

PRCA FOREIGN MISSIONS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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MARANATHA PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCH **VALENZUELA, MANILA, THE PHILIPPINES**

One of the churches which has become a significant and regular part of our mission work here in the Philippines is the Maranatha Protestant Reformed Church in Valenzuela. This congregation is located about 25 miles (usually an hour's drive) from where we live in Antipolo. Rev. Smit and his family worship here at least two Sundays each month. Rev. Smit preaches and teaches with the goal in mind (which is also the stated desire of the congregation) that this church might one day become part of the federation of Protestant Reformed Churches here, the Lord willing. We hope that by means of this newsletter you may gain some knowledge and awareness of this congregation of beloved fellow-saints in Christ.

PASTOR and CONGREGATION

The pastor of this congregation is Rev. Leovy Trinidad (pictured below with his wife Zeny, and their two daughters, Hope and Grace). The Trinidads also have a married son (Jun and Ella), who with their three children currently live in Singapore and are members of our sister church there, the



Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore.

The congregation of the MPRC (pictured above, though with some absent when the picture was taken) consists of 12 families (approximately 35 souls).

HISTORY

The MPRC was formerly known as the Maranatha Foursquare Gospel Church, and thus was a charismatic and Pentecostal congregation. At that time (in the early 1990s), the congregation numbered close to 300 members.

The Lord led the church to the Reformed faith especially through His work in the heart and life of the pastor, Rev. Trinidad. Rev. Trinidad was raised in a Roman Catholic home. In the 1960s, however, he attended and became part of the Foursquare Gospel Churches. But he admits that he was often (if not always) troubled by their Arminian teachings. He himself put it this way:

Through a number of Sundays of attending that church, I was bothered through the insistent desire of a relative for me to make an act, and that was to accept the Lord as my personal Savior. My heart was troubled through that word "acceptance." ... Those years were very uncomfortable to me, because of the Foursquare doctrines that contradict the teaching of the Bible.

Rev. Trinidad was ordained into the ministry in 1976, and then labored as the pastor of the Maranatha Foursquare Gospel Church in Valenzuela. Still troubled by the teachings of the Foursquare denomination, Rev. Trinidad and the congregation in Valenzuela separated from that Arminian denomination in 1996.

In the years that followed this separation, the Lord

gradually brought Rev. Trinidad and the congregation, especially through their own study of the Scripture, and through prayer, to a clearer understanding of His truth.

However, true Reformation for this church had not yet taken place. As Rev. Trinidad states, in the providence of God this did not come until some seven years later.

The Day of Reformation came to us in May of 2003, when a former member of our church explained to us the "MLIP." The Lord opened my eyes and my heart to know the True Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and belief that He died only for the elect. ... Reading and studying God's Word were now precious and truly alive in my heart. Then my son and I were invited to attend the meetings conducted by Rev. Audred T. Spriensma, the PRCA missionary to the Philippines.

The Lord then gave Rev. Trinidad the desire and opportunity to teach the precious truths of the Reformed faith to the congregation.

I felt in my heart that God had opened His wonderful grace to us as a family. Thirst came to us to study the Reformed Faith and doctrines. True Worship and Sacraments. We aggressively imparted this Reformed teaching to the members and affiliated churches, however in a couple of months they left the church and only a few families stayed to be strong in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We totally departed from Arminianism and sold all the instruments used in church worship. We fully followed the Reformed and True Worship of the PRCA.

One cannot help but be struck by the way in which God brought this congregation to His truth. Mysterious and amazing ways of God in leading them, according to His perfect timing, to abandon Arminianism and to embrace the Reformed Faith.

Striking too is the earthly cost (in numbers). For MPRC, it involved going from close to 300 members down to approximately 35. We have also observed or heard of this in other churches, and are reminded that the faithful are few - simply a remnant. But as the members of MPRC themselves will testify, this is the Lord's work and doing. They stand amazed at the goodness of God in delivering them from the lie and leading them to know and embrace His truth. We too should be amazed and humbled at this work of God in our churches and lives.

OUR MISSION WORK

The MPRC became aware of the PRCA and of our mission work in the Philippines in various ways, beginning with their contact with Rev. Spriensma, and including Rev. Trinidad's connections (through his son) to the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church in Singapore. Over the years, Rev. Trinidad has also learned more about the truths we confess through the internet and through correspondence with some of our ministers and professors. Since August 2011, Rev. Trinidad has attended our twice-monthly "7M" meetings (the pastors' instruction classes we conduct here in Manila).

All of this eventually led the congregation to request that we missionaries would provide regular preaching and teaching. With the approval of our calling church (Doon PRC) and the FMC, we began doing so in 2011. This involved occasional Sunday visits by myself in order mainly to preach. These visits also provided the opportunity to get to know the congregation.



Maranatha PRC in 2012

Part way through 2012, Rev. Smit took over the work in MPRC. Since doing so, he has been leading the consistory and congregation into a deeper understanding of the Reformed faith, including Reformed church government. Rev. Smit is currently preaching a series of sermons on I Timothy, under the theme of "Faithful Behavior in the House of God." He also teaches two classes each Sunday, covering the Essentials of Reformed Doctrine and the Church Order of Dordt. He also attends the monthly consistory meeting in order to guide and assist the officebearers in their work and calling in the church.

CONCLUSION

The following words of Rev. Trinidad are, I believe, a fitting way to conclude. He says:

It is my prayer to be faithful in serving our Sovereign and Almighty God through our Lord Jesus Christ by preaching without shame the True Gospel and the whole counsel of God, in season and out of season, which is the power of God unto salvation, and that I truly carry the traditions of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America who hold the doctrines of the Reformation as expressed in the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism and the Canons of Dordt.

We are grateful to the Lord for this congregation, for her pastor, for the dear fellow believers whom we have come to know and love in Christ, and for the opportunity the Lord has given to us to work in their midst.

We trust that you are now able, through a better knowledge of these faithful believers, to join us in the prayer that God will continue to bless and prosper them through their growth in His truth.

In Christ's service, and on behalf of us all,
Rev. Daniel Kleyn