



Eastern Home Missions

Newsletter

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Another year has passed in our labors in the Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Pittsburgh. This past month marks six years that I have labored here among the saints. Time flies by quickly! The face of the Fellowship has changed from when I took up my labors here six years ago. Some of the old members still remain and in their steadfastness continue to lend stability to the group. Many faces are relatively new, testifying to the truth that God still today continues to graft others into the line of His covenant and church, as Jesus taught His disciples in John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice..." We rejoice in this promise that the Head of the church has given us yet today!

We've Reorganized!

We have reorganized. No! We did not reorganize our Fellowship. But we have reorganized the labors of the various committees in the Fellowship here. We used to have two committees: a media and an outreach committee. Now we are down to one committee called the NOC, or Neighborhood Outreach Committee. There still are men and women involved in the work of radio, Internet, and recording. These are answerable to the Steering Committee. But the NOC is now made up of its own various committees. These labor in such matters as pamphlet publishing and distributing, lectures and seminars, a mailing list and quarterly mailings, and our family retreat.

Then there are those seemingly insignificant yet very important matters such as: how to make visitors

feel welcome and comfortable in a worship strange and foreign to them. Or how can we teach our members through bulletin boards of the various labors that are going on in our churches—not only in missions, but in our theological school, in our home congregation, in our schools, and in our sister churches.

There truly is much to do in the outreach of our church in our own community around the church, as well in the city of Pittsburgh at large.

Presently, we are even investigating areas around the metropolitan area of Pittsburgh that are perhaps an hour or more drive from our present mission work. When we look at the potential in this area of labor alone, then our labors (with the emphasis on the plural) in Pittsburgh, though of many years standing, are only just beginning!

Baptism and Wedding

On Sunday morning, February 5, Clara Marie, infant daughter of Pete and Megan Cnossen, was baptized. We are thankful for the birth and baptism of another daughter of Zion. Two more families of our fellowship are expecting children as well! Chad and Kim Skolny are expecting in June, and John and Julie Fennell are expecting in July, the Lord willing. This is encouraging for us too, since last year we were without any baptisms. Mothers expecting children reveals a slow but continued growth from within as well as without. Through all the ups and downs of the work on a mission field, the Lord continues to bless us in these small ways.



Parents, grandparents, and sister of little Clara Marie

Another marriage has taken place in our midst too. My daughter Lydia was married this past January to Derek Kuiper of our Grandville PRC. We tried our best to get Derek to move here, but he is a dyed-in-the-wool Michigan man! We commend our daughter into Derek's care and pray that he will lead her in the way of God's Word. We are thankful that Lydia has found a believing husband and a good church home in Grandville. But that means my wife and I are now officially

empty-nesters! It has taken a little time to adjust to how quiet it is around here, but with my work and my wife's interest in quilting, we manage well enough. Of course, there are also my wife's almost daily telephone calls to all her children to keep in touch with them.

The old wood benches we used in our sanctuary for the past several years have now been replaced with new chairs. We see this as a welcome addition to the church—very conducive for worship!



Members and Visitors

This past January we also lost a member of our mission to California. Mike O'Neill has been a member of our Fellowship since its beginning. He was 19 years old when he began here. Mike worked in finances first at the University of Pittsburgh and then at Carnegie/Mellon University. His on-going education and his knowledge in his field led him to accept a position at the University of LA in California. His presence and labor in our midst will be greatly missed!

We continue to have visitors attend our worship services. Last week a man in his early 60s visited. He and his wife were born and raised in Sioux Center, IA, members of the Christian Reformed Church. But they moved to St Louis and lived there for years. Not so long ago they moved to the Pittsburgh area. He was truly happy to discover a Reformed church in the area! We hope to see more of him in the future. We also had an elderly couple attend from the Assembly of God church. Through radio (and hearing our broadcasts) they have become convinced of the sovereignty of God in salvation. They expressed interest in returning. We now wait and see. We have long learned that most people who visit us do not return.

But that is not always true! We have members who joined with us not so long ago (if a year is not long ago). These members are young in the faith and yet very interested in applying themselves to learning the truth of God's Word. They have become involved in the work that we do in planning activities and conferences; they attend Bible study classes; and, most importantly, they

more and more see the need to attend the worship of the church. It is the preaching that without a doubt attracts new members. There are very few churches that actually teach anymore. Most churches place so much emphasis in their worship on feelings and emotions, as if this is what constitutes true Christianity. This, they claim, is *heart* worship.

But people tire of this rather quickly. They either become disillusioned with the church and quit going or they continue to attend these churches because, for lack of knowledge, they do not know that Christianity can be any different. Our ads on WORD radio inform listeners that our Fellowship presents something different: instruction in the Word of God. This is what attracts visitors. The radio, as I have so often said in my newsletters, continues to be an important means of outreach. One member of our Fellowship remarked that there are lots of people who are totally frustrated with the emptiness found in so many churches. If only they knew we existed! The hard question is: how do we make them know? How can we inform them that we are here? We are trying to use every proper means at our disposal!

Permit me to pontificate a little! I mentioned that in modern context the whole idea of the heart in churches today is equated with emotions and feelings. The churches of today as well as our society in general devalue knowledge. Knowledge is cold, narrow, and judgmental. As opposed to knowledge, it is said, one must let his heart do the directing. This has led to the relativism we find in the churches as well as in society at large. Let your feelings direct you—not knowledge! We must be careful as churches not to use the term “heart” in that way. The heart is the spiritual seat of the soul. It is where the Spirit takes up His abode. The heart, therefore, is not directed by feeling. It is guided by the work of the Spirit through knowledge of the objective standard of God's Word. I have found that when working in the context of the modern church world, I must be very careful to define this term (among others). It can so easily be misunderstood otherwise. When it is, then in the mind of the person who is searching we give nothing different than the shallow “feel-good” gospel that is offered in so many churches.

Thanks for letting me get that “off of my chest!”

Our work continues. It is slow, but slow and methodical go hand in hand. May God give us patience to continue our labor in building the church to the glory of His name.