as in the mandate of the committee you appointed. I will not enter into these but I would point out that this makes it difficult to receive your decisions.

d. This modification respecting withdrawing his children, moreover, has a source. It is the first point of Mr. Schimmel's protest in their letter to Classis, Agenda September 12, page 4:

Our grave concern is the unrest and dissension that has occurred in our church as a result of the consistory's approval of our ***pastor's decision to withdraw his children*** from our own Christian schools to instead be homeschooled. (bold italics added)

Mr. Kleyn's protest is similar.

1) Classis has fundamentally adopted these protests and made them its own. This is true not only of the reframing of the issue, but also in the further course of action classis has taken under Article 82 and the untimely bulletin announcement which followed.

2) The issue at the heart of these decisions is Article 21 of the Church Order brought by the protests of both Mr. Feenstra and Grace Consistory. Classis has not genuinely addressed these issues.

Conclusion

I would urge upon the classis the necessity of reconsidering and treating the protests respecting Article 21 of the Church Order. Your pronouncements are neither consistent with the article nor a just application of it in the context of the situation at Grace PRC. This present direction will not help Grace PRC. It sets precedents that will seriously hinder our mission work. It will drive away contacts, close the options to small churches formed on the mission field, and lead to more families moving from the mission fields to established churches. There are a host of consequences the classis does not see to the decisions you are taking.

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Thomas Miersma
Home Missionary, West
of the PRCA

SUPPLEMENT 40
Protest: Rev. Dick

April 14, 2009

To the Delegates of Synod 2009 of the Protestant Reformed Churches:

I hereby protest the decisions of Synod 2008 in regard to the various homeschooling appeals that were before the synod. My main contention is that each decision of synod was based on an incorrect interpretation and application of Article 21 of the Church Order. This led synod to render erroneous judgments in each case.

Specifically:

*I request that synod rescind Synod 2008's interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order, and to declare it incorrect.

In the light of a proper interpretation of the Church Order, I request that synod:

*Rescind Synod 2008's negative decisions concerning the appeals of Mr. Feenstra, Mr. Kuiper, and Rev. Brummel, and instead to sustain those appeals.

*Reconsider and reaffirm Synod 2008's decision with regard to the appeal of Mr. Kamps, but with different grounds, in light of Scripture, the Reformed faith, and a proper interpretation of Art. 21.

*Rescind Synod 2008's decision to sustain the appeal of Mr. Kleyn, and instead to reject it.

My protest consists of these parts:

*A presentation of three views of Art. 21 represented at Synod 2008, focusing especially on the interpretation of the article given and applied by synod itself.

*A critique of this interpretation from the point of view of the article itself, the historical context and intent of the article, the Reformed faith, and Scripture.

*A critique of Synod 2008's interpretation of Art. 21 from the point of view of Article 86 of the Church Order.

*Application of the correct interpretation of Art. 21 to the appeals, as ground for my protest that synod should reconsider all of the homeschooling decisions of Synod 2008, rescinding most of them, and reaffirming one, but with different grounds.

*A conclusion.

Article 21: Three Views

1. The view of the appellants: Mr. Feenstra, Mr. Kuiper, and Rev. Brummel.

The appellants share the view of the Grace PRC Consistory that the "basic thrust" or purpose of Art. 21 is to promote good Christian education,

and that Art. 21 does not address the specific form of good Christian education that consistories are called to promote, and that parents are called to employ. The position is, therefore, that the “good Christian schools” of Art. 21 are to be interpreted broadly, as not denoting and certainly not promoting any one kind of good Christian instruction over another, and that, to the exclusion of homeschooling except in very exceptional instances.

That this is the position of the above appellants needs hardly be proven. A few references and explanations ought to be sufficient:

*Mr. Feenstra: “A good Christian home school is a good Christian school because it meets the demands of the covenant based on its very nature.” And: “A good Christian home school is in accord with the reasons (demands) for having good Christian schools as set forth in Article 21 of the *Church Order Commentary* of Monsma and VanDellen” (Acts of Synod, 2008, Art. 52, p. 48).

*Rev. Brummel: “Article 21...must be understood in a limited and carefully defined sense. The limitation is that consistories are to promote Christian education” (Acts, Art. 52, pp. 50, 51).

*Mr. Kuiper: This appellant’s appeal concerns the matter of the “conscience.” His contention is that the decision of Classis East, with its interpretation of Art. 21 as all but prohibiting officers in the church from homeschooling, has led to an attempt to “bind the conscience” of Rev. Dick and to jeopardize his maintaining office in our churches as he seeks, in light of Scripture and as convicted by his conscience, to fulfill his parental, baptismal vow. In this appeal, Mr. Kuiper quotes VanDellen and Monsma, who are talking not of instituted Christian day schools vs. Christian home schools, but of instituted Christian day schools vs. public schools, as follows:

Should Consistories discipline parents who fail to give their children Christian day school instruction [but instead send them to a public school, MD] though it be within their power to do so? There may be cases in which parents refrain from sending their children to a Christian school [but instead opt for a public school education, MD] for reasons which they consider valid before God, although others deny the validity of their position. In *all such cases* [even the case of officers in the Church, MD] the matter must be left to the consciences of the parents concerned, although the Consistory should urge prayerful reconsideration repeatedly (*Commentary on the Church Order*, p. 98, quoted in Acts, p. 207).

The position of these appellants can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Article 21 must be seen in light of its basic intent: the promotion, by consistories, of good Christian liberal arts education (vs. bad non-Christian liberal arts education) in the church of Jesus Christ.

2) Article 21 assumes that the decision concerning just what kind of good Christian education is to be provided is that of the parents, and of them alone. Consistories, thus, according to this interpretation, are there *to facilitate* the good Christian education of the parents, and *not to dictate* to them just how (beyond “good” and “Christian”) this should be done.

3) The “good Christian schools” of Article 21, as seen in light of the basic purpose of the article, and in light of the fact that forms of education may vary, and that needs of children are certainly complex and varied, include *any form* of good Christian education, including homeschooling, which parents may employ.

4) Attendance at certain “good Christian schools” vs. others, including good Christian home schools, may neither be imposed (by consistories or classes or synods), nor “recommended” and “urged” as the wisdom of God, either upon or for anyone or any officer in the church who is convicted before God that his children must be educated in another good Christian way than others might legislate or recommend.

2. The position of Mr. Kamps.

The view of Mr. Kamps is that the “good Christian schools” to which Art. 21 refers are instituted, communal liberal arts day schools, and them only (no home schools). This reflects the fact, according to Mr. Kamps, that “election and covenant are organic” (Acts, Art. 47, p. 40). The conclusion Mr. Kamps draws, and that which Synod 2008 rejected, is that Scripture and the Church Order *require* the use of existing PR Christian schools. Not to use them is to disobey a *requirement* of Scripture, and is the sin of “radical individualism” (p. 42).

3. The position of Synod 2008.

Synod 2008 has basically agreed with the position of Classis East (Sept 2007; Jan-Feb/May, 2008). However, significant additions and elaborations are made by the synod.

It is important to note that Synod 2008 agreed with appellants (position #1 above) at key points:

*First, it has granted that the basic thrust, the “demand of the covenant” to which Art. 21 refers, is Christian education.

*Second, synod has acknowledged, with Classis East, that attendance at certain Christian schools is a matter of Christian liberty, is not *required* by Scripture or the Church Order, and cannot, therefore, be required by the church. This is true in regard to anyone in the church, including officers, as long as these latter have good reasons.

*Third, synod acknowledges the authority of the parents in making the parental decision with regard to the education of their children. Thus synod states:

Therefore, Classis East (January/February 2008 meeting) was correct when it stated that “Scripture does not specify exactly how the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished. God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children” (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41).

In responding to the different appellants, synod disagreed with them (position #1) at significant points, as follows:

- 1) Though synod acknowledges that Scripture does not specify “exactly how” the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished, and that this is to be decided by parents exercising their sanctified judgment (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41), yet synod is on record as saying that “Article 21 not only sets forth the principle that the children of the church are to be instructed according to the demands of the covenant; *it also specifies how this should be done*” (Acts, Art. 52, pp. 48, 49, italics mine, MD). Thus, where Scripture is silent as to the exact method parents should employ in the education of the covenant children, the Church Order, according to synod, speaks. And though Scripture grants parents “the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children,” our Church Order, according to synod, informs the parents as to what their sanctified judgment should (with few exceptions) be.
- 2) What should the sanctified judgment of parents be, what is the “best way” of most parents (by far) with regard to the method of Christian education? What should the parents determine to do, according to synod? They should determine to educate their children with the help of the “good Christian schools” of which Article 21 speaks.
- 3) But now, just “what” are those “good Christian schools,” according to Synod 2008? They are as follows:

*The schools of Art. 21 are “day schools.” They are schools instituted by parents outside of the home (Acts, Art. 52, p. 48). They are schools “in which parents have their children instructed by others on their behalf” (Acts, Art. 54, p. 52).

*The schools of Art. 21 are places where parents fulfill their calling to educate their children with other like-minded believers *together*; in “community” with them (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41; Art. 63, p. 67), by participation in and attendance at liberal arts schools *together*:

- 4) What this means, according to synod, is that homeschooling is, for the most part, not an option for covenant parents where good Christian day schools exist. Home schools, according to synod, “are

not addressed in Article 21 as it stands today” (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49). Homeschooling is not a practice specified in the Church Order (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49). Homeschooling, though not forbidden by the Church Order, is nevertheless *not the rule* of the Church Order, which requires, ordinarily, participation in and attendance at certain instituted day schools in which parents delegate the responsibility of the education (and socialization) of the children to others on their behalf.

5) Further, synod, though it pointedly stated that Scripture “does not specify exactly how the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished,” and though it rejected the contention that attendance at certain Christian schools is “the demand of the covenant” (Acts, Art. 47, pp. 41, 42), yet it did attempt to ground its position on the Church Order in biblical principles. The following quotations demonstrate this, as follows:

“The clear implication of the covenant is the establishment and maintenance of our Christian schools” (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41).

“The organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together...” (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41).

“Article 21...addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible” (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49).

“A Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances” only (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49).

Thus, Synod of 2008 has taken a significant stand with regard to the Christian day school and the use of it. Though not required, though not a requirement of God and Scripture, nevertheless, the wisdom of God recommends it to all parents. The sacred covenantal calling of believers is to use liberal arts schools together with others. The sacred, covenantal calling of elders in the church is to promote and urge the use of certain Christian day schools where possible—*and this all, to the exclusion of most home schools*. For home schools may meet the demands of the covenant only in some instances. Ordinarily, therefore, those who homeschool are not following the recommended wisdom of God, and not fulfilling their sacred calling to promote the well-being of the whole congregation. Homeschooling may not be the “radical individualism” that some contend, but it certainly is, except in some instances, contrary to the covenant calling and a hindrance to the covenant *togetherness* promoted, says synod, by Article 21.

6) This means, according to synod, that officebearers in the church, officebearers who are required to uphold Art. 21 of the Church Order,

are held, *by God Himself*, to a higher standard than ordinary believers when it comes to the use of certain Christian schools. These quotations demonstrate the synod's position:

"The rule of Article 21 that a minister promote the use of the good Christian schools requires that he ordinarily send his children to the Christian schools which the consistory recognizes as good, and which the members of the congregation use. If he does not use these schools, the rule of Article 21 implies that the officebearer must give an adequate explanation for not using the schools to the consistory and congregation" (Acts, Art. 54, p. 54).

"The Grace PRC Consistory contended that Rev. Dick could and did promote the good Christian schools. Consistency would require that, as Pastor, Rev. Dick's promotion of the good Christian schools would include the enrollment of his children in these schools, unless there are extenuating circumstances" (Acts, Art. 63, p. 66).

"An officebearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation" (Acts, Art. 63, p. 66. Synod is here quoting Classis East, September 2007).

Refutation of Synod 2008's position on Article 21

1. Article 21 itself.

As Grace Consistory has contended to Classis East, January 2008, and as I have contended to Classis East, May 2008, the basic flaw of the interpretation of Article 21 that limits "schools" to day schools instituted by parents who delegate to others the education of their children is that it is based on *an argument from silence*. Article 21, according to Synod 2008, does not address home schools. It does not "specify" home schools (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49). Therefore, such is the conclusion of Synod 2008, it all but forbids them, and therefore, it *favours* certain kinds of Christian education, namely the "day" schools most parents use.

This kind of interpreting is unacceptable. It is reading into the article what it simply does not say. It is drawing conclusions from an article in a Church Order which do not follow from the Church Order *itself*. It is mistreating and therefore dishonoring the very Church Order the synod is so concerned to uphold!

The logic of the synod is similar to the logic that since, for example, LD 42 does not *say* that the eighth commandment forbids credit card fraud (does not "address it," does not "specify it"—because they did not have credit cards in the sixteenth century!), it therefore allows it. It is similar

to the logic that would exclude from the calling of Professors of Theology the training of preachers to preach because Article 18 of the Church Order only mentions that they are to “expound the Holy Scripture and to vindicate sound doctrine against heresies and errors.”

Nor is it logical to compare, as synod does (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49), the *prescription* of Art. 68 of the Church Order, which clearly *requires* the preaching of the Heidelberg Catechism, and the *prescription* of Art. 69 that clearly states that *only* certain songs shall be sung in the churches, with the *reference* in Art. 21 to “schools.” It may be granted, in fact, that the reference in Art. 21 is to instituted day schools. It may not be concluded, however, that the fact that home schools (because home schools were not common in early twentieth century America) are not referred to in Art. 21 means that they are all but forbidden, that those who want to homeschool must give reasons and then get permission to homeschool, and that officebearers who homeschool without the approval of certain others jeopardize their office! It may not be concluded, therefore, as synod does, that to introduce homeschooling into the life and practice of the churches is as contrary to Art. 21 as would be preaching from the Belgic Confession instead of the Heidelberg Catechism, or adding, without the approval of synod, other songs to the worship of the churches (Acts, Art. 52, p. 49).

As stated in my protest to the May 2008 assembly of Classis East, neither the Grace Consistory, nor anyone else who is seeking to uphold the legitimacy of homeschooling as a viable and acceptable option for parents, is arguing *against* the promoting of existing Christian day schools. Our argument is simply this:

that Article 21, *exactly because it does not speak to the question of whether homeschooling is right or wrong*, may not be used either to say that homeschooling is wrong, or that existing schools are the “standard” of what is “good” and “Christian” [that schools be “good” and “Christian” is the *only* requirement that the Church Order specifies and *requires* about the “schools” to which it refers, MD]. Nor may it be argued from Article 21 that “new” good Christian educational opportunities and forms may not be considered and employed, or that those parents who opt for them have to appear before a consistory and then a classis to get permission to use them, so that until so doing, they are suspect of being in violation of Article 21, guilty until proven innocent of transgression of Christian decency and charity, and so that officers who so avail themselves of different educational opportunities for their children are considered, until this proper validation is given, to be unable to be an example to the flock (Agenda of Classis, May 2008, pp. 56, 57).

2. The historical occasion of the reformulation of Article 21 in 1914.

Synod is not careful in its assessment of the historical occasion of the reformulation of Article 21 in 1914, and therefore in its assessment of the *intent* of the article. The occasion of changing the “school masters” of the original Article 21 to “schools,” was the need to promote good Christian education versus bad public school education. The intent of the reformulation of the article was, and is, therefore, to promote good Christian education versus bad public education. It is nothing else or different than this. This is clear from the history. This is also clear from Church Order commentators VanDellen and Monsma. Vain and, quite frankly, rather desperate is the attempt of synod, therefore, (for example in Acts, Art. 52, p. 48, Art. 64, p. 67) to find an ally in these noted commentators for the position that Article 21 promotes one kind of good Christian education over another to the discredit of homeschooling in covenant communities. Successful is the position of Grace Consistory that from the history:

There is no indication *whatsoever* that the Christian Reformed Church, when revising the Article in 1914, was speaking of a certain kind of good Christian education as more favorable than another, or that if there had been those then who had good Christian *home* schools, that consistories would have been compelled to “urge” even *good Christian homeschoolers* to use whatever good Christian school others might establish. The one and only kind of schooling that was being advanced was *good Christian schooling vs. bad public schooling* (Agenda of Classis, January 2008, Grace Protest).

Pertinent are the quotations adduced from VanDellen and Monsma (*Church Order Commentary*) to prove the contention of the Grace Consistory that *the main issue of 1914 with regard to the kind of education that ought to be promoted was not “instituted day school instruction vs. home school instruction,” but “good Christian education vs. bad public education”*:

Can the charge of this article in any case be applied to our public schools? We would answer in the negative inasmuch as all states, to the best of our knowledge, have laws prohibiting sectarian instruction in the public schools (p. 97).

There may be parents who simply do not feel the need of Christian day school instruction. Their confession may be blameless as well as their consecration of life. And their Christian conduct regarding other matters may be altogether proper and unoffensive. But there is something present or lacking in their make-up and outlook which causes them *to prefer the public school for their children* (italics ours). The position of such parents is grossly inconsistent to put it mildly (p. 98).

3. The historic Reformed position.

It is noteworthy that in the history of the Reformed churches there has never been, as far as this protestant is aware, and *until the last two years in the Protestant Reformed Churches*, an ecclesiastical decision taken, or an official interpretation of Article 21 rendered, that favors one form of good Christian education over another while marginalizing, and even frowning upon, homeschooling, and that, to such an extent that it would prohibit officers in the church, except in rare situations, from exercising their God-given right to homeschool.

Grace Consistory has documented some of this history in its protest to the January 2008 assembly of Classis East. In this protest it is pointed out that while schools have always been regarded highly in the Reformed tradition, nevertheless due respect and *highest* regard has been to that fundamental “school” of the home. Luther, for example, would write that “there is no greater authority on earth than that of father and mother” (*Sermon on John 2: 1-11*, in Prof. P.E. Kretzmann’s, *Luther on Education in the Christian Home and School*, p. 14). And of the home, Luther would preach: “Father and mother here become like God, for they are rulers, bishops, pope, doctor, minister, preachers, schoolmaster, judge, and lord” (*Sermon on Ex. 20:12*, in Kretzmann, p. 18). Indeed, “the feeling of the Reformed,” notes Grace Consistory, “has always been,” as one J.H. Kok writes, that “the family is the educational institute par excellence. No school, no barracks, no home care centers, no reformatory-school can take the place of the family or compensate it” (from Kok’s book *Christelijk Huisgezin*, pp. 138, 139, as quoted and translated in an article by S. Le Cornu entitled “Covenantal Home Schooling: As Seen in a Scriptural, Confessional, and Historical Perspective”).

Thus, while different forms of Christian education have been employed, homeschooling has always been considered an honorable option, and this option has been employed without need for the “validation” of this method from consistories, other ecclesiastical assemblies, or the State. This is, in fact, the implication of the teaching of recognized Reformed Church Order expert Dr. H. Bouwman, who notes that “the rule must be that the school originates with the parents,” and that “according to God’s ordinance, the complete task of education rests first of all on the parents,” and that, though there is a communal responsibility with regard to the education of the church’s children, “nevertheless, that calling may not infringe upon the right of parents to instruct their children” (quoted from Bouwman’s massive *Gereformeerde Kerkrecht*, p. 520, translation mine). This is also the clear implication of our own Baptism Form, which recognizes the responsibility of the raising of the baptized covenant seed to be first of all that of the parents, and wherein a vow is administered to

parents who pledge before God that they will, *to the utmost of their power*, either instruct their children in the “aforesaid doctrine,” or voluntarily enlist the help of others.

Significantly, neither the Reformed faith, nor Reformed church polity, *at any place*, demands a vow of anyone, including officers, requiring them to use certain Christian day schools. Nor does the Reformed faith ever *threaten* anyone with the loss of office should he homeschool according as the Word of God and his conscience testify he must. Nor does the Reformed faith ever even *hint* that an officer who rules his own home well according to the Word of God and his conscience by homeschooling his children, and yet without the approval of certain other people is, by his homeschooling, not being a good example to the flock, or unable to support others in the education of their children.

4. Synod has taken a position on Article 21 that is not only not clearly taught or necessarily implied by Scripture, but which is *contrary* to Scripture.

This is evident in the first place in *the declaration of Synod* that “*the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together*” (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41).

In fact, the statement, *as it stands*, is simply not true.

For, *in the first place*, the Bible never draws nor implies the link between “the organic nature of both election and the covenant” and certain man-made institutions. “Schools,” however good, are only human things, and not sacred. They are only “tools.” The form of them varies from time to time and from place to place. What is good for one may or may not be good for another. They are *not* sacred things. Therefore, it is improper to say that “the organic nature of both election and the covenant” “certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together” in certain designated “schools,” and not others, and not in home schools.

Use of certain Christian schools or not, is a judgment call, a *parental* judgment call. It is *neither* recommended, *nor* mandated by “the organic nature of both election and the covenant.” For it may be, in fact, that “the *personal* nature of both election and the covenant,” an aspect of election and the covenant as equally valid as the organic aspect of them, recommends to me or the next person the wisdom of fulfilling our covenantal calling by educating our children at home. That decision would certainly *not* be contrary to the *organic* nature of both election and the covenant. For one aspect of a doctrine cannot be regarded as contrary to another. And the *unity* of the body can be maintained as truly an *organism*, a living

body, if and only if the integrity of the members, that is, *the diversity* of the body, is acknowledged, maintained, and respected, also with regard to Christian education (cf. I Cor. 12).

It may be, and it surely is the case, that “the organic nature of both election and covenant,” *and also love for the body of Christ*, leads me to consider the needs, not only of my family, but also of others, as I make decisions regarding the education of my children. But that is far different than saying that the “organic nature of election and the covenant,” *a doctrine of the divine Scripture*, establishes communal day schooling *as the rule*, with only few exceptions.

Second, the synod, by declaring that the organic nature of election and covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children *together*; has redefined and presented a novel interpretation of “the communion of the saints” in the area of the liberal arts education of the children of the covenant. In the area of liberal arts education, acting “together,” and “in community with others,” and for the welfare of the whole means, according to synod, that all, with few exceptions, *participate* in and *attend* the same liberal arts schools as others in the covenant community. The organic nature of election and covenant in the area of the liberal arts education means, *as a rule*, full participation of all the covenant parents and children.

But that this kind of “togetherness” is the wisdom recommended by God’s election and covenant is nowhere proven by synod. The Bible knows of no such narrow definition and activity of “togetherness.” Neither the Bible, nor the Reformed faith, therefore, would so *jeopardize* unity by drawing such narrow, merely cultural, and unrealistic lines to define and promote the true unity of the body. Rather, the Bible describes unity and togetherness and community in the body in broader, spiritual terms. We are described, for example, as a body that is “one in Christ,” and one in His Spirit and truth. Our unity (and togetherness) is in the one faith and hope and baptism of Christ (Eph. 4). And we promote that unity by building one another up in the most holy faith, and speaking the truth in love, and such like. And the risen and ascended Lord Jesus has given special officers “for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph 4: 11-13). The Bible teaches, as well, that our unity as the body of Christ is *derived* from Christ the Head (I Cor. 12), and therefore is and must be based squarely on His Word. To add to that word teachings and requirements as expressions of and conditions for fulfilling our unity is to add to, and thus to impinge upon, the authority of the Word of Christ. This leads, inevitably, to an

unlawful and even idolatrous holding of traditions and institutions of men, and to a renunciation of the headship of the Savior (Col. 2: 16-23).

The contention that this kind of Christian-day-school “togetherness” is the wisdom recommended by God’s election and covenant does, in fact, “shift” the focus of our unity from Christ and His church to certain man-made institutions. The Bible speaks of our *spiritual* unity as believers in Christ. Whether one homeschools or uses certain day schools does not, all by itself, either hinder or advance this unity. Ecclesiastical interpretations of Church Orders ought to be carefully made to promote that *spiritual* unity, and to guard against a position that could lead to senseless divisions in the church over certain equally valid forms of education.

While it is clear that synod would avoid the position that Article 21 and the “organic nature of election and covenant” *mandate* parents to educate their children together in all circumstances (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41), its teaching that the organic nature of both election and covenant *recommends* to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together is no more scriptural. Both positions are, in fact, contrary to Scripture: they are an unwarranted application of the precious truth of God’s election and covenant of grace.

In addition, synod’s interpretation of Art. 21 violates the authority, and dishonors the dignity, of parents. This is clear as follows:

On the one hand, synod acknowledges that “God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children” (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41). With the other hand, synod takes away the authority of parents in sharply limiting parental freedom by asserting that the *rule* of Art. 21 and the organic nature of election and covenant certainly recommend to the parents that they fulfill their covenantal calling by educating their children together. By this, synod has set forth a parameter, a standard, a rule that Reformed parents must follow, with few exceptions, if they would fulfill their covenant calling. It is the rule of the use of certain Christian day schools, *and decidedly not home education*.

Further, because synod’s interpretation of Art. 21 leads it to draw the conclusion that the use of these certain day schools, *and them only* is the rule for all parents, with few exceptions, parental prerogatives are further limited. For, according to this interpretation, the only way parents can choose another form of good Christian education than certain Christian day schools, say to opt to homeschool, is to receive a special “dispensation,” which is granted only if the reasons for homeschooling are judged valid by other people and by the authorities of the churches. But this is to deny the parental honor in the home and in the affairs of the home.

Synod’s attempt to justify what amounts to a parent-demeaning and

parent-disenfranchising interpretation of Art. 21 by its reference to Acts 15 and the first Jerusalem Synod is problematic (Acts, Art. 64, p. 67). The problem is, the first Jerusalem Synod did not make decisions which infringed upon parental prerogatives. But this the Synod of Grand Rapids in 2008 has done.

But rather than arbitrary rules of men, God gives parents His sacred Word, and the wisdom and love of Christ within, as the *sole standard* by which parents are to raise and educate their children. Deuteronomy 6 is clear on this, as is Ephesians 6. Let synod truly *stand hard* by its statement that “God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children.” Let neither synod nor anyone be afraid of that truth or compromise it. Maintaining the integrity of the home, and the *sphere sovereignty* of parents in that home, is vital for the sake of the church. To compel, browbeat, or threaten parents into using certain schools is to tyrannize parents. Rather than help certain schools, such a policy, such a rule as synod would make Art. 21 into, can only hurt them.

Further, synod’s interpretation of Article 21 involves itself in a compromise and contradiction of the truth of the sacred offices of the church. The Bible sets forth the requirements for officers in the church in passages such as I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. All of these requirements are spiritual. None of these requirements are not required of all of the people of God in one degree or another. The officers simply must be possessed of these spiritual requirements to a greater degree than others, and in such way that they can be said to be, in the case of bishops, for example, “blameless” (Titus 1: 6, 7). That is, officers must be examples to the flock of those who are truly followers of Christ, upholders of truth, and living the Christian life consistently and fruitfully in all their walk.

Scripture knows nothing of officebearers being required to have their children attend certain man-made educational institutions in order to hold office or in order that the officers might be good examples to the flock. Synod might surmise that “consistency” would require that “as pastor, Rev. Dick’s promotion of the good Christian schools would include the enrollment of his children in these schools, unless there are extenuating circumstances” (Acts, Art. 63, p. 66). But the Bible does not require what synod’s sort of “consistency” would require. In fact, the Bible does require that a bishop rule well his own house, and disqualifies him from ruling in the church of Christ if he cannot rule well his own house (I Tim. 3: 4, 5). By so stating the priority, namely, that especially bishops, or elders, including pastors, must first of all be good parents, *and that parents, even and especially officers, have the right and the responsibility to be good parents as they see fit*, the Scripture stands sharply opposed to an

interpretation of a Church Order which has it backwards, and places the priority and primacy of the education of children with the church, and its authorities, and not with the parents and their authority. Scripture sharply opposes, as well, a position that would suggest that an officer's office is in jeopardy if, though by his parental decisions he is ruling his own house well, yet there are other people or officials in the house of God who would rather he do it another way!

Scripture opposes, as well, the thinking of synod that "for its own welfare the church has the authority to involve itself in matters that belong to the home, even in areas of Christian liberty," and to see to it that parents, especially officers, *as a rule with few exceptions*, "have their children instructed in good Christian day schools" which the church (the consistories, but also the broader assemblies, as is clear in recent years in the PRC) denotes as "good" and "Christian" (Acts, Art. 64, p. 67). The Church, and the State also, do indeed have some limited authority concerning the homes of the people of God. But neither has authority to interfere with the parenting of the parents.

Consideration of Synod 2008's interpretation of Article 21 in light of Article 86 of the Church Order

Article 86, referring to all the Articles of the Church Order, reads:

These articles, relating to the lawful order of the church, have been so drafted and adopted by common consent that they (if the profit of the churches demand otherwise) may and ought to be altered, augmented, or diminished. However, no particular congregation, classis, (or synod) shall be at liberty to do so, but they shall show all diligence in observing them, until it be otherwise ordained by the general synod.

It is my contention that Synod 2008 violated Article 86. It did so by offering an interpretation of Article 21 that in effect has drastically "altered, augmented, or diminished" the article. By this drastically altered and novel interpretation of Article 21, the synod has attempted to impose upon the churches an interpretation of Article 21 which was not first adopted, in the proper Reformed ecclesiastical way, "by common consent."

I hope we are clear on this. Perhaps the position of Synod 2008 reflects, as it undoubtedly does, the opinion of many regarding Article 21. Perhaps, as well, a book or an article or two or three have been written expressing the views of some that are similar to the position adopted by Synod 2008. Perhaps some give lectures reflecting their private opinions of Christian education. Some might even dare to preach that a passage in the book of Joshua condemns homeschooling, or that the prophet Isaiah warns that the only way all of God's people shall be taught of the Lord is by the main-

tenance of certain schools, and by suggesting that homeschooling is stuff and selfishness and that the people of God are too incompetent, anyway, to do it. Be that as it may, and however powerful the rhetoric might be, *all of these views are just private opinions*. In fact, before 2008, the synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches had never taken an official stand on the meaning and application of Article 21. But Synod 2008 surely deliberated as if it had, and has made decisions concerning Article 21 and homeschooling as if it had the authority from Article 21 itself to do so, and as if it were not, as it surely was, establishing precedent and offering novel renditions of the Church Order right and left and on the fly.

It is my contention that the Synod 2008 offered an interpretation of Art. 21 based on custom, tradition, and on the private opinions, perhaps of many, but on the private opinions nevertheless, of certain individuals. It had no official sanction either from Scripture, the Reformed creeds, the principles of Reformed education, or from Article 21 itself, to offer the interpretation it has rendered. The interpretation of Article 21 by Synod 2008 indeed says far more, or less, or different, depending on how one looks at it, than Article 21 itself says. Thus it has “altered, augmented, or diminished” Article 21. Thus Synod 2008 has violated Article 86 of the Church Order.

For consider:

*Article 21 does not, itself, define what the “good Christian schools” are that consistories are to promote. But Synod 2008 has.

*Article 21 speaks of parental schools. Synod 2008 has made it an ecclesiastical matter, thus sharply limiting the choices of parents in the education of their children, and raising the concern that we now, as churches, promote parochial education.

*Article 21 speaks of consistories promoting “good Christian schools.” Synod 2008 has made this read “and all but forbidding homeschooling.”

*Article 21 says very little about just how parents are to cooperate in the education of the children. Synod 2008 has determined that all the parents, with very few exceptions, must support and attend Christian day schools together according to a principle which the synod calls “the organic nature” of election and covenant, and according to a “wisdom” that it contends is recommended by this principle.

*Article 21 speaks only of consistories “seeing to it” that there are certain good Christian schools available for parents. Synod 2008 has said that this means an officer cannot very well fulfill his calling to promote good Christian schools if he homeschools for reasons that others might consider invalid.

If ever there was a violation of Article 86, it occurred in the decisions

of Synod 2008 concerning the interpretation of Article 21 and homeschooling.

I urge Synod 2009 to rescind the decisions of Synod 2008 on the grounds that not only is the synod's interpretation of Article 21 incorrect, but it has also violated Article 86 of the Church Order.

Application of the correct interpretation of Article 21 to certain of the appeals that were before Synod 2008

1. Appeal of Mr. Feenstra.

Mr. Feenstra argues that "a good Christian home school is a good Christian school, and meets the demands of Article 21 and the covenant" (Acts, Art. 52, p. 47ff.).

Mr. Feenstra's argument is valid. Synod 2008's response is based on an incorrect interpretation of Art. 21 (Compare Acts, Art. 52, pp. 48, 49 with the correct interpretation as outlined above).

Synod 2009 ought to rescind the decision of Synod 2008 and uphold the appeal of Mr. Feenstra.

2. Appeal of Mr. Kuiper.

Though Mr. Kuiper's appeal concerns the matter of the decision of Classis East regarding the *conscience* of Rev. Dick, basic to the discussion are underlying differences concerning the proper interpretation of Article 21.

Mr. Kuiper protests that classis did not properly consider the significance or the trustworthiness of Rev. Dick's conscience in the whole matter of the education of his children.

The reason synod does not uphold Mr. Kuiper's protest is because synod's view of Article 21 is that parents, especially officebearers, must provide good reasons, acceptable to all, for homeschooling. If they cannot provide these reasons, these parents, especially officebearers, must, for the good of the whole body, relinquish their right to homeschool.

Mr. Kuiper's protest is valid. The conscience of a parent, in light of the Word of God only, is sufficient guide for that parent to discern how best to raise his children (cf. Acts, p. 211). Synod 2008's response is based on an incorrect interpretation of Article 21 (Compare Acts, Art. 55, pp. 54-59 with the correct interpretation as outlined above).

Synod 2009 ought to rescind the decision of Synod 2008 and to uphold the appeal of Mr. Kuiper.

3. Appeal of Rev. Brummel.

Rev. Brummel contends that the matter of the education of one's children is the prerogative solely of the parent and is therefore not an

ecclesiastical matter. He contends, as well, that Article 21 deals only with Christian education and does not speak to the kind of good Christian education that should be. Both Grace's consistory and classis acted illegitimately, therefore, when they entered into the matter of Rev. Dick's homeschooling. Classis also fell into legalism in making an extra-biblical requirement for officers.

Rev. Brummel's appeal is valid. Synod 2008's response is based on an incorrect interpretation of Article 21 (Compare Acts, Art. 54, pp. 50-54, Art. 64, pp. 66-68 with the proper interpretation as outlined above).

Synod 2009 ought to rescind the decision of Synod 2008 and to uphold the appeal of Rev. Brummel.

4. Appeal of Mr. Kamps.

Mr. Kamps contends that Article 21 and Scripture require that all use the Christian day schools. He contends that classis' decision, which allows for some homeschooling, is individualistic.

Synod 2008 rightly refuted Mr. Kamps, but its contention that "the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together" (Acts, Art. 47, p. 41) is erroneous (see the correct interpretation as outlined above).

Synod 2009 ought to uphold the decision of Synod 2008, but to rescind this one ground.

5. Appeal of Mr. Kleyn.

Mr. Kleyn contends that Classis East attributed to him a "wrong interpretation" of Art. 21.

Synod 2008 itself responds with a wrong interpretation of Art. 21 (Compare Acts, Art. 50, pp. 43, 44; Art. 63, pp. 65, 66 with the correct interpretation as outlined above).

Synod 2009 ought to rescind the decision of Synod 2008.

Conclusion

In conclusion, brethren, I would like to say, first of all, that those of us who homeschool and who interpret Article 21 as indeed allowing homeschooling as a legitimate way to educate children in the covenant community are not at all against day schools. We are not against them, exactly because they are our brothers and sisters who employ them. In the love of Christ we support those schools, because we love God's people, in whatever way we can. *We all are together in supporting good Christian education!*

Second, we should all realize that homeschooling is an increasingly viable option for Christians. There is nothing in Reformed theology or

polity, and certainly nothing in Scripture, that would discourage home education or warn against it. There is no “one way” that is the best way for everyone to follow as regards the liberal arts education of covenant children. With a population that is increasingly educated, with the technology and all the information that is available to help parents teach their children, it is understandable that more and more parents will consider and employ some form of homeschooling or another. These parents ought not to be suspected of not supporting others, or certain instituted schools. These parents and families love Christ and His body just as do those who employ teachers and establish certain institutions outside of the home for the education of their children.

Finally, it is my hope that we might all cooperate, that is, work together, in the vital matter of Christian education. Our unity is in Christ, after all, and as members of the same body, we all ought to have care one for another. This includes cooperation between homeschoolers and those who opt for the instituted day schools. This way of cooperation and mutual respect and love for one another is what has been advocated by our mother church, the CRC, in its massive report, adopted by the Synod of 2005, on Christian Education. In a summary of this report it is written that:

The first responsibility of a congregation is to see to it that all its children have the opportunity to receive an education in a Christian school.... Yet even when the opportunity and resources for Christian education are present, some CRC parents will make other choices. In these situations, congregations and parents must support each other. For example, some believe that the best way to carry out their covenantal obligations is to instruct their children at home. Congregations must respect this choice, and support them with prayer and encouragement to teach a Reformed view of the world. They also must encourage cooperation between Reformed homeschoolers and Reformed Christian schools. In the same way that parents who choose Christian day schools need to support homeschoolers, homeschoolers need to support Christian day school education. Christian education of all children in the congregation is a communal task (from the “Outline” of the Report on Christian Education).

This same cooperation between those who use day schools and those who homeschool has indeed been advocated in our own churches by the very consistories that are to “see to it that there are good Christian schools....” Grace PRC’s consistory has sought to encourage this cooperation. So has the Byron Center PRC Consistory. In fact, in a response that the consistory of Byron Center PRC gave to its congregation in the early 1990s when it was considering the nomination of an elder who homeschooled his children, it wrote these words to its congregation:

The consistory has investigated the legality of homeschooling in the state of Michigan, and the requirements of Article 21 of the Church Order. We have decided that homeschooling of one's children does not disqualify a man from serving in office, and therefore that it reserves the right to nominate for office in the church a brother who homeschools his children. The congregation may be assured that the consistory will nominate men from the congregation on the basis of all the requirements laid out in the Scripture and the Church Order.

The matter of homeschooling is a matter that touches on some of the dearest concerns that the members of the church can have: The concern of the education of our children in the face of the baptismal promises and the covenant demands of God; and the commitment that the people of God have to the good Christian schools that they have worked long and hard and with much sacrifice to establish and maintain. The consistory supports these schools with all its might, and strongly and unashamedly encourages the members of the congregation to use them.

Just as strongly (italics mine, MD) the consistory urges the members of the congregation to deal brotherly with each other: those who use the established Christian schools and those who give Christian education to their children in their homes. The demand of Scripture for us is love, patience, humility, dealing in meekness and kindness. Without this, no education of our children will profit to the glory of God and the salvation of our children. Without this dealing in love and humility there can be no blessing of God on the congregation. Beloved, "How good and pleasant is the sight when brethren make it their delight to dwell in blest accord."

May the Lord bless the deliberations of the synod and our churches by these deliberations, that we may all go forward together in the love of Christ, and guided by His Word, encouraging one another and every family and parent, in the grand and glorious work of the education and nurture of every soul entrusted to our care.

Respectfully submitted,
Rev. Mitchell Dick

SUPPLEMENT 41
Protest: Mr. Ken Feenstra

March 21, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brethren,

I protest the decision of Synod 2008 to not sustain my appeal.

I believe that synod's decision misrepresents Article 21 of the CO, is in conflict with Scripture and the literal reading of this article, disre-

gards the rule of Christ in the home and church, and promotes hostility toward home-school families, which is destructive, unchristian, and schismatic.

My hope and prayer is that synod will change their decision for the sake of the denomination, the congregation of Grace, Rev. Dick, covenant education, our outreach work, having a diverse Christian community, but most importantly for Christ's sake.

Sincerely,
w.s. Ken Feenstra

Dear PRCA Synod of 2009:

I protest the decision of Synod 2008 not to sustain my appeal. My protest consists of three parts: a general discussion, a point-by-point rebuttal of synod's decision, and a conclusion. Synod's decision and previous correspondence with the assemblies can be found in the Acts of Synod 2008 (AOS) on pages 47-49 (Synod's decision), 149-154 (Appeal to Synod 2008), and 154-162 (Protest to Classis, January 2008).

General Discussion

Synod's decision was that an officebearer must use the PR (parental day) schools if possible. This means that if a PR school is available, the officebearer must use it, unless there are good reason for not. Synod and classis rejected Rev. Dick's reasons for homeschooling, even though his consistory approved them. Synod and classis rejected Rev. Dick's reasons, even though he withdrew his children from PR schools to educate his children in his Christian covenantal home, a PR home; he did not place them in a non-PR Christian school or public school.

Synod's decision was based on a narrow, traditionalistic representation of Article 21 of the Church Order (CO).

Article 21: The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

Synod understood "shall see to it" to mean that the officebearers must promote the Christian schools by using them if possible. Additionally, synod understood "Christian school" to mean "Christian day school" exclusively, based on what Article 21 "has always been understood to mean" (supposed long-standing tradition). Scriptural grounds were not given for these representations, neither was a historical perspective presented to support this view, except for a cursory examination of the CO commentary of VanDellen and Monsma.

Further, synod argued that just because homeschooling may satisfy the underlying principles of Article 21, this does not mean that homeschooling satisfies the requirement of the article, at least not in this case. Ironically, how Article 21 “has always been understood” was a greater contributing factor in synod’s decision than the underlying spiritual principles.

Furthermore, Synod argued that an officebearer must pursue the “well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible.” Well-being was not defined, even though the meaning of well-being was critical to their arguments, and is rather subjective. For example, if one focuses too narrowly on the congregation, then the temporal happiness of the majority (or what holds the congregation together) can become a primary gauge of the well-being of the congregation. If not wary, anyone with a new or different idea or behavior (different from custom or tradition) can easily be judged as not seeking the well-fare of the whole, especially if the majority disapproves. Fortunately, however, neither the individual nor the majority rules in the church of Christ, Christ rules through his *Word*; and therefore, the well-fare (well-being) of the church and of the whole body of Christ is promoted by promoting the rule of Christ. Christ’s rule has given individuals, who are diverse, yet part of the whole, much freedom in how they live their lives; this is called Christian liberty. Christ has also given individuals much responsibility. This is especially true of the father, whose head is Christ, and who is the head of his home and must seek the spiritual and material welfare of his family. Therefore, the church and its assemblies may not interfere with or overrule a father’s authority (decision) in the home without compelling reasons—compelling based on tradition is not enough, compelling based on a narrow, non-literal, non-scriptural interpretation of the CO is not enough, but it must be compelling based on explicit and sound scriptural reasons. Unfortunately, synod’s decision did interfere with a father’s authority in the home, the reasons were not explicit and sound scriptural reasons, and therefore compromised the rule of Christ, His headship over the father, and cannot promote the true well-being of the congregation.

In contrast, my arguments were based on scripture, the literal reading of Article 21, the baptism vow, and a comprehensive analysis of the underlying spiritual principles of Article 21 (AOS, pp. 154-162); these arguments were not refuted. I argued that a good Christian home school is a “good Christian school in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.” (If a school is a place where an education is given, if a Christian school is where a Christian education is given, and if a good Christian school is a school where a covenantal Christian education is given, then a home school where a covenantal

education is given is a good Christian school.) Therefore, with regards to the Dick family, the consistory fulfilled its obligation “to see to it” as per Article 21: the children were in a good Christian school. On the other hand, if a home does not fulfill its obligations to bring up its children in the fear and nurture of the Lord according to the demands of the covenant, then that home should be dealt with as such. Rev. Dick was not accused of neglecting to bring up his children in the fear and nurture of the Lord, otherwise he would have been accused of sin; there were no accusations of sin in either classis’ or synod’s decisions in this regard. Therefore and further, it follows that a PR officebearer who transfers his children from one PR parental day school to another or to his home (parental home) is still using a good Christian school (and seeing to their use), and meets the demands of Article 21.

It is really quite simple: the intent of Article 21 (or at least it should be) is to make sure there are good Christian schools so that parents do not need to send their children to public non-Christian schools. There is no inherent conflict or inconsistency in homeschooling in addition to supporting the Christian day school, or vice versa. To create such conflict is sinful and schismatic, and should be dealt with as such. Regarding our children’s education, Christians should support and encourage each other, exhort and admonish each other to obedience, whether they educate their children at home or in the day school.

Point-by-point Rebuttal of Synod’s Decision

The decision of Synod included a single ground followed by five reasons (a-e). I will rebut the ground and reasons separately and in order. My rebuttals are bracketed [klf: ...].

Synod, B, 3: That synod not sustain the appeal of Mr. Feenstra, but uphold the decision of Classis East.

Ground: Mr. Feenstra’s appeal is based on the erroneous position that a practice which satisfies the underlying principle of a particular article of the Church Order must, in the nature of the case, be considered to be a fulfillment of the requirement of that article.

[klf: I will concede that it may not be enough to say that a practice which satisfies the underlying principle of a particular article of the Church Order must, in the nature of the case, be considered to be a fulfillment of the requirement of that article. However, if the practice holds both to the underlying principle and to the literal reading (not traditional representation) of the article, then the practice must be considered a fulfillment of the article. The practice of homeschooling holds to both the underlying principles and to the literal reading of the CO.

I argued in my original protest to the February 2008 Classis (AOS, pp. 154-161) that homeschooling does meet the demands of Article 21 by meeting the demands of Scripture, of the covenant, of the baptism vow, and of the underlying principles found in the CO commentary. These arguments were not refuted by classis or synod.

I argued that a home school, like a day school, is a school: home and day are merely adjectives describing the type of school. Article 21 merely states school, with no modifying adjective of home or day. The writers of Article 21 (revision 1914) properly did not specify the type of school, even though the context of the revision was the need for Christian day schools so that one did not need to use the public day school.

It should be enough to show that the Christian home school meets the demands of the covenant.

However, there is another reason why Article 21 must be viewed as inclusive of the Christian home school. It is the father's responsibility, not the church's, to see to the education of his own children: he must bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord. It is the father's (home's) responsibility to choose the type of school and subject matter of that education. The church's responsibility is to oversee that the father (home) does bring up the children in the fear and nurture of the Lord.

Fundamentally, it is not the business of the church to say what type or style of covenant education is best for a given family—the assemblies improperly made this matter of the home into an ecclesiastical (church) matter. The Scriptures place the children under the rule of their own parents, with the father as the head of his own wife, and by implication, his own children. *Not* someone else's wife and children, but his own; *not* the church as head or ruler, but the parents. In fact, the language of Scripture is downright possessive (jealous) when it describes the relationships between parents and their own children. (Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:7; Ps. 127, 128; Eph. 6:1-4; 5:23-33; I Tim. 3:1, 4-5; Tit. 2:4-5.)

Ex. 20:12—Honour *thy* father and thy mother: that *thy* days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Deut. 6:7—And thou shalt teach them diligently unto *thy* children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Eph. 6:1-4—Children, obey *your* parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour *thy* father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest

live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not *your* children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Eph. 5:23-24—For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to *their own* husbands in every thing.

Ps. 127:3-5—Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath *his* quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

Ps. 128:2-3—For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee. *Thy* wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: *thy* children like olive plants round about thy table.

I Tim. 3:1, 4-5—This is a true saying, if a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.... One that ruleth well his *own* house, having *his* children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)

Titus 2:4-5—That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love *their* husbands, to love *their* children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to *their own* husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

It is clear from the Scriptures that Christ instituted a certain amount of autonomy and independence for the home, just as Christ instituted a certain amount of autonomy and independence for the church, so that they are separate, but integrally related institutions. Christ being the head of both is the sole basis for the unity and fellowship of these two institutions, and therefore, Christ's word is the sole basis for understanding the relations between the two and for resolving disputes between the two.

Since the head of the home (husband, father) is Christ (not the church institute), then if the church wants to speak to the "how" of the father educating his children, the church must bring Christ (Scripture): the church has no other authority in the home. If the church does not bring Christ, the church usurps the authority and responsibility of the father, and ultimately usurps the headship of Christ over the father. For the church to make unbiblical demands of the father in the home goes against Christ Himself. To the point and besides, it is not a matter of Christian liberty for a father (parents) to educate his children in the home, it is his responsibility; Christian liberty

is for the father to send his children to an outside-the-home day school, not the other way around. (This does not mean that it is wrong to communally educate in the Christian day school or that home school families do not have any responsibility toward helping support the Christian day school. In fact, it is my prayer that God gives Christian home school families the grace to liberally support the Christian day schools despite the inexcusable treatment they are receiving because they are not using the Christian day schools.) Synod in its representation of Article 21 and in the resulting actions, turned Christian liberty and Scripture upside down, overstepped their bounds, and lorded it over the father and the home.

By creating extra-biblical—no, unbiblical—requirements for office-bearers, synod has taken “heed to the commandments of men, that turn from the truth” (Titus 1:14). Not only that, but synod is guilty of judging another man’s servant; for the father is Christ’s servant (Rom. 14:4, 6-10; I Tim. 3; Titus 1:14; James 4).

Titus 1:13-14—This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Rom. 14:4—Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

John Calvin in his *Institutes* (McNeill/Ford Lewis Battles, Westminster Press, book iv, 6, p. 1185) writes: “In his law the Lord has included everything applicable to the perfect rule of the good life, so that nothing is left to men to add to that summary. He did this for two reasons. The first is that he wants us to regard himself as the master and guide of our life. This we shall do if all our actions conform to the standard of his will, for in it all righteous living consists. The second is that he wants us to realize there is nothing he requires of us more than obedience. For this reason, James says: ‘He who judges his brother...judges the law; he who judges the law is not a keeper of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver...who is able to save and destroy’ [James 4:11-12 p.]. We hear that God claims this one prerogative as his very own—to rule us by the authority and laws of his Word.”]

Synod: Reason a: Article 21 requires that consistories promote “good Christian schools” – which, as VanDellen and Monsma point out, has always been understood to mean “good Christian Day Schools.” Article 21 not only sets forth the principle that the children of the church are to be instructed according to the demands of the covenant; it also specifies how this should be done.

[klf: VanDellen and Monsma were speaking primarily about good Christian day schools versus public schools. The writers of Article 21 (revision 1914) properly did not specify the type of school, even though the context of this revision was the need for Christian day schools so that parents would not use the public day schools.

Also, it is not obvious that Article 21 “specifies how.” In fact, it is obvious that Article 21 does *not* “specify how”—day, communal, etc, are nowhere to be found in the article—just read it.

Ironically, it was enough for synod to argue that it has “always been understood,” but it was not enough to argue to “satisfy the underlying principle.”]

Synod, Reason b: One may not argue that promotion of another kind of instruction can be considered a fulfillment of the requirement of that article simply because, in one’s own judgment, it meets “the demands of the covenant.”

[klf: First, I am not talking about another kind of instruction! I am talking about where the instruction might take place and by whom. Second, I do not and did not promote the covenantal nature of homeschooling based “just on my own judgment.” I presented arguments for this in my original protest to classis based on Scripture, the baptism vow, and a comprehensive analysis of the spiritual principles found in the CO commentary. My arguments have not been refuted by any of the assemblies. Therefore, I find this insinuation to be ridiculous.

I believe that synod needs to do their homework: to read the protests carefully (including previous supporting documentation), to engage the arguments presented, and to do this based on Scripture, instead of their own preferences (even if it is the preference of the majority in the PRCA).]

Synod: Reason c: Home schools, which are not addressed in Article 21 as it stands today, can be added in no other way than by overture.

[klf: This statement is patently incorrect. The CO says “school,” not “day school,” not “home school,” just “school.” It is just a matter of not arbitrarily excluding the home school as a subset of school.

To maintain that Article 21 needs to be changed by overture is to give in to the bizarre idea that a home school is not a school. If a home school is a school (which it is), and if a Christian home is a covenant institution, then a Christian home school is a covenant

institution that meets the demands of the covenant and Article 21.

Based on synod's mis-reasoning, one could just as easily argue that a "day" school is not a school, since the word "day" is nowhere to be found in Article 21.]

Synod: Reason d: Classis East was therefore correct in declaring that "while a Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances, Article 21 is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible."

[klf: Synod states that "a Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances," but does not tell us for sure if there are any instances or what the determining factors are. This is disturbing because any meaningful understanding of Article 21 rests on an understanding of the demands of the covenant. I believe that the demands of the covenant are that parents bring up their children in the fear and nurture of the Lord (to give or ensure that they receive a Christian education). Synod neither affirms nor denies that this is what the demands of the covenant are concerning our children's education.

"...Article 21 is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation." This statement is confusing and ambiguous. Is synod saying that in this instance the Christian home school does not meet the demands of the covenant, so therefore affecting the "well-being of the whole congregation," or is synod saying that it is not strictly about the demands of the covenant in this instance, but a case of the consistory pursuing "the well-being of the whole congregation"?

If the former, then it is incumbent upon synod to define and prove what constitutes the demands of the covenant. They have not. If the demand of the covenant is to use the communal day school if at all possible, then synod has a ground for saying that the well-being of the congregation is detrimentally affected by an officebearer home-schooling when there is a day school available—but synod correctly rejected this idea. However, if the demand of the covenant is that we must give our children a Christian education (bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord), then the doctrine of the covenant cannot be used as a ground against homeschooling, and homeschooling is perfectly fine in itself: it has met the scriptural standard.

If the latter, then it is incumbent that synod show and prove that homeschooling instead of using the Christian day school is detrimental to the well-being of the congregation. They have not. Contrary to synod, I believe that an officebearer homeschooling is not detrimental to the well-being of the congregation, but it is the response and attitude of those who demand that an officebearer must use the Christian day school that is detrimental to the well-being of the congregation. Why? Because the officebearer who is giving his children a Christian education at home is fulfilling his God-given responsibility as head of his home, as Christ's servant.

Exclusively promoting a local Christian day school does not determine whether or not the children are being brought up in the fear and admonition of the Lord (given a covenantal education). Synod does not prove or even attempt to prove from Scripture (Christ) that the well-being of the congregation is served by insisting on the use of the church-specified schools—because they cannot. They believe and want this to be true, but it is not. Nowhere in Scripture is the well-being of the congregation tied to what good Christian school is being used. In fact, Scripture says practically nothing about schools, and now synod makes them a basis for a congregation's well-being.

It seems like this is about a group of people who want everyone to educate the children in their way, and if anyone doesn't do it in their way, there is going to be trouble—life will be made difficult for anyone that steps out of line, their line, not Christ's. This is tyranny and cannot promote the well-being of the congregation.

By their decision, synod usurps the responsibility of the father in the home and the authority of Christ over that father in the home, and actually hinders the well-being of the congregation. This is wrong and is sinful.]

Synod: Reason e: Mr. Feenstra's position would allow for the introduction into the life and worship of the church practices other than those specified by the Church Order. For example:

- 1) Preaching on the Belgic Confession or some other confession instead of the Heidelberg Catechism, on the basis that this meets the principles of Article 68, that the sum of Christian doctrine be explained systematically.
- 2) Introducing more hymns into the worship of the church than those listed in Article 69, on the basis that these hymns are as biblical as the hymns allowed by Article 69.

[klf: Not so. These examples have little to do with the issue at hand.

First, unlike the type of Christian school used by a parent, preach-

ing and hymns in the worship service are evident, proper ecclesiastical matters and as such are properly dealt with by the Church Order.

Second, and importantly, Articles 68 and 69 are very specific, and Article 21 is not: Article 68 specifies Heidelberg Catechism, not creed; Article 69 specifies the Psalms (Psalter) and specific hymns, not hymns. In contrast, Article 21 specifies school, not day school, not home school, just school.]

Conclusion

I believe that synod's representation of Article 21 is too narrow, and is in conflict with Scripture and the literal reading of Article 21. Synod's representation makes the Christian home school into a second tier Christian school and makes the Christian home subservient to the Christian day school with regards to a child's education (God never instituted the Christian day school, but He did the home). Synod's representation promotes hostility toward home school families, which in itself is destructive, unchristian, and schismatic.

Instead of using the CO as a charitable guide to maintain order in the church institute, Article 21 was used to lord it over the home and to create unbiblical requirements for officebearers; and by doing so, synod overstepped its authority. Article 21 was used as a club against Rev. Dick (and all other officebearers who homeschool or wish to homeschool), instead of used charitably—through the spectacles of Scripture—so that true peace and order might prevail in the church of Christ.

Synod disregarded that the only rule the church has over the home is the rule of Christ, and Christ was not brought. Synod seems blinded by tradition ("has always been understood to mean"), possibly fear, an over zealous, almost fanatical, love for the Christian day schools, and more than likely by money (Christian schools are expensive). The Christian day schools are an important, beneficial institution, but they must not be so venerated (idolized) that the rule of Christ is disregarded, or else the PRCA is responsible for a grievous sin.

My hope and prayer is that the PRCA synod will see the error of its decision and change the decision for the sake of the whole denomination, the congregation of Grace, Rev. Dick, covenant education, our outreach work, having a diverse Christian community, and most importantly for Christ's sake.

Sincerely,
w.s. Ken Feenstra

SUPPLEMENT 42
Protest: Prof. Hanko

To the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches, 2009
c/o Mr. Don Doezema, clerk

Dear Brethren,

With this protest, I am asking synod to rescind its decision found in Article 49, page 43 of the Acts of the Synod of 2008. In this decision an appeal of Mr. Marvin Kamps against a decision of Classis East was rejected. The article reads: “The motion on the floor (Art. 47, B, 3) to reject Mr. M. Kamps’ appeal and sustain the decisions and grounds of Classis East is brought to a vote. Carried.”

The grounds of the decision are found in Article 47, pages 41, 42. I will not repeat those grounds here.

Briefly, the position of Mr. Marvin Kamps is that he protests classis’ decision that Article 21 of the Church Order does not require good Christian schools (Acts, 2008, Supplement 4, p. 162). It is clear from the decisions of classis that the emphasis falls on the word “require” in Article 21. Good Christian schools are to be desired, are indeed to be preferred, but are not a requirement. That is, it was classis’ position that good Christian schools are not a demand of the covenant. When Mr. Kamps appealed this decision to synod, synod upheld classis’ position.

This is the point that I am protesting.

The grounds for my protest are as follows:

1. The decision is a negation of the vow one makes at baptism when parents affirm that they “promise and intend to see these children... instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine (taught here in this Christian church), or help or cause them to be instructed therein, to the utmost of their power.”

Such a promise requires that parents have their children instructed in Protestant Reformed schools wherever possible, and that, where such schools are not possible, they still instruct them to the utmost of their power in the doctrines of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

2. Sending children to Protestant Reformed schools is a fulfillment of the requirement of Article 21 of the Church Order. And consistories must see to it that parents send their children to such schools, where they are available, and that, if they are not, parents still teach their children to the utmost of their power in Protestant Reformed truth.

Article 21 speaks of the need of Christian schools as a *demand* of the covenant. The demand is explicit in the question asked parents at baptism; the demand is to instruct their children to the utmost of

their power in Protestant Reformed doctrine. So Article 21 of the Church Order is doing nothing else but requiring that consistories see to it that parents keep their promise made at baptism.

3. Synod erred in not emphasizing the corporate responsibility of parents in the education of the covenant seed.

a. Our Christian schools are the fruit of the corporate activity of the church to provide education for their children to the best of their ability in the doctrines of the churches to which they belong.

b. At baptism, all covenant parents answer “Yes” to the question asked in the third question of the Baptism Form. While parents are primarily responsible for our own children, the congregation is also responsible for the children of our fellow believers. All erect schools to train all the children; all help to share the cost, whether we have children in school or not; all actively engage in the government of the schools for the benefit of the children of our fellow saints; we grieve when these children go astray in later life, because their waywardness is our responsibility as well as that of their family and church.

c. This responsibility we abandon when we refuse to send our children to the schools established by our fellow believers.

4. Strangely, synod contradicted its own decision when it, in fact, adopted the protest of Mr. Nick Kleyn and upheld his appeal to synod, an appeal which basically asked Grace’s consistory, Classis East, and synod to enforce Article 21 of the Church Order. Synod agreed that this protest was correct, that the consistory’s refusal to instruct its members to make use of our Protestant Reformed schools was indeed a demand of the covenant. On the one hand, synod in its rejection of Mr. Kamps’ protest basically took the position that education in our Protestant Reformed schools was an option, a preferable option, an option which ought seriously to be considered, but an option for all that. On the other hand, Mr. Kleyn was asking classis and synod to declare Protestant Reformed schools to be a demand of the covenant. Synod rejected Mr. Kamps’ position, but adopted the request of Mr. Kleyn.

5. Our Christian schools are, of course, for the covenant instruction of the children of the covenant. Part of that instruction is to teach our children how to live in the communion of the saints in the church of Christ. They learn this important part of their lives in our schools as well as at home and in church, and it is a part of covenant instruction that ought not to be minimized. They learn to live as a member of the body of Christ, something they do not learn when they are isolated from their fellow members in home-school situations.

I ask synod to rectify the contradiction in its decisions and declare emphatically that education in our schools (or the best schools available, if our own schools are impossible) is a demand of the covenant and the keeping of the promise made at baptism, written large in question 3.

Our prayers are for synod in its responsible work.

Respectfully submitted,
Prof. Herman Hanko

SUPPLEMENT 43
Protest: Mr. Paul Hoekstra

April 12, 2009

Synod of the PRCA
Mr. Don Doezema
5111 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear Brothers in Christ,

This letter is to inform synod that I am protesting the decision of Synod 2008 to reject the appeal of Rev. N. Brummel. I ask that synod consider this protest in the clear light of the Scriptures.

Included is the body of my protest with grounds, as well as supporting documentation.

In Christ,
w.s. Paul Hoekstra

Protest re N. Brummel Appeal

I protest the decision of synod, as given in the Acts of Synod (AOS) 2008, Article 64, in which a recommendation is made and carried:

That synod not sustain Rev. Brummel's appeal, but uphold the decisions of Classis East (p. 52, AOS 2008).

Information:

Synod asserts that Rev. Brummel makes several errors in his appeal. Several of the purported errors are listed:

1. Article 21 means simply consistories are to promote Christian education. (Synod asserts that Article 21 also requires what the method of education must be, i.e., a "day school.")
2. The matter of secular education of one's children is not an ecclesiastical matter.
3. Classis improperly laid extra-biblical requirements on an officebearer with its application of Article 21.

Grounds:

I. Rev. Brummel does not err in his contention that Article 21 of the Church Order (CO) means simply that consistories are to promote Christian education. The sub-grounds given by synod to prove their contention are in error.

A. Neither Article 41 nor the specified question for church visitation can be used to clarify what a “school” of Article 21 consists of.

1. Both documents are just as ambiguous in using the term “school” as Article 21 CO.

2. Neither document even attempts to further explain what a “school” must consist of. Instead they both obviously make reference to Article 21 CO and rely on it for any possible clarification.

B. The assertion of synod concerning what “schools” have always been understood to look like is simply not relevant. The article itself merely says “schools,” without giving any indication concerning what these ‘schools’ are to look like (the minimum number of required teachers or staff, the minimum enrollment of students, the minimum number of families involved, size of the building, education requirements of the staff, etc.). Therefore the article itself is broad enough to include anything that can be termed as “school.” To argue that the article indicates what these schools are to look like is an exercise in semantic gymnastics and political wrangling, which should not be tolerated in the church of Christ.

C. The assertion given by synod that good Christian “schools” has always been understood to mean good Christian “day schools” to the exclusion of any other manifestation of “schools” is not historically accurate.

1. The main support for such an assertion is a quote from VanDellen and Monsma which says, “All that know the history of our churches and the history of Article 21, realize that the article as it reads today means to say that our Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian Day Schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God entrusted children, if at all possible” (VanDellen and Monsma, pp. 94-95). Taken out of the context of the commentary and placed into the context of this controversy, this seems to support synod’s contention. However, the context soon clears up this misunderstanding. The meaning is that consistories promote schools for secular education set up by parents as opposed to “Church schools.” The sentence preceding the one from which

the above quote is taken says, “Church schools have never been advocated by the Reformed Churches.” To make the term “day school” appear as signifying the exclusion of anything that is not “day school” does injustice to the commentary and to the article itself.

2. VanDellen and Monsma *continuously* talk about support for schooling of a Christian nature over against that which is not of a Christian nature and *never* speak concerning one manifestation of good Christian schooling over against another. Therefore it is clear that the particular requirement of the article is that officebearers encourage the use of a good Christian “school” over against what is not a good Christian “school.” What that ‘school’ happens to look like is irrelevant.

II. Rev. Brummel does not err in his contention that the matter of the education of one’s children in the covenant is not an ecclesiastical matter. The sub-grounds given by synod to prove this contention are based on an incorrect application of Acts 15:28-29, and do not take into account a multitude of other passages of Scripture which clearly state that the conscience (Christian liberties) can be ruled by none but Christ.

A. Acts 15:28-29 does not teach that the church can claim authority over whatever matter it determines to be “for its own welfare.”

1. The Jerusalem council laid no demands on the members of the church than that which the Holy Spirit instructed (v. 28). We have the entire revealed will of God in the Scriptures, so anything that is said to be from the Holy Spirit can be tested. This word of God is in perfect harmony with the rest of Scripture as well, which shall be proved shortly.

2. We know that eating meat offered to idols (etc.) is of no significance when done with no thought for the idol (I Cor. 8:4-6; 10:19).

3. We know also that eating meat offered to idols to the perishing of a brother is uncharitable (I Cor. 8:9-11) and a sin against Christ (I Cor. 8:12). Indeed, Christ says to those who do so, “I have a few things against thee” (Rev. 2:14; 2:20).

4. Thus it is obvious that the Jerusalem council placed a specific requirement only on those people who were causing their brothers to perish by their actions and not on the church in general. This is no arbitrary claiming of authority at all, but a specific instance of the generic command of Christ.

B. Many other passages of Scripture and the confessions contradict synod’s claim that the church can claim authority over whatever it

determines to be “for its own welfare,” and specifically in the matter of the education of one’s children.

1. God gives the church authority and judgment in matters which are spiritual. Matthew 16:19; 18:15-18; Belgic Confession Articles 30, 32.
2. God gives the church authority and judgment in matters which pertain to her governing and operation. I Corinthians 14:40; Belgic Confession Article 32.
3. God retains for Himself authority and judgment in matters which pertain to the conscience but are otherwise liberties. Isaiah 33:22; Matthew 7:1-2; Romans 14:4; James 4:11-12; Galatians 2:3-5; Belgic Confession Articles 30, 32.
4. The matter of schooling, as long as it is done in accordance with Scripture, is neither spiritual nor pertains to the governing and operation of the church. On the other hand, it does pertain to the liberty and conscience of the believer. Therefore it is not a matter which the church can claim authority over.

III. Rev. Brummel does not err in his contention that classis laid an extra-biblical requirement on Rev. Dick, and thereby fell into legalism, when it advised Grace Consistory to require of Rev. Dick the reasons for his decision to homeschool his children, and to judge their validity. Synod’s ground and sub-grounds are based on the incorrect arguments that (1) Article 21 requires communal action in the schooling of the children of the church and (2) this requirement is based on scriptural principles.

- A. The assertion given by synod that Article 21 requires communal action in the schooling of the children of the church is not historically accurate. See the sub-grounds previously mentioned under I, B.
- B. This novel codification of the officially accepted method of schooling, except under extenuating circumstances where other methods are allowed, is a grasping of authority where God has given none and puts Article 21 of the CO at odds with the Scriptures and confessions. See the sub-grounds previously mentioned under II, B.
- C. Proof for this so-called scriptural principle is missing both from the decision of synod and from the Scriptures. On the other hand, proof that the education of the children is the responsibility of the home is abundant. Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7; 11:19-20; Psalm 78:4-6; Isaiah 38:19; Ephesians 6:4; etc.

Letter to Synod

April 12, 2009

Synod of the PRCA
Mr. Don Doezema
5111 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear Brothers in Christ,

This letter is to inform synod that I am protesting the decision of Synod 2008 to reject the appeal of Mr. K. Feenstra. I ask that synod consider this protest in the clear light of the Scriptures.

Included is the body of my protest with grounds, as well as supporting documentation.

In Christ,
w.s. Paul Hoekstra

Protest re K. Feenstra Appeal

I protest the decision of synod, as given in the Acts of Synod (AOS) 2008 Article 52, in which a recommendation is made and carried:

“That synod not sustain the appeal of Mr. Feenstra, but uphold the decision of Classis East” (p. 48, AOS 2008).

Information:

The ground given by synod for this decision is as follows:

“Mr. Feenstra’s appeal is based on the erroneous position that a practice which satisfies the underlying principle of a particular article of the Church Order must, in the nature of the case, be considered to be a fulfillment of the requirement of that article” (p. 48, AOS 2008).

The explanation of the ground given by synod contains several points, all of which hang on one premise. The premise is that Article 21 of the Church Order (CO) requires that consistory members promote the use of ‘day schools’ to the exclusion of other methods of schooling. Synod evidently means that officebearers must use these ‘day schools’ unless extenuating circumstances prevent such use.

“Article 21 not only sets forth the principle that the children of the church are to be instructed according to the demands of the covenant; it also specifies how this should be done” (pp. 48-49, AOS 2008).

Grounds:

I. The ground given by synod does not address the contention of Mr. Feenstra.

A. Synod's argument assumes that Mr. Feenstra agrees that Article 21 of the CO contains a particular requirement for communal action in the education of the children of the church.

B. In fact Mr. Feenstra rejects the idea that Article 21 of the CO requires communal action in the education of the children of the church.

Classis argues that Article 21 demands the exclusive use of the good Christian day schools, if possible. On the contrary, it is their interpretation of Article 21 that demands this, not the article itself (p. 152, AOS 2008).

C. Instead Mr. Feenstra argues that Article 21 of the CO requires only that secular education be performed from a Christian perspective.

Article 21 was included in the Church Order to assure that our children receive a Christian education as per the demands of the covenant. If the Christian home school meets the demands of the covenant, then it *is* a good Christian school of Article 21 and it is on par (Article 21 wise) with any PR Christian day school, anywhere and anytime (p. 150, AOS 2008).

D. Understanding Mr. Feenstra's second ground (from which synod apparently derives its response) correctly, it is clear that he is not arguing for the allowance of practices that meet the principles of the article but not the particulars of it. Instead he argues that the particulars of the article have nothing to do with the method of education, but only have to do with the nature of the education.

E. Thus the ground given by synod, that "Mr. Feenstra's appeal is based on the erroneous position that a practice which satisfies the underlying principle of a particular article of the Church Order must, in the nature of the case, be considered to be a fulfillment of the requirement of that article," does not address Mr. Feenstra's appeal at all.

II. The explanation of the ground given by synod contains a codification of the acceptable methods of schooling which is at odds with Scripture, the confessions, and church history.

A. This novel codification of the officially accepted method of schooling, except under extenuating circumstances where other methods are allowed, is a grasping of authority where God has given

none and puts Article 21 of the CO at odds with the Scriptures and confessions.

1. God gives the church authority and judgment in matters which are spiritual. Matthew 16:19; 18:15-18; Belgic Confession Articles 30, 32.
2. God gives the church authority and judgment in matters which pertain to her governing and operation. I Corinthians 14:40; Belgic Confession, Article 32.
3. God retains for Himself authority and judgment in matters which pertain to the conscience but are otherwise liberties. Isaiah 33:22; Matthew 7:1-2; Romans 14:4; James 4:11-12; Galatians 2:3-5; Belgic Confession, Articles 30, 32.
4. The method of schooling is a matter which is neither spiritual nor pertains to the governing and operation of the church. On the other hand, it does pertain to the liberty and conscience of the believer. Therefore it is not a matter which the church can claim authority over.

B. This novel codification of the exclusion of brothers in Christ who do not utilize a specific method of schooling, except under extenuating circumstances, is uncharitable to the brother. This decision forces such a brother to choose between being a member of a PRC and his desire to be an officebearer. Such a choice need not be made (see above mentioned ground I, D) and thus should not be forced. Matthew 20:24-28.

C. The assertion of synod concerning what “schools” have always been understood to look like is simply not relevant. The article itself merely say “schools,” without giving any indication concerning what these “schools” are to look like (the minimum number of required teachers or staff, the minimum enrollment of students, the minimum number of families involved, size of the building, education requirements of the staff, etc.). Therefore the article itself is broad enough to include anything that can be termed as “school.” To argue that the article indicates what these schools are to look like is an exercise in semantic gymnastics and political wrangling which should not be tolerated in the church of Christ.

D. The assertion given by synod that good Christian “schools” has always been understood to mean good Christian “day schools” to the exclusion of any other manifestation of “schools” is not historically accurate.

1. The main support for such an assertion is a quote from Van-Dellen and Monsma which says, “All that know the history of our churches and the history of Article 21, realize that the article as

it reads today means to say that our Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian day schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God entrusted children, if at all possible” (VanDellen and Monsma, pp. 94-95). Taken out of the context of the commentary and placed into the context of this controversy, this seems to support synod’s contention. However, the context soon clears up this misunderstanding. The meaning is that consistories promote schools for secular education set up by parents as opposed to “Church schools.” The sentence preceding the one from which the above quote is taken says, “Church schools have never been advocated by the Reformed Churches.” To make the term “day school” appear as signifying the exclusion of anything that is not “day school” does injustice to the commentary and to the article itself.

2. VanDellen and Monsma *continuously* talk about support for schooling of a Christian nature over against that which is not of a Christian nature and *never* speak concerning one manifestation of good Christian schooling over against another. Therefore it is clear that the particular requirement of the article is that officebearers encourage the use of a good Christian “school” over against what is not a good Christian “school.” What that “school” happens to look like is irrelevant.

Letter to Synod

April 12, 2009

Synod of the PRCA
Mr. Don Doezema
5111 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

Dear Brothers in Christ,

This letter is to inform synod that I am protesting the decision of Synod 2008 to uphold the appeal of Mr. N. Kleyn. I ask that synod uphold this protest and reconsider the appeal of Mr. Kleyn.

Included is the body of my protest with grounds, as well as supporting documentation.

In Christ,
w.s. Paul Hoekstra

Protest re N. Kleyn Appeal

I protest the decision of synod, as given in the Acts of Synod (AOS) 2008 Article 63 in which a recommendation is made and carried:

That synod sustain Mr. N. Kleyn's appeal against Classis East's decision, Art. 34, September 2007 (p. 65, AOS 2008).

Information:

The cause for the reversal, according to synod, is that "Classis should have acceded to Mr. Kleyn's request to advise the Grace PRC to require of Rev. Dick his reasons for not sending his children to the good Christian schools and work with Rev. Dick to the end that he use them" (pp. 65-66, AOS 2008).

Ground:

This explanation adds to the appeal of Mr. Kleyn a phrase which changes the essential position of Mr. Kleyn.

Explanation:

- A. Nowhere in Mr. Kleyn's protest (pp. 180-181, AOS 2008) or appeal (pp. 177-179, AOS 2008) can be found the idea that the Grace Consistory merely require of Rev. Dick his reasons for homeschooling instead of sending his children to the day schools.
- B. On the other hand, Mr. Kleyn requires only that "I wanted my Consistory to declare Rev. Dick's rejection of our good Christian schools in favor of 'homeschooling' unacceptable and to work patiently and wisely with him so that he would have his children instructed in these schools according to the requirements of Article 21 of the Church Order" (pp. 178-179, AOS 2008).
- C. Although Mr. Kleyn does allow for exceptions, it is clear that he does not include Rev. Dick's case as potentially creating one of these exceptions. He treats the possibility of exceptions and the case of Rev. Dick as mutually exclusive. "The reason I did not speak of exceptions is not because I believe there cannot be exceptions. My appeal was addressing the specific case of the minister of Grace PRC" (p. 178, AOS 2008).
- D. In fact, Mr. Kleyn goes much further than this in declaring that the day schools are in accordance with the demands of the covenant, where homeschooling is not.

The matter at issue in my appeal to Classis East was the Grace Consistory's approval of Rev. Dick's rejection of our good PR Christian schools in favor of "homeschooling" and the consistory's refusal to carry out

Article 21 of the Church Order by working (patiently and firmly) with Rev. Dick to see to it that he has his children instructed in these good Christian schools according to the demands of the covenant (p. 178, AOS 2008).

“I also believe that our Christian schools are a demand of the covenant” (p. 182, AOS 2008).

E. This idea was rejected when synod rejected the appeal of Mr. Kamps in Article 47 (pp. 39-42, AOS 2008).

Mr. Kamps does not prove that just as Scripture demands (requires) Christian education, so also in the same manner scripture demands (requires) the method this education must assume (p. 41, AOS 2008).

Documents related to protest

Attachment #A: January 2008 Classis’ response to Grace Consistory. [Please cf. Acts of Synod 2008, pp. 123-126.]

Attachment #B: Pertinent minutes of January 2008. [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 146, 174.]

Attachment #C:

- a. Pre-advice re Brummel Protest, January 2008. [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 146-149.]
- b. Pre-advice re Grace Consistory Protest. [Please cf. Supplement 36, p. 286]

Attachment #D Classis January 2008 Pre-advice re:

- a. Kamps Protest. [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 174-176.]
- b. Kuiper Protest. [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 212-215.]

Attachment #E Classis January 2008 pre-advice re:

- a. Grace Consistory Protest. [Please cf. Supplement 36, Appendix 2, p. 261.]
- b. Feenstra Protest. [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 161, 162.]
- c. Brummel Protest. [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 148-149.]

SUPPLEMENT 44

Protest: Mr. Marvin Kamps

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches

to convene on June 9, 2009

in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Dear Brethren of the Synod,

The Synod of 2008 in Article 47 and Article 49 (pp. 39-43 of the Acts of 2008) rejected my appeal against a decision of Classis East in January/February of 2008. I am protesting at this time the decision of the Synod of 2008. The specific decision reads as follows: "The motion on the floor (Article 47, B, 3) to reject Mr. M. Kamps' appeal and to sustain the decisions and grounds of Classis East is brought to a vote. Carried." I do not believe it necessary to quote all of point 3 of Article 47 or the classis' decision of January 2008, for one can read all of this material in the 2008 Acts.

Synod 2008, I believe, wrongly characterized my position. According to synod, my reasoning is flawed: I really agree with Classis East, according to synod. Synod 2008, however, overlooks the issue between us: The issue is not: must one be formally disciplined should he choose not to use our schools? Synod so badly wants to make *that* the issue; but it is not the issue. Synod 2008 wants to make the issue between us the "formal discipline" of those who choose not to use our schools. But the issue between us is: is the demand of the covenant the basis and motivational principle of the establishment and use of our schools by the parents? Does promotion of the schools include instructing the parents to use our schools? To both questions, Classis East and Synod 2008 said no! I say: yes!

Synod made several concessions to the position that I had promoted and defended before it, troublesome concessions, one may say. The synod conceded: 1. "The clear implication of the covenant is the establishment and maintenance of our Christian schools." 2. "While the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together...." 3. Synod also spoke of one's "covenantal *calling* to educate our children together"; one assumes they mean in our own schools.

What position is synod defending and upholding? It is this: 1. "Scripture does not require that this instruction be done in the good Christian schools promoted by Article 21." 2. "homeschooling is one's (his) biblical right because homeschooling falls within the area of Christian Liberty." (Cf. Classis East's decision, Jan/Feb 2008.)

I ask the delegates of Synod 2009 carefully to compare the terminology of the Synod of 2008 and the terminology of our Church Order, Article 21. To do so is very instructive: Synod of 2008 uses the term "recommends," even, "certainly recommends"; but the Church Order uses the expression: "demand" of the covenant; a "demand" that parents together educate their children in the schools that consistories promote. Synod, by its use of the term "recommends," is failing to use the terminology of Article 21. In addition, Synod of 2008 uses the expression: "the clear implication" of the covenant. Again, why such a weak word as "implica-

tion”? The Church Order speaks entirely different language, for the Article says: the consistories “shall” see to it; that is, as a matter of obligation; and the article speaks of the “demand of the covenant.” Synod’s weak, indecisive language does not do justice to the article, but is in conflict with it. I believe the synod and the classis love our schools deeply; take heed, therefore, to what you have written, for your position undermines Article 21 of our Church Order and, consequently, our schools.

Classis and synod have divorced the school from Christian education. According to Synod 2008, Christian education is required by the doctrine of the covenant; but the covenant does not require the school. The school is a matter of Christian liberty. Scripture does not require parents to send the children to the school that is *promoted by the consistory* according to Article 21 of the Church Order. *By such reasoning* we say to the parents in regard to the school, send the children wherever you wish; and, then, we can say to one another and our young people, go to the church wherever you wish, for the truth of God’s Word makes no demand on you. If one can and should divorce the human institution of the school from the demand of the covenant, one can do the same with the church institute. Even as there is no explicit command to send the children to the P.R. school, so also there is no explicit command to join, or remain a member in, the P.R. church institute, even though the truth of God’s Word would demand it for one who is able to do so.

Some have asked me what is meant by the *demand* of the covenant? My answer is that true, biblical doctrine describes a spiritual reality of life. If our children are: chosen in Christ, redeemed and sanctified in Him; and are God’s little friends in the world, etc.; then that same covenant requires not indifference to their instruction in the things of this world, but it requires in every discipline of education that the children are instructed as to their Sovereign Friend’s activities: in creation, history, science, math, etc. This divine activity may not be corrupted into evolution, human sovereignty, omniscient science, etc. Stating it very humbly and plainly, we could say: in the realm of the natural, if the reality of zero degrees in the winter *demands* that we wear a winter jacket, so also in the realm of the spiritual, the reality of the covenant *demands* that we instruct our children in our covenantal schools. If you acknowledge the logic of the hymn, “...love so amazing, so divine, *Demands* my soul, my life, my all,” then you will acknowledge as well the position of our fathers: the covenant demands our schools. That goal may not be always attainable. Some may not understand our enthusiasm and convictions in regard to the school. But when we have our own schools, we surely *do not* inform our people that they need *not heed* the leading and instruction of the elders, the promotion of the school in the preaching of the Word, and with bibli-

cal right ignore the prayers of the congregation, and neglect the labors of fellow saints. That is what classis and Synod 2008 *have done*: The school is a matter of Christian liberty; and Scripture does not require....

Because no course material of the school may conflict with the first commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," the Church Order says this education is to take place in "good Christian schools." The consistory must promote the good Christian school that in its instruction does not violate the first commandment. The members of the church are called upon to support the consistory in this work. Thus our own schools, for they are the *demand of the covenant*. I ask that my remarks about the first commandment be not misunderstood or, worse, misconstrued. One might say, here Kamps reveals his real intent and position: he wants formal discipline of those who fail to use our schools, when they are available. Formal discipline is occasioned by an egregious violation of the law of God. No, not formal discipline, for one who chooses not to use our schools may simply not understand the covenant of grace, or lacks the spiritual strength to do what he knows to be his calling; or is not able to send his children to our schools for economic reasons and reasons of logistics. Discipline is not the thing called for; *further instruction is*. Instruction in the covenant of grace and our calling as the parents of God's children entrusted to our care. That is the decision of 1983. The 1983 Classis West decision is not that the school is a matter of Christian liberty and that it is not required by Scripture and thus by our Church Order; but the decision is that we are called upon to preach and teach in regard to our schools wisely and timely and persistently. Once again, if the school is not required by Scripture, if it is not a demand of the covenant, then the issue is not any longer a matter of wisely and timely promoting the school, but we have come to the point that there is no biblical, covenantal basis for our schools. For a consistory to fail to instruct parents who send their children, when our own schools are available, to Christian schools, (or public schools) , which teach evolution, reject the historicity of Genesis 1-11, teach a Pelagian anthropology, deny in part or in whole the inspiration and infallibility of sacred Scripture, etc. is dreadful error; but *now no longer an issue*, for the school is a matter of Christian liberty, and Scripture does not require that the parents use the schools promoted by Article 21 of the Church Order, *according to Synod 2008 and Classis East*. Our people have used such Christian schools, some of the children were even sent to godless state schools; the first commandment was not violated, for we could do no differently. But the question before the synod is the matter of the faithful, persistent promotion of our schools in order that parents may be spiritually strengthened to perform this mighty work of the Lord.

Moreover, my contention is that if synod wishes to maintain the idea of "Christian liberty" in the matter of the school, it should *not* speak of a "covenantal calling to educate our children together." This expression

is *far too strong* for Classis East's decision to sustain. Classis said: The school is a matter of "liberty," i.e., of "Christian liberty." Classis East, with Synod 2008's approval, grounded and explained this matter of Christian liberty by stating: "Scripture does not require that this instruction be done in the good Christian schools promoted by Article 21." Synod 2008, thus, uses language suddenly that is far too strong for its actual decision. One cannot have it both ways. Is the school a matter of "calling," a calling identified as a "covenantal calling" besides? Synod asserts *nothing less than* a "covenantal calling" to educate our children together! Does not this language conflict with classis' decision? Synod should not try to have it both ways. If Scripture does not require our schools, nor the use of our schools by the parents, then, please, before God I beg you, do not contradict your decision with terminology that would leave the impression that Scripture does require the parents to use our schools. Why do that! What is your purpose?

Article 21 expresses the responsibility of a Protestant Reformed consistory in its leadership of its congregation relative to the *Christian day school*! The subject of Article 21 is not first of all "Christian education"; but the subject is the school that provides this Christian education for the children. The demand of the covenant, therefore, requires the school. If that is not true, what then is the ground for a consistory's *obligation* to "see to it that there are good Christian schools"? This question will not go away; nor can it be forever ignored. It was asked repeatedly of the delegates to the 2008 Synod, but no answer was given! I ask the Synod of 2009 to answer the question: If "the demand of the covenant" is not the basis and motivation of our schools, what is? How then does the demand of the covenant pertain to the school? I asked before: Is Article 21 biblical? I am not asking whether it conflicts with Scripture; I am asking, does Article 21 proceed from, does it bring forth, the principle of the covenant re the school?

Synod 2009 must not fail to ask itself the question: What is the basis of the instruction of Article 21 to a *consistory*? In other words, what is it that motivates and must motivate the consistory in the promotion of our good Christian schools? Does Scripture require this of the consistory? Classis said: NO! Classis said the school of Article 21 is merely an *ecclesiastical* requirement (B, 2, a, of Classis East's decision which was approved and defended by Synod of 2008). According to classis and synod, Article 21 is an *ecclesiastical* requirement that does not conflict with Scripture, but then it is *not required by Scripture either*.

In addition, Synod 2008 has imposed an extremely narrow and exclusive meaning to the expression "the requirement of Scripture." Classis and synod have set up a certain *premise* that emphatically precludes the

proposing of Christian discipline of those who fail to use our schools. I am dead set against Christian discipline in the formal sense in this matter of not using our schools; but I am not opposed to, and I believe Article 21 requires it, further instruction through preaching and praying with these parents, if they fail to see the need for our schools. This constant instruction in regard to our schools is always necessary *for all of us*; something that should not and may not happen, if the school is not a requirement of Scripture and the parents enjoy Christian liberty in this regard.

Let us return to that matter of synod's *premise*. If the church says that something is a "requirement" of Scripture and one should not fulfill that requirement, then he is, according to synod, subject to Christian discipline. Synod 2008 insisted that, if the school is said to be the demand of the covenant, then Christian discipline must follow for failure to send the children to our schools. Consequently, Synod 2008 placed the appellant before the all inclusive terminology: "in *all* circumstances" (B, 3, a, 2); "be done *only* in Christian schools" (B, 3,a, (1), a); "in only one way" (A, 4). Synod is saying: if the appellant rejects "Scripture does not require that this instruction be done in good Christian schools promoted by Article 21," then he must prove an all-inclusive, no-exceptions-possible and/or conceivable use of our schools. Why should I have to prove that? I am opposed to Christian discipline in this context! I am not asking for it! Why do you raise the issue?

I am deeply troubled by the interjection of the question of Christian discipline of unrepentant sin in this discussion and disagreement. The act of raising the issue of "Christian discipline" is in my judgment deliberate, but also inappropriate. This concept in this context terrifies people. The last thing people would want is discipline, therefore the attempt is made to present the school in such a way, i.e., free of the demand of the covenant, so that no one could even *mistakenly* raise the issue of discipline. However, no one is asking for Christian discipline! Why raise the issue? The PRC never condoned discipline in this matter. The PRC have strenuously resisted and declared the plea for discipline incorrect. Throughout our history our fathers understood Article 21 in the same manner as I am expressing it: The demand of the covenant is the basis of our schools, the motivation for the consistory's work, and the grounds of the parents to educate their children together in our schools. Synod 2008 rejects that understanding of Article 21. Its understanding of Article 21 is foreign to what our fathers thought and confessed.

I believe synod's restrictive use of the term "requirement of Scripture" improper and inappropriate. Are there not many principles, "beginnings of a spiritual life," that lack direct, explicit, biblical expression? Without those principles one inhibits spirituality. Principles we could mention for

example concerning Sabbath observance re dress and recreation, and the frequency of church attendance, etc. There are principles that govern the home, including marriage and child-rearing, and family life, that are not explicitly expressed in Scripture. Not every duty is *explicitly* expressed in Scripture. As Reformed people we live by principles of Reformed doctrine and confession, and these principles are derived from Scripture by “good and necessary consequence” (Westminster Confession, Chapter 1, 6).

Synod 2008 also speaks vaguely of the principles of Scripture, but denies these principles *determinative authority* in regard to the Christian day school. The school and the *obligation* of the consistory “to see to it” that there are good Christian schools is not grounded, *according to synod and Classis East*, in the demand of the covenant. The use or no use by the parents of the school is a matter of “Christian liberty”; and “Scripture (source of the doctrine of the covenant, please note!) does not require that this instruction be done in the good Christian schools promoted by Article 21.”

“*Beginselen werken door*” (Principles work through) is a very common Dutch Reformed expression. Our fathers meant that the principles of Scripture under the blessing of the Holy Spirit *work through* (from the heart outward to our actual walk and confession) to dominate and control our lives spiritually. We willingly submit to that. We love it. The expression “requirement of Scripture” historically included not only the explicit commands and directives of Scripture, but also the principles of organic Reformed church life and life in the home and society. Please note now, that if the covenant and its demand is not the principle of the school, then there is no Reformed principle that can work through (*doorwerken*) unto the establishment and maintenance of our schools!

False principles, however, also “work through” to destroy schools and churches!

Please, look around!

In conclusion, my position is, first, that the Christian school is the subject of Article 21 and is the demand of the covenant according to the article. Secondly, I believe Article 21 is biblical. I do believe that the Christian school is required by Scripture. I do not believe that one has the *biblical right* not to use the school because homeschooling falls into the area of Christian liberty. There may be other reasons why one does not use our schools, but Christian liberty is not one of them. Thirdly, by this assertion of Christian liberty Classis East made it *impossible* for consistories to promote our own schools through the preaching, through congregational prayer, through the work of the elders. Impossible, that is, if the consistory or preacher is going to uphold Article 31 of the Church Order. Article 31 says the decision of 2008 is settled and binding; con-

sistories and preachers may not ignore the fact that the school is a matter of Christian liberty, until this decision is shown to be wrong and is thus overturned. Classis and Synod 2008 promote instead: send the children wherever you as parents think desirable or preferable. Where in that position is the spiritual leadership that is the *obligation* of the consistory? One understands very well that if the school is only a matter of *Christian liberty*, no leadership need be given; and I contend *cannot* be given, and cannot because they *may not*, if the school is a matter of Christian liberty.

Synod's position conflicts with the Church Order because it also conflicts with the doctrine and reality of the covenant of grace as set forth in sacred Scripture.

May the Lord God, the God of the covenant of grace, give the synod the leading and guidance of the Spirit of the risen Christ, so that a return to the old paths may be accomplished and as a consequence thereof that hundreds and maybe even thousands of His little ones may continue to be nurtured in our beloved Christian day schools.

Sincerely,
Marvin Kamps

SUPPLEMENT 45
Protest: Mr. Jason Kuiper

April 15, 2009

To the Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America
Submitted to Mr. Don Doezema, Stated Clerk

Brothers,

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. May His Spirit of grace and truth guide you in all your deliberations.

I hereby protest the decision of Synod 2008 to sustain Nicholas Kleyn's appeal against Classis East's decision of September 2007:
Acts of Synod 2008, Article 63, pages 65-66:

Synod treats the recommitted material concerning the Appeal of Mr. Nicholas Kleyn (Art. 51, p. 47).

A. Information: See Article 50.

B. Recommendation: That synod sustain Mr. N. Kleyn's appeal against Classis East's decision, Art. 34, September 2007.

Explanation: Classis should have acceded to Mr. Kleyn's request to advise the Grace PRC to require of Rev. Dick his reasons for not sending his children to the good Christian schools and work with Rev. Dick to the end that he use them. (See Mr. Kleyn's protest to Classis East, September 2007).

Grounds:

1. The requirement of the Church Order, Article 21, is that consistories, and therefore individual officebearers, must promote the existing good Christian schools.

2. The Grace PRC Consistory contended that Rev. Dick could and did promote the good Christian schools. Consistency would require that, as Pastor, Rev. Dick's promotion of the good Christian schools would include the enrollment of his children in these schools, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

3. Rev. Dick had not provided any reasons to the congregation for not sending his children to the good Christian schools.

4. This is in fact what Classis East, September 2007 decided when it denied Grace Consistory's request "to uphold the decision of Grace PR Consistory to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home."

a. See also decisions of Classis East, September 2007: "a. The rule of Article 21 is binding on all consistories of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It requires every minister and elder to promote the establishment and use of good Christian schools in community with other Reformed believers."

b. See also decisions of Classis East, September 2007: "a. An officebearer who does not send his children to good Christian schools, when they are available, and gives no valid reason for doing so to the satisfaction of the consistory (so the consistory can inform the congregation) cannot effectively fulfill the duties required of every consistory member by Article 21. Officebearers must be examples to the congregation: I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17; II Thess. 3:7." Carried.

I believe this decision to sustain Kleyn's appeal is in error for several reasons:

1. Kleyn's appeal to Classis East did not include any request "to advise the Grace PRC to require of Rev. Dick his reasons for not sending his children to the good Christian schools." His appeal was simply this: "I object to the Consistory's decision that they find Rev. Dick's rejection of our Protestant Reformed Christian schools, in favor of homeschooling, acceptable, and support him in this."

2. Classis East understood Kleyn's appeal correctly, and decided "not [to] uphold the appeal of Nicholas Kleyn *that the consistory of Grace PRC judge Rev. Dick's decision to homeschool his children unacceptable*" [emphasis mine].

3. Synod 2008's explanation for its decision *misrepresented* Kleyn's appeal: "Classis should have acceded to Mr. Kleyn's request *to advise the Grace PRC to require of Rev. Dick his reasons for not sending his children to the good Christian schools*" [emphasis mine].

4. Nowhere did Kleyn's appeal address Rev. Dick's *reasons* for

homeschooling, either to claim they were invalid, or that the consistory hadn't (but should have) required of Rev. Dick his reasons. Classis East *later* addressed these things, but Kleyn's protest had not.

5. The grounds for the decision not only make *no reference* to Kleyn's appeal, but do not even represent the *substance* of his appeal. Instead, the four grounds appear to be a fresh, made-to-order argument against the Dicks' homeschooling, drawn not from Kleyn's appeal, but from various subsequent statements by Classis East itself.

I therefore request that you rescind this decision, with its grounds. May God grant you wisdom in judging the merits of this protest.

I also request that you review and adopt the original recommendation of the committee of pre-advice to reject Nicholas Kleyn's appeal: *Acts of Synod 2008*, Article 50, pages 43-46: [Please cf. Acts 2008, pp. 43-46.]

I believe this recommendation to reject Kleyn's appeal is correct and necessary for several reasons:

1. As the committee of pre-advice correctly stated, Kleyn's appeal is indeed based on a "wrong interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order" that would make *parents' use of good Christian schools* a "demand of the covenant."
2. As the committee of pre-advice correctly stated, "The demand of the covenant is *Christian education*" [emphasis mine].
3. This wrong interpretation constitutes not merely an innocent misunderstanding of an article of the Church Order, but nothing less than *false doctrine concerning God's covenant*, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9).
4. This false doctrine entangles believing parents and their children with a yoke of bondage (Galatians 5:1), troubling them with words and subverting their souls, since the Lord has given no such commandment (Acts 15:24).
5. The preaching of this false doctrine, and similar nonsense, and toleration of such preaching by consistories and ministers who should and do know better, has created unrest in several congregations throughout our denomination, and must be brought to an end.

I therefore request that you adopt this recommendation, with its grounds. May God grant you wisdom in judging the merits of this request.

In Christ,
Jason Eric Kuiper
Grace Protestant Reformed Church

SUPPLEMENT 46
Protest: Mr. Bert Mulder

January 23, 2009

Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches
to convene on June 9, 2009
in Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church, Hudsonville, Michigan

Esteemed brethren in our Lord Jesus Christ,

I hereby protest the decisions of Synod 2008, in particular its decisions in Article 63, upholding the appeal of Mr. Nicholas Kleyn, its decisions in Article 52, not sustaining the appeal of Mr. Feenstra, its decisions in Article 55, not sustaining the appeal of Mr. Kuiper, as well as its decisions in Article 64, not sustaining the appeal of Rev. Nathan Brummel.

Regarding synod's decision in the Mr. Kleyn appeal in Article 63, grounds:

1. The requirement of the Church Order, Article 21, is that consistories, and therefore individual officebearers, must promote the existing good Christian schools.

Nowhere was this charge laid formally upon individual officebearers.

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

Just as the oversight of the church is by the consistory as a body, an individual officebearer cannot act officially on his own. The oversight of the church always acts as a body. Compare with Matthew 18:17: "And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." Also James 5:14: "Is any sick among you? let him call for the *elders* of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord."

2. The Grace PRC Consistory contended that Rev. Dick could and did promote the good Christian schools. Consistency would require that, as pastor, Rev. Dick's promotion of the good Christian schools would include the enrollment of his children in these schools, unless there are extenuating circumstances.

3. Rev. Dick had not provided any reasons to the congregation for not sending his children to the good Christian schools.

4. This is in fact what Classis East, September 2007 decided when it denied Grace Consistory's "request to uphold the right of Rev. Dick to educate his children at home."

Grounds 2 through 4 deal with the premise that Rev. Dick's decision to homeschool was unacceptable, the main reason given that he did not give his consistory good and sufficient reasons. It appears, though, that his consistory was satisfied with the reasons given by Rev. Dick. Rev. Dick did provide his reasons to his consistory. As such, he did satisfy the "extenuating circumstances." Moreover, it was the function of the consistory to judge Rev. Dick's motives, although not his conscience, and as such to report to the congregation. Just as it is a judgment call on behalf of the consistory in nominations for office, Article 22 of the Church Order:

The elders shall be chosen by the judgment of the consistory and the deacons according to the regulations for that purpose established by the consistory....

It was individual members of the congregation that did not like the decisions made by its consistory in this matter, prompting the appeal to Classis East by them. I consider that these appeals were never legally before Classis East, as the classis may not lord it over the congregations, just as synod may not lord it over the classis. Even though Article 31 of the Church Order correctly gives the right of appeal, seems to me that Classis East did not consider the situation that these members were not accepting of the judgment and wisdom of its consistory in deeming the reasons for Rev. Dick good and sufficient. As such they were, in effect, sitting in judgment of the conscience of not only Rev. Dick, but also his consistory (I Cor. 10:29). Classis East had decided, as upheld by synod in the Mr. Kamps appeal, that it was a matter of liberty, and that the parents have the freedom to use sanctified judgment, thus synod was contradicting itself in the different decisions on the Article 21 matters. It also was the judgment of F.L. Rutgers that members and officebearers must have freedom of conscience in these matters, and that this would not be an impediment for them to serve in the offices in opinions 33 (supplement 2) and 34 (supplement 3) in his *Kerkelijke Adviezen I* (Ecclesiastical Advice), 1921. Rutgers was, and still is, an eminent Dutch authority on church polity, and was member of the *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland*, in many ways our forefathers and mother churches. His advice in this is that it is the parents that are called by God and responsible; that exemptions must be allowed; and that the conscience may not be bound. These translations from the Dutch, as well as all other translations used in this protest, are mine.

This parental judgment, moreover, is also the charge laid upon parents, particularly fathers, in Scripture. Thus, anyone who dictates where parents must have their children educated acts against Scripture, specifically Deuteronomy 6:1-8:

¹Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:
²That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.
³Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.
⁴Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:
⁵And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.
⁶And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:
⁷And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.
⁸And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

This passage, in the first place, makes clear the parental responsibility, rather than the corporate responsibility. The command is given to individual fathers to train their children. “*Thou* (singular) shalt teach them diligently to *thy* (singular) children....” The command is not given to the covenant community as a whole to train their children together. Thus, for synod to mandate that, at the very least, officebearers must train their children in communal schools adds to the requirements that Scripture puts forth. It is true that synod did not mandate this explicitly. However, the effect of synod’s decision was to shut the door against homeschooling when it involves officebearers. Synod adds to the requirements of Scripture, because Scripture itself does not require that schooling be communal. Then we must hear the warning of Scripture concerning making additions to God’s Word: Revelation 22:18-19.

¹⁸ For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book:
¹⁹ And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Regarding specifically the Mr. Feenstra decision (Article 52), grounds:

- a. Article 21 requires that consistories promote “good Christian

schools”—which, as Van Dellen and Monsma point out, has always been understood to mean “good Christian Day Schools.” Article 21 not only sets forth the principle that the children of the church are to be instructed according to the demands of the covenant, it also specifies how this should be done.

This may be true in practice, although this is open for debate, for the present Article 21 of the Church Order was revised by the Synod of the Christian Reformed Church. When this article was framed in its present form, homeschooling was not at issue. What Article 21 was addressing was the public schooling in opposition to the Christian schools. However, regarding the scope of Article 21 of the DKO (Original Church Order of Dordt),

XXI.

De Kercken-Raden sullen allomme toesien datter goede Schoolmeesters zijn, die niet alleen de Kinderen leeren lezen, schrijven, spraken, ende vrije Consten, maer oock deselve inder Godsaligheyt ende inden Catechismo onderwijzen.

The Consistories shall see to it that there are good Schoolmasters, who shall not only teach the Children reading, writing, languages, and the liberal Arts, but also educate them in Godliness and the Catechism.

Synod of Dordt 1618-1619 did not in any way condemn or contradict homeschooling in its considerations, even though homeschooling was practiced in those days, especially by the rich and famous, employing governors and private tutors for their children. See appended considerations of the Synod of Dordt, in its session 17, November 30, 1618 (supplement 1), where it considers the ecclesiastical scope, the churches’ interest in secular education (all the schools being public in that day), defining the churches’ interest solely as the religious education, or, in other words, the catechizing, as well that the teachers be professing members of the church. This version of the Church Order was retained by the Dutch *Gereformeerde Kerken in Nederland* until 1944.

As also Synod 2008 decided, in Article 47, in its rejection of the Mr. M. Kamps appeal, that Mr. Kamps does not prove according to Scripture the method this education must assume. Thus, in 3, a, 1), b), they upheld Classis East that “Scripture does not specify exactly how the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished. God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children.” Furthermore, synod stated in 3, a, 2, that “While the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom of fulfilling their covenant calling by educating

their children together, it does not necessarily mandate parents to educate their covenant children together in all circumstances.” This contradicts the synod’s decisions in this matter.

Furthermore, our Church Order, in Article 85, states that “Churches whose usages differ from ours merely in non-essentials shall not be rejected.” The exact scope of Article 21 of the same Church Order is certainly not an essential, and is certainly not a confessional matter. As such, the consistory of Grace Church should have been allowed to exercise Article 21 in the way their considered wisdom mandated.

Moreover, we read in Article 32 of the Netherlands Confession of Faith: “...Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God...” These decisions by classis and synod have certainly not tended to nourish, nor preserve, concord and unity in the churches.

Regarding the Mr. Kuiper decision (Article 55) ground 1, b):

The consistory indicates that the very fact that Rev. Dick’s decision to homeschool was a decision of conscience is decisive for the consistory to allow Rev. Dick to homeschool. This becomes clear from C, 3, a, 2) of classis’ decision, “The consistory states in its April 2, 2007 letter to the Schimmels, ‘Our position is that, in fact, and because Scripture alone must be our guide, we must respect pastor’s decision to homeschool, and be at peace about this, since this decision is, by his own admission, a matter of conscience; he and his wife ‘feel convicted in their conscience that it is right, in the sight of God, that they do this.’”

As also, ground 4, b):

Classis, however, recognized that one’s conscience may in some instances make it impossible for one to fulfill the obligations of the office. In its treatment of the Schimmel appeal, classis stated in explanation of its ground, “2) No member, not even an officebearer, may be required to act against his conscience in matters of Christian liberty (Rom. 14), though in certain instances an officebearer’s holding to his conscience may jeopardize his office.”

In order for someone not to be able to honorably serve in the offices, one would have to commit some gross public sin, or otherwise not meet the biblical requirements for office, by not being an example to the flock. However, merely not using the communal Christian schools does not violate the requirement for office. Rev. Dick has not been found guilty of gross public sin, nor is the mere fact of his homeschooling in any way an indication that he does not, in fact, support Christian schools. As a matter of fact, if he was called by God to a location where there are no

good Christian day schools, he might well be commended for a decision to homeschool, rather than using the liberal Christian day schools, or a public school. As also we find many officebearers that do so, in our churches and missions where there is no 'Protestant Reformed' day school.

More importantly, though, the decisions of synod are contrary to Article 32 of the Netherlands Confession of Faith:

In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church; *yet they ought studiously to take care, that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever.* Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God.

Where we confess that we have to be very careful not to introduce human ordinances, and, moreover, to be extremely careful not to bind and compel the conscience in any manner. Also Martin Luther placed a very high and important role on the conscience, when he was facing the Emperor at the Diet of Worms, when he stated:

Since your most Serene Majesty, and your High Mightiness, require from me a direct and precise answer, I will give you one, and it is this. I cannot submit my faith either to the Pope or to the Councils, because it is clear as day they have frequently erred and contradicted each other. Unless, therefore, I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or on plain and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgment of error, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience. HERE I STAND. I CAN DO NO OTHER. MAY GOD HELP ME. AMEN.

Please find appended advice from F.L. Rutgers, in his *Kerkelijke Adviezen I* (Ecclesiastical Advice), 1921, question 33 (supplement 2), where he deals with the question whether someone who sends his child to the public school is electable as deacon. His advice in this is that it is the parents that are called by God and responsible; that exemptions must be allowed; and that the conscience may not be bound. This opinion is further reinforced by his judgment in question 34 (supplement 3), where he considers if a preacher who does not send his child to the Christian school in his town is censurable. Rutgers' opinions stated in both these

cases are opposite that in the Mr. Kuiper decision by synod, Article 55, B, 3, a, 4), b).

VanDellen and Monsma also face this question:

Can one who is opposed to Christian schools serve as Consistory member? Not very well. Those who serve in Consistory pledge to uphold the doctrine and government of the Churches. (Cf. "Form of Subscription.") Now, the Church Order, according to which they help to govern the Church, requires that they promote and sponsor Christian schools. Therefore one who is opposed to these schools cannot serve in the Consistory. He cannot do what is expected of him. Even those who assume a lukewarm attitude toward the Christian school movement are not desirable candidates for the Consistory. We should, of course, remember that every case must be judged on its own merits. A general rule in this matter should never be made (*The Church Order Commentary*, p. 99).

Regarding the Rev. N. Brummel appeal, Article 64, most matters I am protesting are already treated above, such as ground 1, c, and 4, b. I will here treat ground 3, however:

Rev. Brummel errs in his contention that the Grace Consistory and Classis East violated Article 30 of the Church Order by entering into the substance of the protests of N. Kleyn and the Schimmels against Rev. Dick homeschooling his children. Rather, the protest of N. Kleyn and the Schimmels concerned the proper application of Article 21 of the Church Order and therefore dealt with ecclesiastical matters.

Some of the substance of this was dealt with already above, in the protest of the Mr. Kleyn decision. This is a matter of individual members not agreeing with the judgment of their consistory in regards to their pastor. By treating the substance of the protests, classis violated the autonomy of the local congregation.

Also, is this whole matter an ecclesiastical matter, and as such legally before classis and synod, according to the requirements of Article 30? Article 21 reads:

The consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian schools in which the parents have their children instructed according to the demands of the covenant.

Considering this article, taking in consideration the original article of the DKO, the scope of the article is that consistories shall see to it that there a good Christian schools, giving covenant instruction. The scope of the article is not, and was not envisioned by Dordt, at least, to compel

parents to send their children to such schools. Thus, at Grace Church, the requirement of Article 21 was met, as we observe that there are several good Christian schools available, and the consistory of Grace Church is seeing to it, as a consistory, and has treated this matter to the extent they may with Rev. Dick, outside of compelling his conscience.

Brethren, I would not have brought this protest, except that my conscience compels me. As standing on the walls of Zion, I am charged to cry out when I see matters that I deem, in light of Scripture, could hurt the sheep.

This matter has brought great division in our Protestant Reformed Churches, which causes me great grief. My background is in the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland* (Reformed Congregations of North America are their sister churches), in which they have parochial schools. Even though I admit this was not what synod decided, the real and present danger I see is that this is a move to parochial schools, and not with our biblical principle of parental schools. And yes, there have been, and are, homeschooling parents that fit the label of being independent minded, and not willing to work together for the communion of the saints, as such showing they are sheep. However, the sinfulness of certain people should never override the principles of Scripture. There are, however, other, more constructive ways to prosper and support our Christian schools. The Christian schools could have a big role there, in overseeing the homeschooling (a government requirement for homeschooling in Alberta, Canada). The Christian schools could make available online schooling for areas such as our mission fields and where we have small churches, where it is impractical to establish schools. And especially, our schools could compete, and see to it that they are indeed *good* Christian schools. Schools of which the upright godly walk of their students is spoken of.

Brethren, above all, let us all work together, rather than risking schism in our churches. Let us deal with matters in their proper, biblical, church orderly manner. Let us leave the discussion of these matters to the ecclesiastical assemblies, and not in public forums, where we give cause to have His name evil spoken of.

I pray that our heavenly Father will be with synod in its deliberations, and that He will bless its decisions. That everything may be done to the glory of His great name. We have the confidence that He will maintain His church, as it is His church.

Yours in Christ,
Bert Mulder

Supplement 1

Synod of Dordt 1618-1619

Session 17

November 30, 1618, Friday A.M.

Is read the form of the synodical decision regarding a further catechizing of the young and old, abstracted and formulated from the written advice, received both from the foreign as well as from the domestic *delegates*, in this manner.

In order that the Christian youth, from the time of her earliest infancy, be diligently educated in the fundamentals of the true religion, and be filled with true godliness, catechizing in three different manners must be observed.

In the homes from the parents; in the schools from the schoolmasters; and in the churches, from the preachers, elders, and readers, or sick visitors.

Moreover, in order that all these may exercise their office diligently, shall the Christian Magistrates be requested to promote a such holy and necessary work with their authority; also shall all those, who are charged with the supervision and visitation of churches and schools, be admonished to especially take care of this business.

The office of parents is, that they are entrusted at home to most diligently educate their children, as well as their whole household, [42] in the fundamentals of the Christian religion to each one's level of understanding, admonishing *them* seriously and diligently in the fear of the Lord and upright godliness, to take them with them to hear the Word of God, diligently reviewing with them the heard sermons, especially the catechism sermons, reading to them some chapters of the holy Scripture, or instructing someone to read those to them, giving them the principal passages from Scripture to memorize, and to imprint those, explaining those in an agreeable manner conducive to the tender youth, and in that manner preparing them for the catechism in the schools, and when they are come to those, to establish them, to encourage them, and to further them to the utmost of their ability. All parents, according where such admonition may take place, must be seriously and diligently admonished, whether openly in the sermon, or privately, whether in the normal visitation before the Lord's Supper, or at any other set times, by the preachers, elders, and sick visitors. If any parents, confessing the Reformed religion, have been found wanting in this holy work, they shall be, by respectful admonition of the preachers, and, as the case requires, by censure of the Consistory, be brought to realize their serious obligation.

Schools, in which the young youth is suitably educated in godliness and the foundations of the Christian doctrine, shall be established not only

in the cities, but also in all the villages, anywhere there has not been previously established one; and the Christian Magistrates shall be requested to pay the schoolmasters an honest wage, so that men may be used who are capable to this service, and that they thus be more diligent in their service; but especially, that the children of the poor be educated for free, and not be excluded from the benefits of the schools. In the service of the schools shall no one be used than he who is a member of the Reformed Church, endowed with testimonies of an upright faith and pious life, and well versed in the catechetical doctrine, and who will underwrite with his hand the confession and the Netherlands catechism, and making the holy promise, that he, in this manner of catechizing, will diligently educate the youth entrusted to him in the fundamentals of the Christian religion.

The office of these schoolmasters shall be to exercise all their disciples, according to their age and understanding, at least two days per week, not only in memorization, but also in the understanding of the catechism. To this end shall a threefold form of the catechism be used, fitting the threefold situation of the youth.

The first shall be for the children, and shall consist of the Articles of the faith, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, and the institution of the Sacraments and the ecclesiastical discipline, with some short prayers, and simple questions, fitting the three parts of the catechism. To these may be added some principal texts of the Holy Scripture which encourage to godliness.

The second shall be a compendium of the catechism of the Palatinate (Heidelberg Catechism—GM), in common use in our churches. Therein shall those be further educated who are somewhat advanced in the previous. Both forms shall be constituted, either according to the example of the Churches of the Palatinate, or the Churches of Middelburg, as prescribed by this Synod.

The third shall be the catechism of the Palatinate, accepted in our churches, in which shall be educated those who have advanced in age and knowledge. The Walloon Netherlands Churches, who for long time have used the catechism of Geneva, may continue to keep such in the schools and Churches. But other forms of catechizing the schoolmasters will not be allowed to use. Moreover, of the Magistrate shall be requested to throw out of the schools, through their authority, all the Popish catechisms, and all other books that contain errors and abominations. In addition shall the schoolmasters take care that the disciples shall not only memorize these forms, but also reasonably well understand the doctrine contained in such.

To which end they shall explain those according to each one's understanding, and diligently and repeatedly enquire of them if they understand

the sense. The schoolmasters, head for head, [43] shall bring the school-boys entrusted them to hear the holy sermon, but especially the catechism sermon, and shall diligently require account of them.

And, in order that one may have knowledge of the diligence of the schoolmasters and the advances of the youth, shall it be the office of the preachers, accompanied with an elder and (if necessary) one of the Magistrates, to often visit all the schools, whether private or public, to encourage the *schoolmasters* to be diligent, to lead in the catechism class, and to educate the youth with their example, to speak to them in a friendly manner, to question them, and, with holy admonition, praise, and small gifts from the Magistrate, to encourage to diligence and godliness. The *schoolmasters*, if any are found to be lacking or unfaithful in their office, shall be seriously admonished by the preachers, and (if necessary) by the consistory regarding their office. If they will not follow these admonitions, shall the Magistrate be requested to bring them to their required obligation, or else have others with more ability replace them. Finally shall be requested of the Magistrate, that no schools be tolerated which do not allow these holy exercises of catechizing, or are lacking therein. The office and discretion of the preachers in the Church shall be, to compose the catechism sermons in such an open manner, that they be reasonably short, and adapted to the understanding of not only the adults, but also of the youth. The preachers shall be praiseworthy who are diligent and conscientiously use their time to see that the schools, especially in rural areas, diligently review those, and who do not shy away from that labor. In order that those who are advanced in years, never educated in the schools, or not enough advanced in the schools, may be better educated in the fundamentals of the Christian religion (since the experience teaches, that the usual teaching of the church, whether catechetical or otherwise, is not sufficient for many to implant the knowledge of the Christian religion, such as should be usual for God's people; and the custom dictates, that the living voice has very great power, when, through common questions and answers adapted to every one's understanding, which is the best manner of catechizing, the principles of religion be impressed upon the hearts; shall it be the office of the preachers, with an elder, to go to those to be taught, either in their homes, in the consistory room, or some other fitting place, to call together each week a reasonable number, whether of the members of the Church, as also other adults, to discuss with them in common the principles of the Christian religion, and according to occasion of their understanding, advancement, and knowledge catechize them, review catechism sermons, and use all diligence, so that each come to a clear and sure knowledge of the catechism. Those who wish to join the Congregation shall, three or four weeks before the communion service,

be taught diligently and repeatedly, in order that they become more able and ready to give account of their faith.

But the preachers shall take care, to call to them those to be educated, in which they see that there is a marked hope of fruit, and those whom they know are concerned with the salvation of their souls; and also at the same time ought to be called together those whose similarity of condition is such that it may aid them to speak freely.

These gatherings shall be opened and closed with prayers and holy admonitions.

There is no doubt, that all this, for so far as it is done with a desire, wakefulness, carefulness, faithfulness, diligence, and discretion, as is becoming of the preachers, who shall once have to give account of their flock entrusted to them, in short order shall bring abundant fruit due to these labors, both in the advance of the faith, as also in the sanctification of life, to the honor of God and the advance of the Christian religion, to God's blessing, as shall be obvious to all men, and cause our Churches favor and increase.

Are delegated to compose the forms of the lesser catechism, Franciscus Gomarus, Johannes Polyander, Antonius Thysius, Hermannus Faukelius, Balthazar Lydius; and Godefridus Udemannus; [44]

And they are admonished, in the composition of these forms, as much as is possible to stay with the wording of the greater catechism.

Supplement 2

Rutgers, F.L., *Kerkelijke Adviezen I* (ecclesiastical advice), 1921

33. Is someone, who sends his child to the Public School, electable as deacon? (Art. 21)

(1915)

47. I would gladly agree to your request to answer the correspondence I recently received from you quickly, but because of that, my answer must be short.

I see in your correspondence, that there are in your congregation brethren, who as proponents of Christian school education, correctly as the norm, state that in each place where there is a Christian school, Christian parents must send their children there, but who would then make such rule so strict and absolute, that there is no room for any exceptions.

Such exceptions do occur continually in daily life, whether the grounds therefore are the place the parents live, the health of the child, his talents and aptitude, in the scope of the education that one or more courses, which the child must learn, cannot be offered, in the experience of the child, that, even though the education in general is very good, he does not progress, and many other circumstances.

In such cases the parents, who are thereto called by God and as such responsible to Him, have to decide. One can, and must seriously point out to them, that they, in case of Christian education, must, as much as possible, set aside any concerns; but one may not in reality force them to something, which to their conscience would be too harmful for their child, not only in secular, but also in the spiritual sense. Here an attempt to force would even harm our Christian school education.

About the case whereof you wrote me, wherein the specific child would repeat the same grade for the third time, I cannot say anything else, but that I myself would not leave my child in the same school, as I always consider it harmful for a child to repeat the entire same grade three times, often even so harmful that the child cannot overcome in all the rest of his life. Notwithstanding that, the education at that school and the accompanying childrearing can, of itself, be very good; only not for that certain child; and it is that which the parents, in the first place, must consider.

It would be a different case, if the parents would really be against the Christianity of the school, and wanted to separate education from religion. However, the father indicated by you is not considering that: the reverse is obvious.

For that reason, I indeed deem the protest which is brought against the proposal for candidate for the office of deacon unfounded. If it is the case then, to maintain the candidate, I cannot judge, as I am not familiar with the persons and circumstances in place X. There are cases wherein one may not step aside against such opposition. And there are cases, where one must tolerate the wrong insight of someone for a time, rather than deal with strife and an unedifying situation in the congregation. The church council must decide.

Supplement 3

34. Is a preacher censurable, who does not send his child to the Christian school in his place of residence? (Art. 21)

(1910)

48. In your correspondence of October 28, you inform me that you are being bothered by your consistory, led by an elder who is also the chairman of the board of the Christian school, because, in the interest of the education of your children, you do not send them to the said school anymore, but to the Christian school for M.U.L.O. (secondary school—GM) at Y: that because of that they desire of you a ‘confession of guilt’; moreover that they are considering postponing the upcoming Lord’s Supper celebration, because of the dissent raised in the congregation due to the above. And you are asking me my opinion on this and that.

I have to tell you honestly, that the whole history, to me, is incomprehensible.

I would understand it somewhat, if you had withdrawn your children from the Christian school and sent them to the public school at X itself; although even in such a case the decision rests with the parents, whom God has given the care and responsibility in the education. This would usually mean that the Christian parents would send their child to a Christian school. However, it can occur, and indeed does at times occur (I have knowledge of various cases), that the parents, for good and sufficient reasons, feel themselves called of God to send their children to a public school. The consistory can and must discuss this matter with them; but finally must acquiesce in the decision of the parents, and lay the responsibility on their conscience; even if the parents could not express all their reasons. It would be irresponsible abuse of power, and thus to great harm for the church orderly oversight, if in such a case the consistory would continue any further procedure.

However, here it concerns, not a change of a Christian school for a public, but the change of one Christian school for another, which is also Christian. How can this ever be formal consistory business, even demanding a confession of guilt? If such a case, because of misconception, gives any unrest in the congregation, then it would be the calling of the office bearers to better inform the unjustly concerned members. However, how can a consistory come to the point of aiding the unrest as much as possible, by deciding to even postpone the Lord's Supper?

I cannot imagine that there is one church in your Classis, which would agree with your consistory in the case of the school choice for your children. In any case is that unthinkable of any Synod, but what you have to do, if your consistory does not against hope come to a better mind, is hard for me to say, as I do not know the people and situation in X. The decision when to celebrate the Lord's Supper is, of course, formally, the consistory's and not the preacher's. Nevertheless, if they, without right or reason, hinder the celebration in the congregation, there is always appeal to Classis and Synod. We may hope, first of all, for the edification of the congregation in X itself, that there does not follow any ecclesiastical procedure. And, because of that, I would advise you to speak and act as softly as possible with the B.B. (people—GM), knowing that they have a misconception of the case, and always proceed from the premise that they are driven by their zeal for the Christian school education, even though, with their zeal, there is lack of the right understanding.

Supplement 4

31. What is the relationship between the church and the Christian school?
(Art. 21)

(1906)

43. A school for elementary or other education is as such not an ecclesiastical organization; from which follows, of course, that they are not under the official supervision of the consistory, unless the governance of the school has made an agreement with the consistory as such. In addition, this cannot change in any wise, even if all the teachers and all the children were members of the Reformed Church; just as in similar circumstances would make a factory, a carpenter's shop, a wharf, etc, ecclesiastical or put itself under the supervision of consistory. Also, this would not be, if the president or principal of such a factory would have a daily devotional service with the personnel: the office bearers of the congregation would then not have the right, as a matter of course, to look to the quality of such; just as they have no such right in regards to a private devotional in one's home. Members of the Reformed Church are, and remain, of course, personally under the supervision of the consistory; but that is a different matter.

(1906)

44. Certainly is what you ask no less, than a principled explanation of the relationship between the Christian school and the Christian church, and the resulting development of such regarding ecclesiastical supervision, catechism, etc., and more importantly, a principled explanation of the calling of the Christian school with regards to secular education and the Christian education, and the relationship between both. In addition, you pose your questions so general, that for each question there are a number of different facets. For example, your first question regarding ecclesiastical supervision. Certainly, there is in our country more than one 'church' and also more than one kind of 'Christian School,' and as such, one cannot simply speak of the church or the Christian school, but has to distinguish between different cases. In addition, when someone says that 'the school arises from the households,' and that 'the church has the supervision of the households,' then are those expressions again so vague and general, that without further limitation one cannot reason therewith. Of the factory, the workplace, etc. one can also say, in a certain sense, that they 'arise out of the households'; and likewise of the civil state (in which, because of that, one can speak of a right of the heads of households). And, in a certain sense, the church has to look to that, although formally and officially she exercises no manner of right there. In addition, the word 'supervision,' as also the concepts 'church' and 'school,' are, as such, not defined enough to reason therewith.

Supervision by a Reformed consistory of a Christian school can be

formally exercised, when the school, in constitution and foundation, is Reformed; and the nature of that supervision, and the manner exercised must be governed by agreement.

Furthermore the school, in the first place, serves the secular education, but that in an explicit Christian spirit, and such that it also cooperates in the religious and moral instruction.

But of course, parents must not think that because of that they do not have to care for such anymore. As also the church. As such, catechism naturally remains required; which moreover has a different end goal with her instruction than the school.

These are some, very general, observations; which do not serve your purpose very well. However, specifically I cannot now deal with all the queries you have. There are many books written on those, whose contents one cannot repeat with a single word.

SUPPLEMENT 47

Protest: Mr. Fred Tolsma

April 15, 2009

To Synod 2009 of the Protestant Reformed Churches
Convening at Georgetown PRC on June 9, 2009
c/o Don Doezema, Stated Clerk
5111 Ivanrest Ave.
Grandville, MI 49418

Brethren,

Enclosed is my protest to Synod 2009. I believe it to be legally before Synod 2009. I bring this protest because I am very concerned that in the decisions taken by Synod 2008 and also Classis East with respect to the appeals to Synod 2008 by Ken Feenstra and Rev. Nathan Brummel in particular are not scripturally grounded, do not flow from scriptural principles nor from our confessions, and that therefore these decisions and grounds are very confusing at best and are misleading at worst. But much more importantly, I believe that in these decisions and their grounds or explanations of grounds Synod 2008 and Classis East have turned the churches in the direction of doctrinal error in their zeal to maintain their position on Article 21. I ask the indulgence of synod in the length of this protest. More could be said than is presented and I have tried to minimize its length, but what I say, I believe, needs to be said to show that the confusing, contradicting, and unsupported decisions of Synod 2008 and Classis East together with their grounds are leading us squarely toward doctrinal error.

I request that Synod 2009 uphold my protest.

I pray that the God of all Truth may give wisdom and strength to synod and guide her into all Truth in her deliberations by His gracious Spirit and Word.

In Christ's service,
w.s. Fred Tolsma

Protest Summary

- 1) **Introduction** – Main points being protested.
- 2) **Lack of Scriptural Support** – Acts 15:28-29 and Romans 13:4 review, comments, conclusions.
- 3) **Lack of Confessional Support** – Review of Article 32 of Belgic Confession, comments, conclusions.
- 4) **Conflict Between Scripture and Article 21** – Review, comments, conclusion on synod's statement regarding Scripture and Article 21 respecting how education should be done.
- 5) **Article 21, History and the Commentary of VanDellen & Monsma** – Synod's interpretation of Article 21 and use of VanDellen and Monsma commentary to support grounds for decisions, historical background leading to the development of this article, my analysis and conclusions on the proper understanding of this article and the related commentary.
- 6) **Misinterpretation of Article 21 leading to doctrinal error** – Synod's rendering of Article 21 not sustainable because of Article 30 of the Church Order and the error resulting from maintaining this view.
- 7) **Conclusion** – Request to Synod 2009 to deal with this matter and suggestions on how this may be done.

(Note: This summary and the section headings below are for convenience only.)

1) **Introduction**

I protest the decisions taken on Article 21 of the Church Order by Synod 2008 and Classis East with respect to an officebearer normally being required by this article to send his children to a good Christian *day* school (emphasis mine in all instances, FT), if one is available. The interpretation (my term for the rule synod has made) is clearly laid out in Article 64, B, 4, b, which states: "The rule of Article 21 that a minister promote the use of the good Christian schools requires that he ordinarily send his children to the Christian schools which the consistory recognizes as good, and which the members of the congregation use. The rule of Article 21 implies that the officebearer, if he does not use these schools, must give to the consistory and congregation an adequate explanation for not using the schools." In this, Synod 2008 supports Classis East's conclusion that

this refers to *only* good Christian *day* schools, further defined as Protestant Reformed Christian day schools as evidenced by the phrase “...use of *the* Christian day schools...” (Art. 52, B, 3, d—italics mine, FT).

This interpretation of Article 21, directly or indirectly, runs through all synod’s recommendations and their grounds in rejecting the appeals to Synod 2008 by Ken Feenstra and Rev. Nathan Brummel and is the basis for the rejection of those appeals as found in Articles 52 and 64. I protest the rejection of these appeals and the grounds adduced by synod to support such rejection. I believe, taken as a whole, these appeals approached the whole matter of the meaning of Article 21 biblically and thus correctly and should have been upheld. I protest, above all, that the interpretation of Synod 2008 has not been rooted adequately or properly in Scripture nor in our confessions. I further believe that synod and Classis East misstate the correct understanding and purpose of Article 21 because they have ignored the historical, cultural context in which our forefathers found themselves which has directly influenced the way Article 21 reads today, and they have not brought Scripture to bear on their evaluation of the meaning and intent of this article. This is all in relation to the matter of Rev. Dick not enrolling his children in PR Christian schools so that he and his wife could teach them at home, which has been the catalyst for all the protests and appeals to both Classis East and Synod 2008.

2) Lack of Scriptural Support

Synod 2008 produces very little Scripture (really no Scripture) to support the grounds provided in rejecting the appeals submitted by the appellants. In Article 54 the grounds for the rejection of Ken Feenstra’s appeal are made with no scriptural basis at all. Pronouncements are merely made which are not supported by either Scripture or the confessions. The impression one receives is that the interpretation as outlined in 1) above is a self evident truth, i.e., it can stand on its own merits, and therefore in any discussion about an officebearer schooling his children, this must be the point of departure and it is unreasonable to question it. It would be very beneficial and useful to the churches if synod could show how this interpretation, i.e., that the officebearer must use PR Christian *day* schools, flows naturally from Scripture or scriptural principles. Although this is stated as being the case, there is not one whit of true scriptural, confessional support or Church Order support provided to this end. Without such support there is no reason for anyone in the denomination to be conscience bound to observe this interpretation.

In the grounds for the rejection of the appeal of Rev. Nathan Brummel, synod makes reference to Acts 15:28-29 as support that the church may involve itself in matters of Christian liberty and that therefore she

has the authority to make this interpretation for her own welfare (Art. 64 B, 2, a, and b) as follows:

2. Rev. Brummel errs in his contention that the matter of the education of one's children in the covenant is the prerogative solely of the parent and therefore is not an ecclesiastical matter.
 - a. For its own welfare, the church has the authority to involve itself in matters that belong to the home, even in areas of Christian liberty. This is evident from the restriction which the Jerusalem council placed on the new Gentile converts concerning eating meats offered to idols, blood, and things strangled (Acts 15:28-29).
 - b. The same applies to the education of covenant children. While the calling to educate covenant children is the calling of the parents (Deut. 6:5ff.), the church has the authority, for the sake of its own welfare, to see to it that the parents have their children instructed in good Christian day schools, as set forth in Article 21 of the Church Order.

At first blush this may seem to have some merit, since the Jerusalem council did issue decrees; however, a closer inspection of this passage reveals that the Jerusalem council was, in fact, at pains *not* to make decrees to the Gentile converts, cf. verse 28. They only made a decree respecting a matter of Christian liberty which would be easy for the Gentiles to follow, that exactly because there was no infringement upon conscience but only upon personal preference in an earthly, external thing. In fact, the Jerusalem council seems to have been so reticent to impinge upon even this much of the Gentiles Christian liberty that the decree was only temporary, until the Jewish converts with weak consciences grew in understanding. Additionally, this decree only dealt with external things, truly things of no consequence, not things in which a direct commandment had been given to them by God, so that all might receive the decree without having a troubled conscience. Calvin clearly states this in his *Commentary on Acts*, vol. II, pp. 78-79 (Baker Book House, 1979) where he comments on this passage:

So that, to speak properly, this necessity was accidental or external; which was placed not in the thing itself, but only in avoiding of the offence, which appeareth more plainly by the abolishing of the decree. For laws made concerning things which are of themselves necessary must be continual. But we know that this law was foredone (remodeled) by Paul so soon as the tumult and contention was once ended, when he teacheth that nothing is unclean, (Rom. xiv. 14;) and when he granteth liberty to eat all manner [of] meats, yea, even such as were sacrificed to idols, (I Cor. x. 25.) Wherefore, in vain do they gather any cloak or

colour out of this word to bind men's consciences, seeing that the necessity spoken of in this place did only respect men in the external use, lest there should any offence arise thereupon, and that their liberty before God might stand whole and sound. Also in vain do they go about out of the same to prove that the Church had power given to decree anything contrary to the word of God.

He further highlights this from the viewpoint of preventing schism in the churches as follows where he comments on Leviticus 17:10-14 (*Calvin's Commentaries, Harmony of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, vol. 3, p. 32, Baker Book House):

Since, however, the Patriarchs before the Law had abstained from blood, and its prohibition had no reference to the First Table or the legal service, hence it came to pass that when the Apostles abrogated the ceremonial law, they did not dare to allow immediately the free eating of blood, lest great scandal should arise from this new and unwonted thing (Acts 15:20). Wherefore, lest so trifling a matter should cause deadly schisms in the Churches, they commanded the Gentiles not to eat of blood; adding as the reason, that those who were accustomed to read the writings of Moses, would be disturbed at this innovation; yet this was only observed for a short period, as we gather from Paul. It was, not without superstition and misplaced zeal, retained by some even to the days of Tertullian.

There is nothing in this passage in Acts 15 which supports the idea that the churches may make rules simply because it seems good and necessary to them with respect to the overall welfare of the churches. In Acts 15: 28 the authority for this decree was the Holy Spirit. The council's authority was derived from the Spirit, not in addition to it, indicating submission to the leading of the Spirit. Therefore, in this passage, the apostles and church leaders in Jerusalem did not go beyond what Scripture permitted. The Jerusalem council grounded this temporary decree regarding Christian liberty in the scriptural truth of charity by the leading of the Spirit of God. Charity was to be shown to those with weak consciences for the unity and peace of the church, to prevent schism over an inconsequential thing.

Such scriptural principle is sadly lacking in the interpretation of Article 21 by synod and classis. This passage is referenced by synod only to support the idea that church councils may make decrees because "so it seemed good to...us," but the leading of the Spirit through the Word is resoundingly absent. The express content of this passage of Scripture, from which the synod's authority in the matter ought to arise (but does not), is ignored altogether. It seems to me that this passage disproves the interpretation of synod rather than supports it. I believe this passage teaches us that the churches may only make laws concerning matters of

Christian liberty in a non-ecclesiastical matter (i.e., the form that a school must take) with great caution and ought to refrain from doing so unless necessitated by Scripture or a clear scriptural principle, such as the law of charity in the case of the Jerusalem council. I see no such scriptural principle being applied by synod or classis as support for making a rule that an officebearer must send his children to a Christian *day* school as opposed to an alternative form of good Christian liberal training. Thus there is no leading of the Holy Spirit in this pronouncement.

Perhaps one might argue that this should be observed by a pastor in particular because members of his congregation have a weak conscience toward alternative forms of Christian education. However, based on Acts 15:28, 29, a rule or decree which is binding in a matter of Christian liberty only applies to the external act, it does not and may not seek to bind the conscience. Since the matter of the rearing of his children is a direct command of God to the pastor as a father (Deut. 6:5ff.), this argument cannot be upheld if the pastor, such as Rev. Dick, believes it is a matter of his conscience before God to teach and train his children in a way that may, only in form not substance, be different from the way others teach and train their children. Others with weaker consciences concerning this may disapprove or take offence but in this case the direct commandment of the Word of God always takes precedence and others may need to be instructed so that they do not take offence where none should be taken because, scripturally, none is given.

This view was essentially presented by Grace Consistory in their position paper to the congregation and their reply to the protest to Grace Consistory by Gib and Grace Schimmel (cf. Appeal of Rev. Nathan Brummel, Supplement 2, pp. 126 – 140). I find the conclusions stated by Grace Consistory to be well grounded in Scripture, biblical, and edifying, unlike the decisions of synod and classis. One can only wish that the approach of Grace Consistory had been taken in dealing with this matter.

Synod also references Romans 13:4 in the rejection of the Nathan Brummel Appeal in Article 64, B, 2, c as follows:

- c. We also recognize that God has given the civil government authority to make demands concerning the nature and quality of that education for the welfare of the state (Romans 13:4: “For he is the minister of God to thee for good”).

This passage of Scripture deals with the place of the civil government in society. It states that we must obey the government because “the powers that be are ordained of God.” Yet there is a limit to their authority, and the education of our children is not part of their aegis. Professor Engelsma stated

that better than I can in an address he gave to the Association for Education in Ireland in October of 1984. We quote as follows from this address:

The Christian school is based on Scripture also in the sense that the work of the school is done in obedience to a calling from God. In the great task of educating our children we must be found in the way of the Lord in the sense that what we are doing, we have a Divine call and warrant for doing. As a preacher, I must be sure that I have a calling to preach. I had better not be preaching without a call and mandate from God. I had better not even be found doing the work of a preacher in a congregation other than the one in which God has placed me. *Similarly, those educating children must be certain that their work rests on and flows from a Divine call. I am convinced that a basic reason for the collapse of State education in my own country, at present, is simply that people are engaged in the business of education without any call from God. They are running in education, but God has not sent them. For God does not call the State to educate. The children are not the State's, but the parents'. The State has neither the duty nor the competency to rear the children. The God-given task of the State is, to quote Edmund Burke, "the public peace, the public safety, the public order, the public prosperity" (italics mine, FT).*

It is interesting that synod uses the state as support for their position that the church may involve itself in matters of Christian liberty in the home. I say, interesting because the state has no business in the education of children according to Scripture, as stated by Prof. Engelsma above. That is the purview of the parents only, because they and they only have the divine calling to rear their children (Deut. 6:5ff.). The church, insofar as the spiritual good of family is concerned, also has a role, but that is secondary to the parents. The state has usurped the place of the parent in educating their children by imposing compulsory school attendance beginning already in the 1850s in the U.S. and in Canada. We do not recognize that the state has "the authority to make demands concerning the nature and quality of that education for the welfare of the state." Just because they do this does not mean they have the authority from Scripture. The true divine mandate for the state is to provide the funding and protection required to maintain good Christian schools. In this they fail abysmally, and God will hold them to account. Since the state does not have the divine authority to educate, this ground not only falls away but clearly the Scripture reference has been misused, to put it kindly. If synod wishes to use the state for support of its position, and the state has no business telling us how to educate our children, then neither does the church, except insofar as the spiritual supervision (not earthly, institutional supervision) is needed as required by God.

3) Lack of Confessional Support

Synod 2008 references Article 32 of the Belgic Confession as support for its ground rejecting Rev. Brummel's Appeal in Art. 64, B, 4, a and b. Article 32 reads as follows:

In the meantime we believe, though it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church, yet they ought studiously to take care that they do not depart from those things which Christ, our only Master, hath instituted. And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever. Therefore we admit only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity, and to keep all men in obedience to God. For this purpose, excommunication or church discipline is requisite, with the several circumstances belonging to it, according to the Word of God.

In this, synod is seeking to refute Rev. Brummel's contention that Classis East "laid an 'extra-biblical' requirement on Rev. Dick and thereby fell into legalism, when it advised Grace Consistory to require of Rev. Dick the reasons for his decision to homeschool his children, and to judge their validity" (Art. 64, B, 4). Synod goes on to state that "The Church Order lays demands on officebearers that are not expressly required by Scripture, but arise out of the principles of Scripture and are an application of biblical principles." This sounds well and good, but the same problem surfaces as with the forgoing reference to Scripture. Where does synod or classis demonstrate that their interpretation flows naturally and clearly from "the principles of Scripture"? They do not. They again proceed from the assumption that this is simply a self evident truth, which stands so well on its own merits as not to be questioned. Once again, the point of departure in their interpretation is not Scripture or the confessions but their own conclusion as to what Article 21 means, and then Scripture or confessions are referenced in an attempt to buttress this position. The cart is put before the horse. To amplify this I quote from Rev. T. Miersma's protest to Classis East (May 2008), where he points this out concisely and clearly on pages 14 and 15, Art. C, 2, b and c, in dealing with the rejection by Classis East of the protests of Ken Feenstra and Grace Consistory to Classis East (protests which were appealed or formed part of the content of an appeal to Synod 2008) as follows:

b. that your response to the protests is not in accord with Article 32 of the Confession of Faith is manifest from the following points:

- 1) The grounds given for rejecting the protests are strictly based on accustomed traditional application of the Church Order. You

also define Christian liberty from the viewpoint of that accustomed application of the Church Order rather than from the Scriptures. Your decision does not reference any Scripture in connection with Article 21 of the Church Order. Rather, your decision excludes what is biblical on the basis of a customary application.

2) (Omitted, FT)

3) None of your decisions respecting Article 21 and the issues raised by the protests are grounded in Scripture but rather proceed from *custom and tradition alone*, and exactly for that reason they also do not compel the conscience from the Word.

c. Classis is in grave danger of elevating a tradition above the Word of God.

1) (Omitted, FT)

2) (Omitted, FT)

3) That which is biblical, a divine mandate, is by its very nature to be received, and can in no sense of the word be viewed as divisive. Insisting on *conformity* to custom and tradition above this is departing in the direction of human ordinances, against which Article 32 of the Confession of Faith expressly warns. The article was written to keep the churches from doing this.

Synod references Article 32, but, as Rev. Miersma points out above, rather than explaining how this article of our confession leads clearly to the interpretation that synod has made, how it flows naturally out of Scripture or scriptural principles, synod really engages in exactly what the article warns *against* by issuing an interpretation of Article 21 without any grounding in Scripture or biblical principles. Yet synod agrees, as stated in Article 64, B, 4, a, 2), that such ordinances are “proper inasmuch as they arise out of Scripture, are not contrary to Scripture,” according to Article 32, but then synod proceeds not to follow its own advice. This is confusing at best and misleading at worst. One thing is clear, confessional support for synod’s interpretation of Article 21 is non-existent because it goes beyond what Scripture explicitly requires of officebearers. Thus it becomes a man-made law which seeks to bind the officebearer’s conscience, and this cannot be done based on Article 32 of the Belgic Confession. Synod and Classis East in their interpretation of Article 21 are in direct conflict with our confessions.

4) Conflict Between Scripture and Article 21

This type of confusion is further illustrated by synod and Classis East in their rejection of the Marvin Kamps Appeal, where they state plainly the following (Art. 47, B, 3, a, 1), b):

b) Therefore, Classis East (January/February 2008 meeting) was correct

when it stated that “*Scripture does not specify exactly how the instruction of covenant children is to be accomplished.*” God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children” (italics mine, FT).

In this I am in hearty agreement with synod and classis. Yet synod goes on to demonstrate that it places its own interpretation of Article 21 above that of Scripture in the following “Explanation” to the ground for the rejection of the Ken Feenstra Appeal (Art. 53, B, 3, a):

Explanation:

Article 21 requires that consistories promote “good Christian schools” – which, as VanDellen and Monsma point out, has always been understood to mean “good Christian Day Schools.” Article 21 not only sets forth the principle that the children of the church are to be instructed according to the demands of the covenant; *it also specifies how this should be done* (italics mine, FT).

One who reads this would most naturally question how did synod and classis get from the former statement to the latter? How is it that the former statement testifies that Scripture does *not* specify how covenant instruction of our children is to be done but in the latter statement Article 21 *does* specify how this instruction is to be done, according to the interpretation of synod? The latter statement, if true, places Article 21 in direct conflict with Scripture. We know that is not possible, since all the articles of our Church Order are scripturally grounded; this is time tested. So how can these statements be reconciled when synod provides no Scripture or scriptural principles or confessional support to lead us safely across this leap in logic? I believe this is absent because there is no such scriptural support, and this is simply an opinion of synod, which cannot compel the conscience and cannot be binding on the churches. Synod really wishes us to take the latter statement on faith, not faith based on God’s Word, rather faith in them.

If synod had interpreted Article 21 as stating that consistories promote Christ-centered instruction in teaching their children in the temporal but necessary vocational things to function in this life, whatever form that may take, it would be in harmony with the direct command of the Lord, given through His servant Moses, to each individual father in Deuteronomy 6:5ff. Here no specific form or paradigm of instructing children is implied or indicated, nor is such form identified in any other part of Scripture. Rather the command to the Israelite *father* is to teach his children the law of God in *all* of life. The command is not given to the church as a whole, nor to the prophets and priests, nor to anyone that the father might engage

to assist him in teaching his children. The responsibility rests upon the father, and this cannot be removed or supplanted. This follows quite naturally and is readily supported from various passages of Scripture and does not go beyond what Scripture teaches. I think we all agree on that. However, I submit to you that synod has seen fit to make a rule beyond the leading of the Holy Spirit, i.e., the requirement of officebearers (therefore also church members) to have their children instructed *only* in good Christian *day* schools (understood to be only PR Christian day schools) unless exceptional circumstances (which are undefined and unlikely to be defined) prevent them or such schools are not available to them. A specific rule has been made that should flow clearly and naturally from Scripture, as did the rule of the Jerusalem council outlined previously. However, Synod 2008 does not ground its rule upon Scripture in any shape, way, or form. In fact, I do not believe any Scripture can be brought to bear that clearly shows that officebearers are to promote only one particular form or paradigm of Christian schooling above all others and must send their children there to prove to their congregation that they support that form or paradigm of schooling.

5) Article 21, History and the Commentary of VanDellen & Monsma

The only apparent support adduced by synod and classis for their interpretation of Article 21 is based on the interpretation of the Article itself and VanDellen and Monsma's *Commentary on the Church Order* (VD&M). This is clear in the rejection of the Rev. Nathan Brummel Appeal, where synod states that in Article 64, B, 1, c as follows:

This understanding of Article 21 has always been the understanding of Reformed churches. "All that know the history of our Churches and the history of Article 21, realize that the article as it reads today means to say that our Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of good Christian Day Schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God entrusted children, if at all possible" (VD&M, pp. 94-95).

Synod claims that this understanding, specifically regarding day schools, has been the traditional understanding and therefore is nothing new. They claim they and the article are not concerned with other forms or paradigms of schooling, only what they believe Article 21 and the VD&M commentary deal with, i.e., Christian day schools. This is manifestly disingenuous since the making of an interpretation or rule respecting Article 21 which requires that officebearers only promote a certain type of school, implicitly presupposes other forms of schooling are available but are, by the very need to make the rule, specifically excluded or only

allowed by exception. A very definite statement is being made regarding other forms of schooling. To deny this is to be illogical. In this, synod differs from both the article and the commentary.

Synod does not even enter into the question of why Article 21 speaks only of Christian day schools as is explained by VD&M in their commentary. Why does this commentary not even imply or exclude any other forms of schooling? It is notable that the commentary only contrasts the need for Christian day schools over against ungodly public schools. What synod and classis fail to take into account is that this article was drafted at a particular time in our history and in a particular cultural situation. This article is culturally conditioned, and that must be recognized in order to understand the spirit of the article rather than the mere letter. Synod simply quotes chapter and verse from VD&M as though the mere letter of what these commentators write is the final authority on the matter. The point of departure yet again is the premise that synod and Classis East's interpretation of Article 21 is a self-evident truth standing on its own merits because of tradition. This is clear from the fact that synod and classis quote very sparingly from VD&M and do so in the same manner as references are made to Scripture and the confessions, as I have already commented on above. That is, only that which tends to support what is propounded as the accepted tradition by synod is quoted and that as to the letter only, not the spirit or intent. A genuine analysis of the scriptural basis and therefore the spiritual intent of the commentary on this article to provide good, logical support of synod and classis' interpretation is not provided. Ken Feenstra provides such a point-by-point commentary in his protest to Classis East (cf. Acts of Synod 2008, Appeal of Ken Feenstra, Supplement 3, pp. 158-161), which is simply dismissed by synod and Classis East ostensibly because the matter before them does not concern homeschooling, which it very really does as well other schooling methods, as stated above. It is not necessary to make a rule if there are no alternatives. A rule is made because there are alternatives and because of the rule they are to be excluded from use or allowed only by exception. Synod and classis have neatly sidestepped the matter of alternative forms of schooling by saying their concern was only limited to day schools. Leadership by synod, as is her calling before God, is lacking in this whole matter.

Some may believe that Article 21 speaks of the obligation of an ecclesiastical assembly with respect to a non-ecclesiastical matter (institutional day school). Perhaps this can be conceded upon a superficial perusing of the article. However, Article 30 of the C.O. specifies that the authority of the church lies only in ecclesiastical matters: "In these assemblies ecclesiastical matters only shall be transacted and that in an ecclesiastical manner." That is, as VD&M state, only matters that concern

the administration of the Word and Sacraments, discipline, regulation of divine worship, and the spiritual life and walk of the people of God. VD&M therefore ask this obvious question in their commentary on Article 21, page 95 regarding “The significance of Article 21.”

But why does the Church Order stipulate that the Consistories must promote Christian Day Schools, whereas the general schooling of the child is admittedly not the task of the Church?

The relevant part of this answer to this question is instructive and lays the ground for all of their commentary as follows:

The school should teach in full harmony with the Word of God, as well as the Church. That will make, by God’s grace, for strong and well informed Christians. The Church cannot afford, and before God cannot tolerate, to see much of her precious teachings contradicted and silenced five days a week, year after year, before our children and that while they are in their formative years. Godless and Christ-less instruction clearly runs counter to the best interests of the Church, the Kingdom of God in general, the welfare of the child, and the solemn obligation of Christian parents.

Consequently it becomes the plain duty of the Church to promote good Christian Schools, and to urge parents to use these schools if at all possible.

The purpose of Christian schools is not that they be institutional but, according to VD&M, to “make, by God’s grace, for strong and well informed Christians.” This is precisely a *spiritual matter* and harmonizes easily with Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6. Well informed Christians is the goal and the focus of the commentary.

When VD&M wrote their commentary, and when Article 21 was modified by our forefathers, the Christian day school was the only means available to achieve this goal because of compulsory day school legislation implemented by the state.

I believe it was no coincidence the second Synod of the CRC in 1870 first began promoting the cause of Christian education to the churches and that in 1871 the State of Michigan introduced legislation regarding compulsory school attendance. Our forefathers saw the interference of the state in the education of children. Prior to this time, day school attendance was not legislated and schooling was carried out by a combination of local public schools or private schools (there was a Christian school in Grand Rapids, MI prior to this time) and schooling at home. Attendance at day schools was voluntary at that time. However, once compulsory day school attendance came into effect, children were required by law to go to a government-sponsored public school. The law did provide excep-

tions where private schools were permitted; however, these also had to meet the state's requirements, but were not funded by the government. Our forefathers, therefore, urged from 1870 already that consistories urge parents to establish their own private Christian schools because they could see that the public schools provided by the government would not permit sound Reformed education. This was the historical situation from which our current rendering of Article 21 developed. It is instructive to note that our forefathers at the synods of the CRC from 1870 – 1898 use the terms Christian schools, Christian day schools, Christian education, and Reformed education interchangeably. They make no distinction among these terms. This is shown by the following excerpts from the minutes of the CRC synods (all quotes taken from the CRC Agenda for Synod 2005 – Report of the Committee to Study Christian Day School Education):

1. *Primary education* is discussed with [the firmly expressed conviction by all present] that the school is the [nursery of and for] the Church. It is [therefore] the duty of [each congregation to see to it that they establish a *free school*], and if this be impossible, [to do everything in their power to *achieve education that is both Reformed and in the Dutch language.*] This the Assembly impresses on Consistories and Churches. (*Acts of Synod 1870*, Art. 36)
2. Return to Art. 10 concerning *Primary Education*. A discussion on this, with the result that the need of *free Chr. Ref. Schools* be strongly recommended to the Congregations, and that the Congregations take steps to bring such schools into being. Also each Congregation is to report at the next Session what has been accomplished by it along these lines. Sunday Schools shall also be organized in all the Churches. (*Acts of Synod 1873*, Art. 8)
3. The question is raised if any means can be put into practice to *advance primary Christian education*. It is stated that it would be *very desirable to have Christian Schools* where both Holland and English are taught, so that our children need not be ashamed of their education. The State sanctions such schools. (*Acts of Synod 1880*, Art. 62)
4. The *Committee on Christian Education* presents its report which is accepted by the Synod.
 - a) The Synod calls the attention of the Ministers and of the Consistories to take to heart, with all their strength and their gifts, the support and the construction of *Christian Schools*.
 - b) The Synod recommends the organization of *Christian School Societies* for the purpose of fostering *Christian Education*.
 - c) When these Societies come into being, the Synod will give them its moral support. The Society is to be organized with the Name "The Society for the Advancement of *Christian Education* on Reformed Principles" (*Acts of Synod 1892*, Art. 23).
5. Not a general, but a specifically *Reformed instruction* is the require-

ment for our children. Indeed, no educational system is satisfactory, but the acknowledgment of the necessity of regeneration, and additionally the acknowledgment of the covenant relationship in which God has placed our children, are the principles from which education must proceed. *Christian education* according to Reformed principles is the incontrovertible duty of Reformed Christians. All ministers and elders must labor to the utmost of their power in the promotion of *Christian education* wherever and whenever possible. The grounds for these declarations are:

- (1) God's Word requires that children be trained in the fear and admonition of the Lord.
- (2) Parents at the time of the baptism of the children have promised before the Lord and the congregation to do this.
- (3) Here may be no separation between civil, social, and religious life, education, and nurture.
- (4) *Christian education* promotes the honor of our King who has been given all dominion in heaven and on earth, including the realms of education and nurture. (*Acts of Synod 1898*, p. 38).

(italics mine in all cases, FT)

In these minutes our forefathers affirmed the strong need for Christian schools, but they viewed this not in terms of a need for institutions per se; rather, the content of the instruction required was at the forefront of their minds. Good, sound, Reformed education as opposed to ungodly, public school education was the issue, just as it is in VD&M's commentary. The line of thought from these minutes to VD&M's commentary is unbroken.

There was no alternative except public day schools, which our forefathers did not see as a good alternative, and rightly so. Therefore the terminology of "good Christian schools" is included in Article 21, not because of the institution, but because of the *spiritual concern* of the church for the parents in the congregation in rearing their children. The form or method is not at issue at all, witness that VD&M uses terms Christian schools and Christian day schools interchangeably, just as our forefathers did. Rather it is the *spiritual goal* that is specified and emphasized. Godly, Christ-centred education vs. ungodly, Christ-less instruction. This is what VD&M consider to be the significance of Article 21, and this, then, must be the basis for understanding their commentary. To do otherwise would do injustice to the commentators themselves and the scriptural principles upon which both the article and the commentary rest.

All that VD&M state above in their commentary flows naturally from Deuteronomy 6 and Ephesians 6. They do not go beyond this Scripture in their commentary on this article. Although they speak easily of the Christian day school, this is only as a mere *means* to attain a spiritual goal, not an end in itself. This makes the article properly ecclesiastical, dealing

with an ecclesiastical matter, i.e., the spiritual instruction of children by their parents in all of life. This is the only possible logical reading of the article and VD&M's commentary in order to be consistent with Scripture and to avoid causing the article and the commentary from losing their scriptural moorings. Synod and classis misstate the purpose and intent in this commentary by using the references they make to support their contention that officebearers are bound to promote only Christian *day* schools, i.e., institutional schools. That is not what the article or VD&M's commentary is saying whatsoever.

6) Misinterpretation of Article 21 and doctrinal error

Thus synod and classis, by insisting that Article 21 must refer specifically to Christian *day* schools (i.e., particular institutions), confounds the spirit and intent of this article by adding to it and elevating that which is non-ecclesiastical to that which is ecclesiastical, which may not be done. It does so because the emphasis is subtly changed from "Christian" schools to "day" schools. The effect is that the meaning of the article is changed from that which is properly spiritual and flows from Scripture to that which is a temporal institution which is not properly the concern of the church because it is not spiritual and therefore not ecclesiastical. The primary emphasis on the obligation of consistories is changed from ensuring the godly, Christ-centered education of children by parents to that of ensuring that an *institution or specific instructional paradigm* is used to do this. In this way the *spiritual is diminished* and the temporal is set to the forefront. According to Synod 2008, the article must now be read as follows: 'Consistories shall see to it that there are good Christian *institutional* schools in which....' This does not flow from Scripture anywhere, and the meaning of Article 21 is therefore distorted and twisted into something it was never intended to say. I cannot say what was in the mind of our forefathers when they changed Article 21 in 1914 to its current reading, but I believe they did not include the word "day" in the article specifically because they wisely recognized that the type of institution or model used to educate is not a spiritual matter but a temporal one for parents to deal with, thus not ecclesiastical.

Here is where Synod 2008 and Classis East wander toward doctrinal error, and this strikes to the heart of my protest. The doctrinal error we are headed for is that of God's grace being bound up and administered to God's people in earthly, temporal things, in this case by means of an institution or educational model, and then binding officebearers to promote such a concept. That which is not ecclesiastical is raised to the level of that which is ecclesiastical and added to Article 21. Rev. T. Miersma has warned of this in his protest to Classis East (May 2008) where he stated

in Article 2, c of his protest, “Classis is in grave danger of elevating a tradition above the Word of God.”

This is evident from synod’s support of Classis East in the rejection of the Ken Feenstra Appeal (Art. 52, B, 3, d) as follows:

- d. Classis East was therefore correct in declaring that “while a Christian home school may meet the demands of the covenant in some instances, Article 21 is not speaking to those instances, but rather addresses the calling *of the consistory to pursue the well-being of the whole congregation by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible.* (italics mine, FT)

Synod here clearly states that the spiritual welfare of the church is now dependent, at least in part, upon the use of Christian day schools! Not just the children of the parents that are members of the church but the entire spiritual welfare of everyone in the congregation is now dependent upon parents, especially officebearers, using an institution or a specific educational model, a temporal thing, mind you. Now the earthly institution, something that can change with time and really has no eternal significance, is suddenly a matter on which the spiritual well-being of the congregation is dependent! That which is mere form and is temporal and will pass away is elevated to the same level as that which is the content and is spiritual and eternal. I believe the spiritual welfare and unity of the church is solely dependent upon the Word of God, and we receive grace to that end by the sound preaching of His Word. An institution has nothing to do with the spiritual welfare of the people of God.

I believe this problem arises because synod makes no distinction between the end and the means, the substance of the thing and the form of the thing. These two different aspects are rolled together and treated as one. However, I differ with synod in that I believe Article 21 only speaks to the *end* or the *substance* of Christian vocational instruction, which is what gives this article its ecclesiastical quality and license. It can in no way be referring to the means to make this happen. If it was also referring to the *means*, the article would be delving into non-ecclesiastical matters which are not permitted by the Church Order itself. This is a vast leap in logic, to say the least, with no scriptural underpinning provided by synod or classis. I believe with the foregoing I have demonstrated that synod must come up with scriptural or confessional grounds to prove that the educational model is included in Article 21. Failing that, there is no basis for synod to try to bind the conscience of officebearers with their interpretation of Article 21.

I submit that the aforementioned interpretation of Article 21 violates

Article 30 of the Church Order because that which is non-ecclesiastical is elevated to the ecclesiastical. Article 30 clearly states the churches are only to deal with ecclesiastical matters. Much more important, however, is that Synod 2008 and Classis East have implicitly raised a temporal thing to the level of a spiritual thing, perhaps above it, by saying, in effect, that the institution or educational model itself is part of Article 21. In this way the institution or educational model is raised to the level of a spiritual matter because it is now considered ecclesiastical and thus important to the spiritual welfare of the church. As mentioned above, the earthly temporal *means* are regarded at the same level as the spiritual eternal *end*. To illustrate, this would be along the same lines as saying that the consistories must see to it that the congregation worship only in a church building for its own spiritual well-being, but not only that, it must meet only in a specific type of church building, as much as possible, that pleases the majority of the congregation, because this is necessary for the congregation's spiritual welfare. Further, we would include that in our Church Order as being understood in a certain article (however, no article appears suitable for this, so I can't go that far with this illustration). Now, I think we all agree that what is relevant is not the building or location, but the regular weekly meeting at Sabbath Day services. What is important is the *content* of worship; the building is merely a temporal *means* (indeed, sometimes this also can be held in too high esteem). It may be nice to have a good, suitable church building, perhaps even elegant, and we would all appreciate that, but our worship does not depend one whit upon it. We find God's grace and mercy in the preaching of His Word by His faithful appointed servants and by His Spirit. Where we meet to hear that preaching is of trifling importance. This analogy may seem silly, but this is in essence what synod and classis seek to do with the Christian day school rule for officebearers.

When we raise that which is non-ecclesiastical to that which is ecclesiastical, we are not only going beyond what Scripture permits, but as churches *we are well on the path to the error of saying that God's grace is found in temporal, earthly things*. We are in essence saying that God's grace is given to us not only by His Word and Spirit but also now by the temporal means of an institutional school. This is ultimately the result of adding the word "day" to Article 21, or reading that into the article. I believe that is clear from what I have presented above. If we insist upon making spiritual that which is earthy, we diminish God's glory because His grace is not to be found in earthly things. This cannot be avoided. Is this where we as churches wish to go in our understanding of Scripture, ostensibly to preserve our Christian day schools? This is not Reformed, it is the path on the return to Rome, and if we continue on this path it is

not good Christian schools that will be a concern, rather the very Truth as we have always held it in our denomination is at stake here, and therefore our churches. If the churches deviate from God's Word by looking to their own arm of strength in temporal things, then we need not worry, the schools will not be far behind. If we are truly concerned, not only with our schools, but more particularly that the Word of God is upheld in our churches, let us hastily withdraw from this slippery slope before we can no longer turn back to safety. We have that opportunity now at Synod 2009. If we do not do it now, I fear we will not return in the future. Let not the day schools as institutions become, as it did for Gideon after fighting valiantly for the Lord, the ephod that ensnares our churches and therefore our children. I pray that our heavenly Father will grant grace to synod to see this very present danger and act quickly to excise it for the welfare of our churches. As watchmen on the towers of Zion, we must be careful that in our zeal to preserve Truth at the front gates it does not creep in through the back door.

Paul counsels us in Galatians 5:1: "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." We have a goodly heritage from the Lord our God, let us hold fast to that heritage by seeking after Truth and Righteousness only as revealed in His Word, Jesus Christ. Let us take heed to what our Lord and Master, King Jesus, tells us, nothing more and nothing less.

7) Conclusion

I believe, on the basis of what has been presented in this protest, there are sufficient grounds for synod to revisit the decisions of Synod 2008 in this matter. I ask synod to declare in error those decisions as they relate to the rejection of the appeals of Ken Feenstra and Rev. Nathan Brummel.

However, in consideration of the impact this has on our churches and since the view of this matter is significantly divided among our people, I respectfully suggest to synod that a study committee be appointed to review Article 21 and its relationship to our Christian day schools and alternative forms of schooling such as homeschooling and on-line schooling. In the meantime, I request that synod suspend the decisions with respect to these protests and also decisions of protests that are similar in spirit until the study committee reports.

Thank you for considering my protest.

I pray that your deliberations may be directed by the Word and led by the Holy Spirit to God's glory and the upbuilding of His church.

SUPPLEMENT 48**Protest: Mr. Joe vanGelderén**

March 31, 2009

Synod of the PRC
c/o Don Doezema, Stated clerk

Esteemed Brethren,

We prayerfully hereby protest the decisions of Synod, June, 2008, in regards to Article 21, specifically Article 54, B, 3, a and 3, d.

54, B, 3, a:

Rev. Brummel errs in his contention that Article 21 means simply that consistories are to promote Christian education. Article 21 also requires consistories to promote the Christian day school in which parents have their children instructed by others on their behalf.

54, B, 3, d:

Rev. Brummel errs in his contention that classis improperly laid an extra-biblical requirement on Rev. Dick, and thereby fell into legalism, when it advised Grace Consistory to require of Rev. Dick the reasons for his decision to homeschool his children, and to judge their validity.

We do not believe that these decisions were made using Scripture as the basis for the outcome, but rather, using profitable, yet no more than man-made, documents to bind the consciences of our fellow believers.

Basis:

A. The decision-making criteria being used are not solely the infallible Word of God and/or the Three Forms of Unity. Article 32 of the Belgic Confession of Faith states that the rulers of the church are to institute and establish ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of Christ. They must take care not to depart from all that Christ has instituted. “And therefore we reject all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in *any* manner whatever.”

B. Prof. Hanks also states in his *Notes on the Church Order* that “Because the Church Order has no authority on its own, its principles must constantly be subject to the scrutiny of the Word of God and tested by scripture.”

C. The decisions made, make the “obligations” set forth in the Church Order to overrule and add to the scriptural statements of faith in the Belgic Confession of Faith (Article 30), and the obligations of “bishops” in I Timothy 3:1-7.

Explanation:

There are three spheres of authority given by God:

- 1) Nation—The nation is given the authority of the sword, to defend the nation and protect the weak.
- 2) Church—The church is given the mandate to preach and teach.
- 3) Family—The family is given the responsibility to raise the children.

The children are commanded to obey their parents. In the nation of Israel (*before they had a king, when God Himself ruled over the nation*), the responsibility of raising or teaching the children was put upon the parents. Like-minded parents *may* join together, combine their efforts, skills, and abilities to educate their children, but the primary responsibility remains with the parents. And only when we see that the primary responsibility is ours can we join with *like-minded* parents to share that certain task of the upbringing of our children. A good Christian school is to be an extension of the home. But to think that a good Christian school is the only way the Bible instructs parents to teach covenant children is *not* biblical.

And to use the Church Order to force parents to use only that method is an abuse of the Church Order. To say that God's blessing in the teaching of our covenant children is only to be found in one institution, "the good Christian school," is not biblical. Fathers are to understand and embrace the task of raising, teaching, and training the children to be theirs. They are to feel that every day of their lives. It may not be implied through the preaching or teaching of the church that when we send our children to "the good Christian school" we are fulfilling our God-given mandate. We are not to teach that if a parent does not send his children to "the good Christian school" he is not 'Elder material.' Scripture gives us the rules for eldership in I Timothy 3:1-7.

We see how the cause of Protestant Reformed Christian schools is being promoted, and the Church Order is being used to enforce negligent use of the "good Christian school." The Church Order is not Scripture, in that it cannot defend itself on its own merits.

Scripture has the God-given authority, the right, and the continued ability to defend and prove itself. And Scripture must defend and explain our creeds and confessions. The Church Order is not one of our creeds, confessions, or one of the three forms of unity, and does not have a right or authority of its own to defend itself. Nor can it in any way overrule Scripture or our creeds and confessions. If any article is found to do so, it must be, and ought to be, reconsidered.

If an article of the Church Order is questioned, it is to be explained, defended, and proven with Scripture, to be irrefutably the obvious and undeniable truth of God. In the past, the Church Order has been changed when necessity required it so. The Word of God, though, may *never* be

changed or altered, even to the ‘dotting’ of the letter i. This makes the Scriptures indisputably infallible and reliable.

The Church Order and the commentaries thereof are the work of men and are subject to change. The Church Order is a necessary tool, though, that we may and ought to use to aid us in the ruling of the body of Christ. “But it may not be used as a legalistic document, a book of laws in the civil sense. It is not superimposed upon the churches, demanding unreasoned and legalistic obedience. ...The Church Order is moral in character, not judicial. It is a regulatory set of rules, not a legalistic set of laws. Besides, the Church Order is a constant guardian against willfulness and abuse of power, which evils are ever ready to creep in to disturb the peace and progress of the church” (VanDellen and Monsma, *The Church Order Commentary*). These commentators themselves do not wish their work and study to be used in an improper or legalistic way. It is through their study and understanding that this is what these articles have commonly been accepted to mean. Their study and understanding must be tried and tested by and with the Scriptures, as surely has been done many times. They are not infallibly inspired of God as the Scriptures are.

The recent decisions and focus of consistories, classis, and synod is on the man-made institution called “school.” The importance of our children, *all* of our children, attending a Protestant Reformed school seems to be equated with the importance of us bringing our children to church, catechism, and Bible study. If the institution of “school” is equal or similar in importance to the institution of the church, the church *must* oversee the entire goings on therein (parochial-schooling). God has not set up schools as one of the three spheres of authority on this earth. He has given this authority to the parents. All the references in Scripture speak to parents teaching their children God’s ways, and then helping, showing, and demonstrating to them how to walk in it. Can this be achieved using a good Christian school? Absolutely! But synod did not provide scriptural proof that the good Christian school is the preferred or recommended way to educate our children.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find the commandment to teach our children together. It should be a goal of every Christian to help train Christians in the way they should go. But to state that a good Christian school, if there is one present, is the only way or the best way in which the Bible instructs parents to teach covenant children is *not* biblical. In love for Christ and His truth we submit our protest and thank synod for their faithful deliberations in this matter.

Yours in Christ,
Joe van Gelderen

SUPPLEMENT 49**Protests: Mr. Arjen Vreugdenhil****I. Protest Concerning Article 21 CO**

I protest the interpretation of Article 21 of the Church Order adopted by Synod 2008. Synod adopted this interpretation in dealing with various appeals; see *Acts of Synod*, Articles 47, 52, 63, and 64. Contrary to what Synod 2008 and Classis East claimed, this is not the historical interpretation of Article 21. The two key aspects of the interpretation promoted by synod and Classis East cannot be supported.

A. Synod incorrectly claimed that consistories not only “shall see to it that there are good Christian schools,” but also must urge the parents to use these schools rather than homeschooling their children. However, this is not the intended meaning of Article 21.

1. That this is indeed the position of Synod 2008 is clear from the following:

a. According to synod, the consistories “must promote the existing good Christian schools” (Art. 63, ground 1). They must “promot[e] and urg[e] the use of the Christian day schools where possible” (Art. 52, ground d).

b. By saying that Classis East “granted the right of parents in certain circumstances to choose a method of education other than the Christian day school” (Art. 47, ground a, 3, a), synod implies that normally parents do not have the right to make this choice. Rather, Article 21 “also specifies how this [instruction] should be done” (Art. 52, ground a).

c. The application made by Classis East and endorsed by Synod 2008 is that “the rule of Article 21...requires that [a minister] ordinarily send his children to the Christian schools which the consistory recognizes as good, and which the members of the congregation use. If he does not use these schools, the rule of Article 21 implies that the officebearer must give an adequate explanation for not using the schools to the consistory and congregation” (Art. 64, ground 4, b).

2. For support of this position, Classis East and Synod 2008 quoted a passage from VanDellen and Monsma’s *Church Order Commentary*. However, this passage is unrightfully considered decisive, and moreover misinterpreted.

a. The passage in question states: “All that know the history of our Churches and the history of Article 21, realize that the article as it reads today means to say that our Consistories must promote the organization and proper maintenance of

good Christian Day Schools by believing parents, and must urge the members of our Churches to use these schools for the education of their God-entrusted children, if at all possible” (VD&M, pp. 94, 95).

b. In the introduction to the *Church Order Commentary*, S. Volbeda correctly points out “two pertinent facts”: “The first is that this is not an official, that is, synodically approved, commentary on the Church Order. It carries no more weight than the intrinsic correctness of the positions taken in the book will bear. And the second is that not all the views propounded by the authors command the assent of all who are able to judge of matters canonical” (VD&M, p. v). Rather than grounding the meaning of Article 21 in a single expression from this commentary, Classis East and synod should have considered the arguments and principles adduced by the authors.

c. VanDellen and Monsma operate on the assumption that their readers have two options: send their children to the public schools or use the Christian day schools. This is clear, for instance, from their identification of “parents who do not feel the need of Christian day school instruction” as those who “prefer the public school for their children” (p. 98). Based on the inherent unchristian character of the public schools, the authors conclude that the consistory must urge the church members to use the Christian day schools. The consistory must do this precisely because “the Church cannot afford, and before God cannot tolerate, to see much of her precious teachings contradicted and silenced five days a week...Godless and Christless instruction clearly runs counter to the best interests of the Church, the kingdom of God in general, the welfare of the child, and the solemn obligation of Christian parents” (p. 95). But apart from this, “the general schooling of the child is admittedly not the task of the Church.”

d. Synod 2008 therefore makes a gross mistake when it uses this passage in VanDellen and Monsma to give the church authority in matters of education. The heart of Van Dellen and Monsma’s treatment of Article 21 is that the *parents* are responsible for the education of their children, and the consistory’s authority is *limited* to admonishing the parents to fulfill their duty.

3. At the time Article 21 was first adopted, the church did or-

ganize Christian schools, but did not urge their members to use these schools instead of home education.

- a. The Dutch historian VanDeursen makes clear that around 1600, it was considered the task of the parents to determine what kind of education the children would receive.

The master [of an apprentice] had the duty not only to train the children for the bakery or the shoemaker's shop, but also to prepare them for state and society.

That preparation could also take place with the parents at home, or with the teacher in the school. *The three options were considered approximately equivalent*, as long as they corresponded to the proper purpose of education. The parents, of course, have the most important role, inasmuch they are indispensable during the first years of their children. It is also to the parent to decide which preparation for society they want to give to their son or daughter. "The rearing of children," says Simon van Leeuwen, "does not only include the use of food and drink, but also clothing, shelter, possessions, comfort, discipline, education and training in some profession or skill, according to everyone's position and ability." The choice is in the latter part. All parents must offer food, clothing, shelter and discipline to their children. But education and professional training vary according to position and ability.

That need not imply going to school, and rearing children is certainly much more than just that. According to the Commissioners of Holland in 1623, "schools are like gardens, in which godliness and respect for the government is planted into the children." The same philosophy inspired the States of Holland in 1596, when they prepared to appoint a schoolmaster in Cillaarshoek, because for lack of education many children "grew up in idleness and lasciviousness." The government viewed education not only as the instruction in some skills, but "education of the youth in the fear of the Lord" first of all served "to turn and keep them away from all recklessness and mischief." That goal could be accomplished by a training in the schools, *but equally well* by "teaching the children a trade or training them for any other work, that in future times they might earn their living in an honest and respectable way" (*Kopergeld*, pp. 57, 58; my translation).

- b. The Dutch Reformed church had one educational goal for all its members, and even all Dutch citizens: they should learn to read the Bible. How this was accomplished, or what else the children learned, was immaterial. VanDeursen explains:

In keeping with tradition, education had always been the church's business, and the Reformed church found this even more important than the

Catholic church. Its educational goal lay within the church community. It was not about popular education. Writing or arithmetic in itself was not more valuable to the church than milking cows or making baskets. After all, it was the parents who decided which of these things the children learned, according to their position and ability. *I know of no cases in which parents were admonished by the consistory or minister for not sending their children to school.* But, as the church of the Bible, the Reformed churches desired that as many children and adults as possible would be able to read the Bible (*Kopergeld*, p. 59).

c. The churches supported schools and schoolmasters, often by leaning on the governments to raise the teachers' stipends, or by sponsoring the schools themselves. This was considered a work of charity. This is clear from the Acts of the Synod of Dort, where we read the decision "that the government should open schools everywhere, and that the children of the poor should receive free instruction in these schools" (VD&M, p. 99). It also explains the formulation of the third question for church visitation in Article 41 of the Church Order: "Are the poor and the Christian schools cared for?" (The old Dutch word *bezorgd worden*, "to be cared for," identifies the poor and the schools as objects of charitable care.)

d. Thus, the churches made good Christian education available, but did not urge or promote the exclusive use of these schools. Between 1600 and 1900, it was not uncommon for Reformed parents to educate their children at home, or to hire a private tutor. Of course, these options were not available to all; only the educated and rich could afford them. But there is no indication that the church opposed these other methods of schooling. Various examples are known of respected church members, often in positions of leadership, who homeschooled their children. One example is Christaan Huygens (sr.), respected leader in the Reformed church, who educated his children at home. His son, the famous poet Constantijn Huygens, published an essay in Latin in which he sang the praises of his home education. There is no indication that this was considered inappropriate or rebellious. A much later example is Abraham Kuyper, who received his elementary education at home. The practice of homeschooling ceased when the Dutch government in 1902 issued a law of mandatory education in government-approved school institutes. But this was a decision of the state, on the basis of secular social principles.

4. The twentieth-century Dutch immigrants in Michigan emphasized the importance of Christian *education*, and the calling of the individual *parents*, rather than the importance of school institutions.

a. The CRC Synod of 1898 adopted the following recommendation:

that the Synod not only state in its assembly and show in its minutes that positive Christian Education according to Reformed principles is the undeniable obligation of Reformed Christians, but also that an article be published in *De Wachter*, *admonishing* all teachers and elders to work with all their might to promote decidedly Christian Education, wherever it is possible.

In the judgment of the Committee, these are the reasons:

- 1) The demand of God's Word to raise the children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.
- 2) The promise made by the parents at Baptism.
- 3) There may be no separation between civil, social, and religious life, between education and rearing.
- 4) The glory of our King demands it, because all power in heaven and on earth has been given to him, also in the area of education and science.

No generic but *Reformed* education is required for our children. For no system of education (*kweekingsysteem*) is adequate; rather, the acknowledgment of the need of regeneration, and the acknowledgment of the covenantal relationship in which God has placed our children, are the principles from which education must ensue (*Acts of Synod* 1898, Art. 32; my translation).

b. The schools are viewed as *extensions of the home*, and nothing more. The teacher instructs the children *in loco parentis*, “in the place of the parent”—singular, that is, the individual parent. This is the core idea behind “free, parental schools.” It is the leading thought in VanDellen and Monsma’s commentary on Article 21. It is also brought out by Norman de Jong, in his book *Education in the Truth* (1969):

Because of inadequacy of preparation or lack of time, parents usually cannot fully carry out the development of the child and the further refining of the person that Scripture has stipulated. Recognizing, however, that the responsibility is, and remains theirs, the parents join with other parents to form a school, an association through which they employ other, qualified individuals to carry on the work for them. The school, then, is a humanly originated institution, an institution *growing out of and standing*

in the place of the home. It is this concept of “in loco parentis” that is essential to our understanding of the school as a God-worshipping and God-approved institution. Not existing independently, it is an extension of the home which seeks to carry on the functions and duties *that the home has delegated to it.* The school, as institution, derives its authority from the home (De Jong, p. 127).

We find the same emphasis in our own circles. In 1916, two years after the revision of the Church Order, Rev. Herman Hoeksema preached a sermon on Christian education.

Notice, in the second place, that all this time, the parent is held responsible for the training of his children. Moses does not at all address the congregation of the people of God in general, but emphatically he speaks in the singular. He addresses the individual parent. Thou shalt teach them unto thy children. Thou shalt talk of them, etc. *Education is therefore the duty of the parent and of no one else.* And this stands to reason. In the first place there is no one that has more right, more God-given right to the child than the parent. Education determines to a large extent what the child shall be in the future. How it shall think and act. And surely there is no one that has more right to determine this than the parent. But especially is this so with the covenant parents. They are the believers, and they are the ones that are held responsible, and th[ey] express the promise before God and his congregation time and again that they shall see to it that the children are educated according to the doctrine of the covenant. *They, therefore, have the duty to educate their children, and no one else has that obligation as they have.*

...The parent must also educate his children outside of the home. In the catechism [!] and in the school, on the street and in every other place, it is the parent whose duty it is to educate his children. *He may perhaps perform that duty through someone else, that is his servant, but that does not make any difference.* Not the teacher, private or public, has any duty regarding your children[:]; the duty to educate them is yours, and it can only become the duty of the teacher by your employing him.

...All these institutions *are merely extensions of the home, the teacher is merely the servant of the parent,* and even as the boss always remains responsible for the job his servants perform, so the parent is absolutely responsible for the education of his children by the teacher (Hoeksema, *Christian Education*, in a pamphlet edited by Rev. D. Engelsma).

c. Education by the parents was always considered the starting point, the ideal. Schools are established and used only because modern society requires education that cannot (and certainly could not) be provided by parents. This is mentioned by De Jong in the quotation given above. Abra-

ham Kuypers, in his articles on *De Gemeene Gratie*, observes that “it is a fact that, apart from very few exceptions, the parents lack the time and skill to instruct their children in all this; therefore the child must receive this instruction in the schools” (vol. III, ch. LIV; pp. 369, 397). In his sermon on Reformed Education, Rev. Hoeksema said:

You are responsible for all that your child is taught, responsible before God. Of course, we realize that this was far easier in the time of Moses and the children of Israel than in our modern times. Life was so much more simple. The parent was not so busy from morning till night, *that he could find no time to personally instruct his children in the precepts of God*. And life was not so complicated, not so exacting[;] the child did not have to learn so much[;] all things were more simple than they are today.... But this is entirely different. The parent, at least the father, is not at home from the time he rises up till the time he lies down[;] the mother is *too busy or at least often makes herself too busy if she is not*, and time for direct instruction by the parent is actually insufficient. Besides, if the parent did have just as much time as the Israelite of old, he would not be able to instruct his children in all the necessary branches of education. And the result is that we have now the school, the catechism, the Sunday school, where one person systematically instructs many of our children at the same time.

...And upon that same [covenant] basis we come to you with the same word of God and say: Ye shall teach them unto your children and talk of them in your home and outside of your home and everywhere. *And since conditions are such that undoubtedly you will have to entrust a large part of your education to others*, there we again come to you and say: Send them there where you know that they receive a covenant education, an education in the precepts of the Lord. Send them to our catechism regularly and do not neglect it, send them also to our Christian schools, where you know that they receive the education they must. (ibid.)

Thus, Hoeksema promotes the Christian day school, on the assumption that, for practical reasons, parents will have to delegate some of that responsibility to others. He even seems to chide mothers for making themselves too busy to provide direct instruction to her children! The fact that Hoeksema promoted the Christian schools in this manner, two years after the revision of Article 21, makes it highly unlikely that he believed that Article 21 urges parents to use the Christian day schools even when they are able to teach their children at home.

5. Even after the 1914 revision of Article 21, homeschooling

was considered a legitimate, respectable, and desirable option within our churches. Again, we quote Rev. Herman Hoeksema, now as a minister in the PRC and editor of the *Standard Bearer*:

I take it for granted that all our readers... will have to agree with me that our obligation to the existing schools and school societies *can be no other than, and is rooted in, the obligation of the parents with regard to the education of their children.*

These school societies are, with respect to the instruction of our children, only a means to an end. If parents were in a position to give their children all the education they need, *personally at home*, there would be no need of these societies. In fact, in that case *it would be their sacred calling to provide such instruction themselves.* Apart from the church, to which the ministry of the Word is entrusted, they are the only responsible party before God with respect to this instruction.

Or even, if all could afford to *employ a private tutor* to educate their children, the school society might be discarded. (“As to Our Moral Obligation, IV,” in the *Standard Bearer* 1944; reprinted in the pamphlet *Christian Education*.)

6. The text of Article 21 is not against home education, either.

a. It mandates consistories “to see to it that there are” good Christian schools. That is not the same as urging parents to use them. The church must try to *provide* Christian schools where necessary; not to *insist* on the use of such schools. The article speaks of availability, not exclusivity.

b. When the article speaks of “the parents,” there is no reason to interpret this as all parents of the congregation; just as “the children” in the original version of the article was not interpreted as all children of the church. Rather, it refers to those who actually decide to use the schools. A school is a “good Christian school” only if the parents of the enrolled children control and supervise the education.

c. The clause “have their children instructed” may not be interpreted in such a way that the parents *must* have their children taught by others on their behalf. First of all, the causative “have...instructed,” Dutch *doen...onderwijzen*, does not exclude the possibility that the parents instruct their own children. Moreover, this expression is taken from the Form for the Administration of Baptism, which leaves the choice to the parents. They promise to “instruct their children in the aforesaid doctrine, or help *or* cause them to

be instructed therein.” The Dutch version is more to the point: *de kinderen te onderwijzen of doen onderwijzen*.

d. The phrase “according to the demands of the covenant,” Dutch: *naar eisch des verbonds*, also refers to the baptismal form: “And parents are in duty bound to instruct their children therein [i.e., the significance of their baptism].” All of this emphasizes the primary responsibility of the parent. None of it suggests that the parent must be required, or urged, to leave a large part of this responsibility to others.

B. Synod incorrectly believes that Article 21 expresses a preference for day schools over homeschooling because of the communal aspect of these day schools.

1. Evidence that this is the position of synod:

a. Synod upheld the position of Classis East in September 2007, that Article 21 “mandates consistories to see to it that there are good Christian schools established by the community of Reformed believers” (C, 1, b, 2).

b. “The rule of Article 21...requires that [a minister] ordinarily send his children to the Christian schools which ... the members of the congregation use” (Art. 64, ground 4, b).

c. “Article 21...addresses the calling of the consistory to pursue the *well-being of the whole congregation* by promoting and urging the use of the Christian day schools where possible” (Art. 52, ground d). The idea is clearly implied that homeschooling may be profitable for individual parents, but Article 21 is concerned with the greater good of the community.

2. This communal aspect is not supported by any of the evidence quoted by Synod 2008 or Classis East. In particular, the *Church Order Commentary* by VanDellen and Monsma does not discuss anything of the kind. They mention the establishment of schools “by believing parents,” but do not discuss any responsibility the parents would have for each other’s children. Rather, VanDellen and Monsma emphasize that education and the choice of education is the prerogative of the child’s own parents.

Likewise, Herman Hoeksema in his 1944 editorial “As to Our Moral Obligation” (see above) denies that believers only have an obligation toward school societies as long as they are members of these societies.

3. The synod said that “the organic nature of both election and the covenant certainly recommends to parents the wisdom

of fulfilling their covenantal calling by educating their children together” (Art. 47, ground 2). Although the synod did not allow the view that this organic aspect *requires* parents to educate their children together “in all circumstances,” it clearly sees a connection between election/covenant and communal schools. But there is no such connection. There is no biblical or traditional reason why fellow members of the covenant should organize social institutions together. The communion of the saints and the church of Christ transcends social structures. This is the reason why Christian schools were organized as “free” schools: they are organizations in the social sphere, and do not fall under the authority of the church.

4. That there is no connection between covenant and communal schooling is obvious from the history of the church. The children in the Old Testament and in the early church were always taught by their parents. Surely, if the nature of election and covenant imply communal schooling, God would have instructed Israel to organize communal catechetical instruction, etc. Instead, God’s Word always emphasized the community of the *home*. Not the congregation, not the denomination, but the home is the community within which education ought to take place, first and foremost. Children should receive education, not together with children of other families, but together with their siblings.

5. Much of what is taught in the schools is not essential for the spiritual life of children. Not the church but the government requires that children be educated. The interest of the church is that children are instructed in “the doctrine of the Old and New Testament,” “in the Bible and the catechism.” If there were any theological reason for communal training, the church should promote the establishment and use of good Christian *day cares*, in which the parents of the community train each other’s toddlers. But no theological argument can be made why liberal arts education—which is not the business of the church—should become a concern of the community.

6. If the schooling of children were the communal concern of the congregation, this education would properly belong to the ecclesiastical realm. In that case we should abolish our “free, parental” schools and organize parochial schools. That would be a breach with the Kuyperian tradition in which we stand, but it would be more consistent.

C. Without sufficient evidence, the synod may not insist on their particular interpretation of Article 21. The way in which children

are instructed must be left in the liberty of the parents, and under the supervision of the local congregations.

1. The consistory is the primary ruling body in the Reformed churches. Therefore the position of the Grace PRC Consistory must be considered valid, unless it is proven wrong. Since the synod and classis failed to meet this burden of proof concerning Article 21, the position of the consistory must be upheld and respected. The “major assemblies” have no right to prescribe mere preferences as binding on all the churches, especially not if these contradict the decisions of the consistory.

2. Synod 2008 restricted the liberty of the churches to interpret and apply Article 21.

a. Although synod and Classis East “maintain that God gives covenant parents the freedom of their sanctified judgment to determine the best way to educate their children” (Art. 47, ground a, 3, c), they do not allow an officebearer to exercise this liberty, based on the belief that Article 21 requires that officebearers must urge the use of specific school institutions, and therefore must use these schools.

b. The synod made this very clear when they said that “the officebearer, if he does not use these schools, must give to the consistory and congregation an adequate explanation for not using the schools” (Art. 64, ground 4, b). If the officebearer insists on his liberty without such an adequate explanation, he may “jeopardize his office.” By attaching conditions and consequences to the exercise of the officebearer’s liberty, the synod effectively restricted that liberty.

c. In September 2007, Classis East declared that the Grace PRC Consistory was in error when they allowed Rev. Dick to educate his children at home. Thus, the classis did not permit the consistory to make its own interpretation and application of Article 21. By upholding the view of classis over against various protests, synod actively endorsed this decision of Classis East.

3. This restriction of liberty is not legitimate. Article 32 of the Belgic Confession rejects “all human inventions, and all laws which man would introduce into the worship of God, thereby to bind and compel the conscience in any manner whatever.” It “admits only of that which tends to nourish and preserve concord and unity.” It is not clear how the restriction of a parent’s Christian liberty to educate his children the way he thinks best is beneficial for the unity of the church.

4. This restriction of the liberty violates the character and purpose of the Church Order.

a. The Church Order was written with the intention only to regulate the things “necessary for the maintenance of order in the church of Christ” (Art. 1 CO). It limits itself to ecclesiastical matters. Therefore the Church Order may not be interpreted as regulating unnecessary details, or non-ecclesiastical matters.

b. VanDellen and Monsma bring this out in the Preface of their *Church Order Commentary*: “We are convinced that the brevity of our Church Order is one of its merits. More than once, for instance, numberless detailed and involved rules have been used by modernistic majorities at church assemblies, against loyal minorities. Rules needlessly detailed always have a tendency to impede and hinder *free action and development*” (p. viii).

c. When the 1914 Synod of Roseland revised the Church Order, it was their express purpose “as little as possible to make general rules; that these only contain, that for which is absolutely necessary to maintain order and justice, while the regulation of all other matters be left to the freedom of the churches and of life itself” (*Acts of Synod* 1914, p. 57).

D. Conclusion: The position of Classis East and Synod 2008 does not follow directly from the text of Article 21; and there is substantial evidence that the Reformed churches never defended this position. The burden of proof is on the classis and the synod, because they may only overrule the decisions of a consistory on the basis of conclusive evidence.

For this reason I ask synod to rescind their decision “to uphold the position of Classis East,” and to advise Classis East that the Grace Consistory has the right to maintain their interpretation and application of Article 21, unless and until valid arguments are found that their position is in error.

In the case synod is not fully convinced by the historical support I have presented here, I recommend that synod appoint a committee to study the history and principles of Reformed education, and in particular Article 21, so that a well-informed decision can be made.

II. Protest Concerning Ecclesiastical Ordinances

I protest the statements of Synod 2008 concerning the authority of the church to involve itself in non-ecclesiastical matters, such as the kind of education children of the church should receive; see *Acts of Synod*, Art.

64, grounds 2 and 4. Contrary to what synod claims, the church has no such authority. The arguments from Scripture and the Reformed tradition given for support are not valid.

A. Synod 2008 used Acts 15:28-29 to support their view that “for its own welfare, the church has the authority to involve itself in matters that belong to the home, even in areas of Christian liberty” (Art. 64, ground 2, a). But the decision of the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 does not prove this at all.

1. The heart of the decision of Acts 15 is “to lay upon [the Christians] no greater burden than these necessary (ἐπιαναγκη) things.”

a. Therefore this passage applies only to ecclesiastical ordinances which are absolutely necessary for the true welfare of the church. The choice between homeschooling and communal schools does not qualify for this.

b. This is corroborated by VanDellen and Monsma, when they write: “Flourishing Church life demands that these [‘secular’] subjects be taught, but they do not concern the heart and core of the Church and its task. They are not absolutely indispensable to the Church. And so the Church should concentrate on its own specific task, and teach only that which pertains to the Gospel and the doctrine of the Kingdom” (p. 94).

2. The decision of Acts 15 is not about “matters that belong to the home,” but to ecclesiastical matters, namely the participation of Christians in the context of pagan ritual. It would be an exegetical mistake to believe that Acts 15:29 is simply about food or “meat.” The word “meat” is not even found in the original text. Rather, it speaks of εἰδωλοθυτα, “things sacrificed to idols.” In verse 20, the same matter is described as ἀλισγηματα των εἰδωλων, “pollution of idols.” The focus is on the religious aspect.

3. Our poor understanding of the precise reasons why the Jerusalem council chose these four things may not become an occasion for the church to make arbitrary rulings. They were not speaking of matters of Christian liberty. This is clear from the fact that idols are mentioned first (both in verses 20 and 29), and that πορνεία “fornication” is part of the list.

4. John Calvin, in his *Institutes*, is very impatient with those who try to use Acts 15 for this purpose. He writes:

It gives them no great help, in defending their tyranny, to pretend the

example of the apostles. The apostles and elders of the primitive Church, according to them, sanctioned a decree without any authority from Christ, by which they commanded all the Gentiles to abstain from meat offered to idols, from things strangled, and from blood (Acts 15:20). If this was lawful for them, why should not their successors be allowed to imitate the example as often as the occasion requires? Would that they would always imitate them both in this and in other matters! For I am ready to prove, on valid grounds, that here *nothing new has been instituted or decreed by the apostles*. For when Peter declares in that council that God is tempted if a yoke is laid on the necks of the disciples, he overthrows his own argument if he afterwards allows a yoke to be imposed on them. But it is imposed if the apostles, on their own authority, prohibit the Gentiles from touching meat offered to idols, things strangled, and blood. The difficulty still remains that they seem nevertheless to prohibit them. But this will easily be removed by attending more closely to the meaning of their decree. The first thing in order, and the chief thing in importance, *is that the Gentiles were to retain their liberty*, which was not to be disturbed, and that they were not to be annoyed with the observances of the Law. As yet, the decree is all in our favor. The reservation which immediately follows is not a new law enacted by the apostles, but a divine and eternal command of God against the violation of charity, which does not detract one iota from that liberty. It only reminds the Gentiles how they are to accommodate themselves to their brother, and to abuse their liberty for an occasion of offence. Let the second head, therefore, be that the Gentiles are to use an innoxious liberty, giving no offence to the brethren. Still, however, they prescribe some certain thing: they show and point out, as was expedient at the time, what those things are by which they may give offence to their brethren, that they may avoid them; but they add no novelty of their own to the eternal law of God, which forbids the offence of brethren (*Institutes*, IV, 10, 21).

(As for the use of the word “offense” in this context, see [my appeal, III, A, 2, a, Supplement 38, p. 357].)

B. Synod 2008 said: “We also recognize that God has given the civil government authority to make demands concerning the nature and quality of that education for the welfare of the state” (Art. 64, ground 2, c). The implied conclusion seems to be that we should also recognize the authority of the church to make such demands. But this reasoning is flawed.

1. The church and the state have authority in different spheres of life. The fact that the state has a right to involve itself in a matter does not give the church the right to do the same.
2. Even the United States government, with their secular views of social relationships, has acknowledged in recent years that it may not require the use of particular schools (public schools) or

even a particular type of school (day schools). Recent jurisprudence shows that the truancy laws are no longer used to outlaw home education. In this respect, the state seems to understand the authority of the parents better than our churches.

3. The church should use her authority to serve, not to make demands; we should go about authority in a very different way than the world does. Jesus reminded His disciples: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. *But ye shall not be so*: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve” (Luke 22:25-26).

C. According to synod, “the Church Order lays demands on the officebearers that are not expressly required by Scripture, but arise out of the principles of Scripture and are an application of biblical principles” (Art. 64, ground 4, a).

1. The synod fails to prove how the perceived demand of Article 21—namely, that officebearers should promote the use of the existing schools by using them for their own children—arises out of the principles of Scripture.

2. The examples of Articles 67 and 68 used by the synod illustrate that the Church Order only “lays demands” on officebearers concerning their *official duties*. When the minister is called to “explain briefly the sum of Christian doctrine,” he must do this as an officebearer, not as a parent. There is no article in the Church Order that prescribes how officebearers should go about matters in their own home.

3. Synod’s reference to Article 32 of the Belgic Confession does injustice to the thrust of this article. Indeed, the article says that “it is useful and beneficial that those who are rulers of the church institute and establish certain ordinances among themselves for maintaining the body of the church”—but this is merely a concessive clause (“although”); the main substance of the article is that the rulers of the church “ought studiously to take care” to remain in the line of Scripture, and avoid man-made laws. Especially, Article 32 warns the church not to invade the Christian liberty of church members by making laws that *in any way* might compel or bind the conscience.

And this has been the greatest injustice of Classis East and synod in the case of Rev. Dick. Their judgment on his home-schooling compelled him to choose between his conscience as a pastor (his call to minister to Grace PRC) and his conscience as a father (his responsibility to do what he thinks best for his

children). The institutes of “Christ, our only master,” do not prohibit him from doing these things. But the ecclesiastical assemblies denied him this right, and thus compelled his conscience.

4. In fact, the Church Order lays no extra demands on the officebearers beyond the duties pertaining to their office. This is clear from Article 80 CO, which gives two (connected) reasons for suspension or deposition from office: 1) the officebearer has committed a sin or gross offense which renders him infamous before the world (so that he loses his credibility); and 2) the sin or offense would lead to excommunication of any church member. In other words, officebearers may not be deposed or suspended because they failed to fulfill perceived additional “demands.”

D. Conclusion: Synod’s response to the appeal of Rev. Brummel is based on faulty exegesis and conflicts with the traditional Reformed view of officebearers. I therefore ask the synod to rescind these statements (at least grounds 2 and 4 of Art. 64), and to reconsider the arguments of Rev. Brummel in the light of Scripture and the Reformed tradition.

III. Protest Concerning Conscience and Decisions

I protest the position of Synod 2008 concerning the role of Rev. Dick’s conscience in the decision of his consistory to allow his homeschooling; see *Acts of Synod*, Art. 55.

A. The synod upheld the position of Classis East that the consistory was in error when they “allowed Rev. Dick’s appeal to his conscience to be decisive in their decision.”

1. According to the synod, “the very fact that Rev. Dick’s decision to homeschool was a decision of conscience is decisive for the consistory” (Art. 55, ground a, 1, b). However, the decisive argument for the Grace Consistory for allowing Rev. Dick’s homeschooling is that he is at liberty to make this choice, because Scripture allows him to do so.

a. This is clear from the consistory’s *position paper* of January 2007. “Our concern and desire was to search the Scriptures and see what principles exist that apply to this matter. Our concern was also to remain faithful to the Church Order” (introductory letter).

b. The consistory concluded that “there are no principles or biblical reasons that would serve as grounds for the consistory to prohibit officebearers from homeschooling their children even when Christian day schools are available” (PP, II, A).

- c. Classis East and Synod 2008 overlooked the key argument in the consistory's letter to the Schimmels: "Our position is that, in fact, *and because Scripture alone must be our guide*, we must respect pastor's decision..." (emphasis is the consistory's; see *Acts of Synod*, p. 133). And in the preceding paragraph, the consistory had said: "Our position, *because this is what Scripture allows*, is that a Christian parent has the liberty to school his children at home...."
- d. In their *position paper*, the consistory did not present Rev. Dick's conscience as the first *ground* for their decision; rather, they mentioned it as one of the conclusions they had drawn after "discussing at length with the pastor several aspects of his decision to homeschool his children" (PP, III, A).
- e. Classis East continued to insist on their position, even though the Grace Consistory in their January/February 2008 protest had assured the classis that "Grace Consistory had indeed validated Rev. Dick's reasons for homeschooling" (II, 2, b).
2. The synod failed to understand the very nature of "Christian liberty."
- a. "Liberty" or "freedom" implies that there are no external constraints that would prohibit a person from doing something. It also implies that no "reasons" are necessary to make a decision.
- b. The New Testament teaches us that we may not pass judgment on each other's decisions of Christian liberty. Rather, we should be concerned about the consequences of *our own* decisions. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way" (Rom. 14:13).
- c. It is true that the decisions (and other motivations) that determine the Christian conscience may be judged. However, the judge is God, not the fellow Christian.
- d. Therefore, even if the pastor had given no further explanation to his consistory, the consistory would have been justified in validating his decision, because homeschooling is a matter of Christian liberty.
- B. The synod upheld classis' view that Rev. Dick's conscience may not be "pure or trustworthy." This is a violation of the high regard Christians should have for each other, and especially for officebearers.

1. According to synod, it may not be assumed that the consistory judged the conscience of Rev. Dick to be “pure and trustworthy,” because they had not explicitly stated so in their *position paper*. But this should not be necessary.
 - a. The very fact that the consistory, after discussing the matter with Rev. Dick, validated his decision is an implicit acknowledgment of the trust they had in him and his conscience.
 - b. The conscience of a Christian believer “is that activity or faculty of his heart and of his mind according to which he has a certain knowledge, assurance, or consciousness of, and whereby he agrees with, God’s judgment of his works according to their ethical and moral value” (Rev. Heys, *The Christian and His Conscience*). For a true believer, who has God’s Spirit dwelling within him, this conscience will guide him to make the right decisions.
 - c. Therefore, when the consistory found that there are no principles that would prohibit Rev. Dick from homeschooling his children, they were justified in believing that Rev. Dick’s Spirit-led conscience had led him to the correct decision for him and his family.
2. Synod and Classis East referred to Titus 1:15 to demonstrate the possibility that Rev. Dick’s conscience may be defiled. But this passage is not a neutral statement about such a possibility.
 - a. Titus 1:15 says: “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled.”
 - b. In this passage, Paul is speaking of people with a specific behavior. They are unruly, vain talkers, and deceivers; they teach things they ought not, for mere filthy lucre; they are defiled and unbelievers; they profess to know God, but in their works deny him; they are abominable and disobedient, reprobate [unfit] for any good work.
 - c. If this description would apply to Rev. Dick, this would be apparent in his doctrine and life; “for the tree is known by his fruit.”
 - d. The suggestion that the judgment of a “defiled conscience” could apply to Rev. Dick is uncharitable and without ground. When classis publicly made this suggestion, it degraded Rev. Dick’s reputation in the church community.
 - e. If the mere possibility of “defilement” would be reason to doubt the judgment of an officebearer, no ecclesiastical

decision could be trusted. For instance, one would have to dismiss the decisions of classis or synod on the basis of 1 Kings 22:23, which shows that it is possible that a group of even 400 prophets are under the influence of a “lying spirit.”

3. Synod and Classis East referred to 1 Cor. 8:7 to demonstrate that Rev. Dick’s conscience “may be weak for lack of knowledge.” But even if this passage applied to Rev. Dick, the conclusion would have to be that he should be allowed to follow his conscience, to avoid defiling it.

a. The text of 1 Cor. 8:7 is: “Howbeit there is not in every man that knowledge: for some with conscience of the idol unto this hour eat it as a thing offered unto an idol; and their conscience being weak is defiled.”

b. This text speaks of Christians who have not yet shaken the superstitious belief in idols. These people, with feeble (ασθενής) consciences, **should not be forced or encouraged** to do what their consciences forbid them to do, even though it is in itself perfectly legitimate. Otherwise their feeble conscience may become defiled; they would think of themselves as religiously unfaithful in the sight of God. (The tense of the Greek verb μολυνεται shows that it should be understood progressive, “becomes defiled,” rather than stative.)

c. This text can only be applied to the case of Rev. Dick if his decision to homeschool were prompted by a feeble conscience. That is, if for some reason he felt that it would be wrong for him to send his children to the Christian day school. The passage of 1 Cor. 8 teaches those who are “strong” that they may not compel him to violate his conscience. They may not force their liberty to use the day schools onto the minister. For if Rev. Dick were forced to violate his conscience and use the Christian schools for his children even though he feels that it is wrong, his conscience would become defiled.

SUPPLEMENT 50
Appendixes to advice of Advisory Committee
re Article 21 matters
Appendix 1

Summary of the appeals and protests
Synod 2009 faces in the case concerning
Article 21 of the Church Order and Rev. M. Dick

1. The main focus of the various protests and appeals is that the broader assemblies' interpretation of Article 21 is incorrect.

a. Some insist that synod erred in its interpretation of the "Christian schools" referred to.

1) Dick appeal: "The crux of the matter before us in regard to my homeschooling is this: the proper interpretation and application of Article 21 of our Church Order" [Supplement 36, p. 242].

2) Dick protest: "My main contention is that each decision of synod was based on an incorrect interpretation and application of Article 21 of the Church Order" [Supplement 40, p. 405] and "Synod has taken a position on Article 21 that is not only not clearly taught or necessarily implied by Scripture, but which is contrary to Scripture" [Supplement 40, p. 414].

3) Feenstra protest: "Synod's decision was based on a narrow, traditionalistic representation of Article 21 of the Church Order" [Supplement 41, p. 424].

4) Hoekstra appeals: "The interpretation of Article 21 of the CO given by classis is not biblical, confessional, or after the Reformed tradition" [Supplement 37, p. 332]. "A proper interpretation of Article 21 emphasizes the *content* of the education. That is, the idea of *good Christian* schools over against that which is *not good Christian* schools" [Supplement 37, p. 340]. "Since a good Christian home school meets the demands of the covenant by definition, it also meets the requirements of Article 21 of the CO (under the proper interpretation)" [Supplement 37, p. 341].

5) Hoekstra protest: "The article itself merely says 'schools'.... Therefore the article itself is broad enough to include anything that can be termed as 'school'" [Supplement 43, p. 442].

6) Mulder protest: "Nowhere was this charge [the requirement of Article 21] laid formally upon individual officebearers" [Supplement 46, p. 455].

7) Vreugdenhil protest: “Synod incorrectly claimed that consistories not only *shall see to it that there are good Christian schools*, but also must urge the parents to use these schools rather than homeschooling their children. However, this is not the intended meaning of Article 21” [Supplement 49, p. 492]. In addition “Synod incorrectly believes that Article 21 expresses a preference for day schools over homeschooling because of the communal aspects of these day schools” [Supplement 49, p. 500].

8) Tolsma protest: “I believe Article 21 only speaks to the *end* or the *substance* of Christian vocational instruction, which is what gives the article its ecclesiastical quality and license. It can in no way be referring to the means to make this happen” [Supplement 47, p. 486].

b. Others insist that synod erred in failing to make the Christian schools a demand of the covenant.

1) Hanko protest: “...it was classis’ position that good Christian schools are not a *demand* of the covenant.... Article 21 speaks of the need of Christian schools as a demand of the covenant” [Supplement 42, p. 434]. “Synod erred in not emphasizing the corporate responsibility of parents in the education of the covenant seed” [Supplement 42, p. 435].

2) Kamps protest: “...our own schools...are the demand of the covenant” [Supplement 44, p. 448]. “...the Christian school is required by Scripture. I do not believe that one has the *biblical right* not to use the school because homeschooling falls into the area of Christian liberty” (Supplement 44, p. 451). “Synod’s position conflicts with the Church Order because it also conflicts with the doctrine and reality of the covenant of grace as set forth in sacred Scripture” (Supplement 44, p. 452).

2. Some protests and appeals contend that the broader assemblies improperly denied the right of Rev. Dick to be guided by his conscience in matters of Christian liberty, specifically in the matter of choosing to homeschool instead of using the PR Christian schools.

a. Rev. Dick: “If we would be compelled to use certain liberal arts institutions, we would be sinning against our conscience” [Supplement 36, p. 253].

b. Hoekstra appeals: “The church may not claim authority over matters of Christian liberty except those that have to do with the government and life of the church” [Supplement 37, p. 332].

c. Vreugdenhil appeals: “Classis East and synod have promoted a view in which church members are allowed to judge each other even

in matters of Christian liberty”[Supplement 38, p. 345] and “Classis maintained a view of the ‘conscience’ that is foreign to Scripture” [Supplement 38, p. 350].

d. Mulder protest, where, after quoting Belgic Confession Article 32, he states: “Where we confess that we have to be very careful not to introduce human ordinances, and, moreover, to be extremely careful not to bind and compel the conscience in any manner” [Supplement 46, p. 460].

e. Mr. Vreugdenhil also protests Synod 2008 upholding the position of Classis East “that the consistory was in error when they ‘allowed Rev. Dick’s appeal to his conscience to be decisive in their decision’” [Supplement 49, p. 507].

3. Some protests and appeals contend that Classis East and synod erred in matters of church polity:

a. Classis East overstepped the bounds of its authority by passing judgment on the validity of Rev. Dick’s withdrawing all his children from two good Christian schools and homeschooling them.

1) Dick appeal: “...classis has violated Article 30 of the Church Order” [Supplement 36, p. 246].

2) Vreugdenhil appeals: “...they violated the autonomy of the local church and Article 30 of the Church Order” [Supplement 38, p. 352].

3) Mulder protest: “I consider that these appeals were never legally before Classis East, as the classis may not lord it over the congregations...” [Supplement 46, p. 456] and “By treating the substance of the protests, classis violated the autonomy of the local congregation” [Supplement 46, p. 461].

b. Classis East overstepped its bounds in involving themselves in a matter that belonged ~~solely~~ [stricken, per Art. 89] to the authority of parents.

1) Rev. Dick Appeal: “...the classis has ‘intruded upon and indeed attempted to usurp the authority of parents’” [Supplement 36, p. 249].

2) Hoekstra protest: “Rev. Brummel does not err in his contention that the matter of the education of one’s children in the covenant is not an ecclesiastical matter” [Supplement 43, p. 438].

3) Mulder protest: “This parental judgment, moreover, is also the charge laid upon parents, particularly fathers, in Scripture. Thus, anyone who dictates where parents must have their children educated acts against Scripture, specifically Deuteronomy 6:1-8” [Supplement 46, p. 456].

4) Vreugdenhil appeals: “This [decision of Classis East, Sep-

tember 2007] clearly *denies* Rev. Dick's primary right of educating his children the way he believes is best..." [Supplement 38, p. 363].

5) Feenstra protest, "Fundamentally, it is not the business of the church to say what type or style of covenant education is best for a given family — the assemblies improperly made this matter of the home into an ecclesiastical (church) matter" [Supplement 41, p. 427].

4. Some protests and appeals contend that synod added to the requirements of Scripture for an officebearer.

a. Feenstra protest: "By creating extra-biblical — no, unbiblical — requirements for officebearers, synod has taken 'heed to the commandments of men....'" [Supplement 41, p. 429].

b. Hoekstra protest: "Rev. Brummel does not err in his contention that classis laid an extra-biblical requirement on Rev. Dick, and thereby fell into legalism, when it advised Grace Consistory to require of Rev. Dick the reasons for his decision to homeschool his children, and to judge their validity" [Supplement 43, p. 439].

c. Mulder protest: "Thus, for synod to mandate that, at the very least, officebearers must train their children in communal schools adds to the requirements that Scripture puts forth" [Supplement 46, p. 457].

d. Van Gelderen protest: "The decisions made, make the 'obligations' set forth in the Church Order to overrule and add to the scriptural statements of faith in the Belgic Confession of Faith (Art. 30), and the obligations of 'bishops' in I Timothy 3:1-7" [Supplement 48, p. 489].

5. There are also protests which call into question synod's decision in the N. Kleyn appeal.

a. Mulder protest: "I hereby protest the decisions of Synod 2008, in particular its decisions in Article 63, upholding the appeal of Mr. Nicholas Kleyn..." [Supplement 46, p. 455].

b. Kuiper protest: "Synod 2008's explanation for its decision *misrepresented* Kleyn's appeal" [Supplement 45, p. 453].

c. Prof. H. Hanko, viewing it from the opposite perspective in his protest [Supplement 42, p. 435], points to the apparent inconsistency of synod upholding the N. Kleyn appeal while rejecting the Kamps appeal.

6. The Vreugdenhil appeal (Supplement 38, p. 357) objects to Classis East's publicly questioning Rev. Dick's effectiveness in Grace congregation.

Appendix 2Advice to synod concerning the Jason Kuiper protest
and synod's subsequent rebuke**A. Information**

1. In treating legality of the various appeals and protests, synod adopted the following motions (Article 49, B, 7 & 8) concerning the Jason Kuiper protest:

a. That synod declare Mr. Jason Kuiper's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 & 31 of the Church Order.

b. That synod rebuke Mr. Jason Kuiper for the harsh language and serious allegations at the end of his protest [Supplement 45, p. 454], specifically, "This wrong interpretation constitutes not merely an innocent misunderstanding" and under point 5 with references to "the preaching of this false doctrine and similar nonsense...by consistories and ministers who...know better."

2. Because Mr. Kuiper, who was present, was not prepared at that time to acknowledge that he had erred, Committee 1 was directed to discuss the matter with him further.

3. Committee 1 met with Mr. Kuiper, and reports the following:

a. Mr. Kuiper showed himself willing to receive instruction.

b. The brother humbly owned up to his fault, and gave what we believe was a sincere apology, which we accepted on behalf of synod.

B. Recommendations

1. That synod treat this matter in closed session.

2. That synod receive this report of Committee 1 as the end of this matter and note this response of the brother with gratitude to God.

Appendix 3Advice to synod concerning the Ken Feenstra protest
and synod's subsequent rebuke**A. Information**

1. In treating legality of the various appeals and protests, synod adopted the following motions (Article 49, B, 5 & 6) concerning the Ken Feenstra protest:

a. That synod declare Mr. Ken Feenstra's protest legally before the synod, having fulfilled the requirements of Articles 30 & 31 of the Church Order.

- b. That synod rebuke Mr. Ken Feenstra for serious allegations impugning the motives of synod in the conclusion to his protest [Supplement 41, p. 433], specifically, “Article 21 was used as a club...instead of used charitably,” and “Synod seems blinded by tradition...and more than likely by money.”
 - 2. The first clerk of synod contacted Mr. Feenstra to notify him of synod’s decision.
 - a. Committee 1 subsequently attempted to set up a meeting with Mr. Feenstra in order to explain to him synod’s rebuke and give him an opportunity to retract the allegations made at the end of his protest, and in order that we could appropriately advise synod when we reconvene on August 25.
 - b. Mr. Feenstra declined to meet with our committee and instead submitted a letter to synod.
 - 3. Mr. Feenstra’s letter is attached (Supplement 4), in which he retracts nothing from his statements, and makes no apology for what he has written.
- B. Recommendations
- 1. That synod treat this matter in closed session.
 - 2. That synod still treat Mr. Feenstra’s protest insofar as it is incorporated in the recommendations of Committee 1, but bar Mr. Feenstra from speaking to the matter.
- Ground: By his inappropriate language, his impenitence with regard to such, and his unwillingness even to discuss it with the committee, he has forfeited the right to speak on the floor of synod.

Appendix 4

Response of Ken Feenstra

PRC Synod 2009

Rev. James Slopsema, Chairman, Committee of Pre-advice
slo3@juno.com

Dear PRC Synod 2009,

I received the following letter from Synod concerning my protest:
Mr. Kenneth Feenstra
6528 Westshire Street
Portage, MI 49024

June 12, 2009

As first clerk of Synod 2009, I was directed to convey to you a decision that synod took during its afternoon session of

Friday, June 12, 2009. That decision is found in Article 49, B, 6 of our minutes:

“That synod rebuke Mr. Ken Feenstra for serious allegations impugning the motives of synod in the conclusion to his protest [cf. Supplement 41, p. 433], specifically, “Article 21 was used as a club...instead of used charitably,” and “Synod seems blinded by tradition...and more than likely by money.” Carried.

For your information, synod also declared your protest legally before it. When synod will treat it remains uncertain, though it will not be Monday. But synod desires you to understand that, though you have the right to disagree with previous decisions and protest them as you have done, you do not have the right to impugn the motives of officebearers in Christ’s church. An apology, therefore, is desired.

May you enjoy the blessings of our covenant keeping God.

In Christ’s service,
Rev. Douglas Kuiper
First Clerk, PRC Synod 2009

Response:

I wrote that “Article 21 was used as a club...instead of used charitably....” This statement says nothing about motives, but speaks to actions.

“Synod seems blinded by tradition...and more than likely by money.” I am sorry if synod finds this language offensive. I wrote “blinded, not “blind”—a term that has more comprehensive and permanent implications. I also wrote “seems,” not “is.”

About “more than likely by money,” I would like to clarify that I did not mean filthy lucre. No one is getting rich by supporting Christian schools, and teaching is hardly a lucrative profession. A better or different way would have been to write “sacrifice.” Much sacrifice—time and money—has been put into the Christian day schools and the need will continue. This I support—Christian schools are a worthy cause. However, when one makes huge sacrifices, especially toward a worthy cause, it is hard to remain objective about what someone else does.

I have not changed my mind with regard to the “serious allegations,” and therefore, do not apologize. It is my hope that this will not be a stumbling block toward synod giving my protest serious consideration.

Yours in Christ,
Ken Feenstra

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 Loveland, CO—2006

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Lacombe, AB T4L 1X8
Canada
(403) 782-5444
E-mail: tmiersma@gmail.com

Ordained: October, 1982
Pastorates:
First, Edmonton, AB—1982
Western Home Missionary—1994
Immanuel, Lacombe, AB—Oct.,
2009

P.O. Box 163	Ordained: September, 2002
Doon, IA 51235	Pastorates:
(712) 726-3382	Covenant, NJ—2002
E-mail: doverway@netzero.net	Doon, IA—2005

2751 Littlefield Dr. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
(616) 247-0638
E-mail: jslo3@juno.com

Ordained: September, 1974
Pastorates:
First, Edgerton, MN—1974
Randolph, WI—1982
Hope, Walker, MI—1986
First, Grand Rapids, MI—1995

22 Beverly Hills Dr.
Beverly Hills Subdivision
Antipolo City, Rizal 1870
Philippines
E-mail: smitphilippines@prca.org

Pastorates:
Doon, IA—1996
Immanuel, Lacombe, AB—2004
Missionary to Philippines—
March, 2009

2034 Skyline Dr. Kalamazoo, MI 49006 (269) 349-5202 E-mail: spriensma@sbcglobal.net	Ordained: January, 1981 Pastorates: Atwood, MI CRC—1981 Bethany, South Holland, IL CRC—1984 Grandville, MI—1992 Missionary to Philippines—2002 Kalamazoo, MI—2007

18425 Stony Island Ave.
Lansing, IL 60438
(708) 418-0219 (home)
(708) 418-0210 (study)
E-mail: spronk@prca.org

Ordained: September, 2007
Pastorates:
Peace, Lansing, IL—2007

1307 E. Brockton Ave.
Redlands, CA 92374
(909) 792-6776 (study)
(909) 792-0307 (home)
E-mail: pastor@hopeprc.org

Ordained: September, 1997
Pastorates:
Wyckoff, NJ—1997
Hope, Redlands, CA—2002

O-11243 8th Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 643-8023 (home)
(616) 643-8085 (study)
E-mail: rvanoverloop@
sbcglobal.net

Ordained: October, 1972
Pastorates:
Hope, Walker, MI—1972
Home Missionary—1979
Bethel, Roselle, IL—1989
Georgetown, Hudsonville, MI—
1994
Byron Center, MI—2004
Grace, Standale, MI—Nov., 2008

BEKKERING, Rev. Wayne E. (Phyllis)

Ordained: 1952

1028 Allen Springs Ln, Apt. 204 Pastorates:
Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 530-2029

Corinth Ref., Byron Center—1952
Fremont Ref. — 1957
Calvary Ref., GR—1967
4th Ref., GR—1979
Orthodox Ref., GR—1984
Emeritus from RCA: 1984
Admission to ministry in the PRC
via colloquium doctum—Jan., 1993
Emeritus from PRC: 1993

DECKER, Prof. Robert D. (Marilyn)

8760 Cedar Lake Dr. Ordained: October, 1965
 Jenison, MI 49428 Pastorates:
 (616) 457-6618 Doon, IA—1965
 E-mail: decker@prca.org South Holland, IL—1969
 Prot. Ref. Seminary—1973
 Emeritus: 2006

ENGELSMA, Prof. David J. (Ruth)

2266 Ridgefield Dr. NE Ordained: September, 1963
 Grand Rapids, MI 49505 Pastorates:
 (616) 451-9907 (home) Loveland, CO—1963
 (616) 531-1490 (office) South Holland, IL—1974
 E-mail: engelsma@prca.org Prot. Ref. Seminary—1988
 Emeritus: 2008

HANKO, Prof. Herman C. (Wilma)

4665 Ju-Le-On Dr. S.W. Ordained: October, 1955
 Grand Rapids, MI 49534 Pastorates:
 (616) 453-1650 (home) Hope, Walker, MI—1955
 (616) 531-1490 (office) Doon, IA—1963
 E-mail: hanko@prca.org Prot. Ref. Seminary—1965
 Emeritus: 2001

HOUCK, Rev. Steven R.

15536 State St. Ordained: September, 1979
 South Holland, IL 60473 Pastorates:
 (708) 895-7974 (home) Home Missionary—1979
 E-mail: srhouch@comcast.net Peace, Lansing, IL—1990
 Emeritus: 2009

KORTERING, Rev. Jason L. (Jeannette)

990 Village Lane Ordained: September, 1960
 Jenison, MI 49428 Pastorates:
 (616) 667-9163 Hull, IA—1960
 E-mail: j.kortering@sbcglobal.net Hope, Walker, MI—1966
 Hull, IA—1970
 Hope, Redlands, CA—1976
 Loveland, CO—1979
 Grandville, MI—1984
 Minister-on-Loan, Singapore—
 1992
 Emeritus: 2002

- KUIPER**, Rev. Dale H. (Velerie) Ordained: September, 1967
 7507 21st Ave. Pastorates:
 Jenison, MI 49428 Randolph, WI—1967
 (616) 667-0865 Pella, IA—1970
 Home Missionary—1974
 Lynden, WA—1976
 Hope, Isabel, SD—1985
 Immanuel, Lacombe, AB—1987
 Southeast, Grand Rapids, MI—
 1992
 Emeritus: 2003
- VANBAREN**, Rev. Gise J. (Clara) Ordained: October, 1956
 4683 Crescent Dr. Pastorates:
 Hudsonville, MI 49426 Doon, IA—1956
 (616) 662-9389 Randolph, WI—1962
 E-mail: vanbaren First, Grand Rapids, MI—1965
 @prca.org Hudsonville, MI—1977
 Loveland, CO—1994
 Emeritus: 1999
- WOUDENBERG**, Rev. Bernard J. (Fran) Ordained: October, 1956
 7387 Pinegrove Dr. Pastorates:
 Jenison, MI 49428 Creston, Grand Rapids, MI—1956
 (616) 667-1940 (home) First, Edgerton, MN—1960
 (616) 667-1943 (FAX) Lynden, WA—1965
 E-mail: bjw@sibd.org Kalamazoo, MI—1976
 Emeritus: 1996

NECROLOGY

REV. CORNELIUS HANKO

Born: Grand Rapids, MI—May 19, 1907
 Died: Hudsonville, MI—March 14, 2005
 Ordained: September, 1929
 Served in the following churches:
 Hull, IA—1929-1935
 Oak Lawn, IL—1935-1945
 Manhattan, MT—1945-1948
 First, Grand Rapids, MI—1948-1964
 Hope, Redlands, CA—1964-1971
 Hudsonville, MI—1971-1977
 Emeritus: 1977

REV. ROBERT C. HARBACH

Born: Riverdale, MD—July 27, 1914.

Died: Grand Rapids, MI—December 14, 1996.

Ordained: October, 1955.

Served in the following churches:

Lynden, WA—1955-1963.

Kalamazoo, MI—1963-1974.

Home Missionary—1974-1979.

Emeritus: 1979.

REV. JOHN A. HEYS

Born: Grand Rapids, MI—March 16, 1910.

Died: Hudsonville, MI—February 16, 1998.

Ordained: October, 1941.

Served in the following churches:

Hope, Walker, MI—1941-1955.

Hull, IA—1955-1959.

South Holland, IL—1959-1967.

Holland, MI—1967-1980.

Emeritus: 1980.

REV. HERMAN HOEKSEMA

Born: Groningen, Netherlands—March 13, 1886.

Died: Grand Rapids, MI—September 2, 1965.

Ordained: September, 1915.

Served in the following churches:

14th St. Christian Reformed, Holland, MI—1915-1920.

Eastern Ave. Christian Reformed, Grand Rapids, MI—1920-1924.

First Protestant Reformed, Grand Rapids, MI—1924-1964.

Protestant Reformed Seminary—1924-1964.

Emeritus: 1964.

REV. HOMER C. HOEKSEMA

Born: Grand Rapids, MI—January 30, 1923.

Died: Grand Rapids, MI—July 17, 1989.

Ordained: October, 1949.

Served in the following churches:

Doon, IA—1949-1955.

South Holland, IL—1955-1959.

Protestant Reformed Seminary—1959-1989.

REV. HENRY H. KUIPER

Born: Corsica, SD—July 4, 1905.

Died: Loveland, CO—November 14, 1961.

Ordained: September, 1934.

Served in the following churches:

Orange City, IA—1934-1938.	Hope, Redlands, CA—1954-1958.
Randolph, WI—1951-1954.	Loveland, CO—1958-1961.

REV. GEORGE LANTING

Born: Lansing, IL—July 28, 1922

Died: South Holland, IL—October 18, 2004

Ordained: October, 1953

Served in the following churches:

Grand Haven, MI—1953-1959	
First, Holland, MI—1959-1966	Loveland, CO—1974-1979
First, Edgerton, MN—1966-1974	Pella, IA—1981-1986

Emeritus: 1986.

REV. GEORGE C. LUBBERS

Born: Blendon Township, MI—August 6, 1909

Died: Grand Rapids, MI—April 13, 2001

Ordained: September, 1934

Served in the following churches:

Doon, IA—1934-1937.
Pella, IA—1937-1943.
Randolph, WI—1944-1950.
Creston, Grand Rapids, MI—1950-1954.
Home Missionary—1954-1964.
Southwest, Wyoming, MI—1964-1970.
Missionary in Jamaica—1970-1975.
Pella, IA—1975-1978.

Emeritus: 1978.

REV. GEORGE M. OPHOFF

Born: Grand Rapids, MI—January 25, 1891.

Died: Grand Rapids, MI—June 12, 1962.

Ordained: September, 1921.

Served in the following churches:

Hope Christian Reformed, Grand Rapids, MI—1921-1924.
Hope Protestant Reformed, Walker, MI—1924-1929.
Byron Center, MI—1929-1945.
Protestant Reformed Seminary—1924-1959.

Emeritus: 1959.

REV. MARINUS SCHIPPER

Born: Holland, MI—February 8, 1906.

Died: Grand Rapids, MI—January 2, 1985.

Ordained: January, 1937.

Served in the following churches:

Grand Haven, MI—1937-1939.

Second, Grand Rapids, MI—1939-1945.

South Holland, IL—1945-1954.

Southwest, Wyoming, MI—1954-1962.

Southeast, Grand Rapids, MI—1962-1978.

Emeritus: 1978.

REV. HERMAN VELDMAN

Born: Chicago, IL—April 22, 1908.

Died: Jenison, MI—January 22, 1997.

Ordained: September, 1932.

Served in the following churches:

Pella, IA—1932-37.

Creston, Grand Rapids, MI—1937-1941.

Kalamazoo, MI—1941-1950.

Hamilton, ON Canada—1950-1951. Hope, Walker, MI—1963-1966.

First, Edgerton, MN—1953-1959. Hudsonville, MI—1966-1971.

Hope, Redlands, CA—1959-1963. Southwest, Wyoming, MI—1971-1978.

Emeritus: 1978.

REV. WILLIAM VERHIL

Born: Watergraafsmeer, Netherlands—January 3, 1892.

Died: Edgerton, MN—April 1, 1943.

Ordained: September, 1927.

Served in the following churches:

Hull, IA—1927-1929.

Oskaloosa, IA—1935-1938.

Kalamazoo, MI—1932-1935.

First, Edgerton, MN—1938-1943.

REV. GERRIT VOS

Born: Sassenheim, Netherlands—November 1, 1894.

Died: Hudsonville, MI—July 23, 1968.

Ordained: September, 1927.

Served in the following churches:

Sioux Center, IA—1927-1929.

Hudsonville, MI—1929-1932.

Hope, Redlands, CA—1932-1943.

First, Edgerton, MN—1943-1948.

Hudsonville, MI—1948-1966.

Emeritus: 1966.

MINISTERS' WIDOWS

Mrs. Wilmina Lanting
15905 South Park Ave.
South Holland, IL 60473
(708) 331-2564

Congregational Statistics**Classis East:****BYRON CENTER PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH**

1945 84th St. SW, Byron Center SW, MI 49315 (616) 878-1811, www.byronprc.org

Pastor: Treasurer: LOosterbaan@netpenny.net

Rev. Mr. Lee Oosterbaan

1947 84th St. SW 4545 104th St. SW

Byron Center, MI 49315 Byron Center, MI 49315

(616) 878-3255 (616) 878-4772

Clerk: dalebartelds@comcast.net Bulletin Clerk: cindybcprc@comcast.net

Mr. Dale Bartelds Mrs. Cindy Bartelds

8338 E Chester Ave. SW 8338 E Chester Ave. SW

Byron Center, MI 49315 Byron Center, MI 49315

(616) 878-9019 (616) 878-9019

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-95; Communicant Members-241; Total Membership-436.

Consistory: Elders-7; Deacons-6.

Catechism: 130.

Former Ministers: B. Gritters, 1984-1994; D.J. Kuiper, 1995-2001;

R. VanOverloop, 2004-2008.

CORNERSTONE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Dyer, Indiana

13251 W. 109th Ave., Saint John, IN FAX: (219) 365-0165

Mail to Dyer, IN 46311-3310. (219) 365-0144. www.cornerstoneprc.org

Pastor: Treasurer: donaldvroom@aol.com

Rev. Mr. Donald Vroom

10870 Millard Dr. 14001 Huseman St.

Saint John, IN 46373 Cedar Lake, IN 46303

(219) 365-6892 (219) 374-9395

Clerk: lsbultema@yahoo.com Bulletin Clerk: greglenting@sbcglobal.net

Mr. Steve Bultema Mrs. Jen Lenting

8737 Tapper St. 14055 W 93rd Pl

Saint John, IN 46373 Saint John, IN 46373

(219) 588-0220 (219) 365-7848

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.

Number of families-41; Communicant Members-94; Total Membership-164.

Consistory: Elders-4; Deacons-3.

Catechism: 32

Former Minister: N. Brummel, 1999-2009

FAITH PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH in Jenison, MI

7194 20th Ave., Jenison, MI 49428.

Pastor:	Treasurer: keithn@kdccpa.com
Rev. Andrew Lanning	Mr. Keith Noorman
7194 20th Ave.	7881 Emberly Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428	Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 457-8720	(616) 662-4129
Clerk: pvanderschaaf@hotmail.com	Bulletin Clerk: bulletin@faithprc.org
Mr. Peter VanDerSchaaf	Mrs. Karen Daling
1451 Broadview Dr.	4234 Yorkshire Ct.
Jenison, MI 49428	Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 457-6605	(616) 662-0784

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-126; Communicant Members-282;

Total Membership-502.

Consistory: Elders-9; Deacons-7.

Catechism: 125.

Former Ministers: M. Joostens, 1973-1978; W. Bruinsma, 1978-1984;

W. Bekkering, 1984-1988; K. Koole, 1989-2002; R. Cammenga, 2004-2005.

FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

of Grand Rapids, MI

2800 Michigan St. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506.

Pastor:	Treasurer: bbaldwin@bankatbyron.com
Rev. James Slopsema	Mr. Brian Baldwin
2751 Littlefield Dr. NE	2040 Duiker Ave. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506	Grand Rapids, MI 49505
(616) 247-0638	(616) 893-2228
Clerk: bob.faber@hotmail.com	Bulletin Clerk: lyoung78@juno.com
Mr. Robert Faber	Mrs. Linda Young
2759 Alger St. SE	2017 Lafayette Ave. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49546	Grand Rapids, MI 49505
(616) 942-7038	(616) 364-0240

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-69; Communicant Members-162;

Total Membership-229.

Consistory: Elders-6; Deacons-6.

Catechism: 31.

Former Ministers: H. Hoeksema, 1920-1965; R. Veldman, 1939-1944;

H. DeWolf, 1944-1953; C. Hanko, 1948-1964; G. VanBaren, 1965-1977;

M. Joostens, 1978-1995.

FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH of Holland, MI

3641 104th Ave., Zeeland, MI 49464. (616) 748-7645 www.hollandprc.org

Pastor:

Rev.

3645 104th Ave.

Zeeland, MI 49464

(616) 748-7538

Clerk: donldj@juno.com

Mr. Donald DeJong

9457 Polk St.

Zeeland, MI 49464

(616) 875-8600

Treasurer: pgbos@allcom.net

Mr. Greg Bos

4553 36th St.

Hamilton, MI 49419

(616) 688-5894

Bulletin Clerk: overwaybw@juno.com

Mrs. Wilma Overway

5245 Quincy St.

Hudsonville, MI 49426

(616) 669-4467

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-71; Communicant Members-159;

Total Membership-252.

Consistory: Elders-6; Deacons-5.

Catechism: 60.

Former Ministers: M. Gritters, 1932-1938; P. DeBoer, 1938-1943;

W. Hofman, 1944-1947; B. Kok, 1947-1953; J. McCollam, 1954-1959;

G. Lanting, 1959-1966; J.A. Heys, 1967-1980; R. Miersma, 1981-1987;

W. Bruinsma, 1989-1996; C. Terpstra, 1997-2005; D. Kleyn, 2005-2009.

GEORGETOWN PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Hudsonville, MI

7146 48th Ave., Hudsonville, MI 49426

Pastor:

Rev. Carl Haak

4510 Bridgeville Ct.

Hudsonville, MI 49426

(616) 662-0257

Clerk: mrjk@att.net

Mr. Gerald Kuiper

4830 Greenmoor Ct..

Hudsonville, MI 49426

(616) 669-5427

Treasurer: expresscareql@att.net

Mr. Steve Flikkema

7181 Keystone Ct.

Jenison, MI 49428

(616) 669-6661

Bulletin Clerk: barbls2@juno.com

Mrs. Barb Schut

8615 Cedar Lake Dr.

Jenison, MI 49428

(616) 457-3904

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-126; Communicant Members-280;

Total Membership-536.

Consistory: Elders-9; Deacons-8.

Catechism: 170.

Former Minister: R. VanOverloop, 1994-2004.

GRACE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Standale, MI

O-11225 8th Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, Michigan 49534.

Pastor:

Rev. Ronald VanOverloop
O-11243 8th Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 643-8085

Treasurer: steve@kleynelectric.com

Mr. Steve Lotterman
O-2860 Sutters Dr.
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 677-1462

Clerk: randy@feenstrainc.com

Mr. Randy Feenstra
O-12120 8th Ave. NW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 677-0617

Bulletin Clerk: stevedeb@altelco.net

Mrs. Deb Hoeksema
13983 32nd Ave.
Marne, MI 49435
(616) 677-5209

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-58; Communicant Members-129; Total Membership-243.

Consistory: Elders-5; Deacons-4.

Catechism: 79.

Former Minister: M. Dick, 1996-2008.

GRANDVILLE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

www.grandville@prc.org

4320 40th St. SW, Grandville, MI 49418. (616) 534-2626

Pastor:

Rev. Kenneth Koole
4300 Pineway Dr. SW
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 538-2575 (home)
(616) 538-6176 (study)

Treasurer: dalevink@msn.com

Mr. Dale Vink
4245 Creekview Dr.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 662-1016

Clerk: dmkey@verizon.net

Mr. Dan Key
3536 Greenfield Ln
Hamilton, MI 49419
(269) 751-8074

Bulletin Clerk: bulletin@grandvilleprc.org

Mrs. Amanda Kamps
2317 Camden Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49519
(616) 534-3901

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-90; Communicant Members-218; Total Membership-325.

Consistory: Elders-7; Deacons-5.

Catechism: 45.

Former Ministers: J. Kortering, 1984-1992; A. Spriensma, 1992-2002.

HOPE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH in Walker, MI

1580 Ferndale Ave. S.W., Walker, MI 49534.

Pastor:

Rev. James Laning
1550 Ferndale Ave. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 453-1936

Treasurer: davel@wonderlandtire.com

Mr. David Langerak
O-356 Begole St. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 735-0057

Clerk: dvdmoelk@sbcglobal.net

Mr. David Moelker
3886 Tall Oak Ct. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 453-7077

Bulletin Clerk: john_dykstra@att.net

Mrs. John Dykstra
1349 Su-Lew Dr. SW
Grand Rapids, MI 49534
(616) 453-0034

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-97; Communicant Members-239; Total Membership-452.

Consistory: Elders-9; Deacons-6.

Catechism: 153.

Former Ministers: G.M. Ophoff, 1922-1929; H. DeWolf, 1936-1940;

J.A. Heys, 1941-1955; H. Hanko, 1955-1963; H. Veldman, 1963-1966;

J. Kortering, 1966-1970; R. Van Overloop, 1972-1979;

R. Flikkema, 1981-1986; J. Slopsema, 1986-1995; R. Dykstra, 1995-1996.

HUDSONVILLE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

5101 Beechtree St., Hudsonville, MI 49426. www.iserv.net/~hud-prc

Pastor:

Rev. Garrett Eriks
5101 Beechtree St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 669-0755 (home)
(616) 669-5380 (study)

Treasurer: dykstra4@allcom.net

Mr. Eric Dykstra
6100 Bauer Rd.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 895-0121

Clerk: judyanpete@aol.com

Mr. Peter Hoekstra
2187 Riley St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 896-9279

Bulletin Clerk: hudsonvilleprc@att.net

Mrs. Heidi Haveman
1745 Westward Ct.
Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 457-5431

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-145; Communicant Members-341;

Total Membership-503.

Consistory: Elders-10; Deacons-7.

Catechism: 83.

Former Ministers: G. Vos, 1929-1932; J.D. DeJong, 1932-1941;

B. Kok, 1943-1947; G. Vos, 1948-1965; H. Veldman, 1966-1971;

C. Hanko, 1971-1977; G. VanBaren, 1977-1994; B. Gritters, 1994-2003.

KALAMAZOO PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

4515 Green Acres Dr., Kalamazoo, MI 49009. Phone: (269) 381-4211.

www.Kalamazooprc.org

Pastor:

Rev. Audred Spriensma
2034 Skyline Dr.
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
(269) 349-5202

Treasurer: jvandyk@kcsa.org

Mr. Jon VanDyk
4117 Aspen Dr.
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
(269) 370-5780

Clerk: ThomasVerbeek@sbcglobal.net

Mr. Tom VerBeek
5145 Deerland St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
(269) 385-2160

Bulletin Clerk: tkiel1957@sbcglobal.net

Mrs. Marcia Kiel
2826 Olney Rd
Kalamazoo, MI 49006
(269) 381-3763

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-19; Communicant Members-39;

Total Membership-67.

Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.

Catechism: 14.

Former Ministers: W. Verhil, 1932-1935; J.G. Kooistra, 1935-1940;

H. Veldman, 1941-1950; E. Knott, 1950-1953; A. Mulder, 1958-1961;

R.C. Harbach, 1963-1974; B. Woudenberg, 1976-1996;

W. Bruinsma, 1996-2006.

PROVIDENCE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Hudsonville, MI

Meeting in Heritage PR School (Music Room), Hudsonville, MI.

Pastor:

Rev. Heath Bleyenbergh
1805 Federal Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49509
(616) 452-1505

Treasurer: tommheyboer@charter.net

Mr. Tomm Heyboer
5262 Highland Dr.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 662-2076

Clerk: jebrummel@juno.com

Mr. Joe Brummel
2944 Bluewater Lane
Grandville, MI 49418
(616) 538-9471

Bulletin Clerk: mindyberg@juno.com

Mrs. Mindy Bergman
7391 Magnolia Dr.
Jenison, MI 49428
(616) 669-4652

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-26; Communicant Members-61; Total Membership-113.

Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.

Catechism: 22.

SOUTHEAST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Grand Rapids, MI

1535 Cambridge Ave. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49506. (616) 245-6931

Pastor:

Rev. William A. Langerak
1543 Cambridge Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506
(616) 446-5986

Treasurer: j4@vanflikk.com

Mr. John Flikkema IV
7526 Whispering Ridge
Grand Rapids, MI 49546
(616) 464-1235

Clerk: tpipe9@hotmail.com

Mr. Tim Pipe, Sr.
3353 Senora Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
(616) 245-6374

Bulletin Clerk: debseprc@sbcglobal.net

Mrs. Deb Doezeema
4809 Poinsettia Ave. SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49508
(616) 531-1790

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-67; Communicant Members-171;

Total Membership-259.

Consistory: Elders-6; Deacons-5.

Catechism: 72.

Former Ministers: R. Veldman, 1944-1962; M. Schipper, 1962-1978;

C. Haak, 1979-1986; S. Key, 1986-1991; DH. Kuiper, 1992-2002.

SOUTHWEST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Wyoming, MI

4875 Ivanrest Ave. SW, Wyoming, MI 49418. www.southwestprc.org

Pastor:

Rev. Arie denHartog
4895 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
(616) 532-4846

Treasurer: joekuiper@yahoo.com

Mr. Joe Kuiper
2756 Coltan Trl.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 862-9984

Clerk: doezema@prca.org

Mr. Don Doezeema
5111 Ivanrest Ave. SW
Wyoming, MI 49418
(616) 538-1778

Bulletin Clerk: ekswbtltn@att.net

Mrs. Evonne Kreuzer
3574 Hillcrest Rd.
Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 669-1792

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-94; Communicant Members-219;

Total Membership-364.

Consistory: Elders-8; Deacons-7.

Catechism: 97.

Former Ministers: B. Kok, 1929-1937; R. Veldman, 1937-1939;

M. Schipper, 1939-1945; S. Cammenga, 1945-1948;

J. Blankespoor, 1949-1953; M. Schipper, 1954-1962;

G. Lubbers, 1964-1970; H. Veldman, 1971-1978; M. DeVries, 1978-1985;

M. Kamps, 1986-1992; R. Cammenga, 1993-2004.

TRINITY PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Hudsonville, MI
3385 VanBuren St., Hudsonville, MI 49426.

Pastor:	Treasurer: pvinkbpi@hotmail.com
Rev.	Mr. Paul Vink
3409 VanBuren St.	3741 VanBuren St.
Hudsonville, MI 49426	Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 669-7025 (study)	(616) 662-8626
Clerk: djpastoor@sbcglobal.net	Bulletin Clerk: rondavanbommel@sbcglobal.net
Mr. Doug Pastoor	Mrs. Ronda VanBommel
3976 Glenview Ct.	4628 Stonewood Ct.
Hudsonville, MI 49426	Hudsonville, MI 49426
(616) 662-3805	(616) 662-9683

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.
Number of families-87; Communicant Members-192;
Total Membership-362.
Consistory: Elders-7; Deacons-6.
Catechism: 88
Former Minister: R. Kleyn, 2002-2009.

WINGHAM PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Ontario, Canada
292 Edward St. (P.O. Box 570), Wingham, ON N0G 2W0 Canada

Pastor:	Treasurer: marvin@hurontel.on.ca
Rev. Michael DeVries	Mr. Marvin Kikkert
P.O. Box 503 (541 Angus St.)	RR #5
Wingham, ON N0G 2W0	Lucknow, ON N0G 2H0
Canada	Canada
(519) 357-1082	(519) 357-4982
Clerk: jrsiert@bmts.com	Bulletin Clerk: jrsiert@bmts.com
Mr. Jim Siertsema	Mrs. Rebecca Siertsema
RR #1	RR #1
Auburn, ON N0M 1E0	Auburn, ON N0M 1E0
Canada	Canada
(519) 526-7417	(519) 526-7417

Worship Services: 10:30 A.M.; 1:00 P.M.; Special: 10:30 A.M.; 8:00 P.M.
Number of families-13; Communicant Members-28; Total Membership-59.
Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-1.
Catechism: 25

Classis West:**BETHEL PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH**

in Roselle, IL

115 Pratt Blvd., Roselle, IL 60172. (630) 307-9408 www.bethel.prc.org

Pastor:

Rev.

1047 Florida Ln

Elk Grove Village, IL 60007

(847) 524-4739

Clerk: jmooreprc@gmail.com

Mr. Joel Moore

55 Chestnut Ct.

Elgin, IL 60120

(847) 608-0817

Treasurer: jared.vanoverloop@mcmaster.com

Mr. Jared VanOverloop

2227 Camden Ln

Hanover Park, IL 60133

(630) 855-6089

Bulletin Clerk: petersob@gmail.com

Mr. Ben Peterson

2337 S. Lexington Dr., Apt. 213

Mount Prospect, IL 60056

(616) 318-2967

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-18; Communicant Members-41;

Total Membership-63.

Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.

Catechism: 16.

Former Ministers: R. VanOverloop, 1989-1994; C. Haak, 1994-2004.

CALVARY PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Hull, IA

P.O. Box 343, Hull, IA 51239.

Meeting at: Boyden-Hull Com. School, 801 1st St., Hull, IA

Pastor:

Rev. Cory Griess

1902 1st St.

Hull, IA 51239

(712) 439-1284

Clerk: albylsma@yahoo.com

Mr. Alvin Bylsma

3280 310th St.

Hull, IA 51239

(712) 439-2569

Treasurer: wayneandbecky@thedejongs.com

Mr. Wayne DeJong

1519 Willow St.

Hull, IA 51239

(712) 439-2457

Bulletin Clerk: kbengen@mtcnet.net

Mrs. Bonnie VanEngen

1825 2nd St.

Hull, IA 51239

(712) 439-1398

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-52; Communicant Members-110;

Total Membership-205.

Consistory: Elders-4; Deacons-3.

Catechism: 58.

COVENANT OF GRACE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

330 W. Indiana, Spokane, WA 99201 (509) 926-0372; mail: P.O. Box 10138, Spokane, WA 99209

Pastor: Rev. Rodney Kleyn Treasurer: greggyd@gmail.com

7317 N Deschutes Dr. Mr. Gregory Duerr

Spokane, WA 99208 3501 N H St.

(509) 926-0372 Spokane, WA 99205

 (509) 466-4641

Clerk: aedwards99205@yahoo.com Bulletin Clerk: sadiekate@hotmail.com

Mr. Aaron Edwards Mrs. Sarah Lathrop

3028 W. Euclid Ave. 3609 W. Glass Ave.

Spokane, WA 99205 Spokane, WA 99205

(509) 327-4354 (509) 326-6874

Worship Services: 10:00 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 10:00 A.M., 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-7; Communicant Members-16; Total Membership-29.

Consistory: Elders-2; Deacons-1.

Catechism: 9

DOON PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

408 6th Ave., Doon, IA 51235.

Pastor: Rev. David Overway Treasurer: ljohoeck@hickorytech.net

601 N. 1st St. Mr. Lee Hoekstra

Doon, IA 51235 2741 Goldfinch Ave.

(712) 726-3382 Hull, IA 51239

 (712) 726-3514

Clerk: grandpam@mtcnet.net Bulletin Clerk: roverway@netzero.net

Mr. Robert Mantel Mrs. Rebecca Overway

2733 Garfield Ave. 601 N. 1st St.

Hull, IA 51239 Doon, IA 51235

(712) 726-3478 (712) 726-3382

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 2:00 P.M. (Dec-Feb);

9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M. (Mar-Nov); Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M..

Number of families-44; Communicant Members-102; Total Membership-169.

Consistory: Elders-5; Deacons-4.

Catechism: 44.

Former Ministers: J.D. DeJong, 1929-1932; G. Lubbers, 1934-1937;

J. VanderBreggen, 1939-1942; J. Blankespoor, 1943-1949;

H.C. Hoeksema, 1949-1955; G. VanBaren, 1956-1962;

H. Hanco, 1963-1965; R. Decker, 1965-1969; R. Moore, 1971-1976;

M. Kamps, 1976-1986; R. Dykstra, 1986-1995; R. Smit, 1996-2004.

EDGERTON PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

311 Maple St., Edgerton, MN 56128. (Mail to: P.O. Box 212).

Pastor:	Treasurer: farmergary@frontiernet.net
Rev. Dennis Lee	Mr. Gary Boverhof
321 Maple St. W. /P.O. Box 212	1488 21st St.
Edgerton, MN 56128	Edgerton, MN 56128
(507) 442-4441	(507) 442-4874
Clerk: jimverhey@frontiernet.net	Bulletin Clerk: farmergary@frontiernet.net
Mr. James VerHey	Mrs. Marsha Boverhof
2483 180th Ave.	1488 21st St.
Edgerton, MN 56128	Edgerton, MN 56128
(507) 442-4934	(507) 442-4874

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.
 Number of families-23; Communicant Members-55; Total Membership-97.
 Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.
 Catechism: 18.
 Former Ministers: W. Verhil, 1938-1943; G. Vos, 1943-1948;
 P. DeBoer, 1948-1953; H. Veldman, 1953-1959;
 B. Woudenberg, 1960-1965; G. Lanting, 1966-1974;
 J. Slopsema, 1974-1982; J. Smith, 1982-1985; M. DeVries, 1985-1995;
 A. Brummel, 1995-1998; D. Kleyn, 1998-2005.

FIRST PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

15911 107A Ave., Edmonton, AB, Canada

(direct mail to pastor's address) www.members.shaw.ca/firstprcedmonton

Pastor:	Treasurer: GMulder@telus.net
Rev. John Marcus	Mr. Bert Mulder
10712 159th St.	489 A Sioux Rd.
Edmonton, AB T5P 3B4	Sherwood Park, AB T8A 4H2
Canada	Canada
(780) 489-6470	(780) 922-0248
Clerk: FredT@shaw.ca	Bulletin Clerk: FredT@shaw.ca
Mr. Fred Tolsma	Mrs. Netty Tolsma
10 Holly Place	10 Holly Place
St. Albert, AB T8N 6W7	St. Albert, AB T8N 6W7
Canada	Canada
(780) 418-1189	(780) 418-1189

Worship Services: 10:00 A.M.; 3:00 P.M.; Special: 10:00 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.
 Number of families-25; Communicant Members-57; Total Membership-128.
 Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.
 Catechism: 42.
 Former Ministers: R. Moore, 1976-1982; T. Miersma, 1982-1994;
 M. DeVries, 1995-2004.

HOPE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Redlands, CA

1307 E. Brockton Ave., Redlands, CA 92374. www.hopeprc.org

Pastor:	Treasurer: Dhowerzyl@juno.com
Rev. Martin VanderWal	Mr. Dan Howerzyl
1307 E. Brockton Ave.	935 Denise Ave.
Redlands, CA 92374	Redlands, CA 92374
(909) 792-0307 (home)	(909) 335-7457
Clerk: gfeenstra@verizon.net	Bulletin Clerk: bulletin@hopeprc.org
Mr. Glenn Feenstra	Mr. Jonathan denHartog
1380 Faiarview Ln	1365 Crafton Ave., Apt. 1088
Mentone, CA 92359	Mentone, CA 92359
(909) 794-5859	(909) 794-2071

Worship Services: 10:00 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.; Special: 10:00 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-60; Communicant Members-155; Total Membership-227.

Consistory: Elders-5; Deacons-4.

Catechism: 53.

Former Ministers: G. Vos, 1933-1943; P. DeBoer, 1943-1948;

L. Vermeer, 1948-1953; H.H. Kuiper, 1954-1958; H. Veldman, 1959-1963;

C. Hanko, 1964-1971; M. Kamps, 1972-1976; J. Kortering, 1976-1979;

K. Koole, 1982-1989; A. denHartog, 1990-2001.

HULL PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

1006 Hayes Ave., Hull, IA 51239. www.reformedwitness.org

Pastor:	Treasurer: kevinandkathy@brummels.us
Rev. Steven R. Key	Mr. Kevin Brummel
1004 Hayes Ave.	1322 2nd St.
Hull, IA 51239	Hull, IA 51239
(712) 439-1326 (home/study)	(712) 439-1114
(712) 439-1283 (church)	(712) 439-2038 (FAX)
Clerk: loreng@mtcnet.net	Bulletin Clerk: csuitten@mtcnet.net
Mr. Loren Gritters	Mrs. Sue Uittenbogaard
1212 6th St.	1410 Birch St.
Hull, IA 51239	Hull, IA 51239
(712) 439-2032	(712) 439-2258

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 2:00 P.M. (Dec.-Feb.);

9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M. (Mar.-Nov.); Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-103; Communicant Members-223; Total Membership-455.

Consistory: Elders-9; Deacons-6.

Catechism: 148.

Former Ministers: B.J. Danhof, 1925-1927; W. Verhil, 1927-1929;

C. Hanko, 1929-1935; L. Vermeer, 1935-1938; A. Cammenga, 1938-1950;

J.D. DeJong, 1950-1953; J.A. Heys, 1955-1959;

J. Kortering, 1960-1966; 1970-1976; M. Hoeksema, 1976-1979;

R. Cammenga, 1979-1984; R. Moore, 1985-1999.

IMMANUEL PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

in Lacombe, Alberta, Canada

5940 60 Ave. Close, Lacombe, AB T4L 1X8, Canada

Pastor:

Rev. Thomas Miersma
5940 60th Ave. Close
Lacombe, AB T4L 1X8
Canada
(403) 782-5444

Treasurer: marvnmarsha@hotmail.com

Mr. Marvin Mollenkamp
39 Hearthstone Dr.
Lacombe, AB T4L 1P7
Canada
(403) 786-2373

Clerk: joevangelderen@hotmail.com

Mr. Joe VanGelderen
23 Taylor Dr.
Lacombe, AB T4L 2N8
Canada
(403) 782-1561

Bulletin Clerk: leahwierenga16@hotmail.com

Miss Leah Wierenga
RR #4
Lacombe, AB T4L 2N4
Canada
(403) 782-2001

Worship Services: 10:00 A.M.; 3:30 P.M.; Special: 10:00 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-24; Communicant Members-60; Total Membership-141.

Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.

Catechism: 56.

Former Ministers: D. Kuiper, 1987-1992; M. Dick, 1992-1996;

R. Miersma, 1996-2003; R. Smit, 2004-2009.

LOVELAND PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

709 E. 57th St., Loveland, CO 80538. Home page: www.prca.org

Pastor:

Rev. Rodney Miersma
709 E. 57th St.
Loveland, CO 80538
(970) 667-1347

Treasurer: wbpiper@basicisp.net

Mr. Bill Pipe
3899 Jefferson Dr.
Loveland, CO 80538
(970) 461-7977

Clerk: vsolanyk@digitalglobe.com

Mr. Victor Solanyk
5464 County Rd. 50
Loveland, CO 80534
(970) 669-9005

Bulletin Clerk: DnABrands@msn.com

Mrs. Amy Brands
1332 Melissa Dr.
Loveland, CO 80537
(970) 461-7967

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 6:00 P.M. (Aug.-May); .

9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M. (June-July); Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-76; Communicant Members-163; Total Membership-276.

Consistory: Elders-5; Deacons-4.

Catechism: 54.

Former Ministers: H.H. Kuiper, 1958-1961; D. Engelsma, 1963-1974;

G. Lanting, 1974-1979; J. Kortering, 1979-1984; R. Cammenga, 1984-1993;

G. VanBaren, 1994-1999; G. Eriks, 1999-2005.

LYNDEN PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

315 North Park St., Lynden, WA 98264.

Pastor:

Rev. Ronald Hanko
317 N. Park St.
Lynden, WA 98264
(360) 354-4337

Treasurer:

Mr. Matt Moore
1774 Haveman Rd.
Lynden, WA 98264
(360) 354-6078

Clerk: nwelectric@verizon.net

Mr. John Heystek
1518 Abbott Rd.
Lynden, WA 98264
(360) 354-7021

Bulletin Clerk: fredncathy@juno.com

Mrs. Cathy Hanko
P.O. Box 584
Everson, WA 98247
(360) 996-7950

Worship Services: 10:00 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 10:00 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-31; Communicant Members-65;

Total Membership-116.

Consistory: Elders-3; Deacons-2.

Catechism: 32.

Former Ministers: R.C. Harbach, 1955-1963; B. Woudenberg, 1965-1976;

D.H. Kuiper, 1976-1984; C. Haak, 1986-1994; M. Joostens, 1995-2000.

PEACE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH in Lansing, IL

18423 Stony Island Ave., Lansing, IL 60438. www.peaceprc.org

Pastor:

Rev. Clayton Spronk
18425 Stony Island Ave.
Lansing, IL 60438
(708) 418-0210

Treasurer: medema202@sbcglobal.net

Mr. Matthew Medema
10854 Maloian Dr.
Saint John, IN 46373
(219) 558-2342

Clerk: btwarner@hotmail.com

Mr. Barry Warner
60 Summer Hill Dr.
Dyer, IN 46311
(219) 322-9773

Bulletin Clerk: bulletinclerk@peaceprc.org

Mrs. Carrie Bosman
1445 Lake St.
Dyer, IN 46311
(219) 865-0866

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 6:30 P.M.

Number of families-48; Communicant Members-103;

Total Membership-197.

Consistory: Elders-4; Deacons-3.

Catechism: 26.

Former Minister: S. Houck, 1990-2007.

RANDOLPH PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

229 Hammond St., Randolph, WI

Mailing: 225 Pierce St.

Pastor:

Rev. Douglas J. Kuiper

225 Pierce

Randolph, WI 53956

(920) 326-5642

Clerk: daregnerus@centurytel.net

Mr. David Regnerus

N8274 County Highway M

Cambria, WI 53923

(920) 348-6037

Treasurer: jwkmk@centurytel.net

Mr. Jeff Krosschell

502 Tamarack St.

Randolph, WI 53956

(920) 326-1903

Bulletin Clerk: janjaclyn@yahoo.com

Miss Jackie Regnerus

W1787 Hollnagel Rd.

Randolph, WI 53956

(920) 348-5478

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 2:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:30 P.M.

Number of families-52; Communicant Members-119; Total Membership-210.

Consistory: Elders-4; Deacons-2.

Catechism: 56.

Former Ministers: G. Lubbers, 1944-1950; H.H. Kuiper, 1951-1954;

E. Emanuel, 1954-1959; G. VanBaren, 1962-1965;

D.H. Kuiper, 1967-1970; W. Bekkering, 1972-1977;

K. Koole, 1977-1982; J. Slopsema, 1982-1986; A. denHartog, 1987-1989;

S. Key, 1991-2000.

SOUTH HOLLAND PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH

Worshiping in St. Archangel Michael Serbian Social Center (18550 Stony Island Ave.)

P.O. Box 478, South Holland, IL 60473.

Pastor:

Rev. Nathan Langerak

1827 Glenwood-Lansing Rd.

Lynwood, IL 60411

(708) 889-9580

Clerk: bwories@sbcglobal.net

Mr. Bert Wories

3622 163rd Pl.

Lansing, IL 60438

(708) 474-4926

Treasurer: sjhuiz@comcast.net

Mr. Steven Huizenga

24015 S. Volbrecht Rd.

Crete, IL 60417

(708) 367-0291

Bulletin Clerk: jbleyenburg@juno.com

Mrs. Judy Bleyenburg

P.O. Box 478

South Holland, IL 60473

(708) 333-1314

(708) 333-4017 (FAX)

Worship Services: 9:30 A.M.; 5:00 P.M.; Special: 9:30 A.M.; 7:00 P.M.

Number of families-104; Communicant Members-279;

Total Membership-475.

Consistory: Elders-9; Deacons-6.

Catechism: 110.

Former Ministers: P. DeBoer, 1932-1938; L. Vermeer, 1938-1945;

M. Schipper, 1945-1954; H.C. Hoeksema, 1955-1959; J.A. Heys, 1959-1967;

R. Decker, 1969-1973; D. Engelsma, 1974-1988; C. Terpstra, 1989-1997;

A. Brummel, 1998-2007.

SISTER CHURCH

Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland

Web page: www.cprc.co.uk
 Pastor: pastor@cprc.co.uk Treasurer: kegreid@yahoo.co.uk
 Rev. Angus Stewart Mr. Ivan Reid
 7 Lislunna Road 26 Hawthorne Grove
 Kells, Ballymena Glynn, Larne
 Co. Antrim BT42 3NR Co. Antrim BT40 3HE
 Northern Ireland Northern Ireland
 (01144) 28 25 891851 (01144) 28 28 276619
 Clerk: briancrossett@hotmail.com
 Mr. Brian Crossett
 50 Brookfield Heights
 Burnside, Ballyclare
 Co. Antrim BT39 0TS
 Northern Ireland
 (01144) 28 93 341198
 Worship Services: 11:00 A.M.; 6:00 P.M.
 Number of families-14; Communicant Members-32; Total Membership-44.
 Consistory: Elders-2; Deacons-1.
 Catechism: 7

Sister-church relationship established in June 2007.

Seminary

THEOLOGICAL SCHOOL of the Protestant Reformed Churches

4949 Ivanrest Ave. SW, Wyoming, MI 49418 (616) 531-1490
 fax: (616) 531-3033 E-mail: doezema@prca.org
 Professor Ronald L. Cammenga, cammenga@prca.org
 Dogmatics and Old Testament
 Professor Russell J. Dykstra, dykstra@prca.org
 Church History and New Testament
 Professor Barrett L. Gritters, gritters@prca.org
 Practical Theology and New Testament

Mission Fields

Philippines — Missionary: Rev. Richard Smit; Rev. Daniel Kleyn

Berean PRC in the Philippines (Manila); 1:00 P.M. and 4:00 P.M.

Worshiping: 3rd floor Manahan Hall, Philippine Cooperative Center, E. Rodriguez Ave., Quezon City.

Calling Church: Doon Protestant Reformed Church

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania — Missionary: Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

216 Thornberry Dr., Pittsburgh, PA 15235. (412) 727-6811

Worshiping: 716 Atlantic Ave., Forest Hills, PA; 9:30 A.M., 5:00 P.M.

Calling Church: Southwest Protestant Reformed Church (GR)

Sioux Falls, South Dakota — Missionary: Rev. Allen Brummel

3210 S. Fernwood Ave., Sioux Falls, SD 57110. (605) 271-3692

Worshiping: Ambassador Conference Room of the Holiday Inn at 8th and Phillips Ave. in Sioux Falls; 9:30 A.M.; 4:00 P.M.

Calling Church: Edgerton Protestant Reformed Church

SUMMARY OF CONGREGATIONAL STATISTICS

	Classis East	Classis West	Denomination
Number of churches.....	16.....	14.....	30
Vacant churches.....	4.....	1.....	5
Ministers serving churches.....	12.....	13.....	25
Professors.....	-.....	-.....	3
Missionaries.....	-.....	-.....	4
Ministers Emeriti.....	-.....	-.....	10
Families.....	1,224.....	665.....	1,889
Communicant Members.....	2,855.....	1,554.....	4,409
Total Membership.....	4,866.....	2,784.....	7,650

YEARBOOK CHART**Classis East**

Church	Minister	Fam. Fam. Com. Tot.				Coun.	Cat.
		Org.	Org.	Pres.	Mem.	Mem.	
Byron Center		1983.....	24.....	95.....	241.....	436.....	13.....130
Cornerstone		1999.....	24.....	41.....	94.....	164.....	7.....32
Faith	A. Lanning	1973.....	19.....	126.....	282.....	502.....	16.....125
First(GR)	J. Slopsema	1879.....	80.....	69.....	162.....	229.....	12.....31
First(Hol)		1929.....	11.....	71.....	159.....	252.....	11.....60
Georgetown	C. Haak	1994.....	35.....	126.....	280.....	536.....	17.....170
Grace	R. VanOverloop	1995.....	26.....	58.....	129.....	243.....	9.....79
Grandville	K. Koole	1984.....	26.....	90.....	218.....	325.....	12.....45
Hope(GR)	J. Laning	1916.....	7.....	97.....	239.....	452.....	15.....153
Hudsonville	G. Eriks	1926.....	22.....	145.....	341.....	503.....	17.....83
Kalamazoo	A. Spriensma	1927.....	11.....	19.....	39.....	67.....	5.....14
Providence	H. Bleyenberg	2008.....	26.....	26.....	61.....	113.....	5.....22
Southeast	W. Langerak	1944.....	35.....	67.....	171.....	259.....	11.....72
Southwest	A. denHartog	1926.....	16.....	94.....	219.....	364.....	15.....99
Trinity		2001.....	45.....	87.....	192.....	362.....	13.....88
Wingham	M. DeVries	1979.....	6.....	13.....	28.....	59.....	4.....25
Totals			415..	1224....	2855.....	4866....	182...1228

Classis West

Church	Minister	Fam. Fam. Com. Tot.				Coun.	Cat.
		Org.	Org.	Pres.	Mem.	Mem.	
Bethel		1989.....	13.....	18.....	41.....	63.....	5.....16
Calvary	C. Griess	2007.....	46.....	52.....	110.....	205.....	7.....58
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Doon	D. Overway	1926.....	11.....	44.....	102.....	169.....	9.....44
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