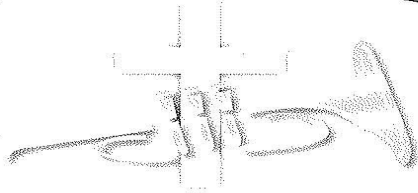


THE TRUMPET



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

Christ Reformed Church Washington, DC

By far the biggest news from Christ Reformed Church in 2010 is my transition into a full-time pastoral role in April. It has been three years since our first Bible study and in that time we have learned a lot about the task of planting a church from scratch in the heart of a big city. Most importantly, we have learned that it would be impossible to grow and prosper a church plant in Washington without a full-time pastor. By the kind providence of God and faithfulness of many supporters, circumstances changed to enable us to do so and begin a new phase of our ministry.

Let me be clear: This is the beginning, not the end, of our story. Planting a city church is hard work, and much work remains as we enter this new phase of our ministry. Our first few years we operated at a "slow burn," allowing us to save money and build a foundation, and only recently have we begun a more aggressive, public effort. We remain in

need of prayer and additional pledges of financial support for the future.

The Challenge of Urban Church Planting

Perhaps the biggest challenge of urban church planting is the transitional nature of life in a modern city, and particularly a world capital like Washington, DC. We lost our two largest families last year—47% of our membership at the time!—to moves resulting from political transition and military reassignment. Even suburban DC churches in more stable neighborhoods report 20%-30% turnover in their membership each year. As a result, it is not enough for a church to establish a foundation; we must constantly be reinforcing it while building upon it.

Our strategy for growth in this difficult environment is to establish a "presence" in the city such that we reach this transitional audience at the front end of the cycle, when they are moving to town. When newcomers ask around about where to go to church—and particularly a Reformed

church—we want to be on the short list of churches they consider visiting. This means having a reputation among Christians and other churches in town for our faithful witness to Christ and the Reformed confessions.

Calvin in the Capital

To this end, we thank God for the success of our Fall 2009 speaker series, "Calvin in the Capital," which increased the visibility of Christ Reformed dramatically. Over the course of six Thursday evenings, we had over five hundred people attend lectures on John Calvin presented by the likes of W. Robert Godfrey, Rob Norris, Darryl Hart, and Ken Jones. Our event was listed in the *Washington Post* and Dr. Lee was profiled in the *Washington Examiner*—no small feat. Over and over again last fall we heard from our guests, "I didn't know you existed before tonight... and I'm so glad you are here doing this work in DC." In addition to a handful of new members we can trace directly to this event, perhaps more important is the increased visits from guests that continues and the recognition I see in people's faces when I tell them I pastor Christ Reformed Church... "Oh, that's the church that hosted the Calvin event."

Our goal is to have our annual "Capital Lectures" speaker series be a centerpiece of educational events that reach the citizens and leaders in our nation's capital. Our October 2010 encore is already in the works, tentatively titled "Preaching in the Capital." Planned speakers include some very provocative voices on Christian worship and culture, including Mark Dever, Gene Veith, T. David Gordon, and Marva Dawn.

We have learned that the speaker series format works much better for us than a weekend conference. People in Washington are extremely busy, and cannot or will not commit an entire weekend to an unknown quantity. DC Christians are big on political action, short on theological reflection. While competition is tough with many offerings from think tanks and other organizations, few other lectures boast solid theological content.

I confess that in the course of planning these events, pouring over budgets and considering how to spend our precious advertising dollars, I am often tempted to focus narrowly on the bottom line: How will this dollar, this speaker, help us bring new people to the church. More than once, Elder Christopher Madsen has had to stop me in the midst of a cost-benefit analysis and remind me of the greatest benefit: The instruction and edification of our members and hundreds of other attendees. He's right. It's a remarkable privilege to represent the URCNA in Washington, and to be able to raise awareness about our wonderful confessional heritage where so few have ever heard of us or the historic Reformed tradition before.

Additional Outreach

Of course, a successful annual event does not make a church. Because we are committed to the priority of public worship and Word and Sacrament as the means of grace, we are not program-driven. We teach our members the centrality of gathered worship, where Christ Himself meets them, feeds them, and strengthens and confirms their faith through the power of the Spirit.

While focusing heavily on the Lord's Day, we also work hard to create places and times where we can meet with newcomers and they can join us in a more casual atmosphere. These include gathering once a month at a local watering hole for "Pub Night" and hosting a local monthly *White Horse Inn Discussion Group*. This summer we are also spending a lot of time with our core group just getting to know each other better, including Sunday lunches, barbecues, and local outings.

We have also been working hard to build a substantial presence online, which increasingly serves as the yellow pages and religion section all in one. In addition to our website, iTunes pod cast, and an electronic sermon distribution email that goes out each week to hundreds of recipients, we have recently established a Facebook page. Facebook provides a convenient way to distribute sermons, provide information about our offerings, and invite people to our events. Just last week, I was having a conversation about our church with a stranger in a local shop, and was shocked to learn that he already knew about Christ Reformed from Facebook.

Prayer Requests

We are encouraged by the progress and success we have found over the last year, but we remain in need of your prayers and support. Please pray for us in the following areas:

- Membership: One of the biggest dividends with the move to full-time ministry is the opportunity to spend more time pastoring our congregation.

Many long-time visitors are interested in membership, so there is much work to do in the area of new members' classes and interviews.

- Fall Speaker Series: Please pray that we may build on our success from last year, increase our exposure, and encourage edifying conversations and reflection on the topic of preaching.
- Attendance: We currently have 25-35 people worshipping with us each Sunday. Please pray that those numbers would increase, particularly as so new arrivals to town might be encouraged that they can plug in and find resources to feel at home.
- Finances: Our giving, both internal and external, has been consistent over the last two years, and our small core group has generously provided for over two-thirds of our own needs. However, annual giving has been \$60,000 short of our "full-time" budget. In the near term we are closing that gap with savings and some generous short-term support. But we need more churches pledging support to the cause of the URCNA in Washington, DC for 2011 and beyond.

Some urban church planters these days think the city is a special place, and that the New Testament models a priority emphasis on ministry to urban centers. I'm not one of them—I value the church in Iowa and Michigan and Idaho as much as the church in the District of Columbia. But I do believe there is a great strategic value for the URCNA to build and maintain a worshipping presence in our nation's capital, a city whose

citizenry represents all fifty states and embassies from all nations of the world, a city which most Americans visit in their lifetimes. Because of our deep rural roots, planting a church in Washington can seem like a big uphill push... it's so expensive, it takes so much time. I believe it's worth it.

Rev. Dr. Brian J. Lee

Pastor@ChristReformedDC.org

www.ChristReformedDC.org

703-861-0460 / Find us on Facebook!

**A Heart for Missions
Gleanings from a URC
Congregational Newsletter
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It has been the privilege of the Council over the past number of years to commend and encourage a brother in his desire to prepare for the ministry of the Word with a particular hope for work as a missionary. During the past four years he has had a number of major changes in his life as the Lord led him to marry, and they have been blessed with a healthy boy. We also rejoice with them and pray that all will continue to go well with their second child. We are also thankful that our brother has fulfilled a major requirement for attending Seminary and training for ordination in the URCNA. He has attended a local Christian University for the last four years and will soon graduate. During the last four months the Council and he have come to an agreement on a number of issues relating to his future preparation for the ministry.

First, we as a council remain convinced at this time that he has a legitimate call and it is our desire to see him finish his

seminary education, declared a candidate for ministry and ordained into the ministry of the gospel. In addition, after much discussion he is convinced that he should continue his studies at Mid-America Seminary. The council is in agreement with this decision.

Second, it is clear that our brother's ministry training is a long term process, which includes his four year undergraduate program of study at the University. His undergraduate degree is a requirement for ministry that the URCNA has set on those desiring to enter into the ministry in his situation. Therefore, we believe that the support of the church for his college year's education is support for ministry training from the Lord's Portion. Our confessions specifically state this and our church order points out the practical reality of this perspective. Therefore, his training for ministry in college is a legitimate cause for offerings and our support.

Third, we are convinced that the substantial debt from school that our brother presently has would be a burden to him, his family and any calling church that may in the future call him to the ministry. We believe that the best solution to this is that he graduate from Seminary debt free. Many seminarians graduate debt free and we are convinced that this is the best option for him and his family. We believe that this is a common responsibility we share with our brother. In order to accomplish this goal it is necessary for him to postpone entering into formal seminary training. The length of this time will depend on the level of support we receive and the amount we are able pay towards eliminating these obligations.

We hope to do this as soon as possible, but we do not anticipate accomplishing this in less than two years.

Fourth, we are committed to begin immediately seeking support for his ministry training related expenses. In addition to what this family is doing, as much as possible, we as a church are committed to the following perspective. Therefore, his training for ministry in college is a legitimate cause for offerings and our support.

- A. We will take special offerings for him to support his training for ministry in the past and the future.
- B. We will set up a special fund for giving within our church where members and others outside our church can pledge a one time gift or a regular gift per month, quarter or year.
- C. We will contact other churches requesting special or budgeted offerings per year until he graduates from Seminary.

Fifth, we believe that it is important for the brother to continue to train for the ministry. The Council and he are convinced that the time spent here in our area until he begins Seminary at Mid-America should help him prepare for ministry. Therefore we have agreed to the following:

- A. He and the council are committed to work together.
- B. He is to be involved in greeting and following up with visitors in the church and making new visitor calls with our Pastor.

- C. He will be in charge of the Jr. High Youth group.
- D. He will be involved in leading Bible studies for the Senior High Youth Group when possible.
- E. He will attend different meetings of the church including meetings with the deacons. In order to get the big picture of the activities and organizational issues of mission work he will be attending the Joint Venture monthly committee meetings and contributing to the work of organizing and advocating the work of missions.
- F. He will meet at least bi-monthly with our Pastor to evaluate his progress and consider other possible activities for ministry development.

We pray that God will use this time in a variety of ways to strengthen him for future ministry and that we will be a blessing to one another during this time of preparation. He and the Council are thankful for the leading of God in this decision and for the mutual respect we have had for each other during this time of decision making. We pray that God will richly bless him and his wife and their growing family as we work together to accomplish the goals we have set before ourselves in these matters. Together we are looking for God to bless this decision and continue to prepare him for the future as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Does your congregation have the same commitment to missions?

Covenant URC, Fresno, CA

"And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!'" (Romans 10:15)

Potential Church Building - One of the struggles that we have in our church is meeting budget. Every year we try to figure out what we can do to operate at a cheaper cost. The Lord has opened the door to a potential facility that will be less rent than the office space that we currently use. This new facility has all the advantages of being able to use it pretty much when we want, and it will be cheaper than our current office space. The facility is located in central Fresno. It is a PCUSA church that is struggling to make ends meet. We are working on an agreement where we will pay rent and help fix things on their building provided that they give us breaks on the rent.

One other reason we like this facility is because we would have an actual sanctuary rather than a space with chairs. A real church building helps to add credibility to a commitment of a church body in a community. Also, we can have a church sign posted all week on a busy road in Fresno, hopefully giving us a better presence in the community. This is a potential opportunity that can turn our church into a self-sufficient work. We ask you to pray that this would work out, and that the Lord would give us wisdom as we pursue this facility. One potential hang up that we have is getting out of our lease at our current office space. Please pray that we find a tenant to take over our lease if we get into the PCUSA church building. **Please remember us:**
Summer, 2010

Calvinism Conference - We had a conference from April 30 to May 2 at our church facility. The title of the conference was *"The Doctrines of Grace: Defined, Defended, and Discussed."* The purpose of the conference was to generate discussion in our community about Calvinism. We are pleased to report that we did have some visitors who came to the conference and heard a presentation of Calvinism. One of the greatest blessings in the hosting of the conference was the advertising deal that we received from a local radio station. Our ad was supposed to be on KMJ at a descent time on Saturday, but the station manager forgot about the double header Bulldog game they were broadcasting. The station manager admitted the oversight and made up the oversight by placing two of our ads on the Inga Barks show for the same low price. She is a conservative commentator with a very large audience in the central valley. We had an ad about the conference and one about our church during the show for about a quarter the normal price. The conference was well attended, and we hope to see fruit of our work.

We ask that you would keep the results of this conference in your prayers. We pray that people would come to our church through this community outreach, and help us build a strong congregation in this area.

Utilizing our Building - One of our congregants graduated high school this year and wanted to have a piano recital to celebrate his graduation. We let him use the church building and we helped him set up for his recital. It was great to see him demonstrate his gifts. He did a very nice job of moving through the different eras of music and gave a brief introduction to each

era he was playing. It was a very enjoyable time. I mention this recital because we had a lot of people visit our church building. We got to make some different contacts in the community, and overall it was a great time of fellowship. We have also finished our mid-week studies. We have been going through the Belgic confession week after week with the men and the women. The men's study has been going exceptionally well. We have high schoolers who participate in our studies. We have a man come who has come to our church without his family. This year he has been coming to the men's study with his son. He has come with his son to worship with us as well. We also finished up our catechism class. We are happy to report that we had enough children in our church to start a catechism program. The younger kids 4-12 are in a class that my wife teaches, and I teach the kids 13 and older. We have been using G. I. Williamson's catechism book for our curriculum.

New Family - Pastor Lindemulder has been doing a community Bible study for several months by going through the Heidelberg Catechism. It is a joy to see fruit of this labor. A husband, who has been attending this study, has started to attend our church with his wife. Now, they desire to become members of our church. Pastor Lindemulder is beginning a membership class with this family in the family's home. In addition to this family, we are also happy to report that the wife's mom, who has not been in church for 25 or more years, desires to attend this membership class and find out more about our church. Pastor has met with her mom, and enjoys the opportunity to dialogue with her. Please pray for this opportunity, and that the Lord would use these contacts to meet more people.

Summer, 2010

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 the Lord would give us wisdom as we pursue the new facility and get out of our old one.
- Pray that the Lord would continue to provide growth both in faith and in number.
- Pray that the Lord would provide for us to meet our monthly financial obligations.
- 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 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. We certainly appreciate them, and need them.

Contact Information: <http://fresnourc.com>
Pastor Paul Lindemulder
(559) 276-7382 / phlinde@gmail.com

HISPANIC CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

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

Visit to Panama - May 3-8, 2010

Panama City - There is no Reformed or Presbyterian church in Panama either in English or in Spanish. I have had the privilege of "connecting dots" of initiatives

that have been discussed, but until now never really followed up on. During this visit I was able to meet with interested "English speaking" contacts in Panama City who are committed to establishing an English-speaking Presbyterian Church as well as a leadership training program.

Their vision is to expand this into the Spanish speaking communities of Panama over time. This is a major undertaking, but MINTS has been asked to participate in the process of training church leaders. I met with a Presbyterian contact who flew down to Panama to discuss these plans with me. The plans are in the "infant stage" and the English portion of this plan will be coordinated by a new MINTS -- English coordinator for Latin America and the Caribbean. It was a wonderful opportunity

for me to have the privilege to be on the "ground floor" of starting this initiative which I anticipate being a part of, particularly as their Spanish-speaking ministry is developed.

La Chorrera Study Centre - This Centre has had several "starts" since my first contact with them in 2007. They have struggled with leadership continuity. However patient insistence on my part is producing fruit in this Centre that has now decided to "multiply" into two communities. I taught two courses, *The Canon of the Holy Scriptures* and *Introduction to the Bible*. This church is doing some "theological soul-searching." It was a thrilling experience to be interrupted time and again during the conference to answer theologically sensitive questions that they have been wrestling with as a church. They are looking to the MINTS Summer, 2010

training to help them in sorting out some of the theological issues related to the Doctrines of Grace and the role of the Holy Spirit in the ministry of the church. The church has a passion for missions and evangelism. They have established 7 preaching points from the "mother church". I had an opportunity to preach at one of them in a village about two hours into the interior.

Visit to Nicaragua - May 8-17, 2010

Peniel Reformed Church - Rev. Isaac Vargas is the pastor of this Reformed church in Managua. They have struggled to finish the Hermeneutics course I taught during the last visit with them. It was encouraging to meet with the students to encourage them to finish the course. It was also a blessing to hear the pastor preach and one of my other students (his elder) teach an excellent adult

Sunday School class on the millennium. These two brothers have the potential of being good MINTS promoters in Nicaragua in time.

Puerto Cabezas - This Study Centre in the Miskitia (indigenous) region of Nicaragua is the most motivated and advanced Study Centres I am working with here in Central America. I have taught 15 courses here over the period of five years. I taught *The Canon of the Holy Scriptures* during this visit. Some students are struggling to finish courses received while others are completing the courses with enthusiasm. In November there will be a graduation for seven students, which is very exciting for this indigenous people group.

Prayer Items - In addition to the above brief ministry report, please pray for:

- 1) A new group which will be starting in San Marcos where I had the privilege of presenting MINTS.
- 2) Plans started on this trip for a MINTS Central American regional conference in Nicaragua in January, 2011.
- 3) A new "preparation level" program of studies that I developed using MINTS courses for students who have not completed high school and those new to the faith who find the university level to be overwhelming.
- 4) The prison ministry as I was again unable to secure government permission to follow up on previous visits.
- 5) Continued funding needs as in the last several months the income has not covered the ministry expenses.

In the Service of Christ,

Rev. Eric Pennings, Missionary
Covenant Reformed Church of Toronto
Miami International Seminary (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, Michigan 49460

**THE URCNA MISSION WORK
IN ITALY**

Summer, 2010

By Rev. Michael Brown

Pastor, Christ URC, Santee, CA

On January 19, 2010, Rev. Andrea Ferrari, a minister of an independent Reformed church in Milan, Italy, sustained a *colloquium doctum* examination administered by Classis Southwest of the URCNA. On January 24, he was ordained and installed by the Consistory of Christ United Reformed Church in Santee, CA, as a missionary-pastor to serve the church in Milan and work toward establishing a federation of Reformed churches in Italy, modeled after the URCNA.

Presently, no confessional Reformed denominations exist in Italy. Although the Protestant Reformation gained some footing in the early sixteenth century, producing reformers such as Peter Martyr Vermigli, Paolo Vergerio, and Bernadino Ochino, it was quickly crushed by Rome's violent Inquisition.

Today, the country is almost entirely Roman Catholic. Of its 60,250,535 citizens, 58,441,290 have been baptized into the Roman Church (though a large percentage of this number consists of nominal members). After that, the ecclesiastical landscape consists mainly of charismatic and Brethren churches. Not even the remaining Waldensian Church in Italy can be considered a Reformed presence. In 1975, it merged with the Italian Methodist Church and the Baptist Union, and is now a member of the World Council of Churches. Aside from the church which Rev. Ferrari serves, there is not a single congregation in Italy that confesses the Three Forms of Unity. Rome did its work well in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. As confessional Reformed Christians, we are

compelled to ask, "Where is the Gospel being preached each week in Italy?"

To put this in perspective, compare Italy to California. California has a population of less than 37,000,000 in a geographical area of nearly 164,000 square miles. Italy, on the other hand, has a population of more than 60,000,000 within an area of about 116,000 square miles. It is smaller than California in its geographical size, yet almost twice as large in population. What is staggering, however, is that California possesses over 180 confessional Reformed or Presbyterian churches which are members of NAPARC, while Italy has only *one established church* that holds to the same standards.

Or compare San Diego to Milan. San Diego County has a population of just over 3,000,000 in a geographical area of 4,261 square miles. The Milan Metropolitan Area

has a population of over 7,400,000 in a geographical area of about 4,633 square miles. San Diego County has 29 NAPARC churches, while Milan has one that meets the same criteria.

In light of these statistics, Christ URC is working with Rev. Ferrari in the long-term mission work of planting confessional Reformed churches in Italy. By God's grace, the light of the Reformation has not yet been fully extinguished in this fair land.

In April and May of this year, I made my second trip to Italy for the purpose of assisting Rev. Ferrari in his labors. The church that he serves in Milan, Chiesa Evangelica Riformata 'Filadelfia' (Philadelphia Reformed Evangelical Church) has been **Summer, 2010**

reconstituted as a congregation that confesses the Three Forms of Unity and uses the URCNA Church Order. Along with performing six baptisms and hearing the profession of faith from a former Roman Catholic man, we ordained two men to the office of elder and one to the office of deacon, all of whom have been well trained and prepared for service. The church now has its first council and is highly enthusiastic about the work of planting more confessional churches in Italy.

This important and historic mission work is in need of financial support. If you or your church are willing to help, please contact me by phone at 619.258.8500 or by e-mail at michaelbrown@christurc.org. Or you may contact Deacon Mark Bloom at markbloom@christurc.org. For more information about the mission work, visit the website reformationitaly.org.

Costa Rica Report

The Costa Rica JVC, under the supervision of the Bethany United Reformed Church of Wyoming Michigan has the responsibility of overseeing the ministries of URC missionaries Rev. Bill Green, (Bethany URC) Rev. Nick Lamme (Trinity URC Caledonia) and the Tepeyac Christian School building project (Bethany URC).

The Tepeyac Christian School (elementary & high school) is the Christian school affiliated with the work of Rev. Green, whose wife Aletha, is principal. The school was outgrowing its facilities so a number of years ago, on faith, property was purchased and as funds became available construction started. It has now been under

construction for 9 years. Several times a year volunteers have gone to assist in the construction, and much has been accomplished. The infrastructure, and the building itself is near completion; however due to the downturn in the economy, and added demands by the local Costa Rican government the building is still not ready to receive the occupancy permit.

Jeff Kortman, Chairman of the Joint Venture Building Fund Committee provided a report of his visit in January 2010:

In January I was able to travel to Costa Rica with the Bethany URC work team. While I was there I saw a lot of excitement in regard the school. VBS was meeting at the school everyday. We could hear the children singing over the noise of backhoes, cement mixers and hammers. The workers were up early every morning ready to get to work, laboring hard and steady through out the

day. Worship services were held at the school each Sunday as well. Also very exciting for me were the many truckloads of supplies that arrived through out the week. Multiple loads of concrete, cement block, steel, lumber and paint, all made possible by the generous and faithful giving of many. It is this giving that keeps the cement mixers mixing, the hammers swinging and the loads of material coming. Being a builder at the school through financial gifts is just as important as traveling to Costa Rica to mix cement or to swing a hammer.

A special note for the URC churches in west Michigan: Rev. Bill and Aletha Green will be traveling to west Michigan and plan on being here throughout the month of July. During their stay, the Joint Venture Building **Summer, 2010**

Fund Committee would like to invite you to an **ice cream social fundraiser, to be held July 14** at Bethany United Reformed Church from 7-9 p.m. It will give you an opportunity to greet Rev. Bill and Aletha Green, see a program showing the work being done at the school, enjoy a time of fellowship and of course enjoy some great tasting ice cream. All the money raised will go towards the construction of the school. We look forward to seeing you there.

The Joint Venture Building Fund Committee would also like to tell you about the "Becoming a Builder" program we are working on. We are looking for people to become 'builders' in the school project through monthly giving. This gives the building project a steady cash flow so construction can continue until completion. We still need substantial funds complete the project so the building can be used as a school.

We would like to encourage persons to join our Becoming A Builder program with a suggested donation of \$20 per month. Information can be received from Bethany URC Church Joint Venture Committee which oversees the Costa Rica Ministry by writing to the Joint Venture Committee Building fund, 5401 Byron Center, Wyoming MI 49519. If you have questions and / or comments, please let us know at jvcbfcostarica@gmail.com.

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

