

Impressions of the Convention

Although the 1980 Young People's Convention lasted but four days, those who attended will long hold memories of it. Some will remember the speeches; others, the fellowship; still others, the spiritual inspiration it provided. We asked a chaperone, the Youth Coordinator, and the following delegates to briefly describe their impression of the 1980 Convention.

By Jerry Kuiper

I have just returned from the 1980 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention at Hope College in Holland, Michigan. It was sponsored by the Hope Church Young People's Societies (Grand Rapids). When I think back on it, I find that there were many things that deserve talking about.

The theme, "Appreciation of the Reformed Truth," is a unique and important one. It teaches us more about where, when, and why our faith was brought into existence. The theme song, "The Church's One Foundation," also speaks of this one reason for our existence, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The speeches, given by Rev. Van Baren, Prof. Hanko, Rev. Van Overloop, and Rev. Joostens, were all excellent. They followed in line with the theme, under four divisions:

- I. The Foundation
- II. The Development
- III. The Admonition
- IV. The Application

I think that these four divisions helped us to learn more about the Reformed truth.

At this convention, as usual, we had daily discussion groups. These really led us to talk of our Reformed heritage. The topics were: (1) "Aspects of the Worship Service," or Liturgy; (2) "Christian Courtesy"; and (3) "Confession of Sin." Most of these groups had good, lively discussions. In these we learned more of the truth of God's Word and how that truth applies to us as young people.

Before we turned in at night, we were led in devotions by our chaperones. In these devotions we studied Psalm 139, Psalm 103, and James 3. We had good discussions, and I think we learned more about these familiar passages of Scripture.

I think it was a well-run convention, and would like to thank the chaperones, Hope's societies, and all others responsible for the good time I'm sure we all had. It was a spiritual uplifting for us all.

By Anna Mae Meelker

The 1980 Convention was a convention not soon to be forgotten. The most important thing to me was the Christian fellowship with each other in Christ which was bountifully given to us.

"Appreciating the Reformed Truth" was an excellent topic. It is not often that we come to appreciate our truth; we usually take it for granted. God in His infinite wisdom blessed us by

giving us His Word to study, and obey, and that through the Holy Spirit working in our hearts we love and embrace that truth.

I felt the discussion groups were the most spiritually rewarding. We discussed the three topics chosen and also allowed for discussions about clapping at Singspirations, having hymns sung instead of Psalter, and whether it is right to send children to public schools. These discussions held much significance and I really enjoyed them. They were a spiritual inspiration to each one of God's chosen young people.

The conventioners parted with heavy hearts and with hopes of seeing each other next year. We are thankful to God for bringing us together and for the spiritual edification He has given us. We pray and look forward with earnestness that the day will soon be here when we will be one in Christ in perfection.

By Gerald Van Baren

A couple of weeks before the Convention I received a letter from the *Beacon Lights* requesting me to write about my impressions of the upcoming Convention. I agreed to do so (it's always easy to agree to do something in the future) and so now I am suffering through the agony of having to not only separate my impressions (all good) from my feelings (also good) and my memories (not a bad one in the lot), but have to also write about them.

The campus at Hope College is in itself impressive for it includes such buildings as the impressive Gothic-style Dimnent Memorial Chapel with its beautiful stained glass windows, and the new Dow Center (the Physical Education building) with its pool, three basketball courts, six racquetball courts, indoor track and weight room. The Convention was nicely arranged so that every day there was free time to swim, play basketball or racquetball, or just visit with old and new friends. We also had a great time on the beach Wednesday, which turned out to be a bright, sunny day, and a lot of the young people, myself included, went back to Hope looking somewhat like boiled lobsters.

The spiritual life at the Convention was also excellent. In the morning, after breakfast, we had an introduction to an outline and after the presentation was finished we broke up into smaller groups for discussion. On Tuesday we studied the aspects of the worship service, Wednesday we discussed Christian courtesy, and on Thursday we talked about our confession of sin. In all the groups that I was in we had active discussion about some of the areas of our lives which were covered by the topic of that day. In this convention there were also two things that were new for me. The first was that we had four excellent speeches instead of the usual three, dealing with our Reformed beliefs starting with the Foundation, going through the Development, the Admonition, and finally the Application of those beliefs. The other innovation was the evening devotions in which the chaperones each took the group they were responsible for (about twenty young people per group), read an assigned chapter from the Bible, discussed it, and closed the day together with thanksgiving to God.

I would also like to personally, and I think I speak for all those who attended the Convention, thank everyone who made this convention the shining success which it was, with respect to both the physical activities and the spiritual activities. Above all else, however, we give thanks to God for gathering us as His Covenant young people to share a week of fellowship and spiritual growth, preparing us for the days when we must hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering.

By Kevin Bylsma

When I was first asked to write about the convention for the *Beacon Lights*, I wasn't sure I would be able to get much information to write about. How surprised I was that by the end of the week my little notebook was filled with ideas for this article. I had to do some condensing so that I wouldn't go over my five paragraph limit, and that was a difficult task.

I thought that the theme of this year's convention was very practical in reflection to our daily lives. It is not very often that we really appreciate the true Reformed doctrine and heritage that we have. It was good that we were admonished, told the foundation and development, and told how to apply this Reformed truth. This is something that we will use every day of our lives.

The added devotional periods before "lights-out" were an added attraction well worth noticing during our time at the convention. I thought, as well as many others, that these devotions have guided us well and showed us how to really close the days activities.

The discussion groups were excellent. The writers of these should be well applauded for their fine work of showing how the liturgy, confession, and courtesy play a vital role in the heritage of our faith.

I felt that I enjoyed this convention much more than the one I previously attended. I could tell from the beginning to the end of the convention that I was maturing spiritually as I never had before.

Through the many aspects of the convention, the words of Paul in Hebrews 10:23 were made more clear to me and made me more grateful to God for the heritage and truth that He has given to us as Protestant Reformed youth, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised."

By Grace Hauck

This year, although the convention was smaller than usual, participation was better than ever. The convention topic was "Appreciation of the Reformed Faith." With the future generations the way they are, only God knows how long the Reformed truth will last and if it will. It seems as if our young people do not care what happens to our doctrine. We exist in a time when there is no persecution as of yet, and the children of God are taking God's Word for granted. We are becoming lax in discipline and the only way to repair this damage is to work hard and struggle so we don't die for the lack of knowledge in the day and age where there is no excuse.

The discussion groups, for me, were extremely satisfying. I can't speak for the others in the group but I thought they were much better than last year in the way of participation. The groups were smaller so each person had to talk more. The topics – Christian Courtesy, Confession of Sin, and the Liturgy of our Churches, were particularly interesting. When should the Christian be courteous and to whom? The question of good works is also involved. Dealing with the confession of sin, must we confess before God every single sin by itself or all at once? Many questions like these were answered in these discussions. Discussions are always very good because you can ask questions you always wondered about but don't like to ask your parents. The leaders did a very good job and kept discussion going.

Devotions at 11:30 was a very good idea. It was a special time when we could worship God before finishing the day. Especially good, was the devotion led by Rev. Van Overloop on Thursday night for the girls in Gilmore Hall. It makes you stop and think, how can we, being so

wicked, ever be saved? This past convention was a very good one, and God willing, may the next one be as good as the last.

By Jim Regnerus

This year's convention left me with a feeling of joy, but also with an attitude of concern.

It was joyous that we as Protestant Reformed young people could come together for a week of Christian fellowship. We heard four speeches on the preservation of our faith that, if one listened attentively to, contained overwhelming inspiration and motivation. We attended discussion groups where, if one applied himself, the material for spiritual growth was limitless. It was joyful.

But one matter concerns me. Did not the theme of the convention revolve around the Preservation of our Reformed faith? Yet, did not we sing nearly all hymns, even the very theme song itself? And is not, as Rev. Van Overloop so adequately suggested, the singing of hymns instead of or in addition to the Psalter numbers a step toward the departure of our Reformed faith? This concerns me especially at a convention because many of us are forming values that will determine what makes the church of tomorrow preserve or not preserve our Reformed faith. I think this marred an otherwise beautiful convention.

By Doug Wassink

This year's convention succeeded in making a good spiritual atmosphere for our young people to meet in. I think this is the main purpose of a convention.

The speeches that were given were very meaningful because they were directed especially to people our age. The things that were learned kept being brought up throughout the convention and this really helped us apply them practically.

The theme, "Appreciation of the Reformed Truth," was well-chosen. This is an important thing for us to be thinking about. I learned a lot in the discussion groups; the topics for these were also good.

The chaperones did a very good job this year, everything went quite smoothly and I think the experience was a real inspiration.

By Paula Faber

Our 1980 Convention at Hope College was very enjoyable. The theme was "Appreciating our Reformed Faith." Throughout the speeches we saw the necessity of preserving the truth in our generations.

We had some very good discussions. After the one on Christian courtesy, we were more conscious of how we should act toward one another. We should not do this just out of courtesy, but to love one another for Christ's sake. We also discussed liturgy and its importance. We have liturgy for our order of worship. We should not let this become formality, but take thought to what we are doing, although the order may remain the same. God must be the center in our worship service. While talking about the third topic, "Confession of Sin", we discussed why there are certain sins we confess publicly and not all our sins. I found that these discussions were very profitable for a spiritual walk of life.

I enjoyed being at the convention, with young people of all our churches, especially hearing others' opinions in our discussion groups.

Let us in the coming year show our appreciation for the Reformed truth.

By Denise Van Baren

This was the first convention for me. I thought that as a whole it was fun and interesting, while, at the same time, a spiritual encouragement. One of the best parts of the convention was meeting new people and making new friends.

The campus was equipped to suit everybody. One could swim, play tennis or racquetball, use the gym and much more. Even though everybody complained about the food, it was usually passable. By Friday most of us were too tired to notice anyway.

The speeches were based on a topic that I think everybody will agree was appropriate. The appreciation of the Reformed truth is something that is not always obvious. The four speeches made us realize how precious truth is.

The topics for the discussion groups were ones that really affected my life and I was interested in them. My groups all had really good discussions, probably for this reason. I learned a lot about how true Christians should behave in certain circumstances.

This convention makes me eager for the convention which, the Lord willing, will be held next summer.

By Val Poortenga

This was my second convention and I really enjoyed it. I have never in my life felt closer to other Christian believers.

The theme of this convention, "Appreciating Our Reformed Faith," was very timely. With all the troubles of this present day pressuring us as young people, I believe what we heard and discussed must apply right now. We must stand up and fight for our faith. As one minister said, "We are becoming weaker in a time when we should be strengthening ourselves for the fight ahead."

My discussion groups were very enjoyable. "Christian Courtesy" is something that we must apply right now and our life will be more pleasant and full. "Liturgy of Our Churches" is a very important part of our worship of Christ, its purpose being to aid us in our worship of Him. "Confessions of Sin" is a daily part of our lives and is essential for our salvation. The seminarians very capable presented their topics.

The speeches were very inspirational! Rev. Van Baren spoke first. His theme was "Foundation of Our Faith." He divided it into three points which were: (1) What is involved in building the foundation of our faith? (2) How our faith is based on Scripture and (3) the basis for our personal faith. He closed by telling us to ask ourselves personally, "How much do *you* appreciate your Reformed faith?"

Prof. Hanko's speech was second and entitled "Development of the Truth." It dealt with the truth as being the most important part of the Church. He emphasized that the truth is developed by the whole church. Our truth is part of our living salvation.

Wednesday night was Rev. Van Overloop's opportunity. "Admonition to Adhere to the Truth" was the topic based on Jeremiah 6. He questioned us, "Is a split necessary to maintain the

truth of Reformed doctrine?” His reply was, “God forbid, but if people go astray, then we will!” The truth is very important because it is a revelation of God and it gives Him the glory.

On banquet night, Rev. Joostens spoke on “Our Walk.” Our life is very unique in the world and wholly separate. We are the only young people who have been taught the Reformed faith and believe it. He reminded us that there is nothing that is not included in our walk. The truth of the Word of God is the only lasting truth and it must be our guide in our walk and calling. *All were excellent speeches!*

In closing I’d like to say that during the week of this convention I became very aware of the precious gift of Reformed faith. I pray that God will preserve me and give me the strength to walk as a Christian throughout my life.

By Jim Van Overloop

Dear *Beacon Lights* Readers,

I was asked by the *Beacon Lights* Staff to write an article about the convention. I thank them for this opportunity as I was a chaperone and because my term as Youth Coordinator has ended. During the convention I occasionally would jot down my impressions of the events that took place as sources material for this article. As I look at these notes I notices different levels of fellowship at various times. I’d like to reflect on the over-all convention, its purpose, and its participants.

The purpose of the convention and all conventions was aptly stated in the pre-registration form. It is: “that Christian young people can fellowship with one another and at the same time exercise themselves spiritually by listening to the speeches and participating in the discussion groups and devotional periods.” This purpose and some basic rules were listed on the pre-registration form, and this was signed by each conventioneer and his parent. I ask you, young people, to read that purpose again and ask yourselves if that’s why you went to the convention. Conventions are a perfect time for young people to relax, to get away from the routine, to get together with like-minded Christians, to listen, to learn, and to participate. The 40th annual convention surely was planned for this purpose and the convention accomplished that end.

The main ingredient of the convention, of course, is the young people. Those who prepared for the discussion groups and agreed with the purpose as stated, had a great time. Those who, as the theme stated, appreciated the Reformed truth, grew. As was emphasized often in the speeches, we need to ask ourselves if we know these truths? Do we love them? Are we willing to suffer for them, or do we die for the lack of knowledge? When I observed the attitudes and actions of a few young people, I wondered what camp they were in. There were times when some of them acted as if they couldn’t care less. We must, however, as Joshua, choose Whom we will serve at all times. By our fruits we make ourselves known to those about us. God judges our every action and we will be held accountable for them. May God in His grace help our young people and all of us in these last times. May He work in us to straighten out our priorities, that we may always put Him first in our lives.

The convention was a spiritual time. There were four speeches and three discussion groups. Each day began with devotions and ended in devotions. In talking to other chaperones, I think we agreed that we all grew spiritually. This is because the Holy Spirit was working in us, causing us to take an active part in listening, participating, and learning. Most of the young people also grew spiritually for the same reason, and had a good time.

It is my prayer that all the young people will always strive toward glorifying God, including the times when they are together with other young people and away from their parents. This Christian walk must be the most important aspect of their lives. This then will dictate their attitudes and actions in all of their activities.

Finally, the conventions are planned for you, young people, so that you may grow spiritually. You can help make them a success by coming prepared, and by being willing to participate and armed with a Godly attitude, to the end that God, not yourselves or others, may be glorified.

By Agatha Lubbers

The 40th Annual Young People's Convention of the Protestant Reformed Churches of America is now history. It is complete with its joy and disappointments. It is complete with the events we would like to remember and some that we would rather forget. The steering committee and societies of Hope Church, Grand Rapids, are to be commended for organizing and administering a fruitful and edifying convention for the young people of our churches.

The first thing that strikes me about the convention this year is that it is the 40th convention. That number 40 drove me to do some research about the origin of the P.R.Y.P. Convention. I could remember as far back as the Seventh Annual Convention – I know that dates me – and that according to my own souvenir booklet of the convention, it was held in 1947. (These souvenir booklets have become quite an established tradition.) The Seventh Annual Convention was my first convention and it was held in the First Protestant Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. (The water tower was still standing where the parking lot is today.) We moms and dads and grandpas and grandmas who see our children go off to camp or college campus for a week of convention remember that those were the days before conventions were held away from the homes of the families of the host church. We remember the day when conventions were hosted by a church and the host church would provide the lodging for the out-of-town conventioners in their own homes. This meant that conventioners were chaperoned, transported, and often fed by the members of the host church. There was something beneficial about that arrangement because conventioners established lasting and profitable friendships in the churches away from home.

As I thought about my first convention in 1947, I could not help but think about my father, who I think is representative of many fathers then and now. He must have transported me and my sister and two other young people from the Randolph Protestant Reformed Church to our first convention in the Hope that we would grow spiritually and establish an understanding concerning the church and the people in the churches in which we had our membership. We young people came from communities where there were other Reformed Churches, but we were called to be distinctively Reformed in the church world thirty years ago.

I remembered that first convention because I was just a youngster then and was quite fearful. I was afraid because I knew very few of my fellow conventioners. Part of my fear was that I was young. I remember that there were many older young people at that convention and that was good. We need older young people at our conventions, and it saddens me that so few of our older unmarried young people attend conventions but turn instead to alternative forms of recreation or entertainment. I hereby register my vote in favor of more of our older young people attending future conventions.

Oh yes, I was going to say something about my father. He was at the very first convention that was held in 1939 in South Holland, Illinois. He had young children then. They were too young to attend a young people's convention. But his family grew. Those early ministers at the first convention in 1939 (think now of emeritated ones – Rev. C. Hanko, Rev. G. Lubbers, Rev. H. Veldman), who were leaders of the young people at those earliest conventions must have dreamed of the day when by God's grace their children would attend conventions; they must have dreamed of a day when conventions would be forty years old and when children of their children would be attending P.R.Y.P. conventions. And that's exactly what has happened. God in His preserving grace has made it possible for children's children to attend conventions. God has been faithful to His promise that He would establish His covenant with those who keep His covenant. We see in our conventions, therefore, tangible evidence of the reward of God's grace.

For me then, this convention was a time to look back and view the events of the present from the perspective of the past. I concluded in my purview that young people have not really changed that much. Solomon said there is no really new thing under the sun. It is still true as the preacher says in Ecclesiastes that childhood and youth are vanity. It is likewise true that God from the beginning to the end of the world through His spirit causes young men to see visions, and old men to dream dreams.

The tendency for young people is to do things only so that they can have "a blast". A few of us go to conventions only so that we can continue the legends that have accompanied the history of past conventions. That this is true can be learned when we read the message of the Federation president to the conventioners of the Twentieth Annual Convention twenty years ago. "All the legendary tales you might have heard about how late others have stayed out during previous conventions, about how much mischief they made, about how many authorities they disobeyed, all being summed up in the frightfully illogical conclusion, 'Boy, did we have fun,' all these tales fall away to make place for real standards of fun at the convention."

This should help us to understand the concern of our newly-retired Federation President, Bob Faber, when he wrote in the 40th Annual PRYP convention booklet as follows: "It is a unique opportunity to meet with fellow believers and discuss matters of faith and conviction. So when we meet with old friends, establish new relationships, and engage in the activities of this week, let's keep in mind the ultimate purpose of the time. Let's be aware that through discussions, speeches, and devotions we are able together to grow spiritually and to mature as Christian young people."

This year the host society planned the 40th convention (a symbolic number, don't you think) and called us to look backward and to look forward. The speeches were planned to help us consider our calling in the midst of a church world that does not really love the Reformed faith found in the Holy Scriptures. We were given an opportunity to view our position as young people who are youthful members of the Protestant Reformed Churches from the point of view of a theme that called to "Appreciate our Reformed Faith."

What were the real standards of fun that were uppermost in the minds of the members of the steering committee? These real standards of fun were that all the activities of the convention should be subject to one main goal – spiritual growth. How could we grow spiritually? When all the other good times have been forgotten, we will remember the edifying and thought-provoking speeches. We will remember the spiritual talks we had with fellow young people and discussion leaders about our confession of sin, about the liturgy in our churches, and concerning Christian

courtesy. We will remember the moments when we gathered around the Word of God for spiritual devotions at the end of a busy day. That's real lasting fun.

You left the convention, young people, and the battle goes on. The same conscious dedication you felt at the convention you must continue as you live in your own societies and churches. You are now separated from each other, but you are bound by a new appreciation for the Reformed faith that should and will by God's grace lead you in your life of gratitude and faithfulness in this world until Jesus comes.

As we commemorate the blessings of God at the conclusion of this 40th Annual PRYP Convention, may we with the assurance of faith recite Moses' prayer of faith as he came to the end of forty years of labor.

“The eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting arms: and He shall thrust out the enemy before thee...

Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the Lord...”
Deuteronomy 33:27, 29.

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