In the May, 2013 issue of Beacon Lights, I began a series of editorials entitled Strangers and Sojourners. That initial article laid the groundwork by defining these biblical terms and describing what strangers and sojourners look like from a spiritual viewpoint. We saw that being strangers and sojourners involves a starting point, a trip, and a destination. In the June, 2013 issue we examined the important truth that in their lives, they are always guided by God’s sovereign providence. Since it has been quite a while since these articles appeared in the magazine, it will be beneficial to re-read them if possible.

We now look more closely at the trip and the destination in the words of our Lord in Matthew 7:13–14: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be that go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” The parallel passage in Luke 13:24 reads, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” According to Luke’s account, Jesus was going about preaching and teaching when someone asked him, “Lord, are there few that be saved?” In answer to this question the Lord gave the admonition of verse 24. According to Matthew’s account in verse 12, Jesus summarized his teachings with what is often called...
the golden rule and then spoke the words that are of interest to us.

In both Matthew and Luke we encounter a metaphor of our spiritual lives expressed by the earthly figure of a journey to a destination. As he so often did, Jesus is talking about the kingdom of heaven, which is defined here in terms of life. The meaning is that the essence of the kingdom of heaven is eternal life. Conversely, Jesus also speaks of destruction and the path that leads to it.

We must grasp the analogy. Jesus speaks of routes to destinations, whether that end is life or destruction. He does not speak of an aimless wandering, but of ways and goals. Everyone must travel on one way or the other. The two are inseparably connected: the way inevitably must lead to the end.

Two options are presented. One possibility is that of a broad way and a wide gate. The other is a narrow way and a strait gate. When he speaks of the narrow way, Jesus uses a word that calls to mind the figure of grapes being compressed or stomped on. That narrow way leads to a strait gate; Christ uses a word from which we get the English term stenosis. In contrast, there is a broad way; it is spacious, wide, and smooth. It leads to a wide gate through which it is easy to pass. The word gate calls to mind the idea of a walled city. In that wall are two openings or portals, used to control access into or out of the city. One portal is wide, while the other is extremely narrow.

There is a double relationship between the two routes of which Jesus speaks.

First, they are parallel. The figure implies that all who travel start from the same place, but then walk different paths to the same destination. The paths, however, are parallel; they run next to each other, or at least one can be seen from the other. To apply the figure to our lives, the idea is that the beginning of the routes is our birth. We then travel one of two routes of life to the eventual destination of our death, followed by our eternal destiny. The fact that both of these routes are mentioned as options means that they are closely related: either route will get us to the destination. We must choose one or the other.

Second, the ways are very different. The broad way is like a freeway. The road is wide, smooth, and straight, and you can easily travel 70 mph. In contrast, the narrow road is little more than a trail. As you sail down the freeway, you can barely notice that it exists. While the freeway eliminates the variations of the terrain and straightens out the sharp curves, the trail follows every bump and twist of the landscape. As it leads through the underbrush, the trail is irregular, rugged, and littered with obstructions and boulders that make for slow going and sprained ankles. If you do not watch where you put your feet, you can easily fall off its cliffs; it is next to impossible to navigate.

Included in Jesus’ analogy is a twofold end or goal of the journey along one of these ways. One is wide. It can be seen from a distance and affords easy entry. No one can miss it. It has no gate and no security, and you can pass through it with no problems. The other is obscure and obstructed. It is tiny, barely wide enough for a person to squeeze through it. You have to search in order to find it. When you do find it, you have to claw your way through the thorn bushes and underbrush to get to it.

The two gates open with opposite results. The wide gate opens to destruction. Jesus here uses a strong word that means utter destruction, a perish- ing, a complete ruin. He speaks therefore of the eternal destruction of hell. The narrow gate leads to the eternal life of heaven, for eternal life means to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. The two portals are graphically pictured in the 1561 edition of John Calvin’s *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. On the title page is a picture of them. The one is narrow with a thorn bush in the entrance and a crown over the top; the other is broad with a flower in the entrance and a flame over the top.

Two kinds of people travel different paths to different destinations. One kind is the “many,” who go to destruction. The other is the “few,” who go into life. This is Jesus’ answer to the man who asked, “Lord, are there few who be saved?” Implied in the contrast is the truth of divine double predestination. Jesus himself said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” The elect of God are always the minority, a small remnant. The vast majority take the easy route to the wide gate. These are the only alternatives.

Nevertheless, it is possible that the travelers change ways temporarily. Some may leave the wide way and try the narrow trail for a time. But this does not last long, because the way is too difficult. Some on the narrow way may veer off the trail and try the freeway for a while. Humanly speaking, this is understandable. We all like the easy way just because it is easy. Why take the arduous trail? The freeway looks good: why struggle along the rough
trail when the freeway is so near and so easy? The freeway has nice motels and restaurants. The hikers on the trail carry their tents on their backs and have just enough rice and beans to last them one day. If they switch routes, they are looking only at the easy and attractive way, not at the destruction to which it leads. But if they truly belong on the narrow way, they will return to it.

Christ commands his hearers to travel the narrow way and enter the strait gate. According to Luke, he says, “Struggle to enter in.” In a general sense this command comes to all who read Christ’s words in scripture and who hear them in the preaching of the gospel. Everyone is obligated to walk the trail to the narrow gate. Most do not obey. They are reprobate who go down the broad way and in the way of their sin pass through the wide gate into eternal destruction. Only the few, God’s elect, by the word of the Holy Spirit, can hear the word of the Lord and obey it.

I have not in every instance drawn every point of comparison between Jesus’ analogy and our spiritual life because I do not believe that this is necessary. The meaning of the figure is sufficiently clear. But let’s apply the metaphor a bit more specifically.

We are instructed that there are two possible destinations for our lives: life and destruction. Young people, toward which destination are you traveling in your young lives? Travel you must. Everyone must walk the road of life, and everyone must enter life or destruction, heaven or hell.

Through which gate will you enter?

It matters, because this concerns your eternal destiny.

It matters, because the gates determine the ways. The broad way leads to the wide gate, and the narrow way leads to the strait gate. If you start on the broad way, where will you finish?

You can’t take the wide freeway of life and then at the last second veer off and duck through the narrow gate. That would be nice, wouldn’t it? But it doesn’t work that way.

So what way are you on?

Don’t say, as especially you young people are apt to do: “I think I’ll take the freeway for a while. I can always try the trail later.” That’s a great temptation for all of us, perhaps more so for young people than for mature people of God. But there are no shortcuts to heaven. Christ commands us to strive to enter the kingdom. This means in our whole life, not just at the end of it. The acorn of regeneration must grow into the oak of sanctification in our entire lives.

So, young strangers and sojourners, heed the word of the Lord.

In obedience is blessing, both now and eternally. It may not appear to be so, because the way is a struggle; how is struggle a blessing?

Scripture gives the answer in Psalm 34:19: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous.” The promise is, “But the Lord delivereth him out of them all.”

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**Editor’s Notes**

Beacon Lights is undergoing some changes both visibly and behind the scenes.

The major and most apparent change is that we are changing business managers. The position of business manager is key to the publication of the magazine. Perhaps a better word would be “indispensable.” The business manager is an essential member of the publication staff. This person manages the finances, which is obviously important: no money, no magazine. This person also manages subscriptions: no subscribers, no magazine.

For the past nine years, Laura Kaptein has been our business manager, and she has done a fantastic job in managing both the finances and the subscriptions, as well as contributing in other ways to the continuation and improvement of the magazine. Those of us who have worked with her will affirm her value to Beacon Lights.

But now Laura has decided that the time has come for her to pass the torch to someone else. Although we would like to keep her, we respect her decision, and we thank her heartily for her good work. If you happen to meet her, please thank her in person.

Before leaving, she has created a new web-based management system designed specifically for Beacon Lights. This system will manage on an integral platform both the finances and the subscrip-
tions of the magazine. It will be easy to use and more efficient than the previous outdated system, and it will have potential applications not previously available. Laura has agreed to serve as a consultant for the near future to train her successor and to make enhancements to the program as necessary.

This improvement will not be apparent to our readers. Yet it is appropriate to mention it from a financial viewpoint. Our subscription income barely puts us at the break-even point from a cost standpoint. Any improvements, such as the cost of this new management system, cannot be figured into the subscription equation. It is in this context that church collections and donations become important. Using good stewardship, we have used these funds to enhance our service to you while keeping our low subscription fee at $15 per year. In this light we thank our people for their giving in church collections and especially those who donate to the magazine. These contributions are essential, and we sincerely thank all those who help us.

Laura’s leaving necessitates someone to take her place. *Beacon Lights* is pleased to announce the appointment of Matt Rutgers as her successor. Matt is a member of Hope (Walker) Protestant Reformed Church and a certified public accountant, which leads us to expect that he is capable of managing our finances. He is also vitally interested in the spiritual health and edification of our young people, and plans to play an integral part in the magazine. In the near future he will work with Laura during this time of transition. Updated contact information for the business manager appears in the masthead. Welcome, Matt!

Next, in the recent past I mentioned that we would like to receive some poems from our readers. The response to this request has not been exactly overwhelming. Thus I reiterate my request: all you poets out there, please put pen to paper.

Finally, this issue contains the editor’s last question from a reader to Schuyler and his response. Schuyler would like some more questions, preferably those of the difficult variety. Feel free to ask him.

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**Ask Schuyler**

**Dear Schuyler,**

While most conservative Christians see a problem with gambling, many of these same people are comfortable with investing money in the stock market, bonds, or other securities as a means to earn income. Easy electronic access to these investments means that people can easily buy and sell stocks at the click of a button in the comfort of their home. Risky investment strategies such as day-trading seem to come very close to gambling in my opinion, but not everyone I talk to feels the same way.

Other than texts that generally refer to stewardship of our God-given resources, are there clear scriptural texts or principles that can be used to define the line between sturdily investing and foolish gambling in the stock market?

**Response**

Before I answer the question, I would like to address in a few words the subject of Christian liberty. The questioner speaks of many “seeing” a problem with one activity, and others not “feeling” the same way. This is an instance in which we should bear Christian liberty in mind.

Christian liberty concerns *indifferent* things. By indifferent we do not mean that they are unimportant, but that the Bible neither commands nor condemns them. Some things are obviously sinful. These are always forbidden. Examples would be stealing, murder, or adultery. Some things are obviously duties. These are always commanded. Examples would be loving your spouse and prayer. But the life of the Christian in the world includes a huge number of activities that cannot be so easily classified. May
I play chess; may I drink wine; may I wear certain clothing; may I observe a certain day? These are issues of Christian liberty. The subject of Christian liberty is one of the most contentious in the church. The New Testament speaks in terms of “weaker” and “stronger” brother (Rom. 14; 1 Cor. 8 and 10). The “weaker” brother has an oversensitive conscience, and does not properly grasp his freedom in Christ. We must remember two things in this regard. First, the stronger brother is not permitted to despise the weaker brother (Rom. 14:3). Take the example of the brother who believes (wrongly) that it is sin to drink wine. The Christian who enjoys a glass of wine must not sneer condescendingly at his wine-avoiding brother, and he must not flaunt his wine-drinking in front of his brother. That is to despise him. Second, the weaker brother is not permitted to judge his brother. The wine-avoiding brother must not accuse his wine-drinking brother of sin and look down on him as less holy because he enjoys an occasional glass of wine. That is to judge him. Let us live charitably in the church.

The reader asks about investing money in the stock exchange. The Bible does not address this directly. It neither commands nor condemns investing in the stock exchange. That should give us pause before we judge someone in that situation. Instead we apply biblical principles and seek to come to a conclusion without being dogmatic and absolutist. What is investment? Here is a workable definition: “to invest is to participate in and benefit from the growth and earnings of a company through purchasing shares of ownership in that company.” When that company makes a profit, the shareholders in that company make money on their investment. The problem is that investment involves an element of risk, because the value of investments can fall as well as rise. At this point there are some who believe that investing in the stock market is akin to gambling. The element of risk does not in itself prove that it is gambling. All investment involves an element of risk. Hiding money in your house, entrusting it to the bank, taking out a mortgage, or investing money in your business or in someone else’s business are examples of our use of money. None of them is foolproof. Riches are uncertain! Do not put your trust in them! “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, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19–21); “Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom. Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle toward heaven” (Prov. 23:4–5).

It is possible to sin while investing in the stock market. No doubt the New York Stock Exchange or Wall Street is filled with greedy, covetous sinners. But that does not mean that a Christian cannot glorify God through investing wisely in stocks. A more important question is what the Christian intends to do with the money he earns on his investments. Hoard it? Save it for something important? Invest it in the church, the Christian schools and missions? Finally, there is a difference between speculating (high risk) and investing (low to medium risk). A Christian who understands the obligation of stewardship will not approach this activity as if he were playing in a casino. He will seek out the wisdom of a financial advisor to help him with prudent investment.

I hope this is of some help to the reader. Schuyler

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Choosing a Vocation

Cara Kuiper

Caring for Those with Disabilities

Once you are in high school, you begin to think about what you want to do after graduation. I always thought I would get married and have children. I had no interest in continuing my education, and I did not want to write another paper or do homework again in my life. I
started to work for a preschool child care center soon after graduation, and within a few years my boss informed me that I should think about taking some classes on child development through Grand Rapids Community College. I did not know what to say to her and was upset my entire drive home. I did not want to go to college, but after much prayer I decided to schedule some child development classes.

One of the more interesting classes I remember was about children with special needs. At the time I remember wondering how beneficial that class would be. However, a short time later I began caring for some children at the child care center who had special needs. Over the years I would find myself pulling out the syllabus and looking up different disabilities, as well as doing additional research at the library to help myself understand the different disabilities. I began to see the good in that conversation with my boss. The Lord used this schooling to mold and prepare me for different situations that would come up in my life.

The realization of what parents go through with caring for children with special needs was a little bit closer to my personal life. First, my nephew was diagnosed with autism. Soon after that my good friend had a daughter who was born and diagnosed with the disability called Myotonic Muscular Dystrophy. As I visited and cared for those whom I loved, I became more interested to help as I was able. I saw the struggles that these parents went through day after day while caring for their children and began to wonder whether there was a small way I could help to lighten their load. As it turns out, there was.

In the spring of 2005, a notification was placed in the bulletins of our churches that help was needed with monthly outings that were held for children and adults with special needs. These outings continue to be held on the third Saturday of the month. The purpose of these outings is to give parents a small respite from caring for these children, as well as to involve those with special needs in activities with others who have disabilities. Through these outings volunteers are able to interact with these children and adults while learning more about their disabilities. The committee was looking for volunteers to plan outings, as well as transport the members to outings and assist them with activities. I began volunteering at the outings and found it very rewarding to see these children and adults have so much fun while participating in the activities.

Soon, I was asked if I could help care for one of the adults, since her father was on a committee that involved her parents traveling from time to time. This experience taught me first-hand the many sacrifices that parents and caregivers go through to care for those with disabilities. It was a matter of getting up at 5:00 in the morning to help her with breakfast, make her lunch, and help her get ready for the bus by 7:00. As I sat there wondering if I had enough energy for the rest of the day, she was excited for the work that waited for her! The everyday activities that her parents completed were a lesson for me to learn. For instance, while our fingers are perfectly capable of opening a zip lock baggie, she would need her baggies closed with only one twist of the twisty tie to make it easy for her to open the bag.

As I think back to that weekend, I am still awe-struck by what is required of a parent who has a child with special needs. Some of these children and adults will live with their parents for their whole life, which requires many sacrifices by the parents. We can see in this a beautiful example of God’s grace being sufficient in every circumstance. In 1 Thessalonians 5:11 we read, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” We learn from this verse the importance of offering our support and encouragement to parents of children with special needs. These parents need our continual prayers that they be content in the way in which the Lord has led them.

About three years ago I heard that Georgetown Harmony Homes needed a weekend caregiver in the girl’s home. Georgetown Harmony Homes has two homes that were built for developmentally disabled adults. Each home has six bedrooms, as well as many features to handle handicaps of all kinds. I applied for this position because it interested me, but I have gained way more knowledge than one could imagine. During one weekend every month, I am responsible for providing a caring atmosphere for the residents. I am also responsible for making meals, helping with house cleaning chores, and assisting the residents with laundry and personal care.

Before I could start this job, the state required that I take two classes. The first class was on medication administration. While working at the home, I must have each resident’s medicine ready in the morning and at night. Not only must the residents take the medicine prescribed by their doctor, but they must also take vitamins and supplements to support their
immune system. It is my job to record properly the medication administered, even if it is just a Tylenol. The records must be very detailed, including the amount of medication the residents received, the time they received the medication, and the reason they took what I administered. It is important for me to make sure I put all the medication for each resident into a cup without physically touching and contaminating the pills. Then I make sure when I set it down that the right resident takes the right medication. As I set my alarm for the next morning, I need to be aware of how long it might take me to prepare meds before 8 AM. If a resident leaves to go on vacation or overnight to their parent’s house, I must have the medication ready to send home and have the parents sign it out. Also, it is essential to be conscious of food allergies when cooking, and if a resident is lactose intolerant, I must record and administer a pill for that as well.

The other class I had to take was on resident’s rights. There are state and federal laws that allow these residents to have the same rights as you and I. It is important to remember that they are able to make many decisions for themselves. It is important to note that in this job, like that of a teacher or doctor, there is a certain right to protect the resident and understand the confidentiality involved. This is essential to remember when working with children and adults with special needs.

As part of my job at Harmony Homes, I am required to plan an activity for the residents to do on Saturday that involves them in the community. This is the most enjoyable part of my job. Through these activities I have learned patience and been taught many lessons from these adults. It is a blessing to be able to see the joy that these residents have in the activities that are planned. There are endless possibilities for activities, from visiting an orchard to completing an activity at Home Depot. Recently I took the residents there to complete a bird house project. The residents nailed the bird houses together, and one of them commented that they did not know it was so easy to nail something together. They also were able to spend time painting them, and I had to explain to a blind resident what colors were on the plate so she could paint her bird house. The girls were excited with what they were able to achieve, and looked forward to giving their bird houses away once they were completed!

Another privilege of my job is to help the girls make meals. They get right into the kitchen and put toppings on the homemade pizza, or they help assemble the burritos before I put them in the oven. They also have chores that they are required to do, such as rinsing off their own plates after meals before loading them into the dishwasher, sorting and washing their clothes, and dusting and vacuuming their rooms. Just as they have jobs around the house, there are jobs in the community that they keep busy with during the day. Many of the residents have to get up at 5:30 in the morning to catch the bus by 6:30, and they all are out of the house for a good portion of the day. Yet I never hear them complain about getting up so early or grumble about making their lunch. They do these things cheerfully, which is something we can learn from their example. The Friday night dinner table is always filled with talk of the week, like collecting the grocery carts from around the parking lot during the rain storm or cleaning someone else’s food tray.

As I read the devotional after supper, the girls ask questions about the meaning of the Bible story. I am reminded that most of them did not grow up going to church twice a Sunday, never attended catechism, and did not have other learning privileges that we take for granted. Just recently at their Thursday night special ministries, the girls studied The Lord’s Prayer. How many of us learned that when we were younger?

It is truly wonderful that the children at some of our Christian schools are able to participate in special classes that teach about a handful of the different disabilities that we come into contact with. I encourage teachers to make a point of talking to their students and helping them to realize that there are areas in which others in the classroom need help. After all, we are all given different abilities and talents in order to help each other in the kingdom of our Lord. A few verses that would be helpful to these teachers in their discussion on special needs are Psalm 139:14–16, which reads “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.” I would also urge people to inquire about the outings that our
churches hold for our children and adults with special needs. Our committee already put out the need for help last spring, since we can always use more help at these outings. The majority of outings are local and do not cost much at all, but a huge reward is the benefit for attending. Another way to help is to be more considerate and offer help in times when you see a need arise. The child or adult will let you know if they do not need help, but it can be very frustrating to the one in need when they are watched and not offered help of any kind. Romans 15:1 says “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” Think on these words if the situation arises.

I hope through reading this article you have been given insight into a few of the everyday tasks we often take for granted that a parent or caregiver of a person with special needs must be available for. Whether it is words of encouragement, a prayer, or holding the door so someone in a wheelchair can get through, it is my constant prayer that we can be used to help those with special needs in a patient, loving way. I also hope that I have planted the seed for some of you to think about jobs that involve working with those with special needs. I know that Harmony Homes can always use patient and dedicated people to be called “weekend caregivers.”

I saw a wall hanging once that read “Let Go, Let God.” This was a good reminder to me that with God, anything is possible. Whatever the disability may be, it is little in comparison to what God can help us with. After finishing my weekends at Harmony Homes, I excitedly with the psalmist say, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God” (Ps. 40:8). It is my prayer that as parents, caregivers, teachers, and others within the church, you are able to experience as I have God’s purpose for including these children and adults within the kingdom of Christ. This is evident in 1 Corinthians 12:18–22, “But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary.”

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

Called to the Ministry

Rev. Clayton Spronk

I was once told that ministers tend to be the oldest children in their families. As the third of four children and second son, I do not fit that profile. The Lord added me on February 21, 1978 to the Spronk family while my dad, Delmar, served as an optometrist in the US Navy in Norfolk, Virginia. (Naturally, when I learned later in life that 8 US Presidents were born in Virginia, I concluded the Lord destined me for that office. My birthday would even fit with Presidents Day!) He and my mother, Jolene, already had a daughter, Amy (5), and a son, Clint (3). After a move to Sheldon, Iowa, God added the youngest, my brother Joel.

All my childhood memories are from when I lived in Sheldon, Iowa (15 miles east of Hull on Highway 18). My dad joined an optometry practice in the downtown area when I was one year old and still practices there today. I was baptized in a Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Norfolk Virginia but instructed and catechized in the First CRC of Sheldon. Catechism instruction began in third grade. My first catechism teacher and the first minister I remember was Rev. Jerome Julian. My next pastor and catechism teacher was Rev. John Vermeer. In the providence of God he happens to be the pastor of Oak Glen United Reformed Church, a few short miles from the parsonage in which my family lives.

God blessed me with parents who valued Christian schools. From kindergarten to eighth grade I attended Sheldon Christian School, which was one
short block away from our house. For high school my parents sent me to Western Christian in Hull.

In high school I had my first real interaction with Protestant Reformed people and theology. Before high school I did not really realize there were different denominations and different schools. I recall track meets in grade school where some of the Christian schools had the strange addition of “Prot” to their names. So (with apologies to Prof. Dykstra, who I later learned deeply dislikes the designation) I knew and referred to the PRs as Prots. No offence was intended, that was all I knew. In high school I became friends with a PR and thus began my journey to the PRC.

But this article is about how God led me to the ministry, so I must back up. My desire to enter the ministry—and yes, it was my desire—began at a young age. No, I was not one of those boys about whom everyone says, “I know someday he will be a minister.” Maybe I did not see it, but I do not think that people said while I was in grade school “there’s a future minister.” In fact, I was a rather poor student in grade school. My interest was in sports—all of them! I would rather play ball than read a book.

Yet the desire to be a minister did begin at a young age. I recall my dad saying often, “my boys will all be ministers.” It was an offhand comment. Maybe it was even really only a joke. Yet that comment still communicated to me that my dad viewed the ministry as the ideal calling for his sons. Though I did not always think I would be a minister one day, I carried with me the thought that it would be the ideal. I believe the Lord used my dad’s attitude and comment to make me seriously think about the call to the ministry. This is why I tell parents and pray that parents will encourage their sons to pursue the ministry at a young age.

The first person who directly and seriously encouraged me to enter the ministry was my Grandpa Bootsma. Grandpa B was an Iowa farmer (dairy, pigs, corn, and soybeans) near Sanborn, Iowa. During my high school years he was part of a group that left the CRC congregation in Sanborn and formed an independent congregation that later became United Reformed. I worked for Grandpa on the farm. We worked hard (throwing hundreds of bales of hay on the hottest days of summer), but we also loved to talk about the church. I didn’t at first. But Grandpa taught me to love talking about the church and about doctrine. At a time when many in the CRC did not take seriously the issues of higher criticism and women’s ordination, I worked with a grandpa who was teaching me the great importance of these issues. I began to take doctrinal issues very seriously and began to read. After I started showing interest, Grandpa encouraged me to go to seminary. I even remember him offering once to pay my way through seminary.

My grandpa was in the United Reformed Church and wanted me to attend Mid-America Reformed Seminary, but I ended up in the Protestant Reformed Churches and attended the PR Theological School. This is where my high school friends come in.

A classmate of mine, Rob Andringa (then and now a member of Hull PRC), first introduced me to common grace. Rob assured me I believed in common grace even though I had never heard of it. I am pretty sure that when I first heard the PRs talking about common grace that I thought they believed in it. I started reading pamphlets—A Triple Breach and Grace Uncommon, and others (the pamphlet racks in the back of our churches are very valuable). Studying the history of 1924 (I admit I sometimes tired of hearing the PRs mention that year), I became convinced that Hoeksema, Danhof, and Ophoff were correct. It was significant that I was studying the issue of common grace at a time when the evil fruits of the doctrine were so evident. It struck me that the terms reprobation and antithesis were not used in the CRC. Sadly, those teachings were lost. I was ready to leave the CRC because of issues such as women’s ordination. But once I became convinced that common grace was a serious error, I determined I could not join the URC. Therefore at the age of 17 I determined to join the PRC.

Around that time I made the significant decision that I would like to marry a Protestant Reformed girl. By the grace of God I was mature enough to view dating as preparation for marriage, and I wanted to marry someone who shared my beliefs. During my senior year at Western, I met Allison, a daughter of Alvin and Brenda Bylsma and a member of Hull PRC. We dated for two years and married on May 15, 1998 (our sixteenth anniversary is in a couple months). My wife’s family was influential for helping learn “what it means to be Protestant Reformed.”

I joined the Hull PRC in January of 1998, six months before our wedding. I was a student at Dordt College. I had thoughts about attending seminary, but did not think I knew the Protestant Reformed
Churches well enough. So I was majoring in history as a pre-law student.

After living in the Hull PRC church for two years, I became more and more convinced that I was in agreement with the Reformed doctrines as taught in the PRC. Even though I took the entrance examination for law school and began the process of applying to law schools, I began to think more and more seriously about seminary. My wife and I traveled to Grand Rapids to visit her sister, Belinda and to visit the seminary. I visited with Professors Decker, Dykstra, and Engelsma and sat in on some classes. This was when I decided to attend the Protestant Reformed Theological School. My wife and I returned to Iowa and the news began to spread.

Allison and I moved to Michigan after I graduated from Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa, in August of 2000. Our oldest daughter, Courtney, was only a week old. I needed to be in Michigan to take pre-seminary Greek with Professor Hanko. My classmate was Rev. Andy Lanning. Not only did I need to learn Greek, but according to Prof. Hanko, I also needed to learn English—grammar, that is. I did learn. It wasn’t always easy, but I enjoyed it. Prof. Hanko said, “God speaks loudly through the Greek program.” So it was a great confidence booster when I received a passing grade in Greek.

Seminary was four years of hard work and great memories—too many to detail here. It is impossible to overestimate how important the training men receive in our seminary is and how thankful we as churches should be for our seminary and professors. The standards of scholarship at our seminary are high. But more importantly, the professors were and are committed to the truth of God as taught in our confessions. There is a right spirit in our seminary. I experienced that the professors were not only interested in intellectual growth, but also spiritual growth. I thank God for them.

After seminary I waited over a year for a call. That was difficult, but God took care of me and my family by giving us an opportunity to spend seven wonderful months in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. We thank God for the fellowship now organized as a congregation in Sioux Falls. We and our children remember the saints in Sioux Falls fondly.

Believing that God did not call me at that time to be a missionary, I took the call to Peace PRC in Lansing, Illinois. My wife and I enjoy living in the parsonage here with our 7 children, Courtney (12), Brandon (11), Ashley (9), Brooke (7), Cristina (5), Amber (1), and Blake (5 months). We love being part of the congregation here and are blessed by the use of the PR grade school and high school in the area.

So for a little over five years I have been involved in the work of the ministry. The ministry is hard work—harder and busier than a seminary student knows or can imagine. There is a sense in which your family gives you up, especially your extended family, but even your immediate family. We don’t see family for every holiday (although Peace congregation is our family). There are meetings—a lot of them. There are difficult issues. But the Lord who calls also equips. And on top of that he blesses, so that overall the ministry is a joyful calling (and a much higher office than the office of President). Preaching, baptisms, catechism teaching, confessions of faith, weddings, even funerals—opportunities through which I am privileged to bring God’s word to his sheep.

Rev. Spronk is pastor of Peace Protestant Reformed Church in Lansing, Illinois.

There are three things that are never satisfied,
Yea, four things say not, It is enough:
The grave;
And the barren womb;
The earth that is not filled with water;
And the fire that saith not, It is enough.

—Proverb 30:15-16
Grace

He giveth hope when it seems like hope
is nothing, but a four letter word.
He giveth peace to a
troubled heart
when the heart has no
where else to turn.
He giveth patience when
nothing
seems to be going right.
He giveth grace when trials
seem to keep coming your way.
He giveth grace for each
and every day.
Grace,
what a wonderful gift
from the Savior!

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**February 11 Read Joel 1**

The occasion of Joel’s prophecy is not certain. It is possible that it was a prophecy to Judah after Israel’s captivity. In this first chapter he tells the people to observe the destruction caused by locusts and other insects. This destruction has affected much in the land, including the ability to bring gifts for the worship of Jehovah. We, like the people of that day, must observe what is happening around us. We, like them, must repent of our sins and seek to walk in a sanctified manner. May this be our goal. Sing Psalter 102.

**February 12 Read Joel 2**

The chapter continues with calls to repentance that were necessary in the land of God’s people to whom Joel prophesied. They are also necessary to the church of all ages, including the church of today. We need to hear such calls, and we need to heed such calls. Then the chapter goes into beautiful prophecy concerning future events. In verse 21 and following we see prophecies of the coming of Christ and of Pentecost. Peter uses this chapter as he explains to those gathered near the temple the happenings to the early church. There is another coming of Christ. Are we ready? Sing Psalter 63.

**February 13 Read Joel 3**

At the end of time God will bring judgement on his enemies and those of his beloved, elect people. Those enemies are prefigured in the nations around Judah. They had all caused God’s people much trouble; they would all be punished for their evils. This would be a comfort to the people to whom Joel was prophesying. This should be a comfort to us, the church who waits for the day of the Lord, when we shall all be delivered from the evil around us. May we watch and pray, always waiting for that blessed day. Sing Psalter 224.

**February 14 Read Amos 1**

In this prophecy we see that God uses a mere shepherd and only an employee of someone else for his purpose. That purpose was to prophesy of the calamities that would come upon the northern kingdom of Israel. Israel was living in a fairly prosperous time, but they obviously were depending upon their own strength and not the strength of Jehovah. After prophesying of a drought, Amos turns to the nations around Israel and pronounces judgement upon them. Some commentators look at the “three and four” formula as God’s way of announcing that the cup of iniquity was full for a certain people. The faithful in Israel could draw comfort that God had not forgotten them even in the throes of evil that abounded in their land. God has not forgotten us either; thanks be to him “from whom all blessing flow.” Sing Psalter 216.

**February 15 Read Amos 2**

After one more pronouncement of doom upon an evil nation, God, through Amos, shows that his people are not without reproach. Judah will feel his wrath because they have forsaken the law of God. While Israel could feel no solace in this judgement, as they had done worse, the faithful were warned to continue in that law. Then Amos turns to the main message of his parable. Israel too was walking in gross sins. They too would feel the wrath of God. It would not come in the days of the descendants of Jehu, but it would come. May we know that the day of the Lord is coming; let us watch and pray as we have been directed by Christ. Sing Psalter 206.

**February 16 Read Amos 3**

God has highly favored a certain people. In the old dispensation it was the nation Israel. Of the church of all ages it is those on whom he has shed his grace. This is a valuable asset. What is done with it? Israel of old turned to idolatry and other ways of life that were not in accordance with God’s law. As verse 3 asks, “Can two walk together except they be agreed?” God cannot agree with sin; therefore he no longer walked with Israel. Israel and any who do not walk in his way will find his judgement poured out upon them. May we walk with God in agreement with his commandments. Sing Psalter 326.

**February 17 Read Amos 4**

Verse 13 shows to us who and how great God is. He is the sovereign one who created heaven and earth, and by whose providence all things exist. Israel rebelled...
against that God. They did not follow his command-
ments, they worshiped idols, and they oppressed the
poor and needy. For those sins God’s judgements
would rest upon them. Nothing has changed. God is
still the sovereign God of heaven and earth. His law
must still be heeded. To do anything else is to bring
certain judgement upon you. Sing Psalter 129.

February 18 Read Amos 5
People of God, whom do you seek? Throughout
this chapter the people to whom Amos is speaking
are enjoined to seek Jehovah, creator of heaven and
earth. They are called to repentance from the sins that
have separated them from God, especially the sin of
idolatry. After calling them to seek good and not evil,
Amos exposes the sin of wrong worship. He reminds
them of the service of Israel in the wilderness and then
their service of gods such as Molech. So once again
we must ask the question: Whom do we serve and how
do we serve him? Sing Psalter 204.

February 19 Read Amos 6
Both Israel and Judah are addressed in this chapter.
Both are reproved for their disdain of Jehovah’s ways
and his judgements on them for their sins. They do not
seem to be affected by what has happened around them
even when it is evident that God punishes those
who sin against his holy name. Are we heeding this
warning? Does our lifestyle show that we trust in God
for all things? Is his holy name being revered in our
daily life and especially our worship? The work of God
through Amos is not just for Israel and Judah; it is for
us. Sing Psalter 273.

February 20 Read Amos 7
We see three figures of God’s judgment upon Israel.
First there is the judgment by grasshoppers, which is
followed by a judgement by fire. Amos’ prayers to God
stop both of these. In the third judgement Amos sees
a plumb line that finds Israel wanting. For that they
would be destroyed. A wicked priest of Bethel’s calf
tries to chase Amos from the land. Amos replies that
God has ordained his work, and that the priest for his
wickedness would lose everything. What will God’s
plumb line find about us? Only by Christ are we found
true by this righteous device. Sing Psalter 300.

February 21 Read Amos 8
There are three thoughts in this chapter. First we see
a basket of summer fruit; the picture is of fruit that is
ripe for eating, just as the ten tribes are ripe for destruc-
tion. Second, those who have oppressed others in the
nation are singled out for their sins. Instead of loving
their neighbor as themselves, they hated their neighbor,
showing that they hated God. Finally, a chilling word
is sent to them. They will have a famine. This famine
will not be a physical famine but a spiritual one, as
God’s word will be withheld from them. Let us take
heed that God does not remove his word from us. Sing Psalter 384.

February 22 Read Amos 9
This final chapter of Amos contains yet another vi-
sion in which Israel’s destruction is foretold. This vision
goes to the very core of their life: their worship in the
temple. Israel had forgotten God and had despised
his worship. Therefore he would bring his justice on
them, and they would be destroyed. But along with the
justice portrayed in the chapter there is also mercy. In
the last part of the chapter the prophet foretells of a
return. This is for the faithful. When Christ returns, will
he find us faithful? Sing Psalter 251.

February 23 Read Obadiah
This short prophecy can prove comforting to any
child of God of any age. Most of the prophecy deals
with the destruction that would come upon Edom.
Who was Edom? Edom was the descendants of Esau,
of whom God had said, “Esau have I hated.” Esau
plagued Jacob, and his descendants plagued Jacob’s
descendants even up until Judah’s captivity by Babylon.
For this God would utterly destroy them and bring his
people to blessed peace. While we do not have Edom’s
physical descendants to worry about, we do have its
spiritual descendants. They will plague the church until
Christ returns. At that time all the evil will be vanquished
and God’s people will be brought to eternal glory in
the new heavens and the new earth. Sing Psalter 379.

February 24 Read Jonah 1
Nineveh was the archenemy of Israel. Jonah was
called away from his work in Israel to go to this city.
Jonah could see no purpose in this calling and fled from
God, or so he thought. God found him on the ship,
and through the instrument of his storm caused the
sailors to find him out. Jonah had to see that he could
not leave God and his calling. We too must see this
lesson. We must carry out the calling God has laid upon
us no matter what it is. If we seek to flee from God,
rest assured that he will find us out. Sing Psalter 384.

February 25 Read Jonah 2
Here we have one of the most beautiful prayers in
the Bible. We do well to study this prayer often and see
what it affords to us. We did not mention the miracle
of Jonah in the fish’s belly yesterday. It was a miracle,
and through this miracle Jonah was taught to seek God
through prayer. Imagine his feelings as he landed in the
water, was engulfed by the huge fish, and then was not
consumed. Jonah does what we must do when faced
with a difficult situation, and that is an understatement. We must pray, and we must pray without ceasing for deliverance, which comes from Jehovah who made the heavens and the earth. Sing Psalter 72.

**February 26 Read Jonah 3**

After three days in the fish’s belly (Jesus uses this as a sign of his resurrection), Jonah is spit onto dry land and called to go and preach in Nineveh. Now he carries out the command of the Lord, and he does it by faith. Nineveh was a large, powerful, and exceedingly wicked city. It took the courage of faith to preach of its destruction. What was the reason for such preaching? I think there are two. First, Jonah must preach in Nineveh for the few people of God who reside there. Second, Israel had to learn of God’s power so that they might believe. Sometimes we are given hard callings. Will we flee or will we obey the word of Jehovah? Sing Psalter 28.

**February 27 Read Jonah 4**

Jonah was still zealous and jealous for God’s people in Israel. In his zealously he was upset with God for not destroying Nineveh. Jonah did not see the whole of God’s counsel. Jonah did not see how God would work salvation for all of his people, Jew and Gentile, and bring about the kingdom of Christ. Through a gourd God brings Jonah to repentance. It was a hard lesson that Jonah had to learn. It is the lesson that we must learn as well. We do not know the whole of God’s counsel because it is “past finding out.” We must be patient and wait for God to carry out that counsel and wait for the day when Christ will come and usher in the kingdom of God. May we pray for that patience and live a life of patience as we wait that day. Sing Psalter 66.

**February 28 Read Micah 1**

God will judge sin and those who commit sin. In the prophecy of Micah we find that the chief sin being judged is the sin of idolatry. Israel and Judah had both fallen into this sin during the time period of Micah enumerated in verse 1. It was not until the reign of Hezekiah that they started to rid themselves of this sin for a time. The second commandment states that the reason for God’s judgement of this sin is that he is a jealous God. Do we worship him in the way he has commanded, or does our worship fall away from the worship principles found in scripture? Let us worship the holy God as he has directed us. Sing Psalter 137.

**March 1 Read Micah 2**

Other sins that God’s people had fallen into were the oppression of those within the house of God. Those who were poor and downtrodden were preyed upon by others. There was no mercy and love shown to those who needed it. In the first chapter sins against the first table of the law are enumerated. Now we see that Israel had fallen into sins concerning the second table of the law. God’s command to us is that we love God with all our being, and that we love our neighbor as ourselves. We must keep each law of both tables of that law. Sing Psalter 24.

**March 2 Read Micah 3**

Micah reproves the leadership of Israel for their wicked ways in this chapter. Those whom God has appointed as the leaders of his church have a very high calling. Ministers must preach the pure word of God and speak the truth to his people. Elders must rule in a way that pleases God and is good for the church. While the priests are not mentioned, they and their New Testament counterparts, the deacons, must show themselves merciful. In Israel kings and prophets had been guilty of the sins that would bring the church to destruction. Leaders of God’s flock today, give heed to Micah 3 and walk in a way that is good for the church and is pleasing to God. Sing Psalter 223.

**March 3 Read Micah 4**

After foretelling the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem, Micah now brings a word of comfort to God’s people. In that word of comfort we find that the church would be restored and would live a life of peace. We know in history Judah returned from captivity and was able to rebuild their society. It could not be a perfect society because that is not for this earth. This chapter looks ahead to when the entire church, made up of people from all nations, will come to the new Jerusalem whose ruler will be the prince of peace, our savior, Christ Jesus. Sing Psalter 125.

**March 4 Read Micah 5**

The first verse announces more of the troubles for Judah. Verse two announces the birth of Christ in the little town of Bethlehem. The following verses announce the greatness of Christ’s kingdom. It was only the faithful remnant who would cleave to the promise of the Messiah. We know that in Bethlehem Christ was born. Do we believe that he will return again, vanquish all his and our enemies, and lead us into the kingdom of heaven? Many children have recited Micah 5:2 for Christmas programs. Do we have the childlike faith to believe the true Christmas story? Sing Psalter 198.

**March 5 Read Micah 6**

After the beautiful promises found in the previous chapters, the prophet turns to the nation of Israel and its sins. God recounts how he had brought them into the promised land. Then he enumerates Israel’s sins throughout history. Among these words are those of
verse 8. Do we need to know what we must do in order to please God? The words found there are not a litany of the good works needed to go to heaven. Those words, like the familiar words in James, “True religion...” are the way we can live a life of thankfulness before God. Let us take them to heart and let those works be evident in our lives. Sing Psalter 24.

March 6 Read Micah 7

The final chapter of this prophecy is a prayer uttered by the prophet on behalf of the people. In the first part the church laments her small size and seemingly destitute situation. Later she confesses that she must trust upon God and not man. We also find in this heartfelt prayer a confession of sin. In the last part of the chapter we find God’s answer. He has not abandoned his people. He will gather them and bring them together in a glorious kingdom. May we pray this prayer, knowing that our help comes from God alone and not from anyone on this earth. Sing Psalter 352.

March 7 Read Nahum 1

One hundred years after Jonah preached in Nineveh, the prophet Nahum pronounced her destruction. She had afflicted and carried into captivity the ten tribes. Now she will be destroyed because of her wickedness. In this destruction we find grace for the people of God. Notice the various phrases that extol our gracious covenant God. God has not forgotten his people. He will come to them with a gracious message. Like the remnant of Israel we too have hope in Jehovah. Sing Psalter 289.

March 8 Read Nahum 2

In this chapter on the burden of Nineveh, we read of the destruction of the capital of Assyria by Nebuchadnezzar and the great armies of Babylon. Nineveh is judged for two faults. First, they are judged for their own sins. They did not continue in their repentance of the day of Jonah. Second, they are judged for their cruel destruction of Israel. The God-fearing remnant is remembered by the sovereign God of heaven and earth. That sovereign God who caused Assyria to mete out punishment to backsliding Israel also caused Nebuchadnezzar to go through the world meting out God’s judgment and punishment to various nations and even to Judah, his own people. Do we recognize the sovereign God in today’s world? We should, and we must bow before him who rules over all things. Sing Psalter 275.

March 9 Read Nahum 3

In this final chapter of the prophecy of Nineveh’s destruction, we read how great that destruction was. We might wonder what the use of these chapters is. The answer is simple. It is a historical fact that Nineveh was brought to destruction just as Nahum said. Those who saw the ruin of this great city—and it was a great one—and who knew of this prophecy would have to conclude that God is a true God. What about us? As we look around the world and the happenings in the world, do we see the hand of God at work? Do we conclude that Jehovah, he is the God? And if we do, do we live out of that truth? God is coming again to judge the nations and deliver his people. Let us wait for such a deliverance. Sing Psalter 353.

March 10 Read Habakkuk 1

We know little about the prophet Habakkuk. From his prophecy we can conclude that he lived during the time of Nebuchadnezzar, especially as the king of Babylon lurked outside the walls of Jerusalem. Habakkuk worries about God’s people. In the first part of the chapter he worries about the sins that they commit and the awfulness of those sins. After God shows him that Babylon will destroy Judah because of those sins, he worries about the destruction this wicked nation would bring upon the people of God. In his words he acknowledges, as we must, that God is a righteous judge and his way is right. Sing Psalter 93.

March 11 Read Habakkuk 2

Habakkuk receives a good answer from God. Those who have continued in the law and the glory of God will receive a blessing even in the destruction that will come. We read those familiar words in verse 4 that “the just shall live by faith.” Do we still live out of this watchword of the great reformation? Do we live by faith? Then we have the familiar words found in the last verse. When we worship, which should be often, we must keep silence before God because he is the only one to be worshipped by his people, and he must be worshiped in spirit and in truth. Sing Psalter 187.

March 12 Read Habakkuk 3

After the final words of chapter two, Habakkuk breaks out into a beautiful psalm or song. From the structure of the chapter some have concluded that the prophet was a Levite who was in charge of praising God in song. It is a beautiful psalm that shows us much about our God. It is a psalm in which the great works of God are extolled as true and just. As Habakkuk finishes the psalm he makes a personal confession of faith. Can we take these words upon our lips, and do they come from our hearts? Let us ever praise God for the goodness that he has given to us and will give to us in the days to come. Sing Psalter 13.
Myanmar

Myanmar is located in Asia, roughly between Singapore and India, about halfway around the world. The climate is a lot like Singapore’s—hot and humid. There is no winter and summer, only the rainy and dry seasons. The population is 55 million people, almost 2½ times larger than that of Australia. This is ironic, because we have all heard of the “Aussies,” and we know where Australia is located. But Myanmar? Who knows where that is?

Religion in Myanmar is primarily Buddhist at 89%. Christianity is 4% and Muslim is 4%. You may have heard of the Buddhist monks marching in silent protest in 2007, and more recently the clashes between the Muslims and the Buddhists. Myanmar was formerly known as Burma. If you look up the facts in the cia.gov web site, you will have to look under “Burma,” because the US government did not recognize the Myanmar military government established in 1962. For 50 years the military has ruled the country with an iron fist. This is changing. The military authorities recently released Suu Kyi, the people’s choice for president, from roughly 20 years of house arrest, and is giving the people and Suu Kyi a small part in the government. Last November President Obama became the first US president to visit Myanmar, and he referred to it as “Myanmar,” thus giving the current form of government more validity in the eyes of the world. There are many interesting political reasons for all of this, but the most interesting fact is that all of this is divine providence for the gathering of his church.

Economically, the difference between the US and Myanmar cannot be more striking. The US is at the top of the economic ladder. Myanmar is nearly at the bottom. In the GDP per capita, the US is #14 in the world, at $50,700. Of the 229 countries listed in the CIA fact book, Myanmar is #206 at $1,400. Westerners can make $100-$200 or more a day. Jobs are available. Myanmar people make $2 a day, if they can find a job. I can describe the situation in words, quote facts, and show charts. But it does not sink in to our Western minds…until you actually go there.

I relate the visit in November 2012 that Hank Vander Waal and I made to Myanmar. Hank had never been outside the US, other than a trip to Bermuda, so there is a Western level of expectation. Our Western minds do not comprehend the differences between the countries. Hank heard all the stories and knew things were “different.” How different? Upon our arrival, I’m explaining the country to Hank. I am actually surprised how much better things looked since the last time I was there 3 years earlier. As I’m explaining this to Hank, the sun is setting, the smog is thick, the soot from diesel fuel is sticking to your face and arms, the smells are overpowering, the noise is loud, the heat and humidity are oppressive, and the roads are full of bumps and holes. I glance over at Hank, and his mouth hangs wide open in shock and dismay. “John,” he says, “this is much worse than I ever imagined.” Welcome to Myanmar.

The main focus in Myanmar at present is our work with Rev. Titus. Years ago he was given his first Christian instruction as a young man under the direction of the Presbyterian church from South Korea. He was a bright young man, and was selected for more training in Singapore. He left his family in Myanmar to study for 2 years in Singapore. While there, he came across a copy of the Standard Bearer in the library. The articles were very distinct, and the instruction was used by the Holy Spirit to tweak his curiosity. He wrote to the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA) asking for more information. When the PRCA learned that he was in Singapore, they recommended that he contact the Evangelical Reformed Churches of Singapore (ERCS), right where he was studying. There he first met Rev. Kortering. As you may recall, about 18 years ago Rev. Kortering was minister-on-loan from the PRCA to the ERCS. This man, Rev. Titus, became very interested in the Reformed faith as explained in the creeds and as taught in our Reformed circles.
He attended the Presbyterian seminary by day, and spent the afternoons and evenings being tutored by Rev. Kortering. The two years were almost up for his studies in Singapore. He had many doctrinal questions for the Presbyterian Seminary in Singapore. Because of this, he was sent back to Myanmar and not allowed to graduate. There he began to teach the people with whom he had contact the truths as explained in the creeds we hold in the PRCA and in the ERCS. He convinced two of the congregations to create the Protestant Reformed Churches of Myanmar. One of these congregations ordained him and sent him to Yangon, the largest city in Myanmar, as a new church plant. Under the direction of the ERCS, and for a period of about 10 years, development continued. The ERCS taught the congregations about the proper work of the office bearers and other doctrinal positions well-documented in the creeds of the Reformed faith. The ERCS helped Rev. Titus and the PRCM with necessary spiritual instruction and with financial assistance for teaching seminars and benevolence.

With the work of the ERCS, and at its height, the churches in Myanmar developed into many congregations in various areas of Myanmar: two congregations in Irrawaddy Division (middle of the country) with a total of 15 families; one congregation in Yangon where Rev. Titus is the pastor, with a total of 11 families; five congregations in five villages in the Ra Khine State (at the border of Bangladesh) with a total of 65 families; and three congregations in the Chin State (border of India), comprised of 26 families.

When the ERCS dissolved in the summer of 2006, members of Hope’s diaconate became concerned that there could be benevolent needs in Myanmar, since we knew that the ERCS had helped the PRCM with benevolence. The Contact Committee of the PRC recommended they contact Rev. Kortering, who had ongoing contacts in the East. Rev. Kortering informed our diaconate of the urgent needs for benevolence in the PRCM.

Meanwhile Rev. Kortering was looking to relieve himself of various responsibilities that fell on him during his time as minister on loan in Singapore. One of those responsibilities included supervising and managing the Special Projects Fund. He returned to the USA with a request from Rev. Titus for a PRC congregation to take up the work that the ERCS had been doing—spiritual advising, teaching in the seminars, and various financial needs. After

Counting Rev. Titus’ family, there are 12 families in the Yangon Protestant Reformed Church of Myanmar and one orphanage. As you can see from the group picture, there are over 50 individuals. Rev. Titus has a home/church, where they meet for two services each Sunday and catechism lessons on week days.
some investigation Hope’s council decided to take on all the work with the PRCM: benevolence under the deacons, and church operation with Rev. Titus’ support under the council.

Hope’s council also began making plans to visit Myanmar. However, in early May 2008, before we could visit, Myanmar was struck by Cyclone Nargis, which left over 138,000 dead and tens of thousands injured and homeless. Our visit plans were put on hold for almost a year. Thus our first visit was in March 2009.

The Myanmar Committee and deacons of Hope Church have regular correspondence with Rev. Titus. We find that email is the most reliable. We have progressed from Rev. Titus’ using an internet café to a broadband (sort of, anyway) brought right into the church/home. We can also contact him on his cell phone with Skype. Skype to his computer generally does not work reliably, allegedly due to the heavy filtering that happens at the Myanmar border. We can download documents and videos for instruction quite readily now. Our work right now is primarily using the internet to send instructional information. We also had Rev. Titus record his sermons on CDs for distribution to the churches in northern Myanmar. He recorded two years of sermons. Rev. Titus also produces a Sunday Digest weekly, and various RFPA books have been translated into Burmese. You will find this and other work Rev. Titus has produced on the web site of the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland. See this work under Burmese at: http://www.cprf.co.uk/languages.htm, where Rev. Angus Stewart has likely the world’s most comprehensive multi-language collection of Reformed literature in over 100 languages.

The Church militant here on earth continues to develop. We can see firsthand that the gospel is going to all nations and languages. This is a requirement before the end of time. I would also like to make an observation about this. I find it interesting that PRCA westerners believe, for good reasons, that we have the truth. We also can see that we have the wealth. This puts us in an enviable and responsible position. I include myself. Certainly we would not trade positions with someone in Myanmar! My observation, however, is that the people in Myanmar are happier than I would have expected. As many of us know, when life is hardest, this is when you grow spiritually. Perhaps the saints in Myanmar are in that enviable position. Remember Rev. Titus and the saints in Myanmar in your prayers.

John is an elder at Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

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**Christian Living**

**Suzanne Looyenga**

**The Company of the White Horse**

They are one of many small military units like them positioned around the earth, and like most of them, they number fewer than 350 strong. Youthful, energetic, and eager, most of them were already brought by their dedicated parents to training centers at the early age of about five or six years old. The purpose already then was that they might be further exercised in the art of a very specialized form of warfare, one requiring even small children to be prepared as early as possible.

Now that these children have entered their teens, they have been transferred, again by their parents, to a more specialized base in order to continue their training. Apprenticed to more seasoned soldiers, they become more knowledgeable in the areas of expertise that they will need for the ongoing battle with a most formidable enemy—an ancient foe most sly and swift and subtle.

There have been great sacrifices made by the parents of these children in order to obtain this quality of training for their offspring. Remarkably, parents like them have continued to make this sacrifice for generations already. While many scoff at the exorbitant amount they are willing to spend for their children’s battle-readiness, these parents consider their children to be of noble heritage, and
their training as both a mandate from their King and crucial for their survival. Hence, the cost does not deter them from sending every one of their children who is capable of undergoing the rigorous exercise that this education requires, regardless of their own personal discomfort or inconvenience.

This particular regiment of young warriors, both male and female, calls themselves “The Company of the White Horse.” To all appearances, although they show their youthful vigor and energy well, they are just average youth, much like those found among their fellow citizens upon earth: tall, medium, short in build; dark-haired, blonde, or red-haired. Some are athletic, while others are not so; some are academically inclined, while others struggle with books and learning. What distinguishes them from their peers, however, is not their physical stature or beauty or intellect or strength, but their awareness of their surroundings, of their enemy, and of their purpose in life.

They have obtained this very specialized knowledge not from a training manual, but from a personal letter directed to them by the King himself. It was given long ago, first in oral tradition, and then later written down and preserved for many, many generations by the King’s own command. So precious is it, and so unlike any other literary document on earth, that it is known simply as The Word.

The parents have seen to it that this volume has been present in the lives of their children since they were extremely small, and its priceless treasures measured out to them in small tidbits before they even had very many words of their own. Now as these children have come to years of discretion, they have begun more and more to grasp the truth about this marvelous gift given to their fathers long ago by the King himself: It is a sword meant for protection, for perseverance, for power. It is the Sword of the Word of the King!

Besides the awful face of the King himself, that Sword of the Word is the only weapon that has proved effective in the warfare against the Enemy. If I speak as though that war for which they are daily in training has already begun, it is because this war has been no Thirty Years’ War or even a Hundred Years’ War, as violent and long-lasting as they were. It is not even a World War that this regiment faces together. The war that threatens them is cosmic in its scope—a war across time and space and the universe. Even more horribly, it is a war not against flesh and blood warriors like their human selves, creatures against whom they could possibly defend themselves with the right training in physical strength and advanced weaponry. No, it is a cosmic war involving powers and principalities, potentates, and the very Prince of the Powers of Darkness himself...

Sometimes they seem to understand this, these brave young soldiers in the Company of the White Horse. Their leaders are humbled by the very real presence of the King’s power evident in their young lives. They have seen evil about them in the depravity and destruction evident in their world, as men and women scorn their King and make their own rules. They understand, some of them, because the Evil One already lurks dangerously close to some of them. Often he has infiltrated their homes and caused danger and discontentment and despair through the rebellion of parents or siblings against the High King of Heaven. He has sent his helpers even into the sanctuaries to which they run on the first day of every week to refresh and restore their spirits, and caused doubt at the hands of his minions from the House of Hypocrisy, who pretend to worship in spirit with them, but in truth hate their King. And he even, even has access to their training centers, where he causes words of spite and cruelty and arrogance to replace THE WORD and flow freely from the mouths of those who were assumed to be their comrades in the fight against the Evil One. I tell you with grief that at times, this so-called friendly fire from fellow soldiers has wreaked more havoc and brought more casualties than a terrorist’s tote on a travel bus. How the Dark One must delight in that destruction!

Foolish soldiers there have been who fancy their words to hold more potency than the Word of the King, and thus try out their word-weaponry against their own comrades-at-arms, the True and Faithful Ones, whom they perceive to be weaker than they. Deceived, they have forgotten the warning that the real battle is not to the strong, nor is this race to the swift. Bringing the warning of The Word is the only way to remind them who their true Enemy is, and to turn them toward the Prince of the Powers of the Air with the Sword of The Word, which is all-powerful...

Despite the onslaughts of the enemy—his deceptions, his devastations, his attempts at disorder and chaos all around them—they have The Word, and its light draws them to their King and to his Truthfulness and Trustworthiness, their bulwarks in
Step into their camp, and behold these well-trained warriors of the beloved Company of the White Horse and their preparations for the great and final Battle of the Ages that draws ever nearer. Day by day they are learning together how to secure the belt of Truth around them, to cover their vulnerable hearts with the breastplate of Righteousness given them by the Crown Prince himself. Daily they practice the fastening of their firm sandals to their tender feet and stand firmly on the Gospel of Peace as their sure hope. Daily each defender grips the mighty shield of Faith given as a dart-deterrent, dons the Helmet of Salvation, and holds out a gauntleted hand to receive the Sword of the Word, that most vital weapon. They are one body, with one hope and one glory that they await.

Watch, as along with their leaders, they listen, listen carefully for the pounding of the White Horse’s hooves drawing near and nearer, for on it rides their victorious Lord, the Prince of Heaven and Earth, the One on whose robes and powerful thighs is written “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” (Rev. 19:16), the one called “Faithful and True.” They await the seventh angelic voice from heaven trumpeting the victory that has already been assured through His triumph: “The kingdom of this world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

Meanwhile, to the wicked, the mighty Word gives only woes and warnings, but to the wise warrior, the Word whispers, “Fear not, little flock, for it is the Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is” then, “for brethren to dwell in unity” (Ps. 133:1).

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Young Calvinist Readers and Librarians (1)

Are you readers, young people? Do you have your own personal library (collection of books)? Do you take an interest in and use the library that may be in your church? Young Calvinists should be readers and librarians, don’t you think? The Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies recently started a new “test” organization called “Young Calvinists” —a great idea, in my estimation. Were you aware that this name was once used for a Reformed magazine for young people in the Christian Reformed Church (our “mother” church), and that one of the founders of the PRCA (Rev. Herman Hoeksema) was editor-in-chief of this magazine for a time?

I don’t expect you to know all this, since it was a bit before your time—even a generation before myself (1920s). But it is good for you to know this, because in the June 1921 issue (Vol.3, No.6) of The Young Calvinist Rev. H. Hoeksema penned a powerful editorial encouraging his young Calvinist audience to read good literature and to build a library in their churches. In this article and in one to follow I would like to encourage you to do the same. I want you, young Calvinists, to become readers and librarians, because I believe your personal well-being, the well-being of your future marriage and family (if God wills), and the well-being of our churches rests in part on your reading and your library!

At this point you might be saying, Are you serious?! Yes, actually I am, and I hope that what I quote and write from this point on will make that claim plain.

Let’s start with the reading part. For this I am going to go back to the first part of Rev. H. Hoeksema’s June 1921 editorial, which was titled “What Are You Reading?” He addressed this question especially to
the young men in the CRC, though the young women were also included. Here are a few of his thoughts on this significant question:

If you ask our young men concerning the literature they read, you will receive different answers.

Many will tell you nowadays that they do not read at all, that they find no interest in reading whatever. ...And it seems to me that the number that will answer the question in this way is increasing. ...That this is a deplorable condition need hardly be said. The results are plainly evident.

There is with many little knowledge. Not only little knowledge in regard to things spiritual and our Reformed truth, but often little general knowledge. There is little ability to read critically. A good many novels of our modern times ought to be read with a critical eye. It is in the modern novel that a life-view is often advocated in a subtle manner. And the life-view that is embodied in our modern novel is not so infrequently radically opposed to our own. But naturally, in order to read critically there must be some general knowledge of principles. And this knowledge is rare. There is often little interest in matters pertaining to God’s Kingdom and the Church. And there is a weaning away from and a loss of contact with sound doctrinal preaching. All the instruction many of our young men receive is the one hour catechetical training per week. And this surely cannot be adequate to meet their needs. That there is so little interest in reading and studying the principles of our Reformed faith is surely a fact to be deplored.

That may seem rather negative to you. I can hear you saying, “I thought you said Rev. Hoeksema was encouraging the young people to read in this editorial. This doesn’t sound very encouraging to me!” You have a point. But so did he. And we need to listen to it. Sometimes to be motivated and encouraged to do something positive we need to hear criticism (the negative). And if his evaluation of the reading habits of young people was justified then, I suspect that it might be even more so today. Am I right, young people? Are Rev.Hoeksema’s words convicting you right now? Young men, does the truth of what he says hurt you in the heart and make you put your head down with shame? What are you reading? And even more basic than that: are you taking the time to read?

I know you young Calvinists have time to read certain things—things you must read, such as your textbooks and assigned readings for school, perhaps some reading for catechism and for your Young People’s Society meeting. And I believe you are reading some things for pleasure—things you want to, such as Sports Illustrated and ESPN Magazine, the newspaper, novels, and romances. And, of course, things you find online to read: news, information, sports. But what are you reading to feed your souls, for the good of your spiritual life and your relationship to the Lord? What are you reading to strengthen your faith and walk with Christ? Young men, what are you reading to help you become a godly man to lead in your home and in the church? Young ladies, what are you reading to help you become a godly woman to serve in the home and in the church? That would include your Bible, correct? You do tell yourself that you must read God’s Word, right? But you do also want to, do you not?

I realize very well all the demands on your time. My wife and I guided six teenagers through these years. After your time at school, participating in sports, working a job, hanging out with friends and your family, attending church functions and all the other social events that crowd your calendars, when do you have time to read anyway? Typically your good reading is going to take place at home, and when are you home? Yes, I know: to sleep. And that Bible by your bedside…? “I’m too worn out from all the activity, Lord. Maybe tomorrow.”

I am also well aware of the fact, young Calvinists living in the twenty-first century, that we are not exactly living in the reading age. The information age, yes, but not typically through reading books. Images, videos, and social media rule. TV, Internet TV, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Skype, and Google Hangout handle most of your “reading”. And, yes, those texts sent via our smart phones. Why would you sit down with a boring book, or even a good one, for an hour when you have all these fun pictures, images, and videos (with a few words thrown in) to capture your eye and grab your mind’s eye? Reading books seems so out of date and so out of touch with our enlightened age.

I haven’t even touched on what all these modern “techie” tools have done to your attention span and to your ability to sit still for an hour or half that. Do young people today even have the discipline to be still and the ability to focus on words on a page? Can we sit long enough to absorb a biography of John Calvin a chapter at a time, let alone a single Beacon Lights or Standard Bearer article? And now I am
There is one major reason for the writing of this article. The return of Christ and the end of this age depend on the fulfillment of the great commission. Christ stated in Matthew 24:14 that before his public return on the clouds, the gospel must be preached to all nations. We know from Matthew 28:18–20 that the church is commanded to make disciples of all nations, and that means well-taught followers of Christ from every ethnic group. All the elect for whom he died MUST be gathered. The great commission must be central in the work of every Reformed denomination, church, and individual believer. It is the central purpose of earth’s history. The Reformed world view must include God’s purposes in the world to call out a glorious catholic church from every people. Paul’s ambition, as recorded in Romans 15:20, was to preach the gospel where Christ had not been named. That should be the collective aim of Reformed churches.

The biblical basis for missions would take at least one full article, so it will suffice to say that even Abraham was told that through him and his seed all nations would be blessed. For his own reasons God limited his old covenant church almost exclusively
to the Jews, but that changed at Pentecost. To the detractors who say the Reformation and Reformed churches have no missionary zeal, we quote this:

Despite the claims of some, Calvin insisted that the church has an abiding call to bring the gospel to the nations. In his extant congregational prayers, one can hear Calvin praying for the gospel to go out to those who are lost. One of the key things to recognize about Calvin’s theology of mission is that he sees the objects of mission in broader terms than many would today. This was true of all sixteenth and seventeenth century Reformed believers. For Calvin, Europe under the sway of Roman Catholicism was essentially pagan, or at least sub-Christian. From his standpoint, the lost were certainly in far-off lands overseas. However, they were also close to home, wherever people still consistently held to Roman Catholic beliefs and practices. This led Fred Klooster to comment some years ago that the Reformation “deserves to be called one of the greatest home missionary projects in all history.”

The comment is anachronistic insofar as the Reformers themselves made no distinction between local evangelism and foreign mission. Calvin and other Reformers saw all gospel outreach as mission, whether local or otherwise, whether within a culture or cross-cultural.

It is true to say that orthodox Reformed convictions are not merely compatible with missionary zeal; in fact, such convictions inevitably must result in such zeal. In fact, the evidence demonstrates that William Carey and others caught the age-old biblical vision from their Reformed forebears and heard the call to mission and the rest, as they say, is history. Those gripped by the doctrines of grace and the beauty of the gospel as best expressed in Reformed theology, cannot but be passionate about bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to those yet in darkness.

The Reformed faith should emphasize knowledge of the Word and knowledge of the world! By ‘world’ I mean the world of mankind in all its diversity of ethnic groups, lost and totally depraved.¹

All men are descended from Adam and Noah, of every color and language since Babel spread them over the earth. It is reckoned by ethnologists that there are about 10,000 people groups in the world today, who like the Kurds may cross political boundaries, but are a homogenous group. It is important to emphasize that nation in Greek is a ethne, from which we get the word ethnic; it does not mean a political nation but a people group. These groups would be people of the same tribe, having similar customs, language, and dress. The actual people may live in one political nation or be spread over several, and with today’s global transportation may have moved many thousands of miles away from their homeland. For example, one of the largest peoples without political nationhood are the Kurds who live in Eastern Turkey, Northern Iran and Iraq; they are actually descended from the ancient Medes, of whom one was Darius, who overrun Babylon in the days of Belteshazzar. There are Kurds now in Western Europe and the USA.

How many of these peoples have few if any believers among them? Approximately 4,000. They all have less than 2% professing Christians, but many as few as .01%, i.e., 1 in 10,000, and some even none at all.

One basic essential to effective church planting is an accurate translation of the Scriptures in the language of the people being reached, but with many of these groups there may not even be a written language, or if there is, few can read it. Pioneers are needed to produce the Scriptures first in audio and then in written form. Of the world’s more than 6,000 languages only 700 have a Bible, 1,400 a New Testament, and 2,000 portions. It is estimated that another 2,000 languages may need Bible translation.

¹ From Reformed Mission History, a series of books on mission history by Dr. Wesley Bredenhof, Dr. Stephen Westcott, and Rev. Geoffrey Donnan.
South Korea, China, Brazil, and the Philippines. Most of these minister in places where there are already established churches; very few are church planting in totally heathen lands. This was actually Paul’s ambition in Romans 15:20. Our Lord clearly stated that the harvest was plentiful but the labourers were few.

Missions depend on financial support of the missionary and his family. Of the finances given for mission work, less than 1% is spent on reaching totally unreached people groups.

Where are these groups? In the “10-40 window,” an elongated rectangle that encompasses lands between 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator stretching from West Africa to Indonesia. It includes India with 1.2 billion folk, which has the most—perhaps 1,400 unreached peoples. Many live in remote areas, are nomadic, illiterate, and poor; huge barriers will have to be surmounted to reach them. I know of a friend in Southwest China who is seeking, along with local Chinese believers, to reach various totally heathen, Buddhist Tibetan groups who have never seen a white man, far less a missionary in their whole history.

There are other barriers to reach these peoples. Some live in lands where the people are almost 100% Muslim, e.g., Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan, or are under political powers such as communist North Korea, where Christianity is outlawed on pain of death.

What should be the response of Reformed churches worldwide to these statistics? First, we must pray. All can do this. Pray for ordained laborers and supporting lay people to be trained to go to the unreached in their own countries and overseas across cultures. Pray for the peoples themselves using tools like the “Joshua Project” online or the book Operation World that God will prepare hearts and open them to the saving message. We need to pray for increased literacy among many groups and for the translation of the Scriptures into many more languages (see Wycliffe Bible Translators). Mission concern should be an integral part of every church’s life and its prayers, and notice boards should reflect this. Someone stated that he could not understand why the gospel should be heard repeatedly in certain places while others had never heard it once. This make sense: we live in post-Christian nations where anyone can access the gospel online or find a true church somewhere, whereas folk in Afghanistan or Tibet cannot. It is a sad but startling fact that over 80% of the people in the Indian subcontinent will not know a true believer.

It falls to the church in the nations involved to reach their peoples; it is the responsibility of the Indian church to reach the unreached of India, but the church worldwide can play its part. Georgetown PRC has input into the life and ministry of Rev. Paulraj in Vellore and support for his church and orphanage. Hope PRC supports work in Myanmar with Rev. Titus.

Some time ago in a review of John Piper’s book Let the Nations Be Glad, I wrote that to play our part in fulfilling the great commission there were several practical applications:

1. Study theology. The better we know God, the more likely we are to fulfil his purposes.
2. As individuals and churches, support in prayer and financially the missionaries we have sent out from our established churches and denomination, and others God has bonded us with.
3. As individuals, in house groups and churches, assemble information and pray for unreached peoples of the world.
4. Be prepared to go if qualified and called.
5. Pastors and elders should teach the centrality of world mission from the pulpit and in visitation.
6. Teach world missions, missiology, culture, and linguistics in our seminary.

Churches like ours can “adopt a people” and spread information about them to the congregations, who can in turn pray for and perhaps even visit them and if the Lord will, send missionaries.

Sometimes God brings the unreached to us. They come as students from Saudi Arabia or Somalia or emigrate and may be glad of the freedoms we have; and when exposed, they may be responsive to the gospel.

What part would God have you play in bringing to pass that prayer, “Thy kingdom come?”

Dr. Kennedy is a member of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland.
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:
Bridget Deena, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Betsy Kleyn—Grace, MI
Zoe Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Luke & Crystal Engelsma—Grandville, MI
Levi Nathan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate & Ellen Pastoor—Grandville, MI
Gideon Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Gary & Marsha Boverhof—Edgerton, MN
Silas James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan & Rachel Huizing—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Genevieve Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron & Maggie Kamps—Hope, MI
Toivo Ming Yan, son of Mr. & Mrs. David & Lai Yin Baldwin—Hull, IA
Jakob Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. David & Esther Hollema—Loveland, CO
Lucy Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Frank & Gina Hiskes—Peace, IL
Olivia Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Christian & Julie Flikkema—Southeast, MI
Emma Kay, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. Nathan & Jessica Decker—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1)
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Kaelyn Hanko—Faith, MI
Bryce Kooienga—Faith, MI
Travis Kuiper—Faith, MI
Laura VanBaren—Faith, MI
Branden Meeleker—Grace, MI
Emily Bartelds—Holland, MI
Zachary Klamer—Hope, MI
Ted Boelema—Trinity, MI

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. Frank DeBoer and Mrs. Jenny Tolsma—Lynden, WA
A Turn of Events: From Chaos to Comfort
A History of the Heidelberg Catechism (Part 4)

Caspar Olevianus had tried to save a close friend from drowning, and almost drowned himself. In the terror of the moment, Caspar had vowed to be a preacher of the gospel of the Reformed faith. Now it was time to keep his word. As soon as his studies in law were finished, he turned his attention to the doctrines of sovereign grace. Peter Martyr, Beza, Farel, and John Calvin were all Reformers of renown under whom Caspar Olevianus studied. Caspar learned those Reformed doctrines well.

He was in his early twenties and ready to begin preaching the true gospel. But where should he go to preach? Farel persuaded Olevianus to return to his hometown of Treves, a stronghold of the Roman Catholic Church. Olevianus desired this as well, but there were problems. Treves had no Protestant church in which to preach, and a Protestant preacher would likely not be welcomed. All he could do was teach Latin in the university there. Yet, true to his vow, he moved to Treves and waited for an opportunity to preach.

August 10, 1560 was Olevianus’ twenty-fourth birthday. It was also a special holy day for Roman Catholics, and he knew the people of Treves would be attending an early mass. He invited them to the university afterwards to hear him speak. It was a daring thing for this young Latin teacher to do.

A great assembly came to listen, young and old, and rich and poor. In fearless and eloquent words Olevianus told them why the mass and other Roman Catholic practices were wrong. He pointed them to the truth of Scripture. Some of the people were convinced, including the city’s mayor. Others were not. Olevianus was promptly forbidden to use the school again for such assemblies, although he was allowed to begin preaching at another location for a time. It would be for a very short time.

Hundreds came to hear the words of truth proclaimed by this young preacher. But word also got back to Rome. Archbishop John came with a company of cavalrymen to stamp out that truth. He began by persecuting the city from outside its walls, and finally stormed the gates. Olevianus and the mayor of Treves, along with others, were thrown into prison.

What would become of Caspar Olevianus now? What would result from the chaos in Treves?

Frederick III, ruler in Heidelberg, Germany, heard of Caspar’s plight—the same Frederick whose son Caspar Olevianus had tried to save from drowning. Frederick sent for him to come to Heidelberg. Frederick had to pay a huge ransom to set Olevianus free, but the treasure of truth that Frederick would receive would far outweigh any trunk full of florins he had paid. Such would be the turn of events...

Find in the puzzle all the words of Psalter #137, verse 6, as quoted below. There may be more than one possibility for some two-letter words.

Bring thou to God the gift of thanks,
And pay thy vows to God Most High;
Call ye upon My holy Name
In the days when sore distress is nigh;
Deliverance I will send to thee,
And praises thou shalt give to Me.

Connie is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS

Monday, August 4 - Saturday, August 9
IDYLLWILD PINES CAMP & CONFERENCE CENTER

"Ye are all children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

I Thessalonians 5:1-8

http://prcconvention.com