

AUGUST 2024

Glad Tidings



Pastor Lipsy delivering his first sermon at the Heritage Reformed Conway Congregation



*"How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace,
and bring glad tidings of good things!" – Romans 10:15*

Official Publication of the Mission Committee of the Heritage Reformed Congregations

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Heritage Reformed Congregations

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MISSION STATEMENT

The purpose of the Heritage Reformed Congregations missions program is to glorify the Triune God, by proclaiming the message of salvation alone in Jesus Christ throughout the world, in order that lost sinners might be reconciled to God in Christ by the Holy Spirit.



The Heritage Reformed Conway Congregation

You can find this magazine electronically at

<https://heritagereformed.com/publications/glad-tidings/>

MEDITATION

A Faithful Witness of the Gospel

Rev. Darryl Dedert

If you read through Psalm 40 you will notice that David rejoices because of the Lord's work in his life, "Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered" (verse 5). David intimately knew the Lord; he knew God's character. He understood that his salvation, his life and joy, was not earned by bringing sacrifices to the tabernacle (verse 6), but by trusting in the Lord for his salvation. David knew that there was Someone greater than himself who would come and save him from his sin. He believed God's promises, that a greater King than himself would be born and accomplish salvation for him and make him right with God.

As David continued writing this Psalm, he must have known that he was writing about his Savior. Hebrews 10:5-7 confirms that Psalm 40:6-8 is about the Lord Jesus Christ. The Psalm says, "Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: Yea, thy law is within my heart."

David gets a glimpse of the good news of the gospel when he is writing this Psalm. He sees that the only solution for salvation and life is not found in sacrifice and offerings but in the Savior who has the law of God within His heart and delights to do his Father's will.

Whether we are involved in outreach at home or on the other side of the world the people we encounter have largely bought into the deceptive lie of works righteousness. Whether secular or deeply religious they believe that, if they are good enough, they will obtain some sort of reward. They seek their salvation and purpose in themselves, trusting that this principle will faithfully bring them through this life, and if there is an afterlife, it will take them to the good place.

But the Lord has revealed to us the only hope of salvation, Jesus Christ the Righteous. And we have the great and urgent responsibility to bring this amazing gospel news to the world, to the billions of people who are willingly hoping in and believing a lie.

And what is this great news? It is that the Lord Jesus Christ came to do the will of God. He came to live a perfect life for His people. He came to suffer and die for the sins of His people. He came to tell the world the good news of the gospel. We see this plainly in this Psalm in verses 9-10, "I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation."



See the heart of Jesus here. He is motivated by love for His Father and love for sinners. He faithfully preached and declared the gospel to the congregation. He did not hide the gospel but declared his faithfulness and lovingkindness to needy sinners.

What motivated Jesus is what also motivates us to be faithful witnesses of the gospel to the world. The Lord has revealed to us the amazing news of salvation and life through Christ. We cannot keep this to ourselves. The love of God within the hearts of His people compels us to go out, to go to our neighbors and help them to see and hear the greatest news that has ever been declared to humanity. We must not hide the light of the gospel under a bushel but prayerfully go forth proclaiming what the Lord has done for self-righteous sinners. We must tell our neighbors, our friends, our family about the seriousness of sin and the danger that they are in. And we must tell them about the Lord's faithfulness, mercy, and love. We must tell them about the Lord's precious promises of salvation, about the hope and contentment they can find in Him.

We are compelled to do this because of Christ's love for us. Being a witness is a command, but it is not a burden. Obeying this command does not give us salvific favor with God, but we are compelled to be witnesses of the gospel because of what Jesus did for us. We are compelled because we have been the recipients of the Lord's amazing grace, we have been astounded by His amazing love, and therefore we desire that everyone would come to praise and honor our great Lord and Savior.

EDITORIAL

Responding to Trouble

Corney Les

In the last edition of Glad Tidings, some of the troubles around the world were mentioned. The persecution of Christians continues to grow in many countries. We are not immune to troubles as Christians in North America. Take note of how the LGBTQ agenda has infiltrated our society, the gender dysphoria that has been forced on children in public schools, the advent of the legalization and promotion of euthanasia and the continued slaughter of unborn children among other things. Most of our population no longer has much knowledge of the Bible. While many of our laws are still based on biblical principles, many are quickly being turned upside down. Peaceful Pro-life protesters in the US have recently been sentenced to up to 47 months in prison! In the meantime, serious sex offenders and predators are being released into society. In Canada at least 33 churches have been burned to the ground in the last two and a half years and more than 100 have been seriously vandalized. Insurance companies have dramatically raised the cost of insurance as a result and many churches have fenced and alarmed their properties to deter vandalism. What should our response to the current deteriorating situation for Christians in our countries be?

When we look at the end of Acts 7, Stephen preaches a convicting sermon to the Council at Jerusalem – accusing them of



betraying and murdering Jesus Christ – The Righteous One! They could not stand to hear this and casting Stephen out of the city, stoned him to death. Following this horrible death, a great persecution arose against the church at Jerusalem. The Christians were scattered throughout the regions of Judea, Samaria, as far as Antioch. There were upwards of 10,000 Christians in Jerusalem at the time who were driven out of their homes. They became refugees! This is both terrifying, painful, and a great trial. Our church in Chilliwack has welcomed some refugees into our church community. Upon hearing their stories and experiences we get a small inkling of how great a trial it is to be a refugee in a foreign land. So it was for the Christians from Jerusalem. Many of them were captured and bound in prison (Acts 8).

Yet, what was their response? In Acts 8:4 we read, “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word.”

The Lord had changed their lives! God had a greater purpose through their persecution. The refugees were very bold in preaching the very same gospel for which they were persecuted! Thousands of refugees were fleeing for their lives yet were speaking the good news of Jesus Christ wherever they went. They were so incredibly thankful that their sins were forgiven by Jesus Christ! They shared their eternal hope of life in Him with everyone, even during their pain and homelessness.

Acts 11:19-21 gives us a look at the result of their speaking the glorious gospel wherever they went. “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only. And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they were come to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”

The purpose of God was to spread the Good News of salvation beyond Jerusalem. This could be described as the first missionary journey. Through the persecution God moved His people to the Gentile nations. Global missions were the result of forced emigration.

There are also other responses to threats against us. The apostle Paul escaped the threat of death in Jerusalem by being let down in a basket and escaping. At other times he was bold in proclaiming the gospel and even suffered imprisonment, beatings and whippings. Yet while in prison with leg irons on, Paul and his fellow Christian prisoners were praying and singing praises to God (Acts 16:25). Is this how we respond when faced with opposition to our Christian witness? It ought to be. The Word of God and the good news of salvation will not fail! Throughout the book of Acts we can witness God using satanic opposition and human sin to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. This continues to this day. Our sovereign Lord can use the powers of hell and Satan to spread the gospel to every tribe and nation. That includes foreign tribes and nations, but it also includes our neighbors.

Let us be encouraged. The purposes of God will not be thwarted. Take heed of the encouragement that the Apostle Peter gave to believers in 1 Peter 4 and 2 Peter 2. There was great

persecution under Nero when many Christians were martyred. Peter encourages the believing Jewish refugees to live in a way that unbelievers would be drawn to Christ.

The enemies of God and His Church have always sought ways to destroy the gospel message and to persecute believers. Keep in mind what Matthew Chapter 5:10-16 teaches: “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Are you active in speaking about your Lord and Savior? Are you living in such a way as to attract non-believers to faith in Christ? Do you love those who persecute you and treat you poorly because of your faith? Matthew 5:44 instructs us to love our enemies and to rejoice and be glad when others revile and persecute us. Let us be bold as we witness to family, friends, neighbors and to all – even to those in foreign lands. God’s work will continue, and the gospel will be brought to the ends of the earth. We must point people to the One who offers them eternal life.

We have enjoyed many years of relative acceptance of Christian principles and morals in the ‘west’. In most of history that is not normal. Persecution and trials are the norm. As western society increasingly turns away from God, we can expect that trials and persecution will come. John 15 and 16 clearly warn us to be prepared. However, in all this, God will be glorified. Not only in the spread of the gospel through the persecution following Stephen’s death, but also today by the power of God Himself. May He receive all the honor and glory.

Have faith in God’s sovereign, future grace — in the sovereign grace of God to turn the unplanned place and the unplanned pace into the most blessed ending imaginable.

MISSION UPDATE

INDONESIA

Sumba Mission – 25 Years

Bernie Pennings

This is the Sumba Mission’s 25th anniversary year. In the next *Glad Tidings* I hope to focus on Sumba Mission’s history and Christina’s perspective and her experiences over the last 25 years. In the meantime, look for a venue where you can come and hear from Christina directly through presentations when she visits Canada this fall, D.V. There is a presentation organized for Sept 20, 2024, at Oxford Reformed Christian School, with more venues to be announced. If you would like to request a presentation in your area or with your group, please contact Bill Klyn at (519) 617-2816.



Mr. Sommer teaching the children from Scripture



Mrs. Sommer helping children on the road

SOUTH AFRICA

Using AI with Authenticity and Integrity

Dr. Brian DeVries

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a significant technology globally. Within this context, Christians have the potential to harness AI effectively, provided they maintain a commitment to Authenticity and Integrity (the other AI). This was the overarching theme of the annual Bible College Consultation, hosted by the Theological Education Association of Southern Africa (TEASA).

The annual TEASA Consultation was held on 11-13 June 2024 in Kempton Park at the comfortable eMesi Christian Conference Centre. It was attended by about 120 delegates from across Africa, some coming from as far as Uganda and South Sudan.

Wonderful Teaching and Fellowship

Once again this consultation proved to be the ideal occasion for networking with representatives from more than forty reformed and evangelical Bible seminaries, colleges, and churches. Altogether there were nine keynote papers and eight afternoon workshops.

None of the speakers spoke against the correct use of artificial intelligence. The negative effects of AI can indeed be overcome by embracing biblical authenticity and integrity. Many papers and discussions mentioned conditions such as the necessity to keep steadfast adherence to moral and ethical principles, to take additional steps to contain plagiarism, to use AI as a tool only and not as an glorified idol, and to guard against thinking of AI as a panacea to human problems.

Hence AI must be used with extreme caution. It cannot be a substitute for hard work. It may become a poison that deceives readers or infiltrate unbiblical values or facilitate doctrinal distortion. Yet it can also make Bible resources more accessible to a wider audience or save time which can be used for other valuable activities.

Technology through the ages has benefited God's people. Think of David's sling to defeat Goliath, Paul's use of Roman roads to plant churches, and what the printing press did for the Reformation. However, modern AI, while useful, lacks true intelligence (the skilled use of reason), abstract thought, understanding, and insight.

AI is just another technology which certainly can be helpful in theological education. It should not be asked to do anything requiring intelligence or spiritual wisdom. But it can translate, get information quickly, answer factual questions, and produce cool images.

Thoughtful Reflection and Collective Wisdom

According to Rev. Neil Henry, the consultation was a resounding success. The collective wisdom and insights garnered from the various addresses and workshops underscored progress being made in this crucial area. "As both an educator and pastor confronting the implications of AI," he said. "I find that a consultation of this nature compels us to engage with the ethical and beneficial development of AI. Returning from this event, I am deeply committed to staying abreast of rapidly evolving technology, ensuring I am better equipped to guide students immersed in this digital age."

"Maintaining authenticity and integrity remains paramount as we thoughtfully navigate the complexities and challenges posed by AI. It is heartening to see the theological education community unite for these significant discussions. Notably, the emphasis on piety, doctrinal purity, and authentic discipleship emerged as essential hallmarks of our ministries, as we leverage AI capabilities to serve the Lord and His kingdom more effectively, for His glory and the benefit of His people."

Rev. Antonio Coppola echoed these sentiments, emphasizing the relevance and engagement of this year's focus on authenticity and integrity in relation to artificial intelligence. "All the speakers made invaluable contributions," he remarked. According to Rev. Coppola, the consultation helped theological

educators consider the numerous ethical implications of AI and chart a path forward in this uncharted territory.

The event this year has been instrumental in fostering a deeper understanding of AI's role in theological education. The discussions and insights shared have reinforced the importance of upholding authenticity and integrity while navigating the opportunities and challenges presented by AI. As we move forward, the commitment to doctrinal purity and authentic discipleship will guide our efforts, ensuring that we serve both the Lord and His people with excellence.

Various Speakers with Helpful Highlights

Maintaining the integrity of Christian institutions requires a steadfast commitment to authenticity, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While modern tools like AI can support educational efforts, they must be used with discernment and integrity, always reflecting the core values of the Christian faith. This was the view expressed by all the speakers at the TEASA Consultation this year. Here are a few highlights from some of the addresses:

Dr. Roy Musasiwa, principal of the Domboswaba Theological College in Zimbabwe, argued that embracing authenticity and integrity in Bible education must begin with the educator. He advocated for a holistic learning experience that integrates the strengths of informal, non-formal, and formal education. He suggested incorporating daily chapel services, koinonia groups that apply the Bible to contextual realities, and diverse worship services. He asked, "How effective are our institutions in ensuring authenticity and integrity in our Bible education?" While AI presents significant opportunities for enhancing Bible education, its application must always align with the core values of biblical authenticity and integrity. This balanced approach ensures that technological advancements serve to further the mission of theological education rather than detract from it.

Rev. Neil Henry, an experienced minister and educator from Cape Town, highlighted how authenticity and integrity are often compromised in the pursuit of success, self-interest, and a "holier than thou" attitude. He warned against simplistic solutions to complex social problems, as well as moral failure, pride, and selfish ambition. How, then, can one return to authentic discipleship? Methods include prayer, lifelong study of Scripture, understanding the teachings of Jesus, meditation, dedicating time and energy to nurturing faith in students, and helping parents to instill the significance of the Christian faith. These are some of the many instruments God has provided to His people.

"AI does not possess the Holy Spirit," said **Dr. Stephan Briix**, academic dean at the International College of Bible and Missions in Johannesburg. He views AI as another tool that can be beneficial in theological education. AI should not be tasked with duties requiring true intelligence but can be used for translation, quickly retrieving information, answering factual questions, and creating images. However, it is essential to remember that AI often makes mistakes and cannot interpret spiritual truths. It is useful only when employed correctly, with authenticity and integrity.

Dr. Brian DeVries, principal of Mukhanyo Theological

College, expressed dismay that about half the institutions on a South African list of illegal schools have Christian names. This is particularly concerning given the Bible's clear directives on integrity, in passages such as Job 2:3, Proverbs 28:6, and Titus 2:7-8, which emphasizes trustworthiness, strong ethical principles, and a Christian worldview. Promoting academic integrity in our institutions is of paramount importance. It involves embedding beliefs, biblical worldview and principles, moral character, and godly behavior. Upholding fundamental values is crucial. Institutional integrity is seen in handling issues like plagiarism, faculty appointments, and interpersonal relationships. Wisdom is essential. Staff must adhere to values with clear standards. Institutions must ask: How will we consistently implement these values? Genuine integrity cannot be produced artificially; it is produced only by the grace of God.

Dr. Terrel Manikam, vice principal and dean of postgraduate studies at the Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa in Johannesburg, emphasized that principles of academic integrity, honesty, and reliability are foundational to all academic endeavors in higher education institutions from a secular standpoint. However, the Bible goes further, revealing the shocking eternal consequences of betraying truth and adopting utilitarian means to disseminate it – actions abhorrent to God, within whom truth resides.

Rev. Ronald Kalifungwa, experienced minister and lecturer at the African Christian University in Zambia, pointed out that theological leaders must maintain a committed, intimate and dedicated relationship with the local body of believers and not hide in the corridors of seminaries.

Dr. John-Paul Harper, senior lecturer at the George Whitfield College, reflected on the urgent need for theological educators to familiarize them with technologies such as AI and to design their assessments in the light of the fact that these tools are publicly available.

A Profound Blessing for Many Institutions

Maintaining the integrity of Christian institutions requires a steadfast commitment to authenticity, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While modern tools like AI can support educational efforts, they must be used with discernment and integrity, always reflecting the core values of the Christian faith.

Rev. Tebogo Rakgalakane, leader of the logistics team, praised the three-day event as a profound blessing. He highlighted the diverse, well-prepared speakers as crucial to its success, noting, "The blend of academic expertise and pastoral insight was particularly encouraging and revitalizing." He thanked all speakers for engaging the audience and commended the organizing committee for their success. "Thanks to all attendees. We pray for successful gatherings in the coming year to continue encouraging one another," he concluded.

At the end of the three-day event, all the delegates and each institution went home with a stack of free books, compliments of Mukhanyo Theological College and several international publishers. All the recorded sessions are now available for download on the TEASA website.



TEASA Consultation 2024

CHURCH EVANGELISM

Heritage Reformed Congregation Grand Rapids, Michigan Reaching the Children – Reaching the World

Ruben Ibarra



Rev. Ronald Kalifungwa presenting



Dr. Japie Malan presenting

In a post-Christian world where secular values are increasingly prominent, Sunday School outreach programs serve as a beacon of light. Children who have never heard the gospel have the Word of God explained to them. These programs play a crucial role in neighborhood outreach and child evangelism by offering a structured environment where young hearts can learn about Jesus, develop a sense of community, and have the gospel explained to them.

The importance of evangelism of children cannot be overstated. Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 19:14). Jesus affirms that children are valued members of God's Kingdom and should be allowed to come to Him without hindrance. Jesus explicitly states that the kingdom of heaven belongs to such ones as these. This affirmation encourages the church to prioritize children's ministry and to make sure children have the opportunity to learn about God's love and grace.

Sunday School neighborhood outreach also helps serve as a bridge between the church and the broader community, especially for children outside of our churches. By a consistent weekly outreach to neighborhoods and families, we can connect with those who may not regularly attend church service or have never attended church! This outreach creates opportunities for children (and parents!) to learn about the precious gospel of Jesus Christ.

Reaching out to the unchurched communities often provides a child's first contact with the gospel and Christian teaching. Through engaging lessons, Bible stories, songs, and activities, children learn about God, their need for salvation, and the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This was supremely valuable to our Lord. Jesus' instruction to "hinder them not to come unto me" highlights the responsibility for church leaders to remove any barriers – whether they are physical, emotional, or cultural – that might prevent children coming to hear from Jesus. It also brings our attention to the need for accessible evangelism, that is, coming down to their level and addressing the needs and understanding of children.

Reaching out to the unchurched communities around us has a long-term effect that extends beyond the individual children we reach out to. As children encounter the gospel of Jesus Christ, they often bring these values to their families and peers. This has a ripple effect as the gospel light and preserving grace spreads beyond the church walls. God uses these simple means to save children! This point is dear to my heart as I personally was saved through the means of an "Evangelism Sunday" campaign of a local church's youth group!

Reaching out to children can also bring two distinct communities together. As the church reaches out to those outside the church, the church becomes a place where community life can take place – offering a place where people can gather, share experiences, and support one another. Such things already occur in normal church life but with the neighborhood Sunday School acting as a bridge to the neighborhood around them, we can invite others into our churches. Community events such as an outreach barbeque or getting to know the parents of the children provide great avenues to fulfill the first and second of the greatest commandments given to us by our Lord: To love God by obeying Him and loving our neighbor by knowing their concerns and sharing the gospel with them!

Sunday School outreach is a strategic tool for fulfilling the Great Commission. By attracting children and their families, our churches can bring the light of the gospel to more people. This approach provides a way to reach the hearts of the rising generation while simultaneously creating connections with our neighbors. Children, who would otherwise have no Christian influence, have the gospel preached to them and the love of God shown to them. By consistently providing programs and events that reach children, churches establish trust and demonstrate their commitment to the well-being of the community. This love and reciprocated trust creates many opportunities for us to share the gospel in hopes that God would use it for the salvation of many!





DOMESTIC OUTREACH

Challenge to Believers to Evangelize¹

Dr. Brian G. Najapfour

Brothers and sisters in Christ, please stop making unreasonable alibis for not evangelizing! Instead, establish better habits of talking to others about Jesus regularly. Start in “Jerusalem” (in your home). Maybe one of your children is not yet saved, or perhaps your father or mother is not yet a believer. Then, from “Jerusalem” move to “Judea” and “Samaria” (your neighborhood and community), and from there, as the Holy Spirit calls and enables you, go “to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). My point is that you present the gospel to those who are lost in sin wherever you are and whenever God gives you an opportunity to do so.



Ask your fellow believers to pray for you that God may open a door for you to share the gospel with your unbelieving relatives, friends, and neighbors, as Paul did in Colossians 4:3-4: “[Pray] also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.” Ask them, too, to pray for you that God may not just open a door for you but open your mouth to speak boldly the message of gospel. This was Paul’s request from his fellow believers in Ephesus: “[Pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:19-20).

Be honest with God about your fears in evangelizing. Are you afraid of being rejected? Jesus was rejected (John 1:11); thus, the experience of rejection is normal in evangelism. Are you afraid of offending your unbelieving relatives and neighbors? Well, expect them to be offended because the gospel is indeed offensive to the unbelievers (1 Peter 2:7-8). Paul says, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18).

Are you a shy or introverted person? Ask God to give you courage and zeal to share the glorious gospel with those who desperately need it (even in the form of a gospel tract).

In his book *Soul-Winner: How to Lead Sinners to the Saviour*, Charles Spurgeon expresses his similar passion to win souls for Christ. He insists that soul-winning, which he calls the “most royal employment,” “should be the main pursuit of every true believer.”² Interestingly, although Spurgeon understood well that ultimately only God can save or win souls, he did not hesitate to use the expression *soul-winning* to describe the work of evangelism. He argued that all believers “should each say with Simon Peter, ‘I go a fishing,’ and with Paul our aim should be, ‘That I might by all means save some’ [1 Cor. 9:22].”³ In other words, in Spurgeon’s mind, a soul-winner is much like a fisher of men.

In Matthew 4:19, Jesus calls Peter and Andrew and says to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” As

Christ's followers, we are to fish sinners or win them for Christ by casting the net of the gospel over them, fully aware that only God can take them out of water or darkness of sin. In his work *The Art of Man-Fishing*, the Puritan pastor Thomas Boston (1676–1732) explains why the unconverted are compared to fish in the water. He says, "Among other reasons, they are so, because as the water is the natural element of fish, so sin is the proper and natural element of an unconverted soul. Take the fish out of the water, it cannot live; and take from a natural man his idols, he is ready to say with Micah. 'Ye have taken away my good, and what have I more?'"⁴ When was the last time you cast the gospel net over a fellow sinner? In case you have not yet done it, do it not only for others' sake but also for your own sake. You may not realize this, but evangelism is a spiritual discipline, and by spiritual discipline I mean a practice designed to deepen our relationship with God. Sadly, few Christians today view evangelism as a means by which they can grow in faith. When believers think of spiritual disciplines, they often think only of Bible study, prayer, worship, fellowship, and others (excluding evangelism). In my own experience, evangelism helps me grow more in my understanding of the gospel I share with others. It also teaches me to become more dependent on God because I know unless He opens the spiritual eyes of the person I evangelize, this individual will not see the beauty and glory of Christ. Indeed, evangelism has many spiritual benefits for Christians. Therefore, I encourage you to participate in the work of evangelism for your own spiritual growth.

Also, as the Holy Spirit enables you, support an evangelistic cause. Before leaving for India, William Carey told his friends Andrew Fuller and Samuel Pearce, "I will go down into the pit, if you will hold the ropes."⁵ Carey was aware of the difficulty of moving to another country to serve as a missionary. He knew he could not be an effective missionary without others' help. He thus needed his fellow believers to hold the ropes for him as he descended into the pit of India (so to speak) to proclaim the gospel there. Thankfully, his friends held the ropes for Carey. They prayed for him, raised funds for him, and encouraged their own congregations to be involved in the mission work in India.

While all of us are called to be ambassadors for Christ, not every one of us is called to leave his or her country and serve elsewhere as a missionary. Yet, these cross-cultural missionaries need their fellow believers back home to hold the ropes for them as they proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. You can hold the ropes in various ways—by encouraging missionaries, praying for them, and helping them with your financial resources. To inspire you in your own evangelistic endeavors, make time to read some good Christian books on the topic of evangelism and some good biographies of missionaries.

If you are a pastor or church leader, set a good example for your congregation. Don't expect your members to evangelize if you yourself do not evangelize. Our members usually learn by our example. Evangelism is an important aspect of your ministry. After Paul exhorted Timothy to "preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season," he reminds him not to neglect the work of evangelism: "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). To fully fulfill his ministry, Timothy must do his work

as an evangelist. My fellow pastor, do you diligently perform your duty as an evangelist? I understand as a minister your primary calling is the two-fold ministry of prayer and of the word (Acts 6:4)—to pray for your congregation and "shepherd the flock of God which is among you" (1 Peter 5:2). Yet, as Paul urges Timothy, do not neglect the work of evangelism. Pray evangelistically for the unconverted in your congregation and offer freely the gospel to them, calling them to faith and repentance. But think also of the unconverted in your community and neighborhood. Reach out to them as well with the gospel and be intentional in your evangelistic effort. Have you ever invited a neighbor to your house and to your church? If not, why not? Does it not bother you that even today you have not yet shared the gospel with anyone in your neighborhood? You're too busy? Is that a legitimate excuse? Remember the old saying, "Where there is a will, there is a way." Could it be the main reason you avoid evangelism is because you simply have no desire to do so?

In 1787, John Newton, best known today for his hymn "Amazing Grace," preached at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Promoting Religious Knowledge among the Poor. The title of his sermon was "The Best Wisdom," which was based on the second half of Proverbs 11:30—"And he who wins souls is wise." In that sermon, while Newton acknowledged that "only [Jesus], who redeemed the soul by his blood, is able effectually to win [the soul] to himself," Newton declared how "the minister who winneth souls is wise." Then he added, "I trust, my brethren, we all desire to win souls."⁶ My fellow ministers, do you desire to win souls, or evangelize sinners?

And if you are a seminary professor, do not lose sight of the Great Commission. The seminary exists for the service of the church; and thus, you should regard your work as an extension of the ministry of the church. Whatever courses you teach – whether history, philosophy, or theology – should be intended for the growth of the church, "both in bringing in new members to it, and strengthening those that are brought in already."⁷ Carl F. H. Henry (1913–2003) had the same concern when he said, "I don't think every seminary classroom should be turned into a course in evangelism, but there's something wrong if divinity professors consider their courses so irrelevant to fulfillment of the Great Commission that nowhere in the span of a year's teaching do students get any glimpse of personal concern for the lost."⁸ Seminary teachers, do you help your students develop a love for the lost?

Finally, my fellow pastors and my fellow believers, live in such a way that you become a good witness for Christ in your family, church, school, workplace, and community (or wherever you are). Remember, you are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13–14). One of the uses of salt is to season food. As salt, then, you are to season the people around you with gospel flavor. That is, you are to influence them with your gospel living, marked by the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22–23). Salt is to be used; it should not remain in the cabinet; it should be put on the table for others to use. In a similar manner, you are not to be a closet Christian; don't hide your Christian identity. Let the people around you taste your gospel savor; let

them know you are Christ's follower. Do the people you interact with daily know you are a Christian?

¹ This article is an excerpt from Brian G. Najapfour, *Every Christian Is an Evangelist* (Ontario: Paideia Press, 2024), 44–53.

² Charles Spurgeon, *Soul-Winner: How to Lead Sinners to the Saviour* (New York/Chicago/Toronto: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), 7, 9.

³ Spurgeon, *Soul-Winner*, 9.

⁴ Thomas Boston, *The Art of Man-Fishing* (Glasgow, 1796), 9.

⁵ Cited in Nathan Finn, "Who Will Hold the Ropes: A Plea for Great Commission Pastors and Churches," accessed December 5, 2023, <https://www.imb.org/2017/06/28/hold-ropes-plea-pastors-churches/>.

⁶ John Newton, "The Best Wisdom" (1789), in *The Works of The Rev. John Newton*, vol. 9 (London, 1821), 179, 187.

⁷ Matthew Poole, *A Commentary on the Holy Bible*, vol. 3 (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1985), 672.

⁸ Carl Henry *at His Best: A Lifetime of Quotable Thoughts* (Portland: Multnomah Press, 1989), 73.

HRCC Church Plant – Conway, Arkansas Homer Mason

It was long in coming, but when the time was ripe, it came to fruition. The story of our Church plant in Conway, Arkansas is a little long and a bit complicated, but just as God works all things for the good of His people, He has worked many things out in the establishment of another congregation 100 miles south of our Harrison HRC.

Our Harrison church plant was established as an official HRC congregation in 2008, with Pastor David Lipsy accepting a call to teach and preach. Many of us first became members of a Reformed church during these early years in Harrison, Arkansas. When Pastor Lipsy accepted a call to Burgessville in 2013, God brought us Pastor Foppe VanderZwaag, and later, in 2021, Pastor Terreth Klaver. Over the years, as our church plant in Harrison grew, so did a construction business, started and run by one of our members. The business, Felland Brothers Construction, employed four additional families from our church, most of whom were related. The work centered in Little Rock, more than 120 miles south of Harrison, causing these families to migrate into the area around Conway, AR. For over a decade, three to five families traveled almost two hours one way to meet together in Harrison. It was, however, a great blessing, and many families were united in fellowship each Sunday. As we made this long journey each week, we knew that someday this would have to change. Our church was not local, and it was not convenient to invite friends or co-workers to worship with us.

About two years ago, in mid-to-late 2022, we began discussing the possibility of a church plant, but could not find a good option for a meeting place. It was also a matter of concern that we not split apart, or thin out our Harrison congregation, while at the



same time increasing our expenses between the two groups. It was at this very time that the Lord began building up our numbers in Harrison. We continued searching for facilities in the Conway area, but were not able to find anything within our parameters. In the spring of 2023, a new door began to open. A local Reformed Baptist church needed to upgrade to a larger facility. Several of our members had attended weekly studies with this congregation and were close to some members of the leadership. At some point the question was raised whether they would allow us to use their old facility in our early stages of church planting. After discussion and prayer, the leadership of Grace Bible Church in Conway graciously permitted us to use their facility without charging us rent or even utilities. We were able to start services the first Sunday of June 2023.

Our next dilemma, although already planned for, was how to get live preaching on Sundays in the interim before we could call a minister. Our Harrison pastor kindly volunteered to preach us an evening sermon (6 pm) after preaching twice in Harrison (10 am and 2 pm). We would livestream our pastor's first service 10 am and then have a fellowship brunch before going home to rest. After Harrison completed their 2 pm service, Pastor Klaver would pack up his family and head south for our 6 pm service. That long drive was undertaken weekly by our faithful and committed pastor. Periodically, we had visiting ministers who helped fill the void. Providentially, a young seminary student named Ruben Ibarra was seeking an opportunity to apprentice under an experienced pastor. Our pastor, willing to provide oversight and opportunity, arranged for Ibarra to intern and preach an edifying word to our congregations. It helped immensely to have Brother Ibarra fill the void in our pulpit for a couple months.

There are many details, conundrums, and questions to work through when planting a church, not the least of which is whom to call as a pastor? Names were compiled and lists were assembled for us to pray over and discuss. We mulled over what type of minister would be best suited for our area and demographic. Conway is called the city of colleges, as indeed there are three prominent colleges in our city of 68,000. We considered questions of age, stage, background and experience. One of the names temporarily sidelined, and not really considered, was that of Pastor David Lipsy. We all knew that it would be a hard and inconvenient adjustment for an older veteran of the Word to accept a call so far out of the way, and to leave family, friends, and associates. Most of us, however, had fond memories of his ministry among us eleven years earlier, and so had him in the back of our minds as a unique candidate. Indeed, all of us could attest that it was during and through his ministry that we all first became a part of a Reformed church. From 2008 to 2013, Rev. Lipsy was instrumental in starting our first church plant, and it was by God's grace, through His providence, that it became a thriving established congregation. With these thoughts in mind, and after discussion and prayer, we made the call to our first minister and long-time mentor. As we always say, the rest was up to the Lord. Deep down, we had the assurance that it would be God's will. Several weeks later, Pastor Lipsy accepted our call, and we all began making plans for his move to us.

With the help of a real estate agent friend, we began hunting for properties in the Conway area that would be suitable for the pastor and his wife Ruth. For more than a month we searched and searched and finally found a place that offered the layout suitable for their needs. The home, however, needed some updates before they could move in. With only a couple weeks between the closing and when the Lipsy's would arrive, we had to work quickly! Most of us could not neglect our daily work requirements, so we worked nights during the week and again on Saturdays. A flooring crew came through and installed flooring after we did our painting – a couple days before the semi and the Lipsy's arrived!

Two weeks after the move, on May 12, Pastor Lipsy was installed as a minister of our parent church in Harrison with a view to ministering in Conway. Then on June 5, at the long-anticipated 2024 HRC Synod, the Conway church plant was given permission to organize as an HRC congregation.

As you can see from this account, blessing after blessing accompanied our efforts in this arduous yet noble pursuit, and we trust our God's gracious hand to provide the rest of what we need in the work that He has called us to do.



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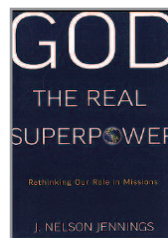
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J. Nelson Jennings

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YOUTH EVANGELISM

Blessed

Henrietta van Woerden

What does it mean to be blessed? The definition in the online dictionary is: made holy; divinely happily favoured; fortunate to have, do or experience.

Maybe you have heard adults use the word "blessed" and wondered what they meant. When the word "blessed" is used it might be a form of being "thankful" for what God has given or provided. Sometimes, we even use the word "blessed" when we experience difficulties in life if we can see past the difficult

circumstance and see God's provision in the most difficult times of our life. There are also times when people focus on the daily provisions of a home, family, food, friends, church and so many other things they feel blessed to have. We certainly may say and have those feelings because they are great blessings of God's provision.

But what should be our focus? God is the giver of all our blessings. Our focus should be on God because He is the One who has given all things in life, His gifts to us. We don't have because we have worked so hard, although we are called to be diligent and faithful in our work. Children, that also means you must be faithful in doing your chores in your family. If God has given you a healthy body to do your chores, be faithful in doing what is asked of you. You will feel blessed by your service to others.

Have you ever watched someone who has mental or physical challenges still do so many beautiful things? Those people and children bless us in many ways. They also have a special place and jobs in our communities. God put them in our communities for a purpose. They teach us so many things. They feel blessed because they have jobs in our communities, and they do it with love. Some cannot do jobs, but their presence lights up a room and we can serve them. When they're acknowledged we see their faces light up.

Let's think about the word "blessed"; what does it mean to you? What does the Bible say about being "blessed"?

Matthew 5:3-11 gives us many verses; these are Jesus' own words: "Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake."

Jesus shows us the perfect meaning to being "blessed" in these verses. For some of these we will need God's grace to help us. I encourage you to read all of Matthew 5. The greatest blessing we can have is knowing Jesus as our Saviour; there is no greater blessing.

Psalm 2:12b, "Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him."

Bible Quiz

- 1) What did Jesus say about the poor in spirit?
- 2) What did Jesus say about those that mourn?
- 3) What did Jesus say about those who are persecuted?
- 4) What is the first word in Matthew 5:12?
- 5) Blessed _____ all _____ that put their _____ in _____.
Psalm 2:12b
- 6) Write down 5 things that you feel "blessed" with or by, beside it write "why" you feel blessed.

Mexico Mission Trip

Joanna Sikkema

On March 28, 2024, a group of 11 teenagers, 6 chaperones, and 1 toddler left Grand Rapids for a mission trip they won't soon forget.

We flew out of Chicago to Tucson, Arizona where we met up with John VerWys and Rosemary Townsend and drove to Douglas.

The next morning and each subsequent morning, we began with group devotions; we also ended each night the same way.

On Friday, the work of the week began. We crossed the border and started building the walls for the home we would construct for the family. We took the walls to the home plot a few miles from the compound, which was quite an adventure. Just imagine four walls on the back of a pickup bouncing up and down over each bump in the Mexican dirt roads!

Saturday, the team once again all headed to the house; some hung drywall in the inside while others worked on the outside stapling on the chicken wire for the stucco.

Sunday, after a time of devotions and discussion together, we took an early morning hike as a team. In the afternoon, we went to the mission church where Pastor Dedert delivered an Easter message to the attendees. While there, we got some rather unexpected weather of rain and wind which set the progress of the house back a little bit for the next few days.

Throughout the remainder of the week, however, we were able to finish the inside of the home, which included a loft and a cement floor. We stuccoed the outside of the home and painted the inside and outside of the home as well.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, we also led the children and the parents of the congregation in a time of Vacation Bible School which included a cute craft, Bible story, and playtime with the team.

During the week each member of the team also took time to go to the current home of the family and witness the poor living conditions. Even in the poor conditions the joy on their faces as they opened their home to us was absolutely heartwarming.

On Thursday, we dedicated the home to the family and there wasn't a single dry eye in the home as they thanked us with all the joy they felt in their hearts.

Friday when it came time to leave, nobody was ready to come home. But we all returned home with a brand-new appreciation for all of the many bountiful blessings God has so richly poured upon us.





MISSION FINANCES

Henry Jansen & Peter Schenderling

Dear friends,

We would like to thank you all for your support to the mission call of the Heritage Reformed denomination. We kindly ask you to pray for the HRC Committee as we continue to seek out ways to spread the Gospel. As well, please remember in prayer the cause of the of the Domestic Outreach Committee. Presently, they are supporting the Plymouth congregation with pulpits supply.

To paraphrase Spurgeon, "The missionary spirit has grown cold in the churches and its funding decreased. It becomes a moot point as to whether missions are absolutely necessary or not is it needful that we should extend the Gospel abroad at all?"

We, the Mission Committee, hope it will not become so with us. As we look back, we are deeply thankful for God's grace. We pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to work through our efforts so that the Gospel message may become precious to many souls living in darkness. Remember, as one commentator says, "the important thing is not HOW a person may be brought to Christ, but that a person IS brought to Christ."

Please refer to the financial statement.

**HRC General Mission
Financial Reports
For the Nine Months Ending April 30, 2024**
Actual and Budget figures presented in CAD

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Actual YTD	Budget YTD	Act vs Bud Variance	Actual Prior YTD	CY vs PY Variance
Revenue					
HRC Church Donations	\$ 104 022	\$ 175 346	-\$ 71 324	\$ 128 888	-\$ 24 866
Individual Donations	4 750	3 750	1 000	2 500	2 250
Total Income	\$ 108 772	\$ 179 096	-\$ 70 324	\$ 131 388	-\$ 22 616
Expenditures					
Professional fees	\$ -	\$ 675	-\$ 675	\$ -	\$ -
Tuition fees	12 398	5 996	6 402	-	12 398
Other Program Support	107 434	107 850	- 416	159 462	- 52 028
Glad Tidings - Pub. & Dist.	7 083	11 250	- 4 167	11 513	- 4 430
Administration Costs	-	375	- 375	142	- 142
Delegate Travel	744	3 750	- 3 006	3 123	- 2 379
Mercy Ministries	-	-	-	-	-
Bank Charges	66	450	- 384	277	- 211
Potential Mission Opportunities	-	48 750	- 48 750	-	-
Exchange Loss (Gain)	-	-	-	536	536
Total Expenses	\$ 127 725	\$ 179 096	-\$ 51 371	\$ 173 981	-\$ 46 256
Excess of Revenue (Expenditures)	-\$ 18 953	\$ -	-\$ 18 953	-\$ 42 593	\$ 23 640

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Actual YTD	Prior YTD	CY vs PY Variance
Assets			
Bank	\$ 140 942	\$ 163 212	-\$ 22 270
Due From DOC	-	-	-
Prepaid Expenses	-	-	-
Other Current Assets	-	-	-
Total Assets	\$ 140 942	\$ 163 212	-\$ 22 270
Liabilities			
Donations Rec'd for Other Orgs.	\$ -	\$ 6 294	-\$ 6 294
Due To Nakekela Clinic	9 345	-	9 345
Other Current Liabilities	-	-	-
Total (Current) Liabilities	\$ 9 345	\$ 6 294	-\$ 14 863
Net Assets	131 597	156 918	- 7 407
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 140 942	\$ 163 212	-\$ 22 270

**HRC Domestic Outreach Committee
Financial Reports
For the nine Months Ending April 30, 2024**
Actual and Budget figures presented in CAD

STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

	Actual YTD	Budget 23/24	Act vs Bud Variance	Actual Prior YTD
Revenue				
HRC Church Donations	\$ 59 939	\$ -	\$ 59 939	
Other Donations	-	-	-	
Total Income	\$ 59 939	\$ -	\$ 59 939	
Expenditures				
Outreach Support	\$ 47 260	\$ -	\$ (47 260)	
Bank Charges	46	-	(46)	
Delegate Travel	692	-	(692)	
Contingency	-	-	-	
Exchange Loss (Gain)	3 800	-	(3 800)	
Total Expenses	\$ 51 798	\$ -	\$ (51 798)	\$ -
Excess of Revenue (Expenditures)	\$ 8 141	\$ -	\$ 8 141	\$ -

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

	Actual YTD	Prior YTD	CY vs PY Variance
Assets			
Bank	\$ 48 970		\$ 48 970
Due From General Mission	-		-
Prepaid Expenses	-		-
Total Assets	\$ 48 970	\$ -	\$ 48 970
Liabilities			
Other Current Liabilities	-	-	-
Total Liabilities	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Net Assets	48 970		48 970
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$ 48 970	\$ -	\$ 48 970

**Your contributions will help bring the gospel and
spiritual encouragement to the areas
where our missionaries are serving the Lord.**

PLEASE SHARE AND DONATE

CHEQUE ENCLOSED OF \$ _____ FOR:

HRC FOREIGN MISSIONS

- ☐ Mukhanyo Theological College and related Ministries
- ☐ Theological Education for foreign students and PRTS partner Seminaries abroad
- ☐ Nakekela Christian Community Care Centre, South Africa
- ☐ Sumba Orphanage and Christian School, Indonesia

HRC DOMESTIC OUTREACH

- ☐ Church Planting
- ☐ Small Congregations Support

OTHER MISSIONS RECOGNIZED BY THE HRC AS WORTHY OF SUPPORT

- ☐ Christian Ministry to Israel
- ☐ Jason Fintelman – Mission Aviation Fellowship

OTHER: _____

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*The Heritage
Reformed
Conway
Congregation*

For the Harvest Time is Near

He that goeth forth with weeping,
Bearing precious seed in love,
Never tiring, never sleeping,
Findeth mercy from above.

Soft descend the dews of heaven,
Bright the rays celestial shine;
Precious fruits will thus be given
Through an influence all divine.

Sow thy seed; be never weary;
Let no fears thy soul annoy;
Be the prospect ne'er so dreary,
Thou shalt reap the fruits of joy.

Lo! the scene of verdure brightening,
See the rising grain appear:
Look again; the fields are whitening,
For the harvest time is near.

Thomas Hastings