

THE TRUMPET

“The great trumpet will be blown, they will come, who are about to perish” (Isaiah 27:13, NKJ).



SUMMER 2006

CLASSIS MICHIGAN MISSIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

Rev. Mark Vander Hart spoke at the Spring Rally about Christians for Armenia. Rev. Vander Hart is on the board of that organization.

The committee submitted its report to Classis on missions support by the churches of Classis Michigan. It showed that the churches of Classis supported 9 United Reformed missionaries, a number of URC church plants, youth and other volunteer group work projects, and other URC benevolent activities with gifts and offerings.

Classis approved an overture that would permit Joint Venture Committees to report directly to Classis provided a copy of the report be sent to the clerk in time to be included with the Classis agenda.

The Committee is planning the Fall Missions Rally for Thursday, September 21, 7:30 PM at the Bethel United Reformed Church in Jenison. The program will consist of reports from a number of missions and work projects that youth groups and other volunteers have been involved in this past year. Included will be an illustrated report by 4 URC young ladies who spent 5 weeks assisting Rev. Poelman in India this summer.

Missions Committee



The Committee received several inquiries asking if the Committee was aware of work teams that had room for volunteers from other churches. The Committee has asked one of its members to investigate the possibility of providing information of work and evangelism projects looking for volunteers, and a list of groups going on such projects through a website(s) connected with our federation.

DOMINICAN TRAVEL LOG JUNE 21-28, 2006 by Dr. Neal Hegeman

Some people from supporting churches ask, just exactly, what do you do? The following travel log of a recent trip to the Dominican Republic will give you a glimpse.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 21

Sandy took me to the airport at 5:00 am. The two hour flight to Santo Domingo went well; I conversed with Rueben Tapia, an agnostic Dominican engineer and encouraged him to believe in God's Son in order to overcome his skepticism.

The evening class had 14 new Master of Theological Studies' (MTS) students. Dr. José Dunker, a Dominican psychologist and reformed thinker has organized this and two more groups. I taught about the Doctrine of Man course for 4 hours using written materials developed by MINTS (Miami International Seminary). The main theme for the evening was that man must be defined in terms of his relationship to Jesus Christ. Then I stayed overnight at Dr. Dunker's place.

THURSDAY, JUNE 22

I was up at 6:00 a.m. and worked in a cyber café (shop with an internet) for the morning and part of the afternoon. Corresponded with Eric Pennings and Bill Green in Costa Rica where Eric is opening new centers. I developed class notes and records, then wrote an article about the apostate mainline Protestant church influences in the Caribbean and Latin America.

I finished the class orientation (4 hours) and gave instruction to the class facilitator on how to finish with follow up classes, homework, reading assignments, essay and final exam. The essay and final exam will be sent to me by internet. The students will be exposed to writings by L. Berkhof, J. Calvin and G. Machen. I stayed overnight at Dr. Dunker's place again and shared interesting cultural and theological ideas.

FRIDAY, JUNE 23

I worked on a borrowed computer and sent the students their homework and reading assignments. I communicated with the class facilitator by internet.

Felix Caraballo, the coordinator for another MINTS group picks me up and we make photocopies and go over administrative issues. Another class of 21 students takes the course on Doctrine of Man. They are at the early stages of the Bachelor level and the Reformed faith is new to most of them. I slept overnight at Felix and Ruth's place. It's very hot! No air conditioning.

SATURDAY, JUNE 24

We held five hours of class in morning and afternoon. We went overtime at the student's request as they wanted to know my position on the issues of who can be church leaders and the role of women in the church. My position is that faithful and called male believers need to be church pastors and elders. Since many students in the class are Christians from a variety of church backgrounds, the teacher has to be able to defend the Biblical truths from a Biblical and Reformed perspective.

We celebrated our first Santo Domingo MINTS graduation. I preached the sermon at the graduation. I have been visiting these students two times a year for five years. Other professors, mostly missionaries, have also taught (Rev. John Medendorp, Rev. Steve Brauning, Rev. Steve de Vries, Rev. Brigido Cabrera, Rev. Daniel Perez and Rev. Alfredo Ossers). The four MTS graduates are Felix Caraballo (journalist); Ramiro Riviera (pastor), Domingo Mendez (pastor) and Jovanni Arias (pastor). Jovanni has started a new church based on Reformed doctrine. The graduation is one of the eight graduations for 2006 (Miami, Toronto, Santo Domingo, Cuba, Colombia (3) St. Vincent) in which about 70 graduates will receive either their Bachelor of Theological Studies, Master of Theological Studies, Master of Divinity or Doctor of Ministry degree.

Julio Vilchez, a Christian Reformed minister picked me up and we traveled two hours to Sabana Grande de Boya, where our family lived and worked for 12 years. When we left in 1993, Julio took over my pastoral position in the church as well as Sandy's position as a Christian school director! We talked well into the night about church and school issues. Julio is a leading pastor trainer in this zone and has worked hard to develop Christian schools in the Dominican Republic, including two which serve over 700 students in this city of about 12,000 souls.

SUNDAY, JUNE 25

I borrowed Julio's pickup and went with a local pastor to a church group a little over an hour away. The roads were very bumpy. We picked up some church members who are walking. Every fourth week of the month, the regional churches send delegates to visit in one central place. Seven of the 14 regional CRC church groups are represented. A pastor explains the Sunday school lesson on I Timothy 2:1-5. I preached on Ephesians 4:12, the perfecting of the saints. I used the opportunities after church to correct some distractions during the service (excessive shaking by some members when they sing and pray).

Coming home at 3:00 p.m., I took the traditional Sunday siesta for an hour or so before preaching in Sabana Grande de Boya and traveling back to the capital city. Julio and I stayed overnight at the national center of the CRC of the Dominican Republic. I left some diaconal funds with Julio for widows and a pastor's wife medical needs.

MONDAY, JUNE 26

Upon rising I met a local CRC pastor. He became pastor after we left the island in 1993 but he recalls my name via a denominational church history book I wrote. I said we had revised it and added 5 more years of study (www.mints.edu/English, "Ethnic Disfranchisement").

A Christian brother took me to the bus station at about 8:00 am. I bought a ticket for noon and I went over to a cyber café and responded to my emails. There are emails from a variety of MINTS coordinators and study centers through the hemisphere. Pastor Julio Benitez, from Columbia, reports on teaching for four groups in Venezuela. A professor in Cuba reported on the 38 Cuban student's master level theses that have been corrected.

It's a two hour bus ride to Santiago. In Santiago I taught the Doctrine of Man course to a group of 8 Christian leaders for about 4 hours. Most are at the master's level. Here I encountered a strong emphasis of Methodist perfectionism. I taught the position of progressive sanctification and growing in grace. I painstakingly showed how sinful believers are. I ended the discussion by asking if anyone in the group considered themselves perfectly holy. By that time there were no responders. We also spoke about the sacredness of human life, the need for adults (as well as children) to know their sin and Savior. Biblical creationism is presented as a response to evolutionism and a variety of other issues related to the doctrine of man. I left them with plenty of reading materials. I slept in the church's guest house for visitors.

TUESDAY, JUNE 27

Early in the morning I worked on improving the teaching manual taking into consideration some of the concerns of the students. A press conference was being held by our group leader, in which the city of Santiago is called to repentance in the light of the incredible amount of corruption. During the last weeks, 8 members of the church have been assaulted, including two members of our study group.

I met with the group coordinator in the afternoon in order to exchange documents to correct and make sure the class records are in order. The students met for several hours to receive materials and instructions for follow up classes. Their class readings were fully printed out and deadlines for reading, homework and essay writing are established. The completed tasks will later be sent via internet to me. Back to the bus stop, I return to Santo Domingo, where Felix picked me up and I stayed the night.

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 28

Felix took me to the airport at 5:00 am. It's a good thing I am early since my flight was delayed 3 hours and I could still make the earlier 6:30 a.m. plane. The two hour flight to Miami went well; it also took about 2 hours to take the bus home.

The following day I handed in my expense reports, worked on academic reports and sent some follow up emails. I also affirmed the schedule for my next trip, which is out west.

In Him,

Neal Hegeman

For Canadian supporters: Covenant Reformed Church, 259 Albion Rd., Rexdale, ONT. Canada, M9W3P1

For USA supporters: Trinity Reformed Church, 2220 Hancock Bridge Parkway, Cape Coral, FL, USA, 33990

TORONTO MISSIONS

We as the Toronto Mission Committee are often humbled by how God uses circumstances and situations for His glory. Many times we have wondered: Is this the field our missionary should be in? Or, would we see more fruit elsewhere? But God is faithful and time after time He reminds us He is in control. Only God can change hearts and we are excellent examples of His glorious work.

Over the last year we have seen how God has blessed the work in Toronto. Rev. Zekveld, in God's providence, has met Peter Nathaniel, and together they work to further God's Kingdom. The Hope Centre is now becoming too small to fit all the South Asians who attend the Sunday worship services. Lives have been changed, and we see the hunger to know more about this faith that does not rely on works. The South Asians freely express thankfulness for the gospel - yet what about us as Reformed believers? - do we still have that hunger and desire to know more about our Heavenly Father?

We want to encourage fellow churches to become involved in local mission work. God works to strengthen our desire to see the lost come to saving faith when we become involved personally. May God bless the efforts of all those who have devoted their lives for the mission field, whether overseas, or right in our own back yard.

by Bill Sipkens, Secretary, Toronto Mission Committee on behalf of the Covenant Christian Church (URC)
Wyoming, Ontario

ARE WE WILLING TO MAKE THE SACRIFICE?

Christian missions is no longer only overseas. It's here, in our own backyard. The North American church steadily continues in its decline. False religions, particularly from among those of the

ancient civilizations of the East, such as Buddhism, Hinduism (and its daughter Sikhism) and Islam continue to infiltrate our lands.

A Wake-Up Call On the one hand, a church which emphasizes "reaching out" to the unconverted at the cost of maintaining the divine antithesis, is a church that eventually will cease to exist. On the other hand, a church that maintains the divine antithesis and does not reach out also may eventually die out. It is no longer being faithful. It may even be questioned whether or not it is truly maintaining the divine antithesis! Why? Because a truly antithetical church will seek to reclaim the lands for Christ through the active preaching of the gospel for the glory of her God! We think of ancient Israel, the people of God, and her conquests in the land of Canaan!

While we confess the indestructibility of Christ's church (Lord's Day 21), it is possible for the church to be wiped out in certain locales and lands due to her unfaithfulness. To deny this is to bury our heads in the sand. Think of the seven churches from the Book of Revelation 2-3! Where are those churches today? Their lamp stands were removed. Islam eventually conquered!

So as North American churches we have a huge responsibility in our own lands! At times I hear, "Well, there is not enough evidence to send a missionary to a certain field. There is no concrete evidence that there is a desire to hear God's Word. So we better wait.." But this is a purely Arminian statement. Are we expecting them to come to us? This is not going to happen! Men are not inclined to seek after God. At least according to Scripture, "As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one. There is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God" (Romans 3:10-11). The call is to return to a Scriptural view of missions. Through us, Christ takes the initiative. We must go out to them and preach the gospel. That's how the desire for the true and living God is awakened in the first place! How else will it happen? And even if a desire is not awakened and they reject the claims of Christ, this too is for the glory of God! This is just as important. The Name of our God is then publicly vindicated! Preaching Christ among them - this is the obedient, faithful thing to do. And we do it for His glory.

True, Islam is going to fall as are all other false religions. But they are only going to fall through the active preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Until then, they will be a thorn to our side and their gods will be a snare to us (cf. Judges 2:4)! Are we willing to make the sacrifice, spend and be spent for their souls? The kind of sacrifice required is: 1) patience, and, 2) dying to ourselves.

1. The Need for Patience and More Patience Sometimes, we seem to have so little of it. Or at least our tendency is not to exercise this fruit of the Holy Spirit as we should in Christian missions. We can talk about a church building expansion and say we are building the church. It's visible and it's constructed within a few short months. We see the results and it looks good! But the real building of the church via preaching the gospel among the unconverted, is often painful, even brutal, involving long seasons of prayer and waiting. The results are not

NEW HORIZON NEWS

Thank God for the opportunity to write to our dear Christian brothers and sisters in URC and other churches.

1. We have made our most significant change in recent times at New Horizon at the beginning of June. We now have moved to two services. The first begins at 1:00 PM, and the second at 2:30 PM. The ESL Bible study follows at 3:45 – 5:15 PM. It makes for quite a busy day, but it is well worth it. We feel that those who are Christians need to have more solid instruction in the Scriptures and our one service per week was now not sufficient. We trust that as the Christians are more and better equipped they will be able to take over some of the present work that I am still doing. We still continue to have ESL Bible studies on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. A regular church Bible study is on Wednesday. Ryan and Nathan are involved in a Bible study at Ryan's home each Thursday.

2. Attendance, in general, has been up in our worship services. More visitors are coming as well as students from the Bible studies. This is a good way of grooming then into the method and duty of worship.

3. We continue to thank the Lord for the small, but steady growth we are seeing at New Horizon. We are also seeing potential elders and deacons from among us. A few weeks ago we were privileged to see Jessica, a mainland Chinese immigrant, making profession of faith and being baptized into the Lord's church. Jessica had studied the Bible with us for more than a year, and had accepted many things in the Bible. But it was only few months ago she came to realization how sinful she was. What an amazing work of the Lord! She now passionately wants to see her husband and teenage daughter come to faith. Her daughter refused to come to her mother's baptism. Jessica is now a help with those who come to the Bible studies.

4. Amy and Chris (wife/husband), who were baptized sometime last year, are also proving to be very useful in the ESL classes. They are working to develop relationships with some of their fellow Chinese to lead them to Christ. Alex, a Chinese convert, helps in translations in the Tuesday Bible study. Max, a Chinese convert, is beginning to help in Catechism classes with new converts.

5. We also have a couple adults who are working through the Catechism. Pray that they will understand what the Bible teaches and that they will then be moved to join his church. There is another lady, Christine, who wants to be baptized but is concerned about our method of baptism. She has seen people baptized by immersion and is struggling with that.

6. We have an intern from the Orthodox Christian Reformed Church (OCRC) (through the Cambridge and Bowmanville churches), a student in his third year of seminary. His name is Curt VanDijken. He will be leading some ESL Bible studies on Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoons and doing some

immediately observable. Yet somehow this does not really "fit" the grandiose, slick, "church growthy", polished North American image of missions and missionaries! "Would we not be wasting our time", some ask, "especially among those from the East who are so enslaved to their ancestral religions"?

Among these people who are coming to our land by the droves, the real scenario is one of sowing, not reaping, not harvesting. In many cases, it's not even sowing. It is simply the labor of preparing the soil. The mucky, rocky soil must be made ready for sowing. It's much easier to go to a field where the soil is prepared, the seed sown and only the harvest needs to be taken off. But who is willing to go where the soil is not yet fit for the seed?

Are we willing to take the courageous step? With our Reformed understanding of Scripture, we should be the first ones! But it will require more than our energy, time, money and gas. It will require the sacrifice of ourselves. And that's difficult. It is easy to give money to a missionary, but when the mission field comes so close to home, the tendency is to withdraw and not to get involved personally. To get involved means commitment and commitment means sacrifice and perhaps for many years! It means personal cost, moving out of our comfort zone, even making radical changes in our lifestyle and risk!

Perhaps we feel too comfortable with our wealth and our affluent lifestyle to make that kind of sacrifice? We don't want that disturbed. But if this is the case, this will be our downfall! The kingdom is all about putting our hand to the plough and not looking back .

2. We Need to Die To Ourselves. Christian missions is not about glossy reports, or nickels and noses. It's not a "numbers game." It's not about "me" or "my image" and the fanfare surrounding my work. It's about dying to ourselves so that others may live through the active preaching of the Gospel! It is about finding joy in our God who is being glorified as Christ is lifted up among the peoples! Yes, there is that fleshly side in us that wants to live to ourselves. It's easy to want to be involved in other types of Christian missionary work rather than bringing the gospel to the unconverted. This is more appealing to our flesh. There is more to hear and see! But who will go and bring the glad tidings to the unconverted?

This is not to say that Christian missions is not multi-faceted, but what is often overlooked is the real heart of missions: bringing the Gospel to the unconverted. Let us consider the vast fields in our own backyards where the soil needs to be prepared in order for the seed to be sown. This work may often go unnoticed. It's humbling. It's "dirty" work. As churches, Christ places His call upon us to go to these specific fields, to plan and strategize and to offer our lives for the sake of the gospel and for God's glory!

We must die to ourselves so that Christ's church may live and expand through the active preaching of the gospel. May the Lord have mercy on us as the realms of pagan darkness continue to descend upon our land.

by Rev. Tony Zekveld

preaching on Sundays. Among the reasons we are thankful is that it would allow me to get some time off.

7. We have been working for some time now to develop relationships with members and pastors of other Reformed churches. We are thankful for pastors being willing to come and preach for us and for doing pulpit swaps. This is also causing others to see us as a congregation and we also are able to see that we are moving from a missions group to a congregation.

8. We are also investigating the purchasing of the building in which we are meeting – a building owned by the Associate Presbyterian Church. They are a small group of mostly older people who are finding it difficult to manage. They plan to move and buy some place outside of the city. Please pray that we will have wisdom in doing what is best, and that if it is the Lord's will, that he will provide the finances to do so. Property is extremely expensive in Toronto and it seems to be a great opportunity to buy.

9. We are also in the process of expanding our lending resources. Many of our books, tapes, and DVD's deal with things such as how to refute evolution, apologetics, systematic theology, and more recently, resources that helps to answer the DaVinci Code assertions. Some of our people were also involved in handing out pamphlets outside of theaters from people who went to watch the movie. You can contact Ryan Kidd if you want to learn more about this.

10. We were pleased to have had a day of prayer and fasting a couple of months ago. It was a privilege to see God's working in the lives of his people and how they are maturing. Of course there are a few members who are spiritually not doing so well.

11. And for a few personal notes on some of our members; Lisa Nathan Kidd are expecting their first in August. Amy got a permanent job. Ally, a young gal, is working her way out of Pentecostalism to Reformed thinking. Ken and Max are continuing to pray for their wives salvation. Jason's cancer is officially gone.

12. You are also welcome to visit – or even visit our website at <http://www.newhorizonchurch.ca/html/index.html>.

13. A million thanks for those who are personally financially and otherwise supporting the work at New Horizon. Thanks a lot to those who write us and send cards and e-mails. I know you will forgive me for not writing back to you. It is not from being lazy. We love your letters and your cards (and those bulletins as well). We know you are praying for us.

Shabeeda sends her love greetings.
Yours and the Lord's servant in Toronto,
Mitchell Persaud

(New Horizon URC mission is a daughter congregation of Cornerstone URC, London, ON4 Littleborough Crt, Scarborough, ON M1C 4S6. Telephone: 416-335-0958, 647-401-5652. E-mail: mapersaud@yahoo.com.)

HISPANIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

A Ministry of Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto
In Partnership with Faith United Reformed Church
of West Olive, Michigan

Dear Hispanic Christian Ministry Supporters:

URCNA Missionary Colleagues. One of the blessings of my ministry is the privilege of serving in coordination with three other URCNA missionaries. Rev. Neal Hegeman serves as the Dean of Miami International Seminary for which I serve as the Associate Dean for Central America. Rev. Ernest Langendoen serves as a missionary in Honduras and has been teaching some of the courses in one of the MINTS Study Centers there. Rev. Bill Green lives in Costa Rica, serving as the Executive Secretary for the Latin American Fraternity of Reformed Churches (the Latin American branch of World Reformed Fellowship). In a recent note to me he wrote, "You are fulfilling a much needed function for MINTS, as the program has expanded so much. We are in need of a coordinator like you to help keep things moving forward!"

This past week I returned from my third ministry trip of this year. On the first week of my trip I visited **Costa Rica**. There, in addition to teaching a course on *Philemon* at the existing MINTS Study Centre, I was kept busy with five conference and/or speaking engagements. MINTS is multiplying in Costa Rica! The invitations I received to present the ministry goals of Miami International Seminary (MINTS) resulted in four different churches committing themselves to starting a new MINTS Study Centre. Two others are giving it further consideration. During my visit there my colleague, Rev. Bill Green, had a motorcycle accident. I witnessed a testimony of God's divine protection and the spiritual maturity with which Rev. Green's family and his ministry team responded to the incident. Rev. Green is recovering well after two weeks of recuperation time.

In Honduras I taught a course on *Liturgy and Worship* at two of the existing Study Centers. Upon formal review of these Study Centers, I am thankful that both centers are experiencing growth, in spite of some challenges. I also had the privilege of giving a conference as part of the General Assembly of a newly emerging federation of churches called *Biblical Church of the Reformation*. Their goals and objectives are consistent with their interest in forming a Confessional and Reformed ministry. At their invitation, I was able to provide some advice and direction in their humble beginnings. After meeting with their leaders, they decided to use MINTS for the training of their pastors and leaders. I started them off immediately with a course on *Hermeneutics*.

Jaime Morales of Costa Rica recently graduated with a DMin degree from MINTS. He serves as a national professor for MINTS in Costa Rica and is filling commitments to teach for MINTS in our Study Centres in other parts of Central America. Because of his theological preparation and aptitude for computer technology MINTS has invited him to develop a module of studies for MINTS via the Internet. This will compliment the Distance Education model of MINTS that we currently use. Please pray that the Lord will continue to use this young man and his new wife in the preparation of leaders around the world through the Internet courses offered.

Benjamin Labrador was a student of MINTS in Columbia and directed one of its Study Centers for some time. He has moved to Costa Rica and is pastoring a church in which he is in the process of opening up a new Study Centre as well. Thank the Lord with us for the expansion of MINTS through students who move from one country to the next.

Edgardo Cantarero, a pastor of the *Biblical Church of the Reformation* in Honduras, visited the offices of MINTS while passing through Miami earlier this year. Rev. Hegeman put his touch with me. I stayed with him and his family during part of my stay in Honduras. He commented, "I wish MINTS was around when we needed this support at the initial stages of forming our association back in 1995".

Financial Update: At our HCM meeting last night, the treasurer noted that we continue to be about one month of budget ahead of schedule in our financial commitments. Please continue to pray for the funding needed.

Rev. Eric Pennings,
Associate Academic Dean for MINTS
Central America Regional Coordinator

Canadian Donations: Hispanic Christian Ministry, c/o Covenant Reformed Church, 265 Albion Road, Toronto, Ontario M9W 3P1

US donations: Hispanic Christian Ministry, c/o Faith United Reformed Church, 8270 120th Ave., West Olive, MI 49460

COSTA RICA JOINT VENTURE COMMITTEE REPORT

The Costa Rica Joint Venture Committee has been in existence for at least three years, and we now have six members on the committee, with representation from four churches in Classis Michigan. The committee has been working with World Reformed Fellowship and Rev. Bill Green, under the direction of Bethany United Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan. Its mandate is to represent and commend the work in Costa Rica to the United Reformed Churches. One of the functions of the committee is to act as a liaison between the missionary and the supporting churches. We discuss the annual budget with Rev. Green, make recommendations to the council, communicate with the supporting churches the needs of the field, promote the Tepeyac Christian School building project, recruit and orientate personnel for work projects, assist in publication and mailing of reports to churches and individual supporters, administrate the offerings and donations, coordinate additional laborers in the field, and provide an accounting of the funds sent. Because we are to be faithful stewards of all that God has given, we seek to provide more efficient use of all the resources, not just financial.

We are thankful for the various gifts and talents God gives to His people. We all need each other as the body of Christ, and not all of us are teachers, but the Lord equips His saints to encourage one another as we provide physical, financial, emotional, and spiritual support to Rev. Green and his family. "Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov. 15:22).

Some of the benefits of the Costa Rica Joint Venture Committee are: (1) guidance and coordination; (2) a closer relationship between Rev. Green and the supporting churches by creating shared responsibilities; and (3) an effective means of fulfilling the principles laid out in the Scriptures and demonstrated by Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15:27: "And when they had come and gathered the church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles."

Elaine Keyzer
Secretary

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