This cover design was used for the first issue of Beacon Lights, published 75 years ago this month.
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Beacon Lights encourages its readers to contact the business office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

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If any material of Beacon Lights is reprinted by another periodical, we will appreciate your giving the source and forwarding the printed periodical to the business office.

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Published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies
This issue marks the 75th anniversary of the magazine, which began publication in January of 1941.

We intend to celebrate this anniversary throughout 2016.

The staff has been researching the archives for some time, and will continue to search for more interesting material in the coming year.

We plan to continue our usual rubrics, but on a somewhat limited basis, in order to make room for reprints of material from *Beacon Lights* past. So those of you who have submitted articles, please have patience—they will be printed.

*Beacon Lights* does not normally reprint articles, primarily because doing this can easily be construed as an indication of laziness in obtaining fresh material. The coming year will be an exception. We want our readers to see what *Beacon Lights* has been throughout its history in its own words. We want to be both accurate and interesting.

Why are we making such a big deal of this anniversary? Several reasons come to mind.

First, this is a celebration. This is justifiable. How many magazines, especially those of a religious content, can say that they have continually published for 75 years? Many magazines, most of them secular, have come and gone since 1941. So we are proud—I use the word carefully—of our 75 years of publication.

Second, for 75 years *Beacon Lights* has been a Reformed magazine. This is important because its Reformed character places us in the minority of religious publications. Many non-Reformed magazines have been and are published, but none are as distinctively Reformed and directed to Reformed youth as is *Beacon Lights*.

Third, the reason for printing past articles is to give our readers a sense of history. History is important because we can and must learn from history. The content of *Beacon Lights* is, after all, the history of the church, and one cannot learn too much from it. We do not live in a historical vacuum, and we need to know our heritage. You young people, because of your youth, know only the most recent history of the Protestant Reformed churches and of *Beacon Lights*.

Even your parents and grandparents have never known or have forgotten much of the history recounted in the magazine. A great deal of history has taken place in 75 years.

Fourth and most importantly, this 75th anniversary is evidence of God’s faithfulness to his church. A great deal of work goes into publishing *Beacon Lights* every month. But it is God who enables the efforts of his servants to come to fruition. It is God who maintains his truth by means of the magazine.

Therefore in the next year *Beacon Lights* will explore various aspects of God’s covenant faithfulness. These will be of varying significance and importance, but we hope that all of them will be interesting.

At this time we do not have all of the details of the 2016 publishing year worked out. This is a large and ongoing project, necessitating much research of the archives, which we have in their entirety, and all of which will eventually be available online. But so far we have researched the first ten years of the magazine, and from it we have gained several themes. The thought is to trace the history of the magazine every 10 years. Disappointingly, the five and ten year anniversaries of *Beacon Lights* were not highlighted by the staff, with a couple of exceptions. We intend to observe these anniversaries as we are able, since they give us the flavor of the magazine at these times.

First, *Beacon Lights* was born in 1941 during WWII. Therefore the overriding content of the magazine had to do with the war and its implications for the youth of the church, many hundreds of whom served in the armed forces of the United States, and some of whom were killed or wounded in action both in Europe and in the Western theater against Japan. Many of our older readers (and we have many) fought in the war, and they have stories to tell, not all of them positive. In the context of the war, two rubrics play a prominent place in *Beacon Lights*. One is *To Our Boys in Service*. The other is *From our Boys*. The titles are self-explanatory. Today
we probably would not call those who fight for our freedom “boys” (although many of them were) or the alternate term “fellows,” frequently used.

The rubric To Our Boys in Service was most often written, though not exclusively, by Herman Hoeksema, pastor of Fuller Avenue church, as it was called (First Protestant Reformed), and from which the majority of the “boys” came. Despite being pastor of a large congregation, teaching in the seminary, writing for the Standard Bearer, plus being a husband and parent, he somehow found time to write to his “boys.” His letters to them were both doctrinal and practical, as a perusal of them will reveal.

The rubric From Our Boys varies from different parts of the world. Many times the letters do not reveal the location of the “fellows” for security reasons. But they all have in common that they express their delight in receiving the Standard Bearer and Beacon Lights. They also sought out a Reformed or Presbyterian church for worship, with varying degrees of success.

These two rubrics give insight into the lives of God’s people, especially the youth, and the issues they faced both at home and abroad in the tumultuous world-wide upheaval that was WWII. As I researched the beginning years of the magazine, it struck me that much of the material was almost incapable of comprehension by our young people today, as well as by many adults, because most of us have never experienced the horrors of war on a world-wide scale, but have enjoyed only peace, marred only by relatively minor conflicts and localized military actions.

Second, in its inception Beacon Lights was a somewhat hypothetical endeavor, as is evident from Rev. C. Hanko’s initial editorial reprinted in this issue. It was a trial run to see if there was sufficient interest in a youth magazine. Based on 75 years of publication, the answer was affirmative.

Third, historically the staff of Beacon Lights was considerably larger than it is today, as will be quickly evident from a perusal of the masthead of the magazine. I am not sure why this was, since today every month we produce a magazine that is both larger and of equal quality as in years gone by. I suspect the reason is that the advent of computers and their great increase in efficiency have a lot to do with this. As an aside, it is interesting to note the people who served on the staff throughout its history.

Fourth, Christian Living is the longest running rubric in Beacon Lights. This fact also gives an insight into the purpose and character of the magazine. It is not primarily doctrinal, although it contains a great deal of doctrine. Rather, it stresses in a very practical way how the young people of the church ought to live their lives in a wicked world. The subjects treated in this rubric vary as to the issues of the day, some of which are almost humorous to us today, but they all have in common that they deal with how Christian young people ought to live their lives.
A Stride Ahead

The appearance of this new periodical is in accordance with the mandate which the publication committee received at the last convention. The Federation went on record as being in favor of developing a Federation paper and laid this matter in the hands of its previously appointed publication committee to be carried out. This, in turn, is in complete compliance with the adopted constitution. This paper is mentioned as one of the anticipated means toward realizing its purpose. And that purpose, as you may know, is fourfold:

1. To unite all Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies so that they may work in close unity and secure a sense of solidarity.
2. To seek the mutual edification of the members of this Federation and to strive for the development of talents as becomes Christian young people.
3. To strive to maintain our specific Protestant Reformed character with a united front.
4. To promote the welfare of the Protestant Reformed Churches in which we have a name and a place.

One stride toward realizing this purpose is made. And hereby Beacon Lights takes upon itself to serve this purpose.

The Name

Beacon Lights purposes to guide you on your course toward your goal. As an airplane pilot wings his way unhesitatingly on his course by the sweeping rays of his beacon lights, so this paper designs to guide you on your way through this world of sin and darkness, that you may ever hold your course and unswervingly strive for your goal. Or, to use a more common, time-tried figure, as a ship at sea is in imminent danger of suffering shipwreck on some hidden shoal or treacherous rock unless the beacon lights guide it through the raging storm and murky blackness of the night, so Protestant Reformed youth must be warned of lurking heresies and threatening temptations which so easily beset them.

The young men of today are the leaders of tomorrow. The young women stand on the threshold of womanhood. Soon your place will be appointed you, wherever God may have planned to use you. And you must be ready. Whether that be in the home, or in the church, or even in the midst of the wicked world, equipped you must be, thoroughly furnished unto every good work!

Protestant Reformed young men and young women have an especially high calling. To them is entrusted the maintenance of their Reformed heritage, the truth of God’s sovereign grace, so commonly denied and consistently undermined in our time. That truth cannot and may not perish from the earth, but must be carried on to the generations to come, even until the end.

May this periodical make its own contribution toward that high calling. May it actually be Beacon Lights for young Protestants.

Criticism Invited

Beacon Lights comes to you with no false pretenses. No one imagines that this is a finished product in the sense that the height of attainment has been reached. We would rather consider this the first efforts in “striving for the development of a Federation paper.” Practically, all those contributing toward this paper, with the exception of Rev. Hoeksema, are fledglings in the work and must still profit by their mistakes. Besides, we anticipate expanding the paper with more and better departments as time goes on. Therefore we invite your criticisms. The publication committee cannot receive a better token of appreciation for its untiring efforts than a large “come back” of remarks and criticism from all of our readers. Who knows but that we may soon be able to introduce the department of “Youth Speaks” in the succeeding issues.

A Word to the Parents

Although these introductory remarks are intended for the youth of our churches who have called this periodical into existence, I am nevertheless certain that many parents would turn away from scanning these pages with a look of disappointment if no single word were addressed to them. Parents are vitally interested in the welfare of their children and believing parents are especially interested in their spiritual welfare. They want to know and have a right to know what their children are reading. Therefore, in the conviction that parents too will examine these pages I want to enlist your services. We need your support in this new undertaking. Not your financial support; in fact, we prefer that young people find ways and means to take care of their own financial obligations as much as possible and that they thereby develop a sense of responsibility. They will appreciate this paper far more if they realize that it has cost them some sacrifice. But we do need your
moral support and your prayers. You can cooperate by maintaining an interest yourself and by fanning the flames of youthful enthusiasm. Discuss the contents with your children; remind them, if need be, to read and make use of it in their preparation for the society; give it your wholehearted support.

In Conclusion
Finally, we would urge all our readers to receive this periodical as your own. Read it and reread it, ponder upon its contents, turning them over in your mind to formulate your own opinions. Do not fail to use it before attending society in order that you may be prepared for the discussion. Discuss it with your friends and get them interested. Learn to use it to your best advantage. And, last but not least, make arrangements to preserve it for years to come.

And may God cause His blessings to rest upon these efforts for years to come and forevermore.

Our Goodly Heritage

Interview with Herman Ophoff

It is March 24, 2008, and I am at the residence of Mr. Herman Ophoff in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Mark H. Hoeksema: Mr. Ophoff, where and when were you born?

Herman Ophoff: I was born on Butterworth Avenue in Grand Rapids. And when I was two years old, my folks moved because my dad (Rev. George M. Ophoff) took the call to Byron Center (he had been at Hope Protestant Reformed Church—I think he was there for five years.) It was after the split of 1924. He got the call to Byron Center, and that was the call he took. At that time I was two years old.

MHH: You grew up in Byron Center then?

HO: Yes, I did. The church was kitty-corner across the street. We were all raised there in that same house. When I got to be seventeen, I joined the Navy. I quit high school and went back later. So I did live there for the first fifteen years of my life because the first two years were on Butterworth Street.

MHH: Just out of curiosity, what led you to join the Navy?

HO: That’s a good question. It was during the war, by the way. I guess it was something that everybody was doing. But it was partially my dad’s thinking. My brother George was in the Navy, and my brother Fred was in the Army. And he was so concerned he made the comment that he didn’t want me to get into the Army (for his own personal reasons), and I wasn’t making any work of joining the Navy. So one day, it was perhaps in June, and he got to thinking about that, sitting in his study, and I guess worrying about it, because I wasn’t doing anything about it. And he says to himself (I guess this is the way it went), “I’ll make work of it myself.” So he came to Christian High. There was a knock on the door. I was in Helen Zandstra’s history class. She went to the door and it was my dad. He said “Come on. We are going to join the Navy” (laughter). So I got up and I was thinking, “Boy this is really swell. In front of all these young guys, I’m going to be a big hero here—joining the Navy.” So we went from there to Reeds Lake Center in East Grand Rapids. They had a Naval Induction Center there. The man in charge asked me some questions. My dad had to sign because I was only seventeen.

I don’t think my father realized the magnitude of what he was doing. I don’t think so. I think that what it did was give him some kind of reason to pause and not worry about it because he was afraid I was going to get in the Army. And I guess I can appreciate that.

MHH: He had a fear that you would, perhaps, be more likely to be killed in the Army, maybe the Navy was safer?

HO: Yes, that was his reasoning. My brother George was already in the Navy, and he just felt that it was safer in the Navy. Well, it really wasn’t, but he thought that way (laughter).

So that’s the way that began. I wasn’t in too long because the war got to be over and I was in the Philippine Islands. I was stationed on a floating
dry-dock, which is a tremendous piece of machinery, but I won’t get into it here. So later on I came home. I came home and my folks had moved. But I didn’t know that (laughter). So I came home to what I thought was their address, but they weren’t there. So I had to go look up my folks when I got home (laughter).

Now I was not much of a sailor. I was probably, on the whole list of the US Navy, the lowest on the list, because I went in as a non-swimmer. And I came out as a non-swimmer (laughter). I was graduated as seaman first class, which, if you’re in long enough, you’re going to be that anyway. I really didn’t enjoy it. But I knew I had to do something. But time came when I was shipped home. But when I look back over those years, I have to say that it was a good experience.

So I went back and finished high school. I stayed at my grandmother’s house on Eastern Avenue, near Hall Street, while I was in high school. And looking back, that was probably the biggest mistake that I ever made.

MHH: Why did you not stay with your parents?
HO: Well, living in Byron Center was getting to be just a little bit of a trial. So my dad asked his mother if that could work out. She needed somebody there anyway to kind of look after her. So that’s why I stayed there—I could walk to school.

But you know, it was not a good move, practically, because I was too young for that and there was no discipline. I was not under the shadow of the home life. It was a terrible mistake. I recognize that today—have for years. But high school was not one of the nicer times of my life.

I have to interject this as I go. I want you to know this, Mark, that even when we were young, we understood the whole history of the beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches. It was just on the agenda. My folks talked about it. At the time our churches were not in existence very long, and my dad was having his struggles in Byron Center during the depression. The church finally dissolved, and most of the people went to other churches—they drove to Grand Rapids and Hudsonville.

MHH: Why did that church dissolve?
HO: Well, I think I can answer that in fairness. My dad was in the seminary (and I might add right now that that was really his first love).

MHH: He was teaching?
HO: Yes.
MHH: In addition to being pastor of Byron Center?
HO: That’s right—and a father.
MHH: He had his hands full.
HO: Because of the time, he had his hands too full. He could not, as I look back, do justice to being a minister (with its problems, particularly at that time), and the seminary. He drove to Grand Rapids every day. That was really his full-time work. But the congregation got to be almost secondary as far as attention was concerned. Of course, that breeds problems when you can’t give your full attention to whatever you’re doing.

In all fairness to my dad, I think he did a good job, because most of the people, with very few exceptions, loved my dad’s preaching, but it was probably too much for one man to do justice to both causes. His first love was the seminary. But he also was one of the writers in the Standard Bearer—in every issue. He spent a great deal of time in the Old Testament, as you probably know.

My father was not an easy man to know. You had to know him intimately in order to really know my dad. We were not, outwardly at least, close to my father. He was not often available. But I don’t think he knew how to be available because his first love was the cause. He was so embedded in love with the truth of the word of God. That was his first and major prioritized concern. Whether that was right or wrong to put all of that into one basket, that’s beside the point.

But I add this in parenthesis, that from eternity, God raised men like that (as your grandfather, Rev. Herman Hoeksema) to be separated unto the gospel from their mother’s womb. And that doesn’t always paint a pretty picture of family life. But he had a certain calling to perform there, and I see that today.

He was a very congenial fellow. You could get along with him real well as long as you didn’t malign what he knew to be the truth. Then you had yourself a bit of a problem, if you couldn’t prove it.

But it required men like that. God raised him up and give him those gifts (like your grandfather). They were fearless, Mark. Your granddad, too, you know that. They were fearless. It’s hard to understand. But I understand it very clear today. My dad was a meek person, he was a humble guy. But that doesn’t mean that he was weak. He was meek but not weak. I say this not because he’s my father, but because he was
my father. I learned to know him that way like nobody else could. Every person in that congregation would have to say, “We learned tremendous much from Rev. Ophoff in those days.”

But he had very little conception of time. It would not be unusual that he would go overtime. And that got to be kind of irritating to some of the folks.

So, you know, I could go on for a day and a half about this, but I don’t want to because I don’t want to be guilty of just rambling on. But that is such an important time in the life of the church—that men, given that caliber, were ready to go, as it were, to the stake if necessary. They were fearless men with courage that is almost incomprehensible. And they cared little or nothing what people thought about them personally. But it was those personal things about my dad (he oftentimes would work all night) that I can remember in those years. He had to get the Standard Bearer article out and he was usually behind schedule in what he was doing. I can remember lying in bed and hearing that typewriter going at 3–4:00 in the morning.

That went on for years. That wears on a man. But we were kids and we didn’t know any different. I want to give a fair appraisal here. If a person had my father as a friend, he would put his head on the block for that man if he believed that he was right in his thinking. That’s the kind of a guy my dad was. And he knew HH (Herman Hoeksema) very well. He worked alongside of him, as it were. But they were two different men. They were absolutely opposite in personality. But for the sake of the cause they functioned together quite well because that was their only priority. They never socialized together outside of the seminary and that became his full-time work.

MHH: How would you say they were different?

HO: They were different in this respect (if you can use this language and not be misunderstood): they were both their own men. One would not hesitate to criticize or correct the other (laughter). They did not fear each other, but they had a tremendous respect for each other—an undying respect for each other. In fact, my dad would refer to Rev. Hoeksema as the “champion of the truth.” And he really meant that. He used to tell us kids, “There is no one who has a hold of the Reformed faith like Herman Hoeksema.” He saw that in him. He was not a follower, but he was an ally. There is a big difference. Neither one of them followed the other one. They worked together going down the same road with the same goal, but with their own private thoughts. But they were not indifferent to each other in that respect. I think that’s why they functioned—because other things did not enter in to mar that relationship between the two men.

They never in my lifetime referred to each other by their first names. They had that kind of respect. I can remember my father would be calling your grandfather up on the phone for one reason or another, and it was either “Rev. Hoeksema,” or it was “Dominee,” but never “Herman.” And your grandfather never called my dad “George.” As I said, they had undying respect for each other. I want to add this because it proves the human part of people. When all the trouble was a-brewing (in our denomination prior to 1953), the trouble was serious, serious trouble. It appeared that we were on the brink of extinction. Your grandfather was having a serious time one evening, which my father learned later. He was becoming discouraged, and he related this to your grandmother.

He said, “I can’t understand why these people are this way. I never laid a straw in their paths. I always told them the truth.” So he was trying to reason that out. He was feeling very, very low. And there was a knock on the door. Your grandmother went to the door, and it was my dad. Now, this is what I put to that, and I live with this. Your grandfather needed to be encouraged at that moment of his life, and the Lord knew exactly whom to send and when. My father didn’t know that. He was there for another reason, which was trivial compared to that. But that was the real turning point in the time of their lives together. They were “soldiers of the cross” together, and in a sense separately, if that’s possible. But they were.

If I’m babbling, let me know.

MHH: No, tell me more.

HO: I have to tell you this. People ask me sometimes, “How did your dad become acquainted with this whole thing of common grace?” He was four years behind Rev. Hoeksema in the CRC [Christian Reformed Church] seminary, and common grace was in its early years of discussion. It wasn’t at that time yet accepted, because this was perhaps four years before the 1924-time came. One night (this is an exciting story, Mark, I think!), when my dad was in the seminary, he was asked, as an assignment, to give a paper on the biblical proof of common grace. Now, no one really understood yet at that point just exactly the fine points of common grace. It
was too early—it was in discussion stage. So my dad accepted that. He too wanted to learn. So he went home that day from the seminary, and he struggled with that. He had to give that paper in two months. He struggled and struggled and struggled. He could not see where common grace could be “friendly,” as he put it, with the scriptures. And he struggled till the time finally came that he had to give that paper. But he yet wasn’t prepared. He was not at peace with it.

On the way to the meeting (it was kind of a large gathering—all the students), there was a serious thunderstorm. It was so serious that lightening hit the electrical system where they were meeting. The lights went out, and they stayed out.

Now, this sounds a little bit superstitious, but it isn’t. The lights stayed out long enough that they dismissed to come back a month later.

Well, that gave my dad some extra time. You know, no matter where you turn, you see the hand of God in everything, don’t you?

So he went back and struggled with that and struggled with that. Finally he woke up at three o’clock in the morning and got to thinking about that. Then it finally dawned on him. He said, “I’m going to treat this as if there is no common grace.” Then the light came on, and he built his whole paper opposing common grace.

Now here’s the punch line. He got to that meeting finally, and the moderator (one of the professors) and all of the students were sitting there. He had to give his paper, but it was in opposition to common grace. Now it hadn’t been accepted then yet, but nonetheless, there were some serious thoughts in that direction. When he got all through, it was quite clear, at least in his mind, there could not possibly be the theory of common grace. The moderator of the meeting got up after he had done his speech, and he said “Are there any questions from the student body?” Well, there may have been, but he referred to the student body as “victims”—“are there any more victims?” (laughter). That was the language that was used. But my point is this: this was four years before meeting Rev. Hoeksema. His mind was solidly stayed on the fact, through that experience, that there could not possibly be a common grace. And from there on he did not struggle with that any more. There was still the battle of denial—that is to say, of those that still adhered to and wanted the common grace theory. There was that battle. But his own personal battle was over, and he never again questioned even the remote possibility of there being a common grace.

That’s the story that I wanted you to know. Your grandfather had his own way of coming to that conclusion. Of course he did. He was in seminary (he was four years ahead of my dad). But even that space is an important thing because they both did not leave the seminary at the same time. They both had their own time of preparation. I think that is a very important factor.

They didn’t say, like two people meet after school, “Hey, I think we really got something here.” No. That wasn’t it. They didn’t even know each other then. But he learned of your grandfather by his reputation and his writing. He read those, and that added fuel to his conviction.

Looking down the road, that was the essence of their beginning of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Quite a story, isn’t it?

MHH: It is indeed. That certainly helps to explain their later relationship.

HO: Oh, it does. There was such a tremendous respect because they trusted each other. They relied on each other. There was nothing in this world that could move your grandfather or my father off from that position.

And that was really the foundation, humanly speaking, of the movement.

Now, here we sat out in Hope Church. My father had no idea what was going to happen after that, whether he’d even have a church left.

I want to insert this. You learn to know whom you can lean on. He knew of four people while he was still in the CRC at Hope. This was during the split and a short time after. There were three people at Hope: Richard Newhouse and Ike Korhorn. There is one more. Oh, my, let me not forget this, there’s another one. And in Byron Center there was Neal Dykstra. These men made this statement to my brother George: “Your dad is a man’s man.” That’s how they viewed him, because he was fearless in his conviction. They knew that, and those that didn’t feel that way were totally afraid to debate this subject with him.

When they were in Hope Church yet (it was the time of troubles), there was no arrangement made on who owned the property. Nobody really had a legal right yet. But the followers of those who went with my father at that time came to church that morning. He was into his sermon when two men walked in. They came down the center aisle, and they
stopped about half way. How do I know this? Old Grandma Kuiper, one of Ike Korhorn’s daughters, told me this happened when she was 8 years old—she experienced it. They came halfway down, and they stopped. He did not stop preaching. He didn’t say, “What are you doing here,” or “What can I do for you.” He didn’t stop preaching.

She told me this when she was 92 years old. She remembered it all her life. They stood there, and they turned around and left without saying a word. They became, I think, very, very conscious of the fact that they were defiling the sanctuary when the gospel was being preached—a terrible position they put themselves in.

I think often of Ananias and Sapphira. It amazes me that they weren’t struck dead. It was the house of God.

And that’s the kind of stories that I was brought up on (laughter). But they all had good meaning. They weren’t just stories, Mark. They all had a certain substance. They had a beginning. But they had a point. And the point was conviction at any price. Not just some, but any price. Your grandfather was that way. They would have literally, as they did in the Reformation period, gone to the stake, gone to the gallows—whatever it took. They knew that they would be given the strength of the grace of God to be faithful.

That’s more than the Protestant Reformed Churches, as you and I both know. We’re talking about the continuation of the Reformed faith with our roots deeply rooted in the Reformation. We really go back to the days of the apostles. And we go back to the Garden where the antithesis became very obvious. That’s the truth of the word of God. That was their position.

They cared nothing about what others thought or said, Mark. Consequences did not enter into it. It so happened that there were quite a few who followed with your grandfather. Very few with my father, but that too was meaningful. I said to him one day when I was a young kid—maybe 15 years old—“Do you ever get discouraged, Pa, when you get in church and you’re only preaching to 25 families?” By the time the church dissolved there were only about 10. He said, “No, I don’t. I’d like to see a big church, but,” he said, “I had only one calling, and that’s to preach the gospel. I can’t do the Lord’s work for him in that respect. If he wants to send people here, wonderful,” But he had courage.

One time, at Hope Church, the catechumens were not coming to catechism because of the split in Hope Church. The minister was taking over on the side of the CRC. He persuaded those young people to come to his house for catechism, rather than be taught by Rev. Ophoff. So my father said to the young people, “Now, you just go with me. We’ll go over to that minister’s house and we’ll teach our catechism at his house.”

So he did. He knocked on the door (now that takes guts, doesn’t it!—laughter). Well, the minister let him in. He came in with his four-five-six or seven students. They all sat down in his house, and he taught the catechism in that minister’s house. Now I don’t have that kind of guts.

There’s one thing about these stories we talk about. In themselves, they’re meaningless, to a great extent—that’s all immaterial. It kind of adds to the picture. But the bottom line—and you know this and I know this—was that they were called by almighty God from eternity to do exactly what the Lord gave them to do. And that was to defend the Reformed faith, if it took their lives to do it. That’s what this is all about.

You and I are knowledgeable of the history. We are of another generation. Yet we’re close enough that any time I read the history of the church in history books, these two men were of no lesser calling than anyone in the Reformation period or even the apostolic times. I put these men in exactly that same category. Absolutely!

MHH: Because they were definitely two of the main individuals who actually stood up for and defended the faith.

HO: Absolutely! But they were two different personalities. There couldn’t be two HHs, and there couldn’t be two GMOs either. Your grandfather was a very organized person.

It took a man like that to do exactly what he had to do. And such was my father too. But it was important that they passed through that learning stage.

Let us return to 1953 to make the following statement. In 1953, I question whether the vast majority of our people understood the defining position of the Protestant Reformed Churches as it relates to the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Almost every Reformed church will say, “We’re from the Reformation too.” But that is not true in the legitimate sense of the word. Your dad [Homer C. Hoeksema] made a statement I never forgot. He said, “We are legitimate
children of the Reformation.” That says it all. And there are ways to prove that with the confessions, in the preaching, in catechism instruction. Living as long as I have, I can look back and see and witness the departure when they deny that which really held it together—the confessions. Then that moves into divorce and remarriage and conditional theology. And those are all effects, not causes, of throwing that out. What a price. But we were given, by the grace of God, men to see the error of that in 1924 and also in 1953.

We are small in number. I’ll say this the best I can say it. Our churches, to me, are a picture of the remnant of the church as that church unfolds according to the counsel of God throughout all history. I’m talking now about the Reformed faith in its purest form. I believe that denominationally, our churches are a picture of that.

Do I say that right?

MHH: I understand very clearly what you mean.

HO: Not exclusively, but a picture of the total sum as far as belief and pure doctrine. This isn’t calling everyone else unbelievers. That’s not my point. But anybody that wants to know what really is the Reformed faith, then you come to the Protestant Reformed churches to learn that.

MHH: Allow me to follow up on one of your statements. Regarding the troubles prior to and including the division in the churches in 1953 and those who forsook what you referred to as the pure path of the Reformation, I’m interested in your opinion. Do you think that was because they did not know and understand what it meant to be truly Reformed? Or, because they did not want to be truly Reformed? I’m curious as to your thoughts on that question.

HO: Simply stated, there were those that were deceived and should have known better but were influenced by the leaders of the “schism” later to regret their foolish decision. What a price! There were also those of a larger segment who knew the position of the PRC but willfully joined the “schismatics.” They saw the opportunity to become “big.” They no more wanted to be Reformed, much less PRC. They hated everything the PRC stood for.

They stole the name PRC to present themselves as the “rightful” PRC to the liberated church (Dr. Klaas Schilder). Many lies were told endeavoring to achieve their evil goal, but it wasn’t to be.

I think to a great degree there were many (I’m talking about the man in the pew), depending on age, who did not really understand the issues of 1924. The leadership certainly did (CRC). And that’s what makes it such an abominable thing because they convinced the constituents, for the most part, of their position. So in a real sense, I believe that not only were they ignorant, they were ignorant of the truth as it pertained to that issue of that day.

There were all kinds of ways to know what the truth was. But there was also a considerable amount of politics connected there too. There were men who were not in agreement with this whole issue of common grace, but they saw no future there without it. They were not ready to step out and become members of a small group. All these things enter in. I was taking a walk the other day, and there was a fellow up the street who is about 75 years old. He goes to the Christian Reformed Church, and he’s a good guy, and he’s a child of God. He waved at me and said, “Come on over a minute.” So I went over there. He said, “What is this thing of years back, what’s this about common grace?” Now he’s sitting in a church listening to the effects and results of all of that. But he is totally oblivious to what truth is.

MHH: Doesn’t even know it.

HO: If I told him, he wouldn’t know. I have a certain lament for that, because I believe that he is a serious-minded child of God, else he wouldn’t have asked me that. But what he should have known all of his life, he still doesn’t. I’m not passing judgment, Mark. But we’re talking about what the issues were.

MHH: Nevertheless, you make a sharp point.

HO: It has been said, “Where the truth is most purely preached the devil is hardest at work.” The PRC is no exception and has once again passed through trial (1953 schism) and again been preserved to rejoice in God’s covenant faithfulness. After the battle was over and a life-time defending the faith, the Lord took them [HH and GMO] home at the appointed time.

We were given a sacred trust that is so awesome that even our most faithful people shuddered under the responsibility of it. But that’s the way it had to be. The result of all of that today is we can say the Lord has blessed that remnant. It amazes me that in every RFPA publication over the many years there is no contradiction. The preaching is consistent. The teaching is consistent and the singing is consistent. The Standard Bearer for over 91 years—never a contradiction. See, they’re all built on the same ab-
solute truth of the word of God. It’s like a diamond that has many facets, but it’s still the same diamond.

MHH: That’s a wonderful figure of speech. I’ve never heard it put that way. I definitely like that.

HO: I like it, too. I gave a little talk at Eastside School years ago, and it just happened to pop into my mind.

MHH: It’s very appropriate. Now, after Byron Center, where did your father go next or what did he do? Tell me about the history subsequent to Byron Center, which now puts us into the 1940s.

HO: They dissolved as a congregation in 1945. My father was already teaching in the seminary, and that became his full-time work. So that part of his life continued. Occasionally he would preach. I remember that he preached when we were holding services in Christian High. He would preach there occasionally. So he was a professor in seminary, and he was really at home there. He didn’t say, “I really feel at home here,” but I know he was because he had a large burden taken off his back. Not that he called it a burden, but it was that, anyway.

They were not afraid of the faces of men, HH and GMO. I don’t know if you ever saw this. It was in the Grand Rapids Press the day that the Christian Reformed Church was examining my dad as far as whether he would or would not agree or disagree with the three points of common grace—in court. I have a copy of the original Press notification.¹

A remarkable thing is, they had no textbooks like they have today. As Lindberg would say, they were flying by the seat of their pants. They had no material. They had no curriculum other than what they themselves wrote, and they knew what was important to teach. But it was bare bones—sitting in that basement of First Church.

MHH: This concludes the interview. Thank you, Mr. Ophoff, for sharing your interesting information and insights.

¹ A Must Read—Portraits of Faithful Saints by Prof. Herman Hanko, page 414, RFPA publication.

Poem

Meghan Ophoff

Creation

My eyes behold the beauty traveling across the land,
Created out of nothing with just the touch of his hand.
All he had to do was speak or think it in his mind,
The power of my Father and his beauty to remind.
He made it all for me beyond my comprehending,
Beautifully and wonderfully done
With a love never ending.
How can one not stand in awe
And say that God doesn’t live
With all he has created and each blessing that he gives?
Yet, there is something even greater
Far beyond any price.
Our unending joy with him
In eternal Paradise.
Read Psalms 42 and 43

According to my study Bible, Psalms 42 and 43 should go together. The section is split into three stanzas, with the command “Hope thou in God” separating each one. The first stanza talks about how the trials of life cause the child of God to yearn after his heavenly Father. The second stanza brings out the idea that although we sometimes feel forsaken as our enemies chase and ridicule us, our God will never abandon us. The third stanza, which is Psalm 43, calls upon God to free us from our enemies and to judge them for their wickedness. The refrain between each of these stanzas is very comforting. It is a great reminder to us that there is no reason to despair. God is on our side, and nothing can triumph over us. Sing or pray Psalter #115.

Read Psalm 42

This chapter begins by talking about a deer that is very thirsty because she is being chased by the hunter. As is brought out here, our soul is in very much the same situation. We are constantly being hunted by the devil, his demons, and our own sinful nature. This hunt wearies us, not only because of the running required, but because our pursuers are mocking us all the way. We need water, living water. That water gives us the strength we need to continue the fight for the short time we are here on this earth. We find that water when we join in worship with our fellow saints.

Psalm 73 presents a similar idea. Here Asaph is depressed when he sees the earthly prosperity of the wicked, “Until [he] went into the sanctuary of God; then understood [he] their end.” Once we are refreshed with this water, we no longer fear what man can do unto us. Sing or pray Psalter #116.

Read Micah 7:1–7

The refrain of Psalms 42 and 43 is “Hope thou in God”. In spite of the trials of this life or the ridicule of our enemies, like David, we must “hope in God.” To hope means “to stay, tarry, trust, wait.” The prophet Micah also saw the importance of waiting on the Lord. In Micah 7, he bemoans the sad state of the land that he must live in. In verses 1 and 2 he says that good men are as hard to find as the “first-ripe fruit” when harvest is over. And not only are the people evil, but those with authority, the judges and magistrates, promote the evil and even encourage it (vv. 3, 4). Micah continues in verses 5 and 6 to lament that there is no one to trust. Husbands couldn’t even trust their wives—“keep the doors of the mouth from her that lieth in thy bosom.” It was a time of great wickedness, much like today. Yet with Micah and David we can say, “Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation; my God will hear me.” (Micah 7:7) Hope thou in God! Sing or pray Psalter #327.

Read Acts 16:25–40

David assures himself in Psalm 42:8, “Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness”. David expects that this is where his deliverance will come from. The fact that God commands his loving-kindness is comforting. Not only is it free (we can do nothing to earn it), but he makes us hear it. Like Jesus commanded the water to be still, God commands his loving-kindness upon us.

According to Matthew Henry, “The mercies we receive in the day we ought to return thanks for at night; when others are sleeping we should be praising God.” This point is also brought out in Psalm 119:62, where it says, “At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee.” We read of Paul and Silas doing this when they were in prison (Acts 16:25). God will put those songs in our heart. Job 35:10: “But none saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs in the night.” Before you sleep, praise God for the loving-kindness that he has commanded upon you. Sing or pray Psalter #117.

Read Psalm 43

David turns to his judge. God, our judge, is the only one who is able to and will defend David and us against our enemies. It is not known who the “deceitful and unjust man” of verse 1 is, but whether it is Saul or Absalom, David needs help from the “God of his strength.” Without God, David and we have no strength. Although there are many reasons why God might “cast us off,” he has promised NEVER to do so. “For the Lord loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off” (Ps. 37:28). David prays that God will light his way to the “holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.” David’s longing to be away from the oppression of man leads...
him to sigh more intensely for communion with God. “Let us pray earnestly, that the Lord will send forth the truth of his word, and the light of his Spirit, to guide us into the way of holiness, peace, and salvation” (Henry). Sing or pray Psalter #120.

**Read Psalm 44**

Psalm 42 begins the second section of the book of Psalms. It is the section concerning Israel as a nation, and Psalm 44 falls perfectly under that heading. This psalm first speaks of Israel’s glorious past, focusing on their conquest of the land of Canaan and how all these triumphs were because of God’s might and power. However, times have changed and now it seems as if God has cast them away, leaving them humiliated before their enemies. Why God has apparently forgotten them is a mystery to them, and they plead with him to save them, not only for their sake, but for the sake of his mercy. Webster’s dictionary defines mercy as “that benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which disposes a person to treat an offender better than he deserves.” How true this is! We deserve absolutely nothing, and yet our merciful God sent his Son to die in our place so that we might inherit eternal life. Israel was right to seek God’s mercy. May we thank God every day that he is merciful towards us. Sing or pray Psalter #123.

**Read Romans 8:28–39**

“Yea for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter” (Ps. 44:22). Our enemies are all around us seeking to destroy us, and yet Paul says in Romans 8:31, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” The trials spoken of in Psalm 44:22 and Romans 8:36 are the ones we suffer because of our belief in God. Because Israel would not forsake their covenant God and king, they were “counted as sheep for the slaughter.” So many were killed that it seemed as if that was their only reason for existence. The end of the world is drawing nigh and the day may come when we too are “counted as sheep for the slaughter.” We too may be tempted to cry like Israel in Psalm 44:23, “Why sleepest thou, O Lord?” We must pray for the strength to say with Paul, “For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life...nor things present, nor things to come...shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38–39). Sing or pray Psalter #122.

**Read Ezekiel 26:1–5**

Why does the daughter of Tyre bring the bride of Christ, the church, a gift in Psalm 45:12? As we see in Ezekiel 26, Tyre was a very wicked city. It was one of the main cities of the pagan Phoenicians, and the same nation from which Jezebel came. Calvin, Spurgeon, and Matthew Henry believe that this verse in Psalms points to the fact that the sound church receives the respect of earth’s powerful men and nations. As Calvin puts it, “Some of the great men of this world, although they themselves refuse to submit to the authority of Christ, act with kindness towards the Church, maintaining and
defending her." Spurgeon goes so far as to say that this means the church will “Impress and attract the heathen around, till they also unite in doing honor to the Lord.” I tend to think that the “daughter of Tyre” here refers to the fact that God’s people in this new dispensation come from all nations. Together, they bring gifts in celebration of the perfect marriage. Sing or pray Psalter #269.

Read Psalm 46

This psalm prompted the great Martin Luther to write the well-known hymn, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God.” This song, sometimes referred to as “The Battle Hymn of the Reformation,” reiterates the sovereignty of God and the unshakable hope we have in him through Christ Jesus that is celebrated here in Psalm 46. This must have been a very personal message to Martin Luther. He experienced first-hand the corruption that had crept into the Roman Catholic Church. He stood up for the truth and experienced great persecution for it. He lived at a time when being put to death for believing the truth was commonplace. Yet God gave him the strength that he needed, and he was able to confess boldly, “The body they may kill: God’s truth abideth still, his kingdom is forever.” What a blessing it is to know that no matter what trials may come upon us in this life, God will give us the perfect measure of strength for each day. Sing or pray Psalter #128.

Read Psalm 46:4–5

According to Matthew Henry, the river here is a picture of the covenant, and the streams are the promises of that covenant. These promises come to God’s people and give them life, for God’s word is living water. God is the center of the covenant, and his people cannot fall out of it. This is a great comfort to us and one that many reject. Can you imagine the horror of a covenant that we could be in one day and out of the next? How could any of us remain within it? We know how great our sins and miseries are. We know the evil thoughts of our hearts. Praise God that we have nothing to fear, for “God is in the midst” of us, and we “shall not be moved.” There are times that we waver, but our God will always come quickly to our aid. Sing or pray Psalter #127.

Read Habakkuk 3:1–13

The word selah appears in the Bible seventy-four times: three times in these verses and seventy-one times throughout the Psalms, according to gotquestions.org. The precise meaning of the word is uncertain, largely because it’s unclear which Hebrew word the English form is translated from. Some think selah means, “to measure or weigh in the balance,” while others think it was a musical direction to the Psalm performers, meaning “to weigh.” A good way to view the meaning of this word is as a combination of these two possibilities. Whenever we read it, we should pause and calmly think about the message that God has just conveyed to us. Selah is used three times in Psalm 46. These pauses make us stop and think about how our God is always there for us, how he loves his people, and how he directs all things perfectly according to his plan. Sing or pray Psalter #207.

Read Isaiah 2:1–5

At the end of time, all the nations will finally come together in worship of the one true God. Instead of persecuting the church, governments will work to grow and preserve it. All men, who before were divided by hatred, will now be brought together in love.

This is the way that many professing Christians interpret these verses. They seek a real heaven on earth. We know that this cannot be true. The Bible clearly tells us that God’s people will be bitterly persecuted right up until the very moment when our Savior returns. We need to remember that the elect within each country are the real nation. In this sense, it is true that “all nations shall flow” into the house of God. It is because of this that when we confess in John 3:16, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,” it is not a contradiction. This parallel passage to Psalm 46:9 is a beautiful reminder to us that, although it can sometimes seem as if we are all alone in the world, God has truly gathered his people from all nations. Sing or pray Psalter #269.

Read Psalm 46:10–11

“Be still and know that I am God.” This command, spoken by God himself, is to the wicked. Let God’s enemies be still. Let them threaten and rage no more, for all they do is in vain. “The Lord shall laugh at him [the wicked]: for he seeth that his day is coming” (Psalm 37:13). God will be exalted not only in the church among his people, but even among the wicked in all the earth.

Furthermore, this admonition to “be still” comes to us, God’s people. Let us be calm and tremble no more. For our God is God alone. He will be exalted and will fulfill his own counsels. It doesn’t matter if we fail to praise him as we ought. It doesn’t matter if we sin in the sight of the wicked and give our God a bad name. Of course, we must repent and turn from our sins, but in the end, God will make sure that his name is exalted in the earth. “For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? And I will not give my glory unto another” (Isaiah 48:11). Sing or pray Psalter #375.
Read Psalm 47

Why should we praise God? This psalm provides us with many answers to that question. He rules over all things, including the wicked. They are hardened in unbelief, but still must confess that he is God. He is the only one who is truly awe-inspiring. When we think on how he loved us so much that he sent his only begotten Son to die for us, unworthy as we are, we see how clearly that is true. He controls the nations, so that even they act in accordance with his perfect plan. This is important for us to remember as we see the signs of the times all around us. He is preparing a place for us in heaven, and that inheritance will be ours when we travel through the passage of death. Truly, we have nothing to fear. Sing or pray Psalter #130.

Read Psalm 48

Mount Zion is mentioned all throughout the Bible. It is often used to represent the kingdom of heaven. In Jeremiah 3:14, God calls his bride back, saying, “I will bring you to Zion.” Mount Zion is specifically called “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” in Hebrews 12:22.

In this chapter, Mount Zion is called “the mount of his holiness,” in verse 1. It is “beautiful for situation,” as it lies close to God’s heart. Mount Zion rejoices as God brings judgment upon all workers of iniquity. The mountain is protected by the impenetrable arms of the Almighty God. He holds us under the shadow of his wing, and we shall not be moved, “For this God is our God for ever and ever.” Sing or pray Psalter #134.

Read Psalm 49

There was a test conducted by a professor at Stanford University in the 1960s on the subject of delayed gratification. Over six hundred preschool-aged children were given a marshmallow and told that they could have an additional marshmallow if they were just able to wait fifteen minutes before eating it. Although most tried for a little while, fewer than one-third of the children were able to hold off for the required fifteen minutes.

Reading this Psalm made me think of that study I had learned about back in college. It is so easy for us to fall into the temptation of building up our treasures here on this earth, like a child who can’t wait fifteen minutes to eat a marshmallow. We are all like small children spiritually, and, even though we know what God has promised us in the life to come, we so quickly forget. We need the constant reminders that we receive from reading the scriptures and hearing them preached twice each sabbath day. Sing or pray Psalter #136.

Read Psalm 50

The Bible talks about a number of different mountains in and around Jerusalem. The main ones are Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, and the Mount of Olives. They are all located within a half mile of one another, so you can get a sense of how small the old city of Jerusalem really was. Although the Bible refers to them as mountains, they are really just hills, with the Mount of Olives being about 300’ taller than the other two. This was the location of the Garden of Gethsemane and where Jesus ascended up into heaven. Mount Moriah was where Solomon built his palace, as well as the temple, leading this area to be referred to as the Temple Mount. As we see in Genesis 22, this was also where God brought Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac. Mount Zion became a symbol for God’s people, and we will dig more into that landform next time. Sing or pray Psalter #132.
January

30

Read Psalm 49:5–10
What is the “iniquity of my heels” mentioned in verse 5? Spurgeon refers to it as the evildoers who are on every side, waiting to entrap us. Matthew Henry explains it as our past sins. He believes that the “days of evil” refer to the time of old age and death, while Spurgeon points to any time that the believer is feeling spiritually low.

I think both ideas can be gleaned from this verse. As we grow older, “Our sins rise up against us, prevailing day by day, but thou wilt show us mercy, and take their guilt away.” We do not fear, because we know that we have been delivered. In addition, the devil brings temptations upon us especially when we are feeling low. However, once again, we need not fear. The riches of Satan’s servants will be gone in a moment, while the riches of heaven promised to us are everlasting. Sing or pray Psalter #2.

February

2

Read 2 Samuel 12:1–12
When we study Bible stories like this in class, students often want to know, “How could such a godly man do something like that?” This question naturally comes to our minds when we read of some of the horrible sins committed by the great heroes of faith. Personally, I think it’s because of this that we find these things in the Bible. God is constantly reminding us that we are all sinners worthy of death, even the most righteous among us. Our officebearers in the church are great spiritual leaders that God has given us, but they are still prone to sin. I must be careful not to think that these people are somehow better than others, and become disappointed in them when sins inevitably rise to the surface. The heroes of faith were not and are not characterized by their lack of sin, but by their humble, heartfelt repentance. This we see clearly in Psalm 51, where David confesses to God, “Against thee, thou only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight... Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Sing or pray Psalter #384.

3

Read 2 Samuel 12:13–23
Kim Davis has been married four times. I know this because I glanced at some of the comments under one of the many articles chronicling her refusal to issue gay marriage licenses. The world is always quick to pounce triumphantly whenever they find any hint of hypocrisy within the life of a professing Christian. They hate us; they really hate us.

David experienced this. He came to God with heartfelt contrition in Psalm 51 and was forgiven, but that did not undo the sin. It was still true that his sin had given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. We need to be aware that the world is watching and waiting for an excuse to mock our God. We are under the microscope, and only God can grant us the strength we need to withstand the scrutiny. Although all our enemies are round about, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” Sing or pray Psalter #385.

4

Read Psalm 51
This is a beautiful psalm, for in it David expresses his sorrow for sin, as well as his love for God and the church. He calls upon God to cleanse him from his sin: not just the sin with Bathsheba, or even all the sins he has committed in his lifetime, but even the original sin in which he was conceived. He cries out as one who has the assurance of forgiveness and confesses that God “shalt make [him] to know wisdom.” David pleads, “Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation.” His sin had taken the joy of salvation away from him, and he wants
“thou wilt not despise” (Ps. 51:17). God has showed us what is good. He desires a humble heart. Sing or pray Psalter #246.

Read Psalm 51:10–19

In our last devotion, we talked about how God does not desire sacrifices as payment for our sins but wants instead a broken and contrite heart. This breaking of the heart is not done in despair, like the broken heart of a man who has lost something precious to him and has no hope of getting it back. It is a heart filled with humiliation, sorrow for sin, and hope. It is a heart “pliable to the word of God, patient under the rod of God, subdued and brought to repentance and trembling at God’s word” (M. Henry). Men despise what is broken, but God does not. He will not refuse or reject it. In fact, the great God overlooks heaven and earth, to look with favor upon a broken and contrite heart. “Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool…but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word” (Isaiah 66:1–2). The only way to have this kind of heart is through Jesus Christ. We cannot have true repentance without faith in him. Sing or pray Psalter #141.

Ask Schuyler

Question for Schuyler

Why is dancing an activity in which we do not participate? The world has corrupted dancing, but is there a proper form of dancing, or is it all wrong? If we condemn all dancing, this would seem to contradict the scriptures, which speak of dancing in many places. Ecclesiastes says that there is a time to mourn and a time to dance. Psalm 150:4 speaks of praising God by dancing. David danced before the Lord. How must we view dancing?

Answer

There are three main Hebrew words and one Greek word for “dance” or “dancing” in scripture, and they all have the same basic meaning: to whirl, to twirl, to writhe, or to turn. Often the word is used poetically, such as in Psalm 114:4, where “the mountains skipped like rams.” Dancing in the Bible is an expression of joy, gladness, and excitement, often because of some great victory or deliverance. In Exodus 15, Miriam led the women of Israel in dancing, because God had destroyed the Egyptians in the Red Sea (v. 20). In Judges 11, Jephthah’s daughter celebrated his victory over the Ammonites by dancing (v. 34). In 1 Samuel 18, the women in Israel celebrated David’s victory over the Philistines by dancing (v. 6). In 2 Samuel 6, David “danced before the Lord with all his might” (v. 14), because the ark of the covenant was brought to Jerusalem. Finally, in Luke 15, the household danced at the repentance of the prodigal (v. 25). Such dancing, a whirling about in joy and excitement in celebration, was appropriate, chaste, and godly.

However, not all dancing in Scripture is praiseworthy. When Israel made the golden calf, they danced around it naked. This was the lewd dancing...
Southwest PRC Evangelism Committee announces that the timely lecture “Theistic Evolution: Should the Church Make Peace or War?” and the follow up sermon “By Faith We Understand … Creation” both given by Professor Cammenenga have been posted to the website at www.CreationOrTheisticEvolution.com. Go to the site to view the lecture and sermon. You are encouraged to submit questions using the “submit a question” box on the website. The questions and answers will be posted on the site.
Sorry, but Beacon Lights is not being offered at $0.75 for a yearly subscription. You can, however, get a subscription (or give one) for $7.50 in 2016. $7.50 in year 75!

What you see above is the first advertisement for Beacon Lights taken from the January 1941 issue. This vintage ad was the first promotion for the “trial...
run" called *Beacon Lights*. 75 years later, God is still using this magazine as a tool to edify his people, young and old.

On the previous page is a graph showing the subscription rate over the years. The bottom line is the actual price. The top line is the price of a subscription using the value of today’s dollar.  

Since the magazine’s beginning in 1941, staff members have come and gone, but all have had the goal of keeping the subscription rate as low as possible. This is the goal of the current staff as well. After the printing, typesetting, and mailing bills have been paid and the yearly subscription fees are taken in, it’s a wash: we break even. All other costs—website management, special projects, office supplies—come from church collections and donations. Therefore the staff kindly asks you to remember this good cause going into the new year, especially as the subscription price is cut in half for our 75th anniversary promotion.

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1 See Rev. C. Hanko’s editorial for more on this.  
2 Values determined using the Consumer Price Index calculator at http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl

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Poem

**Step by Step**

He does not lead me year by year,  
Not even day by day.  
But step by step my path unfolds.  
My Lord directs my way.  
Tomorrow’s plans I do not know,  
I only know this minute.  
But he will say, “This is the way  
By faith, now walk ye in it.”  
And I am glad that it is so;  
Today’s enough to bear.  
And when tomorrow comes, his grace  
Shall far exceed its care.  
What need to worry then or fret,  
The God who gave his son  
Holds all my moments in his hand,  
And gives them one by one.

—Author unknown

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**Poem submitted by Audrey Reitsma**
The Thirty-Second Century of His-Story:
The Gospel Goes Forth to the Nations
as the Earthly Kingdom Decays

The word of God found in the middle of the books of Kings and Chronicles reveals that the church was increasingly feeling the pressure of persecution from within the nation of Israel and Judah itself. It was becoming very clear that “they are not all Israel that are of Israel” (Rom. 9:6). We have here the stories of Ahab and Jezebel murdering Naboth to get his vineyard, the prophets of God hiding in caves, and Athaliah trying to destroy the royal line of David. Even so, God spoke powerfully through many prophets, including Elijah and Elisha, for the comfort of his church and the judgment of the apostate church. God faithfully preserved the spiritual church while the earthly kingdom that pictured the church began to fall apart as they experienced the judgments of famine and political unrest. The growing powers of Syria and Assyria began to loom over Israel and we read in 2 Kings 10:32 that “the Lord began to cut Israel short.”

During this time God directs special attention to two nations: Syria and Assyria. Not only is he raising them up and strengthening them to be employed in the complete destruction of Israel as a nation, but in a wonder of grace, he also reveals something more of his plan to gather spiritual children of Abraham from every nation of the world. In fact, it is in the way of the apostate church’s rejecting the gospel that the gospel is taken from them and preached to those whom the apostate church despises and counts as enemies. We get a hint of this wonder in the story of the Syrian general Naaman who is healed of his leprosy through the witnessing of a little girl he had taken captive from Israel. Jesus referred to Naaman when he preached at his home town synagogue and was rejected and despised by the Jews (Luke 4:27).

Even more surprising is the prophet Jonah who is sent to preach not to the church in Israel, but to people whom God was pleased to save in the heart of enemy territory, Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria. Jesus referred to the repentance of Nineveh when confronting the unbelief of the Pharisees in Matthew 12:41. It is when the apostate church becomes lifted up in the pride of self-righteousness that God demonstrates the power of his grace to save sinners who know and repent of their sin.

The previous hundred-year period ended with friendly relations being attempted between the formerly warring nations of Israel and Judah. Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, had worked hard to bring reformation and the true worship of Jehovah to Judah, but perhaps out of pride and thinking himself able even to have a good influence on the ungodly house of Ahab, king of Israel, he permitted his son Jehoram to marry Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 8:18, 2 Chron. 18:1). The families grew closer. Ahab had been engaged in some battles with the growing power of Syria and their king Benhadad, and as he prepared for another attack upon Syria, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, came to join with Ahab in the battle against Syria saying “I am as thou art, my people as thy people” (1 Kings 22:4). During the battle, Ahab was killed, and...
Jehoshaphat went back home to continue his work of reform, establishing godly judges and organizing instruction in God’s law throughout the land (2 Chron. 19). Even though God spoke to him through a prophet saying, “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord?” (2 Chron. 19:2), he again joined with the wicked king Ahaziah in a business venture which again was ended by God (20:37). These attempts at establishing friendly relations with the ungodly within the apostate church did not result in reform and a good influence upon them; rather, it opened the door to the spiritual enemy, exposed the promised seed of David to destruction by Athaliah, and led to the decay of the nation.

Athaliah had grown up in the Baal worshiping home of Ahab and Jezebel. When she married into the royal line of David, her love for the man-centered worship of Baal dominated the home, and her husband Jehoram could do little to prevent her influence. What she did learn about Jehovah and his purpose to bring the promised Messiah through the line of David only aroused in her a determination to use her position in the home to destroy that purpose. Her plan was to turn the promised seed from the royal line of David from God so that the promised seed would serve the purposes of Satan. She trained her son well in the ways of Baal, and he fell into perfect line with her desire to add royal authority to a Baal-worshiping heart when he became king. Ahaziah ruled for only a year, however, because God sent Jehu to execute judgment upon the wicked house of Ahab, and Ahaziah was killed on his way to visit his ungodly relatives from the house of Ahab (2 Kings 10:13–14).

Athaliah could see the hand of God in the death of her son, and she was now more determined than ever to destroy the purpose of God. God had prevented her plan to turn the royal line from God, so she determined to kill the whole line even if it meant killing her own grandchildren to cut the line of David and prevent the purpose and promise of God. Also in this plan she failed, and God preserved one child who was hidden and raised by Jehoiada the priest until he was old enough to reign.

The earthly picture of the church as a kingdom—earthly kings that rule under God and defend the church and faithful prophets—was decaying. The earthly reality of a kingdom, the nation of Israel and Judah, was now caught in the storm-tossed sea of this world in which nation rises against nation in violence, pride, and greed. Soon king Jeroboam II in Israel would shine forth with one last burst of earthly power and glory like an exploding star before its death. In contrast to fallen man’s way, God had revealed to Elijah that his power to save was in the “still, small voice.” We see this work now as God quietly preserves the promised seed and also works powerfully to gather his church even from enemy lines.

Gathering his elect children from nations outside of Israel is not a new idea or plan of God. His people had been gathered from among various families before and after the flood. People like Rahab and others were taken into the covenant fold of Israel. God’s focus on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and establishing a nation is like a parenthesis in history to reveal certain characteristics of the church and also to provide a rich covenant sphere in which the Christ would be born and prepared for his great work of saving and gathering the church from all the nations of the world. As time goes on this purpose is given more and more attention. Especially in some of the final prophets God reveals this purpose. One of the clearest passages is in the second half of Joel 2, where we read about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. This passage is quoted in Acts when the Holy Spirit is poured out and the gospel is proclaimed in the many different languages that were represented by people from different nations. Here too the work of God in connection with the preaching is the powerful work of the Holy Spirit—the still small voice which is the work of the Holy Spirit.

During this period we begin to see this work when God sends his prophet Elijah to Zaraphath of Zidon to the widow woman. Here, outside the borders of Israel, God reveals the wonder of his power to save by providing food, and also raising this widow’s son from the dead (1 Kings 17). We then read in 2 Kings 4 when Jehovah God had given deliverance to Syria through the leadership of Naaman, that God used the witness of a little Israelite girl to reveal the saving power of Jehovah to Naaman, and even cured this enemy of Israel of leprosy, the picture of sin and death. The next chapter records another strange and striking event that I believe points to the plan of God to gather his church from the nations. Syria had besieged Samaria in an attempt to capture Elisha himself because God was revealing to him their battle plans, but God used Elisha to lead the entire blinded army into the city for a banquet feast and
then let them go (2 Kings 6). Finally, in 2 Kings 8:7 we read God sent Elisha to Damascus, the capital of Syria, to anoint the next king who would be used by God to bring judgment upon the apostate church. In all these works of God, we learn that God is not a respecter of persons or nations, but will gather his people through the preaching of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit when and where he pleases.

The history of the prophet Jonah being sent to Nineveh really belongs to the next century, but we discuss it here in connection with the theme of God’s sending the gospel into the nations of the world. The nation of Israel had risen to its peak of earthly power and glory under king Jeroboam II. The nation of Syria that had threatened Israel was now cowering under the growing threat of Assyria, which was expanding and crushing every nation in its path. It was here that God was pleased to send the precious message of the gospel: a command to repent along with the power of the Holy Spirit to work repentance and a clinging to the way of salvation prepared by God.

Assyria was known for its ruthless war tactics and became extremely great and powerful, especially with Nineveh as its capital. The city had connections with Nimrod the mighty hunter and the tower of Babel (Gen. 10:8–11), and represents a man-centered glory and the best that man has to offer. It is here, in the heart of Satan’s show-case city where men of strength establish their own earthly heaven, that God with the still small voice of his Spirit brings the city to its knees in repentance for sin. Whether only one or all of them truly repented is not as important to know as it is to know that God worked repentance in the hearts of men who lived in the heart of Satan’s realm. That is a wonder God works in the heart of every child of God no matter who we are or where we were born.

Such were the mysterious workings of God during this century of his-story. We see the wonder of God’s gathering his church from the nations, making dead hearts alive and warning against false security in anything we can do or claim. The church is a glorious work of God as he gathers his people from those we least expect. Among those who cherish, defend, and promote the precious truth of the gospel as it unfolds through the battles and brings comfort to saints of every age, God is pleased to continue gathering his children from covenant homes as well. The heritage of Israel and our own heritage is precious to us, but we may not assume that our national or denominational identity automatically entitles us to the gracious work of God and excludes others whom we may despise. May it not be that a careless attitude, lack of appreciation for the gospel, or a despising of and persecution of brothers and sisters in the church leave us with a famine of hearing the word as the gospel moves on to gather the church from the highways and hedges of this earth.

John is a former editor of Beacon Lights and a member of Hull Protestant Reformed Church

Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him. Proverbs 24:17–18
Scientists throughout the years have studied outer space immensely and still have many unanswered questions. They study the stars, moon, galaxies, black holes, and whatever else is found in the quiet, dark realm of space. As Christians, we look at the night sky and observe the moon and stars and think of how awesome a God we have. We see that there is no way that a big bang could have created such a scene, but only an Almighty God could have. Outer space is not really thought about very much by a person, but once one does think about it, his mind cannot comprehend the vastness of it. The region of space is truly an amazing part of God's perfect creation.

Space is such a huge part of God's creation, but it doesn't get much recognition. When one talks about creation, how often does one think about the mountains, trees, flowers, and animals? One does not think much about outer space, even though it is so large. Just for a quick example of how big space is, the sun can fit 1,300,000 planet earths inside of it (Cool Cosmos). This is only the size of the sun! There are also stars in outer space besides the sun called megastars. The closest megastar to Earth is called Pollux, which is 8.8 times larger than our sun. Next in line is Arcturus, which is 25.7 times the size of the sun. Another one of the known megastars is Antares. Antares is 883 times bigger than the sun! And the last star that man has studied is VY Canis Majoris, which is a whopping 1,420 times bigger than the sun. Now, if this does not make us feel small and insignificant, I am not sure what will. Our God has created such a vast universe that our brains cannot fathom the greatness of it (Daily Mail).

God has the power to create an awesome universe, but he also has the ability to destroy it. Not only are there many billions of stars in space, but there are also things like meteors and black holes that can destroy the earth we live on in an instant. Black holes are extremely destructive. The gravitational force of black holes is so great that not even light can escape its grasp. Once an object gets sucked into a black hole, it is gone forever. Along with black holes are meteors that float around in outer space. Although earth is at a very slight risk of being struck by a meteor, God could still direct one at any moment to hit the earth and destroy it. He has the power to do whatever he pleases with his universe, and because of that, we stand in awe and fear of Him.

Yet outer space is not just a place of doom and destruction. Personally, I love to gaze at the night sky and look at the moon and stars. The night sky is one of my favorite things about God's creation because it is so beautiful. The stars are bright with beauty and shine with God's glory. Along with the moon and stars are galaxies. The colors they create are magnificent, obvious proof of a creator. To God and God alone be the glory for the universe we live in.

I think that many of us need to broaden our horizons more on what we think creation is. Yes, we all know and understand that the creation is the whole universe that God has created, but how often don't we tend to forget about outer space and its significance? Outer space is a mystery to us all because it is so big that we cannot process it, but that does not mean we cannot study it and gain more knowledge about it. Look at the megastars and how giant they are, the thousands of beautiful galaxies, and who knows what other undiscovered things there are in outer space. We are so insignificant compared to outer space, and this really puts into perspective how great a God we have. God deserves all the praise for this creation, not a big bang or evolution. Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork."
BAPTISMS
“...that he will dwell in us and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us...the washing away of our sins and the daily renewing of our lives.”

The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
- Calvin Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matthew & Brianna Fisher—Georgetown, MI
- River Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Rachel Veltje—Georgetown, MI
- Victoria Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jamie & Mary Longerak—Grace, MI
- Sawyer Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Katelyn Van Oostenbrugge—Grace, MI
- Eleanor Sarah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Samuel & Anganeta Watterson—Limerick, Ireland/Ballymena N Ireland
- Jonathan Levi, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Aryn Schwarz—Loveland, CO
- Madelyn Brooke, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Troy & Mandy Vanden Bosch—Lynden, WA
- Wyatt Christopher, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dwight & Leisha Kuiper—Lynden, WA
- Paul Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Stacy DeJong—Pace, IL
- Connor James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ed & Jess VanDyke—Randolph, WI
- Conner Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Clint & Lesley Meelker—Redlands, CA
- Jacob Marvin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Stephanie Hanko—Southwest, MI
- Rebekah Hope, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Hannah Tanis—Southwest, MI
- Isaac Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe & Kathleen Kuiper—Southwest, MI
- Alivia Joy & Zoe Beth, twin daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Matt & Gabrielle Gritters—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
Proverbs 3:6

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
- Rachel Carson—First, MI
- Lydia Monsma—First, MI
- Amelia Molenkamp—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
- Derrick Span—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
- Christina Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
- Ian Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
- Steven Zylstra—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
- Elena Bos—Loveland, CO
- Machenzie Scholffeld—Lacombe, CAN
- Alicia Prins—Trinity, MI
- Andrew Prins—Trinity, MI
- Megan VanBaren—Trinity, MI
- Caleb Van Overloop—Trinity, MI
- Natalie Sweeney—Trinity, MI

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

Mr. Stefan Bodbyl and Miss Kaley Zwak—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Jacob Feenstra and Miss Bethany Mulder—Redlands, CA
Mr. John Kamps and Miss Amy Vedder—Trinity, MI
The Belt of Truth Part 1: The Central Pieces

“Are we finally going to talk about some of the armor?” Danny asked his mom. “That’s the cool stuff.”

“Yes, we’re going to look at the Roman sword belt.” His mother opened a book they’d gotten at the library and showed Danny and Becky a picture. “The sword belt was the central piece of a Roman soldier’s armor. It held his tunic and breastplate in place and both his sword and knife attached to it. Pouches, bags that were like big pockets, could be attached to the belt to hold other supplies.”

“That’s a pretty important belt.” Danny tugged at his own belt. “I only wear my belt to keep my pants from falling off.”

Becky made a face at him, and their mom laughed. “Belts are always important, even today. That’s why the Roman sword belt is compared to God’s truth. It is the central piece that everything else attaches to. If God isn’t truth, then none of the other pieces matter.”

“I see.” Becky nodded. “If the Bible isn’t truth, then we lose God’s word also because it isn’t trustworthy. It’d be like a Roman soldier who lost his belt, and his sword along with it.”

“Exactly. If we throw away the absolute truth found in God, then we’ll throw away the sword of God’s word along with it. And once we do that, we’re helpless in the war against sin and Satan.” Their mom pointed at the stack of Bibles and catechism books on the kitchen counter. “That’s why we have to learn the truth—so we hold on to it.”

Questions to Think About:
1. Read Ephesians 6:13–14, Exodus 34:6, Deuteronomy 32:4, and Psalm 33:4 by yourself or with your parents. Why is truth so important? Where is it found?
2. What happens when you throw away truth?

“LITTLE LIGHTS”... let it shine!

Fill in the blanks:
The _________ of ____________ is the _________ piece to the _________ of God because ____________ else attaches to it.

December Puzzle Answer:
Scrambled Letters:
CIENOURNT = Centurion
LONEIG = Legion
LATEEG = Legate
TETBAL = Battle
DEALRE = Leader
REUCONQOR = Conqueror
Hidden Message:
Christ our Captain

Tricia is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
August 8-12, 2015

Lake Williamson Christian Conference Center

17280 Lakeside Drive
Carlinville, IL 62626

Contentment in an Age of Entitlement

Philippians 4:11, “I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”