Beacon Lights

Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People

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Volume LXXII Number 8

Our God is Holy

God is holy. He is completely consecrated unto himself. He seeks himself as the only good. He is the Holy One above all else. His holiness distinguishes him from all that is common. In his holiness he cannot look upon sin; he cannot let sin go unpunished; he burns in just wrath against sin.

The Old Testament is rich with references to God's holiness. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden, they were driven out of the garden and from their close fellowship with God (Genesis 3:22–23). God placed cherubim and a flaming sword to guard against their reentry (v. 24). That close fellowship with God was broken. As they were in their fallen nature, they could not look upon the holy God and live. God would not allow his holiness to be tainted. Aaron had to be dressed a certain way, as described in Exodus 28. He had to do this so that when he went in and out of the holy place, he would not die before the holy God (v. 35). Moses asked God, "shew me thy glory" (Exodus 33:18). God replied to him, "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (v. 20). Nadab and Abihu offered strange fire to the Lord that was not consecrated to him and were consumed by the fire of God (Leviticus 10). Those of Israel who were unclean had to remain outside the camp. The nation of Israel as a whole was to be separate from the rest of the nations around them, because they were set apart by God. All the instances of God's commanding Israel to destroy every man, woman, and child in an enemy nation demonstrated further that Israel was set apart because of God's holiness. The various instances of God's destroying many in the camp because of their sins were because in his

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holiness he cannot look on sin unpunished. When Israel wrongly dragged the ark home behind oxen, Uzzah reached out to steady it. The Lord struck him dead on the spot because he had touched the ark that was consecrated unto God.

One of the most outstanding examples of God's holiness in Scripture is seen in Isaiah's vision of the throne of God in Isaiah 6. This passage is rich with the holiness of God. "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple" (v. 1). The Lord's robe covered the ground of the whole temple. It filled the entire room, leaving no room for anyone to stand. We must imagine Isaiah standing on the threshold of the temple, unable to enter because of the all-filling presence of the holy God. Even the seraphim could not stand on this holy ground, but hovered above the all-covering robe with one set of wings, covered their faces with another set, and covered their feet with another set. If even the seraphim could not gaze on the glory of the holy God, how much more would man not be able to see God and live? The seraphim cried to each other, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (v. 3). God is the thrice holy God in the perfect unity of the Trinity. The posts of the door shook when the seraphim took up their song proclaiming the holiness of God (v 4). Nothing can stand secure in its own strength in the presence of the holy God. We read further that the house was filled with smoke (v. 4). Smoke represents a barrier to man, so that he inquires no farther than what God has revealed to him in his word. Smoke also signifies God's judgment on sin as he burns in his just wrath against it. This idea of smoke agrees well with the following context of the Lord's pronouncing judgment upon the people. "Woe is me!" cries Isaiah, "For I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (v. 5). Isaiah is so shaken by this view of God that he says, "I am a dead man." We read next: "Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged" (vv. 6, 7). The only way we can stand in the presence of the Almighty is if our sin is taken away. The fact that the seraph takes a burning coal from the altar of God indicates that the purging of our sin comes from God alone. "All sinful uncleanness was burned away from the prophet's mouth. The seraph, therefore, did here what his name denotes: he burned up or burned away. He did this, however, not by virtue of his own fiery nature, but by means of the divine fire which he had taken from the heavenly altar." (Keil and Delitzch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, vol. 7, 128). This fire signifies God's love in expiating Isaiah's sin.

Who can stand in the presence of the Holy One? As Isaiah was purified by the coal from the altar, so also we must be made clean before standing in the presence of the Lord and beholding him as he is in his holiness. God alone accomplished this for us through the sacrifice of his Son. God bought us with a price, the price of his own dear Son, who willingly died and suffered in hell that we might live eternally with him in glory. Christ is the ultimate payment for all our sins, the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrifices. We are called to live with the knowledge of who God is in his holiness and what he has done for us in the death of his Son. As followers of Christ, this must be reflected in our lives. We must walk a holy walk. He is holy, therefore we must be holy.

More on this subject next month.

Ryan is associate editor of Beacon Lights *and a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in* Grandville, Michigan.

Editor's Notes

Mark H. Hoeksema

Recently we increased the size of *Beacon Lights* from 24 pages to 28 pages. Now the staff is pleased to announce another enhancement to the magazine. At our June meeting we decided to increase the number of yearly publications from the current 11 issues to 12 issues. No longer will there be a combined August-September issue; from now on there will be an August and a September issue. No current staff member knows why these issues were combined. In fact, some research by staff member

Alex Thompson revealed that over the years the number of issues has varied between 10 and 12. The staff sees no good reason not to publish once a month. We have the necessary copy, and we have willing writers. We take this opportunity to thank all those who have written for *Beacon Lights*, and we encourage all those who are so inclined to continue to supply us with good articles.

Perhaps the best news is that there will be no increase in our subscription price, so you will be getting more bang for your buck. The magazine is financially sound, thanks to church collections and donations in addition to subscription income. We thank all those who have helped us financially so that we can continue to furnish our young people with a solidly Reformed magazine. We covet your continued support and prayers.

In this issue begins a series of articles entitled "Called to the Ministry." As the name indicates, the articles will describe the varied paths to the ministry that our younger ministers have taken. Varied these paths were. Having read a number of these articles, I am amazed at the widely differing routes these men took to the same destination. See if you agree as you read these interesting articles.

Ask Schuyler

Seeking a Spouse

Dear Schuyler,

If a Reformed young person knows more than one godly individual whom he/she thinks could be his/her future spouse, how should he/she determine which one God calls him/her to be with? Does the Lord command us to look for other things in a spouse in addition to godliness?

Dating, courtship and marriage are important issues in the lives of young people, and the process can be bewildering for many. Our young people (for the most part) desire to be married, and by the grace of God there are many godly young people around them of a similar age. But the question comes: if there are so many godly young people, and the Bible teaches that we must marry in the Lord (Prov. 31:30; 1 Cor. 7:39), how can we know which person is our future spouse? How will God direct us to marry the right person? Add to that the pressure and responsibility: we all know that marriage is a lifelong one-flesh union, and therefore we must love and be faithful to our spouse for the rest of our lives. No wonder there is anxiety: what if I get it wrong?

The Bible does not tell us whom we should marry. That is, the Bible does not tell us the exact identity of our future spouse. The Bible is not that kind of revelation from God. It does not answer every life question in detail, but it gives principles. It equips us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16–17), but it does not tell us which career we should pursue, what course we should study or even what we should eat for lunch. It tells us to be diligent and submissive workers and that we should eat and drink to the glory of God. Those are principles: we seek wisdom in prayer to apply them (James 1:5).

Here are the principles.

First, marriage is honorable and singleness is good (Heb. 13:4; 1 Cor. 7:1), and both married and single members are valuable church members who must use their gifts to serve Christ in his body, which is the church.

Second, marriage must be in the Lord, with a person not previously married (unless widowed), with a person who not only professes godliness but displays it. For our purposes, this means that young people should marry only a confessing member of the church. Notice: confessing member! If a person is not mature enough to confess their faith, that person is not mature enough to consider marriage. Godliness will be seen in a young man or young woman and it must be godliness above everything else that attracts a young man or young woman to

his future spouse. The godly young man will be a man of prayer, and his girlfriend will have seen or heard him pray. Let courting couples pray together. The godly young man will also be a man of the word. He will know the word, will be able to speak about the word, and will be able to lead his girlfriend in the word. If a young man knows more about other things and shows more interest in other things than the word, do not expect him to be a godly leader in marriage. The godly young man will be loving, kind and considerate. How does he treat his parents, his siblings, his church members, his friends? A godly young man will be reliable, hardworking and responsible. He will have to support a wife and children. A godly young woman will have a meek and gentle spirit, will be modest and kind. This will show itself in her behavior and in her dress. She, too, will show a keen interest and a good knowledge of the word of God.

Third, your future spouse will be a sinner, just as you are a sinner. We must not be naïve here. We will not meet the perfect man or woman. God will take two imperfect and deeply flawed human beings and he will sanctify them through the marriage relationship. Imperfections are one thing; intolerable character flaws and sins are another. Ask yourself: will I be able to live with this person my whole life, and will that person be able to live with me?

Fourth, there must be spiritual and doctrinal compatibility. This means that you must believe the same thing. If you are both confessing members of the PRC or of her sister churches that should be the case already. You have had the same catechism instruction, and confess the same truth. But if your girlfriend/boyfriend is not from the PRC, you must ask yourself: will this person join my church and confess the truth as I understand it? And do not overlook the possibility that a person might join your church simply for your sake and regret it later. You must be fully persuaded together of the same truth (1 Cor. 1:10). If you are not, there is the danger of compromise. You must also be compatible in other areas: do you have the same conviction on having and raising children; do you have the same convictions on spending and finances, etc. Many people do not even think about these things, which is why they are often discussed in pre-marriage counseling.

Assuming that you have considered all of the above, you need to look at the role of marriage. Our Marriage Form gives the first reason: "that each faithfully assist the other in all things that belong to this life and a better." Quite simply, marriage is a covenantal relationship designed for mutual edification. Therefore, it is not enough that a future spouse be godly. There are many godly people in the church, but you cannot marry all of them. The one you marry must be a friend, and more than a friend—a lifelong companion and helpmeet (Gen. 2:18). This means, to be very practical, that you must like that person and enjoy their company. In a word you must be that person's friend, a friend whom you can know, and get to know more and more intimately. If you find it boring to be with a person and if you find (no matter how godly both of you are) that you have nothing to talk about, how will you live together for the rest of your lives? This does not even mean romantic feelings of attraction. They can come and go, and are no reliable indicator. This does not even mean that you have to like the same things (books, sports, etc.), but you have to like each other, and that liking will develop and deepen into love. There is no secret, however. We can agree with Solomon, "There be three things which are too wonderful for me, yea, four which I know not: the way of an eagle in the air; the way of a serpent upon a rock; the way of a ship in the midst of the sea; and the way of a man with a maid" (Prov. 30:18–19).

Two final points. First, remember that the purpose of dating (or better, courtship) is to determine before the Lord if a certain person is a suitable future spouse. Do not use dating, as the world does, as a form of "fun." Toying with a person's feelings is cruel, manipulative and unbecoming of a Christian. If you are courting, and you know that it will not end in marriage, make that clear and break up as amicably as you can. Do not use a boyfriend or girlfriend as a trophy to display on your arm. Treat your boyfriend or girlfriend with respect. And never put yourself in a situation where you will be tempted to break the seventh commandment. Be wise, prudent, and seek advice and accountability from parents and peers. Second, trust in the Lord. If it is his will that you marry, he will direct your steps in that direction, and when you are married, remember that it will not be a fairytale romance. Marriage is a lifelong commitment that requires dedication and hard work, and he will give you the grace to marry and to love your spouse, or to remain single according to his perfect will.

Schuyler

Christian Money Management

Time is money. If you have a job, you understand what this means because you are probably paid by the hour. When you want to buy something, you may look at that purchase from the perspective of how long you must work to pay for it – an hour to buy a few Gatorades, six hours to fill the gas tank, over twenty hours to buy an iPod, an entire summer to buy a car or pay for a semester of college.

The more we think about money, the greater the danger that money controls us. If we do not think we have enough money, we worry. If we have money in our pockets we think about stopping at McDonalds for a Coke or at the gas station for a Monster. Maybe a large amount of money in your bank account burns a hole in your pocket. How much money we have may determine what we buy. How much a boss offers to pay us may determine whether or not we take a job. Money is powerful. It has the ability to control us.

As Christians we must learn to view money in the light of our relationship with God. As we earn money and spend money, we must learn to manage it in the service of God instead of being managed by money. This means that our view and use of money must be governed by God's Word.

The Money Problem

What is the problem we face in regard to money? We might answer, without hesitation, "Not enough!" Presently for young people it is much more difficult to find a job. Even if you have a job, you might want more hours or better pay because you have a mental list of the things you want to purchase: a car, a cell phone, clothes, and save for college. For young people, earning money opens up a whole new world of being able to purchase things. So it is important that you understand in your youth the real and present danger of money.

Our greatest money problem is not that we do not have enough (Yes, you read that correctly). The greatest money problem we face is the worship of the idol, money. This is what Jesus points out in Matthew 6:19–21: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven…for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Paul reiterates this warning of Jesus in I Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil…" In what ways does money become the object of our worship? Money becomes the object of our worship if we are anxious about not having enough. It becomes the object of our worship if we think that more money is the answer to all our problems. These are symptoms of a heart problem—a heart that thinks more money will satisfy our lives. Another way money-worship controls us is if we are constantly thinking about what we can purchase instead of thinking about how we can serve God with it—if we are on Craigslist or Amazon searching for the next purchase when we have enough cold, hard cash, instead of how we can serve God with it.

The Scriptures teach us to look at money differently. We are called to worship God and God alone. In him alone is found all that we need. Our joy is found in the Lord Jesus Christ and the riches of salvation we have in him. The things of this world will melt with a fervent heat. The riches of this world are corrupted by moth and rust. Their beauty and value fades. But salvation is truly priceless. The value of salvation is infinitely great. We must learn to worship the eternal God of our salvation with our money instead of worshipping our perishing money.

The Sovereign Manager

The infallible, living, powerful word of God teaches how to view rightly the place of money in our lives. The word for this is *stewardship*. The following are the four principles of stewardship.

First, *God owns all things*. The lie we would like to believe is that we own things. We own nothing. God has ownership rights to your car, your paycheck, your bank accounts, and your clothes. He owns all

things because he created all things. Psalm 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein."

Second, *the sovereign God gives us some things to use for a time*. Your job, your money, and all you own was given by God because he sovereignly dispenses everything that people have. We like to think all that we own is ours because we have earned it. God provides all these things through work, gifts, or parents.

Third, *God calls us to use all that he has given for the glory of his name*. Stewardship is using God-given resources to serve him. We may not use the things of this earth in the way that we want. This is the lie that we want to believe. The truth is that God has entrusted to our care certain earthly things to use in the service of his kingdom. This does not mean we must give all our money to the church or to the poor. Instead, we should spend carefully in the light of our relationship with God.

Fourth, *God requires that we give an account of our stewardship*. God says to us what we read in Luke 16:2, "Give an account of your stewardship." We must answer to God for every purchase – a Monster or a car. What was our motivation for that purchase or for that deposit? We will answer to God.

The Money-Managing Life

How do we live the principles of stewardship in our lives, as young people belonging to the Lord Jesus Christ? If we must be faithful stewards of every penny God has given to us, we should budget. I would like to help young people set up a very basic budget. Budgeting may seem complicated, but it is not. If you begin putting yourself on a budget now, when you have few expenses, it will be a great help when you are older and have many more financial obligations.

Budgeting is important because it is a tool for faithful financial stewardship. Having a budget by itself does not mean you are a faithful financial steward. A budget can be used sinfully to save only to buy the things you selfishly desire. Having a budget does not mean you are managing your money in the service of God. Serving God with your money is an issue of the heart. A budget is a tool for the managing of your money to serve God better.

You can budget easily by having an envelope system, in which you put money in one envelope for church giving, another envelope for spending, and another envelope for saving, which gets deposited in the bank. Your beginning budget has three categories.

As you budget, there are two important principles to follow. First, Jesus calls us in Matthew 6:33 to seek first his kingdom. Although this applies to the whole of our lives, in Matthew 6 Jesus is talking about our use of earthly things, including money. This means that as we make money, the first consideration for the use of this money should be giving to support the preaching of the gospel and other kingdom causes, including the care of the poor, the Christian schools, and missions. Although Scripture does not require tithing from us, a tithe of 10% is a good place to start. With this in mind, pray to God and ask him to show you how much you should set aside for kingdom causes. When you put this money in your envelope, make sure that you do not take from it for other expenses.

Second, because you have set aside money for the church does not mean you may spend the rest however you want. Remember that it all belongs to God, and it all must be used in the service of God. When you are young, it is a good idea to save money for things that you need. A car is needed to get to work or school. You do not need a new car, but basic transportation that serves its purpose. Saving for college is a good idea if you know it is God's will that you go to college to develop your God-given abilities. It is a good idea to save money with the desire to be married one day and have children. The building of a covenant home requires money. I believe that even in your youth it is good to think about the big picture of kingdom service in the years ahead in school, work, and home.

The use of our money says a lot about our relationship to God. Spending money carelessly and giving little or nothing to the church says that we think little or nothing about God in relationship to money. But setting money aside to give to kingdom causes and saving for kingdom service in the future shows a heart that loves and worships God. May God give us such hearts that want to serve him better with our money and possessions, as faithful stewards of what he graciously provides.

Rev. Eriks is pastor of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

Trials in the 21st Century

The world today is a hustle and bustle of business and appointments. People are flocking to cities, each person with a task that needs to be done. Society is becoming more and more demanding, as is apparent in the increasing advances in technology. People want everything done yesterday, and this leads to a rapid-paced civilization. But all these advancements, especially in technology, distract Christians from the true purpose in life: to serve God. Young people need to be aware of the trials that are present in the 21st century, especially through the Internet, social networking, and texting.

The Internet, recently invented in the late 20th century, has been a tremendous resource for all of society. Today everything revolves around the Internet. People can shop, bank, or find ways how to do things. It is a center of information, a center of business, and a means of communication. Without the Internet, the world would shut down. But for how helpful the Internet can be, it lies as a demon ready to strike. The temptations are countless. With only the click of a mouse, a person can look up whatever he desires without anyone knowing. The history can be cleared, so that the viewing record is deleted.

Today, even smart phones can be used to browse the Internet, making it mobile and very secretive. But God is ever-present and all-knowing. He knows everything that every man in this world does. This demon tempts us all, and as young Christians we are especially vulnerable because of our sinful nature and desires. We need to discipline ourselves.

However, it is not only what we can look up on the Internet that is a sin, it is also what we can say on the Internet. Social networking has greatly expanded over the last few years as new sites and accounts have been introduced. Sites such as Facebook and Twitter have exploded through this increase in social networking. They have become a center of socialization and posting. People are able to express their ideas and feelings for everyone to see. This may seem to be a benefit and resource, but it is too often abused. People post things that are inappropriate or should not be shared for the world to see, and this can lead to gossip. People can post things about others, criticizing or tormenting others without even seeing them. Cyber-bullying is so easy for anyone to do because they do not need to see the emotions of the person, and they can say it behind a screen. This is a great challenge for Christians because we are called by God to love our neighbor, not slander him. We need to be aware of this love for our neighbor every time we log into our Facebook or Twitter account.

Not only is slandering a danger with these sites, but they also portray ourselves to the world. Posting things on our page or timeline creates an image of the type of person that we are. Anyone can view what we write because it is posted on the Internet. We give the world a chance to ridicule us as Christians because of the things we may post or like. Often we will post something that may not be appropriate, such as a picture or saying. It can be done so easily. All it takes is the click of a mouse. But the world is watching and ready to point out any of our faults. They want a chance to mock God by the way we act, for we call ourselves Christians. We are called by God to be a witness to the world and we must remember this every time we go online.

Texting is another technological advancement that has expanded over the past few years. Almost every one of us has our own phone. Today even young children are given their own phones. This may not seem like a big deal, but it is a temptation. By texting, we can say things to others that we would never say in person. The whole aspect of face-to-face communication is lacking. We no longer have fellowship with fellow Christians around us. We would rather type our feelings to one another. We need to be aware of this because as Christians we need to have fellowship with each other and love one another. That is what God calls us to do in his word.

Though the Internet, social networking, and texting can be useful resources, they can also be abused. We as Christians need to be especially

aware of this and the temptations that they pose. We must do all things to God's glory. That is our calling.

This paper was written for a senior English class at Covenant Christian High School.

Christian Living

Seth VanDen Top

Time for God Versus Self

We call ourselves Christians and go to church twice on Sunday. We try to obey God's commands as much as we can and lead a good life. But the reality of the situation is that we fall far short of perfection because often we get so caught up in our own lives we forget to place God above ourselves.

My life is no exception. The mornings consist of waking up, grabbing food, and running out the door in the attempt to get to school on time. I always have to rush myself. I do not have the time to stop and pray. Does that make it right?

My midday is full of lessons. I learn everything possible in the allotted time and move on. Yes, we have prayer at the beginning of a lot of my classes, but do I really listen and learn from it? It is the same at lunchtime: we have prayer, but minds often wander to what they are going to eat, or who they are going to sit by. I know from personal experience that I am a selfish person, and often think not on God during the prayers. It is so easy not to think about God, and that is a curse of our sinful nature.

My afternoon to evening involves coming home from school and then going to work. These are just simple everyday occurrences for me. Usually during that time not a thought is spent thinking about God. This again is wrong, but it is how most Christians live. We move through our day without thinking about what we are doing and whom we represent. We are called to be the children of God and are made in his image. We are to represent him at all times, meaning that to neglect this is a sin.

As night approaches, I think about who I am going to hang out with and what we are going to do. I think of the fun option and go for it. But I do these things because they are what I want to do. I might just stay home and just not do my homework because I do not feel like doing it. Once again, the reflection of God's image is forgotten. Christians may act this way just because we are not thinking about whom we represent.

There are also Sundays when we go to church and are instructed in the Scriptures. How often do we not walk out of church and forget who we are? If not that, then by Monday morning we are back to work or school and we move on to our normal schedule. How can we better ourselves to represent who we are?

The answer lies in dedication to studying and reading Scripture. I suggest things such as setting aside time for prayer. Also, the reading of the Bible and proper devotions is a great practice often used in the Christian home. It forces us to take the time out of our day to reflect on what we truly believe, and it betters the way we act by causing us to be more conscious of who we are.

We are called to represent God's image because we are to be an example to those around us, especially in the workplace. If those in the world notice no difference between us and themselves, there is a problem. Scripture says that we are to spread the word of God. Through a godly example, we show whom we represent, spread the word of God, and do not neglect our duties as Christians. In remembering who we are through praying and reading the Bible, we enable ourselves to be a better example.

We cannot allow ourselves to get into a relaxed everyday routine in which what *we* want is our first priority without a single thought of God. We must always be conscious of who we are through our determined examination of Scripture. Through this examination, we will be able to give a more perfect example to those around us.

This paper was written for a senior English class at Covenant Christian High School. Seth is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Standale, Michigan..

Called to the Ministry (1)

From October 2000 to October 2004, *Beacon Lights* published a series of articles entitled "Pastor Profiles." In each of these, a minister from the PR denomination answered a series of questions that described several aspects of the ministry. Included in these articles was an account of how each minister received the call to the gospel. We have decided to renew this series with a focus on this point and under the title "Called to the Ministry." The article by Prof. Cammenga serves as an introduction to a series of articles in which ministers describe the manner in which the Lord placed this high calling on their hearts. We hope these articles may serve not only to encourage young men to consider the ministry, but also to provide insights for any who may struggle with whether God would have them enter seminary. Ed.

The Ongoing Need

First, some facts and figures. Fifteen of the thirty-five active ministers—nearly one-half—are approaching or are older than sixty. In the next ten years or so, these ministers will need to be replaced. Of the thirty-five active ministers three are serving as missionaries, three are teaching in the denominational seminary, and one is functioning as a minister-on-loan to a sister church. Of the thirty-one congregations in the denomination, three congregations are presently vacant.

Not only is there going to be a large number of ministers needing replacements, but compounding the urgency of the situation is the fact that over the next four years there will be only three anticipated graduations from the seminary: one in 2013, one in 2014, one in 2015, and none in 2016.

And what about the possibility of additional mission opportunities in the United States or abroad in foreign lands? What about future labors in Myanmar or India? And what about further assistance to sister churches?

This is currently the situation faced by the Protestant Reformed Churches in America. Our Lord's words are as true today as when he first spoke them: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matthew 9:37, 38). Are we praying to the Lord of the harvest? Are we praying fervently? Are we praying personally? Are we praying in our families, in the Christian school classrooms, in the congregational prayers? Are we beseeching him to send forth laborers to gather in the harvest of the elect in our own generations, as well as the elect among the nations of the world?

We are, and the Lord of the harvest has heard our prayers. Nine young men will be entering the Protestant Reformed Theological Seminary this fall. But this does not take away from the fact that our churches will have an ongoing need for ministers, and this certainly must not be a reason for us to cease urgent prayer to the Lord for laborers in his vineyard.

Have You Considered the Call?

The Lord does not call every young man to the ministry, but every young man ought to consider whether the Lord is calling him to the ministry. If you know a young man who appears to have the gifts for the ministry, have you asked him if he is considering the call to the ministry? Parents need to put this question before their sons. Christian school teachers ought to pose this question to promising students. And ministers and elders need to ask the question of gifted young men in their congregations.

Young men, have you given due consideration to the call to the ministry of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ? Are you perhaps struggling with the call? Have you in the past put it out of your mind, only to find that the question keeps coming back? Do you ask, "How do I know for sure that the Lord is calling me to the ministry? How do I know for sure that he is calling me to prepare for the ministry?"

God calls men in different ways and at different times in their lives. Some have had the sense of the calling all their lives, as far back as they can remember. Some God calls when they are in high school or college. Some God even calls later in life, after

several years of work as a carpenter, as an engineer, as a Christian school teacher, or whatever else. Some God calls when they are still single; others after they are married and even have a family.

But just as God's call to faith and salvation is irresistible, so too is his call to the ministry. There may be struggles, doubts that need to be put to rest, questions answered, obstacles overcome, but those whom God calls cannot escape that call.

The ministry is a high calling—there is none higher. But it is also a demanding calling, physically, psychologically, and spiritually. In the ministry a man must be spent and be willing to be spent. He must not only be willing to give some of his time and make use of some of his gifts, but he must be willing to give *himself* for the cause of God's name, God's truth, and God's people. Because it is such a demanding calling, whenever a young man comes to talk to me because he wonders whether the Lord is calling him, I always advise him that if he can find satisfaction in any other vocation, he ought to pursue that vocation. But if he cannot find joy in any other calling and cannot put out of his mind the call to the ministry, then he ought at least to be assured that God is calling him to prepare for the ministry of the gospel.

If you are a young man wrestling with the call, confide in a close friend, talk to your pastor or an elder in your church, or a trusted teacher at school, or come up to the seminary and talk to one of the professors. It is best, at least initially, to talk to someone who knows you well and will be honest with you. In the end the Lord through the church judges whether a man is called to the ministry. But an initial honest assessment by a trusted friend or respected superior may prove to be the encouragement needed to carry on, or the necessary restraint from continuing to pursue the ministry.

What Gifts are Necessary for the Ministry?

Read passages of Scripture that set forth the qualifications for officebearers, and specifically for elders and ministers: Acts 6:1–4; 1Timothy 3:1–7; 4:9–16; 2 Timothy 2; Titus 1. On a piece of paper, write down the most important qualifications that are listed in these passages. Ask yourself: "Do I possess the spiritual qualifications set forth in Scripture?" Not all the qualifications to the same degree, to be sure; but do you possess them in some measure?

Do you love the church? Do you love our Protestant Reformed Churches? Do you have a desire to serve the church and its members? These are important questions to ask yourself. All his epistles give clear testimony to the apostle Paul's love of the church. The church is beloved of God and therefore dearly loved by the apostle. He "longs to see" the members of the church in order that "I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established" (Rom. 1:11). The apostle did not become disillusioned with the church because of the abuse that he suffered at the hands of certain members. He did not become bitter and resentful on account of the harsh and unloving treatment that he endured from time to time. A man whose soul is filled with bitterness cannot serve effectively in the office of Christ. Do you love the church? Do you delight in fellowship with the members of the church? Read John 21:15–17 and put to yourself the question that the Lord Jesus put to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" Do you reach out to the members of the church who have special needs—the widows, the oppressed, those who seem not to have many or any friends? Love for the church is absolutely necessary on the part of the minister of the gospel.

Besides spiritual gifts, the minister must have intellectual gifts. Do you love to read? "Give attendance to reading," the apostle exhorts Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13. This exhortation applies primarily to the Scriptures. Do you love to read and meditate on the Scriptures? Do you love to study, to delve into things, to do careful research? Both seminary and the ministry demand many hours of study. In fact, this is what the minister's office is often called: the pastor's *study*. That is what goes on in that room behind the closed door, in solitude—many hours a week of study. And what about writing, do you enjoy writing? The ministry demands writing, writing of sermons, writing of speeches, writing of articles for the *Standard Bearer*, *Beacon Lights, Perspectives in Covenant Education*, and the *Protestant Reformed Theological Journal*. Do you enjoy writing and are you interested in developing your writing skills?

How good a communicator are you? The minister is above all a teacher, and a teacher is a communicator. Are you able to express yourself clearly, logically, in such a way that your listeners are able to follow you? Do you love to teach and do you look for opportunities to teach, such as Sunday School? What about leading a young people's society or a discussion group? Are your pastor and consistory able to judge your teaching ability? At the time of your entrance into the seminary, they will need to

provide a recommendation and evaluation of your gifts. If you don't love to teach, you cannot be a minister. That is what the ministry is all about. Jesus was a teacher. At his trial, he said to the high priest, "I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple" (John 18:20). His command to the apostles was, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19). The apostle Paul describes the ministerial office as that of "pastor and teacher" (Ephesians 4:11). The apostle himself was ordained "a preacher and…a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and verity" (1Timothy 2:7). He exhorted Timothy to commit what he had heard from the apostle "to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2). The minister must be "apt to teach" (2 Timothy 2:24).

The minister must possess a certain character and exhibit certain character traits. He must be a listener, one who truly listens to what others are saying. He does not suppose that he has all the answers, but is willing to learn from others. He must be open to criticism and show himself willing to receive criticism. Once in the ministry, there is no doubt that he will be criticized. The minister must not lash out at those who dare to criticize him. but he must listen to the criticism and never leave the impression that he is above criticism.

The minister must be a kind and gentle man, willing to bear personal abuse without flying off the handle. "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men" (2 Timothy 2:24). At the same time the minister must be bold for God's truth, bold for the gospel, bold against the enemies outside of and within the church. After the apostles had been imprisoned and threatened, the leaders of the Jews having "commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:18), the apostles returned to the company of believers and prayed to the Lord that he would "grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29). Immediately after they prayed, we read that "the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31). The days are not far off when we too will be commanded to stop preaching in the name of Jesus, stop preaching faith in Jesus as the only way of salvation, stop preaching Jesus' commandments and calling people to conformity to an objective standard of right and wrong. Great boldness will be required of the faithful minister of the gospel.

Prayerful Consideration

In conclusion, pray about the calling to the ministry. Ask the Lord to make plain to you what his will is. Pray that if it is his will that you prepare for the ministry, you will be open to that. Pray that if it is his will, he will open up the way for you. And ask those in whom you have confided to pray for you and with you. In the end, in the way of diligent prayer, be assured that the Lord will make plain to you what his will is.

Two passages of Scripture come to mind, passages that I often turned to when I contemplated the call to the ministry. I still often contemplate these passages. The first passage is Isaiah 6:8. After he saw in a vision the Lord sitting upon his throne and the angels proclaiming "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3), Isaiah "heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8a). The rest of verse 8 contains Isaiah's response, the response worked in him by the Lord through his call of Isaiah: "Then said I, Here am I; send me." By God's grace that is the response as well of those in the new dispensation who are called to the office of minister of the gospel: "Here am I; send me."

The second passage of Scripture that I often contemplated is 1 Corinthians 9:16:"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" Necessity was laid on the apostle to preach, the necessity of obedience to the will of the Lord. Since not to preach and not to preach the truth would be disobedience to the will of the Lord, "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" That same necessity, with its woe, applies to every preacher of the gospel, to all who have the call from God to preach the glorious gospel of his sovereign grace in Jesus Christ.

May the Lord continue to raise up in our churches faithful ministers of the gospel. May he put the call to the gospel ministry in the hearts of many of our young men. And may our churches and our mission fields continue to be blessed through the diligent labors of men who possess the gifts for the ministry and use those gifts to serve the church and its head, Christ Jesus the Lord.

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Watching Daily At My Gates

August 7 ***Read Isaiah 11***

In this chapter we find the whole of the gospel. The savior is identified. He is the root out of Jesse's branch; he is the son of David. The redemptive work for his people is identified. His kingdom is described as one of peace. In the final part of this chapter we see that the Gentiles will also be included in that kingdom. Isaiah looks at the whole of the coming of Christ. It is not just to Israel, but that coming is for the whole church and will culminate in the peaceable kingdom to be established in the new heavens and new earth. Let us look for that kingdom as the finality of our salvation. Sing Psalter 199.

August 8 ***Read Isaiah 12***

When Israel crossed the Red Sea and saw the destruction God wrought upon Egypt, they paused to thank God in song. In Isaiah's time Assyria was threatening them. Isaiah prophesies of deliverance and calls them to praise God. Today we can prepare ourselves for the grand song of thanksgiving that we will join in singing with the church of all ages as Christ's kingdom is made perfect in heaven. How do we sing? Do we think of the victory that is ours through Christ? Are our songs those that proclaim God's goodness and greatness, or do they praise man for what he supposedly has done. Let us praise our God with our whole hearts in preparation for that great thanksgiving that will be ours in heaven when Christ returns. Sing Psalter 261.

August 9 ***Read Isaiah 13***

There was another nation arising on the world's horizon of power. Babylon was beginning its growth as a world power. Israel could see what was happening, and the faithful among them could easily fear what might happen to the "hut in the cucumber patch." God gave to his faithful remnant the comfort found in this chapter. Babylon pictures the power of antichrist that looms on the horizon of our day. Do we see it? If we do, we need not fear, because the burden of Babylon of old is the burden of the new Babylon. Let us faint not but be faithful in the perilous times ahead. Sing Psalter 379.

August 10 ***Read Isaiah 14***

In verse one of this chapter, which is a continuation of the prophecy of the previous chapter, we see that among the troubles that the wicked bring upon the church there is mercy. Through verse 26 we see that God has ordained all that comes upon the church for their deliverance. In verse 27 we see that God can do this because he is the sovereign God who has purposed all things, and the church and we can know that they will be carried out. Even Satan or Lucifer is comprehended in this purpose, and even he cannot escape the end that God has purposed. Let this be to our comfort as we continue our lives in this valley of the shadow of death. Sing Psalter 380.

August 11 ***Read Isaiah 15***

Moab was one of Israel's relatives. The members of the nation of Moab were descendents of Lot. They had afflicted God's people throughout their return from Egypt. The afflictions that they brought were grievous at times. They hated the righteous. God's people might undergo such grief even in today's life. However, there is grace for the chosen, and they have the comfort that nothing can serve to their eternal hurt. May these words comfort us as they did Israel of old. Sing Psalter 187.

August 12 ***Read Isaiah 16***

In this chapter we have more prophecy concerning the destruction of Moab. In the chapter we also see advice given to Moab that they should pay the necessary tribute to God's people. This too serves for comfort to the afflicted remnant. Even as we await the return of Christ, we can know that through the judgement of the wicked comes the redemption for which we wait. Let us wait through prayer and watching for the signs of the return of our savior. Sing Psalter 63.

August 13 ***Read Isaiah 17***

As the book of the church's redemption continues, we now see a prophecy concerning Syria's defeat. Be-

cause the northern kingdom of Israel had joined with this ungodly nation, their destruction is also foretold. But yet in that wicked nation there was a remnant. A few grapes, a few olives will know God's grace both in time and in eternity. These nations' destructions will come at the hands of Assryia, who will also be defeated for the preservation of Judah, the people of God. Sing Psalter 65.

August 14 ***Read Isaiah 18***

The object of the prophecy of this chapter is thought to be Egypt, but not all commentators agree on this. The idea is clear, however. God will bring to judgement all nations who persecute his beloved bride. As the nation featured in this chapter is destroyed, other nations around must take notice. In this way the church is preserved, and ultimately God's name will be glorified. For this we must hope; for this we must pray as we say, "Thy kingdom come." Sing Psalter 122.

August 15 ***Read Isaiah 19***

Not only is Egypt's destruction foretold in this chapter, but also the promise of the gospel to those from that country and other Gentile nations. Egypt depended on the Nile for its life. They worshiped it. God would destroy them by destroying that life as represented in the paper reeds or papyrus plants that grew along the Nile's banks. The gospel will spread to this ungodly nation even as the Septuagint was penned there. God's kingdom will come from all races. For this we can be thankful. Sing Psalter 216.

August 16 ***Read Isaiah 20***

The striking picture of Isaiah walking naked among the people of Judah served to remind them not to put their trust in earthly kingdoms for deliverance. Judah had made advances for help from Egypt in their struggles against Syria and others. God used Assryia to bring judgement against Egypt. In whom do we trust? Is our trust in the sovereign God of our salvation or in some invention of man? Even as the words of this chapter were expressly for Judah, they just as expressly are for us. Sing Psalter 135.

August 17 ***Read Isaiah 21***

The fall of three more nations is proclaimed to the people of God. Babylon, who soon would become the world power and take Judah into captivity; Idumea, or Edom, long Israel's foe, and Arabia would all fall before God. The elect remnant who would be taken into Babylon could remember these prophecies and take comfort in them. The church of today can look at these prophecies and see that even as they came to pass, so the words of Christ concerning the end of the world too will come to pass. May we look for our redeemer each day. Sing Psalter 221.

August 18 ***Read Isaiah 22***

In this chapter the prophet is now given insight into what would happen in Jerusalem. Assryia would come and punish them for the evils that they had performed. Shebna, who had a place of prominence in Hezekiah's court, would be replaced by another who would be given the key of David. We also see the beautiful picture of a nail in a sure place. That nail is the grace of God given to his people. Eliakim too would lose his place as he did not regard that nail as he should have. How do we treat the grace of God given to us? Will we be like most of Jerusalem and despise it or by God's grace will we cling to that nail placed in a sure place? Sing Psalter 158.

August 19 ***Read Isaiah 23***

The world at large does not concern itself with God's decrees, but let one of the world's leaders be touched; then they will take notice. God decrees in this chapter the destruction of Tyre by Babylon. Tyre was the leader in world trade. Through them and by them the goods of the world flowed. When the world's economy is touched, the world takes notice. We see this in today's world as well. The effect of the signs of Christ's coming on commerce is noticed. Do we notice it? Do we see our bridegroom coming for us or do we worry about the world's economy like those around us? Sing Psalter 223.

August 20 ***Read Isaiah 24***

Many times throughout history God raised a nation to destroy large parts of civilization. Think of Assyria, and then Chaldea, and years later Rome, and even some nations in the modern era. Each of these destructions is but a prelude to the final destruction when Christ will return. God used and uses the world's nations to remind his church of his counsel and will. Among the signs of the end is the church's persecution. But also among those signs is destruction upon the world's society. When the final desolation comes, then God's people will rejoice and glorify him with all their being. Sing Psalter 198.

August 21 ***Read Isaiah 25***

As we saw yesterday, the result of the final destruction of the world is that the church would praise Jehovah. Isaiah continues this theme as he sees the triumph that God will bring to his people. Isaiah praises God as an example of the people of Israel. In their present oppression they probably did not feel like praising God. Isaiah had to show them the way. We must do

this today as well. In any oppression or hardship we must see that it is ordained by God for the good of his church and for his own glory. In seeing that, we must break out into praise for God's goodness toward his people. Sing Psalter 182.

August 22 ***Read Isaiah 26***

This chapter is a song and psalm of praise toward our mighty God. The theme of the chapter can be found in verse 4. People of God, do you trust God in all things that come upon you in this life? Sometimes our trust wavers, or we seek some earthy institution in which to place our trust. We should not do this, for as the second part of the verse states, in our God is everlasting strength. This is a strength that is unconquerable. This is a strength that will lead us through this life and the life to come. Let us trust our covenant God in all things and throughout our whole life. Sing Psalter 277.

August 23 ***Read Isaiah 27***

This chapter is a continuation of the song in the chapters before it. God proclaims his deliverance of his people from the enemies that surround them. There is a reference to the present enemy, Assyria, and a future enemy, Babylon. God uses those enemies to chastise his people and to show to them the way that they must walk. The church of all ages should also take heart in these verses as those enemies typify Satan, the ultimate enemy of the church. Before Christ comes again we will face his onslaughts, but we can know that God will show us mercy and deliver us. Sing Psalter 341.

August 24 ***Read Isaiah 28***

The prophet first addresses the northern kingdom under the name Ephraim. He tells them of their coming judgement and destruction at the hand of Assyria. They are to be destroyed because of their terrible sins. Then he turns his attention to the remnant remaining in Judah. They too are not above reproach. Their prophets, priests, and kings have not led God's people in the proper way. However, because of God's grace they would not be destroyed. There is a beautiful prophecy of Christ found in verse 16. That prophecy extends to us, the church of all ages. Sing Psalter 376.

August 25 ***Read Isaiah 29***

Many commentators see three judgements brought upon the city of Jerusalem. While Jerusalem pictures the true church of God, it is also the capital of the nation of Judah. Because that nation did not follow the law of God, he brought judgment and destruction upon it. The first judgment was by the hand of Assyria; second, there was the judgment brought by Babylon; finally, judgment was brought by Rome who destroyed the Jerusalem the Old Testament church knew. However, in the end of the chapter we see that God has grace for his beloved people. We are comprehended in that grace as he brings deliverance for us through Christ. Sing Psalter 403.

August 26 ***Read Isaiah 30***

During the time of Hezekiah, Judah turned to Egypt for help against the threat of Assyria. In this chapter the prophet speaks a word of rebuke for such actions. What about us? When we are in trouble do we seek help from others rather than turning to God's word and the preaching of that word? There are many statements in the Bible about its worth and value. How do we use that word? Do we turn to it daily and especially in times of trouble and see what good counsel it has for us? Sing Psalter 334.

August 27 ***Read Isaiah 31***

This chapter is obviously a continuation of the previous prophecy. The repetition found in the chapter called to the church of that day as well as the church of today to pay attention to the message. Once again God gives to his people the promise of deliverance. When we read verses 4 and 5, we must recognize that this deliverance is for us. God has given to us a way out of the temptations of sin. That way is the way of obedience to him and his word. May we seek to obey, knowing that this is the way of deliverance from our sins and troubles. Sing Psalter 1.

August 28 ***Read Isaiah 32***

While this chapter seems to be a prophecy of Hezekiah and the deliverance he wrought with God's help for Judah against Assyria, it is also a prophecy of Christ, whom Hezekiah typified. Notice that as the prophet preached against the sins of the church, he preached about sins of all kinds of people. As we know from Romans, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God…" Each member of God's church must examine his heart and his life and seek repentance for the sins he has committed. In this way the blessedness of salvation will be for all of God's people of every type and kind. Sing Psalter 140.

August 29 ***Read Isaiah 33***

In this chapter we have a new prophecy concerning the same subject as in the previous chapters. Judah is to be oppressed by Assyria. They will be delivered. They will live in peace and prosperity for a time. There is one theme running though these historical events. God will be glorified by them! Do we recognize this

in our lives? Are we so focused upon our lives that we forget the glory of God? We must not do this, people of God. In all things God is to be glorified and will be glorified. Sing Psalter 282.

August 30 ***Read Isaiah 34***

In this chapter God through the prophet Isaiah pronounces his judgements upon all antichristian nations, These nations are typified in Edom or Esau, who had been Israel's foe ever since the birth of its founder Esau. God's church is hated in this world. That hatred has been exhibited in many ways throughout history. Antichrist will focus this hatred in a most extreme way upon God's church just before the return of Christ. But God does not leave us without comfort. Our comfort will come from the pronouncements of judgement on those enemies. Fear not, church of God, we will find deliverance. Sing Psalter 273.

August 31 ***Read Isaiah 35***

In this chapter we find the redemption of the church of Christ foretold. In the beautiful words of this chapter we find pictures of the work that Christ will do for his beloved. We also see words that our savior himself used in his preaching. What a blessed redemption will be ours when Christ returns again! Let us read his word often to examine the proclamation of the gospel and the blessings for us found in it. Sing Psalter 125.

September 1 ***Read Isaiah 36***

The next four chapters of Isaiah contain an account of history that takes places during the reign of Hezekiah. In this chapter we find the world mocking our God and saying that he is not a whit better than the gods of other nations around Judah. We can see and hear this same charge today as the world seeks to cause our faith in God to waver. Judah of old had to learn how to stand up against such onslaughts, just as the church of today needs the same instruction. Let us continue in prayer for deliverance and ask for help to withstand the onslaughts of Satan and his henchmen. Sing Psalter 159.

September 2 ***Read Isaiah 37***

We find in this chapter the necessity to go to God in prayer when we face affliction at the hands of the world. We quickly must see that our help is not in ourselves but in God who made all things and causes all things to come to pass. Even in affliction we see God working for our good just as he used the attacks of Assyria for Hezekiah's and Judah's good. Prayer is the chief means of thankfulness for God's people. Let us make use of it often as we obey the admonition to pray without ceasing. Sing Psalter 150.

September 3 ***Read Isaiah 38***

Hezekiah is faced with two matters of affliction. First, the armies of Assyria are surrounding the city, threatening its very existence. Second, he is facing death in the form of sickness. We know from history's examination that there is another concern upon his mind. He has no heir as yet and therefore the line of Judah that is to lead to Christ will be broken. With these concerns he prays and receives a good answer from God by Isaiah. May we be concerned as much about our spiritual lives as we are about the physical concerns that may come upon us. God will care for us, and we can be assured that it will be in a good time. Sing Psalter 105.

September 4 ***Read Isaiah 39***

Sometimes our actions have sad results. Such was the case when Hezekiah showed off "his" grandeur. He had forgotten all that God had done for him. Isaiah sends the message that those same Babylonians who saw Hezekiah's riches would take those riches away from his children. In all that we do, we must remember to give God all the glory due to his name. In this way we will please him and cause him to be glorified. Let this be our goal all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 83.

September 5 ***Read Isaiah 40***

Many commentators divide the book of Isaiah at this point. The calling for the prophet to cry a word of comfort to God's people is appropriate for the prophecies that will follow. Even though there will be prophecies of afflictions, there will also be prophecies of the comfort that will be found in the redeemer. In the familiar words of much of this chapter we find such comfort. When we come to the last verse we can rest in comfort that that Redeemer will enable us to enjoy the benefits of the spiritual victory that will be ours in heaven. Sing Psalter 73.

September 6 ***Read Isaiah 41***

In this chapter we find the foolishness of following idol gods and the blessedness of following the only living God, Jehovah. As we live our lives we must stay way from the tendency to worship idols. These may not be the idols of heathen such as Baal, Buddha, and others, but they can be anything that we contrive in which we place our trust. Rather we must serve God who has made all things as well as elected for himself a precious people. May we rejoice to be part of the church who will reign with him in heaven as the church triumphant. Sing Psalter 308.

Mother

If you Google the word "mother" or look it up in a dictionary, you will likely come up with a definition similar to this: Mother: A female parent; one who gives birth; to rear. Attached to this may be an account of those things that mothers commonly do—a job description. The list is likely extensive, rivaling the duties of the CEO of a major corporation. A mother cleans, cooks, purchases, schedules, plans, bakes, sews, organizes, coaches, makes appointments, keeps the books, ships, receives, fills out tax forms, and speaks motivationally.

Alongside this description of both a mother and her work are numerous sayings that people use in reference to motherhood: "A mother's work is never done;" "Don't count on getting any sleep;" "I want them to have a better life than I did;" "Their happiness is first with me;" "I just want to have children that other people can enjoy being around;" "So long as my kids find a way to make the world a better place;" "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." Still other statements abound concerning having children. "A mother's body is her own; it's her choice; it's her decision to make," "We'd love to have children, we just aren't sure how many we can handle;" "You can kiss your figure goodbye;" and the very familiar, "children are such a burden."

We have all heard and maybe have even said at least some of these. But we ought to recognize that each of these statements arises out of the wisdom of this world, flowing out of countless books and magazines written on the topics of parenting and motherhood. But theirs is not wisdom at all; it is foolishness. Why? God is nowhere to be found in their discussion. Because we know that it is the fool who says in his heart that there is no God (Ps. 14:1), we Christians ought not to listen. When the world speaks, it issues forth words, goals, and worldviews that proclaim its love of itself, its lusts, and the pride of life. God has nothing to do with its conversation.

Moreover, a war is going on in our homes—a spiritual war, a war of ideas and doctrines, with the authority of man's word pitted against the authority of God's word. The life of entertainment-crazed pleasure seekers rages against the life of holiness; the sovereignty of man rises up against the sovereignty of God. In this war, Satan is busy. He desires to destroy the church, shrewdly targeting the church's children with an attack against the closest guardians of their souls—their parents, and especially their mothers. It is of utmost importance, then, to base our understanding of motherhood firmly upon the rock of Scripture, for in the face of this wicked attack, God's word is our strongest defense. In so doing, we will see not only the weighty responsibility of a mother, but also the great joy she experiences as God uses the means of bearing and rearing children to sanctify her.

Serving as a mother in the home is a great work. It is specifically mandated by God for the maintenance and nourishment of the body of Christ. In God's covenant with his people, he has promised that his elect will be gathered unto himself, that he will draw them into fellowship with himself and his people. He does not need us in order to accomplish this; nevertheless, he is pleased to use godly mothers to bring forth covenant seed in the line of continued generations. As a means through which God realizes his covenant promises, mothers are greatly privileged members of the church. Motherhood is a great gift from God, as well as a service we are able to perform only in him. We depend on his grace to be covenant mothers, and in order to perform our service, we must do it his way.

Contrary to the popular teaching of this world, our dependence on God is not only spiritual. It is biological as well. The conception of children in the womb of mothers is not a matter of choice. It is not as though we mere creatures are the masters of life, able to give and withhold; it is God who grants conception. Such is the confession of the psalmist in Psalm 100:3: "Know ye that the LORD he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture." To keep from God his power over life is to spite him and defy

him to the face. God is God and does as he pleases, when he pleases. We cannot exist apart from God, and we exist only for his sake. He is sovereign over our wombs, determining the number of children we have and when we have them.

For our flesh, this is a hard truth to hear. Only faith can receive this truth; only the believing woman can experience peace in this way, yielding her body to Christ, resting in him and trusting in God's will for her. By a wonder of grace, the believing woman who obeys God in this area of life is able to do so seeing the great worthiness and benefit of "doing it God's way." In humbly submitting ourselves to God in bearing children, we bear witness in our lives to the plea of the sanctified believer in Lord's Day 48 of the Heidelberg Catechism: "Rule us so by thy word and Spirit that we may submit ourselves more and more to thee." Our God is so great and so loving that he takes the sting of such submission away, replacing it with the joy of his fellowship. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1John 5:3).

There is something uniquely special in bearing children, something closely linked to the awe-inspired confession the psalmist makes in Psalm 139:14–16, wondering at his fearful and wonderful conception and birth. In a similar way, God places mothers on their knees before him through childbirth, with hearts that give utterance to the smallness of self, and the greatness of the Creator. In the face of the whole wonder of motherhood, of the magnitude of the power of God, the only way a godly mother can proceed to take up her newborn duty is to acknowledge her complete dependence on the Lord. At the same time, she counts herself blessed in receiving children from God's hand, as expressed in the songs of Hannah and Mary of old, knowing that every last one of the elect must be born before Christ will return. Moreover, her children are not her own, but they are Jehovah's, a heritage of the LORD. In order properly to understand her calling and have any hope of fulfilling it, she must recognize that her offspring are first of all members of God's church and kingdom. This surrender to the sovereignty of God is a wonder of grace as well, a key part of the mother's sanctification. Her situation is not unlike the one outlined by Christ in Matthew 10:38–39: "And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." Both the mother's calling and the mother's blessed privilege are to "lose her life" in bearing and raising children, in accordance to the will of God.

Having explored the great duty and joy of the mother in bearing children, we now consider the setting of her work as a keeper at home. In the home God raises up young men and women to stand for his cause and his kingdom, to bear testimony of being spiritually minded as they mature in their love of God and his church. In the home they are taught to live the antithesis, to live lives of purity before God. Our homes are centers of instruction in the ways of God's covenant. By means of mothers as instruments, God has designed the home to be a safe haven. In the home, and in the everyday circumstances of the family, many opportunities arise for instruction to be applied to the raising of a godly seed. The manner in which mothers teach their children must reflect the beautiful idea and truths of the covenant; that is, our raising of our children must reflect that living, personal, gracious, blessed friendship that God establishes and maintains with his people. At the same time, the instruction of the home is very practical and down to earth, because it is integrated with the life of the family itself. As God uses the means of the home to reveal parts of himself to his covenant seed, our children learn to trust in him for the preservation of their salvation and the maintenance of their duty-bound, blessing-rich, sanctified walk of life.

God's word not only sets our goals in the vocation of motherhood in the covenant home, but also presents mothers with the "how" of our instruction of our children. The glory of God is the goal, and the word of instruction that he provides is the way. Indeed, through his word, God is actively at work making our homes safe havens from the world.

"And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:7). The godly mother heeds this word of God, showing her children the ways of God's commandments, how they are to be observed and kept, how they must say no to themselves, how sin is contrary to the will of God, how forgiveness, reconciliation, and hope are found in the cross. In short, the work of the mother is to raise her children to be citizens in the kingdom of heaven. Walking in the ways of the Lord must inherently involves submission

to him, the cheerful submission that loving servants yield to their friend-sovereign.

However, submission is always opposed by sinful pride. This is true also for our children. Thus it is important that we as mothers help our children to ask themselves the difficult and piercing questions of self-examination: What are our thoughts being formed by? What is controlling our hearts? What were we thinking when we did that? Are our ways, deeds, and decisions regulated by God's word? Children, like parents, must be taught that Scripture can be nothing less than the only reference point for all of the life of the Christian. God's word is the only reliable standard there is: all our thoughts and actions are subject to scrutiny under its light. Desiring that her children come to this knowledge, the mother presents her children with the admonition of Solomon in Proverbs 3:5–7: "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the LORD."

You may notice that the work of a mother in rearing her children is almost directly correlative to her own walk of faith and instruction at the feet of God. She cannot teach what she does not know, and with the great duty of rearing children comes the mother's corresponding duty of increasing her own knowledge of God and his word. This may sound like a lot of work, and it is. But as we saw earlier, it is a great joy as well.

Here is a beautiful and astonishing truth of God's dealings with mothers. God uses the family life itself to enrich her spiritually! God uses the means of bearing and rearing children to sanctify her (1Tim. 2:15). In the very doing, the instructing and nurturing of the children in the generations, and in the training of them to fear God and keep his commandments, the mother is, by the work of Christ's Spirit, convinced and assured that she herself belongs to God, and that his saving love and promises apply directly to her.

Each day as she goes about her calling, many opportunities arise in which she has need to open the word of God to apply its truths. As she brings the word in correction to a sinning child, that efficacious word by the Holy Spirit also indicts her and causes her to humbly acknowledge her own need of examination, confession, and forgiveness. When, after they have sinned and their weakness is exposed in sin, she builds up her children with encouraging words from Scripture, that very same word of hope brings courage to her own broken and contrite heart. Day after day, in each unique child, as you see your failings in their failings, you have reason to travel together down the well-worn path to the cross of Christ. You kneel beside them, bow at the foot of the cross, and hear your Savior say, "I know you cannot keep my commandments. I know the battle. I bore your guilt and sin. But in me it is finished. Keep your eyes fixed on me, wait on me, I will make you able one day to keep them perfectly." Do you see the great joy of the mother in her home?

As mothers with joy and hearts full of thanksgiving, we walk in this vocation with fear and trembling, and a disposition to cleave to Jehovah and live for him in the light of his word, no matter what lies ahead. This labor is not in vain! Moreover, it is not an onerous obligation, but a gracious gift, marked out with gracious care, bestowed on us in love. It is a vocation that God has nestled within the everlasting covenant of grace, a training ground for servant-fighters of the kingdom of heaven in this battle of faith. As they carry out their blessed calling, God grants the mothers of his covenant seed all that is needed to continue; he is the all-sufficient sustainer of their walk and life as pilgrims and strangers here on this earth, as they live in service of the body of Christ. He brings them to that last day, upholding them all the way and sanctifying them in their vocation.

May God grant you grace to desire and look forward to the day when he may place you in this vocation, to lose your life in it, that you may find contentment within it and seek to glorify him through it. Jealously guard it, pray that none may take it from you—not Satan, not the world, nor the enemy within. Keep the calling of motherhood where it is safe, within the cause of his covenant and of his church and her mighty and glorious calling in the midst of the world, of which our part is pure and undeserved favor.

Great is his faithfulness! To him be the glory!

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Christianizing the World? (6)

In the preceding article in this series, I contrasted the kingdom-life of doctrinal, ecclesiastical, and spiritual Calvinists in all the spheres with the cultural-Calvinists' dream of Christianizing the world.

What now is the expectation of us citizens of the kingdom of God in Jesus Christ? What is our expectation with regard to the kingdom of which we are citizens, the kingdom we promote, the kingdom whose banner flies over all our life in all the spheres?

Antithesis

In this life, in history, and in fact in the near future, also in North America, we expect hatred, fierce opposition, and outright persecution. We expect this hatred and persecution exactly because of our uncompromising confession concerning the kingdom of God and because of our distinctive kingdom-life.

We expect the very opposite of the appreciation and cooperation on the part of the world of the ungodly that the common grace cultural-Calvinists are looking for. Basic to the project of Christianizing the world is the conviction that the ungodly are favorably inclined to the project, that the ungodly regard the cultural-Calvinists as friends, indeed as indispensable fellow workers in the grand project of creating a good, even godly earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity for all, and that the ungodly will not oppose, but work together with the cultural-Calvinists. And by compromising the kingdom of God at every stage of the building of the kingdom of common grace, the cultural-Calvinists see to it that the ungodly world does in fact approve of them and befriend them.

Radically different is the expectation of genuine Calvinists, and radically different is also our experience. There is antithesis—opposition and hostility—between the kingdom of Jesus Christ and its citizens on the one hand, and the kingdom of Man (with a capital "M") and its citizens on the other hand. God has placed this enmity between the two kingdoms: "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed" (Gen. 3:15).

The two great kingdoms in the world at all times, and especially at the end of time, are at war!

The Heidelberg Catechism recognizes this warfare in its explanation of the theme of this series of articles, the coming of the kingdom of God: "destroy the works of the devil and all violence which would exalt itself against Thee; and also, all wicked counsels devised against Thy holy Word" (Q&A 123).

The project of Christianizing the world, as an important aspect of the coming of the kingdom of God, has no place for this instruction and warning of the Catechism, even though the Catechism is the creed also of the cultural-Calvinists.

Jesus forewarned us that the result of our being *in* the world, but not *of* the world, would be that the world would hate us, rather than look favorably on our kingdom-life and pitch in to help us with it: "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (John 17:14).

The Vain Hope of a Carnal Victory within History

We spiritual, doctrinal, and ecclesiastical Calvinists do not expect the carnal triumph of the kingdom of Christ in history. We do not expect the Christianizing of the world. We deny that the Bible holds out this prospect for the project.

The history of the past one hundred years or so of the efforts of the cultural-Calvinists to Christianize their nations and the world has been utter failure. Abraham Kuyper's Netherlands is not a whit more Christian today than it was in 1898. Neither is the North America of the Christian Reformed Church more Christian than it was in 1924.

The present cultures of the Netherlands and of North America are not promising with regard to the coming of the kingdom of God in any form. Open anti-Christianity is virulent in the cultures. The cultures are decadent, and descending into the abyss of the lawlessness that rages against God's law in nature, that is, the law of male and female.

The stubborn project of Christianizing the world fights Scripture, history, and present experience.

Even though Reformed believers do not expect

the carnal victory of the kingdom of Christ within history, we who now live the kingdom-life of Jesus Christ and who promote the kingdom of Jesus Christ will have the victory. The kingdom that is now established in our hearts, that is the true church, and that extends in our lives to all the spheres will triumph. The victory of this kingdom is certain.

It will destroy the rival kingdom of the beast. It will punish and cast into hell all the citizens of the kingdom of the beast. It will establish itself perfectly over all the new creation. In it, we will reign with King Jesus over all things forever.

To this the Heidelberg Catechism directs our hope in the conclusion of its explanation of the second petition of the model prayer: "till the full perfection of Thy kingdom take place, wherein Thou [God triune, in Jesus Christ] shalt be all in all" (Q&A 123).

Not within history!

The Temporary Victory of the Kingdom of Common Grace

Within history, as is taking place in our day, Satan's outwardly grand kingdom of Man, in which Man is all in all, as much as possible, develops itself to the fullest. This grand kingdom of Man is anti-God, anti-Christ, and anti-church. It is lawless. It will persecute the citizens of the kingdom of God for their witness to Jesus, for their confession that God is God, and for their life of obedience to the law of God.

And, now, *mirabile dictu* [wonderful to relate], according to Abraham Kuyper himself, the father of the project of Christianizing the world, this godless, antichristian, lawless kingdom will, in fact, be the final, full development of the common grace project of Christianizing the world.

> The closing scene in the drama of common grace can be enacted only through the appearance on stage of the man of sin…[common] grace leads to the most powerful manifestation of sin in history…At the moment of its destruction Babylon [the world-kingdom of Antichrist—DJE]…will exhibit not the image of a barbarous horde nor the image of coarse bestiality but, on the contrary, a picture of the highest development of which human life is capable. It will display the most refined forms, the most magnificent unfolding of wealth and splendor, the fullest brilliance of all that makes life dazzling and glorious. From this we know that 'common grace' will continue to function to the end ("Common Grace," in *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader,* ed. James D. Bratt, Eerdmans, 1998, 180, 181).

All those, therefore, presently engaged in erecting and promoting the kingdom of common grace are, in fact, deliberately helping Satan to realize his antichristian kingdom, the kingdom that Revelation 13 calls the kingdom of the beast.

I have bad news for them. The wrath of God abides on their project throughout history! And their kingdom will be demolished in the day of Jesus Christ! The little stone of Daniel 2 will fall upon it and grind it to powder.

The day comes when not only Herman Hoeksema, but also all heaven, the holy apostles, and the prophets will rejoice over the destruction of the project of common grace. "Rejoice over her [Babylon, the kingdom of Antichrist, and, according to Kuyper, the final product of common grace], thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her" (Rev. 18:20).

The Goal of History

The victory and perfection of the kingdom of Jesus Christ will not take place within history, but as the goal of history. The victory of our kingdom will be everlasting.

> When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory…Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world (Matt. 25:31, 34)

This is certain, as certain as it is that Jesus arose to become Lord of all, and as certain as it is that the God and Father of Jesus Christ must be all in all.

This is our hope.

With this hope, we live the kingdom life faithfully; promote the kingdom actively; fly the banner of the kingdom without shame or fear; yes, and patiently endure scorn and suffering for the sake of this kingdom and its king.

The kingdom of Jesus Christ and his (particular) grace *is coming*, not so much by our kingdom-work as in answer to our prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

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Why We Need the Church in Order to be Light in the World

To shine as lights in the world, believers need the church. The church of Jesus Christ is the city set on a hill that cannot be hid (Matt. 5:14). Believers who were once darkness are now light in the Lord, and are called to walk as children of light (Eph. 5:8). The purpose is that others may learn through observation and themselves be saved and glorify God (Matt. 5:16). Without a living connection to the body of Christ and an active life in the church, we cannot be lights in this world.

Think of a fluorescent light bulb. All the light of the bulb is created within the bulb itself. When electricity is added to a pressurized mercury gas, heat is created, and tiny explosions take place inside the bulb, giving a bright light to the outside. Separate from and outside the bulb, the mercury will not give off light. Similarly, we need each other and our life together in the church in order to be light in this world.

There are five ways that life in the church is essential to our being light in the world.

First, to be light we need to be a part of the church because the only place in this world where there is light is in the church. God's people are the enlightened ones, and we need one another in order to give light in this world of darkness. The word *light* in Scripture is used in two senses. It can refer to the light that we give over against the dark world of sin, but it also refers to the knowledge that believers have: "The entrance of thy words giveth light" (Psalm 119:130). God's people, who by faith receive his word, are the only ones in this world who really "get it." Amidst all the confusion and questions over moral issues, war, economic downturn, natural catastrophes, climate change, poverty, crime, the breakup of families, and more, God's people have answers from Scripture. They see the light. This is never a reason for pride, or to think we have attained. But the simple fact is that this is God's world, and he is the sovereign of the universe, so understanding and believing his word is the only way to answer man's confusion. This brings home the importance of being a part of the church of God in this world, a church where God's word is faithfully taught and confessed.

Too often young people don't see the importance of this. They take for granted what they have grown up with; they dabble in the world's amusements, lifestyle, and ideas, and they want to think for themselves rather than continuing in the things they have learned from childhood out of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:14–15). With this attitude, they soon become disconnected from the life of the church and their spiritual moorings. Christ Jesus is the light, and you will not find him anywhere else in this world than in the church of God. If you would be light in this world, that begins with your place in the church.

Second, to be light in this world we need to be in the word of God. God's word alone is the source of light in this world, and also in the church. One danger is that we think we don't need the church; the other is to think that all we need is the church and we don't need the word ourselves personally. We find our security in being a part of an institution and tradition. Often people view church as something that just happens, something that others do for them. It's like a buffet. Others do the work, and they set out the food, and you just come and graze and leave. This kind of attitude leads to an apathy not just towards church life, but also in personal spirituality.

One who would be light needs not only to be an active contributor to the life of the church, but needs also to be in the word of God himself, daily being fed from the fountains of life. God's word is living, it is powerful, it is sharp, it is piercing, it discerns the thoughts and intents of the human heart (Heb. 4:12). For the word to work to show the darkness of sin in our hearts, we need to read and study and understand and pray over the Bible. If the Bible is

not read, your light will grow dim. To be a light, you need to hear God's word preached, and you need to read God's word yourself.

Third, life in the church is important because we need one another in order to be a light in this world. Like the components of a fluorescent bulb, we all need one another in order to give off light. The church is a body. Not only is it made up of many members with a variety of gifts, but also all the members have their unique spiritual strengths and weaknesses, and we all depend on one another to remain spiritually strong. The Scriptures speak to this need in many places.

In Hebrews 10:24-25 we are exhorted not to "forsake the gathering of ourselves together" but rather to "consider one another to provoke unto love and good works." To "consider one another" means to evaluate each other as we are in Jesus Christ, and then to exert a positive influence on one another that will encourage love and godly living. True friends, found in the church, put a positive peer pressure on one another.

Colossians 3:16 gives this exhortation: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hyms and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." God has given us the gift of music and song as a beautiful way for his word to dwell richly within the believer, and when we sing together, we encourage, we teach and we admonish one another. As Jehoshaphat's army went out to battle, they sang together (2 Chron. 20:21–22).

Not only must we admonish and encourage others in the body, but we must also be ready to receive admonition ourselves. The Psalmist in Psalm 141:5 says, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." How difficult it is to receive admonition from a peer, a brother, a fellow church member, or an officebearer. How reluctant we are to admonish, lest others take it the wrong way. How formalized we have become in our accountability, leaving it to elders, pastors, or parents. Oh, we need one another, and we need the wounds of faithful friends to brighten our lights.

Fourth, in the church we need love, and we need to love, and by this we let our light shine to the world. This ought to be the brightest light of God's people in this dark world. The world is a selfish place, with everyone in it for himself. But the church operates differently. Motivated by the selfless love of Christ for us, we love one another selflessly and sacrificially. Jesus says, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, that ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

The average American has 1.5 close friends, and the average friendship lasts only a couple of decades. In the communion of the saints, things are different. When a church member is sick, grieving, depressed, poor, or burdened in some other way, the overwhelming love of the saints for them results in their being cared for. The world that looks on—maybe neighbors or people you work with or others—sees the love of the saints for one another. It is novel, something they've never experienced. Believers who live with the mind of Christ give and enjoy a communion and care that is foreign to this world.

If we do not love this way, we cripple our witness to the world. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes" (1 John 2:9–11). Selfishness and hatred are blinding. They lead to further sin. But the way of love is a way of light that prevents stumbling into sin.

Finally, our life in and commitment to the church, particularly our Sabbath observance, shows to the world that we are obedient to God's word, when all around us there is rampant disregard for the morality of the Bible. In many ways the church has lost its distinctiveness in this regard. Either Christians spend no time explaining why they keep the Sabbath holy, or there is no regard for Sunday over any other day of the week. But one who sets aside Sunday as a full day of worship shows to the world his love for God.

Why has Sabbath observance fallen by the wayside? It is because of materialism: making idols of the things of this earth. When you keep the Sabbath you are demonstrating to the world that eternal things are of much greater value to you than anything earthly. It's a message to the world that we are pilgrims and strangers here on the earth, that heaven is our home, that we live by faith, and that our hope is in something greater and better.

In 1 Peter 3:15 Peter says that we should be ready to give an answer regarding our hope. This implies

a question from the world. Here is an opportunity to give this answer. The world asks, "Why won't you work on Sunday? Why do you keep Sunday as a holy day?" How do you answer? Is it because the church requires it? Or because your parents say so? No, it's because we have an eternal hope. The Sabbath is a day in which we taste and begin to enjoy the life of heaven. While on this earth, the closest we can get to the experience of heaven is when we gather with other believers to worship God and to hear his word.

Are you a light in this world? Do you see that you cannot be a light without other believers, but that you need the church of Christ to be a testimony in a world of darkness?

May God keep us faithful to him, to his church, and to each other, and in this way use us as a testimony in a dark world.

Rev. Kleyn is pastor at Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington. This is an abbreviated version of a speech given at the Lynden Young Adults Retreat in July, 2012

Poem — Anonymous

Bless This House

Within these bright and solid walls,
God holds a golden key;
to rooms of safety, warmth and pride,
a place called "family".
May all our days be filled with trust,
nights blessed from up above,
and as the years pass tenderly,
may this roof shelter love.
From month to year...
from friend to kin,
God bless the hearts
that dwell within.

Submitted by Sadie Knoper, a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

Federation Board Update — Erika Schipper

Federation Board Nominees

At the upcoming young people's convention, delegates representing each young people's society will elect new members to the Young People's Federation Board. The Federation Board is responsible for making decisions regarding upcoming conventions and singspirations and scholarship

applications for future teachers and ministers. It is responsible for organizing young people's mass meetings held in the Grand Rapids area, and it also oversees the publication of the *Beacon Lights* magazine. Each new member voted in this year will serve a two year term beginning in September. The board is localized in the Grand Rapids area and meets once a month, making it necessary that all its members are from the West Michigan area churches. In order that all of the delegates from all our congregations may know a little about whom they are voting for, I have asked the nominees to tell us a little about themselves and most importantly their goals for the Federation Board if elected.

The nominees for Vice-president are Dale Schipper and Matt De Boer. Dale is a member of our Southwest congregation. He is an analytical chemist and works in research and development for Amway. As a member of the Fed Board he would like to maintain a high level of interest and attendance for Federation Board activities like mass meetings, sinspirations, and the convention. Dale would like to encourage more young people to read and write for *Beacon Lights* and to read other Reformed literature (such as the *Standard Bearer* and other RFPA publications).

Matt De Boer attends Hudsonville PRC. He recently graduated from Calvin College and plans to attend the Seminary next Fall. He is currently working for Superior Groundcover. Matt feels, by the grace of God, a desire to serve the church. He sees the Federation Board as a great opportunity for him to do this because he can serve the young people who are the future of God's church on this earth.

Those nominated for Vice Secretary this year are Paula Kuiper and Lynette Kleyn. Paula is a member of Southwest PRC. She just finished her fourth year at Calvin College here in Grand Rapids. She plans on taking classes this summer and, Lord willing, will be student teaching at a local Christian middle school next fall. Her goal for the Federation Board is that it will continue to maintain its function as coordinator between the Young People's Societies and that it encourages Christian fellowship and conversation between the members of these societies. Paula believes it is good for our young people to experience the communion of the body of Christ in their home congregations, but also with other young people who share their faith. As a member of the Federation Board she feels she would have a special opportunity to promote the unity of the body through its work.

Lynette attends Grace PRC in Standale, Michigan. She works as a medical assistant for Grand Rapids Women's Health, an OB/GYN office located in downtown Grand Rapids. Lynette's goal as a prospective member of the Federation Board would be to help her fellow brothers and sisters in Christ in a special way, bringing them God's word and knowledge of his love through the Beacon Lights, young people's conventions, and other means that the Federation Board uses. In ways like these we can grow closer to our God and encourage others to as well.

The two nominees for Vice Treasurer of the Federation Board are Brad Ophoff and Steve Ophoff. Brad attends our Southeast congregation. He works at Summit Landscaping and attends Grand Valley State University, hoping to become a physician's assistant. If voted to the Federation Board, Brad hopes to bring the young people together in less formal ways and promote things like Young Calvinists (a sub-committee of the Federation Board whose goal it is further to assist the young people of our churches as they grow spiritually through its internet blog and organized events).

Steve is a member of our First PR congregation. He works at Watermark Country Club. His goals as a member of the Federation Board would be to build his group work ability and create successful young people's events, as well as create an interest in the young people.

Nominees for the office of Librarian are Hannah Westra and Lydia Koole. Hannah attends Southwest PRC. She is currently a full-time student at GVSU and has a part-time internship. Her goal as a member of the board would be to serve the young people of the PRC by helping to unite them in the truth of God's word and in the fellowship of the saints.

Lydia is a member of Hope PRC. She works as a medical assistant for Grand Rapids Women's Health. Her goal for the Federation Board would be to help make decisions on behalf of the young people for their spiritual benefit.

The two nominees for Spiritual Advisor are Rev. Heath Bleyenberg and Rev. William Langerak. Rev. Bleyenberg is the minister of our Providence congregation. His goal and duty as spiritual advisor would be to encourage and promote godliness, humility, and a Christian love among our young people, and that through activities, speeches, conventions, etc.

our young people may always "remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth" (Ecc. 12:1).

Rev. Langerak is minister of our Southeast congregation. His goal would be to provide the Federation Board with sound, biblical advice in order to facilitate their calling to promote the unity and spiritual growth of the Protestant Reformed young people to the honor and glory of God.

As present members of the Federation Board, we ask the delegates, along with the young people's societies they represent, prayerfully to consider these nominees in order that our Federation Board can continue to serve them. We hope that all the conventioneers are looking forward to the upcoming convention. What a wonderful means of fellowship with dear brothers and sisters in the Lord!

Erika is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan and is secreatory of the Federation Board.

Church News

Melinda Bleyenberg

BAPTISMS

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children."
Psalm 103:17

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:

Evelyn Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Vanden Toorn—Bryon Center, MI
Calvin John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Rachel VanBaren—Faith, MI
Marshall David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike & Lisa VanTil—Faith, MI
Trey James, son of Mr. & Mrs. David & Amber Decker—Faith, MI
Annica Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Philip & Kristin Kleyn—First, MI
Theodore David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy & Kelly Langerak—Hope, MI
Jude Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Erin Rutgers—Hope, MI
Millie Louise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rich & Nelle DeMeester—Hope, MI
Anthony Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott & Lynn Oosterhouse—Hope, MI
Noah David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joshua & Courtney Engelsma—Hope, MI
Kelsey Lanae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel & Valerie Minderhoud—Hope, MI
Sidney Charlise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad & Kelly Warner—Holland, MI
Raylee Faye, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kelly & Erin Van Voorst—Hull, IA
Sadie Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Shelia Blankespoor—Hull, IA
Miriam Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Meghan Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David & Jessica Vermeer—Peace, IL
Drew Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Cynthia Koole—Providence, MI
Jude Christian, son of Mr. & Mrs. Casey & Kristina Meelker—Redlands, CA
Claire Margaret, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jedd & Heidi Pipe—Southeast, MI
Chloe Jeanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ross & Sharon Kaiser—Southwest, MI
Collin Isaac, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Amy Kuiper—Southwest, MI
Nolan Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Beth VanSingel—Trinity, MI

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:

Samantha Andringa—Crete, IL
Erin Kooiker—Crete, IL
Dallas Swan—Crete, IL
Eric VanDrunen—Crete, IL
Zachary Zylstra—Crete, IL
Aaron Huizing—Edmonton, CAN
Alyssa DeVries—Hope, MI
Ashley Koole—Hope, MI
Brandi Oostra—Hull, IA
Dana Griess—Loveland, CO
Taralah Allison—Redlands, CA
Brendan Allison—Redlands, CA
Paul McKelvey—Redlands, CA

MARRIAGES

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it…."
Psalm 127:1

United in the bond of holy matrimony were:

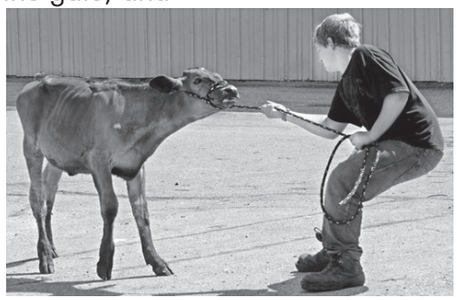
Mr. Todd Karsemeyer and Miss Erika Haan—Byron Center, MI
Mr. & Mrs. Oliver Scott—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Todd Lenting and Miss Jaclyn Vallow—Crete, IL
Mr. Alex Dykstra and Miss Heather VandenBerg—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Jeff Thompson and Miss Abby Van Den Top—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Matthew Brummel and Miss Ellen Van Den Top—Hull, IA
Mr. Justin Vink and Miss Candi Hottman—Hull, IA
Mr. David Camarigg and Miss Emily Korver—Hull, IA
Mr. Tim Kiel and Miss Whitney DeYoung—Kalamazoo, MI
Mr. John Wear and Miss Anita Brands—Loveland, CO
Mr. Adam VanDyke and Miss Catherine Haveman—Trinity, MI

Connie Meyer

TULIP: I (Irresistible Grace) "Stubborn Steer"

Push and pull as he might, Ethan could not get the calf to move. The steer was growing fast, and Ethan knew it had to learn to do as it was told if he was going to be able to show it at the fair. The steer stiffened his neck and legs and wouldn't budge.

Ethan threw down the rope, shut the gate, and left the barn. The calf was bigger than he was now. He would have to think of other tactics.



"Is it going any better?" Ethan's father asked him as they met at the house.

"Nope." Ethan shook his head. "I've never seen such a stubborn steer!"

Father opened the door to the kitchen. The aroma of simmering vegetables and beef met their nostrils. "That calf will be beef stew sooner than he thinks," Ethan muttered under his breath.

A while later the whole family was ready for supper and seated around the table. Father opened with prayer. Mother passed the food.

"So what will you do next to try train your calf?" Father asked Ethan.

"I have no idea," Ethan said. "But I thought of calling him Stew—for beef stew, that is."

Ethan's little sister Sarah put her hand over her mouth. His older sister Sybil smiled wryly.

"Yes," said Father, "I haven't seen many animals with such a difficult temperament as that one."

"You just can't change his mind," Ethan complained.

Father thought a moment and added, "Some people are like that, too. In fact—" he paused, "I'm guessing we all are like that. We'll be reading about that for devotions. We're up to Ezekiel 36. What a miracle it is when God changes *our* hearts and minds. And he doesn't have to push and pull us to do it. *That's* power. *That's* irresistible grace."

They all opened their Bibles and found the passage. "Start at verse 26," Father went on. "Listen: 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them…'"

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

… let it shine!

"…it is evidently a supernatural work, most powerful, and at the same time most delightful, astonishing, mysterious, and ineffable; not inferior in efficacy to creation, or the resurrection from the dead…so that all in whose heart God works in this marvelous manner, are certainly, infallibly, and effectually regenerated, and do actually believe…" Canons III/IV, Article 12

Find all the words quoted from Canons III/IV, Article 12 in the story. There may be more than one possibility for some two-letter words.

C	T	G	O	D	F	V	T	M	Y	L	N	I	A	T	R	E	C
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A	V	A	N	D	S	C	R	G	M	Y	N	D	S	K	R	O	W

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

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