This month’s cover was first used for the January 1944 issue.
**Table of Contents**

**EDITORIAL**  Lessons from Pluto  Page 3  
**75 YEARS**  Book Review  Page 5  
**BOOK REVIEW**  Gottschalk Servant of God  Page 5  
**OUR GOODLY HERITAGE**  Interview with Everett VanVoorthuysen (Part 1)  Page 7  
**A CLOUD OF WITNESSES**  A Cloud of Witnesses  Page 11  
**DEVOTIONAL**  The Daily Press—February 7–March 7  Page 13  
**75 YEARS**  Celebrating Your Life  Page 19  
**CHURCH NEWS**  Page 26  
**LITTLE LIGHTS**  The Belt of Truth Part 2: A Soldier’s Modesty  Page 27

---

**EDITOR**
Mark Hoeksema  
Email: editor@beaconlights.org

**CONTENTS COMMITTEE**
Ryan Kregel (Managing Editor)  
Email: ryankregel@gmail.com  
Abbie Eriks (Contributing Writer Correspondent)  
Email: abbie.eriks@gmail.com  
Monica Koole (Contributing Writer Correspondent)  
Email: monica@kleynelectric.com  
Matt Rutgers (Business Manager)  
Alex Thompson (Archivist)  
Lenora Bodbyl (Secretary)  

**BUSINESS OFFICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS**
Matt Rutgers  
PO Box 37  
Hudsonville, MI 49426-0037  
Phone: (616) 209-2824  
Email: subscriptions@beaconlights.org

**BEACON LIGHTS AUDIO**
A free service to the legally blind. Contact  
Brad Vander Veen  
11395 Hunters Meadow  
Allendale, MI 49401  
Phone: (616) 291-0465

**CHURCH NEWS ANNOUNCEMENTS**
Melinda Bleyenberg  
Email: dbleyenberg@gmail.com

**EXECUTIVE FEDERATION BOARD**
Stefan Bodbyl (President)  
Taylor Dykstra (Vice-President)  
Nicole Kamps (Secretary)  
Joel Rau (Treasurer)  
Elizabeth Ensink (Librarian)  
Sharon Kleyn (Vice-Secretary)  
Joel Langerak (Vice-Treasurer)  
Brad Bruinsma (Youth Coordinator)  
Prof. Russell Dykstra (Spiritual Advisor)  
Rev. Clay Spronk (Spiritual Advisor)

**PROTESTANT REFORMED SCHOLARSHIP FUND**
A function of the YP Fed Board. Funds for this Scholarship should be sent to the treasurer,  
Emily Kuiper  
2450 Boulevard Drive SW  
Wyoming, MI 49519  
Phone: (616) 534-2835

**Beacon Lights** is published monthly by the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies. Subscription price is $15. Please send all business correspondence, address changes, and subscriptions to the business office.

**EDITORIAL POLICY**
The articles of Beacon Lights do not necessarily indicate the viewpoint of the Editorial Staff. Every author is solely responsible for the contents of his own article.  
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.  
All submissions should be sent to the editor six weeks prior to the publication date and must be written in Microsoft Word format.  
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.

**BEACON LIGHTS ON THE INTERNET**
www.beaconlights.org  
Cover Photo courtesy of  
Liquid Moonlight Studios
On January 19, 2006 NASA’s New Horizons (NH) space probe was launched with Pluto as its destination. Ironically, the same year NH was launched, Pluto was demoted from its status as a planet and reclassified as a dwarf planet. A little over a year after launch, cruising at about 36,000 mph, NH swung around Jupiter, using the giant planet’s gravitational pull as a slingshot to propel itself toward Pluto, now at a speed of about 45,000 mph.

On July 14, 2015, nine and a half years after launch, NH finally made its closest approach to Pluto. Since then it has been transmitting loads of data back to Earth—beautiful pictures of the before-uncharted topography of Pluto and information on its system of moons. Much of this data has baffled scientists. Director of planetary science at NASA, Jim Green, had this to say: “The New Horizons mission has taken what we thought we knew about Pluto and turned it upside down.”

What they thought they knew was based on the naturalistic Big Bang theory, which has been developed as the premier cosmological model for the origin and subsequent expansion of the universe. Now that the Big Bang theory is the most widely accepted interpretation of astronomical data, all other discoveries regarding the form and movement of the universe are interpreted based on that assumption. Assuming that naturalism accounts for the existence of the universe, the Big Bang theory is the most plausible explanation of the formation of the universe. Notice I said “assuming naturalism.” The men and women holding to this theory are those who have not been enlightened by the work of the Holy Spirit to confess God as the origin of the universe. They will not see supernatural work in the universe, but see only the operation of natural processes; but more on this later. What has baffled the unbelieving scientists is that what they are observing via NH goes against what a naturalistic interpretation of the universe predicts.

First, with the assumption that Pluto is approaching a few billion years old, its surface should be ridged with many craters from meteorite impacts—old planet equals more craters. Yet this is not what NASA found. “This terrain is not easy to explain... The discovery of vast, craterless, very young plains [young meaning less than 10 million years for the evolutionary worldview] on Pluto exceeds all pre-flyby expectations.” On an evolutionary timescale, Pluto is now seen as a lot younger than theories rooted in naturalism had predicted. Naturalism was what led unbelieving scientists astray in the first place and has now forced them to come up with a new explanation for the formation and age of Pluto. Unless they are instilled by God with the Holy Spirit to confess him as creator, they will incorrectly continue to use naturalism to explain the phenomena they discover.

Second, the NH mission made some surprising discoveries regarding Pluto’s system of moons. Pluto has one large moon named Charon, and four smaller moons. The four smaller moons are rotating extremely fast, much faster than the 24 hours it takes Earth to rotate. Hydra, the outermost of the smaller moons, is spinning so fast that if it would spin any faster, its own gravity would not be enough to hold material on its surface. The bigger problem dealing with the rotation speed of the four smaller moons that naturalism cannot account for is that over the vast amount of time assumed, Pluto’s gravitational pull on these moons should have slowed their rotation speeds long ago.

What is to be learned from the latest observations of Pluto? Can science be trusted anymore to explain anything? Should we stop investigating the universe and just be content with saying, “God did it, and that’s all I need to know?” I think we can agree that this is not the proper response. So how can the...
believer view the latest discussion surrounding Pluto?

First, there is a problem in modern day science. Naturalism, today’s reigning philosophy of science, militates against any idea of God or any supernatural power having any part in the formation and government of the universe. But the fact that sin has so deeply infected God’s good gift of science does not take away from the legitimacy of using the scientific method to examine God’s creation. After man’s creation God gave him dominion over the earth (Gen. 1:28). I am convinced that part of that dominion is using the various disciplines of science to uncover God’s wonderful creation and his continued care to sustain it. With that view in mind, the scientific method of forming and testing hypotheses still stands as a legitimate and useful tool for the Christian to use. Both the believer and the unbeliever use this same process to collect their data. However, when the unbeliever uses the scientific method to study something like the formation of the planets, he does not view his data with the thought that a purely naturalistic explanation might not exist. His interpretation differs from that of the believer because he excludes any idea of the supernatural. Therefore whether he will admit it or not, he has a certain amount of faith—not in God, but in naturalism. His faith is that a material explanation is enough; there cannot be anything else. Naturalism by definition does not permit anything further than a strictly material explanation. With his faith in the “religion” of naturalism he interprets his data and confidently asserts “this is how it is.” In the end he really has an explanation that does not reflect true understanding, but is empty and no better than mere speculation. In his assertion the unbeliever foolishly leaves God out and will ultimately be judged by the creator at the end of time.

Second, God is sovereign. From the great speed of the rotation of a tiny moon orbiting Pluto (Ps. 104:2; Isa. 45:12) to the care of his creatures on earth (Ps. 104:27–29), God is sovereign. God did not as it were, wind up a clock in the beginning of time when he created the heavens and the earth, and then wait to see what would happen. Rather, “God, after He had created all things, did not forsake them, or give them up to fortune or chance, but…rules and governs them according to His holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without His appointment.”

God also is sovereign over those he chooses to enlighten by his Holy Spirit to confess him as creator and those he leaves in darkness. We must remember that it is by grace alone that we confess God as our Father and creator. With this humbling thought, “we represent the truth humbly because we hope the same gospel that has rescued us will rescue other people.” We do not go around swinging this truth as a hammer because “we’re right and those unbelievers are just a bunch of fools.” We humbly hold the truth high so that God is glorified. God may use our humble confession of the truth of creation to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ. Does that make you tremble? Does that make you feel inadequate? It does me. Thanks be to God it’s not up to us.

Herman Bavinck has the following to say about God’s sovereignty in these matters that will stand true no matter how deep into space man goes and no matter what he discovers: “one who does not find God in his or her immediate presence, in his or her heart and conscience, in the word and the Christian community, will not find him in the universe either, even though he equips himself with the best telescope that money can buy.”

---

Fret not thyself because of evil men, neither be thou envious at the wicked;
For there shall be no reward to the evil man; the candle of the wicked shall be put out.
—Proverbs 24:19–20

---

Editor’s Note: The text below is an introduction to the book review rubric, which started with the first issue of Beacon Lights, January 1941. Since then the rubric has appeared 253 times. The exact number of books reviewed over the past 75 years is difficult to determine. In many instances of the rubric’s appearance in a given issue, several books may have been reviewed, bringing the total number of books reviewed to well over 300.

We do not doubt but that our first venture into the field of book-reviewing will be marked with imperfection. However, we have determined that we shall improve, and consequently we welcome constructive criticism of our work at any time. We feel that this department will fill a deep need in the lives of our covenant youth. Our purpose and aim with this department of our new periodical is, first of all, to create in our young people a desire to read that literature which is of a high order, the reading of which will be beneficial for them. Even these days when the cry “I have no time” is frequently heard, we surely must devote part of our time to the development of ourselves intellectually. To serve that purpose this department will not only review certain books, but will also issue from time to time short lists of recommended reading material. From these lists our young people can choose various kinds of books for reading and-or study. These books will include wholesome fiction, worthwhile autobiography and biography, sound historical works, and other books of interest and value to our youth.

We hope that this department will supply a long-felt need among the organizations comprised of our youth. Very often a minister in our churches is confronted with the serious question: “If all this modern literary trash is so very harmful to our young people, what then would you suggest as good reading material?” The answer to this question is an aim of this department. We would regard ourselves well compensated for our labors if our Protestant Reformed youth should develop a definite desire for reading, and thus heed the admonition of Scripture to “buy out the time.” One hears of the so-called “problems” that are connected with the entertainment of youth today. We would warn our young people, however, not to be deceived that there is such a problem. Rather, we would admonish you to study the Scriptures, and advise you to develop your mind by the devotion of your spare time to reading and studying good, clean, wholesome literature. And so we close our introductory remarks with a prayer that our feeble effort may achieve its purposes and aims with the blessing of our Covenant God.

**Book Review**


**Author’s Purpose**

Gottschalk, Servant of God, is the story of one monk living in the Dark Ages and his stand for the truth no matter the cost. Gottschalk’s study of predestination produced an opposing view on election
and reprobation compared to the Catholic Church of the day. The book explains these beliefs and how they threatened the very structure of the way the Catholic Church functioned. It gives us insight into the man Gottschalk and his place in church history.

**Author’s Theme**

Gottschalk had courage, faith, and love for the truth, even if it meant dying for his beliefs. This is seen throughout his life and should encourage us as Christians to fight for the truth as he did. The church in Gottschalk’s day believed in works righteousness. This was contrary to Gottschalk’s belief and teachings of double predestination. This caused great controversy in the church and state, which were closely knit together in the 800s. The life of Gottschalk shows that God, in his purpose at times in history, uses the voice of a single man to further the cause of his church in a very dark spiritual time. In chapter 15 page 67 we read, “Gottschalk was convinced that the doctrines of predestination and sovereign grace that he held to were good and right and according to the word of God.” Clearly it was the love of the truth that drove Gottschalk to defend his beliefs so strongly. We read again in chapter 22 page 90, “Gottschalk was prepared to read and state his views to defend his doctrine, proving from scripture and from the church fathers that what he taught about double predestination and particular grace were true…. He spoke at Quierzy with no less conviction and no less courage.” Faith, courage, and love of the truth continually describe the life of Gottschalk as he studied, spoke, and defended his belief in double predestination in opposition to the Catholic Church’s view of works righteousness.

**Historicity**

The author gives good detail about the time that Gottschalk lived. It was the early Middle Ages, the Dark Ages—a spiritually dark time. It was a time when church and state were intertwined. Much of world history and church history was preserved by monks copying manuscripts by hand. This was the main activity of monks, and we cannot even understand the time it took them. Much details of history were hard to know and many details were lost over time, but the author does a good job of describing the events surrounding Gottschalk’s life. She explains what society was like, the rulers of church and state, life in monasteries, and the difficulties they faced in that time period. The circumstances of Gottschalk’s life and of that period in history were very important in this book.

**Style**

This book was written for young people and is easy to read. Meyer makes the story of Gottschalk interesting without being too difficult to understand. She gives good information and detail without being overwhelmingly theological. She clearly describes the Roman Catholic Church, the monasteries and the life of monks, the rulers of the day and the difficulties Gottschalk faced. The story and character evokes emotion. You want to cheer Gottschalk on to be faithful to the end. You feel badly for how he was treated and angry at those who persecuted him. You want to keep reading to find out how it will end. The truth seems so obvious to us, but it was a different time then.

**Content**

Throughout the book Gottschalk shows courage, faith, and love. He loved God above all else and was willing to die for the truth. He took a stand for the truth of sovereign grace and predestination even though it meant being beaten, exiled, and put in prison. He spent years studying the Bible and the writings of church fathers, devoting his life to the church and God. He was not afraid to stand before the rulers at synod and proclaim the truth. He would not deny his beliefs and continued to write from prison even after being beaten twice. Even on his death bed he would not recant his beliefs. Hincmar tried several times to get Gottschalk to sign the schedula, a document denying his beliefs about predestination. Hincmar offered Gottschalk church membership, a Christian burial, and the bread and wine in exchange for signing the document. “Imprisoned, sick, and lonely he feared denying the truth more than he feared anything else” (120). Gottschalk refused; he would not deny his Lord or the truth. He knew God had chosen him as an elect child merely based on God’s grace.

**Quotation**

We see God’s providence in Gottschalk. Although other men were teaching the same things, he was singled out. God chose him to speak out. “He did not consider the consequences. Only the truth mattered to him. Zeal for the truth is one thing. To maintain zeal for the truth in the face of opposition is another. Gottschalk was given both” (51). Predes-
It is June 14, 2008, and I am interviewing Mr. Everett VanVoorthuysen [EVV] of Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands, California. His wife, Audrey VanVoorthuysen [AVV] has also made substantial contributions to this interview.

**MHH**: Mr. VanVoorthuysen, where and when were you born, and who were your parents?

**EVV**: I was born in Redlands in 1926, November 5, and my parents are Al and Lizzy VanVoorthuysen.

**MHH**: Did you live and grow up in the Redlands area?

**EVV**: My whole life.

**MHH**: Tell me something about your family, about your youth, your childhood.

**EVV**: Well, my dad and my mother came here from Holland. She was born in Holland. She came with her parents when she was nine years old. They lived in Muskegon, Michigan. My dad came to America when he was 18—all by himself. He worked on a dairy in the New York area someplace and then he heard about a lot of Dutch people who lived in Muskegon. So he moved there, and that’s where my parents met each other. They were married in a Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon. They had three children: Christine, Betty, and Andy. They later sold their house and went back to Holland just for a trip, with the idea that when they came back to America they were going to go all the way to Redlands, California.

They arrived in Redlands in the early 1900s, about 1920. They were members of the Christian Reformed Church there and that’s where I was born, in 1926, and my younger sister in 1929—Mary Jean. So I’ve been in Redlands my whole life.

**MHH**: What did your father do for a living? What did you do, where did you go to school—anything you’d like to tell me?

**EVV**: Well, my father was a gardener. There were several wealthy people that lived in Redlands. She was born in Holland. She came with her parents when she was nine years old. They lived in Muskegon, Michigan. My dad came to America when he was 18—all by himself. He worked on a dairy in the New York area someplace and then he heard about a lot of Dutch people who lived in Muskegon. So he moved there, and that’s where my parents met each other. They were married in a Christian Reformed Church in Muskegon. They had three children: Christine, Betty, and Andy. They later sold their house and went back to Holland just for a trip, with the idea that when they came back to America they were going to go all the way to Redlands, California.

They arrived in Redlands in the early 1900s, about 1920. They were members of the Christian Reformed Church there and that’s where I was born, in 1926, and my younger sister in 1929—Mary Jean. So I’ve been in Redlands my whole life.

**MHH**: What did your father do for a living? What did you do, where did you go to school—anything you’d like to tell me?

**EVV**: Well, my father was a gardener. There were several wealthy people that lived in Redlands. They had big estate houses up on the hill that overlooked all of Redlands. There were several people who had lots of money. At the time they say there were 30 millionaires in Redlands. My father worked for one of those. He was a gardener, and he had two of those places that were his main job. Then he even got another one. He had three places that he worked at for forty years.

To start with, I went to kindergarten and first
grade in the Christian Reformed Christian school. Then in 1933, when our church started, we were one of the first Protestant Reformed Churches to have their own Christian school. That’s where I went from second grade through the eighth. I graduated with Bill Feenstra, Marilyn Vos (Rev. [Gerrit] Vos’ daughter), Clarice Gritters, who was Clarice Gaastra at that time (she is Professor Barry [Gritters’] mother), and two or three other people. Then in the ninth grade I went back to that same Christian school and had my ninth grade there. Then I went to Redlands high school—the public school. I graduated in 1945.

When I was just barely out of school, I was drafted into the Army, and I spent a year and a half in the Army, most of that time in Hawaii. I really had a beautiful place for my Army career (chuckles). After I got out of the Army, I took a trip to Michigan with my parents. I remember that’s the first time I ever was in First Church. Rev.[Herman] Hoeksema walked in and four and twenty elders. I couldn’t believe how many men that was. And the size of that church! Just amazing! I was just overwhelmed with the looks of that. Anyway, it was wonderful to hear Rev. Hoeksema in First Church. Later on, after Audrey and I married, we had children. Our next to the oldest daughter met her husband-to-be, Ken Kamps, and they married and lived in Michigan. Then our youngest daughter, Barb went to visit her and that’s where she met her husband-to-be, Ron Schut. Now we have fifteen grandchildren, and eight of them live in Michigan. That’s why we come here to Michigan every year, sometimes twice. Is that good enough?

MHH: That’s wonderful.

EVV: I was six years old when the Protestant Reformed Church started in Redlands. That’s really about all I remember. Going to the Christian Reformed Church, I remember slightly. But my first real memory of the church was in 1933. I was six years old. Our first minister was Rev. [Gerrit] Vos, and I remember how I really enjoyed his preaching. He was unique in a lot of ways. I had all my catechism with him. Rev. Vos was a wonderful minister.

While Rev. Vos was our minister (this was in 1941) is when Pearl Harbor was attacked. I remember that Sunday he even had a sermon connected with that. At the time we had to cover all our windows of the church. We could not have any light shining out of any window. So all our windows were covered for a year or two.

Another thing. When Rev. Vos was in Redlands, he became an American citizen. He was not an American citizen till he was our minister in Redlands. In a court there, a judge asked him, “Rev. Vos, have you ever been arrested?” He said, “Yes, your honor, I cannot lie. I’ve been arrested seven times.” “What for?” “For speeding” (laughter). So he was a very fast driver. Some people called him “Jehu.”

Another story about Rev. Vos. He and his son Peter went with my brother-in-law and me fishing in a lake, and he had no fishing license. My brother-in-law had a fish on the line, and he said, “Here, Rev., why don’t you reel it in?” “No. I don’t wanna break the law. I don’t have a license. I can’t do that.” So anyway, he had a consistory meeting that night, and he broke every traffic law there was in order to get back in time (laughter). But, all in all, Rev. Vos was one fantastic minister. Like I said, I had all my catechism with him, from the beginning to the end—even the adult catechisms.

MHH: He was there for quite a long time?

EVV: He was there for eleven years.

MHH: About how large, would you say, Redlands congregation was at that time?

EVV: Around 55–60 families.

MHH: Good sized.

EVV: Yes, it was. The biggest we ever were was 70–some when Rev. Vermeer was our minister.

MHH: Now, was Bellflower church in existence at that time? What’s the connection there?

EVV: I think Bellflower started shortly after that. But not too long.

MHH: Shortly after Redlands?

EVV: I can’t remember if Bellflower was before Redlands—no, I think Redlands was first. But Bellflower was in existence, when Rev. [Lambert] Doezema was the minister there. I think that was a few years after Redlands’ Church started.

MHH: Was there connection between Redlands and Bellflower?

EVV: Yes, in a way. There never was a real thick relationship. We used to get together, I forget what holiday. Redlands and Bellflower would meet in a park in Ontario, which was about half way between. I remember distinctly once Rev. Hoeksema having a speech there. They used to have that all the time with these picnics. There’d be a speech by one of the ministers. And we used to have all kinds of games.
They’d make a high-jumping thing where we had to high jump over something. At one of those picnics, Audrey’s [Everett’s wife] folks were half-way home and they said, “Hey, we’re missing Donald” (laughter). So they had to go back. It was maybe two or three years that we got together with Bellflower. Our minister sometimes would exchange pulpits. In fact, Rev. [Lambert] Doezeema baptized our oldest child, Karen. That was in the time of 1953, and Audrey and I were under censure for things that didn’t agree with Vermeer’s side. Anyway, we could have Karen baptized, but we couldn’t take communion.

MHH: Really? Let me explore a little bit some of that history. After Rev. Vos left, who became your next minister?

EVV: Rev. Peter DeBoer. He was there for four years.

MHH: And that would have been in the mid-1940s?

EVV: Yes, Rev. Vos left in ’44, and DeBoer came shortly after that. So he was there for four years, to about 1949.

MHH: And how would you characterize his ministry or the situation in Redlands during that time?

EVV: It was OK. But half of that time when he was our minister there, I was in the Army. I was not here. He was—I hate to say it—he was not a tremendous minister/preacher. But he was a very good man, and he had a nice family. I don’t think we had any trouble when he was our minister, as far as I know. Do you remember, Audrey?

AVV: [Everett’s wife Audrey joins the conversation] No, there was just one thing: he never looked at the people, do you remember that? He never looked at you, never. And he had such a nice family. Also, we lived close to the parsonage, so I grew up with most of the people there. I remember that Rev. Vos spent many hours talking with Dad. He’d put both feet on the rim on the chair and they’d discuss the “histories of the nations.”

MHH: After Rev. DeBoer left, then who became your minister in Redlands?


MHH: At that time, Doezeema was in Bellflower?

EVV: Yes.

MHH: Now, what can you tell me about that time-period and about Vermeer’s ministry there?

EVV: Rev. Vermeer, as far as being a preacher, was very good. In fact, the most members we had were during the early part of Rev. Vermeer’s ministry. Every Sunday, we had to haul in chairs. There was no room for people to sit. We were 70-some families at that time. He was a very good preacher, but he was not an honest man in lots of ways. That’s when our school problems started. I don’t remember exactly how that all went; I think Mr. [Edwin] Gritters could tell you the details of that.

MHH: OK. Nevertheless, tell me, if you will, your impressions. You refer to school problems. What school problems? How did the school and the church get intertwined or mixed up? What do you recall about any of that?

EVV: Go ahead, Audrey.

AVV: There were four families that were very against the rest of the people in our church.

MHH: In what sense?

AVV: I can’t remember the reason. They were kind of Dutchy people that came to Redlands, and it had to do with those people, that I can remember. Finally, we had to get Rev. [Herman] Hoeksema here. And we had a big meeting in the basement of church—all the men.

EVV: That wasn’t the whole thing, but…

MHH: You mentioned that Vermeer was not an honest man. What do you mean by that?

EVV: Well, with all the trouble, I know he really had it in for Audrey’s dad [Thys Feenstra]. He wrote anonymous letters. I know Ed Gritters got one, and my mother did.

AVV: And my dad too.

EVV: The letters were derogatory. They were letters that were really telling him off, but he didn’t sign it who it was. They even went to a writing specialist. I think Rev. Schipper at the time was involved with that, when he was in Redlands. And they did get a clarity from a handwriting expert that it was Vermeer’s writing. There again, Ed Gritters can tell you exactly what that was all about.

MHH: OK, I’ll ask him. So now, we’re in the period immediately preceding the split of 1953. Were there doctrinal issues involved with either Vermeer or within the congregation, do you remember?

EVV: Not at the time. I really feel that we would have never had a split in Redlands as far as the DeWolf situation was concerned. We had a lot of internal problems, and that was a way out for Vermeer. He came and preached for DeWolf. There might have
been a few, not many, that would have gone along with DeWolf. But I don’t think we would have, if everything was 100% in Redlands as far as trouble was concerned. I do not think Redlands congregation would have split. A big part of it would have gone along with Hoeksema. There would have been no problem that way. But that was a way out for some of these men.

**MHH:** But then Vermeer did not preach the conditional covenant?

**EVV:** No, not to start with. He preached very solid Reformed preaching when he first came. He was very good. There was no problem that way at all, that he was preaching false doctrine or anything. Not at all. But later on, he had it in tremendously for Audrey’s dad. Vermeer was using the *preekstoel* as a *steekstoel* [a Dutch expression that means to use the (preaching) pulpit as a personal bully pulpit]. In other words, he was getting at her dad and others through the preaching.

**MHH:** Now when the split happened, what happened in Redlands? What happened with Vermeer? What happened with the congregation?

**EVV:** Well, then we had to split. Whoever didn’t agree with Vermeer got out of there. But the big part of the congregation went along with him because a lot of them didn’t like her dad [Thys Feenstra] either. Her dad was the big reason why people went with Vermeer. Not that he was wrong. He was right. But there were so many, even elders, who went along with Vermeer. One of the main elders once said, “You have to uphold the minister.” Dad said, “You have to uphold the ministry. If a minister is wrong, you don’t agree with him.” He had two elders who went along with him, because they were upholding the ministry. That was a big issue. But when it all came down to actually leaving the church, we started out again with 11 families. Your grandfather [Herman Hoeksema] came to Redlands. We all met in a contemporary club with whoever wanted to come in, and there were several of our people there. Hoeksema said, “We’re going to have a break now. Whoever comes back in will be the reconstituted Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands. When I saw who was going to be that nucleus of that church, I thought, man, is that going to be the heart of our church? And I didn’t go back in. And neither did my folks. And neither did Gaastras.

Anyway, the next week, when we had church, Audrey and I were there. There was another Chris-
Christian Reformed. That didn’t last very long. Finally they were down just to a little group. They sold the whole property, and that’s what really burned me up. They built a brand-new gym. That money was donated to the First Christian Reformed Church, and they built a brand-new gym at their school. My brother, who was in the Christian Reformed Church at the time, said every time he went in there, “I just felt terrible. Here’s the Protestant Reformed Church money right here.”

MHH: Converted to a gymnasium.

EVV: After ‘53 when we lost our school, our kids had to go to a Christian school someplace. So all our kids except Barb went to the Christian Reformed Christian school. When we started our school again in 1976, she was a ninth grader, and she graduated from Hope Protestant Reformed Christian school ninth grade. Jon and Joanne Huiskens were the teachers. They came one year and organized our school. Then we got John Kalsbeek. He was there for several years when we got our own school back again. That was a joyous occasion.

To be continued…

Editor’s Note: The following article introduces a temporary rubric called A Cloud of Witnesses. The content will include articles on important people and events in the history of the church. At this time we do not know how many articles will be included, since this is a work in progress, but we hope there will be many. The introductory article that follows is written by Joseph Holstege, a student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We welcome any contributions that our readers would like to make to this series.

Young people, are you ready to die? Do you truly live in the consciousness that the Lord could take you at any moment? When I look back on my days in high school, college, all the way to the present, if I am honest, my answer to this question has always been no. I am still strong and healthy, have aspirations that have not yet been fulfilled, and loved ones whom I do not want to leave. In honesty, would your answer be any different?

Currently most if not all of the readers of Beacon Lights live in countries where the world does not yet violently persecute the church of Jesus Christ. However, the day will come when Christians in such countries will again face terrible and violent persecution. Young people often want to talk about this in connection with the last times. When a young people’s society comes to finish the book of the Bible it is discussing and must choose a new one, without fail the books of Daniel and Revelation are suggested. We know that the word of God foretells great persecution in the last days: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be” (Matt. 24:21). Further, the older generations in the church have told us how much the world has changed for the worse—how the place for godly, Bible-believing Christians is diminishing in a society that is drunk with the toleration of sin. Many of us wonder, will we see those days? Then, unadvisedly, forgetting the admonition of Jesus to “fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul” (Matt. 10:28), we begin to steel ourselves and wonder if we will be able to withstand.

We must not so wonder about these things as to provoke doubt in God’s ability to preserve us, for “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matt. 10:30). But when considering everything that we think we stand to lose (a future spouse? a college degree and successful career? winning a championship game in a soccer tournament?) it is worth considering, am I ready? Ask yourself: if you sat alone, locked in a room, knowing the day when your life would come to an end, would you be OK with that?

The question is difficult, but it is pertinent.
Someday, unless we are one of those of whom the scripture says “we shall not all sleep” (1 Cor. 15:51), we will die. The prospect of this death is not a cause of despair for us, but rather is “most desirable and comfortable” (Belgic Confession 37) because we know that we will be gathered into the arms of our heavenly Savior. There are those of our brothers and sisters in the Lord who one instant were riding in a vehicle down the road and the next found themselves in the presence of the Lord. There are those who at one moment were tied to a stake, surrounded by the agony of flames and the jeers of the wicked, and the next found themselves soothed by the Lord of heaven and earth. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints” (Ps. 116:15).

But that does not mean we do not consider the prospect of our own eventual death with some fright. We do not like pain, nor do we relish the thought of leaving behind our friends and loved ones in the church. Concerning this natural fright that we face, the scriptures encourage us by pointing to the examples of saints who have gone before us. You are familiar with the passage that tells us of the “heroes of faith” (Heb. 11). In that passage we read of many saints of the Old Testament who lived by faith in the promise of God, who now reside in the heavenly home to which we look forward. They have all died, some in peace surrounded by their loved ones, but others in great persecutions and tribulations. “They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (Heb. 11:37–38).

The next chapter of Hebrews refers to these men and women as a “great cloud of witnesses” who compass us about:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1–2).

The idea is of a great multitude of men and women in a crowd cheering us on in the race we are running. Do not misunderstand: I am not suggesting that the saints of old look down on us in our day-to-day lives, as the Roman Catholics conceive. Neither is this true of our loved ones who have gone before us, as the popular misconception would have it. Rather, we are to see the “heroes of faith” in much the same way as a marathon runner sees the people crowding along the way and at the finish line. Those people shout encouragements to the runner. They tell him to keep going, for the prize is within reach. This is the power of the recorded lives of the saints who have passed before us. It does us no good if they simply look on us and have a concern for our well-being from heaven. What does us good is the record of their faithful witness in God’s infallible word. Having lived out of God’s gracious gift of faith, these men and women persevered through great difficulty and trial. They looked to Jesus, who was the author and finisher of their faith. Their lives are an encouragement unto us, for the same reality is true for us. We will face trials, difficulties, and death. But looking to Jesus, we will persevere through these things and be gathered into the arms of our Lord.

Young people, I earnestly encourage you to consider diligently the lives of the saints who have gone before you—both the lives of those recorded for us in scripture and those who have walked since then throughout the history of the church. It is good for us to consider the lives of previous saints who have faced severe trials and revealed the grace of God in them, preserving them. It is good for us to speak to older members of the church, our parents and grandparents, in order to learn how God preserved and sustained them in their various trials. Also it is good for us to read of the saints who lived in the early church or during the time of the Reformation, who were publicly and unjustly murdered and yet persevered through death by the grace of God. You and I are not the first to face dark and dreary trials, and we will not be the last. To that end, this article is introductory to a series that will consider some of the individuals in the “great cloud of witnesses,” whose lives stand as testimonies to the power of faith. It is the sincere hope of Beacon Lights and of the present author that this series will be a source of encouragement to you as you run your race, “looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of your faith.”

Joseph is a student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
The Daily Press
“press toward the mark…” (Philippians 3:14)

February 7 – March 7: Psalms 52–62

Doeg and David
Read 1 Sam. 21:1–7 and 1 Sam. 22:6–23

Psalm 52’s lengthy heading reads: “To the chief Musician, Maschil, a Psalm of David, when Doeg the Edomite came and told Saul, and said unto him, David is come to the house of Ahimelech.” In the passages that we read for today, David and his men are fleeing from Saul, but they are hungry. David requests food from Ahimelech the priest, who is suspicious of David’s sudden and secretive arrival. David lies—“I am on a confidential errand for King Saul”—and Ahimelech gives him and his men the showbread, which was consecrated and reserved for consumption by the priests. Their exchange is witnessed by Saul’s servant, Doeg, an Edomite. Doeg reports what he has seen to Saul, and, at Saul’s command, murders 85 priests and their families and herds.

Was David wrong to eat the showbread? No. In Mark 2:25 Jesus teaches that David and his men were justified in eating the showbread, just as the disciples were right to pick corn to eat on the Sabbath. It was wrong for David to lie to Ahimelech, however: his “little” lie had terrible, far-reaching consequences. Tomorrow we’ll consider his reaction when he hears of the slaughter of the priests.

Sing or pray Psalter #145.

Those Who Love Evil
Read Psalm 52

David recoils when he hears of Doeg’s vicious attack on God’s priests. He cries, “Why do you brag about your wickedness, you mighty man?” He then describes the man who loves evil rather than good. That man devises all kinds of treachery and deceit, and his tongue is the weapon he uses to execute his destruction. In Psalm 64:2–3, the psalmist prays that God will protect him from such men: “Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the inscription of the workers of iniquity: who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words.” Yet, sadly, the righteous are prone to the same sinful speech. By nature the tongue is set on fire of hell (James 3:6). But those who are redeemed have also been given a new nature and a heart that fears Jehovah. Therefore we declare, “The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate” (Prov. 8:13).

When you pray today, pray for protection from and just judgement for those who work destruction with their tongues. But also plead, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psalm 141:3).

Sing or pray Psalter #386:1–4.

The Wrath of Man Will Praise the Lord
Read 1 Sam. 2:12–36

The psalmist contrasts God with the evil man: God’s goodness endures continually (v. 1). How could David declare that when he had just learned of Doeg’s slaughter of God’s priests? David knew that even the wrath of man praises Jehovah (Ps. 76:10). Doeg’s murder of the priests fulfilled God’s words to unfaithful Eli in 1 Sam. 2: “Behold, the days come, that I will cut off thine arm, and the arm of thy father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house” (v. 31). “God is not a man, that he should lie… hath he said, and shall he not do it?” (Num. 23:19).

Just as God was faithful to execute his judgement upon the priests, he will also be faithful to execute his judgment against all ungodly men, who are represented by Edom, the descendants of Esau, the family to which Doeg belonged. And God’s judgment will be just: “Thus saith the Lord; for three transgressions of Edom, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity, and his anger did tear perpetually, and he kept his wrath forever” (Amos 1:11).

Sing or pray Psalter #145.

A Green Olive Tree
Read Psalm 52

The day is coming when God will uproot all those who trust in riches and delight in wickedness out of the land of living. Like weeds that are pulled out of a garden or chaff that is burned in the fire, so will the ungodly be. But the righteous, though they endure trials and troubles now, are like olive trees. The leaves of those who are watered by the word of the Lord are green, and they do not cease to bring forth fruit (Ps. 1:3; Jer. 17:8).

Do you trust in Jehovah? Then you can laugh at the foolishness of the wicked and declare with the psalmist, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for
All Come Short
Read Romans 3:10–31

Eleven months ago we considered Psalm 53’s twin. Do you remember which psalm that was? Psalm 14. Then we learned that those who lack faith are fools. Foolishness is “not the absence of intellectual capability but the presence of moral perversity” (Alistair Begg). Fools deny God, the God who alone is worthy of their praise, the God on whom they are dependent and to whom they are morally accountable. They deny him because they love sin and do not want to be reproved for their evil deeds.

Verses two and three of Psalms 14 and 53 are quoted in Romans 3:10–12, reminding us that God’s evaluation of the fool is true of us too by nature, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Therefore, “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight” (v. 20). Instead, God’s law shows us how miserable we are (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 3). That’s a lesson we need to learn in order to live and die happily, for if we don’t know how great our sin and misery are, we won’t seek to be delivered by the Savior.

Domestic and Foreign Enemies
Read Psalm 53

Psalm 14:4 describes Israelites who deny God and persecute their poor brethren: “Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord.” Verse 5 reassures the faithful: “There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.”

Psalm 53 is one verse shorter than Psalm 14. The fourth verses are identical, but Psalm 53:5 elaborates on the workers of iniquity: “There were they in great fear, where no fear was: for God hath scattered the bones of him that encampeth against thee: thou hast put them to shame, because God hath despised them.” The workers of iniquity in Psalm 53 are not the ungodly within the nation of Israel, but the heathen who would attack and destroy the people of God. They fear even when no man pursueth (Prov. 28:1; 2 Kings 7:6–7), for they know that “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31b).

Like Them That Dream
Read Psalm 126

After deploring the fools who deny God and hold the righteous captive in anguish and affliction, the psalmist laments, “Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When God bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad” (Ps. 53:6). Psalm 126 speaks of the bitter trials endured by God’s saints from the euphoric perspective of those who have been set free from captivity.

What trial brings you grief today? Be comforted: though we sow in tears now, when you and I are fully freed from our bondage to sin, we too will be like them that dream. We need not fear, no matter what circumstances God has decreed for us, for we have the victory in Jesus Christ! Yet we must be careful what we sow, “for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:7–8).

Suppliant Prayer
Read 1 Sam. 23:19–24, 1 Sam. 26:1–2, and Psalm 54

Psalm 54 bears a lengthy, specific heading. According to Joshua 15:24, the family of Ziph belonged to the tribe of Judah, which means that they were related to David, yet they betrayed his hiding place to Saul. David pens Psalm 54 when he learns of their treachery.

This psalm is separated into two parts by the “Selah” at the end of verse three. The first three verses comprise a prayer. David doesn’t begin his prayer by focusing on his foes: he turns his eyes upon God first, calling to mind his name and his strength. Then he entreats, “Hear my prayer, O God,” before he relates his trouble: “For strangers are risen up against me, and oppressors seek after my soul” (v. 3). Even though the Ziphites belonged to the same tribe, David calls them “strangers.” David was a companion of all them that feared Jehovah and kept his precepts (Ps. 119:63). Do you view God’s church as your family? Scripture teaches that Jesus is the firstborn of many brethren. That means that your fellow saints are your brothers and sisters—your family—in the truest sense of the word.

A Lofty Claim
Read Psalm 54

David condemns his enemies in Psalm 54:3b. This is the evidence that David uses to come to the conclusion that they have no regard for God: they have risen up against him and seek his life. That’s a pretty lofty claim, isn’t it? Would you dare to say that because someone is against you they are definitely against God also?

This text causes us to consider the reality that though men penned the psalms, it is Christ who speaks in them. The Bible is his word. David is justified in his conclusion here—it’s likely that the Ziphites knew that God had anointed him to be Israel’s next king, and to be against the anointed king meant that they were against God. But to be against the King who truly and perfectly loves righteousness and hates evil, the one whom God has anointed with the oil...
of gladness above his fellows to preach the gospel to the poor and to heal the brokenhearted, is to be against God (Ps. 45:7 and Luke 4:18–19). As Jesus said, “He that hateth me hateth my Father also” (John 15:23).

Sing or pray Psalter #147.

Confident Assurance
Read Matthew 14:22–30
David’s prayer in Psalm 54:1–3 is answered immediately. No, God doesn’t destroy his oppressors as soon as the words are out of his mouth: he answers David’s prayer by immediately filling his heart with confident assurance. David has taken his eyes off his troubles and looked at God. Now he proclaims, “Behold, God is mine helper” (v. 4). In fact, David’s faith is so sure that he plans a sacrifice of thanks in verse six, and in verse seven he speaks of his salvation as if it is already accomplished, as if the future were the present: “For he hath delivered me out of all trouble: and mine eye hath seen his desire upon mine enemies.”

You and I are prone to be like Peter: we worry about the waves instead of turning our eyes upon Jesus. But like David, we must have no doubt but that our heavenly Father “will make whatever evils he sends upon us in this valley of tears turn out to our advantage; for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, and willing, being a faithful Father” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 26). In Jesus, all the promises of God are yes and Amen (see 2 Cor. 1:20 and also HC, Q&A 129).

Sing or pray Psalter #295.

Wings Like a Dove
Read Psalm 55
Psalm 55 is a heartfelt lament that springs from another difficult experience in David’s life. Most assume that he wrote this psalm in response to his betrayal by Ahithophel, his counselor and close companion. Upon learning that Ahithophel has joined himself to his rebellious son, Absalom, David is so overwhelmed that he wishes he had wings like a dove. If he did, he would fly far away to find rest.

Do you feel that way sometimes? I do. When I consider other saints who endure or have endured great trials, I chide myself, “Being a godly wife and mother should not be so difficult! Why am I so often impatient and discontented?” Yet I sometimes think to myself, “Oh, if only I could get away for a bit, then I could enjoy a little peace.” But that’s not the answer to our troubles, is it? No, Psalter #150 answers that desire to fly away like a dove this way: “No, soul! Instead, call on God all the day: the Lord for thy help will appear. At eve, morn, and noon humbly pray, and he thy petition will hear.”

Sing or pray Psalter #150.

Cast Your Burden upon the Lord (1)
Read Psalm 55
David knows he cannot flee his troubles like a bird; instead, he enjoins his soul, “Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee” (v. 22a). His command to his own heart is one that extends to all of God’s saints. “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). Cast “all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Pet. 5:7).

The word translated “burden” in Psalm 55:22 literally means “that which has been given,” or “allotment.” To every one of his children, God gives a specific portion. Yet “burden” is a fitting translation, for regardless of one’s lot, each bears a burden. That burden can come in the form of physical weakness or sickness, emotional or mental distress, strife in relationships, financial troubles, or just the wearying grind of everyday life. And every one of us bears the great burden of sin. Those are the burdens that we’re called to cast on the Lord in prayer.

Sing or pray Psalter #150.

Cast Your Burden upon the Lord (2)
Read Psalm 55
Our elderly neighbors across the street have a massive maple tree in their front yard. Last autumn we raked up the golden leaves that had fallen from that tree and carried them to our backyard, where we layered them on our garden. I made several trips across the street with a large, black trash bag packed with leaves on my back. When I got to my destination, I’d let that heavy bag roll off my shoulders and fall—plop!—to the dirt below.

When the psalmist enjoins us to cast our burden on the Lord’s shoulders, he means for us to roll the burden on our backs into the mighty arms of our heavenly Father. The burden is too heavy for us to lift, and it’s certainly too heavy for us to throw. All we can do is prayerfully roll that burden into our Father’s everlasting arms. He removes entirely some burdens that we roll onto him. No longer do we need to struggle beneath the load of sin’s penalty. But some burdens, like Paul’s thorn, he doesn’t remove. Rather, he strengthens us to bear its weight and makes our steps sure so that we do not stumble beneath its load.

Sing or pray Psalter #149.

At Evening, Morn and Noon
Read Daniel 6:1–11
Casting our burden upon the Lord, like all of our good works, is a work that God himself works in us (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 2:13). Yet it’s a work that demands deliberate action on our part: we must consciously commit our burdens to Jehovah in prayer.
In Psalm 55:17 David declares, “Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.” My study Bible notes that David’s reference to evening, morning, and noon does not denote three specific times at which he prayed, but rather implies that he is praying continually. Likewise, we’re called to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17) and to continue “instant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). Our Lord taught that we “ought always to pray and not to faint” (Luke 18:1). Yet it’s important that we have regular, scheduled prayer times each day, for “much praying is not done because we do not plan to pray” (D.A. Carson). Daniel was so consistent with his prayer times that even his enemies knew when they would find him on his knees. Is that true of you and me?

Sing or pray Psalter #149.

February

21

Freed from Sin’s Penalty
Read Isaiah 53

In John Bunyan’s Pilgrim’s Progress, it is Christian’s burden that drives him to make his pilgrimage to the Celestial City. Of what does Christian’s burden consist? It’s not wearisomeness, pain, hunger, perils, nakedness, sword, lions, dragons, darkness, or death. Those are sorrows that his neighbor, Mr. Worldly Wiseman, warns him that he will encounter on his way. No, this is Christian’s burden: he knows that he is condemned to die on account of his sin, and after death he will face judgment. He knows the just sentence he deserves too: eternal hell. So he answers Mr. Worldly Wiseman, “Sir, this burden upon my back is more terrible to me than are all these things which you have mentioned. Nay, methinks I care not what I meet with in the way, if so be I can also meet deliverance from my burden.”

Do you long for deliverance from your sins and miseries, too? Christian found his relief at the foot of the cross. Joyfully he sang, “He hath given me rest by his sorrow, and life by his death.”

Sing or pray Psalter #142.

February

22

Freed from Sin’s Power
Read Rom. 13:8–14?

John Bunyan’s Christian is not only freed from his burden of sin and guilt at the cross: he’s clothed in white before he goes on his way rejoicing. The same is true of you and me. We’ve been clothed in Christ’s righteousness, in the garments of salvation. To those who have put on Christ comes this command: “Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14).

Christ’s atonement has not only freed us from sin’s penalty, you see: his work has freed us from sin’s power as well. Whom he justifies he also sanctifies. Is there a sin in your life that you feel as if you are unable to fight? Perhaps you struggle with sexual sin. Maybe you’re prone to impatience or jealousy. Have you convinced yourself that you are saved even though you persist in that sin? If so, you’re lying to yourself: either you are not truly justified, or you choose to ignore the strength of the new man that dwells in you by God’s Holy Spirit. There is not a sin that lies outside the Spirit’s power. Lay hold of his sword, the word of God, and fight!

Sing or pray Psalter #92:1–3.

February

23

Words of our Savior
Read Psalm 55

Do you hear your Savior speak in Psalm 55? His enemies, the Pharisees and the rulers of the Jews, plotted mischief against him day and night. He experienced the painful disloyalty of one who was close to him. It was not an enemy that betrayed him, but one of his own disciples, a man who had accompanied him in all of his travels and worshiped with him at the temple. When the terrors of death were fallen upon him, he turned to God in prayer: “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour…” (John 12:27). Jesus was a man of prayer at morning (Mark 1:35), noon, and evening (Matt. 14:23). By the power of his Godhead, Jesus sustained in his human nature the incomparable burden that was cast upon him: God’s terrible wrath against our sin (HC, LD 6). By sustaining that burden, he obtained for and restored to us righteousness and life. Because he—the Righteous—suffered for us, we can rest assured that no matter what troubles we may face, our salvation is sure: we will never be moved.

Sing or pray Psalter #150.

February

24

His Burden is Light
Read Matthew 23:1–8 and Matthew 11:28–30

There is another burden that you and I pick up again and again, in spite of its weight. That burden is the burden of legalism. At the time when our Lord walked on this earth, the self-righteous Pharisees loaded the burden of countless laws on the backs of their fellow Israelites. We are prone to the same legalistic tendencies, holding ourselves and our neighbors accountable to laws of our own making. This is foolishness. We’re unable even to keep the ten commandments of our holy God. The Scriptures declare, “By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight,” for “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Rom. 3:20; Isa. 64:6). Yet we vainly imagine that we can save ourselves by keeping laws of our own.

Our Savior removes this burden too from our shoulders. His perfect obedience to God’s law is imputed to us by faith. Instead of trusting in our own righteousness, which is no righteousness at all, we’re called to trust in him and to be led by his Spirit. His yoke is weightless, far lighter than the yoke of works-righteousness and self-righteous legalism. Which burden do you bear?

Sing or pray Psalter #109.
February 25

I Will Not Fear
Read Psalm 56

On election day 2015, the people of the city of Houston voted on a measure known as “The Bathroom Ordinance.” Among other things, this law, if passed, would allow homosexuals and so-called transgender people unrestricted access to the restrooms of their choice. To the dismay of the far left and Houston’s aggressive homosexual mayor, the proposal failed. The response of the media was immediate and severe: the proposal failed because the majority of Houston voters were motivated by bigotry and hatred. There could be no other reason.

I’m sure that there were rational, moral citizens who voted against the ordinance in Houston who are not Christians. Yet I give this example to demonstrate that the cry of the psalmist in Psalm 56:5–6 is increasingly true for Christians in the United States: “Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.” What will be our response to such persecution? We must respond like the psalmist: “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee” (v. 3).

Sing or pray Psalter #151.

February 26

God is for Me
Read Psalm 56

2 Timothy 3:12–13 declares, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” We live in perilous times, yet we must say with the psalmist, “In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me” (v. 11). When we’re slandered or falsely accused, we can be tempted to retreat in fear. We must remember that no one can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect: Christ has died for us. Nothing can separate us from his love. In him, we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:33–39).

Brothers and sisters, this means that we must have a confident witness. The evil in this world, the persecution of God’s saints—these are things that our Lord foretold. They are proof that his word is true and that he is trustworthy. We must not compromise the clear teachings of scripture to pacify our persecutors, nor may we isolate ourselves from society. Both of those responses are driven by fear. We are the light of the world. “Let your light so shine before men...” (Matt. 5:16).

Sing or pray Psalter #152.

February 27

Providence Makes the Payment
Read Psalm 57

David is hiding from Saul in a desolate cave in the rocky wilderness of Engedi. Saul pursues him with 3,000 soldiers and camps for the night in the mouth of the very same cave in which David and his men cower. In Psalm 57 David discloses his distress of soul that night. “Be merciful unto me, O God,” he pleads. “My soul is among lions.”

What motivates David to cry unto God, to hide in the shadow of his wings? First, he knows that God is sovereign. Second, he has experienced God’s gracious care of him in the past: this God is the God “that performeth all things” for him (v. 2). In his book, The Mystery of Providence, John Flavel offers this translation of Psalm 57:2b: “I will cry unto God most high: unto God that performeth the things which he hath promised.” Flavel comments, “Payment is the performance of promises. Grace makes the promise, and providence the payment.” Do you find comfort in knowing that God’s providence “performs and perfects” all that concerns you? “It goes through with its designs and accomplishes what it begins,” and it neither does, “nor can do anything that is really against the true interest and good of the saints” (Ibid).

Sing or pray Psalter #154.

February 28

Be Thou Exalted, O God
Read Psalm 57

This is the refrain of Psalm 57: “Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth” (v. 5 and 11). Though he was greatly troubled, David desired God’s glory more than he desired his own salvation. That’s the work of the Holy Spirit, for by nature we desire nothing but our own prosperity and praise.

Our Saviour also desired his Father’s glory above anything else. At the beginning of Passion Week, Jesus prayed, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name” (John 12:27–28a). In response to that prayer of our Lord, there came “a voice from heaven, saying, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.” Because the sinless Son of God humbled himself to the death of the cross, God also hath highly exalted him, and he, the Son of Man, is coming again in the glory of his Father with his angels. On that great day every knee will bow, and every tongue will confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Sing or pray Psalter #155.

February 29

Psalms of the Precious Secret
Read Psalm 58

Psalms 56 through 60 are five of the six psalms that include the word “michtam” in their titles. (The other is Psalm 16.) The root of the word michtam means “to stamp or engrave.” Some translate michtam as “golden,” and regard it as a heading that denotes a psalm so precious it’s worthy of being engraved. Some of Spurgeon’s contemporaries taught that michtam meant “secret” or “mystery” and signified the doctrinal depth and spiritual importance of these psalms. In response to this suggestion Spurgeon wrote, “If this be the true interpretation it well accords with the other of being precious, and when the two are put together, they make up a name which every reader will remember, and
which will bring the precious subject at once to mind: The Psalm of the Precious Secret.”

The mich`tam psalms begin with prayer and relate trouble before ending in confident assurance. The doctrine of Psalm 58 is summarized well in Proverbs 3:31–32: “Envy thou not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways. For the froward is abomination to the Lord: but his secret is with the righteous.” To them he shows his covenant. And that’s a precious secret, indeed.

Sing or pray Psalter #156.

March

Rejoicing at Vengeance
Read Psalm 58

At first read, Psalm 58 would not be one of the psalms that I would title “Mich-tam” or “Golden Psalm.” In this song the psalmist first describes the wicked, and then he calls on God to execute vengeance on them. He confidently concludes, “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance: he shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked. So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth” (vv. 10–11). That kind of language seems more base and violent than it does doctrinally deep and spiritually important, doesn’t it?

Let’s stop a moment and reconsider our enemies. Satan, our adversary, desires only our misery and total destruction. When he, the great deceiver, is thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, there to be tormented day and night forever, won’t you rejoice? (Rev. 20:10). We’ll rejoice, too, when the wicked world, those who hate God and falsely accuse his people, even murder them, are judged for their unrighteous-ness. And what joy to be freed from our wretched sinful natures, against which we fight our whole life long! Don’t forget the last enemy, the enemy that robs a man first of his loved ones and then of his very life: death too will be destroyed. Rejoice!

Sing or pray Psalter #156.

March

Awake, Jehovah
Read Psalm 59

There is a vertical aspect to the psalms: they are prayers to God. There is also a horizontal aspect to the psalms: they are prayers offered with and on the behalf of fellow saints. Today as I read Psalm 59, my mind is on those saints who face grave persecution in other lands. At present, fundamentalist Muslims have nearly eradicated Christianity in the Middle East. ISIS shows no mercy to Christians, who are forced to flee or face torture, imprisonment, or murder. Many of our brethren in Africa are also persecuted by the Muslim majority. Believers in China and North Korea meet in secret for fear of their despotic Communist governments. Bloody men lie in wait for the soul of these saints, not for any transgression or sin that they have committed, but because they love the Lord Jesus Christ.

These persecuted brethren are, with us, members of Christ’s body, “and whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it” (1 Cor. 12:26). On their behalf we pray, “O Lorp God of hosts, the God of Israel, awake to visit all the heathen: be not merciful to any wicked transgressors” (v. 5).

Sing or pray Psalter #157.

March

God is My Defense
Read Psalm 59

Our small flock of hens lives in a coop in the corner of our backyard. Attached to the coop is a chicken-wire run, in which the hens spend most of their day, scratching in the dirt and dust-bathing. Last summer, a couple moved into one of the homes with a backyard adjacent to ours. Our new neighbors own two large dogs. The first morn- ing in their new domain, those dogs flew at our chickens, barking and jumping. The hens responded in utter terror, a cloud of red feathers floating down in the wake of their fright. Now, months later, those two dogs are still in the habit of beginning their day by rushing to the far corner of the yard to assault the hens. No longer do the hens react the way they first did, however. They’ve learned that the dogs cannot cross the fence and do them any real harm.

The same is true for us because Jehovah is our defense. “A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing… And though this world, with devils filled, should threaten to undo us, we will not fear, for God hath willed his truth to triumph through us…Let goods and kindred go, this mortal life also; the body they may kill; God’s truth abideth still; his kingdom is forever” (Luther).

Sing or pray Psalter #157.

March

Our Help from Trouble
Read Psalm 60

Psalm 60 is conversation between Israel and God. Like the other mich`tam psalms, it begins with a lament. Israel has suffered a military defeat that has left them deeply shaken. They are distressed because they sense in their enemies’ victory that God is displeased with them. Still they turn to him in their plight, for they have this assurance: they are his beloved. Do you go to God in your trouble with that confidence?

God responds to his people in verses 6–8. Not only, he says, do I rule over all Israel: your enemies too are my servants. God’s people reply with the prayer that he will give them victory, “for vain is the help of man” (v. 11). You and I need that mighty God on our side, too, in our battles against Satan, self, and sin. Rely on his strength as you fight the fight of faith today. Thanks be to him, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:57).

Sing or pray Psalter #158.

March

A Goodly Heritage
Read Psalm 61

Last fall I attended two funerals. The first funeral was that of our neighbor, who died of cancer. Nine people attended. An Elvis
song was played over the funeral home speakers, and then a Roman Catholic deacon offered a series of short intercessory prayers, pleading that God would accept her soul. After that her two daughters spoke. The first daughter consoled herself that her parents were now reunited in the afterlife. The second sobbed angrily that her mother had died too soon. Then the funeral was over. The second funeral was that of a brother in Christ who had also succumbed to the throes of cancer. Our church building overflowed with his family members and fellow saints who loved him and came to rejoice through their tears that he had been given the victory over sin and death. The service included the reading of scripture, psalm-singing, and prayer.

Brothers and sisters, the heritage of those who fear the name of the Lord is a goodly heritage. It’s a heritage that means membership in Christ’s body already in this life, and citizenship in his blessed, eternal kingdom in the life to come. Is that goodly heritage yours? Praise God!

Sing or pray Psalter #159.

### A Time to Keep Silence
**Read Psalm 62**

The psalmist begins Psalm 62 with a confident declaration: “Truly my soul waiteth upon God.” According to Calvin, this confession can also be translated, “Nevertheless, my soul is silent towards God.” The psalmist goes on to state the reason for his quiet confidence: God alone can save him. Why does the psalmist begin with this rather abrupt assertion? Once again his enemies plot against him, intent on his destruction. The psalmist is so troubled by their persistent attacks that in verse five he directs his soul to do the very thing that he declared he does do in verse one: “My soul, wait thou only upon God,” or “My soul, be thou silent before God.” Once again, he prompts his soul to silence with indisputable proof: God is his rock, his salvation, his defense, and his refuge. Knowing this, he has no reason but quietly to subject himself to God’s will.

What enemies do you face today? In what trials are you tempted to speak against God and to doubt his goodness to you? Be still, and know that he is God, a very present help in trouble (Ps. 46).

Sing or pray Psalter #162.

### March 7

#### A Time to Speak
**Read Psalm 62**

In Psalm 62 the psalmist calls on his soul to be silent before God. Later in the same psalm he charges his fellow saints, “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him.” The reason he gives for speaking is the same reason he gives for being silent: “God is a refuge for us.” You and I need this admonition too. We’re quick to worry and become bitter when we’re distressed. We should be quick to go to God in prayer.

John Calvin offers an interesting comment on Ps. 62:8: “David is here to be considered as exposing that diseased but deeply-rooted principle in our nature, which leads us to hide our griefs, and ruminate upon them, instead of relieving ourselves at once by pouring out our prayers and complaints before God.” Have you ever seen an animal chew its cud? That animal was ruminating: chewing and swallowing, then regurgitating what it had already swallowed, only to chew it again. That’s what we’re prone to do with our griefs. Instead, we must go to God with them, not trusting in self, in others, or in riches, but in him to whom power and mercy belong. He will render to every man according to his work.

Sing or pray Psalter #161.

---

### 75 Years

#### Agatha Lubbers

The mail delivery man on a snowy, frigid, winter day, January, 1941, followed the usual delivery route with mail for the day to be placed in a diminutive mailbox at 609 Peace Street, Pella, Iowa. This time the mail was almost too large for the mailbox. It was a brand new magazine, *Beacon Lights for Young Protestants*.

Lying near me on my desk as I write is the very same magazine that was delivered in January, 1941, now celebrating 75 years of existence, slightly wrinkled and yellowed but completely preserved. This precious treasure with other yellowed and important documents and papers was moved from home to home by my parents when they served the churches.

I can imagine myself as a 10-year old youngster dashing into the house with this first edition of the magazine that was published by the very recently organized Protestant Reformed Young People’s Fed-

---

**Beacon Lights**
eration. As I looked at the magazine, I am almost certain I would have wondered, “What are Young Protestants?”

The decision of the delegates at the second annual young people’s convention, convened at the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan in August, 1940, had authorized the publication of the magazine.

Of course, I could not have known at that time the total significance of the name of the publication of this magazine and the influence of the Federation that published Beacon Lights. That the Federation and Beacon Lights did have a large influence on me and many in the long and fruitful seventy-five year history is an indisputable historical fact.

The parsonage to which that first Beacon Lights was delivered was the home of the Lubbers family and Rev. George C. Lubbers (1937–1944), the minister of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church located at the intersection of Main and Peace Streets, and a block east of the Central College campus, a college associated with the Reformed Church of America.

I remember well the congregation of the Pella Protestant Reformed Church, which, sad to say, no longer exists. Pella PRC was established in the late 1920s in a predominantly Dutch Reformed community. The congregation that I remember was a peace-loving and peaceful congregation meeting in those days in a church purchased from a Methodist congregation.

Only fifteen years had passed since the Protestant Reformed Churches of America had been organized. I heard from a reliable source—my Dad, of course—that the congregation of young and old supported enthusiastically and faithfully the causes of Christ represented by the PR churches.

Pella was and is still today a lovely town established in the rich farm land of rolling hills that are adjacent to and part of the land near the Skunk and Des Moines Rivers. This was the country land in Iowa that was settled and established by 800 Dutch immigrants who followed Hendrick Scholte and his aristocratic wife from the Netherlands in 1847. Here for a hundred years Reformed fathers and mothers lived, worshiped, and reared their children and young people. They were godly and quality people with names such as the now famous Vermeer family, the Van Zees, the Van Weeldens, the Wassinks, the Stuursmas, the three DeVries families (a descendant of two of these families is Rev. Michael De Vries, pastor of the Kalamazoo PRC.), the Vander Molens, the Edemas, the Boenders, and the old but faithful Mrs. Kleyn.

Members of these families attended with others the services and activities of the Pella PRC. The children of several of these families went to the Peoria and Pella Christian Schools, as did children from my family, and were students in the weekly after-church-service catechism classes, where our theme song that I especially remember and learned to love was Psalter number 367, a versification of Psalm 132. The song entitled “God and His Church” began with the well-known words, “Gracious Lord, remember David, how he made thy house his care.” I did not totally realize at that time that my Dad, who was our catechism teacher in those important years, was teaching his students to sing history and sing about the love of King David for the church, the love we have for the church when we sing praise and glory to God. When I sing this song and hear this song sung my mind is immediately turned to the time in my life when I first learned this song and to the significance of this song for young and old Christians.

Let’s get on with Beacon Lights.

When we pause to commemorate and celebrate Beacon Lights, it is most necessary and appropriate to contemplate and celebrate the goodness, faithfulness, and grace of God. In spite of our unfaithfulness, failures, and sin, Beacon Lights has flourished and grown. Although the Pella PRC no longer exists I am convinced that the young people in Pella PR church in those days, especially the Wassinks and VanWeeldens, who were old enough to attend society, were the happy and thankful recipients of this new magazine.

Eighteen months prior to the first publication of Beacon Lights, on a warm summer day in August, 1939, I watched my dad, George Lubbers, and Mr. Cecil Vander Molen (our Uncle Ceis) direct an excited and happy group of young people and young adults as they readied themselves to attend the very first Convention sponsored by the PRYP Federation. I was about eight years old and in the second grade in the Pella Christian School, and I remember that the young people and young adults from the Pella PRC and the Oskaloosa PRC (both Iowa churches) boarded a truck used most of the days of each week for milk delivery from Iowa farms to the creamery. It was to be the mode of transportation for the young people and young adults of the Pella and Oskaloosa, Iowa, Protestant Reformed Churches to make the round trip of six hundred miles. South Holland, Illinois
PR church was the destination. Although Uncle Ceis’ truck was not a Model T Ford or a Greyhound bus, a trip like this looked super exiting to me. That bumpy and exhausting ride from Pella to South Holland and the return must have often been one of the stories they told each other and must have lived long in the minds of these young men and young women and their chaperones. How times have changed since the pre-WW2 days more than seventy-five years ago. Can you imagine a trip like that today? Can you imagine the homecoming of all those who attended this first convention? Think of the excitement and anticipation for the fatiguing and bumpy trips to future conventions.

The results of that first Convention were significant because the emphasis already at the first convention, 1939, in South Holland, Illinois PRC was focused on the plans for the publication of a periodical that would be called Beacon Lights. The main item on the agenda for the second annual convention convened in the summer, 1940, at the First PRC in Grand Rapids, Michigan was to approve the publication of five issues—January, February, March, April, and May 1941. The publication period was declared a trial period, and it was the first of two trial periods. At the third annual convention, Oak Lawn, Illinois, August 1941, the main business was once again Beacon Lights. At this convention the monumental decision was reached to continue publication for eight months: October, 1941 through May, 1942, the second trial period, and then hopefully into the unknown future. However, according to the unchangeable counsel and providence of God, the young people with the advice and counsel of the ministers of the gospel then serving in the churches went home with deep satisfaction because they made the decision that resulted in the publication of a magazine that has existed for 75 years.

The year 1941 is virtually impossible to forget. Soon we will celebrate again the targeting and bombing of U.S. possessions in Hawaii, December 7, 1941, at Pearl Harbor, which began WW2 for the U.S. It was a devastating attack, and those who are old enough to remember know that WW2 had an immediate impact upon the church and the young men of the church. It also had immediate results for Beacon Lights because the magazine began to address the needs of young men who were drafted or enlisted to serve in the U.S. Armed Forces. Letters from Rev. Hoekema and others to the soldiers were included in Beacon Lights. Young men in the armed forces responded with gratitude for Beacon Lights and for the letters published in Beacon Lights. A system was devised so that letters would consistently be sent to the men in the armed forces. In this and many other ways Beacon Lights has contributed to the organic life of the church, to societies, and to the lives of the members of the churches. Praise God!

Seventy-five years is important in the life of our churches that are now over 90 years old. Seventy-five years is the number of years that we can celebrate both the existence of Beacon Lights and the Reformed Witness Hour. The broadcast of the first program of the Reformed Witness Hour was featured and announced on the back cover of the October, 1941, Beacon Lights as “The Protestant Reformed Hour.” The announcement informed the readers that Herman Hoekema would be the speaker, and that the program would also feature a mixed choir, called the Radio Choir. This introductory broadcast would be aired Sunday, October 12, 1941, at 4:15 PM on WLAV, at 1340 AM on the radio dial. This was a live broadcast with no replays. It is perhaps significant that the Young Men’s Society of the First Protestant Reformed Church, which was responsible for the program, was also very active in the production of Beacon Lights. The message that day was “God is God.” I remember well that several weeks later the bombing of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, forced the cancellation of the Reformed Witness Hour that December day so Franklin D. Roosevelt, President of the USA, could address the nation about this attack and consequences of the declaration of war.

When Beacon Lights came into existence and first appeared in the homes of the initial subscribers and readers in January, 1941, I can imagine the animated conversations and discussions among the recipients in the homes of the members of churches spread across the United States in Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, and California. Young people from homes in these States had not merely attended a convention like many of us do and did—but these three conventions were the basic precedent-setting forerunners for future conventions that would occur annually for the next seven decades. These early conventions were new occurrences, new events—a frontier that needed to be explored, tested, and conquered. These conventions of the Federation can be compared to the life of the colonists who were required to clear the forests, plow new ground, build new houses and farm buildings and establish new villages, towns, and cities. Most of these early young Protestants, as
Beacon Lights named them, are now deceased and have departed from the church militant and have joined the church triumphant in glory, but the results of their decisions and endeavors remain.

Young people most certainly went to the conventions to have a good time, but not with the thought or plan that they would attempt to outdo the mischief and adventures of past conventioneers. The circumstances did not contribute to this. Those attending conventions stayed in the homes of families of the guest churches. Conventions were usually small enough for this arrangement. In addition the young men and women had been charged with important and significant responsibilities. They had work to do. The challenging and aggressive agenda for the convention business meetings required important and consequential decisions. Attention to important details in a short two days was the requisite. The challenge and goal was apparent.

The young people heard Rev. Herman Hoeksema, the keynote speaker at conventions for many years, urge them to make progress and go forward. As a young Eastern Avenue Christian Reformed Church pastor, Herman Hoeksema had worked relentlessly and vigorously in the 1920’s to organize young men into a movement and federation called Young Calvinists. His position as the first editor of the magazine, The Young Calvinist, was certainly a stimulus and an influence for the development of both the Federation and Beacon Lights. In addition the leaders of the Federation were urged and encouraged by the enthusiastic young thirty-year old ministers and pastors from the various PR churches to move forward in the process of federation and organization. These pastors obviously understood and recognized that the future of the church on earth is rooted in the life of the militant young people of the church with whom they had the blessed privilege to live and work. The stimulus, encouragement, and leadership given in these ways were certainly obvious to the young men and women who attended the first three conventions, and in the process had caught the enthusiasm and developed desires and a sense of urgency. The minds and hearts of the young men and women were captured so that they in unity and not mere union went to work. This unity would be the incentive and the drive to continue the construction of the Federation that brought Beacon Lights into existence.

These Young Protestants of 1939, 1940, and 1941, were similar to the strong and vital young men and women who accompanied Nehemiah in c.500 BC for the restoration and building of the walls of Jerusalem. The young people, like the followers of Nehemiah, were of a mind to work and in this way bring into existence the walls of the PRYP Federation and Beacon Lights. The young men and women of 1939–1941 and following years were warriors in the faith who worked with the trowel in one hand and with the sword in the other hand—the sword of faith, which is the word of God. In this manner they established a national organization in the fifteen fast-moving and therefore short years following the organization of the PR churches in 1924. These young men and women with great zeal would through this zeal develop a humble but worthy magazine to be an instrument of instruction, edification, and unification of the young people of the churches for seven decades in several states of the USA.

It bears repeating that Beacon Lights came into existence at a time, 1941, when the receipt of this publication was an enormous necessity for our young men that were being drafted or enlisted in the Armed Forces because of WW2, 1941–1946. Concerning Beacon Lights it can rightly be said, “See what God hath awesomely wrought.”

Recently I have read and paged through the first issues of Beacon Lights (Volumes 1–4). I was surprised to find two letters that show how very early in its life Beacon Lights became a medium for our young people to speak to one another. I discovered in my examination of the December, 1941, Beacon Lights a letter from a young adult, Wilmina Rutgers. I said to myself, I know her. Wilmina is the widow of the late Rev. George Lanting. She was a member of the Oak Lawn, Illinois PRC young people’s society that hosted the third convention in August, 1941—the convention that made the decision that Beacon Lights would no longer be published on a trial basis but would move on to be a permanent publication. Wilmina is a member of the Crete, Illinois PRC and is certainly one of the few living past conventioneers of the 1939–1941 era. She wrote as a representative of the host society for the convention of 1941 at Oak Lawn PRC to express great appreciation for the convention and concludes with the comment that “we are thankful to have our own paper, but especially thankful that this is one of the first fruits of our Protestant Reformed Young People’s Federation.”

Wilmina wrote again in the October, 1943, Volume 4, Number 1 issue. Her letter contains the following: “Today I received my Beacon Lights. I read through it from cover to cover. I intend to reread vari-
ous articles so that I will get the full value of them.” She writes that since this is war time many of the young men have gone to the armed services. God sends his covenant young men to war against men with weapons, but also to war against temptations. This makes it hard for them to fight the good fight of faith. If we could see their surroundings we would say it is impossible for them to keep walking uprightly.

Wilmina continues: “At home in the churches a war is going on and we wonder sometimes what the outcome will be. Families are broken up because of doctrinal differences. Fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and cousins are separated from worshipping in the same denomination. When we work, we must fight unions and Sunday work. Where is the peace today? What has the youth today?” She completes her letter by saying, “We know true joy and happiness come from within. The law of God is in our hearts by the new life within us.”

I believe you can say with me that the battle has not changed; only the time and the circumstances. This is cause to be rejuvenated in the desire to see Beacon Lights continue and perhaps improve.

If you know or see Wilmina, please say hello and wish her God’s blessings from you to her and from me to her. I remember Wilmina from meeting her on many occasions and when I taught her children many years ago. It should be apparent that we both have had similar opportunities to participate in the early conventions. If you see her in church, please tell her that you read about her in Beacon Lights and that 75 years ago she wrote letters that were published in Beacon Lights of 1941 and 1943. If you are her grandchildren, thank her for her love and tell her how much you appreciate her faithfulness as a member of the church these many years.

I believe I can safely assume that if Beacon Lights was published at least ten times per year since the first issue in January, 1941, it has been delivered to societies and to subscribers about 750 times. This, I believe, is a notable and illustrious history and ranks high with other magazines and periodicals of this type. Having passed through the history of 1953 it’s remarkable that the magazine is still being published each month. When two-thirds of the membership of the churches left the Protestant Reformed Churches in the 1953 era, many who were subscribers, supporters, and writers left. Therefore it is astounding that this God-ordained magazine has continued to exist and to do that which it was founded to accomplish. Confer the editorial by Cornelius Hanko, January 1941, Volume I, Number 1, to study for reading this mission and purpose.

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.

The statements are statements that set a high and necessary goal. The goal that the men and women of 1941 thought and lived has not changed and must still be the goal of the Federation.

In 1941 Editor Cornelius Hanko, wrote: “One stride toward realizing this purpose is made. And hereby Beacon Lights takes upon itself to serve this purpose.”

The first step is the first step of many hundreds or thousands of these steps. The first step is so significant.

The resulting enthusiasm and industry caused by the decision of the fledgling PRYP Federation to authorize and begin the publication of Beacon Lights after only two conventions attended by delegates from far-flung churches is evident in the editorials by the editor, Rev. C. Hanko. He writes with an obvious flair and a flourish of enthusiasm in his first editorial, January, 1941, Volume I, No. 1, page 1 as follows:

The Publication Committee of the PRYP takes great pleasure in introducing the first issue of our new periodical into your midst. It means to them the fruit of concentrated effort put forth during the last few months to make this paper possible, the removal of what seemed at times to be insurmountable barriers, the satisfaction of having reached a certain goal. But we realize that it means far more to members of the young people’s Federation. To you it is the first-fruits of the youthful, yet lively and ambitious organization it represents. Not 18 months ago the Federation was organized in South Holland, IL. Not 5 months ago the second annual Convention was held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Today you have your own paper. And what this means toward filling the long-felt need in our young people’s societies can only be surmised.
An imposing lighthouse and tower adorns the faded blue cover of the very first issue. A beam of light issued from the light house with the familiar words quoted from Psalm 36:9, “In Thy Light Shall we See Light.” The articles that appeared in the first issue were Editorials, Bible Outlines, Discussion of the Canons of Dordt, Book Reviews, Tomorrow’s Man of God, and Exciting Quotations. The masthead listed the editorial staff. They were the twelve ministers from the PR churches at that time, none of whom are still living on this earth, but I believe have received the reward of Christ for their labors. It is disappointing and sad that only four of the contributors to Beacon Lights in 1953 and prior to 1953 remained with the Protestant Reformed Churches after the painful, sad, consequential, and obviously necessary history of 1953. I remember all of them and met at some time all of them, and I remember very personally and well the events of that time and the necessary but in some ways painful consequences.

Those who remained to work for Beacon Lights were editor in chief, Rev. Cornelius Hanko, of Oak Lawn, Illinois; Herman Hoeksema, George Lubbers, and Marinus Schipper. The original editors, most of whom left the PRC in 1953, were the editor of Bible Study Outlines, Rev. Peter De Boer of Holland, Michigan; Book Review editor, Rev. Leonard Vermeer; the Canons of Dordt editor, Rev. Heman Hoeksema; and the regular writers and contributors: Andrew Cammenga, John D. deJong, Lambert Doezema, Martin Gritters, Andrew Petter, and John Vander Breggen. One must say that this periodical with a humble beginning had an array of ministers prepared to give of their time, understanding, and talent to this production.

“All things have worked together for good” (cf. Rom. 8:28). This is theologically correct, it is true from the viewpoint of salvation, and it is experientially real.

One additional person, namely, the first subscription manager should be identified. Peternella Poortinga received the subscription cost of seventy-five cents (75 cents) or fifteen cents per copy for the first five issues (January–May, 1941). Ah!!!! Seventy-five cents. What can you purchase for 15 cents today? How about 75 cents? Seventy-five years and seventy-five cents. Quite a coincidence, I must say. Don’t you think so?

It was May, 1941 that editor Editor Cornelius Hanko wrote again as follows:

Beacon Lights has made its appearance and has met with a hearty reception, far beyond our fondest expectations. By this time it has gained for itself a definite place in the society life of our Protestant Reformed youth, besides supplying them with edifying reading material. Yet as was said at the outset, these first five issues were merely an experiment from every point of view.

It was October, 1941 after an absence of four months (June, July, August, September, 1941) that Beacon Lights made a renewed appearance at 609 Peace Street and other homes in Pella and Oska- loosa, and on the farms, and in villages, towns, and cities in the USA.

Volume 2, October, 1941 of Beacon Lights appropriately contained another introduction as Editor C. Hanko commenced this aspect and part of a volume of the magazine. Editor Hanko wrote that “Beacon Lights comes to you again as a friend and companion, an invaluable guide throughout the new season of society activities... Once more it takes upon itself to maintain that only in God’s light do we see the light... It appears in new garb.... The appearance has undergone change. For practical reasons the size was reduced and the number of pages increased. We hope that our readers will find the magazine in its present form more convenient to carry about with them.”

The implication of all this is that the editor and those working with him were advocating with enthusiasm and with determination that this good work had not only begun, but that there was more that should be accomplished. All that was needed was the vote for the proposal to continue in the future, with continued enthusiasm, continued fidelity, and continued willingness and devotion for the endeavor and task. Beacon Lights has stayed. We have observed this for seventy-five years. God is good. God is faithful.

Some Specifics Concerning That First Volume: Those First Five Issues

One of the noteworthy and significantly indicative rubrics in terms of the mission and goals of Beacon Lights that were published in the first five issues and further issues is the Bible Outlines rubric edited initially by Rev. Peter De Boer. These Bible discussion outlines provided study material to help direct the discussion in the society meetings each week of the society season. It is obvious that a feeling of unity must have been experienced by the young people when they realized that all young people’s societies were studying the same scripture undoubtedly on the same day or evening. A thorough-going series
of outlines on Matthew 5–7 in the January–May, 1941 issues was published for the young people to use and prepare for the discussion. This was an obvious attempt to unite all Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies. This rubric and practice went on for many years when men like Rev. George Lubbers, Rev. Homer C. Hoeksema, and Rev. John Heys began serving in this capacity.

I discovered that the book reviews written by Rev. Leonard Vermeer are interesting and helpful. I am particularly impressed with his review of the Dutch Trilogy Publications of Dr. Klaas Schilder by Henry Zylstra, my excellent English professor at Calvin College. This Trilogy entitled Christ in His Suffering, Christ on Trial, and Christ Crucified were reviewed with the assumption that young readers should become familiar with Klaas Schilder’s excellent writings published at $3.00 per volume by Eerdmans Publishing. The Dutch were part of the books on the shelves in Dad’s study.

Along with the discovery of the review of these books in a 1941 issue of the Beacon Lights, many could have known what I discovered and remembered about Klaas Schilder, because in 1939 he had spoken in many of the Protestant Reformed Churches. I recall that in 1939 Schilder had visited in our home in Pella, Iowa, on a speaking tour in the churches and visited in our home in Randolph, Wisconsin, in 1947 on a second speaking tour. His lectures in 1947 were primarily concerned with his concept of the covenant.

In 1948–49 my father was the initial translator of De Geloovigen en Hun Zaad (Believers and Their Seed) written originally in the Dutch by Herman Hoeksema and published in the Standard Bearer in 1927. In my opinion, by the visits, conversations, and lectures Dad was influenced to produce his translation so that others who could not read Dutch would be able to read these articles and this explanation of covenant in opposition to the errant covenant theology of Dr. Schilder. I am certain that Dad believed this a careful and accurate scriptural explanation of the doctrine of the covenant.

As I think of this accomplishment and effort today, I believe that a serial publication of these articles and the translation from the Standard Bearer and a little previously published paperback would have been valuable for the instruction of young and old.

These remembrances, associations and other interests helped to capture my intention to read the review of this series of books that are theological tomes in Beacon Lights, and it has also stimulated me to read these translations that are still published or on the shelves of theological libraries.

It surprised me that the book review editor, Rev. Leonard Vermeer, who left the PR church in 1953, would review books of this quality and of this kind in the young people’s magazine. Today reviews like these would more likely be published in the Standard Bearer or a theological journal. Nevertheless the reviews are there and Leonard Vermeer heartily recommends the three volumes by Schilder. Vermeer writes that the contents offer material for the study of the passion and death of Christ found nowhere else. Continuing, Vermeer says: “Throughout the trilogy a marvelous light from the Old Testament passages of Scripture fall upon the New Testament passages concerning the suffering of our Lord.”

Vermeer continues by saying: “It is true that Dr. Schilder, who wrote these valuable books in the Holland language as early as 1929, would have made certain changes today (1941) in exegesis and concepts that appear in the works.” Vermeer also wrote that he believed that “Dr. Schilder since 1929 has edged more and more away from the theory of Common Grace.” Common grace as you obviously know was a theory that had been developed and expounded particularly by the Neo-Calvinist Abraham Kuyper in the 1880s and following years. His edging away was especially noteworthy as this theory is embodied in the “Three Points” of the Christian Reformed Churches. Vermeer wrote that this was very plain from Schilder’s more recent writings, in which he has repeatedly stated that he said he could never believe in the “Three Points” as they are maintained by the Christian Reformed Church.

It was in part because of Schilder’s opposition to the CRC concept of common grace and (contrary to Article 31 of the Church Order) his removal from the ministry of the Gereformeerde Kerken in the Netherlands (allies of the CRC in the U.S.) that Herman Hoeksema and others in the PR churches began to believe that theological friendship with Schilder and his churches was a necessity and certainly a possibility. Schilder was not well received by the CRC. The PRC in 1939 and 1947 received him cordially and also his theological ally Rudolph Van Reest as speakers in the churches. The history respecting covenant theology proved to be the separation between Herman Hoeksema and those who agreed with him.
after the return of Schilder to the Netherlands.

History like this and influences of this kind could have made a more devastating effect on Beacon Lights. Faithful writers, men and women who loved the truth expounded by PR churches, helped Beacon Lights to survive.

CONCLUSION

In this celebratory article and brief review of a monumental effort, I have focused primarily on the very first issues of Beacon Lights that resulted in the production of Volumes 1, 2, and 3. Much more could be written and said, but the birth and the laying of the keel, because it is interesting and undoubtedly the least well known, I believe, is most important and vital for us to recite and recall while in this celebratory mood.

Many were the editors, the writers, varieties of contributors, subscribers, and those who prayed and paid so that the beloved publication and Federation would progress and continue. We pray to the Lord that he will make men and women and young people continue to rise up and work to continue this good work. The work is Christ’s. Like many other responsibilities of the Christian, it is kingdom work led by the Spirit of Christ because of the work of Christ in the hearts of believers who have a desire to serve him in this important way.

I have not been able to begin to recount the many interesting and valuable articles that appeared in the magazine over the many years of the existence and publication of Beacon Lights. A review and continued research and republication of them would be significant, profitable, and enjoyable. As the goal and mission statement in 1941 says, “Let us give thanks to God for the display and use of the talents that have served to edify and served for the survival of Beacon Lights.

We are deeply thankful that God has continued to provide talented, dedicated, and Christ-believing editors, writers, and subscribers who continue to provide for this most wonderful and important cause—Beacon Lights, Magazine of the Protestant Reformed Young People.

Finally I and many others give thanks for all that current Beacon Lights staff, editor, assistant editors, proofreaders, etc., do. Thank you my young brothers and sisters as you go on with this important and weighty task.”

---

**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:

Teagan Natalie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jacob & Anna Andringa—Crete, IL
Oakleigh Jade, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jacob & Cassie Peterson—Grace, MI
Max Edward, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Cheri VanderVeen—Grace, MI
Tedd Alan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian & Tabi Feenstra—Hope, MI
Isaak John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Kate VanUffelen—Hope, MI
Lindsey Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Janelle DeJong—Peace, IL
Wyatt Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kyle & Marissa VanBaren—Randolph, WI
Ian Garrison, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate & Dawn Lanning—Redlands, CA
Ruth Joanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John & Emily Hopkins—Redlands, CA

**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:

Chad Zandstra—Crete, MI
Luke Mantel—Doon, IA
Jesse Teunissen—Doon, IA
Kalie Vink—Doon, IA
Jesse Bomers—Hope, MI
Emily Langerak—Hope, MI
Ethan Moore—Lynden, WA
Michelle Hofman—Southwest, MI
Natalie Ophoff—Southwest, MI
Heidi Potjer—Southwest, MI
Casey Gritters—Trinity, MI
Brandon Kuiper—Trinity, MI
Brock DeBoer—Trinity, MI
Mason VanBemmel—Trinity, MI
The Belt of Truth Part 2: A Soldier’s Modesty

Danny pointed at the picture in the library book of Roman armor. “What are those things dangling from the sword belt? They look funny.”

“Those are called sporrans,” his mom explained. “They were an important part of the Roman sword belt.”

“What do they do?” Danny’s sister Becky leaned forward to see the picture.

“Becky, you wear skirts to church. What happens when it is breezy out?” their mom asked.

“I have to hold down my skirt or it flies up and…” Becky scowled. “It’s embarrassing.”

Danny laughed. “And people see your underwear.”

His mom gave him a stern look.

“Well, Roman soldiers wore a long tunic that went down to their knees, almost like a skirt.”

“Roman soldiers wore skirts?” Danny wrinkled his nose.

His mom opened the book to a picture of a Roman soldier. “The Roman soldiers had the same problem that Becky has when she wears a skirt and it is windy. Their tunic would fly up. That’s embarrassing when it happens during battle. So to preserve their modesty and so that they wouldn’t have to worry about it when they were fighting, they wore sporrans on their belts to hold their tunics down.”

“So people wouldn’t see their underwear.” Danny said.

“Something like that,” his mother said. “Without God’s truth, a person’s inner secrets and lying heart are exposed, like a Roman soldier whose tunic flies up during battle. It isn’t pretty. It isn’t modest.” Their mom shook her head. “It’s a sorry, sorry sight when a person doesn’t have truth.”

Questions to think about:
1. Read Ephesians 6:13–14 and Proverbs 3:3, 16:6 by yourself or with your parents. What did the sporrans do for a Roman soldier?
2. How does truth preserve the modesty of a Christian?

Unscramble the words to find out the answer to the question: What were the leather and iron weights that dangled from a Roman soldier’s belt?

EBTL
RUTH
TOMSEYD
RELODS
TICNU

EBTL
RUTH
TOMSEYD
RELODS
TICNU

P A

Tricia is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
Contentment in an Age of Entitlement

Convention 2016
-LAKE WILLIAMSON-

August 8-12, 2016
Lake Williamson Christian Conference Center
Carlinville, Illinois
www.prcconvention.com

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