

Protestant Reformed Teacher Goes to Ulster

by Jack Lenting

On August 14, 1984, Mr. and Mrs. Deane Wassink and their four small children left for Northern Ireland, where Mr. Wassink will teach the 1984-1985 school year in Covenant Christian School of Newtownabbey — about 15 miles from Belfast. The Wassinks arrived safely, by God's providence; and, at the time of this writing (September 29), Mr. Wassink has been teaching for almost a month.

The story behind Mr. Wassink's going to Ulster begins in September, 1983, when a small group of concerned Presbyterians in Northern Ireland started the first parental, Protestant, Christian school in that country. Traditionally, the schools in Ulster have been the parochial schools of the Roman Catholics and the State schools used by the Protestants. Covenant Christian School, as this new school was named, is governed by an association called "Association for Christian Education in Ireland" (ACEI), operating through a Board. Members of several Presbyterian churches cooperate in the association. One of the association's newsletters speaks of the carefulness of the Board regarding applicants for membership, "in order to maintain the confessionally reformed character of the organization."

In its first year, the school had 14 students; this year, there are 21 students — there is growth.

Because Christian education is new in Ulster, teachers are not available; and the association has needed help from other quarters in the form of a competent, Reformed teacher for the upper "grades." There is a teacher for the lower "grades." Because the group is yet quite small, it needs financial help in the form of partial support of the teacher obtained from abroad. The association does provide some of the support of this teacher.

In late spring of this year, the association learned that the school would not be receiving a teacher it had counted on for the 1984-1985 school year. Because members of the Bible Presbyterian Church of Larne, Northern Ireland, including her pastor, the Rev. George Hutton,

are members of the ACEI and because the Bible Presbyterian Church had recently come into close contact with the Protestant Reformed Churches, through our South Holland Church, the request for help came to the South Holland Church for a Protestant Reformed teacher. Already, in one of his earliest letters to the Evangelism Committee of South Holland, Rev. Hutton had written, "Some of us are very concerned about the schooling of our children and are determined to give them a Reformed Christian education. I know that the Protestant Reformed Churches have years of experience in this field and for this reason I am asking if there is possibly any material specially directed to parents dealing with this particular matter." (By this time, the Bible Presbyterian Church has asked our synodical Committee of Contact to pursue close church-relations with her; and our Synod has sent two ministers to her "in order to explore the possibility of establishing sister-church relationships with [her].)

The request was urgent: the school needed a teacher by September.

Several men in different areas of our denomination then undertook to discover whether a teacher was available and whether there was the readiness of our people to support the work financially. The results were gratifying in the extreme. Mr. Deane Wassink of our Holland, Michigan Church became convinced that the Lord called him to this work of Christian education. However, he had already signed a contract to teach in the Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, where he had taught the year before. But Hope very graciously agreed to release Mr. Wassink from his contract and, at that late date, to find another teacher, thus cooperating on behalf of the school in Ulster.

No less gratifying was the response to the newsletter distributed throughout the churches of our denomination, asking for financial support. Our committee had hoped for \$5,000 by September. At the present time, \$14,000 has been given, mostly by members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, from all across the United States and Canada, in large amounts and in small. Some from outside our churches have also contributed; and their gifts have been gratefully received. The liberality of our people and their zeal for the cause of God's covenant are nothing short of amazing. May God bless the gifts and the givers! The diaconate of South Holland is administering this charity. Several thousand dollars are still needed for the work. Anyone who is willing to give should make his check payable to "Fund for Reformed Education in Ulster" and send it to:

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17014 Wausau Avenue
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The address of Mr. and Mrs. Wassink is:

20 Hillmount Gardens
Larne, County Antrim
Northern Ireland BT40 1TF

The Wassinks will be encouraged by your letters. They need our prayers — remember them and the cause of Christian education in Ulster in your prayers.

Committee for Reformed Education in Ulster
Protestant Reformed Church
South Holland, Illinois 60473

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Equipping Our Children

by Rev. Meindert Joostens

This article is a slightly revised version of the sermon preached on September 9, 1984, by the Rev. M. Joostens, pastor of the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. It is the practice of many Protestant Reformed pastors to heed the directives of Article 21 of the Church Order by preaching a special sermon about Christian education near the beginning of the school year.

“That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”
II Timothy 3:17

You realize, beloved, that in taking this as my text this morning on the occasion of the beginning of the new school year and catechism season, I am forcing this text beyond the meaning of the immediate context. You realize, of course, that this is the instruction of the apostle Paul to his spiritual son, Timothy. He encourages, he admonishes this young preacher, that he must be thoroughly furnished unto all good works in the specific calling in which the Lord has called