

PRCA FOREIGN MISSIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

MARCH 2023 NEWSLETTER

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Greetings

Dear members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, warm greetings from the Philippines. We are enjoying some milder weather here right now. But although December through February are our coolest months, our overnight lows are rarely below 75 degrees F. These lower temps feel cold to most people here, but "cold" isn't really part of our vocabulary when it comes to the weather. Just lately our daytime temps have started climbing into the high 80s and low 90s. The "hot season" will soon be here. Usually, March through May are the hottest months, and then the rainy season begins (June through October).

We and the Smits are all doing well here. Sharon and I are both well again after our recent surgeries. We thank the Lord for His care and goodness through it all and for enabling us to return to our life and work in the Philippines. It is good to be with our Filipino brethren again as well as with the Smit family. We thank you all for your thoughts and prayers, too.

In connection with news on our families, the Smits recently received approval from Doon and the FMC to take a furlough this year. They hope to take a longer one this time, the Lord willing, from June through December. This will not only serve as a good time of refreshment, but it will also enable them to spend time with their immediate family (especially their children), as well as to help one of their sons who is graduating from high school with his move to the USA.

Delegations

The most significant, recent activity for all of us was the visit in January of two delegations from the PRCA. The first delegation, representing Doon PRC and the Foreign Mission Committee, and which came as part of their supervision of the work of the missionaries, consisted of Caleb Woiwood and Doug (& Lisa) Brands. The second delegation, representing the Contact Committee, was made up of Sid Miedema and Rev. Martyn (& Larisa) McGeown. This CC delegation came with the purpose of visiting, encouraging, and becoming better acquainted with the PRCP, our sister church here in the Philippines.

Apart from some missed flights and lost luggage, their travels went well. They stayed with the missionary families, and thus we had plenty enjoyable fellowship with them all.

The delegation from Doon and the FMC was able to accompany us over a weekend to Southern Negros Occidental (SNO) to meet the pastors and the churches there, something they were able to do at church on Sunday as well as at the pastors' classes on Monday. All the delegates worshiped at least once in each of the two PRCP churches here in Manila (Berean PRC and Provident PRC). Also, Rev. McGeown preached on both Sundays he was here, one Sunday in each of the two churches.

The two delegations overlapped for about a week, which enabled them to hold combined meetings with men from the PRCP, as well as with us missionaries. Much discussion took place concerning both our PRCA's current work here, as well as the future of our denomination's labors within and for the PRCP. This included talking of such things as the effects of the controversy and schism upon our denominations, the future of seminary instruction, the strengthening of sister church relations between our denominations, a possible transition of the work here from being Foreign Mission work to being exclusively the work of our Contact Committee, and the PRCP's desire to have a minister on loan one day, the Lord willing.

The visits by the delegations were timely and a good encouragement to our missionary families as well as to the saints and churches here. We thank the delegates for visiting, and our churches for sending them. A special thanks also to the wives who came along, something that our wives truly appreciate, as do also the ladies in the churches here.

Our Work in the PRCP

Both Rev. Smit and I continue to help out as needed in the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines (PRCP). Most of the work we do now is in Provident PRC, which congregation is vacant. We help with pulpit supply, which includes a monthly visit I make to Provident's outreach work in Guiguinto. Rev. Smit leads a weekly Bible study, and

I teach Provident's catechism classes. Rev. Smit does also preach one Sunday each month in the Berean PRC, which frees up Rev. Ibe to visit the Berean's outreach work in Gabaldon. Another area of our work in the PRCP is assisting the Classis with church visitation, along with taking a turn (with Rev. Vernon Ibe) in chairing the classis meetings.

Up to this point in time, what has especially kept us busy as missionaries is the work of seminary training. As you know, a few years ago we had three seminary students here, but two of them withdrew from the seminary when they left the PRCP during the schism and split in May of 2021. As a result, just one seminary student remained. However, the remaining seminary student was advised by Committee #1 (the Theological School Committee), at the end of December, not to proceed with his seminary training for academic reasons. This decision was approved by the recent PRCP Classis (Feb. 25). The result is that we missionaries are now no longer involved in providing seminary instruction in the Philippines.

All of this was disappointing for everyone here, for the need of ministers of the gospel is urgent. Currently the PRCP has only one pastor (Rev. Ibe). More laborers are needed for the Lord's harvest, as we know is also the case in the PRCA. Much prayer is needed, along with words of encouragement to young men who may be suitable for the gospel ministry.

What also contributes to the uncertainty of the seminary here (i.e., in addition to not having any students) is that the PRCP has indicated that they would like to use the Theological School of the PRCA for the training of their future students, the Lord willing.

These recent changes have significantly reduced the amount of work we are doing within the PRCP. The seminary took up the lion's share of our time, with each of us preparing and teaching new courses each semester. However, we know and believe these changes are according to the Lord's perfect will. We are confident therefore that all these things do and will continue to work for good for both us and the churches here.

Our Work in SNO

The changes regarding our seminary work have made us wonder if we can now concentrate our work in the churches in SNO (Southern Negros Occidental). But first a brief summary and update regarding this work.

To date our work in SNO has usually consisted

of a monthly visit during the week to provide instruction to a group of pastors who, along with their congregations, are interested in learning more of the Reformed faith and becoming better established as churches. Due to Covid restrictions, however, we were unable to visit SNO for over two years (from February 2020 until May 2022). In May of 2022 we again resumed our visits. And since September, we have included a Sunday in our visits so that we can also preach and teach, at their request, in their churches. The instruction for the pastors is then given on the Mondays we are there, usually all morning and into the early afternoon. Rev. Smit is currently lecturing in Dogmatics (Christology), and I in Homiletics (sermon making).

There are five pastors and five churches involved in this work, though not all the churches are properly constituted as Reformed churches. The churches range from having about 75 members down to approximately 10 to 15 members. It continues to be the desire of these pastors and their congregations to become part of the PRCP one day, if possible and the Lord willing. Our work is being done therefore with that goal in mind. For that reason, we have also provided instruction in the past in the Church Order. We hope to return to the Church Order again with a view to helping the churches which are not yet properly instituted to become so, guiding them in the formation of a classis (presently they are independent congregations), and assisting them in their desire to join the PRCP.

There are various things that need to be sorted out and decided regarding this work, including the question of when the PRCP might become involved in SNO. We pray the Lord will make His will and way clear. We wait on Him therefore to see what He has in store for us with regard also to these labors in the Philippines.

That brings the news to an end. Please remember the saints here in your prayers. We thank the Lord for your faithful support of and interest in the work and in the churches and saints here. Be assured of our prayers for you all and for our Protestant Reformed Churches.

In the love of Christ,
Rev. Daniel Kleyn