



The Reformed Parish

August 24, 2023

Greetings!

Where to start? Four months ago . . . night and day! Some major news, in case you haven't heard. But first, some updates on the mission work.

First, helpers appear to have crawled out of the woodwork. A new friend from Latin America has visited with hopes to relocate to the U.S. Zealous, evangelistic, confessionally Presbyterian . . . and bilingual! And then another young man of Hispanic heritage in the last few month just plopped down in our little Rhode Island congregation. The Lord seems to have been working in his heart, drawing him to Christ, and inflaming his mind with the Reformed faith. And he wants to help! Both men have begun helping me with translation. Of course, time will tell what all the Lord has in store for them. But I am definitely encouraged and thanking the Lord for answers to prayer!

Next, I recently completed a distance course by videoconference with the Seminario Teologico Reformado – William Ames in Boliva. It was a short, five-week course on the [theory and practice of catechesis](#) for men training for the ministry, with some zealous 'daughters of Sarah' auditing along. I used Spanish translators, and the students really seemed to appreciate it. I'm hopeful that my limited involvement with the seminary will increase, enabling me eventually to offer these courses in satellite locations here in the U.S. with Hispanic students for the ministry.

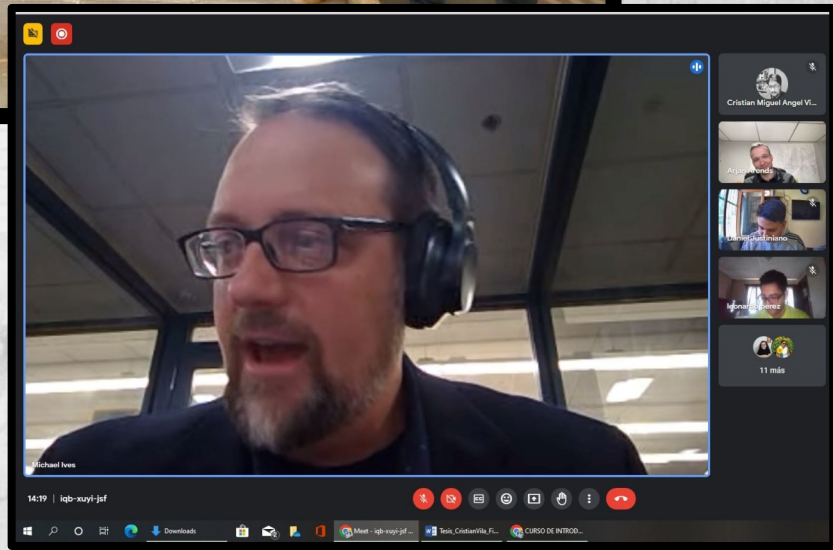
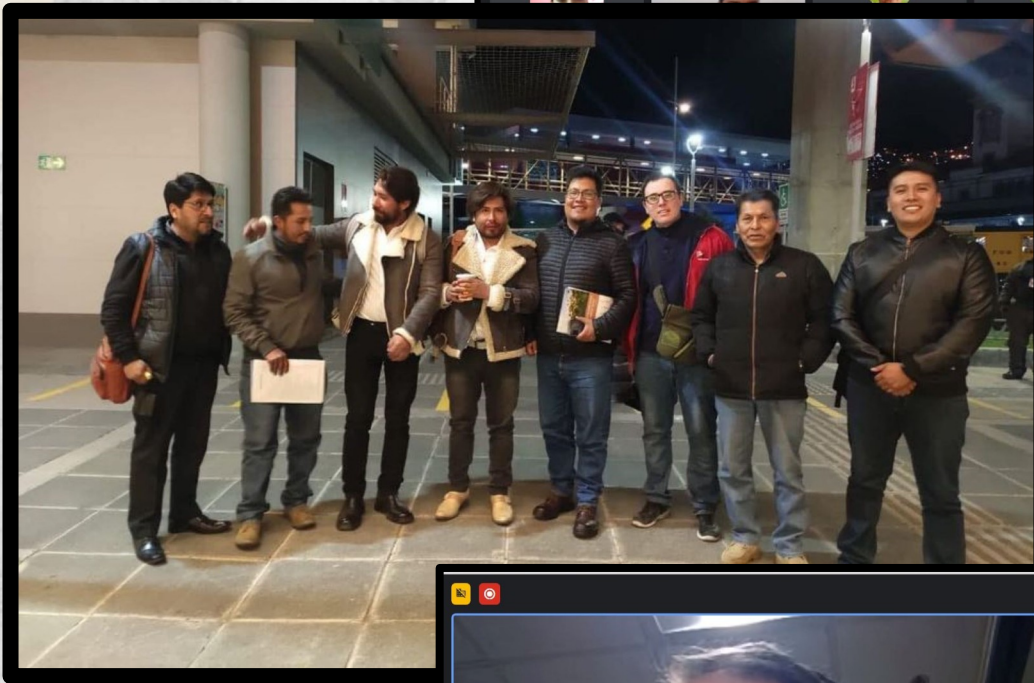
We've also been continuing to help "Fatima" find a new home. That's a longer story in itself. Could you possibly help? [Read more here about that.](#)

The biggest development, though, is that we are **in the midst of a move to South Jersey**. Our newest PRC congregation there has extended a call, and with presbytery's blessing I have recently accepted it. I had hardly thought this might be what the Lord would have me do; and it certainly raises questions about the RPM project here in Rhode Island. Read on below for more.

Yours for Jesus' sake,

Michael Ives
reformedparish.com (outreach)
westportexperiment.com (theology & missions)

August 2023
Quarterly Update



The Reformed Parish

Please pray for us!
And if you are able, could
you help me as I raise
monthly support?
Click here to donate.

Shore to Shore: Rhode Island to South Jersey



The Lord has recently opened a door for me in South Jersey. While this charge, unlike the one I'm leaving, is a bivocational ministry with a limited salary, I feel strongly that the opportunities to do cross-cultural parish mission are even greater than before. As in New England, there are sizable Hispanic communities all throughout New Jersey also. Further, the congregation has a theological student under care of presbytery, James Hoffman, whom I've already been mentoring, and he is eager to help where he can. I sense the time is right to launch out in a more direct and aggressive way with my 'reformed parish' urban missions model. And my presbytery is supportive, offering encouragement and oversight now more directly through our missions committee. Presbytery has even committed to this venture with a pledge of their own monthly contribution.

Naturally, this raises questions about the urban outreach I've been developing for years in S. Providence. Well, one upside to taking this call is that I will still be less than a day away from Rhode Island. I hope to return every few months to spend time with my son (whom we're leaving behind) and to help my former congregation in the pulpit as they explore their future. I fully intend to devote time during each trip back to to work the S. Providence field, perhaps also with my new bilingual helper. So in one way, I see this as an expansion of the mission, though there are certainly growing pains.

I will be installed by presbytery in my new congregation in Corbin City, New Jersey on the Lord's day (Sunday) of September 24. We also anticipate some OPC ministers and friends coming out as a show of support. In October, after starting regular preaching and pastoral responsibilities, I hope to begin outreach into the surrounding communities, carving out one or more mission parishes. I also plan to reach out and develop pastoral contacts especially in minority and Hispanic communities, identifying those with a more Bible-oriented focus in order to spread the Reformed faith, and beginning to partner with other Reformed or Calvinistic churches already in the area.

But I could use your help now more than ever. This decision was not totally straightforward. I no longer have much of a 'runway' to launch a full-time cross-cultural ministry, as I had earlier planned. My decision has meant surrendering a full-time salary, as the S. Jersey church can only manage to support me at a third of that amount. They are fully supportive of my laboring there with an explicit view to serving the local congregation and engaging in aggressive urban missions, especially to Hispanics. They also understand that my vision reaches beyond their local witness.

So, I really need financial support. If you can make a monthly commitment of any kind, it would be a tremendous blessing. My hope is to give myself full-time to cross-cultural urban missions here in the U.S., become fluent in Spanish, do outreach explicitly on the parish model, and to do this closely and organically with one of our established local congregations. **Donation options are here.** But please don't feel pressured. I would rather have just your prayer support if you are already fully committed in your giving. Thank you.

"For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab. 2:14).

The spell of evangelistic home visitation



“There is one lesson that we need not teach, for experience has already taught it, and that is, the kindly influence which the mere presence of a human being has upon his fellows. Let the attention bestowed upon another, be the genuine emanation of good-will, and there is only one thing more to make it irresistible. The readiest way of finding access to a man’s heart, is to go into his house; and there to perform the deed of kindness, or to acquit ourselves of the wonted and the looked for acknowledgment. By putting ourselves under the roof of a poor neighbour, we in a manner put ourselves under his protection—we render him for the time our superior—we throw our reception on his generosity, and we may be assured that it is a confidence which will almost never fail us. If Christianity be the errand on which the movement is made, it will open the door of every family; and even the profane and the profligate will come to recognise the worth of that principle, which prompts the unwearied assiduity of such services. By every circuit which is made amongst them, there is attained a higher vantage-ground of moral and spiritual influence; and, in spite of all that has been said of the ferocity of a city population, in such rounds of visitation there is none of it to be met with, even among the lowest receptacles of human worthlessness. This is the home walk in which is earned, if not a proud, at least a peaceful popularity—the popularity of the heart—the greetings of men, who, touched even by the cheapest and easiest services of kindness, have nothing to give but their wishes of kindness back again; but, in giving these, have crowned such pious attentions with the only popularity that is worth the aspiring after—the popularity that is won in the bosom of families, and at the side of death-beds.”

Thomas Chalmers, *Collected Works*, 14:49-50

West Port Experiment

On parish missions, the care of souls, and all things Reformed