

ἄγγελος THE MESSENGER

February 2011

The Ministry Magazine of the Los Angeles Reformed Presbyterian Church.



This is the Lord's Doing...

We know the text- "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes!" This line comes from the end of the *Hallel* of the book of Psalms (Psalm 118). The *Hallel* were songs that were traditionally sung during the Passover and are made up of Psalms 113-118. As these songs were sung, redemption was on the lips of the faithful and the faithful were given opportunity to meditate on the goodness of God towards His people and all that He does for us as believers.

The LA RPC is currently in a time where we are able to take time to contemplate God's goodness to us; His redemption offered through the Lord Jesus Christ; and His faithfulness to all generations.

In this issue we will talk about some of the things that are going on at the LA RPC- good things- good things that glorify God! And as we reflect on these, we believe that you too will be able to say: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!

The leadership of the LA RPC believes that God is beginning an extraordinary season of grace in the life the congregation, and we would ask that you, our supporters and friends, would continue to pray for us and ask that the Lord Jesus would continue to build his Church here in Los Angeles in the lives of our people as well as new friends- both saints and sinners- who are finding rest amongst us from their labors & the love of God in Christ.

Why Are We Here? A Congregational Meeting Meditation by Pastor Eshelman

Please read Ephesians 3:14-21

Why are We Here? Why are we here at a congregational meeting of the Los Angeles Reformed Presbyterian Church? And what are we doing here? Are we just having a business meeting where we will talk about the budget, maybe have a bit of discussion about what we like or don't like in the budget? Maybe have a few questions or comments about the reports that we will hear from the various reporters in the church.

Well, sure, we are here for that. We need to do this once a year as a part of our doing all things decently and in order, but what is at the core of what is really going on here? Why are we really here?

I would like to look at Ephesians 3:14-21 and divide the text into two areas that will help us to answer this question. The first division will be theological or historically redemptive. And the second division will be doxological, and contemporary to our particular congregation.

So why are we here? Let's start with the theological.

In verse 14 we have Paul giving praise and prayer that the mystery of the Gospel has been revealed and this is part of why we are here. The mystery of the Gospel was that it was going to be a world-wide phenomenon that would start in a tiny centralized slice of land, and it would spread throughout the ancient world and make its way into Spain in the time of the NT and into Europe and eventually North and South America and throughout all of the continents of the world.

We are here because we are part of this inheritance of the mystery of the Gospel.

From this world-wide revelation of the mystery, Paul applies it specifically to the lives of individual believers. Give glory, in verse 16, that the Spirit has

applied this Gospel to the nations, and to us as individuals if we are in Christ. Then verse 17 shows that this personal application has an organic nature and that we are not here just because we are connected to some world wide movement called the mystery revealed to the nations. We are not just here because we have had this individual application of that Gospel. We are here because we have been made a part of something bigger. Notice verse 17 shows that we have been rooted and grounded in love and then in verse 18 we comprehend this with ALL the saints.

We are connected organically as a part of something bigger - the Church. So we are not just a bunch of individuals who are here today who have our own agenda. We are part of an organic union called the Church - and we are rooted and grounded together in this body of Christ which is the Church.

So why are we here? Because the love of God extends high and low and east and west and it must be applied to you specifically and to us as a congregation. And when people look onto our fellowship they should not even be able to describe what they are experiencing because of the love of God in Christ that is applied within the Church surpasses knowledge. And we are called to be filled with the love of God.

This is the theological foundation of why we are here. This should be good enough, right? But why are you sitting in that chair with that packet of reports in your hand? Why are you a member of this church? There are good reasons:

The Gospel has been revealed to the nations and God, in his providence, has revealed it to our lands. Because the power of the Spirit has applied this Gospel to individuals and if you have received that Gospel, you are here because of it. Because we have been made a part of the Church of Christ we are no longer individuals; we are a people rooted together and grounded together in Christ.

But what else? Look at verse 20 and 21.

This has been the focus of much of meditation this week. Here we see the doxological aspect of the question, "Why are we here?"

And what do we see? In this doxology, or word of praise and glory to God, we see some absolutely amazing words. "Him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think." That is why we are here; we are here because the Lord Jesus does far more than we are able to do, ask, or think.

We are here because about 130 years ago a seminary student from Southfield Michigan had the vision to go to the wild west and plant churches. This was in a time when the RPCNA did not have established churches west of Kansas. We are here because someone knew that God was able to do far more abundantly than he could ask or think.

We are here because people from our churches had the vision to come out to Los Angeles when it was still a Midwest sized city of orange groves and missions. We are here because in God's providence He drove people West with a desire to see the Reformed faith grow and expand in places where the Reformed faith had not gone.

We are here because they knew that God was able to do far more abundantly than all they asked or thought.

We are here because as the city of Los Angeles exploded in a population boom and men and woman with vision saw this as a way to expand the work of the Gospel beyond those whose last names originated in the moors and hills of Scotland and Ireland. We are here because these men and women had the vision that God could be glorified in the RP Church through those of diverse cultures. They believed that God could do far more abundantly than all they asked or thought.

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This is why we are here.

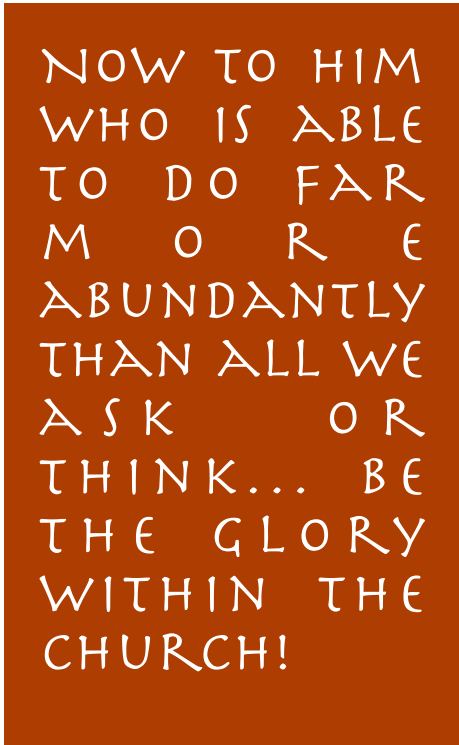
We are here because as the city became dependent on the motor vehicle and people packed up and moved to the newer parts of the city - Highland Park, Eagle Rock, and to the suburbs of Pasadena and Glendale - there were those that had a vision that God was not calling a Church to close, but to expand into a new area, because God is able to do far more abundantly than all that they asked or thought.

This is why we are here.

We are here because a generation of saints that have been going into glory in the past two years lived lives that were radically committed to building the Kingdom and sustaining the work that God had been doing here for a number of generations. We are here because of their prayers and their gifts and their devotion to Christ and their radical commitment to the Kingdom. We are here because these people, many of whom you knew, were convinced that God was able to do far more abundantly than they could ask or think.

We are here because as the prices in LA increased and people migrated back East for cheaper housing and to be closer to the center of the denomination, there were those of you who stayed. We are here because despite the prediction of the death of what

Christ was doing here, there were those who persevered and prayed and knew that God was able to do far more abundantly than all you could ask or think.



That is why we are here.

We are here because a number of you had a vision for renewal that included many hard things - things that would require change, prayer, intense discipleship, and fellowship. We are here because those who were committed to renewal believed that God was able to

do far more abundantly than they could ask or think.

That is why we are here.

We are here because last year we adopted a budget by faith that was somewhat obscene. And we are here because last year the Session challenged us all to pray for three new families, and what have we seen? We have seen that God is able to do far more abundantly than all we can ask or think.

So why are we here?

We are here for normal church business, yes. But we are here because we have a vision for what God can do in this city, in Orange County, and in the Pacific Coast Presbytery.

And today the Lord Jesus challenges us to think big thoughts, and to have big visions, and dream big dreams, and to expect great expectations from Him - because He is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think.

That is why we are here.

And what should this do for us? Look how verse 21 ends: To him be the glory in the church and in Christ - throughout all generations, forever and ever.

Amen.

Deacons' Wish List

At the annual congregational meeting, the Deaconate took time to give God praise and glory for all that He has done in our congregation in the past year. While there have been some unexpected expenses (remember the termites?) the congregational offerings were above what was budgeted for 2010.

The Deacons' wish list for 2011 includes items that the Deacons would like to see prayed for and accomplished in 2011. *Angelos: The Messenger* would like to make that list available for you to pray over as well. Ask that the Lord would grant all that is on the "wish list" for 2011.

Also we pray that God would raise up a new generation of tithers and cheerful givers. It is clear that this congregation has had generations of faithful givers that have put the work of

building Christ's Kingdom above their own desires and wishes. It is the Deaconate's hope that God would raise up a new generation that gives sacrificially.

March 12, 2011 is a work day at the church. If you would like to participate in any of these projects, please let one of the deacons know. Below is the wish list for 2011:

- Replace Facia Board around Church building.
- Repaint the outside of the Church.
- Repaint certain rooms inside the Church.
- Replace lawn in the court yard.
- Landscape the manse.
- Renovate downstairs bathroom at the manse.

Theological Students Bring the Word

The Lord Jesus gives office bearers as gifts to the Church of Christ. The New Testament bears witness to this fact. With that in mind, it is a great honor and privilege to be a part of what Jesus is doing in raising up future office bearers (Lord willing, of course). Recently the LA Session received three letters from young men who desire to be presented to the Pacific Coast Presbytery as students of theology. This is something that is very encouraging to us as a congregation, and something that we have prayed for. This also a new adventure for the Session as we attempt to please the Lord Jesus Christ by caring for those that He has placed under our care.

As we sought the best way to equip these young men and prepare them for seminary training, it was decided to give them the opportunity to preach in a 4PM service on the Lord's Day (2nd and 4th Lord's Day of each month).

Student Gil Garcia was the first to preach for us and he may have had some added nervousness due to the fact that Dr.

J e r r y O'Neill of RPTS was present for this event. After the Session and Dr. O'Neill prayed with Gil, he preached on the Atonement from John 3:16.

The next student to preach for the congregation was Paul Ruchtie. Paul preached on the opening verses of Psalm 119 and exhorted the congregation to find life in the



Scriptures. The congregation is looking forward to hearing from Gregory Whitlock on February 12th.

To aid in their preparation to begin seminary education, the Session is

meeting with them to discuss their sermon content and form.

Pastor Eshelman is also meeting with these men in a group that has been called "The Dead Theologians' Society." Besides reading works about or by "dead theologians," there has been time to discuss sermon construction, outlining, making themes and headings, as well as other things that are essential to good sermon preparation and delivery.

Future events for the Dead Theologians' Society would include guest lectures and discussions with current RPCNA ministers. This would give opportunity for encouragement and pre-seminary training to help equip these young men in their callings to minister the Word.

The Session would like to encourage the readers of *The Messenger* to remember these young men in prayer as well as to ask the Lord Jesus to make clear the way in which He would have them serve in His Kingdom, and

in particular, church planting on the West Coast.

Each of these men will be presented to the Pacific Coast Presbytery at the Spring meeting. The Session will ask that they be taken under care of the

Presbytery as Students of Theology. We look forward to assisting them as they prepare for RPTS, future presbytery examinations, internships and, Lord willing, a call to the ministry of Word and Sacrament (in the

Pacific Coast Presbytery??)!

SAVE THE DATE:
 February 18-19: Presbytery in San Diego
 February 20: R Scott Clark preaching
 March 11: 107th Birthday of LA RPC
 March 12: Congregational Work Day

Back to the Basics

Thirty-Eight young people from up and down the Pacific Coast Presbytery met at the LA RPC from December 30- January 2, for a winter youth conference. This was the first Pacific Coast winter youth conference in over 20 years, so there was a lot of work to be done..and many learning experiences along the way!

Pastor David Whitla preached a series of messages from Psalm 130 under the theme, *Back to the Basics*. These messages were clear, relevant, and called each person to examine their spiritual state and to consider where they stand in relationship to Christ as well as to His Church.

Besides the young people from our own presbytery, there were some who came along with the Phoenix RPMissions team to join us for the weekend (including Matt Filbert).

Besides great preaching, teaching, and fellowship, the young people also enjoyed a trip to the Rose Parade followed by an afternoon of games and recreation at the home of the Pinos.

The young people were well fed all weekend. Sarah Ashleigh headed up the kitchen duties along with a number of volunteers from the congregation and the food surpassed expectations. Great teaching, great fellowship, and great food make for a great conference according to many who attended!

Here are some of the things that our young people are saying about the conference:

“I think my relationship with other members of the RP Church has grown immensely...As vital as it is for me to grow in my relationship with others, it is most vital that the youth in our congregations recognize that they are part of the church, that they have a calling from God, that He has gifted them spiritually to be part of the church, and that they are useful and needed.”
-D

“For me the best part of the conference was getting to know a lot of different people. The preaching and teaching was certainly great, and I assumed it would be. I am always continually amazed at the genuine Christian fellowship in the RP Church.” -J

“I feel like I've grown as a Christian...It made me think about how many things I do that don't revolve around God. I had never done devotions before...and after listening to the sermons and studying devotions I realized how important it is. I also realized that I had actually been longing to see other Christians my age. The lectures were excellent and really made me think about what I believe. I already knew most of what was preached, hence *Back To Basics*, but it seems like no matter how many times you hear it there is always something you missed the last time. There were times during the conference when I felt like I was on the right track as a Christian and also times I'll admit when I was really ashamed of myself. Overall I think I have definitely grown in more ways than one and I would be excited to attend another conference next year.” -H

“This conference was valuable in so many ways and I surely won't be alone in saying that it should continue. Because our congregations on the West Coast are so few and far between, our relationships with other youth in the Churches can feel distant. We, as youth, must also see the importance of a solid biblical grounding, and this conference built me up in that very way. The teaching was clear, motivating, humbling, and most of all God-glorifying - exactly what was needed. This conference was so worthwhile and I hope to see it continue and to see people benefit from it. -K

“Just wanted to let you know that I thought the entire youth conference was awesome... All of us loved the conference and really were challenged in our walk with Christ and in our commitment to His Church.” -P

These testimonies show us the importance of investing into the spiritual lives of our young people. As a small presbytery (309 congregants) it is of the utmost importance that the congregations invest in the future of our presbytery. This is done through feeding the young people a solid diet of theological and experimental Christianity. This is what the *Back to the Basics* weekend was for many of our young people. It was a time to taste and see that the Lord is good!

We would like to thank everyone who worked at the conference as well as those who prayed fervently for the young people by name and stormed the throne room of grace on their behalf. It is the desire of the LA Session that many of those that attended will be able to look back onto this time and say, “I believe that I was converted at the Back to the Basics Conference.”

We give thanks in advance for the way in which His Spirit will apply the Word preached from that weekend. A number of the young people have asked for the dates for next year's conference. The answer to that question will have to wait until presbytery meets this month... wait until they hear what Jesus has been doing!



Meet the Newest Family Members

Remember when we asked you all to pray for 3 new families last year? Well, did you know that Jesus actually answers the prayers of the saints? And He is able to do far more than we can ask or think!

In the past several issues we have introduced you to Robert, Greg, and Paul. In this issue we would like to introduce you to the Garcia family, Joe Zeller, Chris Caruso, and Courtney Whitlock.

The LA Congregation began praying for new members in December of 2009 and in August the Lord began adding to our numbers. Since August of 2010 the congregation has added at least one new member each month. Praise God for that!

The Garcia Family

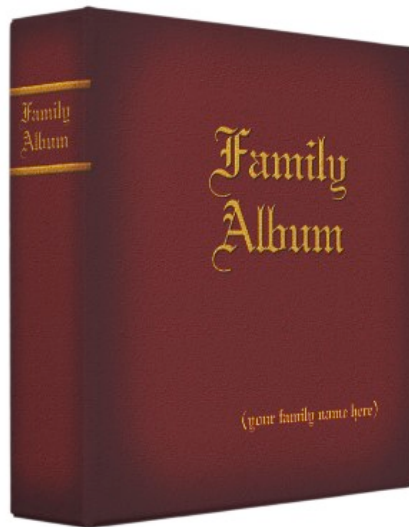
Gil and Eva Garcia live in Encino, CA. Gil has a degree in biology and is seeking the pastoral ministry. Eva is a medical doctor. They have one son, Emiliano (he will be 2 in August); and another child on the way! We asked the Garcia's how they came to decide to join the LA RPC and here is what they told us. "In the summer of 2010 by God's grace, we came to a deeper understanding of God's Word through the understanding of the Regulative Principle of Worship (RPW), especially as taught by the 17th century Westminster Divines. Our former Reformed denomination does not hold to the same application of the RPW, so we were determined to follow God's Word. We were aware that the RPCNA held to the RPW and was faithful to the original Westminster Standards. We also knew that there was a local RP Church in Los Angeles. We had visited on and off as well as have friends who attend the LA RPC. I was already familiar with Rev. Eshelman via The Puritanboard. After reading its membership vows online, contacting Pastor Eshelman, and speaking with the Session we decided to join LA RPC."

Joe Zeller

Joe comes to us from Mission Viejo, CA. He attended The Master's College and majored in Economics (though he jestfully claims his real major was baseball). The Wednesday evening prayer meeting had been praying for Joe for some time (without Joe knowing it) and were pleased when Joe showed up for worship. Joe visited the LA RPC with some other friends from Master's College and was surprised (to say the least) by acapella psalmody. Eventually he began attending Orange County Fellowship and grew into a deeper knowledge of the Scriptures and the Reformed Faith. Joe talks about his experience in this way, "Well I grew up going to Church and thinking that I was saved. However, the Gospel that is

presented in many of the churches today is very watered down. I was steeped in various sins throughout most of my life. Then towards the end of my time at the Master's College one of the faculty discussed with me the condition of my soul. It was at this time that I surrendered my life to Christ. After that, I played baseball during the summer in various states and while I was gone I prayed that God would put godly people in my life and give me a church home. My roommate, Greg, invited me to the church shortly after I returned from baseball, and both of my prayer requests were answered. I am amazed at what has transpired in the past few months and all of the prayers that God has answered."

Joe is a minor league baseball player with the Chicago Cubs. In March he will be in Arizona for Spring Training where he will be cared for and ministered to by Pastor Jon Maginn and the Phoenix RP Church.



Chris Caruso

Chris comes to us from the Sharon, Iowa RP Church. He came into the LA RPC through a membership transfer, although he did renew his vows to the Covenant of Communicant Membership when he joined with the LA RPC. Chris works in information technology and currently lives in Lake Forest, CA. Chris is also a part of the Orange County Fellowship. Chris is married with a young family and would appreciate prayers for his wife and children. Despite the difficulties that life brings, Chris views the LA RPC as a safe haven and a place where he can be refreshed and encouraged in the Word and in the rich fellowship.

Courtney Whitlock

Courtney is the newlywed wife of Gregory Whitlock and has been worshipping with the LA RPC for the past year. She is a nursing student at Master's College, but her long term goals include being a mother and domestic engineer. Courtney was raised in the Reformed tradition and attended a PCA congregation in South Carolina. Many of her family members are PCA and ARP.

Courtney said that her relationship with Christ grew when her father was deployed overseas with the military and she had to learn to rely and trust the Lord Jesus more and more. Courtney comes to us with a servant's heart and desires to serve in any way that she is able. She also has a heart for the younger ladies in the Church and hopes to develop deeper relationships with our youth and teenaged girls.

Who will Jesus bring in 2011? We have some names of those we think Jesus is calling to join with us... but we'll save those for another edition of *The Messenger*. Until then, keep praying that Christ will build His Church!

Some Things Will Have to Wait



There is so much more that we would like to tell you about the ministry of the Los Angeles Reformed Presbyterian Church. The Lord Jesus is working in so many ways and in so many lives. There really is not room in this ministry magazine to tell about all the ways that He is blessing us, using us, stretching us, convicting us, and conforming us to His Word!

We would like to be able to tell you about Perspectives on the World Christian Movement that Pastor Eshelman, Lydia Eshelman, and Heather Huizing are involved in.

We would like to tell you about our desires to be used in college ministry at Providence Christian College, Master's College, and Occidental College.

We would like to tell you about the ways in which the Lord Jesus is building the Orange County Fellowship and how at times they have almost 20 people worshipping there on a Thursday night.

We would love to tell of the new visitors that have been consistently worshipping with us and the new members class that is being developed for those exploring the LA RPC as well as the RPCNA.

We'd love to tell you about the weeks where our worship services are being translated into both Spanish and Korean and how a PhD candidate in Grand Rapids, MI and a number of Korean Reformed Christians have been

participating in the translation of sermons for our Korean worshippers.

And we would love to be able to tell you about the young people that are planning on making profession of faith this month and have been meeting weekly in the pastor's study to prepare for Profession of Faith.

We'd love to tell you about the ministry that never seems to end and the way in which the Lord Jesus has entrusted us to minister to so many that come our way via phone, the front door, mail, internet, and other ways. We would love to tell you how we are attempting to minister unto the glory of God and to please Him in all that we do. We would love to tell you that the Los Angeles Reformed Presbyterian Church will be satisfied with nothing less than the fame of the Lord Jesus being spread to the millions of people across the City of Angels. And we'd love for you to pray for that to happen. We have sought to be faithful to Him and we are looking forward to Him giving more opportunity to serve and to let you, the reader, know how wonderful He is as He works in our lives and in our midst. But all this will have to wait for another time.

Jesus is at work through the Word and Spirit- and that time for that is now.

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