

There is a better way. When we love the RPCNA for who she is now – that is, loving her members, elders and institutions – we may then begin that good work of serving her well. We are to love our brothers and sisters in the Lord, being committed to their ongoing encouragement, service and sanctification.

One may strategically and systematically pray for the RPCNA because of two particular graces - one special and one common. The first, according to God's gracious wisdom and special providence over His Church, is by decreeing right church government to be connectional - neither a mere collective of autonomous congregations nor an impenetrable labyrinth of innovative bureaucracy. Rather, congregations are relationally connected in our presbyteries and synod. Practically, this blessing is furthered that the RPCNA is such relational denomination. The second, according to God's common providence, is that never before has such connectionalism been more palpable. Our denominational magazine and website makes systematically praying for each presbytery and congregation possible; and on each congregation's website, members can listen to the sermons of other congregation's pastors for their edification.

We ought to regularly pray for the RPCNA - her continuing health and growth, for both her members and ministers. And we ought to love the RPCNA for what she is now, by God's grace: a faithful, loving denomination seeking to make known the glory and grace of God.

III

Prayer for what the RPCNA will be

'For this is the will of God, even your sanctification'

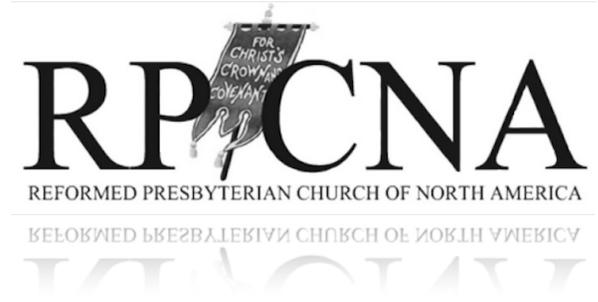
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3

Third, we ought to love the RPCNA for what she, by God's grace, will be. Let us first be clear by what is meant: It is not meant that we are to have

grandiose hopes that the RPCNA would become some ecclesiological superpower, but rather we should desire the continuation of a clear inference that can be seen in the past hundred or so years of the church's history: the RPCNA, generally, is growing in corporate sanctification. This is confirmed in the minutes and documents of the church, as well as the testimony of men who have served in the RPCNA for some time now. We are growing, by God's grace, to be a more biblical church. We should pray for, and then seek out according to the law and order of the church, the continuation of this corporate sanctification in three ways that can be observed even now. (1) That old practices and positions that are unbiblical would continue to be purged out and replaced in true repentance by more biblical ones. (2) That we would grow not only as a confessional people, but as a confessing people. The confession of the church will always be incomplete – in that we are to continue to faithfully respond to the various errors purported around us, and continue to sharpen those doctrines which we do already confess. The *Testimony* of the RPCNA is an example of this necessity and practice. (3) That we would grow (as all God's people are called to) in both godliness and our witness. We should rejoice that churches are being planted, and people are being drawn to Christ by the effectual work of the Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. There is much to love and rejoice in when we consider what the RPCNA, Lord willing, could and will be.

Conclusion

As we love, serve in and pray for the RPCNA in these ways, we must also expectantly pray for the day when the Church of Christ is united visibly, just as She always has been spiritually. For, as our Lord Christ Jesus has said, 'And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd' (John 10:16).



How Should We Love and Pray for Our Denomination?

A Pamphlet to Encourage Members of the RPCNA

*'I thank my God upon every remembrance of
you, always in every prayer of mine for you all
making request with joy, for your fellowship in
the gospel from the first day until now.'*

Introduction

As members of Christ's Church catholic (universal) but, more specifically, as members in the branch of the visible church that is the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America (RPCNA), how should we love and pray for our denomination? Let us first consider these introductory principles, followed by three specific applications.

1) *Our allegiance is ultimately to Christ.* Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church. He is the Bridegroom of His Bride, the Church. Elders, Deacons and Members alike of His Church are first and foremost Christ's servants. It is His glory and honour that we seek, not our own.

2) *Our love for the true Israel of God is ultimately directed toward the Church catholic (universal).* The Scriptures do not speak of the Church as if She were really, that is spiritually, divided. Israel was made up of many tribes, yet one people. The love that we have for the brethren flows from our being part of the whole Household, and our service as members as being part of the whole Body.

3) *We are to responsible to place ourselves under biblical church governance.* God has divinely directed His Church how it should be governed - as congregations covenanted together in hierarchical courts under the authority of a plurality and parity of lawful elders. Any such deviation and innovation would be to spurn the divine right of the Church's biblical government. Elisha had respect unto the reign of Jehoshaphat, but not unto the reign of Ahab (2 Kgs 3:14). In so far as we are informed in our conscience and able, we should place ourselves in a faithful assembly where the Word, sacraments and discipline of the Church are properly upheld.

4) *Denominations are a temporary solution to the great errors within the visible Church.* As *RPCNA Testimony xxv.14* states, 'Divisions that separate believers into denominations mar the unity and are due to error and sin. It is the duty of all denominations which

are true churches of Christ to seek reconciliation and union.' Denominations are necessary, but ultimately temporary - for as God continues to purify His Church in seasons of persecution and sanctify His Church in seasons of prosperity, these divisions will one day, Lord willing, cease.

5) *It is good and right that we should love and pray for not only the Church catholic, but also our denomination.* Knowing that we must then be members of such denominations, just as we are citizens of particular countries, let us affectionately love, pray for and seek the health of the RPCNA - for indeed the strength of one member contributes to the health of the whole Body.

I

Thanksgiving for what the RPCNA has been

'Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.'

- *Hebrews 12:1*

First, we ought to give thanks to the Lord and love the RPCNA for what she has been in times past. We may consider the history and writings of the Protestant, and particularly Scottish, Reformation; the Westminster Assembly; and, especially, the Covenanters. This is perhaps the most common appreciation for our denomination. The thanksgiving of those Christians who find their convictions and practice to be the same as among these godly men of old is like that thanksgiving uttered in Psalm 61:5, 'Thou hast given me the heritage of those that fear thy name.' This is the wonderful experience of biblical covenant theology for all of Christ's Bride - those who are drawn to Christ from paganism, those who come to the Reformed faith from another branch of the visible Church, or those who were born within the reformed church - that when we look in our spiritual family tree, we see such men as Abraham,

Isaac, and Jacob; Elijah and Elisha; Daniel; Peter and Paul; Augustine; Anselm; John Knox; Samuel Rutherford; Donald Cargill and Richard Cameron.

There is much to be admired about the history (past and present) about the Reformed Presbyterians, such as the doctrine and application of the Mediatorial Kingship of Christ and the continuing biblical practice of exclusively singing the Psalms in worship. We need not view these men, positions or practices idolatrously, but we should still love the RPCNA for what she has been in centuries past, so that we might continue to strive forward in increasing faithfulness, building upon that work already laid before us, with Christ as the only foundation. In other words, we pray that the Lord would continue in His covenant faithfulness those things which our forefathers in the faith did well, and purge out those things in which they erred.

II

Prayer and Affection for what the RPCNA is

'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.' - *Philippians 1:3-5*

Second, we ought to love the RPCNA is for what she is now. This may be the most difficult for those who are new and coming in, but also is the most useful. What good is it if a man comes with a desire to serve in the RPCNA, but only loves the people (or positions) of her past and the prospects of her future without loving her for who she is now. The yielding results will certainly be two-fold: disappointment and bitterness. Such a man will feel great disappointment - he came expecting seventeenth century Scotland and instead found himself in twenty-first century North America. The disappointment of unmet expectations gives way then to bitterness, where every disagreement breeds contention, and contention breeds disunity.