The Antithesis: Its Manifestation

In the initial article on the subject of the antithesis, we defined it as the sharp and absolute spiritual distinction between sin and grace, light and darkness, truth and lie, elect and reprobate, God and Satan, Christ and antichrist, believers and unbelievers. We emphasized that it is a spiritual principle, and that its scope encompasses the whole of the Christian life. In the light of James 4:4, we further described it in terms of friendship and enmity.

Without in any way weakening or watering down the fact that the antithesis is a spiritual principle, we must acknowledge that such a principle is abstract. You cannot see a principle or an attitude, and friendship and enmity are concepts. This does not change the fact that the antithesis is real, and that it definitely comes to concrete manifestation. Thus the question may legitimately be asked, If you look for the antithesis, where would you find it?

Most of you would probably answer instantly, between the church and the world. And you would be correct. This distinction between light and darkness is clear, obvious, and easily understandable, to say nothing of biblical.

But if you search a little more persistently, you will find the antithesis also in the church. This may be surprising at first. Does not the church stand for the thesis, for the cause and truth and kingdom of God? Is not the church supposed to be comprised of the redeemed who are saints, sanctified and holy? How then can there be antithesis within the church?
These questions demand answers, and if you search the Scriptures, you will find that there is indeed antithesis within the church. In fact, the antithesis comes to its sharpest and clearest manifestation in the church. By many this truth is poorly understood and unpopular; it causes many problems and is the subject of debate. Often it is denied and rejected. Nevertheless, it is the truth, and Scripture teaches it in many places, perhaps no more clearly than in Romans 9, especially verses 6–8: “Not as though the word of God had taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.”

In Romans 9 Paul is dealing with the problem of God’s rejection of Israel as his chosen people. The problem he faces is that even in the very early years of the New Testament it was clear that a twofold rejection was taking place. On the one hand, the Jews were rejecting God. All throughout the Old Testament they had been the chosen people of God, to whom the word of God came (Rom. 9:6); they alone were the children of the promise (v. 8). But when God in the fullness of time fulfilled his promises in Christ, they rejected him. They took the position that they were saved not by Christ’s atonement, but because they were the natural sons of Abraham. On the other hand, God rejected the Jews in the way of their unbelief, and sent the gospel to the Gentiles, as he was busy doing through Paul and the other apostles at the very time that Paul writes these words.

This situation is a problem for Paul. As a Jew, he was sorrowful to see his people cut off from the only way of salvation in Christ (v. 3). It was also a problem for the church to which Paul writes. How is the apostle to account for what is clearly the state of affairs?

Paul answers that the solution is the truth of the antithesis within the church. He does so by means of three negative statements.

First, not all are Israel that are of Israel (v. 6). All the Jews are of Israel; they belong to the nation in a natural, biological sense, in that they are all descended from Abraham; they belong to the sphere of the covenant, and are outwardly the covenant people of Jehovah. Because they were of Israel, they were complacent and self-righteous in their obedience to the law. Salvation for them was automatic. But not all the Jews are Israel. That is, not all belong really and truly to Israel in the inward, spiritual sense. The line of the antithesis runs directly through the church of the Old Testament.

Second, not all who are seed are children (v. 7). All are the seed of Abraham in a general, natural sense. There was no apparent difference within the nation of Israel, for all belonged to the chosen people of God. Yet not all are the children of Abraham in the true, spiritual sense. The sword of the antithesis cuts right through the church: all who are seed are not children.

Third, the children of the flesh are not the children of God (v. 8). The children of Abraham and Isaac by virtue of natural descent are not truly the children of God, nor of Abraham and Isaac, for that matter. The thesis in the outward, formal sense—membership in Israel and the seed of Abraham, and participation in the promises of God—does not necessarily mean salvation. Some who are the seed of Abraham are children according to the flesh only and do not belong to the Israel of God. The sharp line of the antithesis runs straight through the church both of the old and of the new testaments. Only some—the true Israel, the children of the promise, the offspring of Isaac—are the church of Christ.

The reason is not that the word of God had had no effect (v. 6). That some are saved and some are not is not because the word has fallen by the wayside and gotten lost, so that God did not fulfill his promises due to the powerlessness of his word. Rather, by stating the matter negatively and by placing this statement first in his line of reasoning, Paul insists that the word does have an effect. Whatever else may be true, the fault does not lie with the word of God. The effectiveness of the word is exactly the reason for the antithesis in the church. When hearing the command of the gospel, some obey and believe unto eternal life, while others do not.

The reason is to be found in the truth of sovereign, divine, double predestination.

From the positive viewpoint of the thesis, the reason is God’s word of election. It is a word spoken from eternity in Christ, the elect Son of God. It is a word spoken always and only to his people. It is the word that he spoke to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is the word that he always speaks to the church, the sovereign word of his electing love. And it is a powerful word that always has its effect because it
is God’s word. Because God speaks his irresistible word of election, his people are true Israel, the seed of Isaac, and the children of God and of his promise.

From the negative viewpoint of the antithesis, the reason is God’s word of reprobation. Some are chosen and called according to election, while others are not. This is Paul’s clear teaching. Isaac was chosen and called, and he only. Other children of Abraham, including Ishmael, were not. Not even all who are the seed of Isaac are chosen, as the apostle teaches beginning in verse 10: Jacob was elect, while Esau was reprobate. This twofold line of election and reprobation runs through the church in all of its history, from the moment of the fall until the last moment of time. The same word that speaks salvation to the elect and called seed speaks the word of death and condemnation to those who are not seed. Thus the deepest reason and ground for the antithesis within the church is nothing else than the eternal and sovereign counsel of God.

The clash between the thesis and the antithesis is sharpest in the sphere of the church. The reason is that it is in the church that the effective word of God works primarily. Surely it also works in the world as it is preached and as it saves and condemns; therefore the antithesis is between the church and the world. But the word is first and foremost in the church, and in the church it works in such a way that it makes manifest the antithesis. It does this because the word is itself a double-edged sword, the power of life to those who believe and the power of death to those who do not.

In this truth of the antithesis in the church there is assurance. Certainly not for those who as the children of the flesh are of Israel; for them there is only the word of condemnation. But for those who as the children of the promise are true Israel, there are answers to questions. And questions there are. How are we to account for apparently covenant children who simply reject the word of promise when they come to maturity? How do we account for those who “go bad,” opposing the truth of God? How do we account for those who compromise the word, oppose its hard but clear teachings, and leave the church and the true preaching of the antithetical word of promise in favor of some sort of easy salvationism?

This is the reality; it happens. This struck me recently when I looked at my 1964 yearbook from Adams Protestant Reformed Christian School. Eighteen of us graduated from 9th grade that year. Today three are dead. Four are still members of the Protestant Reformed Churches. The rest are gone, who knows where.

Young people, look around you at your school classes, your congregations, your catechism classes, and at those with whom you socialize. Where will your friends and neighbors be in ten, twenty, or more years? More to the point, where will you be? I know that as young folks you tend to live in the moment. But pause for a moment and think about the truth of the antithesis and how it will work out in your lives in the years to come. We cannot know the details, nor should we make unfounded personal judgments regarding individuals. But we know that there will be division and separation. When it happens, we ought not to be surprised, for such is the clear teaching of the Scriptures.

Rather, the truth of the antithesis in the church ought to be for us an incentive to make our calling and election sure, standing for the thesis and striving to be faithful to the truth as we have been blessed to know and confess it. Then in the way of obedience and faithfulness to the word of promise we have the assurance of being partakers of that promise of salvation in Christ. That word is sure, for it is the word of Jehovah, our covenant God, whose word is always certain.

The 2012 Young People’s Convention is now history, and by all accounts it was very successful and enjoyable. In this customary post-convention issue we have printed summaries of three of the speeches, as well as four pages of pictures. Remember and enjoy—the 2013 convention is already being planned!

On a completely different note, we need your help. We need volunteers to help complete our archive project. If you are interested, please contact Alex Thompson, our promotions manager at promotions@beaconlights.org or 616.308.0116. We also need your older issues of Beacon Lights for our archives. If you have any old copies of Beacon Lights and are willing to part ways with them, please contact Ryan Kregel at ryankregel@gmail.com or 616.802.8191.
As part of the series on different vocations, I have been asked to give some insight into the field of law enforcement. Law enforcement is a field with a wide range of job possibilities. These include non-sworn positions, such as 911 dispatchers, or sworn positions as officers. This article provides a brief overview of some of the different sworn positions in law enforcement, describes what led me to the field, and some of the positive and negative aspects of the career.

My Background

As for my background, I’m currently a State Trooper with the Iowa State Patrol. I have been a trooper since October 2008. Prior to working with the State Patrol, I attended Dordt College where I majored in Business Administration. In my career with the State Patrol I have obtained certification as a Standardized Field Sobriety Test Instructor and Drug Recognition Expert. My training beyond my basic training has focused on detecting and apprehending impaired drivers, whether caused by alcohol or drugs. As a trooper, I have been able to work with many different agencies from the local to federal level. On the local and county level, I have worked with the officers and deputies on a wide array of incidents. Federally, I have worked with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) on different cases resulting from traffic stops. This has allowed me to gain a little experience with the roles of these different agencies.

In this article, I will relate many aspects of law enforcement to consider, which leads to the question, why did I pursue law enforcement? I chose to work in law enforcement for a couple reasons. First, I felt I could use my God-given gifts to glorify him in the vocation. I wanted to do something service oriented. I wanted to help bring calm to a chaotic situation. Did I want to go to a domestic fight where a spouse was badly beaten? No. Did I want to go to a crash and see the mangled wreckage? No. However, I realized that it needs to be done, and someone has to do it. I realized I have the mental fortitude to go, maintain composure, and make sure what needs to be done gets done. I wanted to be able to be a witness to people in some of the lowest times of their lives, and I wanted to assist in maintaining an orderly, safe society in which to live and worship. Those are the primary reasons I pursued law enforcement. Yes, there are the adrenaline rushes from pursuits and such like, but those are not the primary reasons I entered the vocation.

The Field of Law Enforcement

There are many different sworn positions in law enforcement, each with different jurisdictions and different job descriptions. Basically, on the city level are city police officers, on the county level are deputy sheriffs, and on the state level are State Police or State Patrol troopers or officers. On the federal level there are uniformed police officers, non-uniformed special agents (criminal investigators), the U.S. Marshals, and many others. In addition there are positions in other areas such as natural resources law enforcement at about every level. In summary, there are so many different job descriptions that it is impossible to describe them all in an article. If someone is considering a position in law enforcement, he ought to research the different positions and speak with people employed in those positions. That being said, I will briefly describe the most common positions of police officer, deputy sheriff, state police officer, and federal criminal investigator.

Although certified within a state, a police officer typically works within city limits. Depending on the size of the department and city, a police officer may spend his shift going from call to call, or patrolling with very few calls. Some departments, typically the
larger ones, have specialized units such as patrol and investigations. Patrol officers respond to calls and perform the short term investigations. If an incident requires a more in depth or long-term investigation (homicide, theft, robbery, fraud, etc), an officer assigned to investigations can take the case over. In smaller departments, officers share all of these duties.

Whereas a police officer works within the city limits, deputy sheriffs typically have jurisdiction for the unincorporated areas of a county. Just as a police officer, a lot of what the day-to-day job is depends on the population of the county and size of the department. For example, the calls for service in a city such as Los Angeles, CA will be much more abundant than in Hull, IA. In addition, the sheriff’s office is usually responsible for the administration of the jail, security of the courthouse, and service of civil paperwork (small claims, repossession orders, protection orders, etc).

As you have probably guessed, state police/state patrol agencies vary from state to state also. In Iowa, the Iowa State Patrol falls under the Department of Public Safety. Also under the Department of Public Safety are the Division of Criminal Investigation, Division of Narcotics Enforcement, and State Fire Marshal’s Office. In Iowa the state patrol is an assisting agency for the officers and deputies on calls. For example, a deputy could be sent to a fight at a bar and troopers will assist and back up the deputy. That is not to say a trooper will not be sent to a call alone or will not be the lead on call, but in most cases a trooper assists the other agency unless no one else is available. In rural areas, a county may only have one deputy working at night and may rely on troopers for assistance more than in urban areas. The majority of an Iowa State Trooper’s time, however, is spent doing traffic enforcement, criminal interdiction (discovering criminal activity such as drug and human trafficking during traffic stops), and accident investigation.

In Iowa, an officer in the Department of Public Safety can transfer laterally to a different division within the department and do solely criminal investigations (homicides, drug trafficking, sexual assaults, white collar crimes, arson, etc.) or fire safety inspections. In some states, the state police respond to calls just as officers and deputies, and in some they solely do traffic enforcement and accident investigation. This varies greatly from state to state, and someone interested in working for a state police agency needs to research each department.

Federal sworn positions can range from uniformed officers, such as the U.S. Capitol Police or Border Patrol, to non-uniformed positions as Criminal Investigators with agencies such as the FBI, ATF, and Secret Service. Each agency has different areas of the law they are tasked with enforcing, but there can be overlap. For example, a DEA agent may work with an FBI and ATF agent investigating terrorist organizations smuggling drugs and weapons into the United States. For nearly every federal government bureau or division, there are criminal investigators to investigate criminal abuse of the division’s programs. Post-9/11, federal law enforcement has greatly expanded with an added focus on attempting to prevent future terrorist attacks.

**ASPECTS OF THE VOCATION**

There are many rewarding aspects to law enforcement. These can range from simply helping someone whose car broke down, to helping locate a lost child, to preventing someone from injuring another. However, much of the reward must come from the personal satisfaction of contributing to a safer society, as actually receiving a thank-you from the public is very rare.

There are also negative aspects to a career in law enforcement. A person in law enforcement sees a lot of tragedy and hurt. Mentally, one must be able to cope with that. An additional downside is that as with most government employment, politics are a part of law enforcement. When the economy weakens, budgets get cut, training is eliminated, equipment is not replaced, and employment benefits suffer.

Crime does not stop at night or on weekends. Because of this, officers have to work many nights, holidays, and weekends. This is not a normal schedule, and can make it harder to have time with the whole family. That being said, officers typically have the benefit of more vacation time and days off to help offset this. The schedule and other benefits vary from department to department and are something to research when considering a position.

In connection with the preceding paragraph, most law enforcement jobs, at least initially, require Sunday labor. People still get sick, car crashes still happen, and criminals still harm people on Sunday. It is possible to eventually get a position that does not require Sunday labor, but almost impossible initially. Because of this, I strongly caution against
taking a position without researching the schedule and departmental policies. Some departments, especially smaller ones with fewer calls, will allow officers to attend worship services on duty. Some will not. Some departments have a schedule layout that requires working every Sunday unless taken off, while other departments have a more flexible schedule that does not. Classis West considered this issue of law enforcement labor on the Sabbath in 1983 and concluded that “because police work is a work of present necessity, it is a work in which the child of God is permitted to be engaged, if this work does not occasion the neglect of the means of grace on the Sabbath Day.” So although a work of necessity, one must not use that as an excuse to take whatever position one can get and regularly miss worshipping on the Sabbath. Regular Sabbath worship is vital to the life of a Christian. Ponder this, pray about it, and speak to your pastor about it when considering this vocation. Those interested in law enforcement would be well served to read the article “Sunday Labor” by Rev. Bruinsma in the Standard Bearer, Volume 83, Issue 15, and the report of Classis West from the September 1983 meeting.

**Requirements**

The requirements for a law enforcement position vary by department and state. If one is interested in law enforcement, he would be wise to research the requirements for area departments on the internet. For example, some states require a college degree, and some do not. Some states may not, but a department in that state may require a degree. Unless it is required, I would advise getting a degree in something other than criminal justice. That way if something happens and you are unable to work in law enforcement, you have other education to fall back on. Usually someone does not need a degree in criminal justice. An agency just wants to see that someone has the ability to learn and the discipline to study and accomplish a goal. One thing is consistent across the board, however. One must maintain a clean record and be of good moral character.

In addition to whatever educational and physical requirements there are, when considering a career as an officer, a person should examine himself and evaluate whether he has the mental fortitude for the job. Can you handle dealing with people fighting on an almost daily basis? Can you handle putting on a ballistic vest and strapping on a gun belt every day, not knowing what may come? Many times officers see things that the general public never will. Officers see people injured by their spouses, addicted to drugs, and badly hurt physically and mentally. Car accidents can be gruesome and chaotic scenes, and an officer has to be able to stay calm, provide medical assistance, and complete the investigation. This can be very difficult, especially when it involves a fatality accident. In those cases, an officer may have to notify the next of kin of a loved one’s death. An officer has to be able to witness all this and still do his job and maintain his composure. This is not easy, and not everyone has the mental fortitude required. I urge those considering this vocation to evaluate themselves realistically. Do not consider just the adrenaline of driving fast. Can you handle seeing what a cop sees? Officers have to be able to deal with a lot of mental and emotional baggage without venting it on their families. As Christians, we have the wonderful comfort and assurance of knowing that God is sovereign and controls all things. Nothing happens that is not in his control. That is a great comfort working as an officer.

**Glorifying God in Law Enforcement**

As with any vocation, one must consider how he can glorify God in law enforcement. First and foremost, an officer must use his talents and abilities to glorify God. God gives different talents to everyone. For some it may be talents utilized by farming, for some engineering, and for some management. Utilizing those talents to the best of one’s ability serves to glorify the one who gave them.

Second, for the safety and order of society, there are consequences for wrong. This has been recognized throughout history and throughout the Bible. Preventing the rampant spread of crime and bringing justice are the foundation of law enforcement. Working in law enforcement gives the opportunity to make the city, county, state, and country a safer place for people to live and worship. Because of law enforcement, we can worship with relatively no fear of the services being interrupted by violence. We can go about our lives with relative comfort and peace, with few worries about our safety.

Third, there are many unique opportunities for witnessing in law enforcement. The first is to coworkers. Officers are a relatively close group. Living a godly life stands out to coworkers in that group. Things such as praying before meals and living a godly life within this group do not go unnoticed and create opportunities to speak of one’s faith.
Then there are the people that an officer encounters throughout the day. Officers encounter those who are going through chaotic times in life, and can have a great influence on the people in those situations. There are very few vocations where someone can be in that type of situation with another person. As government employees, witnessing in these situations is not always easy, but is possible.

Finally, on a broader spectrum, there are opportunities that extend beyond those encountered with coworkers, at calls, or through enforcement. It is often said that an officer lives in a glass house. Walking a godly walk when in a vocation with the public’s eyes upon you can witness to your faith. When people know someone is an officer, and they see he lives differently, even differently from other officers, and they see he treats people fairly and respectfully, lends a helping hand, and is not out drinking and living immorally, they may wonder. Then they see that he goes to church, sends his children to a Christian school, and loves his wife and is loyal to her. They see he does not just go to church, but lives out his faith during and outside of work.

Our calling as Christians is to glorify God above all else. As one considers different vocations, that must be first. A Christian must seek a vocation where he can utilize his talents and abilities to honor the creator. Perhaps that is as an officer in law enforcement. Perhaps it is not. There are many rewarding aspects to being an officer, and as with most vocations, there are negative aspects. Above all, seek first the kingdom of God, and whatever you do, do it for God’s glory.

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Fish

If you have ever been fishing with a rod and line you will know the thrill of getting a fish on the hook and feeling its pull to escape from you. Eventually, God willing, you will have the satisfaction of landing it and even eating it for supper. This feeling is mentioned in Habakkuk 1:14–15 concerning the plundering nation of Babylon that catches men to make them slaves: “And makest men as the fishes of the sea, as the creeping things, that have no ruler over them? They take up all of them with the angle, they catch them in their net, and gather them in their drag: therefore they rejoice and are glad.” These verses use words to describe the two main methods of fishing name—the net and the angle (or rod and line).

Fish are amazing creatures ranging in size from the microscopic in plankton to the giant whale shark that dwarfs man. The fastest fish such as the marlin can reach speeds of 70 mph. Indeed, the Hebrew word for fish—dag or dagah—means swift.

We first read of water creatures in Genesis 1:20, according to which God made everything in the waters from plankton and shrimp to blue whales, the biggest animal ever to live on earth. In Leviticus 11:9 we are told that all fish with fins and scales are to be eaten, and we all know that they are a tasty alternative to poultry, beef, and mutton (see 1 Corinthians 15:39). Fish oils are a valuable source of healthy fatty acids.

Jonah was miraculously swallowed and preserved from certain drowning by a great fish that later vomited him onto dry land after he had repented—a true story picturing our salvation.

Fish are wonderfully adapted to aquatic life. Their bodies are perfectly streamlined and slippery, covered in scales and slime to allow them to propel themselves with their muscular bodies and tails through their dense water environment. Unlike us, they have gills that have a massive surface area of membrane filled with blood, which absorbs dissolved oxygen from the water. My son just found this out by experience when he put a lot of small stickleback in a bottle and put on the lid. When he went to pour them out into his pond, they were all dead, suffocated for lack of the oxygen they had all used up. Many fish also have a swim bladder that
can be filled or emptied of oxygen, which through changing the fish’s buoyancy makes it sink or float higher in the water. Their fins are strategically placed to aid change of depth and direction. Their sensitive lateral line picks up movement and vibration in the water and converts this into electrical impulses used in shoaling, avoiding predators and orientating their bodies. Their large eyes set on the sides of their heads are necessary to see predators. Amazingly, some live in fresh and some in salt water, and others such as salmon can live in both. Fresh water fish differ physiologically from salt water fish in several respects. Their gills must be able to diffuse dissolved gasses while keeping the salts in the body fluids inside. Their scales reduce water diffusion through the skin: freshwater fish that have lost too many scales will die. They also have well-developed kidneys to reclaim salts from body fluids before excretion. Many species of fish do reproduce in freshwater, but spend most of their adult lives in the sea. These include salmon and sea trout. On the contrary, other kinds of fish are born in salt water, but live most of or parts of their adult lives in fresh water, as do the eels.

Species migrating between marine and fresh waters need adaptations for both environments; when in salt water they need to keep their bodily salt concentration lower than that of their surroundings, and vice versa. Many species solve this problem by associating different habitats with different stages of life. Both eels and salmon have different tolerances for salinity in different stages of their lives.

Fishing in the Old Testament is a picture of judgment on nations and individuals, according to the verses from Habakkuk quoted above, as well as from such passages as Jeremiah 16:16–18: “Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the LORD, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks. For mine eyes are upon all their ways: they are not hid from my face, neither is their iniquity hid from mine eyes. And first I will recompense their iniquity and their sin double; because they have defiled my land, they have filled mine inheritance with the carcases of their detestable and abominable things.”

Contrariwise, in the New Testament fishing is a picture of the gathering of the elect into the church.

The Greek word for fish is ICHTHYS, which the early Christians used as a mnemonic because its letters are the initial letters of Iesous Christos Theou Hyios Soter (Jesus Christ, of God the Son, Saviour). The fish was an early Christian symbol and remains one today.

Fish are an important topic in the New Testament because as many as seven of the disciples were fishermen, namely, Peter, Andrew, James, John, Thomas, Nathaniel, and possibly Philip who was from Peter’s home town of Bethsaida (John 12:21). These men fished the Sea of Galilee with their boats and nets.

Our Lord twice fed large crowds using bread and a few small fish, according to Matthew 14 and 15. He also told Peter to go angling in the sea to land a specific fish with a coin in its mouth to pay his taxes. The first meal the risen Lord ate consisted of boiled fish and honeycomb (Luke 24:42), and later he cooked a meal of fish and bread by the sea (John 21:9–13) just after the miraculous draught of 153 fish, which pictured the gathering of the exact number of the elect from all nations.

Christ’s disciples and we are called to become fishers of men by net and rod. The net spread wide is like Pentecost, the mass crowd listening to preaching. The widespread distribution of literature and of the gospel by hard copy and the internet is like the rod, the work of believers as individuals seeking to “hook” others among our unbelieving friends and family. Fish are attracted to a lure, and our lives ought to attract them to Christ so they can be drawn in and brought to land safely in the church of Christ.

Christ assures us that by following him (and practically that means obeying the Scriptures) he will make us fishers of men. Just as the disciples worked as a team on the lake so do we in our churches in local outreach evangelism and praying with and for our brothers’ and sisters’ witness. According to Philippians 1:27 (striving together for the faith of the gospel) and Romans 15:30 (strive together with me in your prayers to God for me), we pray especially for our church ministers and the needed fishermen for the worldwide catch, because even today the nets and angling lines need to be cast out to many people—groups in the world where presently there are no fishermen. Are you praying for the nets and lines to be cast where never before? Are you supporting the fishermen in prayer and are you personally involved with fishing for men?

We all need to be! 

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A Redeemer’s Love

His love is as high as the mountain tops
and as deep as the ocean is unending.
He is the Alpha and Omega, the
Beginning and the End.
My Redeemer and Friend.
He took the crown of thorns for me so that I might
be saved the shame of defeat.
He took the nails for me so that I might
be saved from the agony
of the pain of sorrow.
He took the cross for me so that I might
be saved from death’s dark pit.
His blood that stained that old rugged cross
washes away my sins and
makes me pure,
white as snow.
I do not deserve this Redeemer’s love,
but He bought me when He died that
brutal death on Calvary.
So I will praise Him all of my days for He is my
King and Savior.

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2012 Convention Snapshots
Only a boy named David. And yet prepared by God as a boy for his future work, work that included leading God’s people Israel as king, as well as writing Psalm 23, the theme of this year’s convention. It is this preparation of David by God that we consider now.

There are especially two events recorded in the Bible in which we can see evidence of how God prepared David at a young age for his work (1 Sam. 16–17). In the first scene, we are taken to a grassy hilltop surrounded on every side by more rolling hills, by green pastures and quiet streams. Nestled there in the hills is the little village of Bethlehem. Standing on that hilltop, leaning on his shepherd’s staff is a boy, handsome and youthful, but toughened by the hours spent outdoors and the encounters with wild animals. Scattered around this boy is a flock of sheep, well-fed and cared for. As the boy stands watch over his sheep, a messenger arrives and tells him to hurry to his father’s house. The boy shoots off and arrives at his father’s house panting and sweating, only to be greeted by a strange scene. There stand his seven older brothers and his aged father, with surprise written on their faces. But another old man is there as well. His name is Samuel, and, the moment the shepherd boy arrives, Samuel takes the horn of oil in his hand and pours it out upon the boy’s head. While his undoubtedly angry and jealous brothers look on, that young shepherd boy is anointed king of Israel and filled with the Holy Spirit to qualify him for this task.

Fast forward a few years. Now you are standing on a ridge, looking across a valley at the camp of the hated Philistines. You are filled with fear because for thirty-nine days now a ten-foot giant named Goliath has stepped into the breach and reproached Israel and her God. Now it is day forty, and Goliath is at it again. But this day is different. After Goliath stomps forward and opens his mouth, someone steps forward from the ranks of Israel. As you look closer you notice that it is not even a soldier, but it is only a young shepherd boy with nothing in hand except a sling. But that boy is not afraid; he rebukes Goliath and tells him that the vultures are going to feast on the bodies of his comrades today. And then that sling goes round and round, and the giant comes tumbling down with the shepherd’s stone in his enormous forehead. And just as quickly the shepherd boy removes the giant’s sword and lops off his head. Certain defeat has become a resounding victory, thanks to that young boy.

Obviously, the young shepherd boy in both scenes is David. And in these two events—his anointing by Samuel and his defeat of Goliath—we see David prepared by God for his future work.

First, David was a young man raised in a covenant home. Before discussing his family, it is worth noting that David was a young man at the time these two important events took place. In 1 Samuel 17:33 Saul says to David, “Thou art not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him: for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.” In verse 42 we read that Goliath “disdained [David]: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance.” The Bible does not tell us exactly how old David was, but he was certainly in his teens and probably no older than 18 or 19 years old. That is, David was about the same age as you young people.

This teenage young man grew up in a covenant home. The story of this covenant home began with David’s great-grandparents, Boaz and Ruth. The Moabitess Ruth was born and raised in idolatry, but by God’s grace she became a woman of great faith. Recall her stirring words to her mother-in-law Naomi: “Intreat me not to leave thee…thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God…” (Ruth 1:16–17). This God-fearing woman married Boaz, a man who was equally as God-fearing. Together they established a covenant home in Bethlehem where God blessed them with a son (Obed) and grandson (Jesse).

Jesse continued the covenant home begun by Grandpa Boaz and Grandma Ruth. He married a
young woman, and he and his wife established their own God-centered home on the family inheritance in Bethlehem. God caused David to grow up in a large family, for he gave to Jesse and his wife ten children: eight sons and two daughters (1 Sam. 17:12; 1 Chron. 2:13–16). Interestingly, Jesus Christ also grew up in a large family with at least seven other siblings (Mark 6:3). Jesse and his wife taught David and his nine siblings the word of God and spoke to them of God’s covenant faithfulness to his people Israel. They guided those children to walk according to God’s law and disciplined them when they strayed. Because of this God-fearing instruction, David had a great love for his parents. When he was forced to live life on the lam because of Saul’s persecution, David made sure to protect his aging father and mother from the murderous king (1 Sam. 22:3–4). Through the means of those God-fearing parents, David was prepared for a life of service to God. The same is true today. God is pleased to raise up spiritually-minded young people from the covenant homes of God-fearing parents. This does not mean, of course, that God cannot raise up strong young people from unbelieving or spiritually-weak homes, but this is the exception. The rule is that God uses the means of covenant parents giving instruction in a covenant home to prepare young people for a life of service to him. That is reason for you young people to give thanks, for God has placed you in such covenant homes.

But it is also something which you ought to remember as you begin dating and having some fleeting thoughts of marriage. Your marriage and the covenant home you will establish is the means which God uses to raise up God-fearing generations. Especially you young women ought to remember this. God is especially pleased to use you—your rearing of the children God gives, your faithful instruction and care day after day as a mother in the home—to produce spiritually-minded children and young people. Ordinarily, God calls a young woman to be a wife and mother in the home, not to be a career woman. This does not mean that you young women may not or cannot go to college or get a job. But if God sees fit to give you a husband and children, he is pleased to use your faithful instruction of those children in the home to raise up a God-fearing generation. What a blessed calling that is!

Second, David was prepared through his labors as a shepherd.

As the youngest of Jesse’s sons, David was assigned the task of caring for his father’s flocks. His care for those flocks gave to him an understanding of the nature of sheep; above all he learned that the predominant characteristic of sheep is their absolute dependence upon a clever, compassionate shepherd. This knowledge prepared David for his later work of guiding God’s flock Israel. He knew that Israel, like his father’s sheep, needed a shepherd to guide and protect them. And David learned as well that from a spiritual point of view he and all God’s people needed Jesus Christ, the powerful yet compassionate shepherd.

Not only was David prepared by learning the nature of sheep, but he also grew and developed the nature of a shepherd. There was a two-fold aspect to this nature. First, David was prepared at this time to be a courageous fighter. It was required of a shepherd not only that he feed and guide the sheep, but also that he protect them from ravenous lions and bears. He must be willing to fight for the lives of the little lambs. And David certainly did, as he tells Saul: “Thy servant kept his father’s sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear, and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him” (1 Sam. 17:34–35). David was also called upon to ward off the thieving bands of Philistines that encroached upon his family’s inheritance. This is very likely the reason why David earned a reputation in Israel as “a mighty valiant man, and a man of war” (1 Sam. 16:18). By defending his father’s flocks and fighting against these enemies, David was prepared to be a strong, courageous defender of God’s people.

But there was another side to David’s nature. Not only was he a valiant fighter, but David also possessed a spiritual, meditative spirit. He was not always called upon to fight lions and bears; much of his time was spent silently observing the flocks. This gave David ample opportunity to become a “cunning” harpist (1 Sam. 16:18) and accomplished writer of songs and poems. During these long hours David spent his time meditating on God’s word as he had heard it from his parents and as he saw that word revealed in the spacious heavens, grassy pastures, babbling brooks, and woolly sheep.

There is a sense in which every young person ought to be characterized by this double-sided
nature. We need to have the nature of courageous warriors. Our battles, of course, are not physical ones against lions, bears, and uncircumcised Philistines; we “wrestle not against flesh and blood” (Eph. 6:12), but against a host of spiritual enemies: the devil and his demons, the wicked world, and our own sinful flesh. And we fight against these enemies not with swords and shields or even with slingshots and stones, but with the spiritual armor spoken of in Ephesians 6 and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. We need to be courageous in these battles and valiantly fight against these enemies that seek to destroy us. We need courage to stand alone, as David did. When everyone else shrinks in fear, we do not fold, but we fight. We fight now, as young people. This is not something that we do only when we get older, but this is a battle we wage already now when we are young.

But we must have that spiritual, meditative spirit as well. We read God’s word and meditate upon it. We study that word and hide it in our hearts. We go to that word for comfort and encouragement, and we speak that word to one another. In this way we will have the strength to be courageous warriors. David found the strength and courage to fight by meditating upon God’s word, and we too are able to stand against our enemies only if we learn to wield that powerful sword of God’s word.

Third, David was prepared by God in such a way that he stood in a right relationship with God.

This is evident, first of all, from the fact that David was filled with a burning desire for the glory of God already at a young age. That was his motivation in going up against Goliath. David did not fight the giant out of a desire for personal glory or even to receive the reward that King Saul promised, but he stepped into that valley with Goliath because he had reproached the God of Israel (1 Sam. 17:26, 36, 45). David told Goliath that he intended to feed the Philistines to the vultures in order that “all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel.” He went on to say, “And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord’s, and he will give you into our hands” (1 Sam. 17:46–47). To put it simply, David was willing to go toe-to-toe with that giant because he was a “God-intoxicated man.” This was something that the enemies of John Calvin threw in his teeth because of his desire for God’s glory. But what they intended as ridicule could not have been higher praise. That was the case with David as well.

The question is, “Are you a God-intoxicated young man or young woman? Would someone say that of you or of me?” If they looked at you—how you act, how you talk, how you dress, with whom you hang out, what you do for fun—would they say that you are filled with a desire for God’s glory as the teenage David was? Or is it the case that you are self-intoxicated or pleasure-intoxicated?

Not only did David seek the glory of God as a young man, but he also had a firm trust in God. It is not surprising that David is listed with the other heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, but what might be a bit surprising is that David manifested this strong faith at a young age. He had this faith when he chased down a lion and a bear, and he had this faith when he confronted the giant. David said to Saul, “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine” (1 Sam. 17:37). And then he said to Goliath, “Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied” (v. 45). At both of these times, David saw himself as a sheep. He was the little lamb that needed to be delivered from the paw of the lion and the paw of the Philistine. And he trusted in God as his shepherd to deliver him. And without this experience, David never could have written Psalm 23. David’s confession that he is the sheep and God is his shepherd is not merely intellectual but arises out of his own experience. In this way too God was preparing David for his future work.

God is our shepherd as well. He is our strength and defense, our shelter and comfort in times of need. He gives to us the gift of faith so that we trust in him as little lambs trust in the Good Shepherd.

Fourth, God worked in David’s heart at a young age a heartfelt love for the church.

This love was nurtured in David through his compassion for the sheep and lambs of his father’s flock, and this translated into a love for the church that belonged to his heavenly Father. David exhibited this love for the church in his battle with Goliath. David was chiefly motivated by a desire for God’s glory, but he was also driven to fight by his love for the church. Not only had the giant reproached God, but he had also “def[ied] the armies of Israel” (1 Sam. 17:10). David says in v. 26, “What shall be
done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?” By referring to Goliath as that “uncircumcised Philistine,” David does not intend to ridicule the giant, but rather he points out the fact that Goliath stands outside of the covenant of God and does not belong to the covenant people of God whom he has reproached. David fights in order to remove this reproach.

This love of David for the church ought to characterize all God’s people. As young people this love for the church ought to manifest itself in your being members of a true instituted church and by making confession of faith in that church. Love for the church means that you do not leave the church for a boyfriend or girlfriend, for a college education or a job offer. Your love for the church shows itself by your attendance at the worship services of that church. This might mean that you do not accept a certain job opportunity or pursue a certain career path because it prevents you from worshipping God on the sabbath day. You show love for the church of which you are a member by speaking well of her to others and by refusing to allow others to speak reproachfully of her. This love shows itself in your desire to be instructed in the truths taught in that church. This especially means faithful and (dare I say it?) enthusiastic attendance at the catechism classes. As young people, your love for the church also manifests itself in your active involvement in the life of the church. Besides your involvement in the young people’s society, you ought to take part in the activities and functions of the church and especially ought to seek out opportunities to give of your time and abilities to serve the other members of the congregation.

Finally, David was prepared by God to be a type or picture of Jesus Christ.

When we consider the life of the young man David as we have done, there is instruction for our lives. David was a king and outstanding type of Christ, but he was first of all a believer and a sinner. That is David’s perspective in Psalm 23; he writes not as the shepherd but as one of the sheep. “The Lord is my shepherd,” David sings, “and I am one of his sheep.” David is therefore an example to us. But even when we consider David as an example, we ought to see that David’s great faith and mighty deeds were all done in the power of Jesus Christ.

But David is much more than an example. He was prepared by God to be a type of Jesus Christ. He was prepared at a young age to be the great warrior king who would deliver God’s people from their enemies. In David, then, we see Jesus Christ as the high king and captain of our salvation who has defeated all our enemies by his death on the cross.

Not only was David prepared to be a type of Christ, but even in the preparation itself we are pointed to our Savior. Born in the little village of Bethlehem, raised in a covenant home by God-fearing parents, claiming only humble origins, faithful in the seemingly menial tasks—young David in every way pointed to the humble birth and early years of Jesus.

But especially in his calling as a shepherd does the young man David direct our gaze to the good shepherd, Jesus Christ. Our strong and loving shepherd leads and protects us his sheep now in this life, and he will lead us for all eternity to the fountains of living water and will cause us to dwell forever in our Father’s house.

Only a boy…but what a Savior to whom he points!

Josh is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

Our Young People’s Federation

Rev. Martyn McGeown

The Shepherd

Beloved young people, we are sheep and we have a shepherd. This is not true of the majority of young people, who are without a shepherd, have no hope and are without God in the world. Psalm 49:14 says of them, “Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them.”
Literally, “death shall shepherd them; death shall be their shepherd!” We are safely in the flock of the only good shepherd. That’s our glad confession at this convention, “The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.” What a beautiful truth! But we must not become sentimental about this. We must understand what this confession means. For example, why is the most common description of Christian sheep? Why not mighty lions or majestic soaring eagles? Why, of all creatures, sheep? The answer is that sheep are the most helpless, stubborn, foolish, wayward, and downright stupid of the animals which God has made. But God made sheep to reflect us!

A shepherd is someone who herds sheep. And because sheep are what they are, our shepherd is what he is. Sheep depend entirely on their shepherd. Their very survival depends on who their shepherd is. Neglect sheep, and they will suffer and die. Put them into the hands of a loving, devoted, hard-working, faithful shepherd, and they will not only survive, they will flourish.

The good shepherd set his love upon us in eternity; he chose us to be his; he shed his blood for us to make us his; and he sent his Spirit into our hearts to unite us to him. We did nothing at all! The happy boast of the sheep in Psalm 23:1 is, “The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want.” Our confession is: “I have many needs, but they are all fulfilled; I do not know the way, but my shepherd does; I cannot fend for myself, but my shepherd provides. Without the shepherd, I lack everything; with the shepherd, I lack nothing!”

Because the shepherd owns the whole flock and each individual sheep and lamb, he determines our life for us. Devotedly, our shepherd rules the sheep: he lives with his sheep and for his sheep, and he spends himself and is spent for his sheep. Our shepherd cannot leave his sheep unattended, not even for a moment. Jacob was a shepherd, and he describes his life this way: “Thus it was: in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep departed from mine eyes” (Gen. 31:40). Long, lonely days; long, sleepless nights, simply caring for sheep as their constant companion and friend.

The shepherd rules in three ways: by his voice, by his rod and by his staff. The shepherd’s voice comes with authority, urgency and tenderness, “My beloved sheep, listen to me, follow me. You will be safe when you follow my voice.” The shepherd also carries the tools of his trade, which are his rod and staff. Psalm 23:4 tells us that these tools in the shepherd’s hand comfort the sheep. One glance at the shepherd with his rod and staff assures the sheep that all is well because they are tokens of the shepherd’s authority. The rod and staff are also instruments of discipline. Sometimes the shepherd applies a short, sharp blow with the club-end of his rod. A wayward sheep can be apprehended by the crook of the shepherd’s staff. Just as the sheep is attempting to wander away, it feels the crook around its neck, drawing it gently but firmly back to the shepherd. The voice of our shepherd is the word of God, especially the preached word of God. By the preaching our shepherd examines us and searches us. And when we do not listen, the shepherd applies sharp but loving discipline to bring us back to our spiritual senses. Do not be inattentive when the shepherd is speaking!

Because we are so wayward, the shepherd must guide us. He faithfully keeps a careful, vigilant eye on us, so that he never loses even one of his sheep. It is comforting to know that when we are not attentive, he is. He pays special attention to the stragglers at the back, he has compassion upon the weak, and some sheep he even carries (Is. 40:11). The leading of the shepherd is gentle, for he never bullies or threatens, but he leads us in accordance with our capacity (Gen. 33:13-14).

The shepherd of Psalm 23 leads us “in paths of righteousness.” Righteousness is the opposite of a crooked path of wickedness. Christ leads us in the way of obedience to God’s commandments. Never may we say that he leads us in sin. When we walk in paths of sin we do that by wandering away from the shepherd. And when we do wander, he restores our soul, or, literally, He causes our soul to return. In response to our terrified bleating as we foolishly wander into danger, the shepherd comes to seek and find us.

Every day brings the responsibility of finding a new place for the sheep to feed. For the shepherd this means a lot of preparation. He must examine the area carefully. Is there adequate grazing? What about threats and dangers? Any predators or poachers? Are there any poisonous weeds which might harm the sheep? Is there a good water supply? Having located the best place for his sheep, the shepherd must lead them there because they cannot find grazing for themselves. Sheep will eat the wrong food. Some will be tempted to eat noxious weeds that
look like healthy plants and then become sick. Other sheep will gorge themselves and become bloated. The stronger sheep will bully the weaker sheep so that the weaker become malnourished. Thus it is not even enough for our shepherd to bring the sheep to the right grazing area. He must supervise the feeding to make sure every sheep is properly fed!

Psalm 23:2 describes the kind of feeding that we, as Jehovah’s sheep, enjoy: “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; he leadeth me beside the still waters.” This is not a barren wasteland, a dried up, withered, blasted heath. This is not a field of thorns or of poisonous weeds. The shepherd provides green pastures: rich, succulent, juicy fields of fresh grass, the choicest pasturage. And with that there are still waters, literally, “waters of rest.” These are not stagnant, dirty pools which would make us sick; these are not muddy puddles; and they are not raging torrents or stormy waters that would frighten us or sweep us away. These are pools of pure, clear, tranquil waters. All of this is thanks to the work of the shepherd in providing it: “he maketh me to lie down...he leadeth me...” The spiritual reality of the green pastures and quiet waters is the word of God. It is perfect food for our souls: precious truths, glorious promises, sound, health-giving doctrines and sweet gospel. As sheep of Christ we dare not feed anywhere else. Do not be tempted to miss church and catechism or to fail to pay attention when you are there. That is when we must feed!

Finally, because sheep are helpless, the shepherd protects them. Sheep have neither sharp teeth nor other weapons to fight against predators. Psalm 23 shows us that there are difficulties in the life of the sheep: the valley of the shadow of death. This is not a mistake. It is deliberate. Sometimes we wish it were otherwise: we are naturally afraid of such trials. But verse 4 does not say, “Yea though I bypass the valley of the shadow of death...” or, “Yea, though I walk around or avoid the valley of the shadow of death...” but, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death...” But we need not fear the trials through which the shepherd leads us, because he is always with us, and his rod and staff comfort us.

To sum up: imagine two sheep in two adjoining fields. One is thin, mangy, disease ridden, and miserable; the other is healthy, plump, flourishing and happy. Says the miserable sheep to the happy sheep: “Tell me, why are you so full of health; why is your wool tangle-free; why do you feed on succulent grass; why are you free from parasites? And why is your life so much better than mine?” The second sheep simply smiles: “The answer, my friend, is simple: it is not because of me. This life which I enjoy is not because of what I did. It is because of my shepherd; I owe everything to him.”

That’s our confession as happy, contented, blessed sheep of our good shepherd, Jesus Christ!

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Rev. McGeown is the missionary-pastor of the Limerick Reformed Fellowship, Republic of Ireland.
all glory goes to God, not to the sheep. Our comfort is not that we save ourselves, but that our shepherd does. This is the viewpoint of Lord’s Day 1: “My only comfort is that I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.” Let us look at just two ways that we have this comfort as our faithful shepherd cares for us helpless sheep.

First, sheep are prone to wander. Isaiah 53:6 teaches, “All we like sheep have gone astray.” The question is, Why do sheep wander? One reason is that sheep are naturally proud, thinking that they know the way that is best for them. Isaiah 53:6 again: “We have turned every one to his own way.” How ridiculous for a sheep, of all creatures, to be proud! Yet sheep think they know best—and we do too. We are tempted to listen to the appeal of the world or our own sinful flesh instead of the wise advice of parents and family. In pride we think that we know best what is good for us. How ridiculous for us, of all creatures, to be proud! The right way is the way that God has laid out in his word, but we turn to our own way.

Another reason that sheep wander is that they are hurt. Ezekiel 34 describes the sheep who were scattered because false shepherds came in and neglected them. In their confusion and fear, the sheep scattered. There are many ways that we are hurt in this life as well. It is, after all, the valley of the shadow of death and the vale of tears. When we face difficulties and trials, we may be tempted to scatter by questioning God’s goodness or the benefit of belonging to his flock. Our calling is to respond to hardships in faith and trust, but we are prone to respond with frustration and impatience.

The shepherd rescues us from such wandering. He calls to us by his voice, and that voice causes us to follow him. As Jesus said in John 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.” Through the preaching of his word, the shepherd hear Christ’s voice.

The sheep know the shepherd’s voice so well that they are in tune with it. They ignore the voices of other shepherds, and follow only when they hear their own shepherd. What voices are we in tune with as young people? What voice excites us and makes us eager to follow? Is it the voice of worldly entertainment that interests us, or the voice of fornication, or the voice of drunkenness? As sheep, we must be in tune with the shepherd’s voice, so that our greatest joy is to hear him. Your love for Christ’s voice has been evident at this convention so far, and for that we are profoundly thankful.

Second, sheep are naturally selfish and cruel to each other. Sheep do not look out for each other, but for themselves. Ezekiel 34 describes the sheep who push with the shoulder and butt with the horns so that they can have the best pasture to the hurt of the other sheep. This is our nature as well. At a convention, we are tempted to size each other up with a glance and disdain those who do not meet our standards. We are tempted to talk and gossip about him or her, and avoid them if at all possible.

The good shepherd saves his sheep from this sin of hating the neighbor by his own love for the sheep. When Jesus says in John 10, “I know my sheep,” He is saying, “I love my sheep.” His knowledge is the deep and personal knowledge of love. So great is his love for his sheep that the good shepherd even laid down his life for us (John 10:11). The cross is the greatest demonstration of Jesus’ love for his sheep, as the good shepherd gave himself to the curse of God in our place, that we might live.

That love of the shepherd for us he also bestows upon us, so that we love him. And loving him, we also love his sheep. The cross of our Lord changes the way we look at each other. Instead of sizing each other up with a superficial glance, we look on each other as fellow members of the flock of Christ. Even more, we look at each other as brothers and sisters in the Lord. No more pushing each other around in selfish hatred, but receiving one another in love as blood-bought family members.

All glory goes to the Shepherd, who rescues his helpless, wayward sheep. No honor goes to us, but what a glorious thing to be a sheep! Then we can confess, “The L ORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” And we can confess, “My only comfort is that I with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful shepherd Jesus Christ.”

Rev. Lanning is pastor of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.
**BAPTISMS**

“For the promise is unto you and to your children…. Acts 2:39

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

- Emilia Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Gareth Halliday—Ballymena, N Ireland
- Faye Justine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chase De Groot—Calvary, IA
- Melanie Ann, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Timothy De Jong—Crete, IL
- Connor Brett, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brett Zandstra—Crete, IL
- Levi Benjamin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ben Tolsma—Edmonton, CAN
- Zoe Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad Noorman—Georgetown, MI
- Adisson Lee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Russ Potjer—Georgetown, MI
- Cameron Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Boverhof—Georgetown, MI
- Noah Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Kalsbeek—Georgetown, MI
- Gabrielle Jay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jamie Langerak—Grace, MI
- Wyatt Allen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Allen Jordan—Grace, MI
- Joela Darlene, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason Bertsch—Grace, MI
- Finley Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Cory Van Overloop—Grace, MI
- Charlotte Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Meulenberg—Grace, MI
- Ethan James, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Bleyenberg—Grandville, MI
- Zachary James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andy Bylsma—Grandville, MI
- Reuben Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. David Langerak—Hope, MI
- Sophia Belle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Langerak—Hope, MI
- Charlie Owen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Looyenga—Hudsonville, MI
- Quinn Elaine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jon Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI
- June Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ron Schipper—Hudsonville, MI
- Charlotte Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Veldman—Hudsonville, MI
- Luke Austin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Gritters—Hudsonville, MI
- Gideon John, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Hoekstra—Kalamazoo, MI
- Adult baptism was administered to Whitney De Young—Kalamazoo, MI
- Sawyer Andrew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark Moore—Loveland, CO
- Amber Jean, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Lee Kooienga—Loveland, CO
- Brooklyn Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Houck—Peace, IL
- Louvin Jedidiah, son of Candidate and Mrs. Vernon Ibe—Philippines
- Olive Cadence, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Brummel—Providence, MI
- Ty Beckett, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate Van Overloop—Providence, MI
- Leah Noelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mike Vander Veen—Randolph, WI
- Ryan Perry, son of Dr. & Mrs. Paul De Jong—Sioux Falls, SD
- Alexander Graham and Samuel Louis, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Fred Johnston—Spokane, WA

**CONFESSIONS OF FAITH**

“Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

I Timothy 6:13

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

- Erika Haan—Byron Center, MI
- Kelly Lubbers—Byron Center, MI
- Thomas Mulder—Edmonton, CAN
- Katie Nieuwenkamp—Edmonton, CAN
- Caleb Flikkema—First, MI
- Sara Doezeno—Holland, MI
- Brady Meekler—Redlands, CA
- Dean Brummel—Sioux Falls, SD
- Ben Noorman—Southeast, MI
- Matt DeVries—Southeast, MI
- Don Hauck—Southeast, MI
- Luke Kamps—Southwest, MI
- Mark Kuiper—Southwest, MI
- Trevor Langerak—Southwest, MI
- Nate Hiemstra—Trinity, MI

**MARRIAGES**

“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

- Mr. Kent Boer and Miss Lindsay Westhuis—Byron Center, MI
- Mr. Brian Kamminga and Miss Jessica Diemer—Georgetown, MI
- Mr. & Mrs. Ross & Brittany Kooienga—Georgetown, MI
- Mr. Mitchell Feenstra and Miss Julie Van Den Top—Grace, MI
- Mr. Keith Doezeno and Miss Melissa Wassink—Holland, MI
- Mr. Bennett Meyer and Miss Sara Pastoor—Hope, MI
- Mr. Josh Van Overloop and Miss Jessalyne Engelsma—Hope, MI
- Mr. Scott Van Putten and Miss Lori Peterson—Hudsonville, MI
- Mr. Nathan Tanis and Miss Megan Griess—Loveland, CO
- Mr. Zachary Feenstra and Miss Lauren Potjer—Redlands, CA
- Mr. Kylar Hassevoort and Miss Roxanne Kamps—Southwest, MI
- Mr. Ryan Barnhill and Miss Miranda Buiter—Southwest, MI
The School Bus

Early morning light shone on a little girl standing at the end of a driveway. A yellow school bus, with brakes squawking, stopped in front of her. The girl looked back one more time to see her mother waving goodbye from the window of their house. She climbed the steps onto the bus. The steps were high for her skinny six-year-old legs to climb, especially with knees jittering. This would be her first time to ride the bus.

The driver was kind and greeted her as she came aboard. This stop was near the beginning of the bus route, so most seats were open. The girl chose a place in the front of the bus, near the driver. Her saddle-shoed feet dangled from the cold vinyl seat. Her red and yellow plaid metal lunchbox rested snugly by her side. With eyes wide open she watched the other children board the bus, one by one, as the long route proceeded.

A group of boys settled in near where she sat. They were older than the girl, and were loud and boisterous as they laughed and teased each other. The loudest one had a brown jacket on. The girl huddled closer to the window at the end of her seat.

The bus neared the edge of town. The driver stopped the bus at a stop sign and turned around to talk to the little girl. “You get dropped off at the Christian school, right?”

The girl stared and nodded. That’s where she had walked to school before her family had moved to the country. Her first grade teacher and classmates would all be there. Yes, that must be where she was supposed to go.

All the other children seated around her belonged to the public school, a few blocks farther down the street. Several more students in the back of the bus would get dropped off at the Christian school too, but they were older. The little girl did not know them.

The boy with the brown jacket paused to look at the girl. He asked her, “Are you a Christian?” He was not teasing. He just wanted to know.

The little girl thought a moment. I’m going to a Christian school. I go to church. Does that mean I’m a Christian? “I-I think so,” she said.

The boy nodded and turned back to his friends. In a few moments the bus stopped in front of the Christian school.

The little girl never forgot the question. She never forgot her answer. “Am I a Christian?” she thought over and over. No—no, I don’t just think I’m a Christian. I know I belong to Jesus Christ. His Holy Spirit told me so in his word. He saved me and he makes me to know it. Yes—yes, I’m a Christian. That is what I will say next time.

FIND ALL THE UNDERLINED WORDS FROM THE FOLLOWING VERSES IN THE PUZZLE BELOW:

“Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, for to seek Saul: and when he had found him, he brought him unto Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people. And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:25, 26).

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| P A N D B R O U H T I W C  |

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NOT ASHAMED
OF THE GOSPEL
Romans 1:16

2013 Young People’s Convention
August 12-16, 2013
Lake Williamson Christian Center
Carlinville, IL  www.lakewilliamson.org
Hosted by Crete PRC in Crete, IL