

ἄγγελος THE MESSENGER

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The Ministry Magazine of the Los Angeles Reformed Presbyterian Church.

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Thankfulness & Reformation

October and November are months that remind us, as Christians, to be thankful. In October, we often reflect on how God moved in a mighty way throughout Europe to reform the Church of Christ. In November, families and churches often gather to give thanks to God for His provision and faithfulness. As October closes and November begins, we - as a congregation - give thanks that God has maintained a testimony in the City of Los Angeles. We do continue to seek reformation within our own hearts, our homes, our church, and even within our city. Please join with the Session and Deacons

of the Los Angeles Church in giving thanks that God has abundantly answered our prayers in 2010. Two areas of thanksgiving are of special notation: In January, we adopted a budget that was about 30% higher than our income for 2009. The congregation encouraged the Session and Deacons to step out in faith and to adopt this budget. The Lord has been faithful. As of the time of writing, we are on track with the 2010 budget. Praise God! The other area where we pause to give thanks is in our numerical growth. We began praying for the Lord Jesus to add three new families to our midst.

Since we began praying for this on Dec. 27th of last year, God has given us three single men and one family who have joined the church, as well as other families and a number of college-and-career-aged worshippers who are now adherents. Praise God for giving to us above and beyond what we have asked! So as we think about Reformation and as we think about Thanksgiving, we give Him all the praise and the glory. He continues to reform us and He continues to make us thankful. Isn't this really just living out "man's chief end?"

Redemption Applied:

Paul Ruchtie Paul Ruchtie joined the LA Church in late September. He was asked to tell us some of how he came to Christ and eventually to the LA Church. Here's his story:

As a kid I grew up in a non-denominational evangelical church. I was always told about Jesus, and my church practiced the "altar call" or what is known as the "sinners prayer." I prayed that prayer about 1.2 million times, but there was never any lasting change or love for Christ. It was basically decisional regeneration. The gospel was put forth in such a way that God sent Christ because I was special. God loved me so much, and was so enthralled with me, that he sent Christ to die for me. All through middle school, high school, and even my first year of college I thought I was a Christian. I believed the Bible to be the word of God, and I thought Jesus was the only way to heaven. I remember sticking up for what I thought to be true in my classes, but walking out the door and living my life for me. After my freshmen year at Youngstown State University everything changed.

It was two or three weeks after finals, and a bunch of my friends were home from college. We got together, and one of my friends started talking about what God had done in his life. He started talking about predestination and "TULIP." I contested, but when he opened his Bible I was baffled at how clear the scriptures were on those truths. This was the first time I heard that God sent Christ for his own glory. I was told God acted for the sake of his name (Ezekiel 36:22). Salvation was a work of God, and Christ actually saves sinners.

My friend then proceeded to take me through the ten commandments. One by one, I was found more guilty of breaking God's law. I saw myself as a wretched sinner for the first time, and for the first time Christ looked beautiful. My only hope was and is Jesus Christ.

That all took place in May of 2007. Over the next few years, God continued to put more and more people in my life who would push me closer to Christ and a deeper knowledge of the truth. One of my Pastors (A.J. Platt) back home had been attending RPTS, and I had absolutely no clue prior to my conversion. He really took me under his wing over the next couple years along with another

"Robert's first question was, 'Does this Church really believe the Westminster Confession?'"

pastor of a local church (Matt Mager). They both introduced me to reformed theology through recommending different books. Through my studies and discussions with A.J. and Matt many reformed truths became solidified in both my thinking and life. Through the reference of a friend, I began to read a website called, "The Puritan Board." The site is where many reformed individuals come together and discuss an array of topics. I began to learn so much through reading countless discussions between different people. I was still looking for a church in Los Angeles at the time, and through my studies I realized that I wanted to find a reformed church. I posted a message on the website about the changes that were taking place in my theology, that I was looking for a more reformed church, and the church had to be somewhat close to The Master's College. A few people commented, and

not many sparked my interest. Pastor Nathan responded to my message, and I recognized that the church was an RP church. I knew a little about the RP church since my pastor back home had gone to RPTS, and I had visited RPTS with him. I decided to call Pastor Nathan over winter break of last year, and started attending the church in mid-January 2010.

All of the above is really a testimony of the sovereignty, grace, mercy, and faithfulness of God. I have been blessed my entire life by the people God has put in my path, and being a member of the LA RPC is one of those blessings. The passion for truth and passion for living out the truth is why I love our congregation. Our congregation is a family, and I am humbled and proud to be a member.

Robert Alvarado was really the first visitor who came to the LA Church after we began praying that God would increase our numbers. Pastor Eshelman met him at the door and Robert's first question was, "Does this Church really believe the Westminster Confession?" Pastor Eshelman told him that we do and then invited him to stick around to see if it was true. Robert has been with us ever since! He also joined the LA RPC in late September. We asked him to tell us about how he first came to Christ. Here's the story of how God worked in Robert's heart and mind:

It was a cool October evening. I was with some friends waiting for another friend to come by with some Marijuana. It was all routine. Before it arrived, another friend, named Gus, came and told us that he was recently converted to Christ. He didn't articulate the Gospel well, but he did share his testimony. I hung on every word! It was there that I first learned of my need to be born again.

All of my Roman Catholic upbringing came flooding to mind.

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Jesus's death, burial, and resurrection became a reality to me. It was there that I first felt sorrow for sin. Tears began welling up in my eyes, but because I was with my friends, I resisted crying. I knew I was a lost sinner that night, and no amount of trying to balance my bad works with good works was going to get me anywhere!

Weeks passed.

I found myself arrested for possession of Marijuana. Since it was my first offense I was made to go to drug counseling at a local Catholic Church. It was there I was given a copy of the Gospel of John. I read for the first time Jesus's own words, "You must be born again." This was further proof of my need for Christ, but I continued to resist.

It was getting worse. My mother worried and she gave me a copy of

"Personal Bible Verses." I started to memorize some of the verses included in the booklet.

Weeks passed.

I received a phone call from a friend inviting me to a local park to try some PCP (a powerful drug that was popular at the time). It threw me for a loop! I did not recognize my surroundings and I could barely walk.

I started to panic. There was a church across the street and I knew what I had to do. I was convinced that I continued down the road that I was on, I may end up permanently impaired, or dead. This was a Friday afternoon. I told my friends that I would no longer be around to party anymore. Believe it or not, they were happy for me! Saturday came. I went to my room, knelt down, and

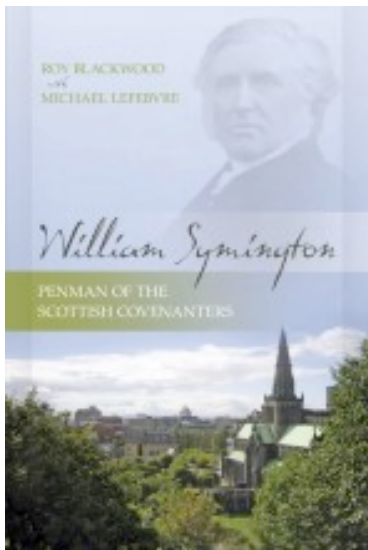
prayed to receive Christ. I felt nothing.

I went to bed as usual and the next morning, I KNEW that I had been born again. I smashed all of my drug pipes and tore down posters of drug related things. I stopped fighting and surrendered to Jesus's Lordship. This is my story.

Gil and Eva Garcia along with their baptized son, Emiliano, joined the LA Church on October 26th and were publicly received during morning worship on October 31st. Elder Huizing gave the words of encouragement to the new members. Their stories will appear in the next edition of *Angelos: The Messenger*. I Look forward to that as well as other testimonies of Christ building His Church.

Dead Theologians' Society

The LA Church longs to be used by the Lord Jesus. We believe that He has called us to have a big vision because He has a big vision (all nations praising him)! Part of that vision includes training men for the ministry. Of course, we have our presbytery (the Pacific Coast Presbytery) and our seminary (RPTS) do that; but raising up men for ministry begins in the local church.



Pastor Eshelman has begun meeting with three young men who have a desire to discern Christ's call on their lives. This group is calling itself "The Dead Theologians' Society." Don't worry; it is not a secret society! Twice a month this group will be discussing a book on pastoral ministry and the work of the pastor. *William Symington: Penman of the Scottish Reformation* is the first book being read because in this book we see the Kingship of Christ applied in the life of a "successful" minister. The Kingship of Christ needs to be the foundational principle for anyone who desires to be used of Jesus Christ in ministry. Please pray that Christ would continue to work in the lives of Paul, Greg, and Gil as they seek to discern Christ's will for their future ministries. Also lift up the Pacific Coast Presbytery as they, Lord willing, direct the spiritual care of these future leaders in Christ's Church. And, pray that God would raise up more future preachers and teachers from the West Coast!

Where'd All These Young People Come From?

Not long after Not long after Pastor Eshelman began pastoring the LA Church, he had a conversation with an Elder from Lafayette, IN about college ministry. Elder Bob Bibby encouraged him with a number of items, but especially noted how college-aged and career ministry has a reviving affect on a congregation.

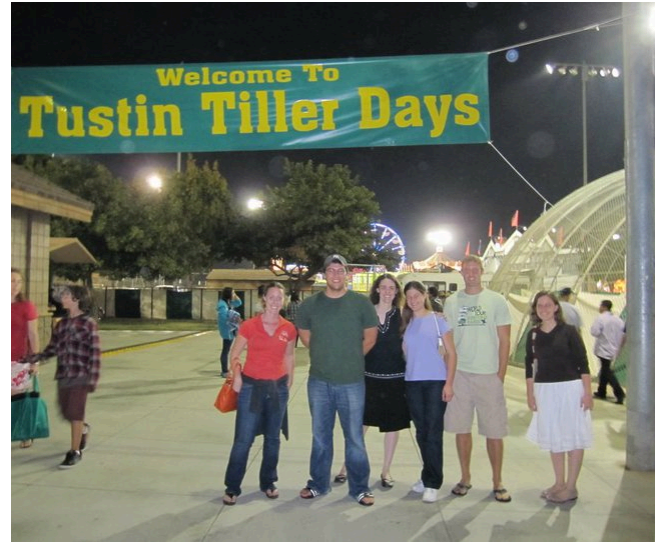
Now that the Lord is blessing the LA Church with a college and career aged group, we thought that we should take some time to reflect on that and to give thanks to God for raising up a generation that was missing from our fellowship. The Messenger asked Heather Huizing to reflect on this group and to give her thoughts. Here's what she said:

About a year ago, the congregation began praying that the Lord would bless us with three families. I'm not sure what everyone had in their mind when we were praying for that, but the first people to show up at our doors were single college students. And then they began bringing their friends. And bit by bit others were added to the college and career population in our congregation. Later came the 'dad + mom + kids' type of families, but before they did, the congregation started to re-evaluate what kind of answer to our prayers God was giving us.

As this group of young adults began to grow, we started to realize what a blessing we could be to one another. As several of us young adults were fellowshipping after church one day, A.J. verbalized what others of us were probably already thinking, "We need to get together and do stuff outside of church." [That may not be a direct quote...] And thus began the LARPC College and Career group... or Older Youth group... or the A-Team... or... Ok, ok, so we haven't come up with an actual name yet. That aside, we have great plans! Ok, ok, so we're not really that organized yet either. Pretty much, right now we're still at the "We need to get together and do stuff" stage. The good news is we have all agreed on that! We have even agreed that the stuff we do should be both fun and spiritual. The rest, well, it will come in time. We are still young, after all.

As of the writing of this note, we have had one official outing – The Tustin Tiller Days: An Overnight Adventure into the OC. Basically, the Jensens live right where this annual celebration of Tustin's agricultural heritage fair/parade/rubber boot race happens. So they invited us to come stay the night at their house and enjoy the festivities. And for our first event I'd say we had a good showing. We had a grand total of 9 unmarried, college + aged young adults present. I think that more than the Tiller Day festivities we enjoyed just hanging-out, spending time with one another doing everything from playing Worst Case Scenario the Game, visiting with friends of the Jensens, eating a massive feast of a breakfast, to sitting around singing Psalms. All in all, I'd say we all walked away blessed by one another.

Our next adventure is due to take place at the end of the month as we test our hand/eye coordination over a rousing round of miniature golf followed by lunch and more time just hanging-out. As you may have noticed, we're ok with being pretty casual and informal about this whole group thing.



Oh, another thing about college students and singles is they like eating with other people. So on Sundays, when there isn't a fellowship meal, we've been hanging around the fellowship hall getting fed by the elder Huizings. But we're hoping this opportunity to bless (and be blessed in return) gets spread around a little. I hope people haven't been shy about signing up to offer hospitality to this group because they are concerned about what to 'do'. Seriously, food's all you need. We're pretty good at providing entertainment. And we are so ready to help with cooking, set-up, clean-up too. Really you end up with a bunch of people to do what you'd already planned on doing (i.e. eating lunch). So, are you ready to offer hospitality to this bunch (and maybe a few others who are visiting/ out-of-towners)? Come see me, I'll get you all signed-up.

In short: I want to take this moment to reflect on what the Lord has done. He has answered prayers that we may not have even know we had. He has blessed us with youth in what was at one time an elderly congregation. He has given us an opportunity to practice hospitality with brothers and sisters. He is raising up future leaders for His church. He has encouraged us. Thank the Lord with me for His abundant blessings!



Olive Walker with two our new college/career aged young ladies: Elizabeth Snow and Katie Dennert.

Saying “See You Later!” After 63 Years

There are times in the life of a congregation when saying goodbye is difficult. Recently Dot Walker moved to be closer to her family. Goodbyes were shared along with hugs, laughter and memories. Dot will be greatly missed, although the congregation understands the need to be closer to kids and grandkids.

The congregation also had a visit from the presbytery around the same time and members were given an opportunity to share their thoughts in a letter to the congregation. As we prayed for Dot and sent her on to the next chapter of her life, Dot’s letter to the congregation proved to be of lasting worth. Here is what she had to say on the presbytery visitation weekend:

“What can I say? I’ve attended this church for at least 63 years! Don and I were the first ones married in the new building. We raised our two boys along with lots of other kids. They’ve all been great. Most left for other parts of the States. I’ve seen lots of people and families come and go. All great friends and acquaintances. I couldn’t have asked for a better life. My family has been blessed, as I know he has blessing on all the new families at church. [Now there] are lots of ideas [in the LA RPC] that mean change; but

life is changing all the time. If everyone works [together] and prays to the Lord for direction- you can’t miss!

I have been sent some place else now, and I will see what the Lord has in store. I leave behind a church and a life of memories, good and sad. What else could I ask for? So love one another, work together, and for goodness sake, hang in there! Love in Christ, Dot Walker.”



Elder Pino saying a few words before Dot headed north!



An Old Fashioned Tent Revival?

Many have written and asked how the termite removal went. We appreciate all of the love, notes, and gifts that support our ministry. We are always pleased to know people are thinking about us and praying for us.

The termite removal went very well. Seeing a building of this size was quite amazing because of the square footage as well as the creative floor design of the building. It was all tented. One friend wrote in and said that it looked like we were having an “old fashioned tent revival meeting” at the church. Well, the Spirit of God is more than free to blow upon us. We are ready! But as for the building- it did look like Charles Finney would have been at home here... at least for the week it was tented!

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