

**AGENDA MATERIALS**  
**CLASSIS CENTRAL US – SEPTEMBER 11-12, AD 2023**

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# AGENDA

## *The 56<sup>th</sup> Meeting of Classis Central US of the URCNA*

Convened and hosted by **Redeemer United Reformed Church**, Orange City, Iowa  
Convening Monday, **September 11, AD 2023 at 6:30 pm**

1. Opening Devotions – By a member of convening consistory serving as chairman *pro-tem*
2. Presentation of the Credentials and Roll Call of the Delegates
3. Reading of the *Form of Subscription* and Delegates' Declaration of Assent
4. Declaration that Classis is Duly Constituted
5. Seating of Officers – Chairman from Community Reformed Church, Schererville, and Vice-Chairman from Sioux Center United Reformed Church.
6. Adoption of a Time Schedule: 15-minute breaks at 10:00 am, 3:00 pm and 8:00 pm. One-hour breaks at 12:00 p.m. and 5:30 p.m. Evening session to end at 9:00 pm. Morning session to begin at 8:00 a.m.
7. Appointment of Committees to Examine the Credentials
  - a. Credentials of the delegates
  - b. Credentials of the examinee
8. Classis Reports
  - a. Interim Committee – the consistory of Redeemer URC, Orange City, Iowa
  - b. Stated Clerk
  - c. Treasurer
  - d. CCHM (formerly CPAC)
9. Fraternal Greetings
10. Candidacy Examination for Mr. Kirk Gibbons (see *CO* Appendix 3)
  - a. Chairman explains the procedure for the exam
  - b. Credentials report – Credentials Committee for the examinee
  - c. Sermon Evaluation by the consistory of Redeemer, Orange City in executive session – Rule I.F
  - d. *Practica* – Rev. Jon Bushnell (45 minutes)
  - e. Bible Knowledge – Rev. Jody Lucero (30 minutes)
  - f. Biblical Exegesis – Rev. Greg Lubbers (30 minutes)
  - g. Confessional Knowledge – Rev. Ben Davenport (30 minutes)
  - h. Reformed Doctrine – Rev. Roberto Rossi (30 minutes)
  - i. Church History – Rev. Nick Alons (30 minutes)
  - j. Ethics – Rev. Dan Donovan (30 minutes)
  - k. Church Polity – Rev. Joel Worries (30 minutes)
11. Overtures
  - a. DeMotte – Adopt Pastoral Advice re Church, State, & Family
  - b. Pella – Put Synodical Committee Mandates in Synodical Reports
  - c. Waupun – Dissolve Appointment of Committee Overseeing Classis Website
  - d. Waupun – Dissolve Appointment of the OCWOC
  - e. Kansas City – Support for Emeritus Minister
  - f. Sanborn – Latino Mission Project
12. Elections and Appointments (see attached list of classis functionaries)
  - a. Church Visitor – East – to replace Mr. John Surowiec who asked to be released for health reasons
  - b. Stated Clerk – Rev. Pontier has completed his second term. There is a two term limit.
  - c. Church Visitor West – Mr. Korrie Van Maanen (Rock Valley) – his term has expired.
  - d. CCHM – Mr. Bruce Aardsma (Schereville, IN) – his second term has expired.
  - e. CCHM Alternate – Mr. Korrie Van Maanen (Rock Valley) – his third term has expired.

- f. SCFM Alternate – Rev. Paul Freswick has asked to be released from this position.
- 13. Credentials Committee Report for the delegates
- 14. Next Meeting
  - a. Date for Next Meeting – (*Rules of Procedure* I.B., “Two meetings shall be held each year: in the second full week of April and in the second full week of September.”). However, in years when we have synod, we generally waive the rule and meet before the synodical agenda deadline, which is March 25, 2024.
  - b. Place – Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa. This follows the alphabetical rotation for convening consistories.
- 15. Closing Matters
  - a. Thanks to Host Church
  - b. Concept Minutes
  - c. Prayer and Adjournment

**DEVOTIONS SCHEDULE:**

The chairman, or a delegate from the designated church, should be prepared to lead a brief devotional as suggested below. (*This schedule goes beyond the anticipated length of the meeting, just in case.*)

- ☐ Opening of Classis (*Scripture, Prayer, Song*).....Chairman *Pro-tem*
- ☐ Closing of Session #1 Monday evening (*Scripture, Prayer, Song*).....Hills
- ☐ Opening of Session #2, Tuesday morning (*Scripture, Prayer, Song*) .....Kansas City
- ☐ Closing of Session #2, prior to Noon meal (*Prayer*) .....Lansing
- ☐ Opening of Session #3 after Noon meal (*Scripture, Prayer, Song*) .....Lynwood
- ☐ Closing of Session #3, prior to evening meal (*Prayer*).....Oaklawn
- ☐ Opening of Session #4, after evening meal (*Scripture, Prayer, Song*) .....Orange City
- ☐ Closing of Classis (*Scripture, Prayer, Doxology*) .....Chairman

Venue: [Redeemer United Reformed Church](#) is located at [302 Saint Paul Avenue SE, Orange City, IA](#)

**LODGING:**

-----  
**Hampton Inn** – 712-707-4100  
 914 8th St. SE. Orange City, IA 51041  
 -Block of 25 double queen rooms under "Classis Meeting at Redeemer URC"  
 -rate of \$153 + tax  
 -need to call to reserve **by August 10**.  
 -hotel is 1 mile from classis meeting  
 -hot breakfast is served  
 -----

**Holiday Inn Express and Suites** – 712-722-3500  
 100 Saint Andrews Way, Sioux Center, IA 51250  
 -Block of 20 double queen rooms for \$130 + tax  
 -Block of 5 single king rooms for \$135+ tax  
 -rooms are booked under "URC Classis Meeting"  
 -need to call to reserve **by August 10**  
 -hotel is 11 miles from the classis meeting  
 -hot breakfast is served

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**Dutch Inn and Suites**  
 810 Lincoln Place  
 Orange City, IA 51041  
 712-737-2600  
[dutchinnandsuites.com](http://dutchinnandsuites.com)  
 -They do not hold blocks of rooms  
 -currently rooms are \$89.99 + tax for the night of September 11 (subject to change)  
 -hotel is 1 mile from classis meeting  
 -continental breakfast

**CLASSIS MEALS:**  
 The Redeemer congregation plans to serve supper on Monday, September 11, at 5:30 p.m. as well as lunch and supper on Tuesday (as needed)

Please print this page separately and bring completed form (hard copy) to the meeting.

### CLASSICAL CREDENTIAL

To Classis Central US of the United Reformed Churches in North America, to convene on  
September 11-12, 2023 (date), at Redeemer United Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa (place).

The Consistory of \_\_\_\_\_,  
member congregation of the United Reformed Churches in North America, has appointed brothers  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ as  
delegates to represent said church at the meeting of the classis. The alternate delegates are:  
\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

We hereby instruct and authorize them to take part in all the deliberations and transactions of the classis meeting regarding all matters legally coming before the meeting and transacted in agreement with the Word of God, as interpreted by the Three Forms of Unity, and applied in the Church Order.

By the order of the Consistory,  
Done in Consistory on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
\_\_\_\_\_, Chairman  
\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk

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#### Church Order Article 26 Questions

1. Are Consistory and diaconal meetings held regularly? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Is the Word of God faithfully preached? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Are the sacraments faithfully administered? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is church discipline exercised? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Are the poor cared for? \_\_\_\_\_
6. Is God-centered schooling promoted? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Does the Consistory need the advice or help of the classis for the proper government of the church? \_\_\_\_\_  
If yes, use the reverse side.

Done in Consistory on \_\_\_\_\_ (date)  
\_\_\_\_\_, Chairman  
\_\_\_\_\_, Clerk

Please e-mail the correct spelling of the delegates' and alternates' names to the clerk at **ClassisCentralUS@gmail.com** AND please **BRING** the completed form (hard copy) to the classis meeting.



Redeemer United Reformed Church, Orange City, Iowa

Convening Consistory Report

July 17, 2023

Please accept this report from your convening consistory

1. Convening consistory made the following arrangements for a candidacy exam of Mr. Kirk Gibbons.
  - a. Secured the required examiners
  - b. Secured the text assignments for the required sermons
  - c. Made arrangements for a consistorial evaluation of a sermon preached Mr. Gibbons.
2. Convening consistory made arrangements for blocks of hotel rooms and transmitted the details to the Stated Clerk.
3. Convening consistory made arrangements for meals for the delegates including a pre-classis supper meal which will be served at 5:30 Monday night.
4. Convening consistory makes the following time allotment recommendations the examination:
  - a. 40 minute time limit for: Practica, Biblical exegesis, and Reformed Doctrine
  - b. 30 minute time limit for: Bible knowledge, Confessional Knowledge, Church History and Ethics
  - c. 20 minute time limit for: Church Polity
5. Convening consistory allowed Jim Iwema with RMS to have a display table in the back of the church during the meeting.

It has been a privilege to serve the churches of Classis Central US.

The consistory of Redeemer URC of Orange City, IA.

# CLASSIS CENTRAL U.S.

*of the*

## UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

Rev. Ralph A. Pontier  
Stated Clerk of Classis  
641-230-3880

118 Holland Drive  
Pella, IA 50219  
ClassisCentralUS@gmail.com

### REPORT OF THE STATED CLERK July 31, AD 2023

Dear Brothers,

This report, and most of my past reports, are written not only to inform you what your clerk has been doing to earn the big bucks, but also to help the next stated clerk know what the job entails.

Since my last written report on April 8, 2023, I have attended to the following matters:

1. Follow up after the last classis
  - a. I prepared the minutes and report of our last classis meeting which was held on April 10-11. They were distributed to the classis mailing list on April 14, 2023. Receiving no negative feedback, they were distributed to the rest of the rest of the federation on May 31, 2023. Our fraternal contacts were sent the classis report on the same day with an offer of minutes upon request.
  - b. On May 31, I posted on the classis website a copy of the April 2023 Agenda and Minutes and the Classis Report. Only the report is available to the public.
  - c. On July 18, 2023, I updated both the classis and federation websites with the date, time, and place of our next meeting and set up classis forum reminder notices.
2. I forwarded to the classis mailing list, on the date indicated, the following materials:
  - a. 4/12 The Planting Periodical - CPAC newsletter
  - b. 4/14 The agenda for Classis Western Canada meeting on April 18, 2023
  - c. 4/21 The April report of missionary, Rev. Pablo Landázari.
  - d. 4/24 An invitation to attend the licensure exam of Mr. Thomas Bell at Covenant URC, Kansas City.
  - e. 5/18 The minutes of Classis Michigan held on May 16.
  - f. 5/30 A request from our classis representative on the Synodical Home Missions Committee asking churches to suggest improvements of the Church Planting Manuel.
  - g. 7/18 The minutes and report of Classis SW Ontario held on June 28, 2023.
  - h. 7/18 The July report of Rev. Landázuri.
  - i. 7/19 The agenda for Classis SW Ontario
  - j. 7/19 The minutes and report of Classis Western Canada held on April 18-19, 2023
3. [Classis Website](#)

REMINDER: The classis has a website hosted by the same firm that hosts the federation website (click on the blue letters above). Anyone can view the public side (calendar showing the agenda deadline date and the next meeting date, Church Order, classis regulations, and the news release of the last meeting). The private side has all the minutes, agendas, and news releases going back to the beginning of the classis. Anyone can go on the website and ask for permission to view the private side. Those who receive permission

will also receive one reminder per week for about 8 weeks prior to a deadline or a classis meeting. We are the only classis with its own website.

4. Ecumenical matters
  - a. Rev. Greg Hoadley of Grace OPC, Des Moines is delegated to attend this meeting for the OPC Presbytery of the Midwest.
  - b. Rev. Jonathan Haney, pastor of the Clarinda, Iowa Reformed Presbyterian Church is planning to attend as a fraternal delegate from the Midwest Presbytery of the RPCNA.
  - c. On May 21, I sent a note to all the ministers on the east side of the classis asking for volunteers to attend the September 8-9 meeting in Hanover Park of the Presbytery of the Midwest, OPC, as a fraternal delegate. No one responded. I sent a letter of greeting.
5. I compiled the agenda for this meeting with the assistance of the convening consistory.
  - a. I have been informed that Rev. Paul Freswick, on the advice of his consistory, wishes to be released from his position as alternate delegate to the Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions. I have informed the convening consistory and with their permission and have placed a new election on the agenda.
  - b. I have been informed that for health reasons Mr. John Surowiec wishes to be released one year early from his position as church visitor for the East. I have informed the convening consistory and with their permission have placed a new election on the agenda.
  - c. One synodical committee representative sent me a report. I reminded him of the rule of classis that such reports were only received at the Spring meeting.
  - d. One consistory submitted a proposal that was not in the form of either an overture or communication. I advised them that it would be better if it came with specific recommendations or overture statements (motions) to vote up or down. Under the oversight of the convening consistory, I gave them a week past the deadline to make some changes. There was no delay in distributing the agenda because of this.
6. It is a privilege to serve the churches of Classis Central US as clerk. Thank you for the opportunity to serve in this way. My two terms are expired, and classis has a two-term limit. Please do not consider waiving the rules. To paraphrase General Sherman, if nominated I will not run; if elected I will not serve.

Respectfully submitted, your servant,  
Ralph A. Pontier

**Classis Central US**  
**United Reformed Churches in North America**  
**Harlan Harmelink, Treasurer**  
**Sioux Center URC, Supervising Consistory**

**Beginning Balance - All Classical Funds (03/31/2023)** **\$47,978.87**

<b><u>General Fund</u></b>		
Beginning Balance		\$6,444.83
Income:		
Classical Askings	\$2,112.00	
Interest	<u>\$ 31.08</u>	
Total Income	\$2,143.08	
Expenses		
Church Visitor/Delegate expense	\$307.24	
Classis Meals (April '23)	<u>\$1,391.54</u>	
Total Expenses	(\$1,698.78)	
Net Change		<u>\$444.30</u>
Ending Balance		\$6,889.13

<b><u>Classical Assistance Fund</u></b>		
Beginning Balance		\$41,534.04
Income	\$5,130.83	
Disbursements		
Kansas City	\$6,000.00	
Wellsburg	<u>\$5,000.00</u>	
Total Expenses	(\$11,000.00)	
Net Change		<u>(\$5,869.17)</u>
Ending Balance		\$35,664.87

**Current Balance – All Classical Funds (06/30/2023)** **\$42,554.00**

Remaining Commitments from Assistance Fund

- Calendar year 2023
  - Wellsburg \$10,000
  - Kansas City \$12,000
- Calendar year 2024
  - Wellsburg \$20,000
  - Kansas City \$24,000 (subject to renewal)

**Classis Home Mission Fund**

Beginning Balance		\$0.00
Income:		
Receipts	\$9,600.00	
<u>Interest</u>	<u>\$1.03</u>	
Total Income	\$9,601.03	
Disbursements:	\$0.00	
Ending Balance		\$9,601.03

**Trinity Psalter Hymnal**

(surplus funds received from URCNA--U.S. Treasurer)

**6-month CD Balance**

Current Balance	
Maturity Date	\$38,125
Interest accrual at maturity	10-3-23
	\$480.00 (approximate)

Suggested annual Asking is currently set at \$300-\$600 per church to meet the operating needs of our Classis. Please forward all Askings, receipts, or questions to:

Harlan Harmelink  
1441 4<sup>th</sup> Ave SE  
Sioux Center, IA 51250  
(712) 441-0573 (cell)  
[Harlan.Harmelink@dordt.edu](mailto:Harlan.Harmelink@dordt.edu)

Notes

1. Under the Classical Assistance Fund, I included the remaining money that is committed for this year (as approved in September 2022)
2. It is my understanding that the 2024 portion for Covenant (KC) will need to be formally approved at the meeting this fall
3. The Classis Home Mission Fund (CHMF) which was approved in April has been set up as a new/ separate account for tracking purposes and is shown on page 2 of the attached report. Grace URC (Waupun) indicated at the last meeting that there was a commitment to contribute to this fund on a regular basis, and that has begun.
4. The surplus funds from the TPH project are in a separate CD for a better interest rate and would be available for distribution in October if a recommendation or overture is brought to Classis and approved in September; otherwise, the CD will likely be renewed.

Please feel free to let me know if there are any questions about this information.

Thanks! Harlan

**Classical Committee on Home Missions**  
**Report to Classis Central U.S.**  
**September 11-12, 2023**

Esteemed fathers and brothers in our Lord Jesus,

At the spring meeting of classis (April 10, 2023) the Church Planting Advisory Committee was reconstituted as the Classical Committee on Home Missions, and given a new mandate, largely in keeping with the direction that came from Synod Niagara 2022. As the name of this new committee indicates, we exist to help classis in home missions (i.e. church planting efforts within our region). This means that the CCHM has no official responsibilities with regard to the mission work in Quito, Ecuador, overseen by Covenant URC of Pella. Since there is currently no church planting work in classis, this committee has focused on better understanding its mandate. After a brief hiatus in the spring, we resumed monthly phone meetings, and are now strategizing as to how we can be of greater service to the churches of classis. The work of the CCHM is overseen by the consistory of Immanuel URC of DeMotte. We are thankful for their support, and the opportunity to continue serving Classis Central. We draw your attention to the fact that alternate member Korrie Van Maanen reaches the end of his current term this September; the committee will need classis to reappoint him or appoint a new alternate. Also, Bruce Aardsma comes to the end of his term – we anticipate his reappointment.

We remind you that Cornerstone URC of Sanborn began to plan outreach to the Latino community in northwest Iowa a couple years ago. This committee (actually CPAC at the time) met with the Council in Sanborn last January; we are very pleased to see how their plans continue to develop, and we anticipate that classis will soon consider the opportunity to give its official support to the Latino Mission.

This committee is also eager to see what may come of plans at Christ Reformed Church in Sioux Falls to plant a daughter church across town. Initial planning involved CPAC way back in the summer of 2021. It is most encouraging to see that plans have resumed.

In light of these budding church plant efforts, the committee encourages all consistories of classis to bear in mind some important commitments that Classis Central has made earlier this year in connection with home missions. When a consistory is engaged in a home mission work, classical support will ordinarily be obtained and facilitated by means of the Classical Committee on Home Missions. The committee has been mandated to review all "Church Plant Proposals" and all requests to draw from the newly-established "Classical Home Mission Fund" (the committee makes recommendations to classis on the basis of such proposals and requests). Moreover, this committee's membership will be augmented by an elder representative from each overseeing consistory of a classically-assisted home mission work.

It has been fifteen years since our classis has attempted a church plant. The committee would ask the consistories to commit to regular prayer for the developing home mission works mentioned above, as well as for the work of Rev. Pablo Landazuri that continues in Quito. Please pray for the work of the CCHM, and especially pray that the Lord God would bless our churches with such health and vitality that we would be more engaged in the work of missions, evangelism, and disciple-making for the increase of the Kingdom and ultimately for the glory of our great God.

Your fellow-laborers in Christ Jesus,

Elder Bruce Aardsma	Rev. Roberto Rossi
Elder Grant Diekevers	Rev. Joel Worries, <i>chairman</i>
Rev. Jody Lucero, <i>clerk</i>	



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*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ~Acts 2:42*

June 24, 2023

Dear Brothers of Classis Central US

The Council of Christ Reformed Church in Sioux Falls, SD is hereby recommending Mr. Kirk Gibbons to the churches for ministerial candidacy. We are requesting that he be allowed a ministerial candidacy examination at the upcoming Fall 2023 meeting of Classis Central US at Redeemer United Reformed Church in Orange City, IA in accordance with Article 4 and Appendix 3 of our Church order and the relevant rules of Classis Central US.

Kirk graduated with his Master of Divinity degree from Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in May 2023. He and his wife Melissa, with son Bodie, are currently members at Christ Reformed Church, and they have been a great blessing to our congregation. Kirk served as an intern at Christ Reformed Church first during the summer of 2021 and he has been serving as an intern again since June 2022. Throughout that time, he has diligently served the congregation in many capacities including but not limited to the following:

- exhorting the congregation from God's word
- leading worship services
- teaching Sunday school
- providing discipleship to members within the congregation
- leading and participating in adult Bible and book studies
- providing training to the youth
- providing office bearer training
- visiting members and those seeking membership
- participating in church council and consistory meetings

Kirk has previously served as a ruling elder in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and exhibits the qualifications for overseers described in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Kirk's work has greatly assisted the Christ Reformed Church Consistory in shepherding the congregation throughout his time with us. He displays a vibrant love for Christ and his church. His faithfulness in doctrine and life is clearly evident to all of the saints at Christ Reformed Church, and his labors within the congregation provide clear evidence of his desire to serve the Jesus Christ and His church.

The Council of Christ Reformed Church in Sioux Falls heartily recommends Mr. Kirk Gibbons for examination at the September 2023 meeting of Classis Central US.

In the Service of Christ and His Church,

Mark Hoogwerf  
Christ Reformed Church Clerk of Council



# MEDICAL STATEMENT OF HEALTH

For

CLASSIS CENTRAL U.S.

UNITED REFORMED CHURCHES IN NORTH AMERICA

The *Guidelines for a Candidacy Exam* (Appendix 2, URCNA Church Order) call for each prospective candidate to submit "a medical evaluation of health" prior to being examined by the classis and named a candidate for the ministry of the Word and sacraments.

In fulfillment of this requirement, each examinee is expected to arrange for a medical evaluation by a licensed physician. After this medical evaluation has been performed, the examinee should ask his physician to complete this form, which then should be submitted to the clerk of classis by the examinee's consistory.

## PHYSICIAN'S ATTESTATION OF HEALTH FOR MINISTERIAL CANDIDACY

I, Dr. Scott Dierks, hereby attest that on

this day, I examined Mr. Kirk Gibbons

with the intent of evaluating his capacity for serving as an ordained Christian minister in full-time service. Having done so, and being duly licensed in the state of South Dakota as a medical doctor, I declare that I have found no health condition which would impede him from this service.

(If there are any qualifications to this recommendation, please note those on the lines below.)

Attested on this day, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023,

Signature: Scott Dierks, MD.

Please Print Name: Scott Dierks, MD

*Thank you for your service!*



# Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary

BY AUTHORITY OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND UPON RECOMMENDATION  
OF THE FACULTY HEREBY CONFERS UPON

## Kirk Patrick Gibbons

THE DEGREE OF

## Master of Divinity

TOGETHER WITH ALL THE RIGHTS, PRIVILEGES AND HONORS APPERTAINING  
THERETO, IN RECOGNITION OF THE SATISFACTORY COMPLETION  
OF THE COURSE PRESCRIBED BY THE FACULTY OF THE SEMINARY

GIVEN AT GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA ON THIS NINETEENTH DAY OF MAY  
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD TWO THOUSAND AND TWENTY THREE

*Justin T. Moore*

PRESIDENT

*C. F. Marcink*

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES



*Sidney D. Hoyer*

*Joseph A. Hoyer*

*William D. Hoyer*

**Mr. Gibbons' transcripts have been redacted from the agenda where it is distributed outside Classis Central US**

**Pages 14-16 have been removed from this copy of the agenda.**

## Personal Testimony

God, by His sovereign grace and mercy placed me in a Christian home as the son of a pastor. I was catechized and taught the doctrines of grace. I have always known that God is my Father and Jesus is my Savior. He has guarded, guided and protected me.

This being true, I struggled in my youth to know God *as* my Father and Christ as my one only blessed hope. I have seen periods of rebellion, periods of formalism and periods of spiritual fervor, but the best description of my conversion is a slow burn.

Over my life, God has faithfully drawn me out of selfishness and slavery to my own passions and lusts and warmed my heart to see His loving grace in the face of my filthy sinfulness. The farther I have fallen, the deeper His grace reaches. Due to periods of backsliding and indecent living, my assurance was greatly disturbed and I found myself locked up as Pilgrim in Doubting Castle. Through the preaching of the Word and the power of the Spirit, I have been called from my stubborn sinfulness and He has caused me to desire Him above all. I now consider all things rubbish compared to my Savior and cast every hope and treasure at His feet. I desire nothing more than to know more of Jesus and the depth of His love.

## Confessional Commitment

I hereby attest that to the best of my understanding of the confessional standards of the United Reformed Church in North America, namely the Heidelberg Catechism, Canons of Dordt, and the Belgic Confession, I submit and subscribe to the doctrine therein contained as faithful to the revealed truth of God as taught in the Holy Scriptures consisting of the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments. I commit to supporting and teaching that which is contained in these historic standards without reservation or exception. Further, should any such exception be discovered I promise to make such concerns to my consistory.

Kirk Gibbons

July 19, 2022



Introduction

Have you ever had plans go awry? Perhaps your dream to go to a particular college, to date a particular person? Perhaps you went on a trip with great joy only to hit problem after problem after problem. Perhaps more seriously, you started life with certain hopes and dreams, but now years later you feel sad, bitter or even betrayed that life does not look like you planned.

The Bible tells us that God hears and answers our prayers. What are we to do with that in light of our everyday life? Jesus, in teaching the disciples how to pray tells them to pray for their “daily bread”, that is, the provisions they need. How should we as Christians understand this petition and should we despair if God is not blessing us with the provisions we believe we need?

HC 125 helps us understand what the 4<sup>th</sup> petition means by summarizing what the whole Bible says about asking God to “Give us this day our daily bread” (see page 895 TPH). Its teaching is not scripture itself, but it helps us get our mind around what God has told us in the Bible about broader questions. To help us with that, the writers have listed some of the clearer passages that inform the catechism’s teaching. Therefore, let us engage with both Scripture and the HC regarding what God has told us about asking Him for our “daily bread”.

***125. What does the fourth petition mean?***

“Give us this day our daily bread” means: Provide for all our physical needs ***so that*** we may recognize

1. That You are the only source of everything good,
2. And that neither our care and work nor Your gifts can do us any good without Your blessing.
3. Therefore, may we withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it in You alone.

***God commands us to pray for our daily provisions so that we might recognize and remember...***

1. God alone is the source of every good thing
2. God alone blesses man’s labor and his use of divine gifts
3. God alone may be trusted for all that is needful

**“Give us this day our daily bread” means:  
Provide for all our physical needs, so that we may recognize...**  
*(That you are the only source of everything good)*

**I. God alone is the source of every good thing**

**Mt 6:5-13 – Jesus gives us a pattern for prayer:** Jesus begins teaching about prayer by giving an example of what not to do. *“Do not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand in the synagogues and at the street corners that they may be seen by others.... And do not heap up empty phrases and the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard for their many words.”* (vs5, 7) Jesus tells them instead to be quiet and secret about it. This doesn't mean that we are to avoid the presence of people every time we pray, but our prayers are to be concerned with God's glory, power, faithfulness, and goodness; rather than seeking self-glory through man's approval. Jesus also encourages confidence in prayer, knowing that, *“your Father who sees you in secret will reward you.”* (vs 6). Calvin explains that this is not a reward of merit, but rather, Jesus is declaring “all the reward, which is promised to us in any part of Scripture, is not paid as a debt, but is a free gift.”<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, Jesus commands us to pray humbly before God, recognizing our place as creatures before our good and perfect Creator, who knows what we need before we even ask (vs 8).

**Ps 145:15-16 (Because God is the source of every good thing, we pray to Him alone for our needs):** David sings in Ps 145, *“The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food in due season.”* (vs 15) In other words, there is no corner of creation that does not depend on God as the source of any and all good. It is by God's grace alone that all life exists and continues, for our needs are satisfied only when, *“You open your hand, and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”* (vs 16)

**Acts 14:17; 17:25 (God's daily provision for creation demonstrates His power and care):** Likewise, Paul teaches in Acts 14 that God has not left Himself without a witness in the world, *“for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.”* (Acts 14:17) and later teaches the Athenians, *“He is not served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives mankind life and breath and everything.”* (Acts 17:25) In other words, God's daily provision for creation demonstrates God's being, power, and goodness.

**James 1:17 (All good comes from God above):** Further James says, *“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”* Thus, any and all good things, come not by chance or by autonomous, disconnected natural law; but life, light, meaning, joy... every good and perfect provision is a gift from the Father, who does not shift like the shadows.

**Therefore friends,** because God is the source of all good things, this means you are not. Stop looking to yourself for your daily needs. Stop trying to control circumstances. Instead, look to God and reach to Him with the eye and hand of faith, presenting your requests to Him who hears and knows your every need. *“Humble yourselves under the mighty of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you.”* (1Pt 5:6,7) ... and He alone is the source of every good and perfect thing in this life and the next.

*So, we pray, “Give us this day our daily bread”, asking that God would provide all our physical needs so that we recognize, declare, and remember that God alone is the source of everything good.*

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<sup>1</sup> John Calvin, *Commentary on a Harmony of Mathew, Mark, and Luke*, trans. William Pringle, vol. I, Calvin's Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005), 313.

**“Give us this day our daily bread” means:  
Provide for all our physical needs, so that we may recognize...**  
*(neither our care and work, nor your gifts can do us any good without your blessing)*

**II. God alone blesses man's labor and use of divine gifts.**

This is important because it isn't the possession of food and supply alone that fills our anxious hearts. Don't we also fret and worry about the result of our efforts and use of the resources we have?

**Ps 127:1-2 (Unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain).** Ps 127 was written by Solomon, the wisest and richest of kings. He is a super example of God's abundant generosity to man. As king, Scripture tells us that “*Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father*” (1Kg 3:3). Despite his great wealth, Solomon understood that ultimately all things were in God's hand. This is his point in Ps 127, “*Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the Lord watches over the city, the watchman stays awake in vain.*” (127:1). Solomon teaches us that God alone, gives the material, and blesses our labor - **so that** in all things God is shown to be God.

Solomon then continues in verse 2, “*It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep.*” Isn't that beautiful? We need not drive ourselves to breaking, eating bread of anxious toil, as though the world and its outcome depends on us. Rather, we may – and *must* - look to our heavenly Father for each day's bread, and also rest in Him for the outcome of their use.

**Mt 6:28-34 (Do not be anxious, but seek first the kingdom of God)** You can see now why Jesus points his hearers to Solomon in speaking of God's provision and care. In verse 28-29 of Mt 6, Jesus tells them to look at the lilies of the field, “*Yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.*” Jesus uses the super-example of God's provision and blessing in Solomon to say, “Look, the daily evidence of God's provision for the flowers is a greater testimony than that of Solomon. So **DO NOT WORRY** about how I will provide for you, rather seek the kingdom of God and I will handle both the supply and its fruit. You be faithful, I will be God”.

Does this mean that if we are not as rich and wise as Solomon, something has gone awry? No, God often gives us far less supply, and greater trials than we think we can or should handle. Think of Israel in the desert. Moses told them. “*And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.*” (Dt 8:3) This teaches us that it isn't the daily provisions we receive that gives life and satisfies our desire. Rather, it is God who blesses what He gives. He is the source and substance of all good.

**Therefore**, this means that isn't your job to produce outcomes or results. As you pray for daily /bread, be confident that God gives good gifts, but that He also is at work in you to use those gifts. Christian labor is about living in dependence on God and the faithful pursuit of the eternal kingdom. This is why the Word of God exhorts us to “*be steadfast, immovable, always abounding the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.*” (1 Cor 15:58) FOR, **neither our care and work, nor God's gifts can do us any good without His blessing.**



**“Give us this day our daily bread” means:  
Provide for all our physical needs, so that we may recognize...**

*(Therefore, may we withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it in you alone.)*

### III. God alone may be trusted.

**Jeremiah 17:5-8 (the man who trusts in the Lord is firmly rooted and watered):** The prophet Jeremiah gives us a picture of what a man who trusts in the Lord is like. He begins by describing the one who trusts in man or in the flesh. He says, “*Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.*” (vs 5,6) Do you ever feel that? Like your strength is sapped and you are dry and lifeless? This is what it is like to trust in man and the flesh says Jeremiah.

However, “*Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.*” (7,8) This is quite a picture! Notice that both men face the heat of trial and difficulty. Yet one is dried up and consumed, but the other is green and fruitful. Why? Because the man who trusts in the Lord is rooted in living water. The dust, the flesh has no life of its own. As the tree needs water, so man needs the life of God in Christ who supplies living water (John 4), by His Spirit. The man rooted in the Lord shall never wither, for his “*life is hidden with Christ in God.*” (Col 3:3)

**Ps 55:22 (Cast your burden on the Lord for He will sustain and anchor you):** David tells us the same thing in Ps 55, “*Cast your burden on the Lord, and he will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.*” Again in Ps 62, “*Trust in Him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us.*” David says it is the Lord who is a sure refuge and certain trust. In prayer, you are reaching for the living water like roots reaching for the underground stream. Cast your cares upon this God who so fully sustains you in the midst of adversity.

**Matthew 6:25-34 (Do not be anxious, but trust your heavenly Father):** Because this is true, Jesus exhorts the disciples (and us) not to worry. He tells us to “look at the birds of the air” (vs 26), “Consider the lilies of the field.”(29) If all things in heaven and earth are so faithfully cared for that you don’t even notice it, won’t He care for all your needs? Friends, this is the confidence of the children of God.

Therefore, this means that each new day is filled with evidence that testifies to the faithful ruling and provision of the Father. Let go of trying to be in control. Don’t you know that anxiety and discontent are rooted in the desire to be in charge. This was the sin in the garden... “You will be like God, knowing good and evil”. Trusting God’s sovereign goodness and love is the opposite of anxiety and discontent. If I know that God is handling all things perfectly, and that what He has given me is the perfect portion from His hand for this time in life, then what do I need to fear? Why long for more? ... unless, I think I know better than God.

Because God is the source of all your good, and the One who makes all things work together for good (HC 1), then “*Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’ So we can confidently say, ‘The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?’”* (Heb 13:5-6) Therefore, put off the old nature of anxiety, and “*by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving make your requests known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*” (Phil 4:6,7) *Therefore, may we withdraw our trust from all creatures and place it in you alone.*

Conclusion

The events of life in this world are often confusing, and painful, and unexpected; causing you to wonder, "Can anything good come from this." In fact, it is rare (if ever) that one meets someone whose life turned out exactly as they had planned. You may be here this evening locked in a quest to make life, to make work, to make your spouse, to make your kids... well not perfect, but to make it all.... Okay.

Friends, you need to see and hear this evening what God's Word says, and the catechism teaches.

- 1<sup>st</sup> – there is one God in heaven, and He makes Himself known every day. You need to give thanks for everything you have every second of every day, because He takes care of you and your life every moment.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> – God is the one and only source and definition of any and all good in heaven and on earth. Therefore, you must seek and learn from Him what good is. When you do, you will find that good is found not in stuff and circumstance... but in God Himself and He freely offers Himself to you in the person of Jesus Christ now. The offer will close, so today is the day to seek Him.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> – God rules all of creation so that a star can't twinkle, a worm can't crawl, a cell can't grow, a hair can't fall, and life cannot begin or end without all things working together for the good God has appointed. This means that if you desire any good to come from your labor, you must seek it in the Lord alone. You cannot change the heart of your children. You cannot change the tide of the economy, politics, or world history... BUT you have the privilege of resting in the palm of God's hand, pouring out you hearts' desire, and trusting Him while He works all things for His glory and your good.
- 4<sup>th</sup> – this means that you must stop seeking your own good, chasing the idols of success, a perfect home, perfect kids, a perfect spouse, longer life, and sweeter days. Instead, you must seek all your good in the well of His perfect goodness and providence...

God, your Creator, and Father to all who are found in Christ, has drawn near to you by His HS and calls you today to pray to Him thru Christ and tell him all your pains... all your needs...all your fears... all your confusion; and then to trust Him alone for all your good. In praying this way, you honor and glorify Him by gratefully looking into His kind face by faith and testifying, "You O God, are my only good, my only blessing, and all my trust; for every need is in you, and in you alone.

May God above assure you dear ones of His unchanging and sovereign promises to you in Christ, by His Holy Spirit when you pray, give us the day our daily bread.

Amen.



# **THE DANGERS OF UNBELIEF**

**Old Testament Exegetical Paper**

Jonah 1:1-3

*In compliance with the request of the Classical Examination Committee*

*Submitted July 14, 2023*

**Kirk Patrick Gibbons**

**Jonah 1:1-3 Translation**

(footnotes listed with translation due to the Masoretic and vowel markings)

<p>Jonah 1:1 (BHS) וַיְהִי דְבַר־יְהוָה אֶל־יוֹנָה בֶן־אַמִּטַּי לֵאמֹר:</p>	<p><i>It came to pass<sup>1</sup>, the Word of YHWH<sup>2</sup> was to Jonah<sup>3</sup>, son of Amittai,<sup>4</sup> saying<sup>5</sup>,</i></p>
<p>Jonah 1:2 (BHS) קוּם לֵךְ אֶל־נִינְוֶה הָעִיר הַגְּדוֹלָה וּקְרָא עָלֶיהָ כִּי־עָלְתָה רָעַתָּם לְפָנָי:</p>	<p><i>“Arise, go<sup>6</sup> to Nineveh, that great city, and cry out against it.<sup>7</sup> For, their evil has gone up before my face.”<sup>8</sup></i></p>
<p>Jonah 1:3 (BHS) וַיָּקָם יוֹנָה לִבְרֹחַ תְּרַשְׁיִשָׁה מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה וַיֵּרֵד יָפוֹ וַיִּמְצָא אֲנִיָּהוּ בָאָה תְּרַשְׁיִשׁ וַיֵּתֵן שְׂכָרָהּ וַיֵּרֵד בָּהּ לָבוֹא עִמָּהֶם תְּרַשְׁיִשָׁה מִלִּפְנֵי יְהוָה:</p>	<p><i>But Jonah arose in order to flee<sup>9</sup> to Tarshish<sup>10</sup> from before the face of YHWH.<sup>11</sup> He went down to Joppa, and he found a ship going to Tarshish. He gave the fare, and went down into it, in order to go with them to Tarshish, from before the face of YHWH.<sup>12</sup></i></p>

<sup>1</sup> Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, Second edition (Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 99. וַיְהִי - The wayyiqtol form may be used on its own without a preceding clause to begin a narrative sequence or section of narrative. When introducing a book or section, it may be thought of less than a verbal form and more of a “macrosyntactical signal” for introducing a block of text.

<sup>2</sup> Construct form. דְבַר is the subject and יְהוָה is a genitive noun indicating that this is the “Word of the Lord”. The purpose of the book is to reveal what God has said through His prophet.

<sup>3</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew: Grammar, Exegesis, and Commentary on Jonah and Ruth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 23. “The expression ‘the word was to [proper name]’ indicates that the object of the preposition was the recipient of a message from God.”

<sup>4</sup> See 2 Kings 14:25

<sup>5</sup> This verb couples with the ל to act as a marker for direct discourse embedded in the narrative.

<sup>6</sup> Chisholm, *A Workbook for Intermediate Hebrew*, 24. The two imperatives placed back-to-back give a sense of urgency and immediacy.

<sup>7</sup> Chisholm, 25. Due to the surrounding context, including a causative particle (כִּי), and the evil that has gone up, it is best to understand עָלֶיהָ as “cry out against it”, as in judgment.

<sup>8</sup> This phrase, “before my face” also signifies in the sight or presence of God. This is repeated throughout the book and teaches that the acts of the just and unjust, Israelite and pagan, faithful and rebel, all are seen and known before God.

<sup>9</sup> לִבְרֹחַ - Qal, infinitive construct – though the verb form could also be imperative, the וַיְהִי indicates it is an infinitive construct showing the intent or purpose of the main verb which is וַיָּקָם “he arose”.

<sup>10</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, on Jonah. trans. John Owen, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Books, 2005), 29–30. – Calvin notes that his destination was Cilicia through the Sea of Tarshish. The matter is not of the greatest import except to say, Jonah fled the opposite direction of the destination he was commanded to go.

<sup>11</sup> George Hutcheson, *Exposition of the Minor Prophets* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1962), 36. This author notes that Jonah fled from the presence of God, that is from the land in which God made Himself known to His prophets. This is probably more accurate regarding disposition of heart. Though fleeing from God’s presence, he will later return to the face of the Lord while still located in the belly of the fish.

<sup>12</sup> The wayyiqtol verb form dominates this verse. This keeps the narrative quickly moving from one event to the next, emphasizing the active downward spiral of the prophet, away from the presence of YHWH.

## Background

The book of Jonah is one of the Minor Prophets, also known as the “Book of the Twelve”, in the Old Testament canon. The book itself gives little detail regarding authorship, though there is a strong tradition of attributing it to prophet himself. The period of the events in the book are more clearly discerned. 2 Kings 14:25 places the life and prophetic ministry of Jonah, son of Amittai, during the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 BC), and therefore a contemporary with Amos and Hosea.<sup>13</sup> There are very few clues as to the time of the book’s final completion.<sup>14</sup> Youngblood notes that opinions regarding the time of final authorship range from as early as 750 BC to as late as 200 BC. This is due in part to an apparent incongruity in the account’s details regarding the city of Nineveh and its king and the time period of Jonah’s life. Another factor contributing to the ambiguity of the date of authorship is the stripping down of historical detail in the account of the prophet.<sup>15</sup> Youngblood give three possible causes for this lack of detail. First, it may be the result of authorship taking place much later than the actual events recorded. Second, the details may have been stripped to highlight the universality of the book’s message for current and succeeding generations. Third, “the book of Jonah was not written as strict historiography. Rather, the author’s interests were more theological and didactic than historical and chronological.”<sup>16</sup> I find that all three of these possibilities make sense, but the date of authorship is simply not given, so speculation is not particularly helpful. However, it is helpful to recognize the effect of the author’s style, namely a stripped down and efficient use of narrative and poetry, in order to convey a historical yet universal message that is as theologically significant as it is historically true.

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<sup>13</sup> Kevin J. Youngblood, *Jonah*, Logos, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Zondervan, 2015), 32.

<sup>14</sup> Richard L. Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories: The Bible Student’s Guide to Interpreting Old Testament Narratives*, 1st ed (Brentwood, Tenn: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1990), 303.

<sup>15</sup> Youngblood, *Jonah*, 34.

<sup>16</sup> Youngblood, 31.

### **Purpose and Themes of the Book**

There are several theological themes present in Jonah. Prominent among these is Jonah wrestling with the tension between God's justice and mercy, and between God's universal reign and his particular election of Israel. Jonah struggles to reconcile these concerns because he, as well as Israel as a whole, misunderstood the role of God's elect people among the nations. Pratt adds, "Jonah focuses on the theme of Israel's prophetic role to the nations.... It demonstrates that God receives other nations, even the Assyrians, and expected the Jewish people to serve as mediators to them."<sup>17</sup> This misunderstanding not only pervades the prophets but is also at the root of the Jews rejection of Jesus as a Messiah who spent time among gentiles, prostitutes, and tax collectors. Thus, all the motifs of God's sovereignty, the inclusion of the Gentiles in divine grace, and the care of the Almighty over those in error,<sup>18</sup> serve to rebuke, or even mock Israel and Jonah for their hypocrisy and self-righteousness.<sup>19</sup>

Another prominent theological theme at work in the book of Jonah is that preaching is a means to repentance unto salvation. Though Bullock believes Jonah to introduce the concept that repentance may avert God's divine wrath<sup>20</sup>, the biblical record says otherwise. The book does indeed teach this message, but it is far from novel. God spoke a call to repentance to Cain. Noah preached repentance to the world, offering them a means to avert destruction. Lot and his family were spared by fleeing in faith. The Israelites were spared in the desert through repentance and the mediation of Moses. Repentance in the scripture is always an act of faith through which God's people are delivered. In Jonah, this very pattern of YHWH's compassion is the reason Jonah later gives for fleeing, "...for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, and relenting from disaster" (Jon 4:2). The theme of salvation through repentance in the face of judgment extends from Jonah forward, and is clearly preached in the New Testament exhortation, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mt 3:2),

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<sup>17</sup> Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 303.

<sup>18</sup> C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007), 57.

<sup>19</sup> Pratt, *He Gave Us Stories*, 303.

<sup>20</sup> Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 50,61.

“The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel” (Mk 1:15), and “unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (Lk 13:5). Thus, the book of Jonah contains and foreshadows some of the gospel elements present in Jesus’ ministry. Youngblood agrees and lists among these elements: a journey from death unto life, the offensive nature of God’s mercy, and the proclamation of salvation. Further he rightly sees a clear connection between the book of Jonah and Rom 11:28-36, where Paul teaches that the Jews became enemies for the sake of the gospel going out to the nations, just as God’s hardening and judgment of Jonah served to proclaim the gospel to Nineveh.<sup>21</sup>

### **Structure and Form of the Book**

The book of Jonah is highly structured for rhetorical emphasis. The basic narrative structure is driven by the wayyiqtol verbal pattern, which is the scaffold for the mainline of the plot and advances the plot through the action sequence.<sup>22</sup> While there are a few distinctions among commentators regarding how the book is divided, all agree that the repeated phrase, “And it came to pass the Word of the Lord came to Jonah...” serves as the two pillars (1:1;3:1) upon which the book is divided. From here there is some variation as to the way these two “halves” are divided. However, Youngblood helpfully identifies 6 rhetorical devices that give structure to the book and emphasize its points. The first of these is a parallelism that not only divides the book in half, but also emphasizes God’s command and Jonah’s responses, particularly in regard to the gentiles. Second, the author uses alternating scenes that move the dialogue and action from YHWH → Jonah → Gentiles, demonstrating the flow of revelation and the message of the gospel. The third is a high level of verbal repetition, particularly in the use of the Hebrew word for evil, which shows that both Jonah and Nineveh deserve the same fate (Rom 11:32). Fourth, the author symbolically uses geography to externalize the state or condition of Jonah’s heart and faith. When God speaks to him, he is on solid ground. Yet, when he is acting in rebellion he is subjected to storms, drowning, and blistering heat. Fifth, the author references several themes from other Scriptures,

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<sup>21</sup> Youngblood, *Jonah*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Youngblood, 36.

particularly Genesis 1-11. This can be seen in the “great city of Nineveh” and the connection of God’s care for man and beast among other more nuanced markers. Finally, Youngblood notes the author intentionally leaves gaps of information (such as Jonah’s reason for fleeing in chapter 1 is not answered until chapter 4). Perhaps this is a device aimed at probing the reader as to their own reaction in the face of God’s commands.<sup>23</sup> The effect of these devices is a book rhetorically structured to emphasize the sovereignty of God, the power of His Word, and salvation by faith in YHWH.

Jonah begins with the Word of the Lord. There is no background narrative or setting given. God speaks to Jonah, and unexpectedly commissions him to go to the Gentile city of Nineveh. God’s Word requires a response, and Jonah responds by fleeing from the presence of the Lord. His objection is not in word, but in decisive action that sends the prophet into a downward spiral of self-inflicted exile, which is the central point. Rebellion against God’s revelation exiles man from His presence unto judgment.

### **Exegetical Explanation**

#### ***Verse 1 – God calls Jonah by His Word (vs 1)***

The opening verse of the book begins with the common prophetic word formula,

וַיְהִי דְבַר-יְהוָה אֶל- (And it came to pass, the Word of YHWH was to...). This is a declaration of divine revelation from God through His prophet. It is unusual that this formula is without historical or situational context. The result is an abruptness that immediately gathers attention. This prophetic formula is repeated in 3:1 and so structures the first and second half of the book. As a rhetorical element, the phrase emphasizes the importance of divine revelation. Jonah did not craft the message of this book, but it came as direct revelation from God to His appointed prophet. Divine revelation is the only way for man to know God or to know himself, for man cannot know himself without a knowledge of God, and man cannot know God without divine revelation.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, how gracious, and good is it that God

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<sup>23</sup> Youngblood, 37–42.

<sup>24</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. John Allan, 7th ed., vol. 1 (Philadelphia, PA: Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1936), 47,48,51.

should deign to reveal Himself and communicate with fallen man? Thus, the whole of the book of Jonah is a gracious declaration of God's judgment against sin and His mercy to man.

The prophet to whom this word came was Jonah the son of Amittai. According 2 Kings 14:25, Jonah was known as a prophet in the northern kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam II. The northern kingdom under the reign of Jeroboam was blessed, and extended to its greatest bounds since Solomon, as was prophesied by Jonah. Nationalism among the people was high, and reverence for the God of their fathers was all but absent. 2 Kings 14 tells us that Jeroboam "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." Likewise, Calvin explains, "They [Israel] made a profession of true religion, they boasted that they were a holy people... yet they despised all the Prophets, so that their teaching among them was wholly useless." Perhaps this is why Jonah was sent elsewhere.<sup>25</sup> The obstinacy and idolatry of the people would eventually lead them into exile, but not before repeated warnings through the prophets. Thus, God sent Jonah to preach to the Gentiles, just as He would later send Paul (Acts 13:46).

### ***Verse 2: God Commissions Jonah with His Word***

The word which came to the prophet was imperative and urgent. It begins with two successive imperatives to "Get up (arise)! And Go!" The servants of God are not to be about their own business but that of their Lord's purpose and direction.<sup>26</sup>

God's commission to Jonah was totally foreign. Though Jonah is a prophet of Israel, God commands him to go outside the boundaries of Israel, to the Gentiles. Moreover, God commands Jonah to go to Israel's enemies. While other prophets were given oracles regarding other nations, particularly their judgment, it is unique that Jonah was commanded to go to Nineveh and preach a message to call them to repentance. Youngblood notes that the term "that great city" in regard to Nineveh is rich in reference to the ancient founding of Assyria, reaching back to its origins in Genesis 10.<sup>27</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>25</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2: Jonah. 20.

<sup>26</sup> Hutcheson, *Exposition of the Minor Prophets*, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Youngblood, *Jonah*, 54.

great cities of ancient origin such as Nod and Babel were founded by those exiled from the presence of God seeking to build their own gardens, their own mountains (Tower of Babel), essentially their own existence apart from God.<sup>28</sup> This being true, the commission to go to Nineveh was not only urgent, but shocking. Calvin suggests that the Lord sent Jonah to Nineveh in order to provide His own people with an example of “pious docility”, that is humble repentance, from a foreign and uncircumcised people so as to leave His own without excuse.<sup>29</sup> Rather than conquering the nations by the sword, God sends Jonah to conquer hearts, first of the Ninevites by faith which comes by hearing (Rom 10:14,15), then of Israel through pious jealousy (Rom 11:25-36), leading to faith and repentance.

God’s commission to Jonah was not coercive (by military might), but it was “ministerial and declarative.”<sup>30</sup> Jonah was sent to declare or preach a message, to “cry out against” the city. Jonah’s message was a warning of judgment for sin. Chisolm explains that the causative particle, יָ (for or against), works with the rest of the context to understand יָ-עָלְתָהּ as “cry out against it”, meaning “in judgment”.<sup>31</sup>

God tells Jonah the reason for this commission, “their evil has gone up before my face.” This idiom carries the sense of a careless accumulation of offenses to such an extent that God can no longer suffer their wickedness to go unpunished. The language “emphasizes the blatant nature of Assyria’s crimes, which they had shamelessly put on display.”<sup>32</sup> This display was not in a vacuum. Rather, it was a reckless piling up of offenses against the God who has clearly revealed Himself in the things that have been made, leaving them with no excuse (Rom 1:20). Their wickedness was a repeated, full rebellion

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<sup>28</sup> L. Michael Morales, *Who Shall Ascend the Mountain of the Lord? A Biblical Theology of the Book of Leviticus*, New Studies in Biblical Theology 37 (Downers Grove, Illinois: Apollos, InterVarsity Press, 2015).

<sup>29</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2: Jonah. 20.

<sup>30</sup> Thomas Ephraim Peck, *Notes on Ecclesiology - Primary Source Edition* (Nabu Press, 2014). See Peck’s discussion of the nature of ecclesiastical vs civil power. Israel as the Old Testament church was given both spheres of power under the national covenant, but the office of the prophet was specifically ministerial and declarative of the gospel.

<sup>31</sup> See footnote 7

<sup>32</sup> Youngblood, *Jonah*, 55.



against the God of heaven and earth. Jonah was not sent to suggest how they might change, but to declare divine judgment, so that they might repent and believe (Jonah 3:5-10).

Nineveh's cosmic rebellion against the Almighty God was committed before the face of God. The term מִלְפָּנָי (before my face) is significant for two reasons. First, the fact that the sins of the nations are before the face of YHWH, shows that God's eyes are upon all His creation, and He takes notice of all the works of man. Therefore, as God's creatures, they not only owe Him honor and praise, but they are responsible to seek and obey Him as Ruler. Second, Nineveh's guilt is increased all the more because it boldly and blatantly piled up sin in full sight of the Ruler of all creation and His law written upon the hearts of men and the created order. Therefore, as all creation is laid bare before God, mankind sins openly and defiantly "in His face", thus they carry the full responsibility for all their corruption. Therefore, the Lord sends Jonah not only to show that Almighty God is Ruler of all heaven and earth, punishing sin and corruption even among the pagan nations; but also, says Hutcheson, to leave a sure witness in the repentance of Nineveh against any who stubbornly refuse the gospel.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Verse 3: Jonah Rebels Against God***

The third verse is dominated by the wayyiqtol verb form, which drives the narrative mainline forward.<sup>34</sup> The result is a sequence of actions that reveal the prophet's intentional disobedience. The fronting of the name, Jonah, directly after the verb creates a strong adversative to the shocking commission of YHWH. Youngblood observes that since most divine commissions in Hebrew narrative are followed by the subject's obedience, and since the verb אָרָא (and he arose) mirrors the first imperative in vs 2, the reader is baited to expect Jonah's compliance, but this is not the case. Instead of "going", Jonah flees.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Hutcheson, *Exposition of the Minor Prophets*, 36.

<sup>34</sup> B. M. Rocine, *Learning Biblical Hebrew: A New Approach Using Discourse Analysis* (Macon, Ga: Smyth & Helwys Pub, 2000), 424.

<sup>35</sup> Youngblood, *Jonah*, 56.

Jonah's disobedience was rebellion. The author does not explain Jonah's reasoning, but instead strings together a series of downward actions. The effect is that as Jonah flees from the presence of the Lord, he progresses further and further downward. Youngblood notes, that this downward progress is opposite to the Lord's command to "get up". Thus, Jonah flees instead of going, and descends instead of arises.<sup>36</sup>

It is also notable that Jonah is bound for Tarshish. Calvin is adamant that Tarshish is a region or sea, not a city, and that his actual destination is Cilicia.<sup>37</sup> I have no reason to dispute this, and it is somewhat irrelevant whether it is an individual city or a region where Cilicia was located. It is significant that Jonah was headed far to the West in rebellion. Youngblood helpfully explains that Tarshish was associated with exotic and distant lands of the West, in the opposite direction from Nineveh. Most significantly, "Tarshish was known as a location where YHWH had not yet revealed His glory or His Word."<sup>38</sup> The repetition of Tarshish and "away from the presence of the Lord" emphasizes Jonah's intent to remove himself from the face of God and to plug his ears against God's call and commission.

Calvin asserts that Jonah's flight was fueled by the weakness of the flesh, the novelty of the message, and because he despaired of a lack of fruit among his hearers.<sup>39</sup> From a human standpoint, this is possible, but the absence of a reason for flight in vs 3 serves to significantly highlight Jonah's actions. Regardless of the reason (which we are given in chapter 4), Jonah's actions demonstrate intentional disobedience. Jonah placed more weight on his own concerns than the powerful and good hand of God, believing that God was in error. Therefore, Jonah's essential sin is unbelief, for as James teaches, "Faith apart from works is dead" (Jm. 2:26). Just as the early Israelite tribes were exiled and perished in the wilderness for failing to believe God as they entered the land of Canaan, Jonah refused to believe that YHWH would be just in His mercy. He was blinded by unbelief. Hutcheson helpfully comments that

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<sup>36</sup> Youngblood, 58.

<sup>37</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:Jonah. 29.

<sup>38</sup> Youngblood, *Jonah*, 56.

<sup>39</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2: Jonah. 28.

“men in their rebellion are ordinarily so addicted to their own will, that they are blind”.<sup>40</sup> This is true of Jonah. Like Israel, he failed to understand the role that the elect people of Israel were to play in the world. The promise to Abraham was, “...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3). God’s people are to proclaim the goodness of God to the world and put His glory on display. This was the great failure of Israel as the servant of YHWH. They failed to proclaim the glory of God to the nations, and instead became like them. Jonah (and Israel with him) failed to understand, and “preferred to go down to the grave, than to undertake an office which apparently had no reason in its favor.”<sup>41</sup>

### **Concluding Summary, Theme, and Proposed Outline**

The first three verses of Jonah 1 contain God’s call to the prophet Jonah, God’s commission to the prophet, and Jonah’s response. In these verses God teaches that rebellion against God results in exile and destruction. God’s call to Jonah teaches us that God alone reveals truth and knowledge to man. He does this through men of His own choosing, whom He calls into service by His own sovereign will. God’s commission to Jonah teaches us that God’s call upon our lives and His purpose in us is beyond dispute and requires obedience. Though we may not fully understand, by faith we are to conform our wills to His in gratitude and obedience, for all mankind lives before His face and is accountable for every deed done under the sun. Jonah’s response teaches us that living in opposition to the revealed will of God is a downward spiral that leads to exile from God’s presence, the removal of His favor, and ultimate destruction. Therefore, we are left understanding that in our own rebellion we are no better than the rank heathen before a holy God. We all deserve His wrath and judgment. However, in mercy God has sent His gospel into the world so that by faith in His Son, the great Prophet, Priest, and King, all may believe, repent and be saved from certain destruction.

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<sup>40</sup> Hutcheson, *Exposition of the Minor Prophets*, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:28.

### **Homiletical Theme and Outline**

#### **Theme: Rebellion against God's Word Results in Exile and Destruction**

- I. God calls Jonah by His Word (vs 1)
  - A. The nature of God's call
    - 1. It is God's call
    - 2. It is a gracious call
  - B. The recipient of God's call
    - 1. God calls an Israelite
    - 2. God calls His appointed prophet
- II. God Commissions Jonah with His Word (vs 2)
  - A. The nature of the commission
    - 1. The commission is authoritative
    - 2. The commission is foreign
    - 3. The commission is declarative
  - B. The reason for the commission
    - 1. Nineveh has rebelled
    - 2. Nineveh's sin is before God's face
- III. Jonah Rebels Against God and His Word (vs 3)
  - A. The nature of Jonah's rebellion
  - B. The reason for Jonah's rebellion
  - C. The result of Jonah's rebellion

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**INTRODUCTION**

When I was a little boy, we sang in Sunday School. Children do you sing in Sunday School? Sure you do. One song in particular was not only sung at Sunday School, but also at home, and at school.

Obedience is, the very best way, to show that you believe....  
doing exactly what the Lord commands, doing it happily.  
Action is the key. Do it immediately. Joy you will receive.  
Obedience is the very best way to show that you believe.”

I wonder why that song was so popular with my parents and teachers.... Well, perhaps its because obedience is a challenge.

Children, what happens when you don't obey happily, actively, and immediately? Consequences come, don't they? They do, and the truth is that Mom and Dad's consequences are actually very gracious when you consider how God views disobedience. God says that disobedience is the cause of death, and it sends your eternal soul to hell forever. He says in Eph. 2:2 that all people are born dead in sin following the spirit of disobedience. In Eph. 5:6 he says that the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Disobedience is rebellion against God and leads to destruction.

Today we are going to read about a very well known example of disobedience. There was a reason that Jonah ended up in that big ol' fish. Before he got there, he rebelled against God. We are going to read about how all that started and what it means for people when they rebel against living God of heaven and earth.

**Theme: Rebellion against God's Word Results in Exile and Destruction**

- 1. God Calls Jonah By His Word (vs 1)*
- 2. God Commissions Jonah with His Word (vs 2)*
- 3. Jonah Rebels Against God and His Word (vs 3)*

**GOD CALLS JONAH BY HIS WORD (VS 1)**

**A. The nature of God's call:** The book of Jonah opens with an abrupt announcement. It would be easy for us to pass by this opening verse without much thought, as a sort of sanctified “once upon a time”. But that would be a foolish error.

This opening verse tells us first, that the God of all creation, is speaking, and that He is speaking to a man. World religions and philosophies wrestle and struggle with the unknowability of God. This is the basic premise of agnosticism. They would say that even if there is a God there is no way for me to know a being that is so transcendent. In some ways there is truth in this. God is transcendent. God is completely other than man. Isaiah says, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9). Yet God has not left Himself unknowable. David in Psalm 19 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge” (Ps. 19:1-2). Further Paul teaches in Romans 1:19-20, “...what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” God has revealed Himself to man, not only in creation and His governing of it, but also by direct, verbal revelation, which He has commanded to be written down. The otherwise unknowable God has made himself known, to man. God's Word is a direct, clear, call to action.

**B. The recipient of God's call:** The Word of God comes to His prophet for distribution. We know he is a prophet first because God is speaking to him. However, Scripture also testifies in 2 Kings 14 that Jonah, son of Amittai served in the office of prophet around 750 BC in the northern kingdom of Israel. He served during the reign of Jeroboam II, and he prophesied that the northern kingdom would expand to its greatest extent since the time of Solomon, which it did. This was time of great national pride and success in the northern kingdom, and a time of great wickedness. God's people had become idolaters as the nations around them, their king did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and the nation failed to listen to its prophets. While they professed to be God's people, they lived as the pagans. Therefore, the Lord sends His prophet, with His Word, to an unlikely audience, with a message of judgment.

**Application:** What would be your response to hearing the Word of the Lord directly? How would you respond? Now consider dear Christian the privilege you hold in your hands. We confess that God has made Himself known in His Holy Word. That “this Word of God was not sent nor delivered by the will of men, but that holy men of God spoke, being moved by the Holy Spirit... Afterwards our God... commanded His servants, the prophets and apostles, to commit this revealed Word to writing” (BC 3). The Bible in your hands is the written down, verbal communication of the God of the universe! Paul says, “I would have you know, brothers, that the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:11-12). The author to the Hebrews tells us that in previous days, God revealed Himself in various ways, but in these last days He has fully revealed Himself to us in His Son (Heb 1:2). If then the Word of God is His revelation to man in Jesus Christ, and through His Spirit; then you must receive it as it really is, the voice of God, come from heaven for you to know Him and to know yourself before Him.

**GOD COMMISSIONS JONAH WITH HIS WORD (vs 2)**

**A. The nature of the commission:** The Word of the Lord to Jonah is a commission to action. It begins with two commands, “Get up” and “GO”. The two commands together add a sense of authoritative urgency. Jonah is not to stand around and decide his own business, but to be about the business of His God<sup>1</sup> “Arise and go to Nineveh”.

God’s commission is not only urgent but strange and foreign. Nineveh was not a part of Israel; it was a gentile city. In fact, one commentator notes that it was a city with roots that go back to foundation of the Assyrian empire (Gen. 10).<sup>2</sup> Jonah was being sent outside the bounds of Israel, to foreigners, and to enemy territory. This is a striking departure from the prophet’s expected commission. Even though prophets in Israel were often given oracles regarding the gentile nations, such as Isaiah’s oracles regarding Egypt and Cush, or Tyre and Sidon, it was another thing entirely to physically go to the people who the message is condemning.

Perhaps the mission to Nineveh would have made more sense to Jonah if it had been a military campaign to conquer the city. This would have fallen in line with Jonah’s previous prophesy regarding the expansion of the kingdom. Yet God sends Jonah not to conquer, but to preach, to declare judgment to that great city of Nineveh, and “cry out against it”. In other words, Jonah was to go to the city, walk around, and let all of them know that God’s judgment is coming because of their evil. This is not the way to win friends and influence people. This is a bold declaration of God’s justice against sin.

**B. The reason for the commission:** The reason for Jonah’s commission is that the evil of that city had come up before the face of YHWH. What does this mean? Essentially, the city of Nineveh has racked up blatant and shameless offenses against God who has clearly put Himself on display in the things that have been made, leaving them accountable and without excuse (Ps. 19; Rom 1:20).

Further, God says that their evil has gone up before His face. The phrase, “before my face” is significant for two reasons. First, it shows that the sins of the nations are before the face of God, whose eyes are upon all His creation, taking notice of all the works of man. Therefore, as God’s creatures, they not only owe Him honor and praise, but they are responsible to seek and obey Him as Ruler. Second, Nineveh’s guilt is increased all the more because it boldly and blatantly piled up sin in full sight of the Ruler of all creation and His law written upon the hearts of men and the created order. Therefore, as all creation is laid bare before God, mankind sins openly and defiantly “in His face”, thus they carry the full responsibility for all their corruption.

**Application:** The fact that God has revealed Himself in creation and His Word is a terrible reality for all who disregard His Lordship and openly rebel against God’s revealed law. “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth” (Rom. 1:18). God’s Law holds all men accountable for every wicked thought and practice because they are all before His face. It is for this reason that our catechism says that God is “terribly angry with the sin we are born with as well as our actual sins”, and “He will punish them by a just judgment both now and in eternity” (HC 10). Therefore, all your inborn and actual sins – acts, thoughts, and impulses – are before the face of God and exposed before Him. The sin of mankind goes up before Him, crying out against us for the satisfaction of justice just as Abel’s blood cried out from the ground.

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<sup>1</sup> George Hutcheson, *Exposition of the Minor Prophets* (Ann Arbor, MI: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1962), 35.

<sup>2</sup> Kevin J. Youngblood, *Jonah*, Logos, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (Zondervan, 2015), 54.

**JONAH REBELS AGAINST GOD AND HIS WORD (vs 3)**

**A. The nature of Jonah's rebellion:** Verse 3 brings a bit of a twist. The verse begins with an indication that Jonah is going to obey. "Jonah arose..." But contrary to expectation, rather than going, Jonah flees. The reader gets juked! Instead of going east to Nineveh, Jonah goes West, and runs from before the face of the Lord. What does this mean? Does Jonah think he can escape from God? Is he so foolish to think he can hide, perhaps as Adam did? The author does not actually tell us Jonah's thoughts in this text<sup>3</sup>, but instead gives us a series of actions that describe what Jonah is doing.

The first thing we notice in Jonah's actions is that he went from the presence of the Lord, and secondly, he continued to go down... down to Joppa where he found a ship going to Tarshish and down into the ship away from the presence of the Lord. Tarshish was more than likely either a region or a sea. One commentator notes, it was an area associated with the exotic and distant lands of the West. It was in the opposite direction of Nineveh and known to be a place where the Word of God had not yet been revealed.<sup>4</sup> Jonah intentionally goes West instead of East, down instead of arising, and away from the presence of the Lord instead of proclaiming the Word of the Lord.

**B. The reason for Jonah's rebellion:** Why? Why is Jonah rebelling so intentionally and blatantly? The author does not tell us in this text, perhaps to have us ask this very question. What motivates rebellion? Our perhaps the author leaves it out to intentionally highlight the fact that the reason for Jonah's rebellion is not as relevant as the fact of His rebellion. Jonah was an Israelite and a prophet. Just as Israel professed to be a holy nation yet lived as pagans, Jonah professed to be a servant of YHWH, but rejected His authority. By silencing Jonah, the author lets Jonah's actions speak. "Faith without works is dead" (Jm. 2:26). Jonah's actions tell us that Jonah's reason for fleeing was unbelief.

**C. The result of Jonah's rebellion:** In unbelief Jonah fled to avoid the voice and presence of God. Jonah's actions resulted in a literal "downward" spiral that mirrored Israel's rebellion. As Israel became like the nations in idolatry, Jonah became as the gentiles in unbelief. He sought out a ship and paid the fare to journey among the gentile travelers. In doing so, Jonah becomes liable for the same judgment God has declared for Nineveh. As Nineveh's sin has come up before the face of YHWH, so Jonah's sin of fleeing, is full rebellion before God's face. At the end of verse 3, the reader is left with a sense of calamity. If the "great city" of man is under God's judgment, and God's people have failed unto the same judgement, what hope is there. Sin and Misery – This is what we are left with, a pile of sin and misery.

**Application:** Christian, are you any better than Jonah? Jonah did not think of himself as a former Israelite or a pagan gentile. Yet, he let his own sense of what "should be" override his submission to God, rather than faithfully and obediently proclaiming that which God commanded. If we were to do as our text does, and we removed your vocal profession, leaving only your actions, what would your life reveal? Have you eagerly received God's Word, accepted His commission and commands, and then faithful gone out to obey? Perhaps you haven't bought fare on a ship, but have you purchased anything from the world... perhaps even something small (that fits in your pocket), that distracts and fills your eyes and ears with the things of the world, rendering you unavailable for work in the home, the workplace, the world to whom you have been sent? Do you leave here on Sundays, with the Word of God in your ear and in your hands, only to go out into the world and live as a practical atheist – professing faith but living as the godless?

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<sup>3</sup> Although we are told in chapter 4 of Jonah's reasoning, we are only dealing with what has been revealed so far.

<sup>4</sup> Youngblood, 56.



**CONCLUSION**

If obedience is the very best way to show that you believe, then rebellion and disobedience is the clearest way to show that you do not believe. This is a hard reality because there is not a single person in this room who can claim to be perfectly obedient. Paul says, “None is righteous, no, not one”, and “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:10,11;23). This means that if your salvation is based on your behavior, you are lost. This is what our catechism labels our sin and misery. There is no comfort or hope in this world or the next until you understand that your sin and rebellion... not just the things people know about, but the sins and corruption that no one knows about...the stuff you would never tell anyone... all your sins inward and outward have gone up before the face of God. In His goodness and justice, His Word tells you that this is so, but so does your conscience. There is no hiding from God, not in a bush, not in a ship, not in your phone, Cadillac, or Sunday best. God sees you and His Word cries out in judgement against your sin.

But God has also sent another message and another Messenger. God is just, but also merciful. In His mercy He sent His very own Son as the perfect Messenger. Unlike Jonah, Jesus obeyed God and did so perfectly. He came into the world to preach the righteousness of God and the coming judgement against sin. But He also came satisfy the justice of His Father for all who answer His call in faith. Jesus has paid the eternal consequences for your rebellion. Your disobedience was laid upon Him, and by faith alone, His perfect obedience is laid upon you. In this way, God the Father delivers sinners from their sin and misery and counts those purchased and washed in the blood of Christ as righteous in His sight.

What does that faith look like? Living faith believes that God is faithful and just, forgiving and cleansing all those who confess their sins, repent, and believe. Living faith does not look for assurance in your own obedience, but in the finished, perfect obedience of Christ. He is our only Advocate and only Savior. (1 Jhn. 1:9-2:2). Trusting in Him, living faith then acts in grateful, imperfect, but persistent obedience. Thankful obedience is the very best way to show that you believe and love the Savior.

**CHRIST OUR SURE FOUNDATION OF HOPE**

**New Testament Exegetical Paper**

**1 Peter 2:1-10**

*In compliance with the request of the Classical Examination Committee*

*Submitted July 14, 2023*

**Kirk Patrick Gibbons**

### 1 Peter 2:1-10 Translation

1 Ἀποθέμενοι<sup>1</sup> οὐ<sup>2</sup> πᾶσαν κακίαν καὶ πάντα δόλον  
καὶ ὑποκρίσεις καὶ φθόνους καὶ πάσας καταλαλιάς,<sup>3</sup>

*Therefore, putting aside all malice and all deceit, and  
hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,*

2 ὡς ἀρτιγέννητα βρέφη, τὸ λογικὸν<sup>4</sup> ἄδολον γάλα  
ἐπιποθήσατε<sup>5</sup>, ἵνα ἐν αὐτῷ αὐξηθῆτε<sup>6</sup>  
[εἰς σωτηρίαν]<sup>7</sup>,

*as newborn infants, long for the pure milk of the Word,  
that in it you might grow up (unto salvation),*

3 εἴπερ<sup>8</sup> ἐγεύσασθε<sup>9</sup> ὅτι χρηστὸς ὁ κύριος<sup>10</sup>.

*if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

4 πρὸς ὃν προσερχόμενοι<sup>11</sup>, λίθον ζῶντα<sup>12</sup>, ὑπὸ  
ἀνθρώπων μὲν<sup>13</sup> ἀποδοκιμασμένον<sup>14</sup>, παρὰ δὲ θεῶ  
ἐκλεκτόν<sup>15</sup>, ἔντιμον,

*Coming to Him, a living stone, rejected by men, but in  
the sight of God, chosen and precious,*

5 καὶ αὐτοὶ ὡς λίθοι ζῶντες<sup>16</sup> οἰκοδομεῖσθε<sup>17</sup> οἶκος  
πνευματικός, ἱεράτευμα<sup>18</sup> ἅγιον, ἀνενέγκαι<sup>19</sup>  
πνευματικὰς θυσίας εὐπροσδέκτους<sup>20</sup> τῷ θεῷ διὰ  
Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ.

*you yourselves also, like living stones, are being built up  
[as] a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up  
spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus  
Christ.*

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<sup>1</sup> Aorist, middle, participle- nominative, masculine plural – As an aorist participle, preceding the main verb, ἐπιποθήσατε – which is also aorist - I take this as a participle of attendant circumstance even though it is not in a narrative passage. Thus, the participle carries the weight of the imperative, but is subordinate to the following command.

<sup>2</sup> Connects this statement in 1-3 with that which preceded it regarding new birth in 1:23

<sup>3</sup> Robertson notes that the use of plurals in contrast to the singulars adds stress on the separate acts listed.

<sup>4</sup> Adj – accusative, neuter, singular – translated as spiritual in ESV, NIV, NLT, NET and ASV. The word, being related to λογος, is elsewhere rendered “of the word”. Strong glosses it as “rational; logical; reasonable; of the word”

<sup>5</sup> Aorist, active, imperative -2p, plural: this is the main verb to which the participle of vs1 is connected and subordinate.

<sup>6</sup> ἵνα clause with aorist, active, subjunctive indicating the result of the main action.

<sup>7</sup> Variant in critical text. **Wallace** states the goal of this growth is to grow up “unto salvation” (var. εἰς σωτηρίαν) - this is a variation found in the manuscripts used by the critical text, but few consulted commentators address the variation. [Daniel B Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2008), 369–70]. **Clowney** makes the assertion that the phrase is best translated "unto salvation" rather than "in your salvation". This would make the use of εἰς a preposition of result, rather than reference. [Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England ; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 80]

<sup>8</sup> Variant: εἰ is found in the Alexandrian text. Metzger notes that εἴπερ is a stylistic improvement with more nuance. This variant lends to the translation “if indeed”.

<sup>9</sup> Aorist, deponent, indicative-2p, plural: Vincent notes that this is a tasting that excites the appetite. It is a tasting that has occurred at new birth, but continues to crave that which it tasted.

<sup>10</sup> This is conditional statement with a ὅτι clause which includes a verbless clause as the direct object in an indirect discourse structure following the verb of perception, ἐγεύσασθε. Wallace notes that in this conditional statement, the protasis is assumed true and it is the apodosis that is in question. (694)

<sup>11</sup> Present, deponent, participle- nominative, masculine, plural (adverbial)

<sup>12</sup> Present, active, participle- accusative, masculine, singular: Lenski notes Peter’s connection between the new life of the babe in Christ and the *living* stone. Also, Clowney comments that Peter highlights that Christ is the living stone, for he does not lay in the ground still, but is alive!

<sup>13</sup> μὲν / δὲ construction that contrasts one statement against another – *on the one hand, but on the other*

<sup>14</sup> Perfect, passive, participle- accusative, masculine, singular: describing the stone.

<sup>15</sup> As Christ is the chosen and precious stone of God, by union with Him we are also chosen and precious in the sight of God.

<sup>16</sup> Present, active, participle- nominative, masculine, plural

<sup>17</sup> Present, passive, indicative-2p, plural: This verb can feasibly be read as an imperative, passive, or middle form. Both Lenski and Calvin agree that the verb must be passive due to context. The act of being built up is like the act of coming previously mentioned. They are a work of God.

<sup>18</sup> Variation - εἰς is added in the critical text contributing to the added prepositions of *for, as, or to be*. While not necessary, the preposition does help draw the connection between the spiritual house and the holy priesthood

<sup>19</sup> Aorist active infinitive – infinitive of purpose. In other words, the body is built into a temple and priesthood for the purpose of offering acceptable spiritual sacrifices

<sup>20</sup> While the OT priests had to offer continual sacrifices of blood, Christ has become the final sacrifice for sins. The remaining sacrifices to be made by this priesthood is that of a living sacrifice (See Rom. 12:1)

6 Διότι<sup>21</sup> περιέχει<sup>22</sup> ἐν τῇ γραφῇ, Ἰδοῦ, τίθημι<sup>23</sup> ἐν Σιών λίθον ἀκρογωνιαίον, ἐκλεκτόν, ἔντιμον· καὶ ὁ πιστεύων<sup>24</sup> ἐπ' αὐτῷ οὐ μὴ καταισχυθῆι.<sup>25,26</sup>

*For this reason, it is contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I place in Zion a cornerstone chosen and precious, and the one who believes upon Him will surely not be put to shame."*

7 Ὑμῖν οὖν ἡ τιμὴ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν<sup>27</sup>. ἀπειθοῦσιν<sup>28</sup> δέ, Λίθον ὃν ἀπεδοκίμασαν<sup>29</sup> οἱ οἰκοδομοῦντες<sup>30</sup>, οὗτος ἐγενήθη<sup>31</sup> εἰς κεφαλὴν γωνίας,<sup>32 33</sup>

*Therefore, the honor is for you who are believing, but to those disobeying, "the stone, the builders rejected, this One has become the chief cornerstone,"*

8 καὶ, Λίθος προσκόμματος καὶ πέτρα σκανδάλου<sup>34,35</sup>. οἱ προσκόπτουσιν<sup>36</sup> τῷ λόγῳ ἀπειθοῦντες<sup>37</sup>. εἰς ὃ καὶ ἐτέθησαν.<sup>38</sup>

*and, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense." They are stumbling at the Word, because they are being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.*

9 Ὑμεῖς δὲ γένος ἐκλεκτόν, βασιλείον ἱεράτευμα, ἔθνος ἅγιον, λαὸς εἰς περιποίησιν, ὅπως τὰς ἀρετὰς ἐξαγγείλητε<sup>39</sup> τοῦ ἐκ σκότους ὑμᾶς καλέσαντος<sup>40</sup> εἰς τὸ θαυμαστὸν αὐτοῦ φῶς·

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for possession, so that you might proclaim the excellencies of His character who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*

10 οἱ ποτὲ οὐ λαὸς, νῦν δὲ λαὸς θεοῦ· οἱ οὐκ ἠληθήμενοι<sup>41</sup>, νῦν δὲ ἐληθέντες.<sup>42,43</sup>

*who formerly [were] not a people, but now [are] the people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy.*

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<sup>21</sup> **διότι**, conjunction, equivalent to *διὰ τοῦτο*, ὅτι; "on this account that, because," (cf. Winer's Grammar, 445 (415). Thayer's Lexicon in BW 10; re: 1 Peter 2:6

<sup>22</sup> Present, active, indicative – 3p, singular: carries the sense of seizing, coming upon, or containment

<sup>23</sup> Present, active, indicative – 1p, singular – This verb appears again in verse 8. The One who appointed or placed the Stone, also appointed the doom of the disobedient

<sup>24</sup> Present, active, participle- nominative, masculine, plural

<sup>25</sup> Present, passive, subjunctive-3p, singular

<sup>26</sup> Quoted from Isaiah 28:16

<sup>27</sup> Present, active, participle- dative, masculine, plural

<sup>28</sup> Present, active, participle- dative, masculine, plural

<sup>29</sup> Aorist, active, indicative- 3p, plural

<sup>30</sup> Present, active, participle- nominative, masculine, plural

<sup>31</sup> Aorist, passive, indicative- 3p, singular

<sup>32</sup> Quoted from Psalm 118:22

<sup>33</sup> A corner stone was the first stone placed in a foundation and had to be true and straight, for all the rest locked in place by virtue of it's integrity. Jesus Christ is the priceless, precious, and perfect first stone and foundation of His body the church.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted from Isaiah 8:14

<sup>35</sup> Both of these I take as expegetical genitives, describing what the Rock is to them.

<sup>36</sup> Present, active, indicative- 3p, plural

<sup>37</sup> Present, active, participle- nominative, masculine, plural - I take this as participle of cause. "stumbling *because* they are disobeying"

<sup>38</sup> Aorist, passive, indicative- 3p, plural: See note 15 – τίθημι – reflects God's sovereign decree of election and reprobation.

<sup>39</sup> Aorist, active, subjunctive,- 2p, plural

<sup>40</sup> Aorist, active, participle- genitive, masculine, singular

<sup>41</sup> Perfect, passive, participle- nominative, masculine, plural

<sup>42</sup> Aorist, passive, participle- nominative, masculine, plural

<sup>43</sup> Hosea 2:23 prophesies that God will again draw those whom he has scattered back to Himself.

## **Background**

The book of First Peter is an epistle addressed to the elect exiles of the dispersion, the suffering saints scattered among the nations in “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1). Peter wrote from Rome, in approximately 62-63 AD.<sup>44</sup> The exiles to whom the apostle wrote were early Christians, a majority of which were gentiles ejected or exiled from their home due to their profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Brandon Crowe explains, “Peter wrote this letter to Christians who had very likely been displaced from their homes and transplanted in a foreign land far away from all that was familiar.” This displacement or dispersion was a result of Roman persecution of Christians. Crowe continues to say that many of these transplanted Christians may have not had Roman citizenship due to this persecution even though their families had been in the region for many generations. Therefore, they were not only exiles from Rome, but also shunned foreigners and outsiders in the places they were sent.<sup>45</sup> These displaced Christians faced great suffering as newborn babes in Christ, and therefore were susceptible to discouragement and temptation.

## **Purpose and Themes of the Book**

Peter’s letter of encouragement is designed to strengthen the persecuted church by pointing them to the solid hope of the resurrection and glorious inheritance of the kingdom of God in Christ. Peter structures his exhortation with a repeating cycle of indicative and imperative exhortations. He teaches that the reality of who they are by virtue of being elected, called, and reborn in Christ, brings hope and comfort, but also brings responsibility to live lives consistent with who they have become. Therefore, the theme of the epistle is, “*Salvation in Christ is the foundation and substance of the living hope of the elect amid suffering and exile*”.

## **Structure and Form of the Book**

Peter’s letter to the exiles begins with an address, then a greeting and body, concluding with a closing section. Following the apostolic greeting, Douglas and Moo note that the body of the letter is broken into three parts, set off by Peter’s use of the term, ἀγαπητοί, or “beloved”.<sup>46</sup> In the first portion of the epistle, Peter exhorts them to live distinctly

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<sup>44</sup> D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, Second edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2005), 646.

<sup>45</sup> Brandon D. Crowe, *The Message of the General Epistles in the History of Redemption: Wisdom from James, Peter, John, and Jude*, First edition (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P&R Publishing, 2015), 4–5.

<sup>46</sup> Carson and Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 636.  
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as a holy people, rooted and grounded in their identity as God's people in the midst of suffering as exiles (1:3-2:10). Secondly, he directs them to live out this identity in the various roles they have been given in this world (2:11-4:11), and finally, continues to exhort them to live as members one-of-another in Christ, in the life of the church (4:12-5:9).

### **Exegetical Explanation**

The first ten verses of chapter two end the apostle's first major section. Peter exhorts the elect and suffering exiles, scattered in Asia minor to put aside all that once belonged to their life in this world, and to find their sustenance, their value, and their citizenship in Christ who is the solid foundation of their Christian hope.

#### ***Verses 1-3 – Christ Is the Foundation of New Birth***

Verses 1-3 of chapter 2 exhort the saints to live as those brought from death unto life. The οὖν (so, therefore) in 2:1, connects the apostle's previous indicatives of chapter 1 to the imperatives that follow. Peter is reasoning, in light of their regeneration through the imperishable seed of the Word of God (1:23a), they are then to put off the deeds of the world and live lives commensurate with their new identity in Christ. They must put away the deeds of the dead heart characterized by malice and evil. They must put off the root and the practices of evil speech and conduct. Peter punctuates this with a conditional statement in verse 3 that ties the sweet justifying grace of God tasted in conversion to the ongoing need to feed on the Spirit's sanctifying grace.

1. Verse one of chapter two, lists habits and patterns of worldly speech which reveal both the sins of the heart and their expression. AT Robertson explains that Peter's switch from singular nouns to the plural is an idiomatic usage (some of these words were perhaps seen to be more appropriate in the plural), but nevertheless places emphasis on the separate acts.<sup>47</sup> "Malice" and "deceit" are singular nouns while those that follow are plural nouns. This grammatical division also seems to divide the root sins of malice and deceit from their applied expressions regarding others. Combined with the use of *πασαν*, *παντα*, and *πασας*, the emphatic intent is clear. Christians, based on their new life, are no longer to live with any root at all of malice and deceit which expresses itself in all sorts of outward sins toward their brothers. Though the

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<sup>47</sup> Robertson, A.T. *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*. Logos Bible Software, 2006, loc. III.X.VII.d

words of wicked speech are like delicious morsels, going down into the inner parts of the body (Prov. 18:8; 26:22),  
Regenerate and converted believers are to crave something different.

2. F.F Bruce explains that as “infants, ‘born anew ... through the living and abiding word of God’ (1:23b), these believers are part of a new life, a new purpose, and a new community in which they must put off the old practices and put on a new character.<sup>48</sup> The aorist participle of attendant circumstance in verse 1, points us toward the main verb in verse 2. **Ἀποθέμενοι** (put aside) carries the weight of an imperative, but it is subordinate to and points toward the main command, which is **ἐπιποθήσατε** (to “long for” or crave). In putting aside the deeds of death, instead they must to crave that which will nourish the new life to which they have been born. As babes in Christ, they should crave milk. Peter describes this milk as not so much food for the immature or the baby believer, but is rather contrasted to the corruption upon which they once fed. Calvin explains Peter is not promoting a state of continuing infancy in which believers never mature, for which Paul scolds the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:1. Instead, this milk is described as guileless... this is a contrast to the guile of the flesh and is its opposite. This milk is also described as λογικὸν (reasonable, rational, “of the Word”, translated spiritual). It is related to τοῦ λόγου (of the Word) in 1:23, that is, milk that is of the Word. Peter is speaking of a manner of life, contrasted to that of pollution and malice, a life which “has the savour of new birth”. He is commending a nourishment of pure truth and a life of innocence.<sup>49</sup> Turretin describes the gospel as, both the wisdom and power of God in our call and conversion, as well as the sweet milk by which we are fed.<sup>50</sup> Having been called and regenerated by God’s Holy Spirit, justified by faith in Christ, the Christian is sanctified by that same spirit. This is why Berkhof comments, “Though man is privileged to co-operate with the Spirit of God, he can do this only in virtue of the strength which the Spirit imparts to him from day to day.” And further notes that this day-to-day sustenance comes from the means of the Holy Spirit of which the Word of God is primary<sup>51</sup> As a babe grows and matures from the nourishment of its mother’s milk, so Peter clarifies that it is the pure milk of the Word that is the source of all growth in grace and maturity unto its ultimate goal, namely final salvation.

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<sup>48</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Eerdmans, 1968), 63.

<sup>49</sup> Jean Calvin, *Commentaries on the Letter to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 62–63.

<sup>50</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1992) loc.15.4.20.

<sup>51</sup> Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1949), 535.

Feeding on the pure Word of God by the Holy Spirit is the ordained means to grow up “unto salvation”. This final prepositional phrase is a variant found in the critical text but not in the majority text. Few commentators consulted mention the variant, but it completes the thought in mind, and is important because Salvation is the goal in sight and the great benefit of our new birth and union with Christ.<sup>52</sup>

3. Verse 3 provides a conditional statement that frames all the preceding. It is a reference to Psalm 34:8, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” The Psalm describes the steady trust and confidence that David has amid affliction. The Lord is good, and “Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him” (Ps. 34:9). The “if” of verse 3 does not make the protasis uncertain. Indeed, it is assumed that they have tasted that the Lord is good. Rather, it is to say that *because* you have tasted that the Lord is good, therefore feed upon the One whom you have personally encountered. It is the apodosis that Peter is emphasizing on the basis of what they already have experienced. This is why Calvin teaches, “the ground of Peter’s exhortation is rooted in the goodness (the experienced goodness) of God, because the kindness which we experience or perceive in Christ, ought to entice or allure us.”<sup>53</sup> Further, Turretin explains, “Tasting the goodness of the Lord is the experimental nature and confirmation of justifying faith which is deep in knowledge, cleaving to the inmost heart, not derived from mere hearing, but is living and practical, bearing both light and heat.”<sup>54</sup> He continues to say that the result of the tasting is an ongoing or continual thirst and desire for the full perfection of the grace tasted, only to be experienced in that glory toward which we press on.<sup>55</sup> Only those reborn have tasted what their soul desires in Christ, and therefore long for ongoing nourishment of the Word. The Venerable Bede concludes, “It is hardly surprising if someone who has never tasted the kindness of the Lord fails to avoid the filth and corruption of this world. But if your hearts and minds have been cleansed from wickedness, then it is natural for you to long for the vital nourishment of Christ”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, Peter is encouraging the saints, those enduring suffering in exile, to remember that they have been brought from death to life by the sweet, regenerating power of God in Christ, born again of the Spirit. They are united to Christ Himself which Berkhof defines as “that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation.”<sup>57</sup> Consequently, put off the heart of

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<sup>52</sup> See foot note 13 for Wallace and Clowney’s comments

<sup>53</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Letter to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, 63.

<sup>54</sup> Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. loc15.15.5

<sup>55</sup> Turretin. loc. 15.16.26

<sup>56</sup> Gerald Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, vol. XI (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), 84.

<sup>57</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 449.



malice and deceit that spews out hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. Rather, long for that which you have already tasted, namely Jesus Christ, upon whom you feed and grow up unto salvation by His Word and Spirit.

### ***Verse 4-8 – Christ Is the Foundation of His Church***

In verses 4-8, Peter shifts his imagery from new birth and nourishment of the saints by the Holy Spirit, to that of living stones being built up in Christ by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit. He begins with an adverbial, present, participle that not only serves to connect the previous section with what follows, but as Lenski explains, indicates that this and the preceding paragraphs belong together, and connects our experience of the Lord's care for the regenerate and what he makes of us as a people. He retains the idea of new life in the expression "living stones," the life to which we have been begotten (1:3, 23).<sup>58</sup> Just as the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation or source of their living hope, new birth, and heavenly inheritance (1:3,4), He is the Living Stone to whom they are united as stones in a building, and to whose pattern and image they are being conformed. "This", says Davids, "both introduces the stone imagery that will dominate the next five verses, and designates Christ not as a monument of dead principle, but as the living, resurrected, and therefore life-giving One."<sup>59</sup>

4. There are two things said about this living stone, to whom the people of God are to come. This is a  $\mu\epsilon\nu\text{--}\delta\epsilon$  construction of correlative conjunctions that operates to contrast the two descriptors.<sup>60</sup> First, He is on the one hand ( $\mu\epsilon\nu$ ), rejected by men, but on the other hand ( $\delta\epsilon$ ) chosen and precious in the sight of God.

As the "stone rejected by men", Peter points his readers to Psalm 118:22, quoted in verse 7; and, as Bruce helpfully comments, also points more poignantly to Jesus's own use of this quotation in Mark 12, "to drive home the point of the parable of the vineyard to hearers who had 'perceived that he had told the parable against them.'" Peter would himself include it in his reply to the Sanhedrin in Acts 4:11 regarding the healing of the lame man. He "assures the court that the healing was affected by 'the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth' and adds: "This is the stone which was rejected by you builders, but which has become the head of the corner."<sup>61</sup> Peter therefore assures the saints in exile that the same

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<sup>58</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 82.

<sup>59</sup> Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans, 1990), 85.

<sup>60</sup> Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics*, 672.

<sup>61</sup> Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, 65–66.

Lord and Messiah, spoken of by David, and by whose name the lame were healed, the dead were raised, and who was rejected by the world, is the same name by which they have been given life. More than that, they themselves are united to Jesus being made living stones after His image and united and tied together in Him as their chief cornerstone.

Jesus was rejected by men, but is "...in the sight of God chosen and precious" (vs 4b). This is an allusion to yet another Old Testament passage, Isaiah 28:16, quoted in verse 6.<sup>62</sup> The stone that was rejected by men, is nevertheless the "chosen and precious cornerstone and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame" (vs 6). Clowney explains,

In the building technique from which the figure is drawn, the cornerstone of the foundation would be the first stone to be put in place. Since both the angle of the walls and the level of the stone courses would be extended from it, the cornerstone must be square and true. Large and precious stones were cut for the foundation of Solomon's temple. Peter identifies the cornerstone with Christ. He calls him a living Stone; he would not have us think of his Lord as inert marble! Christ is the Living Stone, however, not just because he is a living person, but because he is alive from the dead as the risen Lord. God set his cornerstone in place by the resurrection.<sup>63</sup>

The image is powerful! Jesus Christ, the risen Lord, though rejected of men is the precious, appointed, and chosen cornerstone, and object of God's good pleasure.<sup>64</sup> In Him, the whole building of the living temple is tied together and examined and evaluated as to its worth, and as Berkhof puts it, "as Mediator He was adorned with the special image of God, to which believers were to be conformed, and the Kingdom with all its glory and the means leading to its possession were ordained for Him, that He might pass these on to believers."<sup>65</sup> Because Christ suffered and was rejected, the members of His body suffer and are rejected of men. Yet, as He is chosen and precious in the sight of the Father, so also all who are united to him and laid upon the surpassing worth of this precious Cornerstone are counted as level, plum, and true... that is justified and righteous in Christ. This is confirmed in the following verses where it says, "You yourselves also, like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house" (vs 5).

5. As living stones, God's elect are not only declared righteous in Christ, but as stones chiseled and shaped to fit the foundation, God's people are constituted as righteous by the sanctification of the Spirit who conforms the regenerate to image of His Master. "These Christians", says Walker, "must consider themselves as a new Temple. All the blessings

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<sup>62</sup> Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 85.

<sup>63</sup> Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter: The Way of the Cross*, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England ; Downers Grove, Ill., USA: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 85.

<sup>64</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 113.

<sup>65</sup> Berkhof, 113.

and spiritual import that had previously been localized in the Jerusalem Temple were now theirs in Christ.”<sup>66</sup> Believers are not individual entities to themselves. The adage, “Just me, my Bible, and Jesus” is foreign to the teaching of Scripture. Believers are members of Christ, tied and united to Him by faith, but also members one of another just as the stones in a house, more than that a temple, the house of the Holy Spirit.

In this house says Peter, the members do not merely lay motionless. Having been brought from death to life, they are not only stones in the temple, but also “a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (vs 5b). This is a double honor, says Calvin. God’s people are both consecrated as a temple to Himself, but He also makes us priests, motivating us to a life of service and worship.<sup>67</sup> This is precisely what Paul exhorted the church to do in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1). The sacrifices of God’s people no longer are bloody shadows of a coming Redeemer, rather believers, as a royal priesthood in Christ, offer spiritual sacrifices of worship which consume the whole of their life. Christ gave His life for us; therefore, we give our lives as sacrifices to and in Him. These, say Peter and Paul are acceptable to God, but not on their own merit. They are acceptable only in that these living sacrifices are made by living stones, united to the Chief Cornerstone and Great High Priest, Jesus Christ the Risen Lord, who also is at the right hand of the Father interceding for us, that the services of the people of God may be accepted on His behalf.<sup>68</sup>

**6-8.** Peter now anchors his statements on the Scriptures to which he already alluded, mirroring Paul’s teaching in Romans 9 and 10. God spoke through His prophet to declare that a day would come in which He would lay this precious cornerstone in Zion, Jesus Christ the Precious One. “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone,..” Those who believe on Him will not be put to shame, but rather will be built upon that foundation, for “the honor is for you who believe” (vs 7). For says the Scriptures, “Everyone who believes in Him shall not be put to shame” (Rom. 10:11). Yet, we know that no one can believe and enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born again (John 3). And further, that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, it is only by God’s given grace we are justified

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<sup>66</sup> P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1996), 310.

<sup>67</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Letter to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, 65.

<sup>68</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 404.

through Christ (Rom. 3:24). So then, it is only those chosen in Christ from before the foundation of the world, elected unto life (Eph. 1:3) who can believe, for natural man cannot please God, indeed the flesh is hostile to God (Rom. 8:7,8).

Therefore, we confess that because man is born sinful, corrupt, and an affront to the perfect holiness of God, He does them no injustice by leaving them all to perish and delivering them over to condemnation (COD 1.1), Thus, the apostle teaches that the curses of God come upon all who refuse to believe and be united to the Chief Cornerstone, for “They are stumbling at the Word, because they are being disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed.” (vs 8b). The verb ἐτέθησαν (appointed, placed) is a form of τιθημι (put, place, lay). The sense is to set in place or to lay. The aorist tense adds a sense of a one-time appointment with continuing effects. Similarly, the participle, ἀπειθοῦντες (being disobedient), shows that they are stumbling because of disobedience, which is disbelief. In contrast to those who stumble, the honored ones (vs 7) who believe in Him will not be put to shame. They have been appointed unto life and are being laid or built on the foundation of Christ and His resurrection. But those who are disobeying have been appointed, laid, or destined (NASB) to stumble at the Word. “The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’ and ‘a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense” (vs 7b,8).

Jesus is everything for the believing, all hope and value, upon whom our souls find a steady and restful repose and reliance<sup>69</sup>. But, as Lenski notes, the opposite is true for the disbelieving, “This wondrous stone means everything also to any and to all who refuse to believe: their rejection is fatal to them. In the first place, God nullifies their rejection and makes this stone the corner-head; in the second place, this stone destroys them.”<sup>70</sup> Thus, we confess with Paul, “So then he has mercy on whomever he wills, and he hardens whomever he wills” (Rom. 9:18), and with the church:

The fact that some receive from God the gift of faith within time, and that others do not, stems from his eternal decision. For “all his works are known to God from eternity” ([Acts 15:18](#); [Eph. 1:11](#)). In accordance with this decision he graciously softens the hearts, however hard, of his chosen ones and inclines them to believe, but by his just judgment he leaves in their wickedness and hardness of heart those who have not been chosen (COD 1.6).

Therefore, Christ alone is the foundation of His church. In Him alone are all His people chosen, gathered, and built up in faith upon His own perfections. As the Living Stone, He gives all His precious ones life in Him, and chisels, shapes, and conforms them to His image. And, against this Living Stone unbelievers are dashed and thrown down, left to their own rebellion.

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<sup>69</sup> Berkhof, 495.

<sup>70</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude*, 95.  
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*Verses 9-10 – Christ Is the Foundation of Covenant Citizenship*

Peter returns to his comfort of the exiles by drawing a clear contrast between them as regenerate believers, members of Christ's body, versus those appointed for destruction. These dear saints are not those who stumble and are offended by Christ; *BUT* rather, they are an elect and holy nation. Peter is showing the suffering exiles through the scriptures of the Old Testament that the hope and promises of the people of God before Christ are indeed theirs now *in Christ*. Michaels is correct when he concludes, "one of the major concerns of 1 Peter is to claim for Christians a heritage."<sup>71</sup> This heritage is the historic faith and covenant promises of God to His elect people. In verses 9 and 10, Peter identifies the elect exiles to whom he writes, with God's people scattered among the nations. In Christ, both Jew and gentile believers, as one people, are citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

9. Peter identifies the believers as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and people for possession..." (vs 9). In Christ, believers become a race, a new line, chosen by God. As God chose the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to set His heart upon them as a chosen people (Deut. 10:15), now all believers are the fulfillment of God's call to the nation of Israel in Exodus 19:6, "and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod. 19:6). And as His chosen and holy nation, they are called a people for possession, echoing Exodus 19:5, "if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples" (Exod. 19:5). God's covenant promise to Abraham, to bless all nations in his Offspring (Gen. 12) is now fully realized in Christ. For God's promise is that He will be their God, and they will be His people, and He will dwell among them (Gen. 17, Jer. 31, Rev. 21).

The purpose of this calling and heritage is to "proclaim the excellencies of His character who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (vs 9). God's excellencies are His attributes, that is the perfections of His character and nature. Berkhof defines them as "the perfections which are predicated of the Divine Being in Scripture, or are visibly exercised by Him in His works of creation, providence, and redemption."<sup>72</sup> God's mighty acts speak to who He is as God and Lord of His people, and have always had the broader purpose of declaring His might and excellencies to the nations (1 Chr. 16:1, Ps. 96; Ezek. 39:7; Rom. 9:17). The Risen Lord Jesus commissions the church to do so in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). And, "Go into all the world

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<sup>71</sup> J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Themes (Dallas: Word Pub, 1989), 64.

<sup>72</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 52.

and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). The proclamation of the excellencies of God calls His people to life out of death, to honor from shame, and to “His marvelous light (9) from the darkness of the world. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching” (Rom. 10:14-15)? The preaching of the Word is the means by which the elect are called to faith and the Father qualifies them in Christ to share in the inheritance of the saints in light, delivering them from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of the Beloved and His marvelous light (Col. 1:12,13). This light in which they dwell by faith is a foretaste of the full consummation of all the covenant promises to them in Christ, namely the resurrection of the body to dwell before the face of God in Christ. Oh, blessed hope! But how is it that gentiles are given this heritage along with the Jews?

10. “Who formerly [were] not a people, but now [are] the people of God; who had not received mercy, but now have received mercy” (vs 10). In verse 10, Peter applies God’s covenant promises to Israel to New Testament believers by appealing to the Word of the Lord in Hosea. God reveals through this prophet of the Northern Kingdom that Israel would be scattered among the nations because of their spiritual adultery. In judgment, God would remove their covenant monikers given at the time of the exodus. Instead, because of their idolatry and faithlessness, they would be called “not my people”, and “no mercy”, and they would be “scattered” among the nations.<sup>73</sup> In exile, Israel was literally scattered and made as all the other nations. But God, for the sake of His covenant, restores or reassigns these promises to a people drawn from the fields in which they had been sown<sup>74</sup> to show mercy and to gather “My people”. Bruce adds, “He looks forward to a time when those who at present are not His people will once more be His people, and when those who at present have no claim on His kindly feelings will once more be the objects of His mercy.”<sup>75</sup>

Peter uses the language of Hosea to demonstrate the compassion of God who loves His people and will not “give them up” (Hosea 11:8). Yet, in using this language with the church, Peter fills out the prophesy in Hosea to show that it was the scattering of Israel, making them as the nations, that resulted in the gathering in of *all* the exiles, from Ephraim and Judah, but also from all the nations of the earth. Peter is declaring, this is the day when, “I will sow her for myself

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<sup>73</sup> There is significance in the names of Hosea’s children of the harlot. Jezreel means “sow, plant, scatter”. Lo-Ruhamah means “no mercy.” Lo-Ammi means “not my people”.

<sup>74</sup> Michael Morales’ notes on Hosea, GPTS class, Prophets

<sup>75</sup> Bruce, *The New Testament Development of Old Testament Themes*, 67.

in the land. And I will have mercy on No Mercy, and I will say to Not My People, 'You are my people'; and he shall say, 'You are my God'" (Hosea 2:23).

The gospel of Jesus Christ has gone out into the world. Whereas the people of God had remained scattered among the nations, the Jews and gentiles alike were “not a people” due to rebellion. They had been awaiting a second exodus, led by the promised Davidic King, who would restore the tent of David and to whom the nations would flow (Isa. 2; Mic. 4). In Him the covenant promise to Abraham for all nations would come to fruition. The risen Lord of the Covenant, the Davidic King and Messiah has come, conquered death, poured out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2; Acts 2), and now calls those who had not received mercy, and those who were not a people, to be those gathered and planted (sown) from among the scattered under one head, the Chief Cornerstone of the Temple, the head of His body, the church (Col. 1). But where are they planted? God’s people are not planted on an earthly mountain around a temple made with hands, but as living stones are fit and built upon the Living Cornerstone. So, the exiles of the world who have received Christ “walk in Him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith” (Col. 2:6,7). Those found in Christ have their names enrolled in the heavenly kingdom which cannot be shaken (Heb. 12:28).

It is for this reason that those eschatological views which hold that there is a separate plan and set of promises for the Jews is erroneous and contrary to scripture. Berkhof notes, “It is remarkable that the New Testament, which is the fulfilment of the Old, contains no indication whatsoever of the re-establishment of the Old Testament theocracy by Jesus, nor a single undisputed positive prediction of its restoration, while it does contain abundant indications of the spiritual fulfilment of the promises given to Israel.”<sup>76</sup> The covenant promises of God are for all His people in Christ, who had previously been “not a people” because of sin and rebellion. Peter is connecting the richness of God’s Old Testament promises to His people with the present-day suffering saints in exile. The foundation of their hope and comfort as exiles under pressure, is that God in Christ has called them out of death and darkness by giving them life and the light of His presence. He has fixed them in place as chosen, precious, living members of Christ who shall not be moved. Further, though they may be exiles according to the world, scattered from their temporal home, they have a full and certain citizenship in the kingdom of God. Having received mercy, they are a race and a people who have a living hope and eternal inheritance through Christ Jesus.

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<sup>76</sup> Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 713.  
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### **Concluding Summary, Theme, and Proposed Outline**

1 Peter 2:1-10 is the final portion of the first section of Peter's epistle. The apostle's concern is to encourage the elect saints in exile by pointing them to Christ as their true sustenance by the Word, their solid foundation in whom they are being built up and perfected, and the name by which they are made a distinct people with heavenly citizenship.

Theologically, the text deals with matters of regeneration, election/reprobation, sanctification, ecclesiological unity of the people of God throughout redemptive history, and the glory of the kingdom to come. The central point and exhortation is that there is only one name upon which the hope and glory of God's people rest. That foundation is Christ alone!

#### **Theme: Jesus Christ is the Foundation of Christian Hope<sup>77</sup>**

##### **I. Jesus Christ is the Foundation of New Life**

- A. Put off the old life
- B. Feed your new life
- C. Pursue Him who gave you life

##### **II. Jesus Christ is the Foundation of His Church**

- A. Come to the Living Stone, chosen and precious
  - 1. He was rejected by men
  - 2. He was chosen and precious in the sight of God
- B. You are living stones, chosen and precious in Him
  - 1. You are stones being built into the Temple
  - 2. You are a holy priesthood
- C. Jesus Christ the Cornerstone placed in Zion
  - 1. Honor for those appointed to believe
  - 2. Offense for those appointed to disobedience

##### **III. Jesus Christ is the Foundation of Covenantal Citizenship**

- A. Your citizenship in Christ makes you a distinct people
  - 1. You are a chosen race
  - 2. You are a royal priesthood
  - 3. You are a holy nation
  - 4. You are God's precious possession
- B. Your citizenship gives you a distinct purpose
  - 1. God's people proclaim God's excellencies
  - 2. God's people live as recipients of mercy

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<sup>77</sup> While ideally, this section would be split into 3 pericope's, this theme and outline reflect a proposed outline to deal with the passage in its entirety.



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**Theme: Jesus Christ is the Foundation of Christian Hope**

**1 Peter 2:1-10**

**Introduction**

J. Gresham Machen, 100 years ago wrote a little book entitled *Christianity and Liberalism*<sup>1</sup>. In the introduction to this book, Machen explains that there is one thing alone that took a band of eleven confused men and their friends, from being lost in sorrow after the death of their friend and teacher, to becoming the foundation of the New Testament church. That one thing was a three-word message, “He is risen!”. The reality and power of Christ’s resurrection from the dead is the foundation of all Christian hope. In our text today, Peter writes to believers scattered throughout Asia Minor due to Rome’s persecution of Christians. They were homeless, poor, lied about, hated, and often put in prison or put to death simply because they believed in Christ and preached this message of hope. Peter writes to encourage the brothers and sisters that in spite of what the world sees, though their lives are being poured out for Christ, though without a country of their own in this world; yet they are alive! They are not alone! They have a place, a home, and an inheritance that shall not perish or fade. And the Holy Spirit tells you as much today dear Christian: “In Christ you are alive, you are not alone, and you have a home.” This is because Jesus Christ is risen and reigning, and He is the foundation of our Christian Hope.

**Theme: Jesus Christ is the Foundation of Christian Hope**

1. *Jesus Christ is the Foundation of New Life (1-3)*
2. *Jesus Christ is the Foundation of His Church (4-8)*
3. *Jesus Christ is the Foundation of Covenantal Citizenship (9-10)*

**JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF NEW LIFE**

The first message that the apostle has for the exiles under pressure is, “You are no longer dead, but alive!” Peter teaches that despite their suffering, they are alive by the Spirit, through Jesus Christ, by the mercy of the Father (1:3). They have been born again out of death by the power of the resurrection, through the living and abiding Word (1:23). Because this is true, Peter says, “So”. The word “so” connects what Peter is getting ready to say, with what he said in chapter 1.

**A. Put Off the Old Life** - *So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. (1 Pet. 2:1)* Peter says in the preceding verses that they have been born not of perishable, but imperishable seed through the living Word of God (1:23), therefore he reasons that those things which are birthed from a new seed should produce new and living fruit. So, “*Because you are alive in Christ, be done with corruption that once was at work in you and spewed out of you.*” Malice is another word for evil, rank wickedness, depravity, or naughtiness of disposition toward God and others. Likewise, deceit is craftiness, guile, and the twisting of truth. These are the root of evil and lies that characterized the fall in the garden.<sup>2</sup> Satan came in malice and deception. Mankind, being deceived, “subjected himself willingly to sin and consequently to death and the curse, lending his ear to the word of the devil (BC 14.2).” And from that perishable seed comes all sorts of evil and deceptive speech and behavior. Peter says put ALL these away. This isn’t who you are anymore, you have been “born again...of imperishable seed, through the living Word of God.” As you are putting these things away, putting the old man to death, you therefore are to feed and crave what belongs to your new nature.

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<sup>1</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, New ed (Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Strong, James. *A Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament and The Hebrew Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2009.

**B. Feed Your New Life** - *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation-- (2:2)* The command to “put away” is tied or dependent on the *actual* command/imperative which is, “Long for (crave) the pure spiritual milk...”. Peter presses the illustration, “ceasing from the guile that came out of your mouth, fill your mouth and feed your new life with that which is pure and undefiled.” By using the terms “infant” and “milk”, Peter is not chastising the believers, or suggesting that they are culpable for spiritual immaturity like Paul does in 1 Corinthians. Rather, as Calvin explains, “this milk is described as guileless... a contrast to the guile of the flesh and is its opposite. This milk is also described as ... [1:23], milk that is of the Word. Peter is speaking of a manner of life, contrasted to that of pollution and malice, a life which “has the savour of new birth”. He is commending a nourishment of pure truth and a life of innocence.<sup>3</sup> The Word of God is the milk of the gospel, says Turretin, which is both the wisdom and the power of God in our call and conversion, as well as the sweet milk by which we are fed.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, Peter is encouraging the saints, those enduring suffering in exile, to remember that they have been brought from death to life by the sweet, regenerating power of God in Christ, born again of the Spirit. They are united to Christ Himself which Berkhof defines as “that intimate, vital, and spiritual union between Christ and His people, in virtue of which He is the source of their life and strength, of their blessedness and salvation.” Consequently, put off the heart of malice and deceit that spews out hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking. Rather, long for that which you have already tasted, namely Jesus Christ, upon whom you feed and grow up unto salvation by His Word and Spirit.

**C. Pursue Him Who Gave You Life** - *If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good. (2:3)* Verse 3 provides a conditional statement that frames all the preceding. It is a reference to Psalm 34:8, “Taste and see that the Lord is good.” The Psalm describes the steady trust and confidence that David has amid affliction. The Lord is good; “Blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him” (Ps. 34:9). The “if” of verse 3 does call the tasting of God’s goodness into question. It is assumed that they have tasted that the Lord is good. Rather, he is saying that *because* you have tasted that the Lord is good, therefore feed upon the One whom you have personally experienced and know. Peter is emphasizing the longing they are to have for the Word, on the basis of what they already have experienced. This is why Calvin teaches, “the ground of Peter’s exhortation is rooted in the goodness (the experienced goodness) of God, because the kindness which we experience or perceive in Christ, ought to entice or allure us.”<sup>5</sup> Further, Turretin explains, “Tasting the goodness of the Lord is the experimental nature and confirmation of justifying faith which is deep in knowledge, cleaving to the inmost heart, not derived from mere hearing, but is living and practical, bearing both light and heat.”<sup>6</sup> The result of the tasting is an ongoing or continual thirst and desire for the full perfection of the grace tasted, only to be experienced in that glory to which we press on.<sup>7</sup> Only those reborn have tasted what their soul desires in Christ, and therefore long for ongoing nourishment of the Word. Thus, if you have indeed tasted and know that the Lord is good, pursue this pure milk of the Word, made nourishing to your soul by the same Spirit who gave you life.

**Application:** Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, we must ask ourselves, what are our mouths full of? Do worldly opinions, deceptions, gossip, or joking fill the ears of those around you, or as a born-again members of Christ do you long to know what Christ has to say about your days, your family, your job, your purpose, or your relationships? Do you long to dine on tasty morsels of the latest news, or to feast on the pure Word that with the Spirit gave you life? Dear ones, if you are in Christ, you are alive for all eternity and are called to live and speak by a new principle. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian’s life, therefore nourish that new heart by His Word and prayer, ceasing from all foolish malice, deceit, and evil speech.

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<sup>3</sup> Jean Calvin, *Commentaries on the Letter to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1981), 62–63.

<sup>4</sup> Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, ed. James T. Dennison, trans. George Musgrave Giger, 3 vols. (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: P & R Publishing, 1992). Loc 15.15.5

<sup>5</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Letter to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, 63.

<sup>6</sup> Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*. loc15.15.5

<sup>7</sup> Turretin. loc. 15.16.26

## **JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF HIS CHURCH**

Peter continues, aware that these “new-born babes in Christ” lived as strangers in a foreign land. God’s people are often found as exiles and wanderers. Peter encourages these displaced believers by reminding them that in Jesus Christ, they are not foreigners. You are not alone, but members of an intricately bonded communion of believers, built upon the immovable foundation of Jesus Christ, the head of His church and the Chief cornerstone of the kingdom of God.

**A. Come to Jesus Christ, the Living Stone, Chosen and Precious** - *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, (2:4.)* The born-again believer is one who comes to the source of that pure milk. The Word and the Spirit, bring the converted to Jesus, to be members of a body and community. Just as Peter carried the theme of “new birth in Christ” from chapter 1 to chapter 2, he retains the idea of new life in the expression “living stones,” the life to which we have been born again (1:3, 23).<sup>8</sup> As the resurrection of Jesus is the foundation or source of their living hope, new birth, and heavenly inheritance (1:3,4), He is likewise the Living Stone to whom “those who are coming” are united as stones in a building, and to whose pattern and image they are being conformed. Notice, that Jesus, the Living Stone is described in two contrasting ways. On the one hand, He is the stone “rejected by men”, but on the other, “in the sight of God He is chosen and precious”. While on this earth, the Savior was rejected by His own people, suffered, beaten, and killed. Yet, the Heavenly Father says of Him, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased” (Mark 1:11).

**B. You Are Living Stones, Chosen and Built Upon a Sure Foundation** - *You yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (2:5)* As Christ is *the* Living Stone, Peter now tells the brothers, that they also, having been born by the Spirit, are united to Christ in such a way that they also are living stones, after His image. God’s elect are not only declared righteous in Christ, but as stones are chiseled and shaped to fit the foundation, God’s people are constituted as righteous by the sanctification of the Spirit who conforms the regenerate to the image of His Master through the Word. Christians are a new Temple. All the blessings and spiritual import that had previously been localized in the Jerusalem Temple is now theirs in Christ.”<sup>9</sup> God’s people, says Calvin, are both consecrated as a temple to Himself, but He also makes us priests, motivating us to a life of service and worship.<sup>10</sup> This is precisely what Paul exhorted the church in Romans 12:1, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship” (Rom. 12:1).

**C. Jesus Christ is the Sure Foundation placed in Zion** - *For it stands in Scripture: “Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious,” and “whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” (2:6)* Peter now quotes the Scriptures that testify to that which he is teaching. The prophet Isaiah, spoke regarding God’s promise to send the Messiah, that His chosen One would be a chosen, precious Cornerstone. The cornerstone was a single, precious, and high-quality stone set first in the foundation. It was the rule and line for the rest of the building. All the other stones would be put in place using the shape and angles of the cornerstone. Thus, the worth and quality of the building was measured and evaluated by the quality and worth of that all-important first stone. Large and precious stones were cut for this purpose in Solomon’s temple, yet Peter is here stating that Jesus Christ Himself is the chief and perfect Cornerstone. Upon Him all must fall, either as a sure and precious foundation by whom His people are patterned, or as the rock of stumbling for those who reject Him in disobedience. The dividing line, says Peter, is faith. Quoting Paul, he states that all those who believe in Jesus, will not be put to shame (Rom 9:33, 10:11). But notice he goes on to say,

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<sup>8</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of The Epistles of St. Peter, St. John and St. Jude* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), 82.

<sup>9</sup> P. W. L. Walker, *Jesus and the Holy City: New Testament Perspectives on Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub, 1996), 310.

<sup>10</sup> Calvin, *Commentaries on the Letter to the Hebrews and the Catholic Epistles*, 65.  
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*So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,” (2:7)* Here is the distinction. The honor and worth of a building is measured by the quality of the cornerstone. The honor of the building is the cornerstone’s honor. Peter says that by faith, these believers, and you also, are honored by the glory and worth of that precious Cornerstone on whom you are built. Yet for the “builders” – who are they? Those who had the scriptures and the law the promises of the covenant – this Paul’s point in Romans 9 – the Jews who rejected Jesus, and particularly its leaders, they are those who rejected this Stone. For them, vs 8 says, He became *“A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense” (vs 8)*. Peter quotes again from Isaiah 8. The Messiah would be contrary to the expectation of man, a Suffering Servant, a Man of Sorrows, rejected by man and His own people, so that He might fulfil the purposes for which He was sent, and serve as both a certain and sure foundation of righteousness for all who believe upon Him, and a rock of stumbling and offense for those appointed for destruction. This is what it says, *“They stumble because they disobey the Word, as they were destined to do.”*

**Application:** We say then with Paul in Romans, “Note the kindness and severity of God: severity toward those who have fallen, but God’s kindness to you, provided you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you too will be cut off.” (Rom. 11:22) How then is this any sort of assurance or firm foundation? If the natural branches (as Paul calls them) were cut off, how secure are we? Shall we not then fear? Ah! But take heart oh living one! You did not give yourself life anymore than a baby can birth itself. You did not shape yourself for the church anymore than a stone can pick up a chisel and go to work. No, your life and membership in Christ, oh dear one, is that of faith, which is a gift of God’s grace. Therefore, do as Paul warns and Peter exhorts. Continue in the kindness of God by longing after pure spiritual milk of the Word of God. Rest yourself on the sure and immovable, perfect foundation of Christ’s finished work on your behalf. Believe in Him and be conformed by the Spirit as you live in the church as a member of the body, a living stone in the temple, offering your life a living sacrifice of praise and prayer and worship.

### **JESUS CHRIST IS THE FOUNDATION OF COVENANTAL CITIZENSHIP**

Though the elect exiles to whom Peter wrote were quite literally without a home in this world or citizenship in Rome, Peter teaches that their citizenship is written in heaven, for they are members of a people, a nation, an eternal kingdom in Jesus Christ.

**A. Your Citizenship in Christ Makes You a Distinct People** - *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, (2:9a)* These dear saints are not those who stumble and are offended by Christ; BUT rather, they are an elect and holy nation. Peter is showing the suffering exiles through the scriptures of the Old Testament that the hope and promises of the people of God *before* Christ are indeed theirs now *in* Christ. They are no longer exiles, but citizens. They are not foreign immigrants, but citizens by birth, *new* birth, by the Word and Spirit, united to Christ and now distinct from the world. In Christ, believers become a race, a new line, chosen by God. As God chose the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to set His heart upon them as a chosen people (Deut. 10:15), now all believers are the fulfillment of God’s call to the nation of Israel in Exodus 19:6, “and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). And as His chosen and holy nation, they are called a people for possession, echoing Exodus 19:5, “if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples” (Exod. 19:5). God’s covenant promise to Abraham, to bless all nations in his Offspring (Gen. 12) is now fully realized in Christ. For God’s promise is that He will be their God, and they will be His people, and He will dwell among them (Gen. 17, Jer. 31, Rev. 21).

*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. (2:10)* In verse 10, Peter applies God’s covenant promises to Israel to New Testament believers by appealing to the Word of the Lord in Hosea. God reveals through this prophet of the Northern Kingdom that Israel would be scattered among nations because of their spiritual adultery. In judgment, God would remove their covenantal ID given

at the time of the exodus. Instead, because of their idolatry and faithlessness, they would be called “not my people”, and “no mercy” and they would be “scattered” (Jezreel) among the nations. In exile, Israel was literally scattered and made as all the other nations. Therefore, the covenant identifiers are given to those who are born again unto salvation and natural citizenship (Jew and gentile) in the kingdom of God. This is a radical transformation! Though once a people appointed for destruction, now a chosen, holy people for God’s own possession. Once objects of wrath, now children of mercy!

***B. Your Citizenship Gives You A Distinct Purpose ...that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (2:9b)*** Genesis tells us that God’s act of creation was that of speaking light into the darkness (Gen. 1:2), and separating the light from darkness (Gen. 2:4), and later when delivering His people from Egypt, He sent a plague of terrible darkness, and darkness that could be felt, but in the land of Goshen God’s people had light (Ex 10:21-23). Further, Matthew tells us that when Jesus came into the world it was a fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophesy that “those dwelling in darkness have seen a great light” (Mt. 4:16). God in sovereign mercy and wisdom distinguishes between darkness and light, separating for Himself a distinct people by calling them out of the darkness of sin and death and transferring them into the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Col 1:13,14). Revelation gives us a picture of what Peter is saying. Though we were once scattered among the nations, we are now a gathered people from every kindred, tribe tongue and nation,

...standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb! (Rev 7:9-10)

As a distinct people, called out of the world, united to Christ and resting on Him alone for worth and value, you are given this distinct purpose – to stand in this world amid its darkness, as a royal priesthood among the nations, proclaiming the excellencies of Him who called you out the darkness of sin, death and judgment, and into the brilliance of His marvelous light and life in the Beloved. We proclaim all the excellencies, that is the perfections of God’s infinite, eternal, and unchangeable being, in wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. We are to be lights set on a lamppost in a darkroom , “so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

**Application:** Therefore, understand that there is good reason for the Christian to feel strange, different, misunderstood, shunned and resented in this world. The Christian is not at home in this world, you are exiles and foreigners amid the darkness, death, and sins in which you once walked (Eph. 2:1). Though once dead, God has made you alive together with Christ – by grace you have been saved! You are distinct people, with your name enrolled in heaven, a heavenly people, a holy priesthood living lives which daily offer sacrifices of praise and Godly worship. God’s people feed on different food, gather and are built upon a different foundation. You are therefore distinct, separate and speak not the evil of this world, but proclaim the power, the goodness, the mercy, the justice of God and the glories of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This should characterize your life oh believer. You are called to live distinct and separate from the world, relishing in the goodness of God, feeding on His Word, resting in Christ’s work, and putting God’s electing grace on display in your life?



### Conclusion

Christian hope is the only real hope there is. The message “He is risen” is no hope at all unless it is true! But because it is true the Christian is born again out of God the Father’s electing grace, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ and His living Word, and made effectual by the power of Holy Spirit. Peter writes to encourage the elect exiles and you to look to Christ and His living Word as your true sustenance, your solid foundation in whom you are being built up and perfected, and the name by which you are distinguished as a people with heavenly citizenship. If you are here today and have not tasted the goodness of God in Jesus Christ, turn here to this Word of hope and promise. Seek the Father through the Son by His Word and Spirit. Cry out to him as a starving infant in need of life-giving milk. Seek Him now, believe this Word of power and grace.

For those who have tasted that the Lord is good, who are being built and conformed to their Savior, and who live under the covenant promises and citizenship of the kingdom of God – to you the Word of God says: Feed your hope and nourish it with pure Scriptural milk, rest your hope on the worth and perfection of Jesus in whom you are being shaped and fit for heaven, and be assured that just as certainly as Jesus Christ sits on the throne of heaven, so shall you, and all who find their hope in His life, surely dwell with Him as citizens and heirs of the eternal Kingdom of God. Jesus Christ is the certain foundation of your hope.

## Overture 1

### Adopt Pastoral Advice Regarding the Relationship of Church, State, & Family

#### Background

We inhabit an era of serious – even potentially catastrophic – moral and cultural decline. Both in Canada and in the United States, society is renouncing, both in law and in socio-cultural life, its historic Christian heritage in pursuit of liberty without the Gospel, justice without God’s law, truth without the Scriptures, life without obedience, atonement without the cross, love without faithfulness, peace without repentance, salvation without Christ, and a world without creational norms. Given the danger and the folly of this trend, it is incumbent upon a faithful church to set forth, to all powers and authorities, and for the edification and strengthening of the church, the claims of Christ and the freedoms possessed by His Kingdom people, the church (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 3:10; Col. 2:15; 1 Tim. 1:9-11, 17; 3:15; 1 Pt. 2:16-17; 5:11).

In a cultural context in which ultimate sovereignty is being seized by – or readily surrendered to – the state, imperiling inherited liberties and exposing our civil government to divine judgment, we must be mindful that freedoms not defended are soon forfeited.

Furthermore, these developments have sown confusion among the churches regarding the relationship of church and state, the proper submission due to governing authorities, and the boundaries belonging to the family, the church, and the state. The need to apply Scripture and our Confessions to our contemporary context is important for the unity of the churches on these significant matters.

**This overture was brought to Synod Niagara 2022.** The advisory committee assigned to the overture thought it was unclear whether the overture was intended to address the State or the churches, that it could be viewed as “reactionary to a global pandemic”, and that a comprehensive theological exposition could be done on the matter. Synod did not adopt the advisory committee’s recommendation not to accede to the overture, but rather tabled the matter indefinitely (*Acts of Synod 2022, Article 89, p. 88*). Thus, no deliberation or action was taken on the overture itself.

In terms of the length of treatment of an issue, we need to be reminded that past URC Synods have not hesitated to provide concise, biblical, and confessional statements on issues that affect the churches without requiring comprehensive, treatise length treatment of a matter:

1. Synod Escondido 2001: adopted a concise statement on six-day creation. (*Acts of Synod 2001, Article XLIII, pp. 21,22*);
2. Synod Schererville 2007: approved an amendment to the Church Order to include a biblical definition marriage to protect against potential legal persecution of the church; adopted a nine-point statement on justification. (*Acts of Synod 2007, Article 21, p. 15; Articles 67 & 72, pp. 36, 37, and 38*);
3. Synod London 2010: approved sending a letter to the U.S. Armed Forces urging them to maintain a policy prohibiting homosexuals from openly serving in the armed services because repealing that policy would have a deleterious impact on our chaplains. (*Acts of Synod 2010, Article 128 & 132, pp.80-82*);



4. Synod Wheaton 2018: approved concise Doctrinal Affirmations on Marriage in response to the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision creating a “right” to homosexual “marriage”. (Acts of Synod 2018, Article 90, pp. 79-90);
5. Synod Niagara 2022: in response to the rise of cultural confusion over sexuality, erected a committee to study the issue of human sexuality with a mandate that the committee provide a concise “*statement of affirmations and denials serviceable for legal protection for the churches.*”. (Acts of Synod 2022, Article 37, p. 37).

In terms of intended audience, it is good to be reminded that “*Pastoral Advice is Synod’s application of the Scriptures, the Ecumenical Creeds and the Three Forms of Unity to particular circumstances in the life of the churches. Pastoral Advice expresses the collective wisdom of Synod to guide the churches in their pastoral care.*” (Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix D). Thus, by definition, this overture’s pastoral advice is directed for the edification and benefit of the church. Of course, a local church may in its discretion use these affirmations as a witness to those outside the church if the occasion arises.

The following overture contains nine (9) Affirmations of Scriptural and Confessional truth concerning Christ, His church, the family, and the state. These affirmations can guide the churches on any number of issues that currently or may in the future press upon the church, *e.g.*, government overreach of the kind witnessed during the pandemic, threatened passage of “hate crimes” legislation intended to silence the church’s message, forced indoctrination of children on sexuality, *etc.* The affirmations are not limited to any of these specific issues but address the overarching and recurring matter of church/state/family relations that is increasingly acute in our time. It is our prayer that the church will be mindful of these Biblical findings in all their decisions and actions concerning the relationship of church, state, and family, passionately defending these truths when they are assaulted.

### **Overture**

Therefore, the Consistory of Immanuel United Reformed Church of DeMotte, Indiana, overtures Classis Central U.S. to overture Synod 2024 to adopt the following Affirmations as **Pastoral Advice**, in accordance with the Regulations for Synodical Procedure, Appendix D.

### **Affirmations Governing the Relationship of Church, State, and Family**

1. Jesus Christ claims total authority over the nations as the Creator and Ruler of the kings, judges, and governors of the earth (Ps. 2:7-12; Ps. 110; Luke 23:3; John 19:11; Acts 17:7; Eph. 1:20-23; Phil. 2:9-11; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Tim. 1:17; Rev. 1:5).
2. The one, holy, catholic (i.e. universal), and apostolic church has been founded by our Lord Jesus Christ long before our contemporary temporal authorities came into existence (Matt. 16:18; Mark 3:13-19; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:7-13; Col. 1:18; Belgic Confession Art. 27).
3. The church of Jesus Christ does not have her position in the nation assigned to her by the permission of civil government, but *jure divino* – she has her own organization, and she possesses her own office-bearers (Matt. 10:1-15; 18:15-20; 28:18-20; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 6:1-7; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:9-13; Belgic Confession Arts. 30 & 31; URCNA Foundational Principles 3, 6, and 12).

4. The authority of the state and the authority of the church exist side by side, instituted by God according to the purpose and means assigned by God and in service to God, as recognized in the Scriptures. The magistrate is instituted by God and is endowed with power, in order that it, on its part and within the limits set for its authority, may promote the maintenance of human life and its development as a society pleasing to God in agreement with the moral law of God (Mark 12:13-17; Acts 5:29-32; Rom. 13:1, 4; 1 Cor. 6:1-7; 2 Cor. 10:3-6; Eph. 1:22; Phil. 2:9-11; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; Belgic Confession Art. 36).
5. The church shall recognize and honor the magistrate in its God-given power and service by faithfully proclaiming the full demands of God's Law and Gospel, both for the office and life of the magistrate and for that of its subjects; and by being mindful of the apostolic injunction to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving for all men, including kings and those in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-2; see also Ezra 6:10; Jer. 29:7; 1 Pet. 2:17; Belgic Confession Art. 36; Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 140.).
6. The magistrate, under penalty of forsaking its holy office and falling into tyranny, should forbear assuming the right and power of the only King of the church, Jesus Christ, who from heaven rules and protects and completely saves His church. The church with its officers, in all that has been given and entrusted to it, owes allegiance and responsibility to Christ alone, and shall for the coming of His kingdom and the overthrow of the kingdoms of antichrist have its expectation fixed alone upon the power of His Spirit and the revelation of His glory. (Ps. 2:7-9; Dan. 2:44; Rev. 2:4-5; Rev. 11:15; Rev. 20:7-10; Belgic Confession Arts. 27 & 36).
7. The churches shall remain free to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ peacefully, proselytize, establish churches, and disciple those who wish to follow Christ, without any form of censorship or penalties imposed by temporal civil authorities. We reject all false doctrine asserting that the church must surrender the content or form of its message to the prevailing ideological and political convictions of our day. The Christian church is in all things to acknowledge and declare the transforming power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, whose Word upholds all things. The civil magistrate is called to protect the preaching of the Gospel and all the holy service of God with all the means given to it by God, in order that freedom of conscience to serve God according to His Word be guaranteed and every anti-Christian power which would threaten the church in the exercise of its holy ministrations be resisted and prevented (Psalm 82; Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Tim. 4:1-5; Belgic Confession Art. 36; Canons of Dort Head 2, Art. 5).
8. The churches and their members shall remain free to meet in person for religious worship, prayer, the study of the Bible, or any moral or benevolent purpose without disturbance or interruption from any persons. The sacred duties to assemble for worship and engage in Christian ministry are divine obligations laid down in Holy Scripture and should be recognized and protected by civil authorities. Christians have the obligation to join with the assembly of Christ's church wherever God has established it, even if civil decrees forbid it and death and physical punishment result (Ps. 92:1-2; Psalm 100; Heb. 10:19-25; Heidelberg Catechism Lord's Day 38; Belgic Confession Art. 28).
9. Parents in Christian churches are to remain free to disciple, educate, and catechize their children in the faith and confession of the church concerning all of God's revelation

about creation, the fall of man, and salvation in Christ. They are free to do so without fear of persecution, reprisal, or the seizure of their children by the state. We reject the false ideology that beyond its God-ordained and limited sphere as a ministry of public justice, the state or any other institution should become sovereign over human life and so presume to fulfil the vocations of the family and the church (Eccl. 2:24-26; Eccl 3:12-14; Daniel 1; *Heidelberg Catechism* Lord's Days 1 & 13; *Belgic Confession* Art. 36).

**Grounds:**

- a. Serious cultural errors and a broad moral decline presently are infecting and marginalizing the church and family, such that our civil society is renouncing, both in law and in socio-cultural life, our historic Christian heritage.
- b. Increasingly the state and is imperiling our God-given liberties and exposing our civil government to divine judgment.
- c. These developments have sown confusion among the churches regarding the relationship between church and state, the proper submission due to governing authorities, and the boundaries belonging to the family, the church, and the state. The need to apply Scripture and our Confessions to our contemporary context is important for the unity of the churches on these significant matters.

Done in consistory July 11, 2023  
Immanuel United Reformed Church  
DeMotte, Indiana

## Overture 2

### Include Committee Mandates in Committee Reports to Synod

#### Background

In the last synodical agenda, there were 11 committee reports. Of those, four committees began their reports with a full quotation of their synodically given mandate, one committee summarized its mandate, one interspersed its report with occasional references to parts of its mandate, and one (CECCA) cited material that functions as its mandate. Four committees made no mention of their mandate. CECCA reported that it has no formal mandate and proposed one (in an appendix), but it did not include it in its recommendations, so synod took no action on it. Synods have sometimes given additional mandates to existing committees. Some additional mandates have been temporary. Keeping track of it all is not easy. Reporting to synod in 2024, there should be 11 synodical standing committees and two newly appointed study committees.

Citing the mandate at the beginning of a report is recognized among us as a beneficial practice but it is not practiced by all. This overture seeks to establish the practice among all our standing, study, and ad hoc committees.

#### Overture

Covenant Reformed Church in Pella, Iowa overtures Classis Central US to overture Synod Escondido 2024 to add to the *Regulations for Synodical Procedure* a regulation under heading 5 *Committees* as follows:

5.1.4. Every committee, in its report to each synod, shall begin its report with a verbatim copy of its synodical mandate.

If any committee does not presently have a mandate, we overture Synod Escondido to instruct that committee(s) to draft its own mandate and recommend it to the next synod for approval.

#### Grounds

1. It is very likely that there will always be new ministers and new elders at each synod who have no knowledge of the history of all the committees. Beginning each report with a copy of its mandate will enable all readers, new or not, to readily understand the purpose of the committee and measure the rest of the report in light of it.
2. A review of its mandate with each report will help discipline each committee to stay within its mandate and avoid mission creep.
3. This is presently done by some committees and has proved helpful, but it is not being done by all the committees.
4. Synod, on occasion, has tweaked committee mandates or added to them. Reminding readers of those changes in the next agenda for synod will help keep all readers up to date.
5. There is no federation archive where all committee mandates can be found and even if there were, it would not be as helpful as having the report and the mandate together in the agenda for synod.

Covenant Reformed Church, Pella, Iowa  
Calvin Meinders, Clerk

### **Overture 3**

#### Dissolve the Appointment of the Consistory Supervising the Classical Website

##### **I. Background:**

When the Classis Central Website was set up it was requested that Grace United Reformed Church in Waupun would be the supervising consistory for this classical website. At this time, the consistory of Grace United Reformed Church would like to step down from this role. However, as we do not see why it is necessary for any church to be appointed as a replacement for this work, we believe that it would be best to simply dissolve this appointment.

##### **II. Overture:**

The Consistory of Grace United Reformed Church (in Waupun, WI) overtures Classis Central U.S. to:

1. Dissolve the appointment of a Consistory Supervising the Classical Website.

##### **Grounds:**

- a. Any technical support necessary is provided for by the domain service-life.
- b. This should not create any extra work for our classis treasurer (one check per year going directly to service-life instead of one check per year going to Grace United Reformed Church as a reimbursement).
- c. We already have a website tied to our classis (the Classis Central Church Planting Website, [harvestingtheplains.com](http://harvestingtheplains.com)) which operates well without an appointed supervising consistory.

In Christ's Service, on behalf of the Consistory

David Kok, Clerk

## Overture 4

Dissolve the Appointment of an Oversight Consistory of the Website Oversight Committee

### I. Background:

At Synod Schererville (See Acts of Synod Schererville 2007, Article 51, Recommendation 2), Grace United Reformed Church in Waupun was appointed as the Oversight Consistory of the Website Oversight Committee (OCWOC). The mandate included the call to act “as a legal entity when such is requested by the Website Oversight Committee” and to act “as the responsible ecclesiastical assembly, in the time between synods, when such is requested by the Website Oversight Committee...” (See Acts of Synod London 2010, Article 57, Recommendation 14).

At Synod Niagara Grace United Reformed Church in Waupun sought to have relief from this labor. This request was granted, and the consistory at Grace was tasked with recommending their own successor (See Acts of Synod Niagara, Article 105, Recommendation 3). After sending a letter to interested churches, when no single consistory responded that they would take this appointment, the consistory at Grace began to pass over some of their volunteer duties directly to the Website Oversight Committee (WOC). Those duties, which already fit within the mandate of the WOC, were graciously received by the committee. As the duties we previously performed have now been transferred in full to the WOC, we believe it is no longer necessary for any consistory to fill this appointment.

### II. Overture:

The Consistory of Grace United Reformed Church (in Waupun, WI) overtures Classis Central U.S. to overture the Synod of the United Reformed Churches in North America to:

1. Dissolve the appointment of an Oversight Consistory of the Website Oversight Committee (OCWOC).

#### Grounds:

- a. With one exception (see “2” below), the Website Oversight Committee (WOC) is currently able to complete all of their mandated duties without an appointed Oversight Consistory (OCWOC).
    - i. Some of the previously mandated actions, to be done “with the approval of an appointed consistory” have already been accomplished (See Acts of Synod Schererville, 2007, Article 51, Recommendations 6 and 7).
    - ii. The most recent mandate to the WOC, “to entirely redevelop the [urcna.org](http://urcna.org) website” has already been adopted without reference to any direct approval from the OCWOC  
(See Acts of Synod Niagara, Article 51, Recommendation 1).
  - b. A committee with various appointed members is best suited to handle the technical labors related to our federation’s website.
2. Grant the Website Oversight Committee authority to establish and maintain the duties of

the webmaster.

**Grounds:**

- a. This would allow the Website Oversight Committee to continue this ongoing mandate, while removing the language of “with the approval of the Oversight Consistory” as this mandate was originally given (See Acts of Synod London, 2010, article 57, recommendation 2).

In Christ’s Service, on behalf of the Consistory

David Kok, Clerk

## Overture 5

### Financial Support of Emeritus Minister

#### I. Background

Reverend Allen Vander Pol (Emeritus) is a member of Covenant Reformed Church in Kansas City, MO. Last year, the Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church, Kansas City, requested the concurring advice of Classis for Rev Vander Pol's Emeritation, and for financial support. This support was requested partly due to the fact that the majority of Rev Vander Pol's career was not under the supervision of Kansas City, yet the Consistory seeks to honor the spirit and letter of the URCNA Church Article 10 to honorably support this minister in his emeritus status.

#### II. Overture

The Consistory of Covenant Reformed Church of Kansas City, MO overtures Classis Central US for up to \$24,000 (\$2,000 per month) in financial assistance from the Church Assistance Fund for the year of 2024 if and as needed.

#### III. Grounds

1. The Church Order of the URCNA, Article 10 states (in part): *“A minister who has emeritated due to age or who is unable to perform the duties of his office due to age, sickness, or other personal disabilities, shall retain the honor and title of Minister of the Word, and his ministerial credentials shall remain with the church he last served, which shall provide honorably for his support, with the assistance of the churches of classis if necessary.”*
2. Reverend Allen Vander Pol has served honorably in his career, and was emeritated with the concurrence of Classis Central US at the Sep 12-13, 2022 Classis meeting in Lynwood, IL: *“1: Covenant URC Kansas City requests concurring advice for the emeritation of Rev. Allen Vander Pol beginning December 31, 2022. Rev. Vander Pol (not present) has served as a minister of the Gospel for 42 years. A motion is made and supported to grant concurring advice for emeritation beginning December 31, 2022. ADOPTED”*
3. We feel we will not meet the obligation of honorably providing for Rev. Vander Pol's support in accordance with URCNA Church Order Article 10 without classical assistance, as evidenced by the attached documents of support previously received/dispensed and our annual approved budget.
4. A previous motion adopted at the Sep 12-13 Classis meeting in Lynwood, IL allows for annual review of this support as needed:  
*“2: Covenant URC Kansas City requests financial assistance from the Classis Church Assistance Fund for \$2,000 per month for the support of an emeritus minister. A motion is made and supported to grant \$2,000 per month to be paid at the beginning of each month from the Church Assistance Fund for 2023 and to be reviewed annually at the September classis meeting. ADOPTED”*

Done in the Covenant Reformed URC Consistory: July 13, 2023 President: Ian Harris  
Clerk: Phil Veltkamp



Appendix to Overture 5  
Covenant Reformed Church 2022 Budget

2023  
Budget

**General Fund**

	Pastor's Compensation	82,600
	Pastor's Continuing Ed.	1,000
	Pastoral Visits	500
	Pulpit Supply	2,500
	Pastor Emeritas Fund	24,000
	Classis Emeritas Reimbursement	(24,000)
	Summer Intern	6,500
	Seminarian Support	6,000
	Bookkeeping Supplies	2,700
Council Expenses	Copying & Printing Expenses	600
	Church Cleaning	7,200
	Church Mowing	2,400
	Federation Expenses	1,500
	Federation Askings	1,400
	Classis Assistance Fund	2,400
	RYS Comm/Board Travel	-
	Gas & Electric	10,300
	Insurance	9,500
	Miscellaneous	600
	Telephone / Internet	2,350
	Water & Sewer	3,000
	J.J. Support	1,440
	Distant Member Visits	1,240
	Building - Church	6,175
	Building - Parsonage	1,500
Committee Expenses	Grounds	6,200
	Education	1,500
	Fellowship	500
	Library	300
	Missions & Outreach	2,000
	Services	1,225

Covenant Reformed Church 2022 Budget

Worship & Music	3,850
Youth Ministries	3,200
<hr/>	
Total	172,180
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**Budget Totals - Offerings** 172,180

<b>Offerings Rate</b>	2,023
Per Month	14,348
Per Week	3,311

2023  
Budget

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**Building Church**

HVAC Inspections	1,100
Workday supplies	1,000
Carpet cleaning	700
Painting projects	200
Sanctuary Ceiling Fan	200
Backflow Prevention Test	50
Bathroom repairs (basement)	150
Kitchen	250
Refinish basement floors	500
Basement kitchen countertop	500
Gravel around AC units	50
Roof repairs from windstorm	200
Repair steeple roof	500
Tankless water heater (old)	600
AED Batteries (every 4 years)	175
Total	6,175

**Building Parsonage**

HVAC Inspections	310
General maintenance	690
Workday Projects	500
Total	1,500

**Grounds**

South Lot Mowing	250
Lawn treatments	800
Mower maintenance	300
Gas for Mowing	450
Workday & miscellaneous	1400
Snow removal	1,000
Trim trees	0
Mower Replacement	1,000
Reseal / Paint Parking Lot	1,000
Total	<u><u>6,200</u></u>

2023

Budget

**Education**

Material (children)	800
Material (adult leader)	300
Supplies	50
Christmas program	50
Catechism materials	200
YPS study materials	100
Total	<u><u>1,500</u></u>

**Missions & Outreach**

Thomas Bell Seminary Support	0
Joseph Sato Seminary Support	0
Anthony Sato Seminary Support	0
Community Outreach Projects	150
SermonAudio.Com	600
Web-Site Upkeep	250
Pamphlets & Brochures	1,000
Total	<u><u>2,000</u></u>

**Fellowship**

Congregational Dinner	100
Fellowship activities	400
Total	<u>500</u>

**Library**

Books and subscriptions	300
Total	<u>300</u>

**Services**

Nursery supplies	75
Hospitality	400
Funeral Flowers	100
Kitchen supplies	400
Showers	200
Community Garden	
Mother's day carnations	50
Total	<u>1,225</u>

**Worship**

Bulletin paper	300
Profession of Faith Bibles	250
Piano/organ tuning	100
Upgrade sound system	3,000
CCLI License	0
Flowers	50
Communion Supplies	150
Total	<u>3,850</u>

**Youth Ministries**

YPS	750
Cadets	750
American Heritage Girls	1,700
Total	<u>3,200</u>

Covenant Reformed Church 2022 Budget

	2023 Budget
<b>Pastor's Compensation</b>	
Salary	
Base salary	28,000
Social Security offset	5,500
Pension Fund	10,000
Optional Pension	
Compensated Allowances	
Housing	21,600
Parsonage Utilities	4,500
Auto	4,000
Aggregate Salary / Allowances	73,600
Expense Items	
Health Insurance	8,000
Life Insurance	500
Disability Insurance	500
<b>Total Salary, Allowances and Expenses</b>	<b>82,600</b>
Non-Cash Items (no budget impact)	
Parsonage usage	0
Total Pastor's Compensation	82,600

Overture 6

# **LATINO MISSIONS PROPOSAL**

**FOR**

**CLASSIS CENTRAL US**

**SEPTEMBER 11-12, 2023**

**PROPOSED BY:**

**CORNERSTONE URC  
SANBORN, IOWA**

**LATINO MISSIONS PROPOSAL**

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## **HISTORY OF THE MINISTRY**

In June, 2020 the Consistory and Council approved the formation of a Latino Ministry Ad-Hoc Committee with a mandate of researching a number of points pertaining to the formation of a fully Reformed Latino ministry in the Northwest Iowa area. (See Appendix 1). In January of 2021 a report of the work of the committee was presented to the Council. Throughout the remainder of the year the Council discussed how best to begin this ministry. In January, 2022 Mr. Arturo Gomez began working with the Ad-Hoc committee in making contacts with Latino brothers and sisters. The initial hire was intended to be for 4-6 hours per week, but due to an increasing demand from his work schedule, Mr. Gomez was unable to continue to devote the time to the ministry that was desired by Cornerstone and the Ad-Hoc committee. However, in the time that was devoted to the ministry by the Committee and Mr. Gomez, it became more evident to all involved that the need for such a ministry was real and that a small scale, part-time approach would not do justice to the growing need for a truly Reformed Latino ministry in Northwest Iowa.

With this brief history of where we have been, the Council proposes the following:

**That Cornerstone United Reformed Church of Sanborn, Iowa be the calling church for a full time Latino Missions Coordinator (LMC) who will be set apart specifically to minister among the Latino communities in the broader Siouxland area. This is explained in more detail in the Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Action Plan that follow.**

## **VISION STATEMENT – THE WHAT**

*To make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ from among the Latino community in the broader Siouxland area, through a distinctively Reformed and gospel-centered ministry (which may or may not lead to an organized Spanish-speaking church).*

## **MISSION STATEMENT – THE HOW AND THE WHY**

The directive that Jesus gave to us in **Matthew 28** is right here in our local community. There are souls yet unsaved in the Latino community, which means that we have an evangelistic calling to minister to our Latino neighbors. We will do this by calling an ordained servant of the Lord who will be set apart to preach and teach the good news of the gospel, namely, that God sent His only-begotten Son into

this world to save us from our sins and misery. This ordained servant of the Lord (the Latino Missions Coordinator, hereafter LMC) will also engage in the work of discipling those who come under this ministry. Along with the support and involvement of the Cornerstone congregation, as well as the deacons, the Consistory will oversee this missions work in obedience to Jesus' command to love our neighbors and to *"make disciples of all nations."*

## **BACKGROUND**

Our towns and area businesses have observed a growing number of Latino immigrants moving in to find work, purchase homes, and enroll their children in the local schools. As more of these immigrants purchase homes, it indicates their long term desire to live and work in NW Iowa. These immigrants move to our area from Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua, as well as other South and Central American countries. While most of these immigrants have a religious background in Roman Catholicism, many have a Pentecostal background which is rich in emotion, but severely lacks a biblical doctrinal foundation and therefore leaves many on a path to false religion and false eternal security.

There are religious gatherings in Sheldon, Bigelow MN., and Sioux Center (Amistad Cristiana) which are an outreach of the CRC and RCA. The Ad-hoc committee sought information regarding the teaching of these outreach programs and found that they lack Biblically sound teaching of our Reformed doctrines. The committee also learned that each of these ministries places high regard to the working of the Holy Spirit in speaking to individuals in revelatory ways, yet are noticeably devoid of biblical doctrine and instruction. As a result, the need of bringing a distinctively Reformed gospel ministry to these immigrants is vitally important for us, as Christ's ambassadors.

Inquiries by the Ad-hoc committee with local schools and city administrations revealed that the Latino population makes up approximately 25% of our neighborhoods. This number varies from community to community as detailed in Appendix 2. These numbers show us very clearly that the mission field has come to us and there is a very significant opportunity before us to *"make disciples of all nations"*.

The Ad-hoc committee sought counsel of like-minded Reformed ministries in the URC such as Rev. Ruben Sernas, pastor of El pacto de Gracia in Chicago Heights IL. Rev. Sernas had many suggestions for us to consider, one of which is that we consider a Joint Venture Committee with a few other local NAPARC Churches in order to partner together in funding and supporting the ministry. Rev. Sernas also advised that we have a core group of 50 people before we organize worship services. We also met with Pastor Ken Anema and Elder John Hamstra from De Motte IN who are engaged in direct ministry to Latino's through prison ministry.

An important aspect of what we learned through these investigations is that the Latino population has a view of ordained ministers as the CEO and Administrator of the church, (similar to the Roman Catholic tradition of Popes and priests) but have a lack of understanding how churches can be ruled and directed by ordained elders and deacons. This common Latino view of ordained ministers must be



replaced by our Biblical doctrine of the importance of the priesthood of every believer, in missional outreach and growth.

## **ACTION PLAN**

The Consistory determined that a detailed action plan was required before moving forward with the ministry. The following are the specific points researched and discussed in more detail:

1. Finalize the wording on the Vision statement and Mission Statement
2. Determine the scope or area of the proposed Missions work
3. Outline a Timeframe for developing the ministry
4. Determine the location of the residence and study of the LMC
5. Develop a budget for the Ministry
6. Determine the Oversight structure for the ministry.
7. Prepare a list of qualifications for the LMC
8. Call a qualified man to serve as the LMC
9. Detail the Disciple-Making Process
10. Determine study materials used for Bible studies, Counseling, etc.
11. Ministry Evaluation

What follows is a more detailed explanation of each of the points of the Action Plan:

### **1. Finalize the wording on the Vision statement and Mission Statement**

The completed Vision and Mission Statements are laid out on page 2 of this document.

### **2. Determine the scope or area of the proposed Missions work**

The initial plan is to **ordinarily** work within a 25 mile radius of Boyden, Iowa. However, if opportunity arises where family/friends or known interested contacts are within a reasonable distance of the described area, these contacts will be encouraged. See Appendix 3 for a map of the proposed area.

### **3. Outline a Timeframe for developing the ministry**

A. Vision, Mission, & Action plan development:

1. Complete all above Action Plan details
2. Compile all of these details and rework the Ad hoc com proposal

3. Present to the Council for input and approval-March 15 mtg
4. Present to LM Ad Hoc Com for input and critique.  
-between March 15 and April 2 church mailbox distribution to congregation

B. Presentation of proposal (determine involvement and funding)

1. Congregation-Informational meeting on April 16, May 3 congregational meeting
2. NAPARC Churches in 25 mile radius-very early June  
-Notice of the joint meeting sent out very soon after Congregational approval to the following churches:
  - a. OC Redeemer URC
  - b. Rock Valley URC
  - c. Doon URC
  - d. Sioux Center URC
  - e. Hospers PCA
  - f. HRC Hull
  - g. Sioux Falls URC
  - h. Hills URC
3. Private Financial support Coordination-Paul Anema  
-do needed background work to determine interested parties and present a private support proposal to the Council in July timeframe.
4. Classis Central US-September 2023-make a formal presentation of the proposed ministry with a specific long term financial assistance request.

C. Calling process-following Classis Central US meeting in September 2023.

1. The LM Coordinator will be called as an Associate Pastor of Cornerstone URC, but called specifically to the duties of ministry among the Latino community in NW IA. As an associate pastor, the coordinator would be expected to attend all Consistory and Council meetings at CURC. As with any pastoral call, the time of service in this position will ordinarily last until another call is received. Article 47 of the URCNA church order states that a local Consistory must seek the advice of Classis before sending or removing a home missionary from a field. If the CURC Council determines the ministry should be discontinued, the Council will seek the advice of Classis before removing the missionary from the field and then declare the associate pastor eligible for call to the sister churches of the URCNA.
2. Consider advertising for the position following Congregational approval in May. At this time, a calling committee will be formed to explore possible interest and leads for the LMC position. No official call would be suggested until following the September Classis meeting.

#### **4. Determine the location of the residence and study of the LMC**

With the coordinator being an associate pastor at Cornerstone URC, the desire of the Consistory is to have the residence of the coordinator reasonably close to the Sanborn area. With this being said, we also realize that much of the potential contact work is from the Highway 60 corridor and to the west. Thus, the desire would be for the LMC to reside in the Sanborn/Sheldon area.

The office location will be determined after a coordinator is hired. If there is room in the home for office space, an in home office would be an option. If there is not sufficient space in the home or if the coordinator desires to have office space in a different location, then office space options will be investigated at that time.

#### **5. Develop a budget for the Ministry**

The Council would recommend making a proposal at the May congregational meeting for congregational approval of the concept of the ministry. Since the income sources and amounts are unknown at this time, the attached budget is a concept budget only at this time. If the CURC congregation approves the proposal, an early June joint meeting with the NAPARC churches in the area will be set up. Following this information meeting, these churches will be asked to go back to their respective Councils and determine the interest level both in personnel and finances for the ministry. CURC would ask for a formal response with this support information by late July. We will need final information prior to Classis information being distributed. Also, during the May-July timeframe, initial private donation support levels will be determined. Upon receiving the above information from the neighboring NAPARC churches and private donors, the CURC Council will determine the level of support they will seek from the Cornerstone congregation as well as at the Classis level for the ministry. The Classical Committee on Home Missions (CCHM) will be updated on the budget shortfall and the total finances to be requested at the September Classis Central US meeting. An additional congregational meeting will be held at Cornerstone URC prior to the Classis meeting for approval of a more specific financial support level. Appendix 4 is a copy of the concept budget for the ministry.

#### **6. Determine the Oversight structure for the ministry.**

The oversight of the ministry is ultimately the responsibility of Cornerstone URC. With this being said, the Consistory of CURC realizes that it would be extremely difficult to oversee the

proposed mission work if, in time, it broadly covers the proposed area. Thus, to assist in the oversight process, The CURC Council is proposing the formation of a Joint Venture Committee (JVC). The JVC would consist of 2 representatives from each of the churches interested in supporting the ministry both financially and with personnel to aid the coordinator with work in the area of that particular church. A suggestion would be for one of the representatives to be a more long term position and for one of the representatives to be a Council member, thus rotating (preferably every 3 years). This would give a fair amount of continuity to the JVC while also allowing the individual church Councils to stay informed of the work of the ministry. The chairman of the JVC will be from Cornerstone URC.

The JVC would conduct annual reviews of the Coordinator and the ministry and report back to CURC. The CURC Consistory and Council will also have monthly feedback from the monthly reports that are expected at the Consistory level from the LMC.

The Cornerstone URC Council would also suggest the formation of an Advisory Team in addition to the JVC. This would simply be a larger group of individuals from our area communities who share in the vision and mission of the ministry and may employ or in some way work with the Latino community. This team would jointly meet with the JVC once or twice per year to discuss ideas and concepts to potentially make the ministry more effective.

Finally, since Cornerstone URC will be working with the Classical Committee on Home Missions (CCHM) in this ministry, Cornerstone will be mandated to have an elder serve on the CCHM as a committee member.

## **7. Prepare a list of qualifications for the LMC**

- a man who is spiritual, personable, relatable, responsible, reliable, trustworthy, wise, and also punctual, while meeting the criteria listed in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1
- a man who is culturally-sensitive with regard to the variety of Spanish-speaking peoples in the NW Iowa/Siouxland area, who may have different nationalities in their background
- a man who is able to contextualize gospel-related ministry among people who are not only Spanish-speaking, but who also have different backgrounds (RCC, charismatic, worldly)

## **8. Call a qualified man to serve as the LMC**

- vet a man who has received a thoroughly Reformed theological education, and do so by ascertaining knowledge of his doctrine, life, and background through an interview process
- ensure that this man is bi-lingual, being fluent in both English and Spanish
- follow the process outlined in the URCNA Church Order (broadly, Arts. 3-8)

- per our polity, the man called to be the LMC will have his ministerial credentials and his church membership held by the Consistory of CURC

#### **9. Detail the Disciple-Making Process**

- Work with area businesses and groups that hire and employ Latino people and build relationships with these businesses and organizations.
- Establish and ensure means of local congregation involvement/relationship building.
- have a mix of outreach and evangelism (community contacts and a Word-based ministry)
- hang up or hand out flyers, create a digital footprint/presence, establish various relationships
- Bible studies, new members classes, counseling sessions, + other Bible-based instruction
- outline the process of church membership, baptisms, and professions of faith, per the CO
- prepare for wedding ceremonies, funerals, and other ministry opportunities, too
- develop a plan to incorporate Spanish-speaking people in public worship at CURC, using Google translate and available i-pads as a means of translating what is being preached?

#### **10. Determine study materials used for Bible studies, Counseling, etc.**

- leave the initial selection of various materials to be used up to the discretion of the LMC
- use the current process of having the Education Committee approve suggested materials that will be used in various teaching-related ministries
- use the current process of having the Consistory approve material for counseling sessions
- in short, the LMC will initially select the materials he wants to use; and to ensure that we are all on the same page, the Education Committee and the Consistory will give approval
- the LMC will be a member of the CURC Education Committee

#### **11. Ministry Evaluation**

The CURC Council realizes that this is very likely going to require a long term commitment. Thus, the Consistory simply wishes to say that we are committed to the ministry for the foreseeable future instead of putting a time frame of having certain goals in a certain number of years and then determining if the ministry is to continue. History tells us that it will likely be a slow process.

#### **Additional Notes:**

1. The LMC could possibly lead 2 services annually in each of the supporting churches. This would give the individual congregations a chance to hear sermons and become accustomed to the content and style of the ministry. Ideally, the sermons preached in the supporting churches

would be sermons prepared for the Latino ministry. This would also present opportunity for the coordinator to update the individual congregations with updates on the ministry.

- A. Keep the Coordinator polished in sermon writing and delivery skills
  - B. The Spanish version of the developed sermons could be used as a part of an online resource for promotion of the ministry.
2. With adequate interest over time, the ministry would work toward the organization of a Spanish speaking United Reformed Church.

**Special thanks to the Ad-hoc committee for their contributions to this proposal.**

**Given the background and action plan as described previously in this proposal, Cornerstone URC, Sanborn, Iowa would request that Classis Central US consider the following:**

**Background Summary:**

**Cornerstone URC, Sanborn, Iowa has been in contact with the CCHM (and former CPAC) regarding the desire to begin a Latino ministry in Northwest Iowa. In January of 2023 a face to face meeting was held in an attempt to get all involved moving in the same direction. Since that meeting, a more formal proposal has been drafted and the action plan is being executed. It is the desire of Cornerstone to continue to proceed and call an associate pastor who would fill the duties of Latino Ministry Coordinator to minister specifically to the Latino Community in Northwest Iowa.**

Grounds:

1. There is a growing number of Latino immigrants moving into the northwest Iowa area.
2. The majority of this community lacks a true biblical foundation in faith that they have.
3. Other current religious gatherings that attempt to minister to the Latino community lack a Biblically sound teaching of our Reformed doctrines.

**Action Request:**

**Cornerstone URC, Sanborn, Iowa requests that Classis Central US approve the proposal as explained in this document and to financially support this ministry at the Classis level with an annual commitment of \$35,000.**

Grounds:

1. Total minister compensation and other expenses are greater than what Cornerstone URC can sustain on an annual basis.
2. Private Donations and support from other NAPARC churches will not make up the shortfall from expected annual expenses vs what Cornerstone can commit to the ministry.

## Appendix 1

**Cornerstone United Reformed Church**

**Sanborn, IA**  
**Latino ministry Ad-Hoc Committee**

Members

Paul Anema-Elder Representative-Chairman, Jake Van Otterloo-Deacon Representative, Wendi Minderhoud, Kelsey Covey, Grant Diekevers

Mandate

Research the feasibility to start a fully Reformed Latino ministry in the Northwest Iowa area in terms of:

- What is the driving force?
- Latino demographics in the area.
- Leadership needed and training.
- Financial needs to support the ministry.
- Where should support and involvement be sought – local URC's, NAPARC churches, Classis Central U.S?
- What does success look like?
- Locations of meetings.
- What would be the length of commitment?
- How the Church Polity of the URCNA would be applied with regard to church membership, baptism, the Lord's Supper, etc.

Progress reports to the Council of Cornerstone as necessary or upon request of the Council.

Provide a summary of the committee's findings and make recommendations to the Cornerstone Council.

Approved by Council June 24, 2020

**Appendix 2**

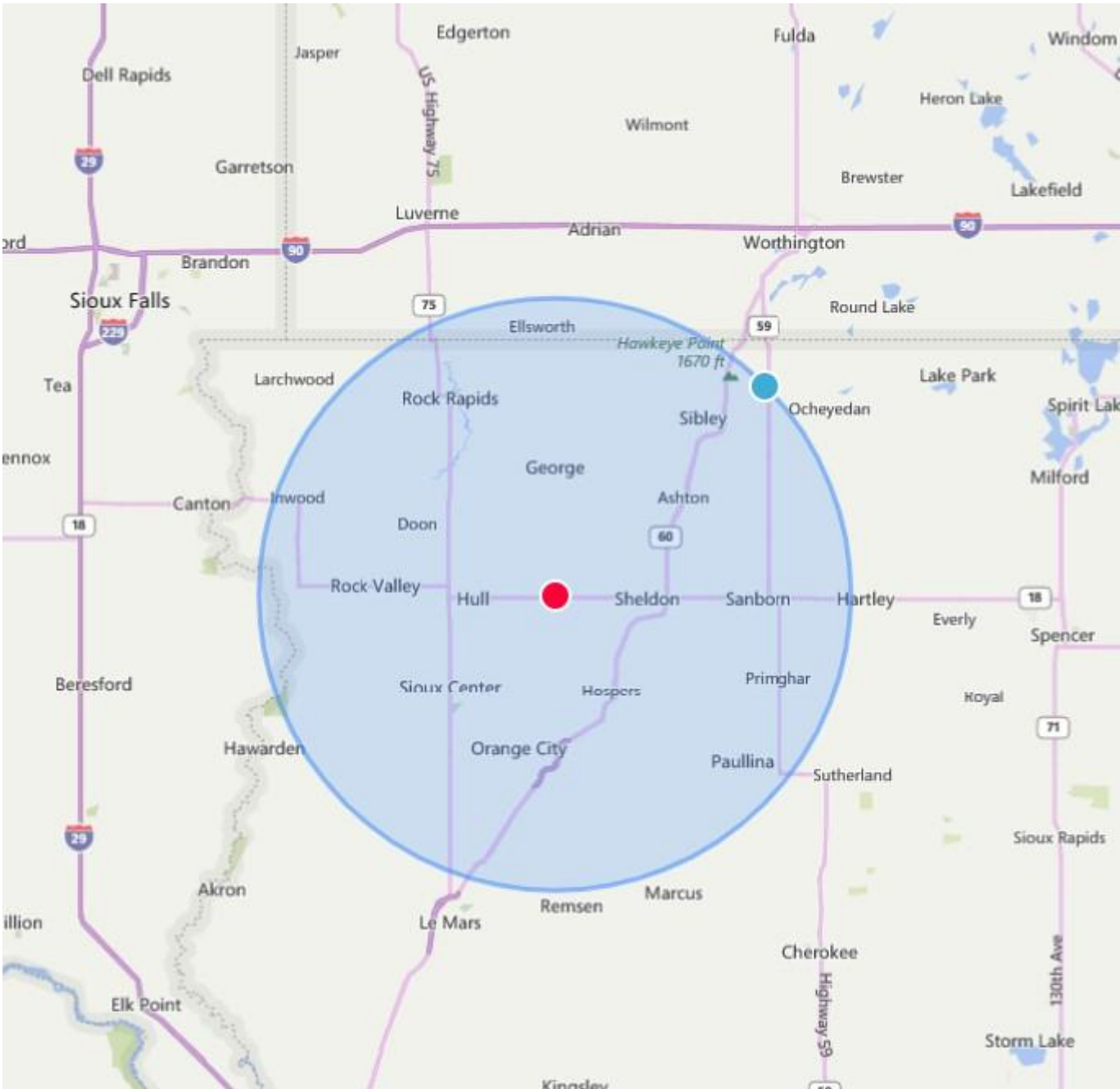


**School District**                      **% Hispanic Enrollment**

Central Lyon	5%
Hartley/Melvin/Sanborn	13%
Sheldon	17%
South O'Brien	6%
Boyden-Hull	25%
MOC/FV	17%
George Little Rock	4%
Sioux Center	34%
Rock Valley	34%
Sibley Ocheyedan	18%
West Lyon	4%
West Sioux	34%

Statistics Courtesy of GreatSchools.org

**Appendix 3**



**Appendix 4**

		<b><u>Latino Ministry Concept Budget</u></b>					
EXPENSE:							
<u>Full Time Minister Compensation</u>							
Salary	\$	50,000					
Annual Child Allowance (2,000/child)	\$	-					
Social Security/Medicare	\$	3,825					
IRA	\$	5,000					
Annual Book Allowance	\$	1,200					
HSA Contibution	\$	5,000					
Medical/Dental Insurance	\$	15,000					
Housing Allowance	\$	18,000					
Total Minister Compensation	\$	<b>98,025</b>					
<u>Other misc expenses</u>							
Mileage	\$	9,825.00	2023 IRS rate .655/mile, 300 miles/week estimate (15k/year)				
Education Materials	\$	2,500.00					
Evangelism/Community outreach	\$	2,000.00					
Total misc expenses	\$	<b>14,325.00</b>					
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>112,350.00</b>					
INCOME:							
Cornerstone support	\$	32,500.00					
Classis support	\$	35,000.00					
other church 1 support	\$	15,000.00					
other church 2 support	\$	15,000.00					
private donations	\$	15,000.00					
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>112,500.00</b>					

## Concept Budget Only

## CHURCHES OF CLASSIS CENTRAL US

UPDATED JULY 24, AD 2023

### **Churches (organized) alphabetical listing for rotation of hosting and chairing:**

1. Beecher, IL | Faith URC, Rev. Nathan Voss
2. De Motte, IN | Immanuel URC, Rev. Roberto Rossi
3. Des Moines, IA | Providence Reformed Church, Rev. Jody Lucero
4. Doon, IA | Doon URC, Rev. John Vermeer
5. Hills, MN | Hills URC, Rev. Praveen P. Muthusamy
6. Kansas City, MO | Covenant Reformed Church, Rev. Stephen Lauer
7. Lansing, IL | Oak Glen URC, Rev. Ed Marcusse
8. Lynwood, IL | Lynwood URC, Rev. Nick Alons
9. Oak Lawn, IL | First URC of Oak Lawn, Rev. Harold Miller
10. Orange City, IA | Redeemer URC, Rev. Todd De Rooy
11. Pella, IA | Covenant Reformed Church, Rev. Greg Lubbers
12. Rock Valley, IA | Rock Valley URC, Rev. Caleb Castro
13. Sanborn, IA | Cornerstone URC, Rev. Dan Donovan
14. Schererville, IN | Community URC, Rev. David Klompfen
15. Sioux Center, IA | Sioux Center URC, Rev. Jon Bushnell
16. Sioux Falls, SD | Christ Reformed Church, Rev. Benjamin Davenport
17. St. John, IN | Redeemer URC, Rev. Steve Swets
18. Waupun, WI | Grace URC, Rev. Paul Freswick
19. Wellsburg, IA | URC of Wellsburg, Rev. Joel Worries

### **Ministers of Classis Called to Foreign, Domestic, and Educational Missions and Ministries**

Rev. Ken Anema – Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary  
Dr. J. Mark Beach – Mid-American Reformed Seminary  
Rev. Nathan Brummel – Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary  
Rev. R. Andrew Compton – Mid-American Reformed Seminary  
Rev. Paul Ipema – Divine Hope Reformed Bible Seminary  
Rev. Pablo Landázuri – Quito, Ecuador | Iglesia Reformada Luz de Vida,  
Rev. Andrew Spriensma – US Army Chaplain  
Rev. Mark Vander Hart – Mid-American Reformed Seminary  
Dr. Cornelis Venema – Mid-American Reformed Seminary

### **Emeritus Ministers**

Rev. Ted Gray  
Rev. Allen Vander Pol

### CLASSIS FUNCTIONARIES:

#### **Stated Clerk (2 term limit):**

Rev. Ralph Pontier, 641-230-3880 (cell)

**Second term ends September 2023**

#### **Alternate Stated Clerk**

Rev. Greg Lubbers

First term ends April 2026

#### **Treasurer**

Supervising Consistory: Sioux Center URC (appointed March 2014)

Treasurer: Mr. Harlan Harmelink, (712) 441-0573 (cell)

1441 4th Ave SE

Sioux Center, IA 51250

#### **Church Visitors East**

Rev. Ed Marcusse  
Mr. John Surowiec (Schererville, IN)  
Alternate: Rev. Andrew Compton  
Alternate: Rev. David Klompien

Term ends April 2025  
Term ends September 2024\*  
Term ends September 2024  
Term ends April 2026

**Church Visitors West**

Rev. John Vermeer  
Rev. Ralph Pontier  
Alternate: Mr. Korrie Van Maanen (Rock Valley)  
Alternate: Rev. Todd De Rooy

Term ends September 2025  
Term ends September 2024  
Term ends November 2023  
Term ends September 2024

**CCHM Membership**

Immanuel URC (De Motte, IN)  
Rev. Jody Lucero  
Rev. Joel Worries  
Mr. Grant Diekevers (Sanborn, IA)  
Mr. Bruce Aardsma (Schereville, IN)  
Rev. Roberto Rossi  
Alternate: Rev. Nick Alons  
Alternate: Mr. Korrie Van Maanen (Rock Valeey)

Supervising Consistory  
Fourth term ends September 2024  
Second term ends September 2024  
Second term ends March 2024  
First term ends September 2023  
First term ends September 2024  
Third term ends March 2026  
Third term ends September 2023

**CECCA Delegate**

Mr. Gerald Swets (Schererville, IN)  
Alternate: Rev. John Vermeer

Third term ends March 2026  
Third term ends September 2025

**CERCU Delegate**

Rev. Harold Miller  
Alternate: Rev. Dan Donovan

First term ends September 2026  
First term ends September 2025

**Synodical Committee on Foreign Missions**

Mr. Harold Meinders (Pella, IA)  
Alternate: Rev. Paul Freswick

First term ends March 2026  
First term ends March 2026\*

**Synodical Committee on Home Missions**

Rev. Jody Lucero  
Alternate: Rev. Dan Donovan

First term ends March 2026  
First term ends March 2026

**Web Oversight Committee**

Mr. Micah Van Maanen (Orange City, IA)  
Alternate: Rev. Joel Worries

Second term ends September 2025  
Second term ends April 2025

**Standing Committee on Appeals**

Mr. Mark Van Der Molen (De Motte, IN)  
Alternate: Rev. Ralph Pontier

Second term ends September 2024  
Second term ends September 2024

\*Has requested early release.

NOTE: Synodical committee delegates & alternates serve three-year terms. As per Synodical Regulations 5.3.2.c, each classis determines how many three-year terms their delegates may serve.

# RECORD OF BIENNIAL REGULAR CHURCH VISITS

## Article 27 of the Church Order

*Each Consistory of the classis shall invite two experienced office-bearers appointed by classis, either two ministers or a minister and an elder, to visit the council **once every two years**, who shall give account of their visit to the classis. These visitors shall inquire whether the office-bearers faithfully perform their duties, adhere to sound doctrine, observe in all things the adopted order, and properly promote as much as lies in them, by word and deed, the edification of the congregation, including the youth, to the end that these visitors may fraternally admonish those office-bearers who have in anything been negligent, and may by their advice and assistance help direct all things unto the peace, edification and greatest profit of the churches.*

Church Visitors as of **February 2023**

East: Rev. Ed Marcusse, Mr. John Surowiec, Alternates: Rev. R. Andrew Compton, Rev. David Klompier

West: Rev. John Vermeer, Rev. Ralph Pontier, Alternates: Mr. Korrie Van Maanen, Rev. Todd De Rooy

CHURCH	Date Visited	Date Visited	Date Visited	Date Visited	Date Visited	Date Visited	Date Visited
Beecher	07/02/14	03/01/2017	01/06/2021	01/04/2023			
De Motte	10/18/2016	04/20/2021	04/20/2021				
Des Moines	04/27/2015	06/14/2017	06/18/2019	07/19/2021			
Doon	06/8/2015	05/08/2017	09/04/2019	04/05/2021			
Hills	02/04/2015	06/05/2019	09/02/2021				
Kansas City	09/22/2014	09/22/2017	11/16/20				
Lansing	09/30/2015	10/05/2016	02/05/2020	03/02/2022			
Lynwood	10/6/2015	09/05/2017	08/03/2021				
Oak Lawn	11/04/2014	05/07/2017	05/04/2021				
Orange City	07/04/2014	03/13/2017	09/04/2019	10/18/2021			
Pella	09/28/2015	02/04/2019	July 5, 2022				
Rock Valley	08/08/2016	04/09/2019	July 11, 2022				
Sanborn	01/26/2015	03/14/2017	06/05/2019	10/27/2021			
Schererville	03/19/2014	09/21/2016	11/20/2019	02/16/2022			
Sioux Center	10/14/2014	09/06/2016	11/14/2018	04/20/2021			
Sioux Falls	02/04/2015 w/Hills	10/14/2018	11/12/2020	08/2/2022			
St. John	04/12/2016	12/11/2018	09/08/2020	11/08/2022			
Waupun	05/18/2015	03/20/2017	11/17/2020	10/11/2022			
Wellsburg	10/24/2014	11/14/2016	10/16/2018	July 20, 2021			