This month's cover was first used for the October 1947 issue.

JEHOVAH IS OUR LIGHT AND OUR SALVATION
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Like an eaglet returning from its first long flight back to its nest high up on some towering cliff, so the first issue of *Beacon Lights* returns to the editor’s desk, breathless and excitedly happy over its warm reception.

It is true, this first appearance was not without its disappointments. The greatest of which was, no doubt, that the printer, for various reasons was two weeks late in placing the magazines in the mail and thereby definitely created havoc in all previously arranged schedules. Many societies had arranged their program in anticipation of a timely arrival of the magazine, which was but proper, only to meet with disappointment. We are more than sorry that this happened.

But the hearty reception soon banished every other thought. It so happened that the Fuller Ave. Young Men’s Society favored your editor with an invitation to be present at the meeting, which was of social nature, at which the first issue was given out. So also there first-hand information could be obtained on the first reaction of our young men, and, I must admit, it far exceeded my fondest hopes. There were expressions of approval, of surprise even, and no less of criticism.

Yes, even the criticism could warm any one’s heart. They show that our young people are not adopting this magazine as a foster-child which is forced upon them, but are receiving it as their very own, a product of their own efforts, and are not afraid to handle it, to eye it critically and to say exactly what they think of it.

There can be no doubt but that there is plenty of room for improvement, and suggestions are in order, for they can only mean the wellbeing of the paper. Many of you will notice already in this issue that your remarks have not been entirely ignored, nor will they be in the future.

Although it is still too early to accurately register the complete reaction to this new venture, no one will deny that the reception was very favorable. You may be interested to know that every society in our denomination, with but few exceptions, has subscribed to this magazine before it made its appearance. Since then new subscriptions are still coming in, more will follow, and we are confident that soon all of our young people’s societies will be one hundred percent subscribers.

Already questions are being raised concerning the plans of the publication committee for the future.

Now that the Federation has its own periodical there is no one who wishes it an untimely death, but everyone is eager to see it prosper and become indispensable as it is invaluable in the societies and in the library of every one of our Protestant Reformed youth.

Having anticipated this question in the advance the publication committee has its answer ready, at least in part.

This committee has all but completed its task when the last issue appears next May. All that will still remain to be done is to give a detailed report of its work and offer suggestions for carrying on, that there need be no delay in the appearance of the first issue of the new year when the societies once more open their season next fall.

As to these first five months, the committee regards these as the trial period which will determine the future of the magazine. There can be no doubt any more but that it will have a future. Yet it will undergo some changes before we have the product our young men and young women want. During this period all our young people will certainly gain a growing appreciation for the paper, will see its good points and advantages, but will also have suggestions to offer for its improvement. These suggestions will be carefully listed for the publication committee in order to present to the next Convention the benefits of this experiment in the form of concrete proposals as to how this work should be carried on.

All of which means that the success of this magazine depends as much on you as upon anyone else. Make it your own. Read it to appreciate it; be free to offer suggestions for its improvement; urge others to read it.

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Rev. Hanko was the first editor of *Beacon Lights*. 
What, if anything, does the Bible say about tattoos and body piercings? It seems that you cannot go anywhere without seeing people who have one or the other. I know that the Old Testament forbids tattoos, but many had body piercings. Could there be a connection between the acceptance of tattoos and the end time—“taking the mark of the beast”? Also, what about those who tattoo their bodies with a Bible verse, cross, or something that reflects their faith? Our bodies are the temple of the Lord, but beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If one’s inner beauty is reflective of Christ, what’s the harm in having a tattoo that reflects that? I also would like to make young people aware of the lifelong ramifications of getting a tattoo.

The New Testament says nothing about tattoos and body piercings. The prohibition against such practices is in the Old Testament, especially in the Mosaic Law. Leviticus 19:28 says, “Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord.” Leviticus 21:5, in reference to the priests, says, “They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.”

The principle of these passages is important to understand. Israel was (and the church is) a holy nation unto Jehovah, her God. Therefore, she is to abstain from the abominable practices of the heathen nations around her. The pagan Canaanites had death cults, that is, they performed various rituals when a person died. Notice that in the passages quoted above the reference is mainly, if not exclusively, to cutting and marking the body for the dead. Probably the Canaanites, being without hope and without God in the world (Eph. 2:12), attempted to appease their gods or the spirits of their ancestors by mutilating their bodies. We need only to recall the desperate antics of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel as an illustration of this (1 Kings 18:28). How unfitting for God’s people! Jehovah graciously gives his people eternal life, and they have the hope of the resurrection. Therefore, such despairing cultic practices were not and could not be part of Jehovah’s worship. As Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 4:13, at a Christian funeral we “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.” It is a testimony to the hopelessness of our society, especially as people face death, that tattooing and body piercings are so common.

Generally speaking, the entire Old Testament Law of Moses was designed to serve and illustrate the antithesis. Remember that the antithesis is the principle of spiritual separation from the ungodly world. Jehovah insisted that his people should be devoted to him. That devotion was seen in this: they were separate from the wicked nations around them. But Israel was a little child (see Gal. 4:1ff.) who needed to be instructed by means of pictures. Consider these simple examples. Why should it be forbidden in the Old Testament to mingle fabrics, when today we have liberty to wear a cotton and polyester shirt? Why could there be no crossbreeding in the Old Testament? And why were certain foods designated “unclean” in the Old Testament (see Lev. 19:19 and Deut. 22:9–11)? These were pictures or vivid illustrations of the spiritual principle of separation. In the New Testament, the pictures fall away, but the spiritual principle remains. We still must be spiritually separate from the heathen.

That means, with respect to tattoos and body piercings, that we avoid the practices of the heathen today. We all know that unbelievers tattoo their bodies and get their bodies pierced, not for the glory of God, but as an act of rebellion. They do it for the “shock factor,” in exactly the same way and for exactly the same reason that punks dress the way they do with colored hair, Mohawks, and the like. Christians are not rebels. When our loved ones die, we do not cut ourselves in inconsolable grief, and we do not attempt to contact the dead. We rejoice in Christ’s victory over death and in the hope of the future resurrection. If a believer wants to use a tattoo as an excuse to “witness” (“a Bible verse, cross, or
something that reflects their faith”), I find that argument unconvincing, even disingenuous. A tattoo is usually on a body part hidden under clothing. If someone is so keen on witnessing (and not just using “witnessing” as an excuse to get a tattoo), he should wear a T-shirt with a Bible verse on it, or, even better, speak a word of witness. We witness by speaking to others about Christ, and supporting that with a godly life, not by getting tattoos and body piercings.

The reader mentions other possible arguments. I would not use them for the following reasons. First, the one passage in which our body (in distinction from the church) is called the temple of the Holy Spirit is 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, and there the immediate reference is to fornication. It is doubtful whether a legitimate application can be made to activities such as tattooing and body piercings. For example, some who might argue against tattoos on the basis of 1 Corinthians 6 have no issue with smoking, a sedentary lifestyle, and overconsumption of certain foods, all of which are more harmful to the body than tattoos. I am not arguing for or against smoking, bodily exercise or eating certain kinds of healthy/unhealthy diets. My point is that Paul forbids fornication because it is a sin that defiles the body, not because it is unhealthy/harmful for the body as such. The body of even the healthiest and most health conscious Christian will eventually decay and die, so while we respect our bodies, we do not worship them. Second, the mark of the beast in Revelation 13 is almost certainly not something physical. A future government, I dare say, will not print 666 tattoos on its citizens’ hands and foreheads. The mark of the beast is a satanic counterfeit of the seal of God, of which we read in Revelation 7:2–3, 8:4, 14:1 and 22:4. Just as God’s servants do not have a visible tattoo of God’s name on their physical foreheads, so the servants of the beast will not receive a visible tattoo on their hands and foreheads. The mark, which is the number of man, is simply indicative of their allegiance or devotion to the antichristian leader. It has, therefore, nothing to do with tattoos.

So while it might not be possible to argue from scripture for an absolute prohibition of tattoos, it is not wise, and it is not Christian behavior to mutilate the flesh. The general principle of the law is against it. In addition, people who foolishly received a tattoo in their youth are stuck with it for the rest of their lives. Tattoos are not easily removed, as our reader points out. Remember Paul’s great principle, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient” (1 Cor. 6:12). When a person’s motivation to get a tattoo or body piercing is examined in the light of scriptural principles, it is found wanting. I cannot imagine why any Christian today would even consider it.

Schuyler

Our Goodly Heritage

Mark H. Hoeksema

Interview with Everett VanVoorthuysen (Part 2)

Mark H. Hoeksema: I’d like to explore that just a little bit further. What was the thinking or the impetus behind the establishment of the school and the re-establishment in Redlands?

Everett VanVoorthuysen: Rev. C. Hanko was our minister, and he really promoted that. We had De-Boer, then Vermeer, then Kuiper after ‘53, then H. Veldman for four years. We bought our church when Veldman was there, just before he came. We bought a Methodist Church and parsonage for $24,000—the whole business. Can you imagine that? It was not big, but it was nice. That’s where Rev. Veldman spent his whole time. Rev. C. Hanko was there seven years. His whole ministry was in that church. That’s
where Mrs. Hanko had her stroke. That was quite a thing. Audrey was involved with her. She did her hair every Saturday and she and Barb would go there. Daughter Barb was just a little girl then. She is the first one who got Mrs. Hanko to say, “Barb-y.” She couldn’t talk.

Audrey VanVoorthuysen: That was in the Beacon Lights.

EVV: This is just a funny thing. When Jim Van Overloop and Linda Ekema were married, Rev. Hanko said, “Now I present to you: Mr. and Mrs. Jim Ekema” (laughter).

MHH: I was asking about the impetus behind the reestablishment of the school. You were about to make some comments about that.

EVV: Rev. C. Hanko really pushed that. We had several meetings and Marvin Kamps really pushed that too. We made a decision and we could see our way clear to have our own school. When Marvin Kamps was our minister, we bought this property where we’re at right now. There are 4.7 acres with a great big house on it and several chicken coops (laughter). We bought it for $35,000—that whole property. What we did first was cleared that whole land off. I know everybody in the congregation went home every Saturday with asparagus. Everybody got asparagus. Anyway, we bought that property and fixed up the house. Actually who lived in that house first was John and Judy Kalsbeek. During the ministry of Kamps is when we actually built that school, and he was very instrumental in helping. He worked many a Saturday. He was a very good brick-layer. That was what he used to do. We did that all on our own. Everybody came.

MHH: So you built the school, the actual physical building, while Kamps was there.

EVV: Yes. Then the school started while he was there, and that’s when Jon and Joanne Huiskens came. That was in 1976.

Then we built a whole new church. George Joostens was the leader of that, but we had three supervisors—men of our church, and they all had a committee. For two and a half years, all or most of the men of our church went there every Tuesday and Thursday after work and all day Saturday, and we built that whole church we have now. It was quite a thing.

MHH: Did that help to draw the congregation together?

EVV: Yes, it sure did. It really did.

MHH: Is it fair to say that the school has prospered?

EVV: Yes. Right now our school is down to 31 students, but we’ve been as high as 60-some. It’s been a very rough financial year, but we still have three teachers, and there’s a tremendous support from the whole congregation. I dare say a third of what it costs comes from people who don’t have kids in school. So it’s been a wonderful thing. When Rev. [Arie] den Hartog left he said that it had been a tremendous asset to his family to have his kids in a PR school. And the future looks like next year there will be a few more. We’re going to have several marriages this year and next. We have more boys in our church than girls. Those guys are coming to Michigan and finding girls there, but they’re going to live in Redlands.

MHH: That was going to be my next question. I’ve noticed that many times people who started out their lives in Redlands end up in other areas of the country and don’t stay in Redlands. Why do you think that is?

EVV: Mostly girls who can’t find their husband here. That’s half of life. Our two girls ended up in Michigan because they couldn’t find somebody here.

MHH: That hasn’t been particularly helpful to Redlands’ congregation.

EVV: No, it sure hasn’t. If everybody stayed in Redlands who grew up there, we’d have a huge congregation.

MHH: How would you characterize Redlands’ congregation? Different congregations have different identities or different things that characterize them, almost like a personality. What would you say would characterize Redlands?

EVV: I would say Redlands is a very close-knit congregation. Whenever anything happens in the church or during the week, just about everybody is there. For instance, we used to have all our picnics in the park in Redlands. Now, ever since we have our own church and school, we have a great big ball field and everything that goes with it. We have everything right there. So it’s just our congregation. And after church on Sundays, people stand around talking for fifteen-twenty minutes. A few people go home right away, but very few. I’d say we are a very close-knit family. There are some problems, but not much. Redlands has been noted as being a very friendly congregation.

Another thing: Redlands is one of the most musi-
cal congregations. In our little church, with just a few families, we have a dandy choir. We have a terrific male chorus. I’ve heard your CDs of your chorus [the reference is to the Hope Heralds], and I think we could be right in there with you (laughter).

MHH: As you look back over many years of membership in Redlands, Mr. VanVoorthuysen, how would you compare the church of today with the church of your youth?

EVV: I would say that a lot of especially the older young adults seem to be much more spiritually-minded than when I was that age. They’re very good young adults. They seem to be more interested. I’m just speaking of how I felt in those days. For instance, I don’t think I read the Standard Bearer very regularly. But there are people who read that all the time—people who are in their forties or fifties. They seem to be more knowledgeable. But there’s also the element that there’s so much money that people have all kinds of things and toys of different kinds and are involved with lots of sports. Sometimes I think that’s overdone. I think that there should be less of a lot of that and more time with spiritual things. But overall, as far as people being faithful in church, just about everybody is there both services every Sunday. They have Adult and Young Adult societies, twice a month, and that is well attended by all these young married couples and even people who aren’t married. The ladies’ society is good, but the men’s could be a lot better. But overall, I would say, the spiritual attitude of a lot of our younger people is very good.

MHH: One additional question. Are there any issues related to the churches that you would like to address, or any opinions that you would like to express?

EVV: Redlands has always been a very conservative church. In fact, about four years ago, I was still in the consistory, and we heard people say they would like to recite the Apostles’ Creed and have silent prayer. We never had that in Redlands.

MHH: Really?

EVV: No. We voted on it, and it was unanimously turned down. They would rather not have silent prayer and recite the Apostles’ Creed. We never had that in Redlands.

MHH: Really?

EVV: So the minister [in introducing the Apostles’ Creed] says, “Everybody say in their heart.” For silent prayer, everybody prays when you come in. You just pray. Sometimes that’s not good because somebody wants to get in [the pew] and they have to wait. I notice that in our church, there are a lot of people who made confession of faith and are supposed to pray before church are not doing it. That’s not good, either. With silent prayer, everybody has to pray. That’s good. I wouldn’t mind it if we had silent prayer.

MHH: But it doesn’t go over well in Redlands.

EVV: I think it should be brought up again.

EVV: Well, I think it should be brought up again. This happened about four or five years ago. I remember that once Prof. [Herman] Hanko [referring to the organist’s response to silent prayer] said, “I don’t like to have an organist tell me how long I can pray” (laughter).

MHH: Well, I can tell you, as an organist, it’s thirty seconds (laughter).

You mentioned earlier, aside from this recording, that you had a humorous story regarding Herman Hoeksema. I’d like to hear that.

EVV: All right. Your grandfather was in Redlands, and it was during the World Series. I came home for lunch one day, and your grandfather and Audrey’s dad [Thys Feenstra] were in our house. We were one of the few people that had a TV. I walked in and here’s your grandfather and my dad watching the World Series. On the floor was a whole bunch of money. Your grandpa looked at me and just busted out laughing, because he thought that I thought they were betting on the game (laughter). Well, what happened was that he had just gotten paid from our treasurer—maybe a hundred bucks….

AVV: He had three hundred dollars

EVV: Anyway, he went to our bathroom, and when he went over to flush, all that money fell in the toilet (laughter). He grabbed that money. Your grandmother said, “I think he lost ten dollars” (laughter). But anyway, he was drying that money on the floor when I walked in.

Another one. After Rev. Kamps was our minister, he and his twin brother Leon, came here once, and he had an old tape of a sermon that Rev. [Gerrit] Vos preached in 1965 in Hudsonville Church. On that tape you can hear the train going by. Anyway, in that sermon, he said, “Vell, here we go again. This is the twenty-seventh time I go through the Catechism.” He had quite an introduction. About half the sermon was about who wrote it. In that sermon he said, “You kick around a little, you buy a new suit or two, and the next thing you’re six feet under
on Balsam Street” (laughter). The first time that we came to Michigan to visit, I said, “There’s Balsam Street and there’s that cemetery” (laughter). That’s what he was talking about. We have the sermon on tape, and it’s something else.

MHH: From time to time during this interview, there have been significant contributions made by Audrey VanVoorthuysen. At this point I’m going to give her a chance to make any comments that she would like to make regarding her church life and regarding the church, particularly as it’s instituted in Redlands. So, Mrs. VanVoorthuysen, is there anything that you would like to add or any opinions you would like to express as far as the church is concerned?

AVV: You mean, as I grew up there or so?

MHH: Anything is fair game.

AVV: I know that we lived practically in the back yard of Rev. Vos’ house, and we were good friends with all them. He used to come to my folks and he would sit on the couch and he would talk about all the problems of the church (chuckle). And a lot of times (you can erase this if you want to) he would say, “Say, shall we have a glass of wine?” (laughter).

I don’t know if you want to tell the story about Pete Vos and Andy and Rev. Vos?

EVV: OK. Rev. Vos liked to play cards—Rook. My brother Andy was a good friend of Pete, their son. They were about the same age. There was a congregational meeting or a consistory meeting, and Rev. Vos had been playing cards with them. When he got back, he said, “OK, I’m back. Deal me in” (laughter).

Another time: when he left Redlands, he was the minister in Edgerton, Minnesota for three years. On the way to Michigan, Audrey and her folks stopped by Vos. They were sitting around the table and playing cards. Somebody knocked on the door, and he (whoosh), just got all the cards. Then he went to the door and said, “Well, hello, Mrs. So-and-so. What can I do for you?” (laughter)

MHH: There’s a story involved.

EVV: OK. Rev. Vos liked to play cards—Rook. My brother Andy was a good friend of Pete, their son. They were about the same age. There was a congregational meeting or a consistory meeting, and Rev. Vos had been playing cards with them. When he got back, he said, “OK, I’m back. Deal me in” (laughter).

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AVV: How about when they had the consistory meetings?

EVV: Oh, yes. At the end of the year when the new consistory was going in and the old going out, the minister would put on a kind of a little party. We’d have coffee and stuff. Anyway, we had a drug store where Rev. Vos bought his wine, and he went there. That guy’s name was Dutch Winn. Rev. Vos said, “Dutch, I want some good wine, because, I’m having the church board over tonight” (laughter). And that was Vos.

MHH: Mrs. Van Voorthuysen, most of Redlands’ history we’ve covered, and you’ve made some contributions to that along the way. I’ll ask you the same question that I asked your husband: How would you compare the church of today with the church of your youth, and in that connection, feel free to express your opinions on pretty much whatever subject you choose.

AVV: I think Redlands has not changed much in all the years. I think it’s been very conservative. You can tell how the young people have been brought up. They’re right there with us. They’re always in church, and they’re just wonderful. I’m not bragging. They just are. We have two married, and it’s just great. They’re with their parents a lot, and we have a lot to talk about and get along fine. That’s true with most of them here, and that makes you feel really good. I can’t compare it to the other churches because I don’t know enough about them.

MHH: That bodes well for the future of the congregation.

AVV: Oh, it does. There are so many babies right now. You don’t want to sit in the back part of the church (laughter).

MHH: A further observation now from Mr. VanVoorthuysen.

EVV: I don’t know how old I was, but I know it was before we were married. Rev. Hoeksema preached for us on Easter morning once. He happened to be in Redlands. I never heard a sermon like that. You could hear a pin drop. He was standing on the edge of the pulpit there. It had to do with the garden where Jesus met Mary Magdalene. During that sermon, he said, “Ma-a-ry!” It just ran through that whole church, and his eyes looking right through you. And she said, “Rabboni.” I remember that part. That whole hour just went boom. It was gone. It was just a tremendous sermon. Just unbelievable.

MHH: Obviously you have never forgotten its detail.

EVV: No. I remember him standing there. He was not even behind the pulpit. And when he said, “Ma-a-ry,” the whole church just rumbled (laughter). He was an exceptional preacher.

MHH: This concludes my interview with Mr. and Mrs. VanVoorthuysen. My thanks to both of them.
In his infinite wisdom God prepares and makes use of many different kinds of men to accomplish the salvation of his beloved church. God qualifies each one and gives to each the necessary spiritual gifts to perform the work he has prepared for them. Sovereignly he shapes his servants, molding their experiences to form them into fit instruments. The history of the Reformation plainly illustrates this fact. We look upon the diversity of saints whom God used: how many different people with such different personalities, strengths, and weaknesses! For the task of reforming his wayward church, God raised up such men as the bold and fearless Luther, to confront and smash the edifice of error with the hammer of the word of God. God equipped the scholarly Calvin with a brilliant mind and organizational talent in order to build the doctrinal and structural foundation of the Reformed church. God raises up giants, saints whose exploits dominate the pages of church history, who loom large in the church’s memory. But God also raises up less prominent servants who are no less important, quiet and compassionate preachers who minister to their flocks and build up the church through their faithful labors. Such men are often overlooked when we pass our gaze over church history.

The Swiss reformer Peter Viret is one such man of God. Although his name is not forgotten among us, he is overshadowed by his great peers. The result is that the significance of his life and work is often forgotten. For many of us his name may sound familiar but beyond that we can say little. That was true for me until I was given a biography of Viret. Peter Viret deserves to be numbered among our great Reformed fathers. His work was formative. He contributed much to our precious heritage of the Reformed faith. The history of Viret’s life and work is worth remembering. Why? Not simply for the man’s sake, but for Christ’s sake. To remember the lives and deeds of the saints of old, our forefathers in the faith, is to remember the work of God himself, by whose strength and grace alone the saints did what they did. That, young people, is one reason that we study, learn, and delight in church history. Church history is the story of God’s covenant faithfulness to us, the story of his ever-constant gathering, defending, and preserving his people throughout the ages. It is the story of how God has brought us to where we are now. In Psalm 78 the psalmist calls our attention to this. He calls us to contemplate the “wonderful works that he hath done.” For what reason? “That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (Ps. 78:4–7). Of course, the psalmist has in mind the mighty works God performed for the people of Israel. But God’s mighty works are not limited to his works in the Old Testament. God’s mighty works are found throughout all of church history. We too are called to ponder God’s mighty works in history, to the end that we fix our hope the more firmly on the God of our salvation. By knowing God’s works through the saints of the past, we not only learn from history’s light, but we are also comforted. God’s faithfulness in the past assures us of his faithfulness into the future.

The story of Peter Viret’s life and work on behalf of the church is a concrete example of God’s faithfulness to his people. When his people dwelt in darkness, God raised up lights to guide them. God brought Peter Viret into the world in 1511 at the very dawn of the Reformation, the movement that would become his life’s work. Viret was born in Orbe, a small town situated in the pristine countryside of
the Pays de Vaud, the area that today roughly corresponds to French-speaking Switzerland. Planted at the foot of the snowcapped Jura Mountains and surrounded by the Orbe River, its namesake, Orbe, would soon have its quiet life stirred up by the coming of the Reformation. And in God’s providence, that would happen through the work of one of their own, the yet-young Peter Viret.

As a boy Viret’s intellectual gifts were noted by his father, the town tailor. Since his family was of moderate means, Viret enrolled in the town school where he learned his letters and studied the Latin language, a necessity for the pursuit of any higher learning. Very soon Viret’s gifts were noted by his teachers too. He was a quiet young man gifted with a keen mind and with understanding and perceptiveness beyond his years. Above all, Viret’s spirituality was noted. He seemed a prime candidate for the priesthood. At age 16 Viret moved to Paris to study at the Montaigu, a college located in the staunchly Roman Catholic French capital. Here Viret, immersed in his studies, discovered the emerging Protestant faith of the yet-young Reformation. His heart was grasped by the power of the word of God. He embraced the Reformation whole-heartedly. Paris being no place for one sympathetic to the Reformation, Viret was forced to flee. But this was all in God’s plan. God brought Viret back to Orbe, the place where God would have him begin his ministry to a gospel-starved people.

It all started when William Farel came to town. The Protestant canton of Bern had recently gained sovereignty over the Pays de Vaud, and Bern was interested in bringing its holdings into the Protestant fold as well. To that end, preachers were sent out. With Bern’s backing, Farel came to preach in Orbe’s pulpits. Few people in devoutly Catholic Orbe were interested in what Farel had to say. His fiery sermons were unwelcome. But a few faithful congregants never missed Farel’s sermons. Viret was one of them. Farel’s sharp eyes soon took note of the quiet and thoughtful young Viret, as he sat listening in the sparsely populated pews. Viret’s entrance into the ministry bears resemblance to Calvin’s. Farel had a knack for recognizing men with gifts for the ministry; and he was determined not to let this one escape. Like Calvin, Viret was terrified by the prospect of the ministry, with all its heavy responsibilities. But Farel was relentless and soon got his way. Viret agreed to enter the ministry.

On May 6, 1531 the quiet young Viret found himself standing in the elevated pulpit of one of Orbe’s beautiful churches. The pews that were once vacant now were full. The air was still with anticipation. What would this twenty year-old say? What word would this son of the tailor bring? What followed was a sermon of profound depth and clarity, delivered gently, compassionately, yet firmly and without compromise. The people were stunned. The people were gripped. Viret’s preaching turned the tide for the cause of Protestantism in Orbe. God’s hand is evident here. God provided a man fit and suited to the work in Orbe, whose gifts were precisely what was needed to reach the hearts of the people. Despite his youth and inexperience God caused Viret’s work to bear fruit. His peace-loving and compassionate spirit won many of his neighbors and friends to the light of the Reformed Faith. Although opposition was at times fierce, a vibrant Reformed congregation soon sprang up in Orbe. To his joy, Viret’s own devout Catholic parents joined his congregation. Such was the humble beginning of Viret’s long and fruitful ministry.

But God did not plan for Viret to remain the pastor in Orbe, content as he was to do so. His gifts were needed elsewhere. God’s call came to Viret in the form of a Bernese deputation. Bern was concerned that the cause of the Reformation in Geneva, their ally, was falling apart. The Dominican, Guy Furbity, had appeared in Geneva and fiercely opposed the Reformation at every turn. An uproar ensued. Farel returned to Geneva to strengthen the Protestant cause, but more help was needed. The Bernese left Viret little choice. Though he was loath to leave his beloved congregation, he did what he understood to be the Lord’s will, forsaking the comparative peace of his homeland for the battleground of Geneva. And battle he found. In 1534–35 Viret fought alongside Farel in an effort to win the Genevan populace for the Reformation. Things escalated before they settled down. On March 6, 1535, the Roman Catholic party succeeded in poisoning one of Viret’s meals. The poison laid the Reformer low, bringing him nearly to death. But in God’s providence, he survived. God used the work of wicked men for good. Appalled by such an unchristian act, the city council shifted its favor to the Reformers. In August of that year, Geneva joined the Reformed cause. Viret’s labor was instrumental in winning the city for the Reformation. He was dearly loved by the Genevan church as one
of her founding pastors.

The flower of Viret’s years and ministry would be spent in Lausanne. Lausanne had no Reformed pastor of its own. Upon his arrival Viret found a city steeped in superstition and bereft of the light of the gospel, so he devoted himself to the reformation of yet another city. Lausanne was won through public debate, culminating with the great week-long Lausanne Disputation in which Farel and Viret, assisted by Calvin, expounded the Scriptures and refuted the errors of the Roman Church. Viret’s charity and skill in the holy scriptures were recognized by all, even his opponents. The disputation was a mighty victory for the Reformers. A great multitude of people, monks and priests, commoners and magistrates, were gathered into the Reformed fold. Lausanne soon declared itself a Reformed city with a Reformed church. Viret passed many good years as the beloved pastor of the Reformed church in Lausanne. Under his pastoral care the church of Lausanne grew and flourished. He oversaw the establishment of the Lausanne academy to fill one the most pressing needs the Reformers faced: the need for trained ministers. As more people flocked to the Reformed faith, congregations formed that had no minister of their own. During the early years of the school’s existence Viret served as its only professor. But he served with vigor. Quickly the school grew. Lausanne would remain the foremost Reformed school until Calvin’s Genevan Academy was built. Many a Reformed missionary was dispatched abroad after being prepared in Viret’s school. Viret’s time in Lausanne was also a joyful time, for it is here that he married Elizabeth Turtaz, a woman from his hometown of Orbe. Theirs was a happy and loving marriage. In Lausanne Viret bore a crushing work load. But all of these responsibilities, Viret bore with gladness: preaching, pastoring, teaching, and being a good husband and father. The love of God and his truth was his sole motivation. As Paul before him, he joyfully expended himself on behalf of Christ and his church.

At this point it is fitting to dwell for a moment on Viret’s character, his God-given compassionate and peace-loving spirit. His character set the tone for his entire ministry. He was a peacemaker and a mediator. He fulfilled this role on many occasions throughout his ministry, mediating between the church and the magistrates of the various Swiss cities. In this way God used him to hold together the fragile Reformed churches in the Swiss cities.

His was a stabilizing influence. In a time of such tremendous upheaval, it is hard to appreciate how important Viret’s influence was for the young Reformed churches. Viret’s kindness extended to friend and foe alike. Viret embodied the virtues that Paul in 2 Timothy 2:24–25 says must mark the minister of the gospel: “gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.” Just as Paul had once viewed his Jewish opponents, Viret did not look upon his Catholic opponents simply as enemies to be vanquished; he looked upon them with eyes of compassion, as blind men grasping in the dark. Compassion for the lost motivated his preaching. It did not cause him to compromise the truth or to shy away from sharply refuting the error. Rather, because of love he preached the truth all the more ardently, but always with gentleness and meekness. We all, not only preachers, can learn much from Viret’s example. Love and compassion must always accompany the gospel. The church is built and defended not only by warriors but also by peacemakers. God uses both. Both are needed.

By 1538 Geneva was a mess again. The city had expelled Calvin and other faithful ministers for their refusal to administer communion to unworthy part-takers at the magistrate’s bidding. Robbed of their best pastors, the Genevan church was in dire need. They appealed to their old minister, Viret, to come and help them. So it was in 1541 that Viret came to minister in Geneva for a second time. That same year Calvin was recalled to Geneva, in large part due to Viret’s mediation. Viret remained in Geneva for a little over a year. Lausanne desperately needed their pastor back. But during the short time that they worked together in the Genevan church, Viret and Calvin developed an abiding friendship, forged in the shared struggles and sorrows of ministering to the saints in a day of tremendous upheaval. Their warm friendship was life-long. Viret returned to Lausanne to minister to the church there for many more years. During this time he was touched by the bitter sorrow of death, losing his beloved wife to illness in 1546. The loss was so hard on Viret that he retreated for a time to Geneva to find some solace. Calvin was an ever constant friend. Despite sorrow, Viret continued to labor in Lausanne until his fruitful ministry was unjustly ended by the tyranny of the Bernese magistrates. In 1559 the Bernese officials expelled
Viret and other ministers from their congregations because they refused to comply with the magistrates’ attempt to exert control over church discipline. For his faithfulness Viret was exiled.

Viret spent his final years in exile ministering to the persecuted Reformed believers in France. He spent a year serving the beleaguered church in Nimes before moving to Lyon. There he ministered for four years, preaching the gospel and quelling conflict. Lyon was a battle-torn city. The conflict between Catholic and Protestant was fierce and at times bloody. Viret brought stability and peace to the city, such that even some Catholics wished to keep him in their city. However, Viret’s opponents obtained a royal decree banishing Viret from France. He lived his final days in Navarre. At last in 1571 he was taken to glory. The story of Peter Viret’s life and work is strewn with difficulties and sorrows. He bore the heavy burden of pastoring multiple congregations of new Reformed believers. He suffered the persecution of Roman Catholic opponents and of wolves within the Protestant fold. He suffered ills from the poison he ingested in Geneva his whole life long. He was unjustly banished from his home and church. Yet Viret was known among his contemporaries as a man of constant joy and inner peace. This joy and peace came from his deep knowledge and love for Jesus Christ, for whom he cheerfully bore all these things. “The smile of the Reformation.” That is what Calvin once called his friend and fellow laborer in the gospel. How fitting a title indeed! For Peter Viret, the word of the apostle surely applies: for him to live was Christ and for him death was gain.

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Poetry
Monica Koole

A Humble Sinner’s Confession

My sin and evil is great,
And fills my mind with cruel hate.
This corruption leads to strife,
Bringing troubles to my life.

I must look on high for strength,
To God who shows mercy at length.
He who is faithful shall save
From sin’s hold which does enslave.

He takes away sin’s power,
Purging me with trials of fire.
All the work is God’s alone,
Worked through Christ who did atone.

Although often I do stray
And seek to head down the wrong way,
Yet the Lord does forgive me,
That his great works I might see.

He saves me for a purpose,
Delivering me from my dross.
I’m filled with joy to the brim
And thankfulness to him.

The mercies he does bestow
Greatly humble and bring me low,
Then lift me to sing his praise,
And to him all glory raise.
"press toward the mark…” (Philippians 3:14)

March 8

Read Psalm 61
Paul in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 instructs us to “pray without ceasing.” Are we fulfilling this calling? What does praying without ceasing look like and how can we improve in this area?

Matthew Henry points out that this command of Paul immediately follows the command to rejoice. The more we pray and talk with our God the more reason we will have to rejoice. Henry goes on to explain that the meaning here is not that we must only pray all day, but that we must never do anything that hinders our prayer life.

I’ve noticed a tendency I have to convince myself that this or that problem is too insignificant to require prayer. Do I really need to make such a big deal out of this little problem by praying about it? Can’t I just handle it on my own? This method of reasoning fails to recognize the truth that God always answers our prayers. In addition this thinking implies that I have strength of myself to deal with the problems of life. We must always remember that all our strength comes from God alone, and we are nothing of ourselves.

Sing or pray Psalter #161.

March 9

Read John 8:42–47
“William, you are NOT the father.” William leaps out of his chair and starts dancing uproariously, as the woman who is bearing someone else’s child collapses to the ground in tears. The host bends down and places a comforting hand on her shoulder as the crowd cheers.

This is public television, family entertainment. I saw a clip of this show a number of years ago, and I know that there are many more like it out there. The idea of taking real-life lying, cheating, and adultery and morphing it into entertainment really shows us how far man has fallen.

In John 8:44, Jesus says that the devil “is a liar, and the father of it.” The father of lies passes this on to his children, as we see in Psalm 62:4. Here, we read that the wicked “delight in lies.” The sin of lying is always a danger to us, and we must be on constant guard against it in a world where it is glorified.

Sing or pray Psalter #162.

March 10

Read Matthew 6:19–21
Did you know that if your household income is $34,000 or more a year then you are in the top 1% of wealthiest people on the planet? That means that out of one hundred randomly selected people on Earth, you would probably find only one person in that group that makes as much money as you do. This statistic, which comes from a report by the Canada-based Fraser Institute, helps put things into perspective for us. It’s true that part of this can be explained by the fact that the cost of living isn’t nearly as high in developing countries as it is in this one, but the point still stands— we are rich.

David in Psalm 62:10 instructs us not to set our hearts on riches. Jesus, in his Sermon on the Mount, commands man to lay up his treasures in heaven and not on this earth. It is important that we realize this is a real danger for all of us here in the modern world. Sure, there will always be plenty of people around who appear to be much wealthier than we are, but that doesn’t mean that they are the only ones who need to be fighting this temptation.

Sing or pray Psalter #97.

March 11

Read Isaiah 26:4–7
We studied Africa in geography class this year, and I read the students a book about the Rwandan holocaust. The book entitled *Left to Tell* is a true account of how a Tutsi girl survived for three months in a tiny bathroom with seven other women, while outside the Hutus ran around with machetes chopping up their family and friends. I had to paraphrase parts due to the brutality of it, but it’s quite an amazing story.

Psalm 62:8 brings to us the command to trust in God “at all times.” It’s hard to imagine a more difficult time than the one described in this story, but the main character spends her days in the bathroom praying and communing with God. There are many things she holds to that we wouldn’t agree with (she’s Roman Catholic), but it’s a wonderful reminder to us of the fact that God will always give his people the perfect measure of strength they need for each trial.

Sing or pray Psalter #72.
Read Proverbs 14:29–35

We are commanded in Psalm 62:10 to “trust not in oppression.” Trusting in oppression is characteristic of the wicked world around us. It amazes me how much money is made by preying on the poor in this country. Payday loans immediately come to mind. If you have never heard about the interest rates charged on these loans, you may want to do a little research, because it’s truly unbelievable. The people who get these loans are desperate, and the lending companies use this to enslave them. If these people needed the money that badly in the first place, how are they ever going to pay back a bill that is many times the amount they borrowed? The obvious answer is that they can’t and the companies know it. This practice of robbing those in need is in direct opposition to the teachings of God’s Word.

In contrast God’s people are commanded to care for the poor, as God cares for us. As Proverbs 14:31 states, “He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoreth him hath mercy on the poor.” We care for one another, as God cares for us.

Sing or pray Psalter #113.

Read Romans 9:9–16

We are saved because God knew we would be saved when others would not. God gives us the gift of salvation and all we have to do is accept it.

These false teachings are everywhere today, but we know that man truly did nothing to merit his salvation. Romans 9:16 states, “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that sheweth mercy.” How then can we explain a verse like Psalm 62:12, which says, “for thou renderest to every man according to his work”?

Article 24 of the Belgic Confession and Lord’s Day 24 of the Heidelberg Catechism explain this well. In Article 24 we learn that, although we perform good works, those good works do not merit anything. Lord’s Day 24 goes on to clarify that our good works are still rewarded: “but this reward is of grace, not of merit.” In the latter passage Jesus teaches us that our heavenly Father will reward us “openly” when we worship him in humility.

Sing or pray Psalter #338.

Read Matthew 25:31–46

Yesterday we talked about how God rewards our good works with grace. God gives us a good illustration of this truth with the stars in the heavens. All the stars are out there together, but some shine more brightly than others. Likewise, some of the elect perform more good works than others, although all of them have been saved solely by God’s grace.

Jesus addresses the issue himself in this passage. These verses talk about how the righteous and the wicked will be separated at the end of the world. Those that have performed good works will be rewarded, and those that have not will be punished everlastingly.

Taking a passage like this by itself could easily make us proud of our good works, but we must always remember the words of Philippians 2:13: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

Sing or pray Psalter #15.

Read Revelation 22:8–15

Before we move on from the subject of good works, I thought I’d point out a few other passages that address it. The section we read for today begins right after an angel has revealed to John the glory of heaven. John is in such awe and wonderment after this tour that he falls down to worship the angel, but the angel reminds him that he is a “fellow servant.” He instructs John to spread the two-edged sword of the gospel, as the end of time is fast approaching. Soon God will come on the clouds of glory “to give every man according to his work shall be.”

The fact that God rewards our good works in this and the life to come is also clearly stated in 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Matthew 6:6. The first of these verses talks about how we all will be judged at the end of time, and each will be rewarded “according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” In the latter passage Jesus teaches us that our heavenly Father will reward us “openly” when we worship him in humility.

Sing or pray Psalter #360.

Read Psalm 63

When I started teaching, I remember the students asking me at least once a week if we could read our book outside. When this question was first posed to me, I couldn’t really think of a reason why not, so I agreed. It wasn’t long before we were reading outside fairly regularly. Then one day when a student asked the usual question in reading class, I told them we were just going to stay inside this time. You would have thought I’d told them we wouldn’t be changing desks for the rest of the year! They had come to expect that they would be able to read outside, and were no longer content to have it otherwise.

It is our nature to become discontented no matter our age, and we must fight that temptation every day. This Psalm reminds us that we have God’s lovingkindness, which “is better than life.” No matter what our lot is in life, we must always be content, for we have been given the free gift of salvation. Even as the wicked “go into the lower parts of the earth,” so we will be brought up to eternal life in heaven.

Sing or pray Psalter #163.
When confronted about this they’d say, “I was just joking.” I have also heard spouses speak of each other in belittling ways, with a little laugh in their voice like they are “just teasing.” “Just teasing,” “just joking,” and “just kidding” hurt just as much. Remember Thumper, the little rabbit in Bambi? His father gave him some good advice: “If you can’t say something nice, don’t say [anything] at all.” “For he that will love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Peter 3:10).

Sing or pray Psalter #13.

Read Psalm 65
God is mighty in creation. He sets fast the mountains, stills the noise of the seas and the tumult of the people, makes both morning and evening beautiful, waters the earth, makes the harvest plentiful, and provides cattle and corn in abundance. These earthly blessings are but pictures of the heavenly blessings he bestows upon his people. Just as he sets fast the mountains, he also upholds the believer. Just as he stills the noise of the seas, he quiets our enemies. Just as he provides a bountiful harvest to feed our bodies, he also provides his Word as food for our hungry and thirsty souls. Psalm 107:9 says, “For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.” The Holy Spirit, as a river, flows over our hard, sinful hearts and makes them fruitful unto good works. “Wherever the Lord passes, by his preached gospel, attended by his Holy Spirit, his paths drop fatness, and numbers are taught to rejoice in and praise him” (M. Henry).

Sing or pray Psalter #169.

Read Matthew 26:59–64
Psalm 65:11 refers to the clouds as the “paths” of God. This name can be explained when we look at a few references to clouds in Scripture. During Israel’s exodus from Egypt, God went before them in a cloud, leading the way. God also descended in a cloud to strengthen his Son at the time of the Transfiguration, as we read in Matthew 17:5. Later a cloud would receive Jesus up into heaven at the Ascension, as recounted in the first chapter of Acts. Finally, Jesus tells his accusers in Matthew 26 that at the end of time the Son of man will be “coming in the clouds of heaven.” Then we will have the joy of riding back with him on the clouds to our everlasting home.

Sing or pray Psalter #168.

Read 1 Kings 17:1–6
In vocabulary class we learned the word “commodity,” meaning “something of use or value.” Water is definitely a commodity. While the human body can survive for a number of weeks without

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Read Philippians 3:13–21
Psalm 63:8 says, “My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.” David speaks here of an earnest desire to keep up communion with God. We must always have our eyes set on God, reaching towards him as our prize. Paul writes in Philippians 3:14, “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” We must never lose sight of God in life.

We can only follow hard after God if he is helping us. We would fail if God’s right hand did not uphold us. In his grace God not only gives us the desire to follow him, but strengthens that desire and keeps it burning in our hearts. This is an assurance to us of our salvation; for God would not put those desires in our heart and keep them strong if he wasn’t going to grant them to us. Then we will say with Paul in 2 Timothy 4:7-8, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day....”

Sing or pray Psalter #164.

Read Psalm 64
Life in Sparta, a major city-state in Ancient Greece, was pretty rough. Babies were left on a mountain to die if they were viewed as weak, boys were taken from their mothers by age seven for military training, and a soldier’s diet consisted of stale bread and pig-blood porridge. Under these harsh conditions young Spartans were encouraged to steal as a means of survival, but they were punished severely if caught.

The world loves to convince itself that a sin isn’t really a sin if you don’t get caught. Psalm 64:5 says that the wicked “encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?”

Sing or pray Psalter #165.

Read James 3
“Death and life are in the power of the tongue...” states Proverbs 18:21. James 3:5–6a says, “Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity....” So much evil can be found in our tongue: gossip, lying, cheating, boasting, unkindness, etc. It is even compared to a sharp sword and a bow that shoots bitter words like arrows (Ps. 64:3).

As a teacher I quickly noticed a tendency among students to follow up an unkind comment with “just kidding.”

Sing or pray Psalter #166.
food, a few days without water is enough to kill us. Water brings life, something that often goes unappreciated in a place like Michigan, but is very apparent to those living in extremely dry climates such as California. In Psalm 65:9–10, God is praised as the one who brings water upon the earth to feed the crops and cause the pasture grass to grow.

With this in mind, think of the weight of the grim prophecy that Elijah was called to bring to King Ahab. It would not rain for years, a situation which brought about the deaths of many in the land, as evidenced by the story of the woman from Zarephath in the following verses. This drought was a picture of the living water, God’s Word, being taken away. The people had rebelled and God would judge them. To emphasize this point, Elijah himself was told to leave as well. Israel needed to be reminded of its need for the water of life.

Sing or pray Psalter #167.

Read Psalm 66:10 and Zechariah 13:7–9

I read a short story that went something like this: Some women met to study Scripture. They came across Malachi 3:3, which begins, “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver.” One lady offered to visit a silversmith and ask him about the process of purifying silver. After the silversmith told her all the details, she asked, “Do you sit and watch while the refining is going on?” “Oh yes,” he replied. “I must watch the fire carefully. If it gets even a tiny bit too hot, the silver will be ruined.”

The lady saw the picture here. God is watching over us every moment, and he will never let a trial become more than we can bear.

Later, the silversmith remembered that he had forgotten to mention one thing: the only way he knows the process is complete is when he can see his reflection in the silver. Proverbs 25:4 says, “Take away the dross from the silver, and there shall come forth a vessel for the [refiner].” When we are purified, we will reflect the beauty of God.

Sing or pray Psalter #174.

Read Psalm 67

This psalm is a prayer for blessings upon the church. Verse one is a benediction similar to the priestly benediction of Numbers 6. Verse two is a clear prophecy of the gospel going to the Gentiles. God will show them the way of his “saving health” of salvation. As Jesus said in John 17:3, “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God.” Then, as stated in verses three through five, all the world, Jews and Gentiles alike, shall praise God. Of verses six and seven, John Calvin writes, “Notice is next taken of the temporal blessings which he confers upon his children, that they may have everything necessary to complete their happiness.” He goes on to explain that God would also use those blessings to attract the attention of the surrounding nations to him. This would increase the fear of his name and cause many nations to submit to him after seeing his fatherly care for his people.

Sing or pray Psalter #176.

Read Psalm 68:1–6

David begins Psalm 68 with the same words that Moses spoke in Numbers 10:35: “Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee.” Many interpreters believe that just as Moses spoke these words when the ark was carried before Israel through the wilderness, David wrote Psalm 68 when he moved the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Mount Zion.

God through the ark led the way for Israel, and we must also seek God to lead our way. We could pray the same prayer as David and Moses—a prayer for God to go before us and for our enemies to be scattered. Although our enemies might not be the same as Israel’s, we still have enemies—powerful enemies that are often more subtle than the wicked nations that surrounded Israel. However, we must not forget to rejoice as well, for we are the righteous, and God has promised to drive away our enemies like “wax before a fire” (v. 2).

Sing or pray Psalter #179.

Read Exodus 15:1–21

Psalm 68:4 says, “Sing unto God, sing praises to his name....” Singing is a very important part of our worship. There are many examples of saints in the Bible that sang: Paul and Silas sang in prison (Acts 16:25), Moses and the Israelites sang after crossing the Red Sea (Exodus 15), David sang and played the harp. Psalm 33:1 says, “Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright.” Our songs, the songs of the righteous, are beautiful to God.

But is this true all the time? There are many times when we stand in church and “sing,” not thinking about the great God we are praising, but thinking about earthly worries or joys. Then our songs do not please God. Our songs should come from our heart and should reflect upon God’s great name, as it says at the end of Psalm 68:4, “Exalt him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH.” Moses spoke similar words in Deuteronomy 33:26: “There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.” May our songs always be pleasing to God!

Sing or pray Psalter #259.

Read Psalm 68:7–14

Psalm 68:7–9 speaks of God’s goodness toward Israel on their journey through the wilderness to Canaan. He led them, gave them the law on Mount Sinai, and fed them with manna or “rain” from
heaven. After many of God’s great works, the people of Israel published them in songs of praise and thanksgiving. Verse 12 speaks of how Israel’s enemies fled before them and left so many spoils that even the women and children who had done no fighting received riches. Verse 13 remembers how Israel had gone from being slaves in Egypt to being a powerful and rich nation under the reigns of David and Solomon.

Matthew Henry compares this to the New Testament. Just as Israel defeated its enemies, so Christ conquers sin and death and his resurrection makes our spiritual enemies flee. Just as Israel sang in praise of God who gave them their victories, so the disciples and ministers today proclaim Christ’s victory to the world. Just as the women and children received spoils from the battle, so we sinners experience the benefits of Christ’s victory.

Sing or pray Psalter #182.

**Read Psalm 68:15–23**

These next verses talk about Mount Zion, where the ark is being taken. Mount Zion was not by any means the most beautiful mountain in Jerusalem. The psalmist contrasts it to Mount Bashan, a very tall mountain known for its soft, rich soil, oaks, and wild cattle. Mount Zion was not tall and fertile like Mount Bashan, but it was even more important because it was God’s mountain. Verse 16 says, “Why leap ye, ye high hills? This is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever.” The other mountains had nothing to boast about because God hadn’t chosen them. Matthew Henry says, “It is much more honorable to be holy to God than to be high and great in the world.” Spiritually, the Lord abides eternally in Zion, his chosen church, and “there is no kingdom in the world comparable to the kingdom of the Redeemer, no city comparable...to that in which God dwells and will dwell forever” (Henry).

Sing or pray Psalter #183.

**Read Amos 9:1–10**

There is a children’s song that goes like this: “You cannot hide from God, His eye is fixed on you, wherever you go, whoever you do....” Psalm 68:22 talks about how God will “bring again from Bashan” and “from the depths of the sea.” The words “my people” were added by the translators because of the next verse, which speaks of God awarding vengeance to his oppressed people. However, it is true that God will find the wicked also and judge them.

There is no escape from our God. Neither the heights of Bashan, nor the depths of the sea can hide us from safety in our God and the wicked from his hand of justice. This is a comfort for us, but not for the wicked. Amos 9:1-4 speaks of the hopelessness of the situation of the wicked. They can’t hide in hell or in heaven, the top of Mount Carmel or the bottom of the sea. They may flee to the utmost ends of the earth, but the Lord will arrest them and lead them back to face his judgment.

Sing or pray Psalter #181.

**Read Psalm 68:24–35**

The rest of Psalm 68 can be divided into three small sections. Verses 24–27 describe the procession of the ark as it winds its way through the countryside and city to Mount Zion. There were musicians, singers, and representatives from several different tribes in the procession. Verses 28–31 tell of a powerful command given to those without to come in and join themselves to the church. Some will submit willingly. Others will submit outwardly in fear. Those who refuse to submit at all, God will scatter over the earth. Then verses 32–35 tell those who submitted to join with the Israelites in praising God. We are part of this joyful throng as the New Testament Israel.

Sing or pray Psalter #180.

**Read Psalm 69:1–15**

Quicksand is pretty terrifying stuff. The idea that you can sink into death by suffocation is not one we like to think of. In reality quicksand is often only a few feet deep, and it doesn’t actually suck you down, but it still isn’t something to take lightly. Struggling will get you nowhere but down. The amount of pressure pinning your legs beneath you is enormous. You have nothing to grab onto to help haul yourself out. Escape seems impossible.

This is the feeling David was referring to when he says in Psalm 69:14, “Deliver me out of the mire, and let me not sink.” David saw that he relied completely on God for his deliverance. There was no way that he could make it through this trial on his own. Attempting to would only increase his desperate situation. David needed God to draw him out of his trial, just as we need God to deliver us from ours.

Sing or pray Psalter #185.

**Read Psalm 69:1–15**

How far down into the ocean do you think sunlight can travel? Well, that can be a little difficult to pinpoint exactly, but photosynthesis isn’t possible at depths greater than about 650 feet. Now, how deep do you think the ocean gets? The answer is a staggering 6.77 miles deep! Isn’t that amazing? This means that there is an entire world of complete darkness on this planet that we still know almost nothing about.

In this section of Psalm 69, David uses the depths of the ocean to illustrate his point, as well as the quicksand that we talked about yesterday. As we learn more about these huge bodies of saltwater all around us, we can better understand how easy it would be for the deep to swallow
us up, as David fears will happen if God does not deliver him speedily. There are temptations on every side, and David knows his weaknesses. Thankfully, we and David have the assurance that God will always hear his people.

Sing or pray Psalter #184.

Read Romans 6:12–23

To the child of God, slavery is beautiful. That is because we are God’s slaves. As we confess in Lord’s Day 1, “I am not my own, but belong unto my faithful savior Jesus Christ; who with his precious blood hath fully satisfied for all my sins....” He owns us. Even our very bodies belong to him. In becoming his slaves we were delivered from slavery to sin. The world around us is indeed enslaved to sin, and we see that in their pollution of slavery throughout history. Being enslaved to God means that we have the freedom to worship him. The wicked will never be able to make this vital connection between slavery and freedom. To them the two are polar opposites. To us this is our only comfort. In times of trial we find strength in verses like Psalm 69:33, which says, “For the Lord heareth the poor, and despiseth not his prisoners.”

Sing or pray Psalter #186.

Read John 2:12–17

As I read Calvin’s commentaries to help in writing these devotionals, I am continually amazed at the spiritual fervor the heroes of faith throughout history have exhibited. The amount of writing Calvin did is astounding. His commentary on the Book of Psalms alone is hundreds of pages long! In addition to these commentaries he did a lot of other writing, including his Institutes of the Christian Religion, in which he developed the Five Points of Calvinism we know so well today. Just as Jesus showed in his casting out of the money changers and as David states in Psalm 69:9, Calvin was truly “eaten up” by his zeal for the house of God.

God has given us lives of ease here in the modern world at this time in history. May we not set our hearts on the things of this life, but pray that God grant us strength to be eaten up with zeal for the cause of the Kingdom.

Sing or pray Psalter #187.

Read Psalm 70

According to Matthew Henry, Psalm 70 is a psalm of remembrance. We like the psalmist must remember past afflictions, so that we might also remember how God comforted us and gave us relief. If we are visited by affliction again, we might want to use the same words of prayer that we used before. Christ prayed the same words three times in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk. 14:32-42), and David also prays words he used before. Psalm 40:13–17 is very similar to Psalm 70. Both show David’s need for God.

First of all, David wants his enemies to be so filled with shame for seeking his hurt that they turn in repentance to God. Psalm 83:16 says, “Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord.” Secondly, David prays that God will fill the hearts of his friends, those that love God, with joy. “Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord” (Ps. 105:3).

Sing or pray Psalter #189.

Read Psalm 70

“Make haste!” David exclaims several times in Psalm 70. He wants God’s help quickly! Was he sinning by asking this? After all, we must wait patiently for God’s time even though sometimes it seems like God is taking forever. David is not showing impatience towards God. Instead he’s manifesting his belief that God will deliver him in due time and provide him with the immediate strength he needs to persevere while the trial is still upon him.

According to Matthew Henry, God sometimes allows his children to suffer longer in order for them to come to the same point as David is here: in need of God’s help immediately. We must realize that God is the only one who can help us, and we must not seek help or escape by any temporary earthly means. We depend on God alone for our help, and sometimes we need his help quickly. “LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice when I cry unto thee” (Ps. 141:1).

Sing or pray Psalter #188.

Read Psalter #189.

In Psalm 71 and many other psalms, David expresses his extreme confidence and trust in God. He trusts in the God who has never failed him since the day he was born. “Thou art he that took me out of my mother’s bowels” (v. 6). God was always with him in his youth. “Thou art my trust from my youth” (v. 5). Now David is an old man, and he can say with confidence, “In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust... I will hope continually towards God. Instead he’s manifesting his belief that God is taking forever. David is not showing impatience towards God. Instead he’s manifesting his belief that God will deliver him in due time and provide him with the immediate strength he needs to persevere while the trial is still upon him.

We have this same confidence. Those of us who are old can look back on our lives and see all that God has done for us. Those who are young can read the Bible and see how God has always taken care of and provided for his people. Then we can all sing the beautiful hymn of Isaac Watts, “O God our help in ages past, our hope for years to come...”

Sing or pray Psalter #190.

Read 2 Samuel 18:1–5

It’s difficult even to imagine what David was going through at this time. His world was crumbling around him. Just think about everything that had happened in

Sing or pray Psalter #190.
the last decade of David’s life. His son had died as a result of his adultery with Bathsheba. His son Amnon had raped his daughter Tamar. His son Absalom murdered Amnon for this sin. Absalom had declared himself king and publicly humiliated David by sleeping with his concubines. Wickedness had saturated the family to its core. Then he found himself about to go into battle against his own son.

David speaks about the weight that all these things have placed upon him in Psalm 71. He places his trust in God, praying for his deliverance and the judgment of his enemies. He prays as one who is sure his petition will be answered. By God’s grace we also have David’s confidence and are able to pray with him in verse 21, “Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.”

Sing or pray Psalter #192.

75 Years
Rev. H. De Wolf

Current Events

Stalingrad

At the time of this writing, Stalingrad has withstood thirty days of constant and destructive siege. The big question that almost everyone is asking is, “Will the Russians be able to hold the city?” and “How long will they be able to continue in the face of such a terrible assault?”

Whether or not Stalingrad still stands when this article appears in print, no one dares to predict. But, already now, one thing has become plain and that is that the Russians would rather die than be conquered. There can be no doubt but what the cost in human lives is terrific not only on the part of Germany but of Russia as well. How a nation can continue fighting in the face of such a wholesale devastation is indeed surprising. It certainly doesn’t seem natural, or even possible. For one thing, it is plain that Russia has a vast amount of man-power. If this were not the case she would have been compelled to surrender already a long time ago. More than once we have heard that Russia is not receiving war materials as she should and as was promised her and that she has been holding the invading forces through sheer man-power, through human flesh. Another thing that has become evident is that Russia has prepared herself to meet the German attack in the city of Stalingrad. She knew that it was coming and so she prepared herself to resist to the last ditch at this spot. This, in a measure, accounts for Russia’s ability to stand at this time. However, the greatest factor in Russia’s resistance is undoubt-

Air Power

It is generally conceded that this war is being waged predominantly in the air and that it will be won and lost in the air. We admit that this sounds very reasonable. No one will deny that the airplane has become a dreadful instrument of destruction. Therefore it also stands to reason that the nation which is best able to wage an air-war and is most successful in its bombing raids, will win the war. That means also that the determining factor in the winning of the war will be that of wholesale destruction. The final outcome will not hinge on the ground battles, on hand to hand fighting or the destruction of armies, but on the destruction of property, of munitions factories, supplies, cities, and consequently of men, women and children.

Just imagine the awful power of destruction of a four ton bomb! That, we are told, is the latest size
bomb being used by England in its raids on German property. Compare that with a giant firecracker which you used to set off on the fourth of July; that gives you a faint idea of the power of such a bomb.

We may well ask, “Where will it end?”

Every so often we hear of a new secret weapon which will soon be used. And it seems that each is worse than the former.

**Our Young Men**

Many of our boys have already gone into the service. And there are many more who will go in the near future. There seems to be every reason to believe that before long those of eighteen and up will also be called. The general opinion seems to be that after the coming election, congress will pass a bill to call up all the young men within this age limit.

Whether or not this will be the case we do not know. However we do know that the Army has always been in favor of calling the men of this age. And we have also read that the only thing that has prevented it is the coming election. Nevertheless, just this morning I read that the President has stated that that would not be necessary.

What can a person believe?

We hope that the boys who are constantly being called up may experience that their strength is in the Lord; that they may also be found faithful.

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**A Mighty Fortress Is Our God**

A mighty fortress is our God,  
A bulwark never failing;  
Our Helper He amid the flood  
Of mortal ills prevailing.  
For still our ancient foe  
Doth seek to work us woe;  
His craft and power are great,  
And armed with cruel hate,  
On earth is not his equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,  
Our striving would be losing;  
Were not the right Man on our side,  
The Man of God’s own choosing.  
Dost ask who that may be?  
Christ Jesus, it is He;  
Lord Sabaoth His Name,  
From age to age the same,  
And He must win the battle.

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These words from the familiar hymn based on Psalm 46 were printed in the October 1942 issue, during World War II.
Matthew 22:37–39 reads “Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” This is a familiar passage, but the question must be asked, who is your neighbor? Is it your siblings, parents, classmates, or the people who live next door? Jesus explains this through the parable of the good Samaritan found in the parallel passage of Luke 10:25–37. In the parable a man is found stripped, wounded, and left for dead by a group of thieves. Jesus gives us three individuals from different social classes and race that encounter the man; they are the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan. These days we hear the name Samaritan and we associate it with a good individual who is helpful, but in Jesus’ time this was not the connotation that this name had. Samaritans were despised for their ethnic and religious impurities. Listeners to the parable would have expected the Levite or the priest to stop and aid this man. These religious leaders did notice the man, but went on to neglect him, whether for reasons of pride, busyness, or concern for their social status. Our neighbor can be of any race, social background, or anyone in need. In this article we are going to explore ways that families can emulate the Samaritan of the parable by loving and serving the less fortunate. We are going to look at foster children and families who have felt the call to serve them, and how youth and families can be neighbors to them.

God created families and established his covenant in the line of generations. He gave man one wife (Gen. 2:24) and commanded them to replenish the earth (Gen. 1:28). In Genesis 17:1–14 God establishes his covenant with Abraham and his seed. He promises to direct his path and bless him and the generations to follow. Abraham is instructed to circumcise each male in his household. “And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed. He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant” (v. 12–13). Abraham must obey God and circumcise all the males in the household, whether they were his biological offspring or whether they were brought into his home from elsewhere. In the New Testament baptism has taken the place of circumcision. When a foster or adoptive child is brought into a godly home, parents set another place at the table alongside their covenant children and raise them in the light of scripture. If parents adopt a child, they look forward to baptizing him or her as they would their own biological children. This is a beautiful picture of how we are brought into God’s family, not begotten or born from him, but adopted and made his heirs by his mercy and grace.

There is much sin and agony in the world today. The sanctity of marriage has been ruined by rampant divorce and remarriage. One of the results of this wickedness is that children are suffering, living in broken homes, sometimes with abusive and/or neglectful parents. Some of these children end up in the foster care system. Children are placed into foster care when the state removes them from their homes when it is discovered that the children are victims of abuse or neglect. The goal is to reunite the child with his or her parents, but this goal is not always achievable. If it is not possible for the child to be reunited safely with his or her family, the child is then in need of an adoptive family. In Michigan alone there are over 3,000 children in the foster care system each year that are in need of permanent, loving, adoptive homes. It is estimated that there are 13,000 children in the foster care system at any given time, either working towards reunification with parents or waiting for permanent homes. The need is real and great.

Currently the people licensed to accept children into their homes include Christian couples, individuals, and regrettably, gay and lesbian couples. There is great need in our community for Christian
families to provide stable, supportive, loving homes for these children. These children have experienced a range of trauma due to abandonment, rejection, abuse, and neglect. The only parents they love and depend on have been torn from their lives. It is likely that these children will suffer from issues of anger, anxiety, mistrust, fear, and detachment. Because of their difficult life experiences these children can be physically, emotionally, behaviorally, or mentally challenged. These children typically do not have the blessing and benefit of two God-fearing parents who have taken a vow to raise them in the fear of the Lord. The majority of these children have never learned about God and have never had a fatherly example of Christ as most of you are blessed with. Welcoming these children into our covenant lives and homes can be a great blessing to these children.

The families that feel a calling to open their homes to these children must go through the process of becoming licensed through the state to provide stable and loving homes for these children. Foster families who welcome these emotionally wounded or struggling children into their homes need support from their family, church family, and community. Whether the family welcomes a newborn baby, toddler, or a teenager, there are many adjustments to be made within the home. The parents will experience the difficulty of developing a relationship with a new child. This can be difficult for foster parents as they don’t have any idea of how long the child will remain with them, but it is essential for them to give fully of themselves to help this child trust and develop properly. The siblings will have to adjust to a new child that will require the time and energy of the parents. They may have to give up their bedrooms, share their toys, and learn to be more accepting and patient. The child himself will likely have a difficult time adjusting to his new family, wondering if this family will love him forever or if they will fail him like his previous birth or foster parents. He may continue to test the foster or adoptive parents by behaving badly, being destructive of property, running away, using abusive language, and telling the family that he hates them. He needs continuous forgiveness and love, in the same way God has forgiven his children of their sins every single day. Ephesians 4:32 states: “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” He must be taught God’s forgiveness by our example. Parents and siblings can facilitate the child’s healing by teaching them how to trust and to love again. They must remember the unfailing love of the Lord, as Deuteronomy 10:17–19 teaches us: “For the Lord your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward: He doth execute the judgement of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment. Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” This is our opportunity to show love to this wounded neighbor as the Samaritan did.

There are many families who may not feel this calling to open their homes. This belongs to the diversity of the body of Christ, and this must be embraced as well. Romans 12:4–8 speaks of our role to be faithful and seek ways to serve others with what gifts Christ has given to us. We then have a great opportunity to support the fatherless and widows. This can be accomplished by supporting those in our church community who have lost spouses or parents and by supporting foster or adoptive families. This can be done in the way of lifting the family up in prayer, asking God to give them strength, patience, grace, and mercy. Foster and adopted children are in need of prayers, specifically that the Holy Spirit will work in them to know and believe that there is hope in Christ and to receive the new family’s love and trust. Church members can also help by offering to make meals or baked goods when the family has just received a child, because regardless of the age of the child, the parents are likely going through a time of significant adjustment. At times simply being a nonjudgmental sounding board for the frustrations and difficulties that come along with the foster care system and adoptive process can be very helpful. Individuals can easily have a background check performed through the child’s foster care agency free of cost so that they can legally provide babysitting services for foster children. This respite allows the foster parents to focus on their marriage, take time to regroup, or to spend dedicated time with the other children in the family. Families can also help by donating items to the area foster care agencies to aid and assist families and children. Individuals can be great assets to the parents and child by becoming a mentor for the foster child either in an official capacity or casually. This is a great way to be an example and resource to the child that does not take on the disciplinary role of a parent.
As young people your interactions with peers is extremely important. The way you treat your siblings and classmates will impact you and them for the rest of your lives. When you apply the great commandment of Jesus to love your neighbor as yourselves, you can reach out in humility and love. You are called to be kind and tenderhearted to each other (Eph. 4:32). This is true regarding children of different race, adopted children, foster children, or just simply children who dress, talk, or act differently than you do. Some ways to do this are by forming relationships with those who differ from you, talking to them without judging them or making fun of them, and being an example to them of godly living, so they can learn from you. Love and help is more aptly given when we understand some of the circumstances or challenges our neighbor may face. You may have no idea what another individual is going through or what difficulties they have experienced. They may be traumatized, scared, or calloused from a difficult life, and we need to show them compassion and love.

Michigan Adoption Resource Exchange (mare.org) is a website with information about the children who are waiting for permanent homes in Michigan. The information is updated daily with roughly 300 children waiting each day, and some have been waiting for years. There are no adoption fees associated with adopting a child from foster care in Michigan. Information on how to become and support foster families and children in Michigan can be obtained through one of Kent County’s four local agencies. They are Bethany Christian Services, D.A. Blodgett of St. John’s, Catholic Charities of West Michigan, and Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. Each state has local social services agencies and children waiting to be cared for. Bethany Global is an international social services organization working in more than 15 different countries. The agencies work with interested families to help them become licensed foster homes, and offer ongoing support, training, and classes. The child receives a daily stipend for room and board, food, and clothing. These children are waiting here in your own neighborhood.

As God’s children we are called to serve each other and humble ourselves, to be “subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” (1 Pet. 5:5). Many times throughout scripture Jesus calls us to show mercy to the helpless and needy, especially the children. Luke 9:47–48 says, “And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child, and set him by him, And said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me, and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.” Opening one’s home to broken and hurt foster children can be uncertain and challenging yet also greatly rewarding. For example, these rewards can be seen when a difficult or defiant child comes to know God’s love and grace. God can use our times of pain to teach us and draw us closer to him. When we trust in God, he directs our paths (Prov. 3:5–6).

Eric and Tricia Bouma are members of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church and are foster and adoptive parents. David and Becky Dijkstra are members of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church and are foster parents.

**What Beacon Lights Means to Me**

On a typical Sunday afternoon, my family eats dinner, has devotions, and eventually gathers in the living room to read. For many years I spent this time doing written work or studying catechism, and afterwards, I would pick up whatever novel I had been reading during the week. Our coffee table almost always held a few copies of the *Standard Bearer* and *Beacon Lights*, but I never considered reading them until one day, with my parents’ encouragement, I read an article from *Beacon Lights* before switching to my regular reading. Though this reading began as something
I was simply “supposed to” do, I grew to appreciate Beacon Lights for its relevance to my life and eventually became more interested in other Reformed reading. Beacon Lights is important to me because it helped me develop reading habits that continue to enrich my life as a Christian. I believe that reading good, Reformed literature is an important part of growing as a believer. Words are an amazing gift from God that let us share ideas, express our faith, see God’s creation from new perspectives, and learn from God’s people throughout church history. Thousands of books, articles, and even blogs exist that can help us grow in our faith. Beacon Lights was my introduction to this world of Reformed reading. The articles are rarely intimidating in their language or topic. They do not shy away from difficult doctrinal concepts, yet also focus on applications to daily life. I remember reading articles about modesty, choosing a vocation, and dating, that helped me through high school. I enjoyed learning from the perspectives of ministers telling their stories of how they were called and from the perspective of elderly saints who lived during very different times, yet shared the same faith. When I found myself struggling to get into a regular habit of devotions, the daily devotionals helped keep me on track with a simple word of encouragement and reflection each day, and eventually, Beacon Lights became a place where I could share my own words with fellow believers. Because I began to read the approachable articles in Beacon Lights, I have begun to appreciate the other good writing by both our Protestant Reformed ministers and other Reformed writers that can help me grow in my faith.

Reading is a valuable resource to us, yet it seems that deep reading is not valued in society today. Most people and online publications emphasize quick reads that state the bottom line and take little time to digest. How many times have you read the first paragraph of an online article and then clicked on another link before finishing it? Wouldn’t you rather watch a two minute video clip than read a whole news report? I know I often find myself starting to skim after the third paragraph even when the article is interesting to me. Brief articles and videos certainly have their place in effective communication, but it is still essential to read more deeply. If we apply the “too long, didn’t read” mentality to the many books and articles about Christian life and doctrine, we may lose the desire or even ability to learn from the resources that God has given us. Even more importantly, if we can’t take the time to read an article that analyzes and reflects on God’s word, how can we begin to uncover the beautiful truths of scripture by reading the Bible ourselves? It is difficult to make the time to read, but developing the habit of reading and reflecting deeply on God’s truths is crucial, maybe even more so with our busy schedules, and Beacon Lights is an excellent place to start.

There are still several copies of Beacon Lights on the coffee table in our living room, and I’ll admit, I haven’t read any of them cover to cover. However, I am grateful to this magazine for opening the door for me towards meaningful reading, and I know that I can pick up any copy and find a word of encouragement, reflection on scripture, or new perspective to apply to my daily life. I pray that God continues to provide the means to supply these words of guidance and develop the important place of reading in our lives as Christians.

Elizabeth is a member of Trinity Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

There is a generation that curseth their father and doth not bless their mother. There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness. There is a generation, O how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation, whose teeth are as swords, and their jaw teeth as knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men. —Proverbs 30:11–14
“Search the Scriptures” comes the command;  
Search the Scriptures to understand  
What is the will and way of the Lord,  
Where to find joy which earth cannot afford.  
In covenant homes in the days of their youth  
Children learn to pray, “Lord, lead me in thy truth.”  
As young children we learned verses by heart:  
“How shall two walk together except they agree.”  
When God does not give a mate or children, though  
this is our prayer;  
We read, “Cast thy burden on the Lord.” And, by  
grace, we leave it there.  
When God gives us children and we stand in awe  
before the gift and responsibility,  
We rest in the promise, “I will be a God to thee and  
your seed after thee.”  
When teenagers try us with their foolish persistence  
We cling to the scripture, “My grace is sufficient.”  
When times of loneliness and the fog of despair  
settle in:  
“From the depths I will bring thee forth once again.”  
We hear the law read and know our misery:  
“My God I will praise all the day long.”  
When I envy a sister’s gifts, her lifestyle, her raiment;  
Have I learned, “in whatsoever state I am therewith  
to be content?”  
And when I’m “so busy,” I’ve no time to read God’s  
word or to pray,  
“O! How love I thy law! It is my meditation all the  
day?”  
When in a puffed up spirit I am looking down upon  
all,  
“Pride before destruction; a haughty spirit before  
a fall.”  
When with thankful hearts we see confession of our  
youth,  
“I have no greater joy than to see my children walk  
in truth.”  
And in our later years, we can utter a thankful prayer:  
“A goodly heritage is mine, marked out with gra-  
cious care.”  
In all phases of life, no matter our lot, or our unique  
situation,  
Searching the Scripture we find correction, peace,  
and consolation.  
For in our searching we’re finding more of our God  
every day;  
“Hear thou … be wise, guide thine heart in the way.”  
By his Word our souls are strengthened and fed,  
“Lord, ever more give us this bread.”  
May God ever bless us with the Holy Spirit, giving  
us eyes  
To see, “with healing in his wings the Sun of Righ-  
teousness arise”.  
May the Lord grant the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual  
ears  
That our response may be: “Speak, Lord, Thy servant  
hears.”
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:
Caleb Samuel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan & Elsie Miersma—Edmonton, AB, Canada
Kendra Joanne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben & Stephanie Tolsma—Edmonton, AB, Canada
Tessa Mae & Macy Jo, twin daughters of Mr. & Mrs. Gordon & Rebecca Tolsma—Edmonton, AB, Canada
Tyler Samuel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Jill Hop—First, MI
Ryan Enoch, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Betsy Kleyn—Grace, MI
Elizabeth Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Scott & Lynn Oosterhouse—Hope, MI
Brynn Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Lacey Key—Hudsonville, MI
Kayla Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jason & Jill Holstege—Hudsonville, MI
Audrey Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Frank & Gina Hiskes—Peace, IL
John Daniel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Dawn Howerzyl—Redlands, CA
Abigail Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jed & Heidi Pipe—Southeast, MI
Savannah Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Christian & Julie Flikkema—Southeast, MI
Nora Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Cassie DeVries—Trinity, MI
Allena Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben & Andrea Ver Strate—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Proverbs 3:6
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Sis. Leslie Joyce Macandog—Bulacan, Philippines
Bro. Jeremiah Pascual—Bulacan, Philippines
Jesse Busscher—Georgetown, MI
Danielle Elenbaas—Georgetown, MI
Zach DeVries—Hope, MI
Emily Hop—Hope, MI
Jesse Kamps—Hope, MI
Kristi Kooiker—Hull, IA
Rochelle Kooiker—Hull, IA
Eric Hanko—Lynden, WA
Amanda Heystek—Lynden, WA

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Michael Lenting and Miss Carmen Miedema—Crete, IL
Mr. Jesse Busscher and Miss Danielle Elenbaas—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Matt DeBoer and Miss Kelsey Ferguson—Hope, MI
Mr. Allyn Brummel and Miss Jacilee Andringa—Hull, IA
The Belt of Truth Part 3:  
A Soldier’s Honor

As Danny, his sister Becky, and their mom looked at the picture of a Roman soldier in a library book, Danny’s mom tapped on the belt. “A Roman soldier’s sword belt had one last important role. It was also the symbol of the soldier’s place as a soldier. Only soldiers wore belts like that. If a Roman soldier had his belt taken by his commander, it meant he was being kicked out of the Roman army in dishonor.”

“Dishonor?” Danny asked.

“It’s like being expelled from school. It’s being kicked out and shamed for failure,” his mom explained.

“As Christians, we are a part of God’s army. We are people of truth. To lose truth is the same as leaving God’s army.

It is a dishonor. It is a shameful act. Truth is our badge of honor as a part of God’s army. It marks us as one of God’s warriors. You can’t be in God’s army without it.”

Questions to Think About:

1. Read Ephesians 6:13–14, Psalm 145:18, Proverbs 23:23, Isaiah 26:2, and John 4:24 by yourself or with your parents. How important is the truth to a Christian?

2. What happens when truth is taken away?

Puzzle Answers for February:

Scrambled words:

Belt
Truth
Modesty
Soldier
Tunic

Answer to the question: sporrans

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

Convention 2016

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”