

# missions

OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHURCHES

Volume 1, Issue 3

## THE PROTESTANT REFORMED FELLOWSHIP OF PITTSBURGH | Rev. W. Bruinsma

**G**od is richly blessing us as a Fellowship in Pittsburgh. This blessing is evident, however, not in the mere addition of members to our Fellowship. We well know that, in many instances today, the sudden and massive addition of members to a church can be an indication of compromise and/or an introduction of some strange and innovative element of worship aimed at attracting those who have itchy ears.

Our growth as a Fellowship has been small but steady. What we mean when we say God is blessing us as a Fellowship is our growth in the knowledge of God's Word and faith. This is not to say that we are without struggles in this regard. (What church is without such struggles?) But we are blessed with the preaching, with the study of God's Word, and the opportunity to share what we believe with others. This makes for vibrant life within our Fellowship. That God adds slowly to our numbers is evidence of this life.

At the same time, we understand the interest that others may have in our membership. There have been several families and an individual that have been with the Fellowship since its early years when in 1996 Rev. Tom Miersma visited Pittsburgh to investigate a potential mission work here. These families still with us today are Ron and Sylvia Bauman, the oldest members of our Fellowship, Keith (son of Ron and Sylvia) and Margaret (Peggy) Bauman with their two sons, Jason and Anthony, and Kelli Gurevich (daughter of Keith and Peggy) together with her four sons: Ethan, Nathan,

Aaron, and Noah. These represent four generations of believers. With these early members Mike O'Neill a friend of the Bauman family joined at the age of 19. He is still with the Fellowship today playing an active role on the Steering Committee.

A second "wave" of saints became a part of the Fellowship under the labors of Rev. Mahtani. These members include Mr. Joseph Petron, a Latin and music teacher from Trinity Christian School, Brian and Carla Suber with their seven children: Perez, Jahmai, Terrence, Rebekah, Juanita, Audrey, and Azariah, and Ben Mahtani who has taken up labors in a business firm in the city of Pittsburgh.

Soon after my own arrival there were a couple of more families added to the Fellowship. My daughter Megan married Peter Cnossen and they became members. God has since blessed them with their daughter Nelle. Chad Skolny then joined and

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Steering Committee of the Pittsburgh Fellowship





Members of the Pittsburgh Fellowship

since has married Kim, and together they too have been blessed with a daughter, Abigail. More recently Samuel Colon, a Massachusetts man and Dave and Bev Reitsma with their daughters Anna and Katheryn have joined themselves together with us.

For over a year now our most recent members have also been laboring in the Fellowship. These include Mike Murrell, a young man from the nearby borough of Wilksburg, John Fennell with his girlfriend Julie Hernley, and

Chuck Wiese, a Reformed man from Irwin. Neither can we overlook a young woman that has been a part of the Fellowship for four years while attending Grove City College, Larissa Van Putten from Hudsonville PRC. Recently, Larissa found a job in Pittsburgh as an accountant. She is now in the process of having her membership papers sent to Southwest church with a view to becoming a member in the mission here in Pittsburgh. We have also seen Peter Mahtani in church a number of

times. He has just started his studies in Grove City College.

These forty saints together with our visitors fill a good number of pews in our church sanctuary. Their voices join together in song that fills the church with praises. We are thankful for one another and for the labors expended on our behalf by our calling church Southwest PRC and the Domestic Mission Committee. May it please God to continue to gather His church here.

## THE WORK OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD OUTREACH COMMITTEE | Mike O'Neill

**T**he Neighborhood Outreach Committee (NOC) was established in March of 2008.

The committee's current members are: Michael O'Neill (chairman), Peter Cnossen (secretary), Megan Cnossen, Peggy Bauman, Mary Bruinsma, Dave & Bev Reitsma, Larissa Van Putten, Lydia Bruinsma, John Fennell, Julie Hernley, and Rev. Bruinsma (advisor).

The committee is in charge of various activities that go on at the Protestant Reformed Fellowship in Pittsburgh, with the first of these being hospitality. All of the members of this committee are on a rotating schedule to be church greeters for a week. The greeters ensure that every visitor signs our guest book so that we can place them on our mailing list to keep them informed of our upcoming events. The committee

also developed a Welcome Packet for all new visitors. The Welcome Packet contains general information regarding our church service times, the various catechism and Bible study classes we offer, as well as a brief outline of our major beliefs.

The NOC is also responsible for our church's quarterly mailers that are sent to all of the contacts on our mailing list. Our mailing list consists



of both contacts from the local Pittsburgh area as well a broader list of contacts throughout the Eastern United States. The mailers consist of a letter from Rev. Bruinsma as well as a flyer of upcoming events and activities. In addition, we have periodically sent out brochures and pamphlets regarding our doctrines as well as those related to issues of practical living.

All of the lectures, seminars and events held at the Fellowship are organized by the NOC. These include our Annual Open House and Reformation Lecture. In the recent past, the committee organized two seminars: one on marriage and another on the family that was held in Northeastern Ohio.

In the future, the committee plans to organize a Young Adults Retreat. The committee is responsible for locally advertising these events in the form of road signs announcing the events, distributing flyers in other local area churches as well as local businesses in the area.

The committee is continually exploring local community events



The Neighborhood Outreach Committee of the Pittsburgh Fellowship

to find if we can participate in them. Often times these local fairs and activities will allow churches to set up a table to display their literature and other materials. It is our hope in the future, especially during the summer months, to become more active in these types of outreach activities.

Finally, the NOC is also exploring the possibility of developing a

community Bible study. The study would be organized by exploring the specific subjects that would be of major interest to local individuals and families in the area.

We are thankful that we can be busy in this work of the Lord and pray that God will bless these labors unto the gathering of His church

## THE WORK OF THE MEDIA COMMITTEE | Keith Bauman

### Mission Statement of the Media Committee

The mission of the media committee is to use the tools and technology that the Lord has made available to this era as a means to further propagate His Word throughout the region where He has placed us. Our churches acknowledge the imperative of being active participants in the Great Commission that Christ has ordained for His Church. For that reason, we use the direct parallel between the tools that were available to the early church (the state of the art technology of the time: pen/quill, ink and parchment), and the electronic tools which He has made available to us. We use the means God has given us to labor in the privileged role He allows us to participate in.

The Media committee is broken down into 4 sub committees:

#### Professional recording/Producing CDs and DVDs, distribution and proper audio/video equipment.

The preaching of the Word is the Chief means of grace, therefore that Word is at the forefront of our work. As in most of our churches, we record the audio (CD) and video (DVD) versions of the sermons preached here.

Although these recordings are not an alternative for the corporate worship of the Lord, they are an excellent means to listen to sermons missed by members, as well as an effective means to broadcast those sermons around the region, and other areas in the world.

#### Internet construction and constant updating.

Our webpage is another tool that is used in the gathering of the church in this area. Many visitors (as well as new members to the mission), began their journey to our door via our webpage. Our page is a great way to see the inside of our Fellowship. It is also a portal for further investigation into our denomination. The site takes constant vigilance to keep it fresh. Updates and ideas for submittal are given by all the members of the committee.

#### Radio/Cable/Newspaper, local periodical advertising.

Other members of our Fellowship have become so by means of the radio. God has used this vehicle mightily in the gathering together of those who are called by His name,



here at the Pittsburgh Fellowship.

We have a radio presence via the "Reformed Witness Hour" and a local program called "Bibleburgh". Pastor Bruinsma has been featured on both shows many times. We also air one minute advertisements which have been instrumental in attracting many to our worship services.

In the future, we hope to air entire sermons during late night radio time.

### Pamphlet

Last, but by no means least, is the pamphlet ministry. It is here that the thoughtful can be fed by, and the wavering convinced of the veracity of our beloved doctrines. There



The Media Committee of the Pittsburgh Fellowship

are six pamphlet racks throughout the church building. Visitors are encouraged to take whatever pamphlets they may wish to read. Members are also encouraged

to keep abreast of the latest pamphlets in order to be effective witnesses in the community. We pray always, that God will bless the work of your hands.

## CRITERIA FOR ORGANIZING A MISSION GROUP INTO AN INSTITUTED CHURCH | By Rev. W. Bruinsma

**T**he calling of the church of Jesus Christ in her mission work is outlined in the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, 20. According to this mandate the church is called to preach the gospel in order to make disciples of all nations teaching them to observe all things Christ has commanded His church. When we examine this mandate more closely we find that the task of preaching the gospel on the mission field must accomplish more than merely bringing people to repentance and faith. The preaching must shape and mold people into disciples of Christ. This requires that the churches through the missionary spend much time and effort training the members of the mission.

This training requires not only thorough instruction in the Word of God, but a careful nurturing of the saints. Just as little children are over time nurtured by their parents in order to shape and mold them as members of the church, so also such nurturing must be done in mission work. The people who will, the Lord willing, be organized into a church must be Reformed in thought, but also in deed. Time must be given to those who learn of the Reformed faith to understand how these truths also

relate practically to godly living in the family, in the church, and in their place in this world.

The difficulty arises: how much time is needed for this to take place before organizing the group of believers into an instituted church? Dr. Peter Y. De Young in his book, *Obedying the Great Commission*, writes, "Missions by its very nature must remain mobile. On the one hand, it [the church] enables the missionary to settle down for a season and expects him not only to bring some conversion but also to lay the foundations for an established church. Yet, it recognizes the peril of staying too long may be as great as that of engaging in fly-by-night preaching which leaves no permanent results. Because of the differences in situation, we should not expect to be finished as soon as Paul. Time must be taken to demonstrate both by words and in a measure by works that the gospel of Christ transforms all of life." This means, of course, that if a missionary leaves the work of the mission too soon it will not have a solid, Reformed structure to remain firm and prosperous in the future. On the other hand, if the missionary stays too long the mission will become too dependent on him and the churches

that support the work. How long must a missionary continue his labors on a mission field?

In the past we as churches have judged the success of a mission work on the basis of organization. If we have succeeded in organizing a mission group into an instituted church: success! But statistics reveal that organizing churches out of mission fields in our churches has not produced such great results. From the perspective of home missions alone (I will leave a study of foreign missions up to the reader) in the last forty years five mission groups have been organized into churches. (I am deliberately excluding the newly organized churches in Sioux Falls and Spokane.) Out of these five churches organized from our "recent" mission labors only two remain today - and one of these is in Northern Ireland.

Why is this true? There are, in my mind, a number of reasons. But one all important reason is that we have failed to establish a certain set of criterion by which we are able to judge whether a mission work is ready to be organized. In future articles I would like address these criteria. To be continued . . .