Variations of this month’s cover were used throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s.
# Table of Contents

**EDITORIAL**  
Gathering without God  Page 3

**ASK SCHUYLER**  
Adopted Children  Page 4

**LETTER TO THE EDITOR**  Page 5

**OUR GOODLY HERITAGE**  
Interview with Edwin Gritters (Part 1)  Page 7  
A Blessed Heritage  Page 11

**75 YEARS**  
Beacon Lights: Highlights of the Late 1950s and Early 1960s  Page 13

**DEVOTIONAL**  
The Daily Press—April 8–May 8  Page 15

**A CLOUD OF WITNESSES**  
Simon van Velzen: Watchman on the Walls of God’s Zion  Page 22

**75 YEARS**  
Precious Pamphlets  Page 24

**CHURCH NEWS**  Page 26

**LITTLE LIGHTS**  
The Breastplate of Righteousness  Page 27
Gathering without God

In large bold type, such was the headline in a recent front page article in the Grand Rapids Press. The subtitle was “Church without religion forms in Michigan’s Bible belt.”

Before I write any further, allow me to remark that the comments I will make are not narrow and provincial. They are not directed only to those who live in the Grand Rapids area. I am well aware that Beacon Lights goes to you, young people, who live throughout America and beyond, even to the ends of the earth. But I think that this subject is relevant to all who read.

As you can easily imagine, these headlines caught my eye and aroused my curiosity, as no doubt they were intended to do. Now there is nothing unusual about a gathering without God. Such gatherings occur every day in the workplace, sports arenas, government offices, and a thousand other places. The difference is that this gathering without God is supposed to be a church. Nowhere in the newspaper article did any of the participants refer to themselves as a church, but spoke instead of “Sunday Assembly.” The purpose of those who gather on Sunday is “to celebrate their faith—or rather, their lack thereof.”

One of the members of the group says, “We like to say we ripped off the best stuff of church, but we do it without the religious dogma. We will not tell you what to believe and what book to get your rules from. You are free to make your own decisions.”

The article continues: “At the monthly meetings, there’s a welcome, a lecture that can relate to life’s moments—good and bad—and music to speak to the soul...But there are no hymns, prayers, or doctrine as traditional worship services emphasize.”

The expression “ripping off the church” shows complete disrespect to the body of Christ. “Ripping off” is, of course, a colloquial term that refers to stealing. There is here an implied lesson as to how we speak about the church. Always we must speak reverently and respectfully concerning the church that God loves and saves through Christ. We do not rip off the church for our own reasons and purposes.

“Religious dogma” has no place in the Sunday Assembly. I would ask, religious as opposed to what? Apparently as opposed to secular dogma. This is reinforced by the further comment that there are no hymns, prayers, or doctrine. So what is left? A welcome, a lecture, no doubt of a secular nature, and some music for the soul.

What a horrific corruption of the scriptures, of the church, and of the worship of God! The worst of it is that these Sunday Assembly people are not ashamed of what they are doing. One would almost expect that they would practice their wickedness in private, hiding it from the general public. But this is not happening in a dark corner somewhere. No, they are not at all ashamed of what they are doing. They are proud of what they are doing, and encourage others to join them. And the secular media gives them front page publicity, making themselves complicit in this evil endeavor.

Besides, all of this is taking place in Grand Rapids, MI, a city long known for its conservative, religious character and many churches. Often in the past it was referred to as “Jerusalem.” This sobriquet was often used sarcastically, but there was also a good deal of truth in it. To think that the Sunday Assembly can take place in this historically Reformed environment boggles the mind.

What must we say about this blatant rejection of the church?

Paul instructs us in 2 Timothy 3. In this chapter he writes to Timothy about the last days and the perilous times that will come. In so doing he describes in detail the nature and character of men during those times. In verses 2–4 he uses many terms to express the wicked nature of these men. In verse 5 we find a precisely correct portrayal of the Sunday Assembly people. They have a form of godliness (I hardly dare even use the word), but deny the power thereof. In verse 7 they are depicted as “ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” How can they, when all they have is a man-centered false religion? In verse 8 they are said to resist the truth; they are men of corrupt minds, reprobate
A re adopted (rather than biological) children in a Christian family part of the covenant? What Bible references can you suggest for your view?

The short answer is, “Yes! Absolutely!” Salvation in neither the Old Testament nor the New Testament is biological. Sin is biological, that is, it is passed from father to son on account of Adam’s guilt, but grace is not.

We begin with Abraham, the father of the faithful. God promised to save Abraham’s seed, by which he meant to save his elect children in Christ. Galatians 3:16 makes this absolutely incontrovertible: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed.” If only the biological children of Abraham could be in the covenant, woe unto us! We would not be in the covenant, but since Abraham’s seed is Christ’s spiritual seed, we Gentiles can be and are included in the covenant: “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29).

When God gave Abraham the sign and seal of the covenant (see Rom. 4:11), he did not restrict it to Abraham’s biological children: “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” (Gen. 17:12). The issue is not biology. The issue is Abraham’s household.

Consider what adoption is. A couple, often childless, or desiring more children, choose to take a child into their home. They choose to give that child all the privileges of being a member of their family. They give that child the right to live with them, to eat with them, and to be loved by them. They treat that child exactly as they treat all their other children. That child has the right to call the woman who adopted him “Mom” and the man who adopted him “Dad.” It would be a denial of all that adoption is, if that couple locked their adopted child in the basement, or made him sit in the corner by himself, while they lavished love upon only their biological children.

The main issue with adoption is this: the legal process takes time. That child is not adopted until all the paperwork is finished and signed, and a court is satisfied. But once adoption is finalized, the child has all the privileges, rights, and responsibilities of any other child.

If that child is adopted by Christians, he has the same privileges, rights, and responsibilities of any other covenant child. And that means that as a covenant child, he is as much a covenant child as any biological child of any other church member. That means that that adopted child, that adopted covenant child, will be baptized, catechized, and instructed with all the other children. We will not

Young people, turn away from evil and continue in what you have learned.
have separate categories in the church for biological children and adopted children. (One practical point: the consistory will sometimes delay baptism of such children, because they need to make sure that the adoption process is finally and formally over before the children are officially adopted. Once the adoption papers are signed, however, the application for baptism can usually proceed as normal). In fact, since not all biological children are in the covenant, the biological children must never boast against the adopted children. Absalom and Adonijah were David’s biological sons, but they were not true sons, unlike Mephiboseth, whom David adopted. There are biological sons, born to Christians, who rebel, and have to be cut off by church discipline, while adopted sons, taken from outside, prove to be faithful members of the church.

Is this not what happened throughout Israel’s history? When a pagan renounced idolatry and was adopted into Israel, was he not circumcised and given access to the spiritual privileges of life in Israel? Did he not become an Israelite indeed? Was he not embraced by God in his covenant? One need only think of Uriah the Hittite as an example of this.

That is our salvation. We are adopted children of God. God has only one eternal and natural, or only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. When God adopts us, he makes us his children indeed. He makes us his heirs, co-heirs with Jesus Christ himself. He sends his Spirit into our hearts, so that we cry, “Abba, Father” (see Rom. 8:14–17; Gal. 4:4–7). We are born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13).

The “adoption process” for our salvation meant that God’s firstborn Son, Jesus Christ, sacrificed himself on the cross to atone for our sins. We are legally declared to be the sons and daughters of God because of what Jesus did. Our adoption papers, as it were, are signed in the blood of Jesus Christ. Never will God say to us, his adopted children: “I love you less than I love my real Son, Jesus Christ.” Never will he say, “My Son, Jesus Christ, is in my covenant, but you, technically, are only adopted sons. You are secondary sons.” Never will he say, “I have an inheritance for my real Son, Jesus, and a secondary, lesser inheritance for you.” Never will we eat the crumbs under the table, as lesser sons, while Jesus, the real Son, feasts at his Father’s table.

And if God lavishes such love on us, we will not lavish less love and acceptance (less than full acceptance) upon the adopted children of Christian parents in the church.

We are co-heirs, sons with Christ! What a wonder of grace!

Schuyler

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**Letter to the Editor**

**Dear Editor,**

In the December 2015 edition of *Beacon Lights*, Mrs. Brenda Hoekstra published an article entitled “Christian Patriarchy Life,” which criticized the Christian Patriarchy movement for erroneous views about the calling of the Christian within the family. I was disappointed in her response to the movement, which gave only vague biblical references instead of searching the Scriptures for specific texts that speak to the issues at hand. I would like to point out a couple of her statements that need to be more closely studied with Scripture.

Mrs. Hoekstra criticized Dr. Jack Hyles, a CP leader, for saying that “a woman has no rights,” comparing this to the Muslim abuse of women. We as Americans are very attached to our “rights,” but the Bible doesn’t actually give Christians any rights. Job understood this when he “did not charge God foolishly” after God allowed Satan to take away his riches, his health, and even his children (Job 1). Women really don’t have rights, as Dr. Hyles says—but, we might add, neither do their husbands have the right to be abusive tyrants, for they have the responsibility to love and honor their wives (1 Pet. 3:7, Eph. 5:25).

Later in her article, Mrs. Hoekstra says that CP “teaches that women are unfit for any authority or leadership of any kind by virtue of their emotionality, weakness, and susceptibility to deception.” She explains their error by writing that “the Genesis curse...
is lifted from women in Christ just as it has been lifted from men...we live to Christ not through a role.” The Bible certainly does teach that the value of a godly woman is the same as the value of a godly man: God loves both with an everlasting and unconditional love and has redeemed both with the blood of Christ (Isa. 43:1–4). Galatians 3:28 tells us that in regard to salvation, “there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” We do not degrade the value of women, however, when we say that God indeed has set biblical gender roles that apply in the church today. This is not based on any ability of the woman (as Aristotle claimed), but simply on her calling from God. Woman was created, not cursed, to be subject to her husband. Her role of submission instead of authority then remains in her redemption: “the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3).

We need to be careful when we evaluate the statements of false teachers, and be sure that we are actually comparing them with Scripture before we judge how their teachings err. A false accusation against false teachers can only hurt our witness to those around us.

Hannah is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan.

I take this opportunity to remind our readers that Beacon Lights has a rubric called “Letters to the Editor,” which provides a forum to comment either negatively or positively on previously published articles. The original author will be given the chance to defend his/her position. —Editor

RESPONSE

I agree with Hannah that mankind never has the right to challenge or question God in his providence. We have no right to tell God what to do. However, as adopted children of God, and brothers and sisters of Christ, we have many rights and privileges afforded to us in and through our elder brother Jesus Christ. We have an inheritance that is by definition a right that the Bible calls a birthright. Christ shares his inheritance with us as gifts to us and makes us partakers of all blessings, as stated in the forms for baptism and the Lord’s Supper. That inheritance includes the legal right to eternal life with God forever in paradise that Jesus earned for us and gave us through justification. There are many rights that are included in that eternal life both now and in our life to come.

My reference to rights is not a right to challenge God. It is the understanding of rights that CP denies exist for godly wives. In the bond of marriage, the wife has the right not to live in fear of her husband, since she is also his spiritual sister by Christ’s own work. To shed light on what CP teaches, we could consider the example of Abigail the Carmelite. Here is a churchman whose headship is corrupted. His rule over Abigail is harsh and obstinate. In his opinion she has no rights. If she had submissively accepted that, she and her house would have perished. Yet she understood that God gave her the right and duty to stand up for what is true and good. Being under this man, she still understands her calling as helper and exerts her God-given right to pursue a course of action that will save her household. She is commended for this by David in 1 Samuel 25:34. Staunch followers of CP would condemn her for not being submissive.

Adam was indeed created first and Eve came after as a help fit for him in his needfulness. Eve was taken from his rib and not a second handful of dirt showing that she is from the man and for the man. We cannot know what their perfect relationship of headship and perfect helper looked like. My reference to Genesis 3 as it relates the rule of Adam over Eve as a direct consequence of her role in the fall is that because of sin, headship changed. Rule became domination and tyranny. But by grace, rule has been reclaimed among God’s people to its godly form as servant leadership instead of oppressive control. Those in CP point to the curse spoken to Eve as if it was a command spoken for Adam that gives him absolute and unmitigated control over the wife. Contrary to CP, we teach that women have the right to be treated decently within their marriages. Christ gives them that right when he instructs husbands to love their wives as themselves. Mistreated wives have recourse in the leadership of their church. The church should be a place of safety and protection, particularly for women, and not ever a place that supports and protects domineering power or a corrupt version of headship.

I also agree that we are indeed given roles, but CP teaches that these roles must look like the lives of the OT patriarchs. The true church teaches that these roles are to be worked out between individual couples within the confines of Christian liberty. As
belonging to the New Testament, these roles can manifest themselves in different ways within different cultures. For example, the elect of God lived their marital roles considerably differently during the agricultural era of the Midwestern US 200 years ago than they do in suburbia today.

Due to the desire not to have this topic become a long series, sometimes we trade a little clarity for brevity. So I hope my explanation helps and I thank Hannah for the opportunity to cover this.

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

Our Goodly Heritage

Mark H. Hoeksema

Interview with Edwin Gritters (Part 1)

It is July 5, 2008, and I am interviewing Mr. Ed Gritters of Redlands, California.

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

Ed Gritters: I was born February 20, 1929 on a farm just north of Hull, Iowa, and I was baptized by Rev. C. (Cornelius) Hanko in 1929.

MHH: Who were your parents?

EG: Ben and Ann Gritters.

MHH: What can you tell me about them and what can you tell me about your childhood? What was the occupation of your father, where did you live, what type of lifestyle did you have?

EG: It was during the depression, so our lifestyle was by today’s standard very low, as it was for most people during the depression. We were rental farmers, so about every two or three years, the landlord’s son would grow up, and he needed the farm, and my folks would be on the road, moving again to another farm if they could find one to rent. By about 1941 they could no longer find farms to rent in Sioux County, Iowa. So then we bought a small farm north of Edgerton, Minnesota in 1942.

MHH: When you moved to Edgerton, I assume that your membership was transferred there as well?

EG: Yes, because I was only 12 years old when we moved to Edgerton.

MHH: And how long did you live in Edgerton?

EG: Until I finished Junior College in Orange City, Iowa in 1948. That’s when I went to Redlands. So I lived in the Edgerton area only about five or six years, because I went back to Western Christian in Hull for my senior year of high school. Then I went two years to Orange City—Northwestern Junior College, because there was no Dordt College in those days. Right after that, I went directly to California because we had just gotten a new minister in Edgerton who said that it was June and Redlands had neither teacher, either the principal and teacher for grades 5–9, or the teacher for the lower room. So they only had three months to go. Rev. DeBoer, who came from Redlands to Edgerton, persuaded me to contact the Redlands’ school board and offer to take the job there if they wanted—which I did.

MHH: Now, when you went to Junior College, you were trained as a teacher then?

EG: Basically it was for teaching, yes, although it was largely pre-seminary type courses, too. I had Greek and History and things of that nature.

MHH: In a Junior College?

EG: Yes.

MHH: So you had a two-year degree, then.

EG: Yes.

MHH: And did that qualify you to become a teacher in California then?

EG: The restrictions in California for teaching in a
private schools were very lax. You only had to sign
one thing, which was that you were not on drugs
(laughter). No requirements about graduation, de-
grees, anything like that.

**MHH:** So you went to Redlands when you were 19
or 20 years old?
**EG:** Nineteen.

**MHH:** And you began to teach there. At what grade
level?
**EG:** I had grades 5–9 and being principal at the
same time.

**MHH:** A fair amount of work for a young man and
a brand new teacher to take on.

**EG:** For a greenhorn, it was….

**MHH:** I didn’t want to use that word! (Laughter)

**EG:** I worked till midnight almost every night. You
had to study five lessons for each class for each
day. So there was a lot of reading and studying to
do ahead of time.

**MHH:** Now, what can you tell me about the school—
about its origin and its development and its size—
anything, any information that you can give me.

**EG:** I think the school started in about 1933. My
wife could give you the exact date. But I think it was
about 1933. And Rev. Vos was instrumental in get-
ing it started there. In fact, I saw some old records
there once in the school, of the early years of the
school, and Rev. G. Vos was the secretary of the
school society. The minister was heavily involved in
the beginning of the school there.

The school met for those first seven or eight
years in a basement of our church with one teacher
with eight grades. My wife was one of the children
who went through those entire eight grades with old
Pete R. Zuidema. Later I saw Mr. Zuidema’s picture
in some consistory picture in Grand Rapids, so he
must have gone back to Grand Rapids after teach-
ing in Redlands.

**MHH:** So if it was started in ‘33, you came in what
year to Redlands?

**EG:** In ’48.

**MHH:** The same time you began to teach.

**EG:** The same day. He came there the same day I
did. He had a seventeen-year-old daughter who just
graduated from high school in Pella, and she taught
the lower room.

**MHH:** Quite a load for her, too.

**EG:** Yes.

**MHH:** The formation and continuance of the school
in Redlands makes it probably the first school that
was established by people from the Protestant Re-
formed Churches. Is that correct?

**EG:** It was and is the first school in our denomina-
tion, yes.

**MHH:** And what was the motivation behind the
establishment of that school and its continuance?

**EG:** I wasn’t there, of course. I couldn’t speak about
the motivation. But I think it would be the same for
every one of our churches: where they were able to
establish our own school, they did so. Rev. Vos was
heavily behind it. He strongly recommended it. With
him being the minister there, they soon decided that
they would start their own school.
MHH: And that was separation, then, from the existing local Christian schools.
EG: That's correct.
MHH: At what point in this sequence of events were you married?
EG: We were married on September 1, 1950. That would have been just before my third year of teaching.
MHH: And, speaking of your third year, how long did you teach in Redlands?
EG: I taught there six years—from 1948, although the congregation had split badly in 1953 already, so I had children of both groups in my room—made it very difficult teaching. So at the end of that year I did not sign my new contract. I was surprised that they gave me another contract because I had basically left the group that was with Vermeer and DeWolf. But they chose to renew my contract, which, of course, I did not dare sign.
MHH: Can you give me some history about the difficulties in Redlands in connection with Vermeer and with the school, with various factions in the church? Walk me through it step-by-step. What was this all about and what happened?
EG: Well, many of those things did start for just something rather minor. We had a family that moved to Redlands from Montana. They insisted that the Montana schools were so much better than our Redlands Christian school that they wanted all of their three daughters stepped up one grade—just automatically. The school board didn't feel that that was a good enough reason to say that Montana schools were so much better than our Redlands Christian school. Well, nothing was said or done about it at that time. But then, when more and more difficulties arose, then they started bringing that up. They said that we were punishing this poor family from Montana who had three kids and now they'd have to pay tuition a year longer and things of that nature. I really don't remember what the next step was. I do know that soon people who were wholeheartedly with Rev. Vermeer started agitating, and they were able to get a majority of their people on the school board. That pushed out some of the people that had been on the school board for a long time.
MHH: Back up for just a second. This problem—why were there factions to begin with? Was that connected with the matter of the conditional covenant and doctrinal splits? Back up a little bit and take me through that.
EG: I don’t know that I can tell you why that split occurred at that time, but it split quite a bit along the lines of what happened in 1946 with principal A. C. Boerkoel. You know, sometimes you think those things heal. But after four or five years, those things had not healed. So after getting control of the school board, the next thing they decided to do was pick on the Sunday School. We had one man who was happily teaching the Sunday School. He was the president of Sunday School for several years. One year they did not approve him continuing as Sunday School principal. Then some of the other Sunday School teachers—because this superintendent who was not approved for continuing as president of the Sunday School—also quit. So they had a new batch of Sunday School teachers, basically again that were put forward by Vermeer and those who followed him closely and who were still somewhat against this man who'd been principal of the Sunday School for many years.
MHH: So now we have basically two factions, and the majority one gained control of the board.
EG: The board, yes, and the Sunday School.
MHH: What happened next?
EG: Well the next thing that happened was that there was more and more discussion finally reaching Redlands about the problems with Hoeksema and DeWolf and others in Michigan. A few of the members of the church of Redlands (about 5 of them) were totally in favor of Rev. Hoeksema. Basically, the rest of the congregation, to my mind, did not see that great a need for a split. I don’t think we saw the need for the Declaration of Principles.
So there we have the five families, five men who were strongly in favor of the Declaration and going along with Rev. Hoeksema. Basically the rest of the church, I think I can say, were not overly joyful over the Declaration. But when Vermeer’s group then voted to join the DeWolf group, that really left the other group out in the open, off by themselves, because they said they really did not feel like starting a new church with these five people there, because they were always 200 percenters, so to speak.
So they called Rev. Hoeksema to come. I know that the five people that were for Hoeksema all the time were not overjoyed about it that now the rest of us were going to jump on their bandwagon once more, although a couple of them did get voted into
the first consistory in 1953 or 1954. They were not especially happy about it.

One of those four became Sunday School superintendent in our new church. He had other things that he was always harping on. He did not believe that our sins will be revealed in the resurrection and he insisted that a Christian Reformed Church is the false church. That many years ago, we were not ready to take that stand. I don’t know if we would say that today, but looking back 60 years, you can read a lot into it.

He was told he could teach Sunday School, but he could not tell the children that your sins would not be revealed in the resurrection and that any other church but ours at that time was a false church.

But he ignored the consistory and he taught those things. So the consistory then told him that since he had reneged on his agreement not to discuss those things in the Sunday School, that he could no longer be the Sunday School superintendent.

MHH: You mentioned, Mr. Gritters, that eventually there was a faction in the church, I assume under the leadership of Vermeer, who went with the DeWolf group. Now, why did that happen? Was the conditional covenant being preached by Vermeer? Did he agree doctrinally with DeWolf? What happened?

EG: I believe they did not originally believe with DeWolf or go along with DeWolf. But I know that some of them also were not totally in agreement with going with Hoeksema. So there was a difference of opinions there. When this trouble then spread from the school and then into the Sunday School in the congregation there, then Vermeer, since he saw that we were contacting Hoeksema, and five of these men whose names I haven’t mentioned were with that group also, then they decided they would go with DeWolf. That was contrary to what people thought after discussing it with Vermeer over the last year or two. They had made comments that Hoeksema was getting old and he should quit. I personally overheard Vermeer and another member who became a member of the other group say that. I personally witnessed that when I was teaching school here.

MHH: Would it be fair to say that there were, at least to one degree or another, personalities involved?

EG: I’d say there was probably over half personalities. Some of that reflected back to 1946 when the school split over principal A. C. Boerkoel.

MHH: And the result of all of this was that the school ceased to exist?

EG: It did, when I declined to sign my new contract for 1954–55. They got a Baptist teacher from Yucaipa to take over the lower room and my second cousin from Iowa who had been teaching with me. I believe she was the principal that year. But that was the last year. After that they closed the school down because about a third of the kids went with us to our church, probably a third or fourth of them had already gone back to the Christian Reformed school. And that left them with such a small group that they decided that they could not continue.

MHH: I’ve also heard comments made about some letters in the context of this Rev. Vermeer. I know nothing about that. Can you help me out?

EG: Well, one day my wife and I had picked up the mail, or it came right to our front door, and there was an envelope handwritten in pencil. My wife said (just a joke), “What’s this? Blackmail?” Well, it turned out that it really was, because when we opened it and we read it, it said things like, “We just welcomed our minister back from his much needed vacation and we had a celebration for him. And where were you that night? You were with the enemy.” And those were the types of things that were stated in that letter. It was all handwritten. As to where it came from, I don’t know. I did take it to Rev. Vermeer and discussed it with him. The minute he saw it, he took it from me and he crumpled it up and he said, “Here’s what I do with these things.” And he dumped it in the wastebasket. I said, “No, I would like to keep that letter.”

I’ve always been interested in people’s handwriting. I could identify every kid in our school just from their handwritings. This one said, “Dear Ed:—” Now, you either have friendly letters with a comma, as you know, or a business letter with a semi-colon. But I knew somewhere I’d seen someone who always started his letter: “Dear So-and-so,—” I found a letter written by Vermeer that, in my mind, there was no doubt about it that he had written it. And then I understood that Mrs. VanVoorthuysen also got a very uncomplimentary letter from somewhere, they didn’t know where from. It was traced back to Vermeer’s typewriter. I don’t really know much about that because no one talked about it much because those of us who received those letters were ashamed of them.

MHH: But yet, you had not done anything wrong that you were aware of?

EG: No, and I had never been accused of anything
Beacon Lights 11

wrong. And, like I said, at the end of all this, I was given a new contract again for the 1954–55 school year. So if they had been terribly against me, they never would have renewed my contract. But I felt, that because of the situation, I could not go on. It was very difficult finishing out that first year. A lot of the children had already gone back into the Christian Reformed school. And I sat there with two groups of students in my class: the kids that were the people from our church who thought that I was favoring the other side, and the other side who figured that I was favoring the children who I went to church with. It made it very difficult working, even though I tried the best to be equal with all of them, discipline-wise. I didn’t do anything different than I did the previous five years.

MHH: So those were difficult times.
EG: Yes. That was a difficult year to finish. And then, like I said, the school continued one more year and then the school ceased also.
MHH: And at that point, the church had divided also?
EG: Yes.
MHH: Approximately how large was the church that remained in Redlands?
EG: When we left, I would say we probably had about 26 families at reorganization, although I was not there since I was still teaching in the school. And I thought it’d be just raising more difficulties if I joined, while I was principal of the school and joined another church. So I stayed to complete that year. What did you ask, how many children?
MHH: Yes, the size of the church, because you had mentioned that originally it got as large as 60 families.
EG: It got as large as 80 families, to my recollection. After the dust had settled, we had maybe just over 30 families in our church—between 25 and 30. A lot of them went back to the Christian Reformed Church, at least a half a dozen families that I can remember. So they were probably left with 50 families—certainly, a bigger majority than we had. That came out also then when we started fighting as to who was going to get the property.
MHH: What happened there?
EG: We went to court with it and the court ruled in their favor, I think because they had a majority of the people, although that didn’t happen in all of our churches. Some churches, they said, this small group, small as they are, are the true continuation of the old Protestant Reformed Church, so they get the building. The judge in San Bernadino did not look at it that way. He ruled in favor of the majority who remained. [To be continued] ☐

A Blessed Heritage

God’s faithfulness shows itself to the church in so many ways and it seems at differing degrees throughout history. The older members can testify to the battles that they have had to fight in their days. The younger members do well to listen for their own spiritual well-being. What follows is the recollection of such a battle story as told to me by my father, Henry John Holstege. The year 2000 marks the 75th anniversary of the Protestant Reformed Churches, but it also marks the 75th anniversary of the Holstege family having its membership there. God in his grace chose to reveal to Lambert Holstege, my grandfather, the truth of sovereign grace over against the error of God’s grace being something simply common and mundane. The occasion for this piece of writing is that my Aunt Florence asked me to recall in writing what I remember being told by my father concerning the facts and events that led up to the Holstege family’s joining the denomination of the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Aunt Florence Haveman (Mrs. Marvin Have-
man, nee Holstege) was born on May 29, 1922 and therefore was only two years old when the events of 1924 happened. Although I, Leonard Holstege, was not yet born, my father Henry Holstege had gone through the struggle. Many times he talked about the events with his children. In fact he talked about it so much that I often felt as if I had personally gone through the history of 1924. It seems that my father, being so much older than his little sister, was closer to his children than to his sister (at least with respect to conversing about the so-called common grace struggle of 1924). Therefore Aunt Florence asked me to write this piece so that she could have a better understanding of her own family history. Before proceeding, I must comment how amazing it is that my aunt and others see that the important thing concerning her family history is how we have become members of the PRC, rather than being related to someone famous or very wealthy. Aunt Florence has it correct. Our importance lies in the fact that we are fellow soldiers in the church militant.

So Aunt Florence, here it goes. In the period around the years 1920–1924, your father and my grandfather lived near the small little village of Beaverdam, Michigan. He and his wife Elizabeth (nee Vander Meulen) lived on New Holland Street, just a wee bit west of 56th Avenue. This was in the Hudsonville Post Office district. They were humble farm folk who took very seriously their calling as being part of God’s covenant. They had 15 children (many hands make light work on a farm) whom they instructed in the truth of God’s sovereign grace.

In the late teens and early twenties the Janssen controversy was going on at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids. Professor Janssen was a professor at the seminary. For more information on Professor Janssen and the controversy, I refer you to Prof. Hanko’s master degree thesis (available from our seminary), The History of the Protestant Reformed Churches by Rev. Herman Hoeksema in the March 1, 2000 issue of the Standard Bearer, and the first issue of the Calvin Theological Journal, 2000. Now although Beaverdam and Grand Rapids may have seemed to be universes apart, they were connected. Prof. Janssen had relatives in Beaverdam, namely, the Smits, who were rather influential in the church. And, they were neighbors to grandpa and his young family. Needless to say, much serious communication and argumentation was going on in the Holstege neighborhood at that time.

However, the Smits were not the only ones grandpa talked to. He often conversed with his father-in-law, Steven Vander Meulen, who lived nearby. Great Grandfather Vander Meulen, whose wife passed away in 1922, agreed wholeheartedly with grandpa that Rev. Hoeksema was correct with respect to the common grace issue. My father remembered that grandpa had asked great grandpa who was correct according to the scripture—Hoeksema or the synod of 1924.

Around the time of the famous Christian Reformed Synod of 1924, grandpa bought the book written by the Revs. Hoeksema and Danhof entitled Van Zonde en Genade (Of Sin and Grace). Grandpa had heard that this was an important book, and so it was. It was fairly well known throughout the area, and it became rather influential as well, so grandpa bought a copy. Sometime after the Synod of 1924 and before the January 13, 1925 meeting of Classis Grand Rapids West, it was time for the Beaverdam Christian Reformed Church consistory to conduct house visitation at the Holstege residence. Aunt Florence, you were about 2½ years old, do you remember it? The minister noticed this book on grandpa’s reading table. He then praised the book up and down, saying that he had read it and believed that Hoeksema and Danhof were correct as far as the truth was concerned. He said that it was a really good book and was happy to see that grandpa was reading it.

After the Synod of 1924, when Revs. Hoeksema, Danhof, and G. M. Ophoff refused to stop preaching, teaching, and writing against common grace, they were put out of their respective offices along with the majority of their consistories and members. Rev. Hoeksema was deposed by Classis Grand Rapids East in December of 1924. Revs. Danhof and Ophoff were deposed by Classis Grand Rapids West at its January 1925 meeting. Shortly after Classis GR West had taken their action against the two ministers and their churches, the consistory of Beaverdam CRC sent a committee of elders to meet with Grandpa Holstege. They simply told him that if he insisted on taking and propagating the views of Rev. Hoeksema he would be barred from partaking of the Lord’s Supper at the next celebration of that sacrament.

A few days later, Grandma Holstege had the evening meal prepared and ready to eat. But she did not know where “Pa” was, since he was always very prompt. Grandma said to my father, “Hank Jon,
go find Pa, it’s time to eat.” My father looked high and low throughout the farm buildings. He finally found “Pa” in the hay mow on his hands and knees praying. That night at supper, grandpa announced to his family that they would be going to church in Grand Rapids. But in order to do this, he had to buy his first automobile and his son (my uncle) Steve had to get a driver’s license. He and his family became members of the church ministered by Rev. Hoeksema until the PRC of Hudsonville was organized.

Life around the farm and the neighborhood was anything but peaceful. The neighborhood kids were mean to my dad and his brothers and sisters during this time. They called them names and made fun of them for being kicked out of the church. Nevertheless, Grandpa had the peace of God with him.

And that is all one needs in this life. This is how I remember my father explaining to me the history of my grandfather becoming Protestant Reformed. My children also remember hearing these stories from their Grandpa Holstege.

Thus it was for the Holstege family. But the story goes about the same for my mother’s side. Her father & mother Schut were told to stay away from the Lord’s Supper also for the same reason. I am sure that there are many others who have similar stories. God grant that we may continue to pass these stories from generation to generation.

Len is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.

75 Years

Beacon Lights: Highlights of the Late 1950s and Early 1960s

Although I became editor of Beacon Lights only in 1959, I managed to stir up controversy over the magazine as early as 1958. I had the help of others, who with me were members at that time of the Federation Board of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies. The Federation Board had the oversight of the magazine.

In view of the upcoming Young People’s Convention in Loveland, Colorado in the summer of 1958, the cover of the June-July 1958 Beacon Lights featured several of us in an old car, on the side of which was the sign, “18th P.R.Y.P. Convention or Bust!” The sign was a take-off, of course, on the mantra of the pioneers, “Pike’s Peak or Bust!” Since the convention would be in Colorado, the state in which is located Pike’s Peak, we thought the sign fitting.

We intended to promote the convention.

It never entered our minds that anyone might be offended by the sign. But we learned that some took umbrage at the cover of Beacon Lights. These included redoubtable ministers. They read the sign as impinging on the sovereignty of God with regard to getting to Colorado and the convention.

Despite this lapse of judgment, I was appointed editor of the magazine in 1959. I served as editor until 1963, when I graduated from seminary and entered upon the ministry in the Protestant Reformed Churches, whereupon The Standard Bearer beckoned.

Looking over the issues of the magazine published during my editorship, I found many pictures of the gifted, dedicated young men and young women who worked together on behalf of the magazine in those days, now more than fifty years ago. How those, my colleagues on the staff, have aged! How gladsome that many of them have proved to be faithful, active members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, including ministers and teachers in the Protestant Reformed Christian schools! How sobering that a number of the friends and co-laborers of those days, many years ago now, have died! How sad that some of them have left the churches and the cause of the pure, sound Reformed faith that in those days they enthusiastically promoted and
One strong memory of those days on the staff of Beacon Lights is our zeal on behalf of the magazine and the activities of the Protestant Reformed young people that the magazine promoted, including singspirations, lectures, and conventions.

Stimulating the shared zeal were strong friendships.

Adding an edge to the enthusiastic meetings that planned the issues of the magazine, as occasionally to the contents themselves, was a willingness to “push the envelope.” If we did not purposely break through established Protestant Reformed boundaries, we were not averse to extending them a little. The staff meetings to plan future issues of Beacon Lights were lively.

An expression of this spirit was the creation of an occasional rubric written by a young man under the pseudonym, “Sole Mirans.” This Latin phrase, which was, I fear, a deliberate attempt to flaunt our cultural development, meant, or was intended to mean, “Only Wondering.” The rubric was supposed to subject accepted Protestant Reformed behaviors to critical examination. The first such article appeared in the January 1960 issue of the magazine under the title, of all things, “Popcorn.”

To the best of my knowledge, the youth who was “Sole Mirans” took his identity to the grave with himself, at least with regard to the general readership of the magazine. I will not betray Mr. Mirans here.

That the spirit of questioning certain aspects of the accepted Protestant Reformed way of life was never carried too far, indeed, never carried very far at all, became evident in a sharp letter to the editor by a young lady whom all of us attending Calvin College knew well. In the March 1961 issue of Beacon Lights, she criticized the youthful staff of the magazine for displaying a “holier-than-thou attitude toward other churches.” We published her critical letter in full. The editor responded, graciously (if I may say so).

Two projects of the magazine during those years stand out. First, Beacon Lights arranged the first ever “literary contest” of Protestant Reformed writers. The contest was announced in the June–July 1961 issue of the magazine. Results of the contest were revealed in the January 1962 issue. A number of winning entries were published in this and subsequent issues. Limited to members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, the contest featured three categories: fiction; non-fiction; and poetry.

A second contest followed a year later. But then, evidently, the project fizzled out. I think it ought to be resurrected.

The second project was the establishment of a Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund for prospective ministers and teachers. The project was proposed in the March 1960 issue of Beacon Lights. The June–July 1962 issue announced that this project had become a reality. It exists to this day, having helped many ministers and teachers with college and seminary expenses.

Throughout the early 1960s, when as yet there was no Protestant Reformed high school, Beacon Lights was an ardent supporter of such an institution of higher learning. The entire October 1961 issue of the magazine was devoted to Christian education.

One talented contributor to the magazine in the early 1960s was also a good friend of many of us on the staff of Beacon Lights: James Jonker. James died very young, in 1961, in a car accident. After his death, Beacon Lights published a large collection of his poetry in the June–July 1961 issue of the magazine.

Prof. Engelsma is emeritus professor of the Protestant Reformed Theological School.

As a roaring lion, and a ranging bear; so is a wicked ruler over the poor people.

The prince that wanteth understanding is also a great oppressor: but he that hateth covetousness shall prolong his days.

—Proverbs 28:15–16
The Daily Press

“press toward the mark…” (Philippians 3:14)

A Prayer for the King
Read Psalm 72

The heading of Psalm 72 reads, “A Psalm for Solomon,” but many commentators agree that Solomon actually wrote the psalm. The prayer is David’s, but Solomon, the son for whom he prays, pens the prayer as his father lies on his deathbed.

The psalm begins with an earnest petition, “Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son.” The remainder of the psalm details the answer to that prayer in a confident, glowing description of Solomon’s reign. Yet it’s immediately evident that this text praises a King who is no mere human: it’s a psalm about the one who is “greater than Solomon,” our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 12:42). Only his reign is perfectly righteous, universal, and everlasting.

Sing or pray Psalter #198.

A Righteous Reign
Read Psalm 72:1–7 and 2 Samuel 23:1–5

The reign of the Messiah is a righteous reign. This King is not a respecter of persons: all of the judgments that he makes conform perfectly to God’s standards of good and evil. In Deuteronomy 16:19 and other passages we’re warned not to pervert judgment, for we’re prone to show partiality to those from whom we think we have something to gain. But our Lord is no respecter of persons. Therefore, “my brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons” (James 2:1).

Not only does the Christ judge righteously, he also applies his righteousness to his subjects. When the righteousness of Jesus Christ is applied to a person, that person has peace with God, for he knows that God judges him not according to his own sins, but according to the righteousness of his Son (Ps. 35:24). Do you have peace that passes all understanding? Then, though you mourn when wicked men rule, you will flourish forever under the rule of Jesus Christ, the true Melchisedec, King of righteousness and peace.

Sing or pray Psalter #199.

A Universal Reign
Read Psalm 72:8–11

The righteous rule of the Messiah knows no earthly boundary: his reign is universal. No descendant of David ever ruled over a kingdom without borders, Jesus Christ excepted. God has highly exalted this King, who humbled himself to the death of the cross in order to deliver his poor and needy people. At his name of Jesus every knee should bow. Those who do not worship him as King will lick the dust (v. 9).

Notice: those who hail this King bring him gifts. They’re not taxed: it’s their delight to offer freely unto him. Do you offer freely of what you’ve been given to King Jesus? Besides the material gifts that we give Christ’s church and to the poor, we’re called to present our very bodies to him as living sacrifices; we’re called to keep his law by loving him with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. These are the gifts that his people from all nations lay before his throne as they look forward to the day when the kingdoms of this world finally and fully become the kingdom of our Lord, and of Christ.

Sing or pray Psalter #194.
A Perpetual Reign
Read Psalm 72:17 and Luke 1:30–33

The reign of the Messiah is a righteous reign, a universal reign, and a beneficial reign. But there’s even more good news! His reign is perpetual: it lasts forever. Psalm 72:17 puts it this way: “His name shall endure forever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun.” What name is this, that is above all names? The name Jesus, for he is the one who saves his people from their sins. As the angel foretold to Mary, “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.” (Luke 1:32–33).

Do you look forward to hearing the declaration recorded in Rev. 11:15, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever”? In Jesus’ glorious, forever kingdom, God himself will dwell with his people, “and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

Sing or pray Psalm #195.

God is Good to the Pure in Heart
Read Psalm 73

In God’s providence our pastor completed a series of sermons on Psalm 73 at the end of 2015. Consequently, the content of my meditations on this psalm will originate in large part from the sermons I’ve recently heard.

Psalm 73 begins a series of eleven beautiful meditations written by Asaph, one of the Levites whom David appointed to minister with music in the tabernacle (see 1 Chron. 6:31–32, 39). Psalm 73 begins with a declaration: “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.” It’s important for us to remember first that God is eternally good in his triune being. In his grace, he shows his goodness to men, but not to all men, as most presume. He is good only to Israel, that is, to those who truly are of Israel: the members of Christ’s church. With his blood he purchased for them a new heart. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” It’s important for us to remember first that God is eternally good in his triune being. In his grace, he shows his goodness to men, but not to all men, as most presume. He is good only to Israel, that is, to those who truly are of Israel: the members of Christ’s church. With his blood he purchased for them a new heart. “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Jesus declared, “for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). They shall see him not as the judge from whom they would run in terror, but as their faithful, heavenly Friend to whom they flee with all their needs.

Sing or pray Psalm #204.

A Parent’s “P.S.”
Read 3 John 1

When I was young I had a number of pen-pals. We’d append a multitude of postscripts to our letters: “P.S.,” “P.P.S.,” “P.P.P.S.,” we’d write, never content to conclude our letters. You could argue that Book 2 of Psalms doesn’t end with a doxology, and in a sense, you would be right: there’s a postscript tacked on to Psalm 72. But this postscript contains a note of finality: “The prayers of David the son of Jesse are ended.” What is the hope that above all was the supreme and final prayer of David’s heart? The hope that he expressed at the very beginning of his prayer, “Give the king thy judgments, O God, and thy righteousness unto the king’s son. By God’s grace David saw his petition’s sure and affirmative answer in the coming Messiah, of whom he and Solomon were only types.

What is the prayer that is nearest your heart, fellow Christian parent? I assume that you, like me, “have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 1:4). We can pray that prayer trusting that the one whose reign is universal and perpetually beneficial has promised to bless believers and their children in his everlasting kingdom.

Sing or pray Psalm #239.

Doxology
Read Psalm 72:18–19

Each of the five books of Psalms ends with a doxology. Psalm 72 concludes Book 2 with the doxology that many of us sing at the close of our Sunday worship services. Doxology has had an important place in the church throughout the ages: in the Old Testament, the apostolic era, and still today as the New Testament continues.

A doxology is a brief song of praise to God, one that celebrates his infinite nature. It’s a beautiful way to think about your brief life and mine: as a doxology, a joyful, living song of praise to the sovereign, eternal God. “While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being” (Ps. 146:2). Does your life look like a doxology today?

Sing or pray Psalm #196.

April

12

13

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15

16
A Lesson from Asaph
Read Malachi 2:1–9 and Psalm 73:15

We saw yesterday that Asaph was plagued with unbelief regarding God’s goodness to the righteous. If you turned to Psalter #201 yesterday, perhaps you noted that Asaph’s struggle leads him to cry in stanza five, “Clean hands are worthless and pure hearts are vain.”

Psalm 73 makes it clear, though, that Asaph’s complaint was never voiced: his was an internal crying. Why didn’t he broadcast his doubt? Because he loved the Lord’s people. He couldn’t bear the thought of offending God’s children, of dragging others down with him as he stumbled. So he kept his mouth shut.

What’s your tendency when you’re struggling spiritually? Are you ready to rattle off your misgivings and sew the same seeds of discontent in your family members and fellow saints? You and I have a lesson to learn from Asaph. May the words of Malachi 2:6–7 ring true of us New Testament saints? You and I have a lesson to learn from Asaph. May the words of Malachi 2:6–7 ring true of us New Testament saints?

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Asaph’s spiritual struggle and the recognition that his doubt could cause his fellow saints to stumble were deeply painful for him. In his distress he enters the sanctuary, the tabernacle where he himself served, and there, in the presence of God’s people, he meditates on the deep things of Jehovah. In the sanctuary his earthly perspective was replaced with an eternal one. There he was given to see that all the pleasures and the prosperity that the wicked enjoy are not dispensed upon them in love. There he is led to consider the terrible end of the wicked, for it is appointed to all men once to die, and after that, the judgment. Those are the same truths that you and I are given to understand when we gather with God’s saints for public worship and attend to the preaching of his word. The Christian faith is not driven by emotion or mysticism: it’s a certain knowledge that requires the use of one’s mind in careful, Spirit-led application of God’s word. So, “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering...and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Heb. 10:23–25).

Do you long to be found in the blessed sanctuary of the Lord each sabbath day?

A Light in the Dark
Read John 14

Asaph’s earthly perspective is replaced with an eternal point of view when he enters the sanctuary. That same blessing is granted us too, when we gather in the Lord’s house each sabbath day to worship him in spirit and in truth. But what about those of God’s saints who are unable to attend public worship? Perhaps you are prevented by illness or age. Maybe you’re the weary mother of a needy newborn or an anxious father tending a sick child. What about those saints who are unable to assemble because they are confined to a hospital or hospice bed, are persecuted by their government, or are imprisoned for their faith? They too enter the sanctuary as God graciously ministers to them through his word—whether that word be held in their hand, their heart, or whether it comes through the mouths or pens of fellow saints—and teaches them through the comforting presence of his Holy Spirit. Even in the darkest of places, the entrance of God’s word gives light; it gives understanding unto the simple (Ps. 119:130).
Asaph’s Repentance
Read Psalm 32 and Psalm 73:22–23
The knowledge that Asaph acquires in the sanctuary bears fruit. He’s not like a man who looks at himself in a mirror and then walks away, promptly forgetting what he has just seen. No, he’s not merely a hearer of the word: he’s a doer. His renewed understanding drives him to his knees in heartfelt repentance. He grieves over his sins, and he names them: foolishness and ignorance. “I was like a beast before thee,” he confesses.

Repentance must be our response too, when we’re confronted with the word of God. We’re quick to rattle off the generic line, “Forgive my sins,” but true repentance is preceded by careful self-examination and fueled by sincere contrition. It’s also followed by fruit, fruit that is meet for repentance; that is, fruit that is in keeping with that repentance. What fruit is the greatest evidence of sin repented of and forgiven? Sin forsaken.

Sing or pray #84.

Asaph’s Chief Desire
Read Psalm 42 and Psalm 73:25–26
Asaph once envied the wicked, nearly falling from the faith, but renewed understanding, which God gave him in the sanctuary, led him to heartfelt repentance. He rises to even greater spiritual heights, however, with this declaration: “Whom have I in heaven but thee? And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (v. 25). Asaph had viewed the abundant material possessions of the ungodly as evidence of God’s favor toward them. Now he confesses that there is no thing or pleasure that he desires more than God. Notice: Asaph doesn’t desire God because of the gifts that he gives. He delights in God himself, and, like a deer pants for streams of water, he longs to know God more. Even though he knows his flesh and heart will fail, he rejoices that God will be his portion forever. Again, notice: he doesn’t long for heaven primarily because there he’ll be freed from sorrow or reunited with his loved ones; no, he’s already affirmed that there is nothing in heaven, either, that he desires more than God.

Sing or pray Psalter #203.

Guided to Glory
Read Psalm 73:21–28
Asaph had been determined to choose his own path, but he now knows that his way leads to destruction. He has turned to God, who grasps his right hand, in repentance, and now he willingly submits to his Father’s guidance, resting assured that Jehovah will continue to guide him in the future. How would God guide him? By his word and Holy Spirit; in his providence; and to glory.

So our heavenly Father guides you and me. Do you believe that if you obey his word you will safely arrive at your heavenly destination? Such a life requires childlike trust, for though we catch glimpses of glory and though we may be able to discern where to place our next step, we cannot see all the valleys that lie ahead. We aren’t privy to the mountains we will have to climb. We face “One day at a time, with its failures and fears, / With its hurts and mistakes, with its weakness and tears, / With its portion of pain and its burden of care; / One day at a time we must meet and must bear…” / Not yesterday’s load we are called on to bear, / Nor the morrow’s uncertain and shadowy care; / Why should we look forward or back with dismay? / Our needs, as our mercies, are but for the day…” (Annie Johnson Flint).

Sing or pray Psalter #101.

Nevertheless
Read Psalm 37 and Psalm 73:23

We left Asaph yesterday on his knees. In shame he acknowledges the sinfulness of his sin, but then he remembers, “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand.” That conjunction “nevertheless” testifies to our Father’s faithfulness in the light of our unfaithfulness. What a beautiful, comforting, wonderful truth! Though we forget God and wander, even approaching the edge of a cliff, as Asaph did, all the while our heavenly Father has us by the hand. He keeps us from stumbling so far that we would fall over the edge and be lost.

What temptations confront you today? Do discontent, envy, or despair threaten to disarm you? This is God’s word to you: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.” (Isa. 41:10). Your steps, like Asaph’s, are “ordered by the L ORD.” Of him in whom God delights Psalm 37:24 says, “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the L ORD upholdeth him with his hand.”

Sing or pray Psalter #101.

Draw Near to God
Read Psalm 73

Asaph has confessed that he desires God more than anything on earth or in heaven. He recognizes that the wicked are far from God; in fact, he’s so certain of their impending destruction that he speaks of it in the past tense. In contrast, he desires to be near God because he recognizes that only Jehovah can fill the God-shaped void in his—and in every—human heart. He confines, “It is good for me to draw near to God” (v. 28). If you and I desire God as Asaph did, we too must actively and intentionally draw near to him. How do we draw near to him? We do so on the sabbath by joining our fellow saints in public worship. We do so throughout the week by daily meditating on his word and regularly bowing before him in prayer. No matter
how crazy your day, no matter how long my “to-do” list, there is nothing more important that we must do.

Drawing near to God produces fruit: one who is near to Jehovah cannot but speak the things that he has seen and heard. We were created and called for that purpose: “This people have I formed for myself; they shall shew forth my praise” (Isa. 43:21). Will you draw near to him and declare his works today?

Sing or pray Psalm #203.

**April 26**

**The Thief of Joy**

**Read James 3**

What sin triggered Asaph’s stumble in Psalm 73? Envy. Envy has its roots in comparison. A child is delighted with his slice of cake until he notices that his sister’s portion appears slightly larger. A woman is content with her clothing until she notices that the woman in the adjacent pew is wearing a new dress. The next time you begin comparing yourself with someone else or your lot in life with that of another, remember: comparison is “the thief of joy,” and following close on its heels is its deadly cohort, envy. James 3:16 reads, “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” Proverbs 14:30 teaches that envy makes one’s bones rot. So serious is the sin of envy that Galatians 5:21 warns that those who envy will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

At its heart, envy is idolatry, the worship of self or some other object that one desires. How can we safeguard against envy? By delighting ourselves in the Lord, who, like a jealous husband, covets all of our affection (see Psalm 37). By considering others better than self (Phil. 2:3). By praying for those whom we envy, remembering our calling to love our neighbor as ourselves. Love does not envy (1 Cor. 13:4).

Sing or pray Psalm 290:1–5.

**April 27**

**The God Who Remembers His Covenant**

**Read Psalm 74**

A “maschil” is a psalm of instruction. What is the spiritual lesson that Asaph would have us learn in Psalm 74? He first describes Israel’s dismal and desperate condition. It seems as if Jehovah has deserted his people: their enemies plunder the land and have destroyed the temple and the synagogues, yet God remains silent. No prophet brings his word. Still, Asaph confesses that God, who rules over all creation and who brought his people out of the bondage of Egypt, is his king. Asaph knows that the steadfast love of the Lord toward the sheep of his pasture is unchanging: he will be faithful to his covenant. He knows too God’s jealousy for his own glory: Jehovah’s cause will prevail.

What sins or sorrows overwhelm you today? Do you wonder if God’s thoughts toward you are not thoughts of peace, but thoughts of evil? Asaph teaches us how to pray to our Father when we are overcome. We must plead with him not on the basis of anything we have done, but on the basis of his faithful covenant promises. He has redeemed us from bondage with the precious blood of his Son, and he will certainly bring the good work that he’s begun in us to completion.

Sing or pray Psalm #205.

**April 28**

**Two Cups**

**Read Psalm 75**

Psalm 75 begins with this confident exclamation: “Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, unto thee do we give thanks: for that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare.” To that praise our Lord responds, “When I shall receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly.” The Judge of all the earth warns the wicked what their portion will be: “His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty” (Job. 21:20). “The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night...” (Rev. 14:10–11b).

The terrible judgement of God is a reality that, though sobering, the righteous celebrate with thanksgiving. How can that be? Because we know that the dregs of the cup that we deserve to drink have been drained by our Savior. Instead of being handed the steaming cup of God’s wrath, we’ve been given a cup that overflowing with the sweetest of blessings.

Sing or pray Psalm #206.

**April 29**

**Our Indwelling King and Defender**

**Read Psalm 76**

Psalm 76 describes God as the mighty sovereign and warrior who dwells among his people, defending them from all their enemies. Those who persecute them incite his wrath; not one of them will stand in his sight. This king is sovereign among his people, but he also governs the affairs of ungodly men. He uses even the raging of the wicked to accomplish his purposes. He will be glorified, and the meek will inherit the earth and delight themselves in abundant peace.

The same God who made his dwelling place in Jerusalem dwells in our hearts by his Holy Spirit. He causes us humbly to submit to his righteous rule, and he defends us as we wage war against the devil, the world, and our own sinful selves. Is Jehovah your king and defender? Then, “Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared” (v. 11).

Sing or pray Psalm #207.

**April 30**

**He’s Still Working on Me**

**Read Psalm 77:1–9**

In Psalm 73 Asaph recounts a serious spiritual struggle, at the end of which he declares that God is good to the pure in heart, he desires God, and he expresses
An Unfaithful People
Read Psalm 78:9–54

The recurring negative theme of Psalm 78 is summarized in verses 10–11. The Israelites did not keep God’s covenant, and they refused to walk according to his law. Repeatedly they forgot his works and wonders. Notice: they acknowledged God as their rock and their redeemer with their mouths, but God did not consider such lip service true worship, but flattery and deceit. Like those to whom Isaiah prophesied and the Pharisees whom Christ condemned, they drew near to God with their mouth and honored him with their lips, but their heart was far from him (see Isa. 29:13 and Matt. 15:8). They were an unfaithful people.

When we read of all the works that God performed on the Israelites’ behalf, we might wonder how they could so quickly forget such miracles and shake our heads at their unbelief. Their negative example must elicit self-examination. The true worshippers of God worship him in spirit and in truth. What wonders has God worked in your life? Recall his goodness to you, and worship him from your heart.

Sing or pray Psalter #215.

Infidelity and Integrity
Read Psalm 78:55–72

Do you know what an infidel is? An infidel is a person of another religion. As a Christian, you would designate a Muslim an infidel. Interestingly, the word “infidelity” is also used to refer to marital unfaithfulness. Throughout the Bible God calls unbelief adultery—infidelity. When we sin against him, we demonstrate that we worship another god: the god of pleasure, perhaps, or the god of self. But—praise him!—our God is faithful. While we are characterized by infidelity, he is a God of integrity. One who has integrity is one who is whole and undivided; he or she exhibits unity of purpose and action. That’s our God. “If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself” (2 Tim. 2:13). So, in spite of Israel’s infidelity, again and again, “He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity,
and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath” (v. 38). How thankful we can be that we serve a God of integrity!

We’re called to imitate our heavenly Father (Eph. 5:1). Which characterizes you: spiritual infidelity or integrity?

Sing or pray Psalter #213:10–15.

Purge Me
Read Psalm 79 and Jeremiah 16:1–13

The setting of Psalm 79 is a terrible one indeed. The heathen have ransacked God’s temple. The Israelites’ carcasses are strewn about the city, food for birds and wild animals. The streets run with blood. You might expect the prayer of God’s people that follows the description of this grim scene to be exclusively one for deliverance from the cruel enemies who afflict them, but it’s not. Listen: “O remember not against us former iniquities” (v. 8) and “purge away our sins” (v. 9). Jeremiah had repeatedly foretold of this sad day; they knew that the havoc brought upon them by their enemies came as just judgement for their own wickedness.

For what do you pray when you are afflicted? We ought to be “more earnest in prayer for the removal of our sins than the removal of our afflictions” (Matthew Henry). The word purge implies an abrupt, often violent cleansing or removal of sin. Do you so hate the sin in your heart that you’re willing to undergo even more chastening to have it removed?

Sing or pray Psalter #217.

The Fowls’ Final Feast
Read Psalm 79 and Jeremiah 16:17–21

The picture of the fowls feasting on the flesh of the Israelites—a scene that’s foretold four times in the book of Jeremiah—is a gory one. But in response to the prayer of his people that he purge them and deliver them—a prayer based not on their own merit, but on the glory of his name—God pours out his wrath upon the heathen. Their punishment is just: not only have they shed the blood of the saints, but they also do not own Jehovah as God, and they have not called on his name (vv. 10 and 6).

How does the Bible describe the end of the wicked? As another feast for the birds. According to Revelation 19:11–21, when our Savior, the one named Faithful and True, comes in righteousness to judge the earth, he will call the fowls of heaven to come “to the supper of the great God.” For that supper, he will have slain those who worshipped the image of God with the sword of the word of God, and he will call the fowls to gorge themselves on their flesh. That’s the just judgment that will fall on all those who persecute saints and prophets.

Sing or pray Psalter #216.

Shine on Us
Read Psalm 80: 1–7

Once again God’s people are in a desperate state. In fact, they’re so desperate that they say that all they have to eat or drink are their own tears. Their sad state is the occasion of their enemies’ mockery, but worst of all, the God who had vowed to hear them when they humbled themselves and prayed (see 2 Chr. 7:14), seems to be angry with their prayers and doesn’t answer them. Perhaps the Israelites didn’t receive an answer to their prayers because they were driven by impure motives: they “asked amiss” (James 4:3). Perhaps God delayed his response to their prayers to cause them to grow in patience (Rom. 5:3).

Whatever the case, there’s a lesson for us in these verses. Though it seems God is angry with their prayers, his people do not cease to pray. In these seven verses alone they come twice with the same prayer: “Turn us again, O God, [that is, “restore us”] and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved.” They long to be restored to fellowship with their great shepherd; they know that they will have peace only when his face shines on them (Num. 6:24–26).

Our Lord Jesus taught that we “ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Is that the persistence with which you come before the Shepherd of your soul?

Sing or pray Psalter #221.

God’s Vine
Read Psalm 80

On what ground do God’s people base their persistent prayers? On his own work of redemption, a truth that we also considered only one week ago. In Psalm 80 God’s people remind him that they are the vine that he saved from Egypt and planted in the cleared ground of Canaan. Once the vine flourished, but now the wicked plunder it. God’s people plead with him to visit his vineyard once again. They plead on the basis of the promised Messiah, to whom they refer as “the branch” and “the son of man” that God has made strong for himself (v. 15 and 17).

That branch is the root that grew out of dry ground; the shoot that sprang out of the stump of Jesse; the vine of whom Jehovah is the husbandman; the one in whom we must also be found if we are to bring forth fruit to God’s praise. He said, “Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing…. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you” (John 15:5 and 7).

Sing or pray Psalter #220.
A s Reformed Christians, we give thanks to God that we stand in the line of the great 16th century Reformation. But when we trace our spiritual heritage back to the Reformation, we recognize that there are a number of intervening links in the chain. Not only did Christ reform his church in the 16th century, but he has carried on that work of reformation in the 500 years since then. The watchword of the church of Christ on this earth is and must always be: “Reformed, and always reforming.”

One of the links in that chain is the Afscheiding (Secession), the reformation of the church of Christ in the Netherlands beginning in 1834. The Reformed Church in the Netherlands had apostatized in the 200 years after the Synod of Dordt, but through the Afscheiding Christ brought her back to the pattern that God had ordained in his word. For this work Christ used a number of God-fearing men, men whose names ought to be familiar to every student of church history: De Cock, Scholte, Brummelkamp, Van Raalte.

And Van Velzen.

His Life
Simon van Velzen was born on December 14, 1809, in Amsterdam. He was baptized and raised in the apostatizing state church, which he was destined by God to reform.

With his five siblings, Van Velzen received his early education from his father, who ran a boarding school in the family home. Early on it became evident that young Simon had been given outstanding gifts and abilities by God, so his parents destined him for the ministry, eventually enrolling him at the University of Leiden to prepare for this calling.

As a young man, Van Velzen lived at times like his riotous and ungodly fellow-students. But God brought about a drastic change in his life. Before he could begin his studies at Leiden, the southern part of the Netherlands (modern day Belgium) revolted, and the country was plunged into war. Dutch soldiers were called up, and Van Velzen volunteered to fight. During the interludes between battles he spent his time reading God’s word and other Reformed books. Van Velzen later described the effect this had on him: “While I was examining myself and looking for salvation, I searched the Word of God as I had never done before. And then to me the way of preservation was opened, then to me the Savior—who was before hidden from me—was revealed with clarity in my heart, and I found in Him my righteousness and strength. I felt myself also to be in full agreement with the confessions of the church, and I found there my own faith expressed.”

Van Velzen returned to the University a changed man. He befriended several other godly young men, and together this “club” studied God’s word and the Reformed confessions and grew in their knowledge of and love for the Reformed faith.

After he graduated in the spring of 1834, Simon began his ministry in a small village in Friesland. Van Velzen faithfully carried out his labors as a minister of the word, and the people there loved and respected him. But he did not keep quiet about the problems that were going on in the denomination; he raised objections to the false doctrine that was being promoted. This did not sit well with the state church, and disciplinary actions were taken against him in the fall of 1835. Finally, on December 11, 1835, Van Velzen seceded from the church along with twenty-eight other members.

Due to the shortage of ministers among the churches of the Afscheiding, Van Velzen was called to pastor the whole province of Friesland. For over three years he served the Frisian churches devotedly, traveling constantly through the countryside preaching the gospel and organizing new churches.
During those early years Van Velzen endured much persecution: worship services he led were broken up by the authorities, mud and insults were slung at him and his family, and outrageous fines were levied against him.

In 1839 Van Velzen left Friesland and accepted a call to serve the congregation in Amsterdam, where he labored for the next fifteen years.

Van Velzen was a gifted and powerful preacher. It was said of him that “he has inspired enthusiasm, awakened a warm spirit in many hearts, and poured soothing oil on stinging wounds.” He preached wherever and whenever and to whomever he could. He preached in church buildings and in barns, in open fields and in boats on the water. He preached early in the morning (once at 4 a.m.) and late into the night. He preached to small groups of people and to crowds of 500 people or more. He preached in large cities and in small hamlets, tirelessly proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When the churches of the Afscheiding established a seminary in 1854, they recognized Van Velzen’s gifts and chose him to be one of the first professors. Van Velzen served as seminary professor until his retirement in 1889 when he was eighty years old.

During his lifetime, Van Velzen married three different times, but each wife was taken from him in death. From these marriages he received a number of children, and these children were present when on Good Friday, April 3, 1896, Van Velzen breathed his last, extolling God’s “wonderful grace.”

**His Reforms**

Let’s look briefly at the specific areas in which God used Van Velzen to bring reform.

First, Van Velzen brought about reform in the church’s worship. Specifically, he opposed the use of Arminian hymns in the worship of the state church. In addition to the Psalms, the church had introduced a number of hymns, some of which had an Arminian slant. Van Velzen was opposed to these hymns. He recognized that the use of them opened the door to false doctrines being sung into the church.

One story best illustrates his opposition to these hymns. One Sunday evening a large crowd of people came to hear him preach. The sanctuary was bursting at the seams, so a decision was made to hold the service in the cemetery outside of church. When it came time to sing, Van Velzen announced the required hymn, but he quickly noticed that a number of people began to walk away in disappointment. He immediately told the congregation that they were no longer going to sing the hymn but were going to sing Psalm 68 instead. The people who had left came filing back among the gravestones, and the congregation sang this psalm with tremendous gusto.

Second, Van Velzen brought about reform in the area of church government. One of the issues that plagued the churches of the Afscheiding was whether or not to use the Church Order of Dordt. The Synod of Dordt not only produced the Canons but also wrote a church order. Van Velzen and his fellow reformers wanted to return not only to the doctrines of Dordt but also to the polity of Dordt. So at their first Synod, held in secret in March 1836, Van Velzen and the other delegates decided to make use of the old Church Order of Dordt.

A third area of reform in which Van Velzen was involved was the area of doctrine.

First, Van Velzen was committed to the confessions produced by the church at the time of the Reformation: the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dordt. His love for the Reformed faith was evident at his classical exam. During the course of the examination, Van Velzen expressed his belief in the doctrines of election and reprobation. His examiners were astounded by what they heard. “Where did you learn that? You certainly were not taught that by the professors at Leiden?” To which Van Velzen replied, “Certainly not! The professors never taught me that, but that is the teaching of the Canons of Dordt!”

Later in his ministry, Van Velzen penned a work on “The Value of Symbolic Documents [i.e. Creeds].” “In opposition to the dry, comfortless opinions of adversaries,” Van Velzen wrote, “the symbols [creeds] present the most glorious truths; they provide weapons against attacks; they provide warnings against errors; and they have already been a blessing for thousands and thousands of individuals.”

A second instance of Van Velzen’s efforts to
reform the church in her doctrine was in a controversy over the doctrine of the covenant. In 1861, two ministers published a book on infant baptism and the covenant. In this book they introduced the idea of a conditional covenant made by God with all the children of believing parents. Van Velzen opposed this false doctrine, and in its place taught the truth of an unconditional covenant established with the elect. But try as he might, Van Velzen was not able to eradicate the noxious weed of a conditional covenant from the churches. The result has been the development in our own day of the conditional covenant teaching of the Federal Vision.

His Significance

Van Velzen’s greatest strength was that he had an unwavering and resolute character. Many do not consider this to be a strength, but rather criticize Van Velzen for being “unyielding, obstinate, and domineering” and charge him with being the chief troublemaker in the churches of the Afscheiding. Admittedly Van Velzen exercised his zeal in a wrong way at times, but this man was a staunch, unwavering watchman on the walls of Zion. God gave to him a heart-felt zeal for the truth and a desire and ability to defend that truth against all attacks. “No! No!” he later wrote, “Not even one truth that has been entrusted to the church may be abandoned! If the Forms of Unity are pure, biblical doctrine, and if the truths therein contained are necessary and beneficial unto salvation, then complete devotion to them cannot be unwholesome. We must instruct and warn with all longsuffering, but we must never tolerate error.” One writer later described him as a man who “desired to maintain, defend, and develop the old Reformed theology. He held fast the line of the Reformation without deviating an inch.” He was “the Calvin-figure” of the movement.

This “Calvin-figure” ought to be of interest to Reformed believers in this country. Although he never set foot in America, Van Velzen influenced the Reformed men and women who came to this country from the Netherlands. Members of the Protestant Reformed Churches, as well as other Reformed churches, trace their spiritual ancestry to Van Velzen.

Although we are thankful to God for using this man, our interest is not in the man himself, but in the work of God through him. The question that comes to us is this: Are we truly thankful? Is our gratitude a matter of lip service, merely building the tombs of the prophets and garnishing the sepulchers of the righteous? Or are we truly thankful for the work of God in reforming his church? Are we willing to fight for the truths that the reformers maintained and developed? Are we ready to teach them to our children and grandchildren and pass them on to the next generations? Are we zealous to live these truths out in our daily walk in this life?

This is a sign of true children of the Reformation!

Rev. Engelsma is pastor of Doon Protestant Reformed Church in Doon, Iowa.

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Precious Pamphlets

When I was growing up, there was an antique wood hutch in our living room. The top half of the hutch had open faced shelves filled with knick-knacks. Later those knick-knacks were replaced with religious books. The bottom half of this hutch had little doors with pretty hinges. When I was very young I was fascinated with what was behind those doors. When I would open up that hutch, there in front of me were three shelves full of neatly stacked thin paper pamphlets. I could not believe how many there were. I liked to pick one out randomly from the stack. I would first look at the cover. There was always a lighthouse on the cover, and I loved to see what color it would be on this pamphlet. I then liked to look at the date and see if I happened to pick out the one dated May 1996, the month I was born. After that I would turn to the last page. There was always a little drawing or puzzle along with a story.

As I grew up, I started to understand what those little pamphlets were. Dad said they were called
Beacon Lights and a new one got delivered to our house every month. Soon, it was required that I read at least one article every Sunday from Beacon Lights if I did not have catechism to study. Reading was not something I liked to do. My poor parents always had to encourage me and tell me to make myself read an article or two. It was hard because I didn’t always understand what the articles were talking about. But I realized the older I got how applicable the articles I read were to my life.

Soon, I was going to that old hutch as a young person. Sometimes I went by myself, but more than likely I’d have a friend or sometimes my brother along with me. We were looking for articles to share with the young people when it was our turn to lead an evening discussion group. I remember one article we picked out being about David and encouraging us as young people to stand up for what is right, like David often had to. It always fascinated me how old articles from years ago still applied so well to us today. That’s because God’s word never changes, and unlike any other book in the world, it withstands time and never gets dated. You can never study it too much.

One day our plethora of Beacon Lights got too big. We ran out of room. So we decided that we had to downsize. A lot of our Beacon Lights disappeared. Part of me wishes that never had to happen. But now that I was trying to get through a whole issue I realized we had more than enough to read.

Beacon Lights also had and still has a place in our family devotions. We have gone through the Bible with Chester Hunter. Sometimes he brings up a point we never talked about in our discussion, but we also get encouraged by hearing the same things we talked about get brought up in the devotional.

Eventually Beacon Lights changed its look. There was still a lighthouse on the front, but it didn’t change color every month. I started to recognize the names of those involved in the publication, those who wrote the articles, and even some of the young people making confession of faith. I soon saw my name printed under the confession of faith along with many other friends from various states. I still love to look there every month to see who else I know.

But the best part of Beacon Lights is the articles. My favorites are the articles that have to deal with what we as young people and young adults must face in our world today. I like those little single precious nuggets from the elderly or from young people who are well grounded in their faith. I love the encouraging or maybe warning words from our ministers. And I love hearing the bond of faith we have with those overseas.

But I also really enjoy the series articles. Some of my recent favorites have been the questions for Schuyler, the articles about different career choices, the letters to dating and single young men and women, and the articles about our ministers being called to the ministry. But my favorite has been the interviews Mark Hoekema has had with the elderly. I love church history and to hear what those who lived during the splits of ‘24 and ‘53 had to stand for and go through is not only interesting, but also encouraging.

I know reading doctrinal material is unfortunately not very popular among many of our young people anymore. And it makes me very sad. Although it was not my favorite thing to do, I’m thankful my parents pushed me like they did to read. I wish more parents did the same. I can’t count how many times I’ve learned something new or have been encouraged by articles I read. It’s especially important for my generation to be up to date on what is happening around us, not just to know what is going on, but to understand what is happening in a scriptural light. We are going to be pressed more and more from the world as the end draws nearer, and we must not be caught unaware or be oblivious to the issues and not understand why they are wrong.

So, young people, young adults, parents: let’s continue to read these helpful pamphlets that have been a treasure in our denomination for years. Let’s encourage each other to read them and discuss them together. Parents, encourage and maybe even make your young people read Beacon Lights and The Standard Bearer. They may be resentful now, like I was, but they will thank you later.

Why do this? Because we are called to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Also read 1 Thessalonians 5. In this chapter we are reminded about Christ’s coming, how it will be as a thief in the night, how we must not be sleeping but rather building each other up, studying, praying, and watching for the signs of Christ’s coming. Verse 8 says, “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.” And verse 11 admonishes, “Wherefore
comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.” What a blessing that through Beacon Lights we can edify, comfort, and warn each other! Let’s be thankful the Lord has given us Beacon Lights for 75 years! 

Dana is a college student and a member of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Loveland, CO.

**Church News**

**Melinda Bleyenberg**

**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:

Bode Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Ashley VanMaanen—Calvary, IA
Jordan Arthur, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joshua & Bonnie Dotson—Crete, IL
Charlotte Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. James & Amanda Kooienga—Crete, IL
Cooper Jeffrey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Todd & Karla Van Baren—Crete, IL
Garrett Craig, son of Mr. & Mrs. Craig & Amy Horvat—Georgetown, MI
Morgan Paige, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ben & Lauren Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Theran Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andon & Angie DeBoer—Sioux Falls, SD

**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:

Cailey De Jong—Crete, IL
Sara Bartelds—Georgetown, MI
Ariel Bosman—Georgetown, MI
Jessica Verbeek—Georgetown, MI
Alyssa Klyn—Spokane, WA
Ethan Groenendyk—Southwest, MI
Amber Reitsma—Southwest, MI
Aaron Van Donselaar—Southwest, MI

**MARRIAGES**

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

Mr. Frank Block & Miss Judi Helder—Georgetown, MI

**CELEBRATING THE**

1916-2016

**of Hope Protestant Reformed Church**

Walker, MI

**of the 100th Anniversary**

“1 Peter 2:4-5

“To whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”

**www.hopeprchurch.org**

**A Spiritual House Acceptable to God**

The congregation of Hope Protestant Reformed Church cordially invites you to attend a commemorative program and celebrate with us a century of God’s preserving grace.

**JUNE 10, 2016, 7:00 P.M.**

First Jenison Christian Reformed Church
8360 Cottonwood Dr.

The commemorative program will be live-streamed at www.sermonaudio.com/hopeprc
The Breastplate of Righteousness

Danny and his sister Becky crowded around the library book their mom held on her lap. Danny frowned at the picture of a Roman soldier. “What’s he wearing for armor?”

Their mom tapped the picture. “It’s a lorica segmentata, the type of breastplate the Roman soldier wore at the time Paul wrote Ephesians. The lorica segmentata was made of overlapping pieces of metal held together with leather straps. It was flexible so it didn’t get in the way when the Roman soldier used his sword and shield. It could be taken apart into four pieces, so it packed away into a compact bundle when the soldier had to travel. The lorica segmentata not only protected the soldiers’ front, but also his shoulders and back.”

Becky pulled out the family Bible and pointed at the passage about the armor of God. “The verse mentions a breastplate of righteousness.”

Their mom nodded. “Yes. As soldiers of God, we are given a breastplate of Christ’s righteousness to protect our hearts. This breastplate, like the lorica segmentata, is designed to be used in the battle of this life along with our shield and sword.

Questions to think about:
1. Read Ephesians 6:13–14, Philippians 3:9, Isaiah 59:17, and 1 Thessalonians 5:8 by yourself or with your parents. What does the breastplate of Christ’s righteousness protect?
2. Is wearing Christ’s righteousness constricting for a Christian? What happens if we take it off and put on our own righteousness instead?
August 8-12, 2016

Lake Williamson Christian Conference Center

www.prccession.com

Speeches to look forward to:

1. Content with God’s plan. (Rev. R. Kleyn)

2. Content with what you have. (Rev. R. Barnhill)

3. Content with what you are. (Rev. R. VanOverloop)

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