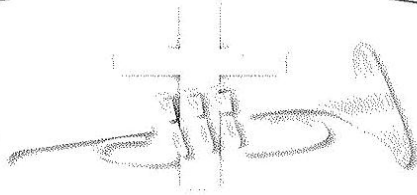


THE TRUMPET



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

COVENANT URC ~ FRESNO, CA

Covenant URC's Newsletter ~ January 2010

Professions of Faith

When individuals start a New Year, people talk about resolutions or *New Year's resolutions*. These resolutions are personal resolves to make the most out of the upcoming year, or to learn from the mistakes of the previous year. Sometimes it is the hope and prayer that the struggles of the previous year are left in that previous year. Covenant URC in Fresno had such a hope for 2010. Covenant URC has been through some trials. At times it has been hard to see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, this year started off great for us as a church. We started the year with two professions of faith. This does not add people from the outside, but at the same time it is encouraging to start the year with people desiring to publicly profess their faith before the congregation of saints, and commit to our particular church. In addition to the two professions of faith, we had a retired couple move to Fresno from Hanford.

They have requested to join our congregation. Lord willing, we will receive them into our membership by the end of January. We hope that this is a sign that our church is turning a corner.

Community Bible Study

In the previous newsletters I mentioned our community Bible study. It was difficult to get this study started. The pastor went around our office complex and tried to start a brown bag Bible study. The point of this study was for community members to get together and discuss the Bible. The pastor only received one phone call, and it was fairly discouraging. The idea was laid to rest as it seemed the Lord closed the door. However, by the providence of God, a study did get started with a member in Fresno desiring to learn more about the reformed faith. Now, a group of five men are meeting consistently at a local Mexican restaurant in town. This particular restaurant has a buffet of really great food, and they have a sectioned off area in the front of the restaurant that makes for an accommodating place to have

the study. In the study we continue to work through the catechism, Lord's Day by Lord's Day. I am happy to say that the Lord has been blessing our discussion and fellowship together. As a result of this study, we have picked up a family that has been faithfully visiting our church since the end of last summer. There is also a single man who attends this study that has expressed interest in fellowshipping with our church after he finishes some obligations at his current Baptist church.

Increased Visitors

I mentioned that our church has had some trials. One of the discouraging things we experienced in the past summer and fall was the lack of visitors coming to check out our church. Well, this year that has been changing. Our sanctuary seats 43 people and if the entire congregation shows up, plus our consistent visitors, we are packed in this sanctuary. This is a nice thing for us to experience. As a result of this growth, we are in the process of searching for a new facility. One individual who knows different people in a variety of churches is trying to help us find a facility that we can share. We are very thankful for this individual's interest and concern for our church. Please pray that the Lord opens doors.

Upcoming Conference

In addition to our worship services and Bible Studies, we are having a mini conference on the five points of Calvinism. Lord willing, this conference will be in May. We are going to have the conference from April 30 through May 2, 2010. Our hope is that we can expose our community to Calvinism, and start some good edifying discussions on this topic.

The name of the conference is, "The Doctrines of Grace." Right now, Rev. Findley, Rev. Lindemulder, and Rev. Cotta (son of an elder in our church) will be speaking. Please pray that the Lord would bless this effort as we try a different way to get our church anchored in the community.

Members Utilizing material

One of the many compliments we get at our church is the amount of material we have on the back table. There are several reasons we do this, but one of the main reasons is so that as our members dialogue with their friends and family, they have material that they can give to them. I am happy to report that I am getting many requests and e-mails from people in our congregation about what they can give their friends about particular topics or how to answer particular questions that their friends have raised. This tells me that our people continue to dialogue with their non-Christian and non-reformed friends and family. Please pray that we see fruits of these efforts, and that these opportunities continue to manifest themselves.

Please remember us:

We want to once again thank the churches for their generosity, but also ask you to keep the following requests in your prayers:

- Please pray that we would continue to see fruits of our efforts of reaching out to the community.
- Pray that the Lord continues to sustain our church.
- Pray that the Lord would bless our efforts in this conference.

• Please pray that the Lord would continue to add to our congregation so that we will be self sufficient.

• Pray for wisdom and encouragement for our pastor and elders as they discern God's will and faithfully lead His church.

Thank you again for your support and remembering us in your prayers.

Contact Information: <http://fresnourc.com>

Pastor Paul Lindemulder

(559) 276-7382 ~ phlinde@gmail.com

January 2010 update on the URC of Sunnyside, WA

While we've only been on this church "journey" together for just under three years, it has honestly been a good three years. Nothing has gone perfectly, there have been some doubts along the way, one family moved away, and we do still struggle financially. Though we organized as a local church in October 2008, at times we still feel like a church plant. When sickness and vacations hit our church at the same time, our pews seem quite empty. Evangelism and outreach are difficult in our area (as they are in many areas). We have advertised on the radio as well as in the paper, and we even have gone door to door inviting people to church - they've brought in only one visitor. We have invited the broader community to a few Reformation Rallies (where a confessional Lutheran pastor and I took turns speaking about the Reformation), to Bible studies, holiday worship services, and to several lectures contrasting Mormonism with historic Christianity. These events
Winter, 2010

were well attended and fruitful in many ways, but they brought no new visitors to our Sunday worship. All of this is to say: evangelism and outreach are one of the biggest struggles we face (and make up a big portion of our prayers!).

Yet despite these struggles, we have also enjoyed a measure of harmony that is greater than we expected. We are a united group; our recent family visits have been a blessing for everyone. There is sincere unity among the members and visitors. We have baptized several infants, as well as a believer in her 80's. We've had a few professions of faith, and we still enjoy visitors several times a month. Spiritual growth is evident - from young to old, we are slowly seeing more and more the depth of our depravity, but also the heights of grace. We have around 16 families on our membership roles, so our numerical growth is not exceptional, but it is happily slow and steady. Our members and visitors frequently come from 45 miles to the West, South, and East. There are very few confessional Reformed / Presbyterian churches in the area, so the few people that are looking for solid worship and clear gospel preaching do note how thankful they are for our solid, deep, and sound worship. As far as church fellowship, we enjoy friendships and community with the URC in Kennewick, WA, the OPC there, (around 50 miles away), and the PCA in Walla-Walla (around 100 miles away).

Our ministry also extends into the local prison, where we lead a Bible study several times a month. Though this prison is one where the inmates are frequently transferred, we have had the privilege of telling unbelievers about Christ and

encouraging struggling believers in their faith. This prison ministry has its ups and downs, but these men are hearing about sin, salvation, and service. We pray God would grant the increase.

We do ask for your prayers - prayers of thanks for the unity we have as well as the spiritual growth God has granted us. We also ask you to pray for our financial situation and difficulties we face in getting the gospel out. If you want more information, visit our website: www.urcofsunnyside.com or email Pastor Shane Lems: pastorlems@gmail.com.

Sioux Falls URC Church Plant

Domestic Missions

By the grace of God we continue to persevere with the URC church plant work in Sioux Falls, SD. We've been blessed with great unity in purpose and vision between Hills URC (the planting church) and the church plant—something essential for a healthy daughter church plant.

It's no surprise that smaller church plants face a strenuous uphill battle, and SFURC has not been different. A year ago, when we evaluated the future of the plant, there was much uncertainty about it. Convinced of the need for a confessionally Reformed church in the largest city in the area, we have labored to bring the Reformation to Sioux Falls.

Now at the beginning of 2010, there is more hope and assurance of God's continued grace in establishing the work, as we see fruit. Although the future of SFURC remains uncertain, we have been encouraged over this past year, and especially in the past few months.

While few in numbers, we've again been seeing visitors who not only attend, but also return. Some find the website (www.sfurc.org) or hear word-of-mouth, while others have met the pastor in a coffee shop or at one of the Bible studies. Still other we met through the Calvin Conference we hosted in the fall, or our community Christmas Sing.

There's no shortage of studies for edifying the saints and introducing ourselves to the community. The ladies of SFURC host a weekly study called "Tea & Titus." A men's study meets to consider the Puritans' views on various biblical topics, attracting several non-SFURC members. We're now in our third term of campus ministry, hosting a weekly study at a university to expose the students to many truths of the Reformation. Rev. Aalsburg recently began another Bible study in a coffee shop where only non-members have attended with appreciation.

Sioux Falls URC's word-centered worship, built around the preaching of the whole counsel of God focusing on Christ Jesus, is our greatest hope for God to establish the church plant. The saints gather weekly to feast upon the Word and savor the Savior, while being prepared and equipped to be a blessing to the underfed, misled, and spiritually dead around us.

God has preserved Hills and Sioux Falls URC through the prayers and encouragement of our sister URCs. The faithful giving from within and from many URCs has enabled us to continue to wield the keys of the kingdom in Sioux Falls. We heartily thank the Lord for the much-needed support we received in 2009. We could not have done it without the generous gifts of sister churches.

Would you please join us in thanking God for his grace in persevering, and ask for His continued blessing on the Hills URC Council & SFURC? Additionally, would you please consider partnering with us financially by taking offerings or placing us on your domestic mission's budget? A hearty and sincere thank you for your prayerful consideration. And please remember to tell all your family and friends in the Sioux Falls area about the church plant.

For Christ and His Church,
Hills URC Council

URC church plant in Hawaii update

The Kauai Reformation Church continues to meet and worship our God on this small island in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Each Lord's Day we have between 30 - 50 people who gather for prayer, singing, spiritual nourishment and to give of their offerings. These include regular attendees and a growing number of visitors from the mainland who have come to enjoy the beauty of God's creation. It has been especially gratifying to hear that some chose to come to Kauai over other islands *because* there is now a reformed work here.

I recently completed preaching a series of sermons through the book of Titus. I chose this book because in it Paul gives instruction to Titus, a church planter on the island of Crete, of how to set things in order in the church. Titus 1:5 says, "For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking..."

Since its inception, KRC has followed the mandate of Article 40 of the URCNA Church Order: "At one of the services each Lord's Day, the minister shall ordinarily preach the Word as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity, with special attention given to the Heidelberg Catechism by treating its Lord's Days in sequence." Before I was called and arrived here as the church planter, Oceanside URC sent many men to Kauai to preach and instructed them to follow this mandate. KRC has now heard sermons on every Lord's Day of the Catechism, every article of the Belgic Confession, and every head of doctrine of the Canons of Dort. I have just recently returned to Lord's Day 1 of the Heidelberg Catechism.

What is interesting to note is that those visitors from the island who are interested in joining us LOVE this catechetical preaching. They are spiritually hungry and are "eating it up." I am presently working with three people who want to join KRC. Praise the Lord!

For the first time as a congregation, we recently had the blessed privilege of witnessing the public professions of faith of two of our young people. This was especially unique because after having taken the profession of faith class, they were interviewed by the Oceanside Consistory over the internet using Skype. At the worship service I preached from Mark 8:34-38 which begins with Jesus' words: "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

Every Friday evening we get together as a congregation for Bible Study. We trade off going to the north shore where we are studying the book of Romans, and on the alternate weeks we go to the south shore and study Philippians. Whole families come and sit together for these studies. Our time together includes prayer, singing and study; then afterward we enjoy good food and fellowship.

I also write for a weekly column in the Garden Island newspaper here on Kauai. It is a column entitled, "Spiritual Leaders Answer" in which a topic is provided and spiritual leaders on the island write a short article on that topic. Though my submissions are often edited and shortened far more than I think they ought, they have been appreciated and are spiritually more substantial and Christ-centered than most others.

Please continue to pray for us here on Kauai. I've always said that the work here is not a sprint but a marathon, and we covet your prayers. In around 1820 the first protestant missionaries came to the Hawaiian Islands. They were "Calvinists" who came from the east coast of the United States. Sadly, over the subsequent years, the true gospel has been muted by Arminianism with the result that today's churches are very weak. But now in 2010, in God's providence, a reformed work is shining the light of the good news on Kauai once again. Please join us in support of this good work. Your support for the spread of the Gospel, whether it is with your finances or prayers, is NEVER a wasted effort.

Rev. Derrick J. Vander Meulen
Church Planter, Kauai Reformation Church
Winter, 2010

HCM Update

Rev. Pennings will be traveling to El Salvador and Honduras from Feb 26 to March 11. In El Salvador he will be meeting with the new MINTS country coordinator who moved there from Toronto last month. He has already started some new Centres which Rev. Pennings will be visiting. He will also be visiting seven existing and potential Centres while in Honduras to teach *Introduction to the Bible*. He'll be on the bus from place to place quite a bit during this trip. Please pray for safety in travels, blessings in his teaching, and for his family at home.

Missionsurc.org

Have you checked the Classis Michigan Missions website?

Classis Michigan's Missions Committee has established a website for the primary purpose of providing information on URC missionaries, short term missions and work project opportunities. The Committee invites our URC missionaries and churches to submit information that would be suitable for posting on the website. Please e-mail your information to the CMMC secretary, donvandyke@tm.net

Everyone, please check MissionsURC.org for missionary postings, information and back issues of The Trumpet.

Trumpet Publisher: Cornerstone URC
Newsletter Staff: Don Van Dyke, Cheryl Doll
Mailing Address: 6442 - 36th Avenue, Hudsonville, Michigan 49426 / Phone: 616/669-2190
E-mail address: office@cornerstoneurc.com