

Greetings

Greetings in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Harvest, from the City of Antipolo, in the province of Rizal of the Philippines. Here is an update regarding our labors in the past several months.

2022 Furloughs

My family enjoyed our furlough from May 31 to July 28, our first since being called back to labor here in December 2017. Rev. and Mrs. Daniel Kleyn enjoyed their furlough from July 11 to August 30.

When thinking about our respective furloughs in June to August 2022, now seemingly long passed already, I was reminded of a comment about furloughs in a book, *The Reformed Church in China 1842-1951*, written by Gerald F. De Jong. The comment appears on p. 80:

Furloughs for missionaries were, of course, necessary. Few critics could find fault with Philip Pritchard's observations that "missionaries, like all other busy workers, get run down, worn out, and on account of the unvarying daily routine... become more or less rusty. Physically, mentally, and spiritually the whole life is apt to, and very often does, become sluggish."

Although those observations were written in a vastly different age of transportation and communication in May 1897, yet his main point is certainly still apt. We, too, understand from experience the need for periodic furloughs among our PRCA congregations in North America, in the midst of our calling church in Doon, and among our respective families and friends. Although our furloughs involved a different kind of work, including overcoming jetlag, pulpit supply, some presentations, and attendance at various ecclesiastical meetings, yet they provided rest, vacation, and recuperation. As a result, we have returned to the field "oiled" for our ongoing task here.

Our Task within the PRC in the Philippines

The first main part of our current task here has been providing pulpit supply to the vacant Provident PRC. Rev. Kleyn and I currently provide pulpit supply to Provident three Sundays per month. We continue providing pulpit supply in the Berean PRC when necessary. Usually that is the case for the Berean PRC in the weeks that Rev. Ibe is on vacation or when he is sent to Gabaldon to teach a catechism class and to lead a worship service on the first Sunday of each month. Sometimes we provide pulpit supply in the Berean PRC on the Sundays after a week when Rev. Ibe's pastoral workload is unusually heavy. We are thankful for the opportunity to be engaged regularly in sermon work and regular preaching for the PRCP congregations.

Our preaching task includes catechism instruction. Rev. Kleyn teaches two catechism classes in the Provident congregation: the Old Testament Bible History for the younger children, and the Reformed Doctrine class (Belgic Confession) for the teenagers. With the approval of the Doon consistory, I teach our four sons here since the class schedules in the Berean and Provident churches do not work for our family. I am teaching OT History for Beginners, Heidelberg Catechism, and Essentials of Reformed Doctrine.

A significant second element of our task within the PRCP is our role as teachers in their seminary program. We are teaching one seminary student, Bro. Ace Flores, who is in his third year of training. We have a pre-seminary student, Bro. Peter Zuniega, who has joined Bro. Ace in the NT Greek Grammar course. Rev. Kleyn teaches two courses (Hebrew Reading and Church Polity), while I am teaching Introduction to Dogmatics, Theology, and NT Greek Grammar. This part of our task keeps us busy each week in preparation and in the actual classroom instruction.

Our task within the PRCP includes a third component of leading Bible Study. Currently, the Council of Provident PRC has assigned me to lead the Wednesday night Bible Study. We have been studying the book of Acts, and currently are studying about the first New Testament martyr, Stephen, in chapter 7. There are on average about 17 persons in attendance.

Our task within the PRCP has included a fourth element of participating in conferences with lectures. We have done so in past years, and Rev. Kleyn had the opportunity to do so again in a conference on July 2 which was sponsored by the PRCP Classis for the PRCP membership. The conference addressed the topic of the recent schism in the PRCP and PRCA in 2021. In addition to Rev. J. Laning ("Repentance and Good Works") and Rev. W. Langerak ("The Covenant, Fellowship, and Good Works") from the PRCA, Rev. Kleyn also spoke on the schism under a speech entitled, "Church Political Matters." In addition to the speeches, Rev. Kleyn, Rev. Laning, and Rev. Langerak were kept busy with many questions and profitable discussion during the coffee and lunch breaks.

Finally, our formal task within the PRCP includes attending the Classis meetings of the PRCP and providing advice as a committee whenever asked for such by the consistories, the Classis, or one of its standing committees. The next PRCP Classis is scheduled soon for November 1.

Medical Leave

We have been reminded again that the gift of health and strength is necessary for continuation in the mission task here by the recent announcement in the PRCA regarding the health needs of Rev. and Mrs. Kleyn.

The Council of the Doon PRC, with the concurrence of the FMC, has approved and announced a 9-week medical leave of absence for Rev. and Mrs. D. Kleyn from their missionary task in the Philippines. It is expected that the leave of absence (October 26 to December 28) will provide sufficient time for their surgeries and recovery.

If all goes as well as the physicians expect, then we are looking forward to welcoming the Kleyns back home again in Antipolo on December 29, the Lord willing. Pray that the Lord will watch over them in their travels and through the medical procedures, will provide a good outcome, and will give them a speedy recovery in order to resume their role in the ongoing task at hand here.

Some Adjustments

In light of the leave of absence, some adjustments are being prepared in our pulpit supply schedule in the PRCP and in the catechism instruction in Provident PRC. The elders will be helping with leading worship services when pulpit supply is unavailable and with teaching catechism until Rev. Kleyn has returned.

With regard to seminary instruction, the impact of the medical leave on the instruction in the seminary program for the PRCP appears at this time to be manageable without requiring, for example, emergency help from one of our retired pastors or professors. Adjustments have been proposed and approved by Committee 1 (TSC) for the second half of the first semester and the upcoming semester. Thus, what cannot be completed in the courses that Rev. Kleyn is currently teaching this semester will be covered in the upcoming semester without difficulty in the scheduling. We are thankful to the Lord that, in His wise timing, the impact of the leave to our seminary task is minimal.

Our Task in Southern Negros Occidental

Another major element of our missionary task in the Philippines is our work with churches and contacts in the Visayan area that we, who have been very familiar with snow in North America, affectionately call SNO.

We started visiting again in SNO in May. At that time, we resumed our monthly Monday classes with the regular group of pastors and elders with whom we had been working before the disruptions of Covid regulations. Currently, we are presenting lectures in Homiletics (sermons) and in Christology.

Then, earlier in September, in addition to our monthly Monday classes, we resumed preaching in the area churches, at their request, on Sundays. On September 18, Rev. Kleyn preached in the Reformed Christian Church in Canturay while I preached in the Reformed Free Church in Inayauan. The churches at this point have one regular worship service with all of the

necessary elements of worship according to the regulative principle. However, prior to their morning worship service, they have a tradition of a one-hour service of "Sunday School" in which the pastors teach catechism to the congregation. This type of service is common in many churches in the Philippines, and we have experienced this in our labours with other churches. In some, the "Sunday School" service eventually became a full worship service for Heidelberg Catechism preaching. Thus, to develop to that goal, the local pastors preach the Heidelberg Catechism in that one-hour service, which we also do when visiting.

We intend to continue laboring with them, the Lord willing, at their request as they continue their development as Reformed congregations in all necessary respects according to Scripture, our Reformed confessions, and Reformed church order. A commendable goal that the leaders desire is, not a loosely associated group of independent Reformed congregations, but a communion of churches of like precious faith. Our prayer is that the Lord will bless us in our role of service to the leaders and their gatherings in their development and that the Spirit of our Lord by this means may continue to guide them into His truth.

Bro. Dick Espiritu (1941-2022)

Some visitors may remember meeting our fellow saint, Bro. Dick Espiritu, one of the first officebearers of the Berean PRC when Rev. A. Spriensma was laboring here. He labored several terms as deacon after the Berean congregation was instituted in 2006. Bro. Dick was taken by the Lord to glory in death on Monday morning, September 12. His burial was on September 19, which would have been his 78th birthday. He is survived by his wife, Sis. Violy. Two of his sons, Bro. Herbert and Bro. Andrew, along with their wives and children are also members of our Berean PRC. The missionaries and our wives had the opportunity to visit with the family at the funeral wake and to bring them in their sorrow words of comfort and hope from Scripture.

We give thanks to the Lord that, in a predominantly Roman Catholic country where most believe the horrible, ungodly teaching of purgatory, we with the Espiritu family might stand in genuine faith before death and the grave in the victory of our Lord Jesus Christ! What a comfort to know assuredly that at the end of our earthly sojourn we have for Christ's sake alone this triumphant expectation:

*Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel,
and afterward receive me to glory. (Psalm 73:24)*

In His Service,
Rev. Richard J. Smit