Variations of this month’s cover were used throughout the 1970s and into the early 1980s.
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*Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the business office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.  

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War creates its own problems, particularly for young people whose lives are so directly affected by it.

By far not the least weighty of these problems for many of our young people is the question of a war marriage. Shall they marry now, before the young man leaves for active service in the armed forces, or shall they postpone every consideration of marriage at least for the duration?

Stating the question in that form we already leave out of consideration all such marriages as are directly brought about by the war. To be sure, in these days of emotional stress a soldier boy may strike up an acquaintance with some young lady, either at home or near his camp, and in order to drown his sense of loneliness rush into marriage with her. Or some giddy young woman will allow her head to be set awhirl by the sight of a uniform, is flattered by the attentions of its occupant and before the excitement has died out has made an insane vow which is intended to be binding for life. Such foolhardy marriages are always to be condemned, and especially in times like these. But they can safely be left out of consideration here since we expect better things of our young people than that. Nor, on the other hand, is it necessary to consider in this category each and every marriage that is contracted in times of war. It is very well conceivable that vows are spoken which are not brought about in any way by our times and are only indirectly affected by them. If the prospective bridegroom has every reason to believe that he will not be called away into active service, the war itself need not be a reason for postponing the wedding day. Just because the country is at war does not mean that a holiday must be declared on marriages.

But I have particularly such cases in mind where a young couple have known each other and have actually kept company with a view to marriage for some time. Under normal circumstances they would be married now or in the not too distant future. But as the case now stands the young man will be, or is already called into service and their separation from each other is imminent. Their problem is a very real one: shall they marry now in the face of their impending separation, or shall they postpone it until the young man returns, which may mean waiting for a number of years or even no marriage at all?

Certainly neither consideration is very pleasant, yet if the question be considered calmly and rationally there can be but one answer: wait!

Too often the arguments raised in favor of war marriages prove the case against them.

Sometimes the fear is harbored, though generally not expressed, that one or the other may not prove faithful during the period of separation, so that a wedding ring might help to remind them of their sincerity. But if sincerity lies not deeper than that, an unfaithful boy or girl friend will prove to be a greater asset than an unfaithful husband or wife. What better proof of love and faithfulness can there be than the test of a forced separation?

Or it is also possible that the young couple wish to seal their undying love for each other with a marriage vow. Yet the seriousness of the step which is taken must not be forgotten. A monthly check from the government is a poor compensation to a lonely wife, and an insurance indemnity to a bereaved widow, who has forsaken father and mother to cleave to an absent husband. The young lady may even desire to have a child as an abiding remembrance of him, but she may well consider that a mother of a child is not free to come and go as she may desire, has difficulty in keeping a job and caring for her family at the same time, and can easily make herself a burden to her mother and family. Facts are inescapable and must be considered.

The young man may even anticipate coming to a home and family of his own upon his return, and the young lady may dream of welcoming her newly-gotten husband. Yet little thought is given to the fact that both, and particularly the young man, are due to undergo remarkable changes during their absence from one another. Will the young lady left behind still be the blushing bride of his
“How do we respond to a relative who has decided
on cremation?”

Two arguments have been used against cremation.

First, we are told that it is pagan. While it is
true that pagans have cremated their dead for pagan
reasons, that in itself does not make the practice
pagan. Pagans such as the Greeks cremated their
dead because they denied the resurrection of the
body, confessing only the immortality of the soul.
The Greeks believed that the body is a contemptible
prison for a noble soul. Therefore, death was release
from that prison, and the Greeks saw no need to
honor the body instead of a support, should she be expected
to cope with that? Surely it is better that one life be
ruined than two, particularly if the possibility can be
foreseen in advance. They may both be very certain
of their abiding love for each other, yet love cannot
overrule the grim realities of war.

But, you may ask, are there no exceptions to
the rule that war marriages should be avoided? No
doubt, each case stands or falls on its own merit and
must be judged individually. Yet it is equally certain
that any young couple must have an absolutely airtight
case, especially in times like these, to escape the
maxim, “marry in haste and repent at leisure.”

And even so I can readily imagine that this
weighty question, which so directly involves the lives
of many young people, has many other angles to it.
How about discussing it in our Open Forum? It can
only prove beneficial to all of us.  

This editorial was originally published in the December
1942 issue.

Ask Schuyler

Cremation

“How do we respond to a relative who has decided
on cremation?”

Two arguments have been used against cremation.

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body, confessing only the immortality of the soul.
The Greeks believed that the body is a contemptible
prison for a noble soul. Therefore, death was release
from that prison, and the Greeks saw no need to
honor the body by burying it. We must maintain the
belief of the resurrection of the body. How we apply
that belief in funeral practices is a different matter.
Incidentally, it is also pagan to attempt to contact
the dead, or to pray to them or for them. The Bible
strictly forbids necromancy (Lev. 19:31, Deut. 18:11;
Isa. 8:19–20), and departed saints do not have
contact with the living. They are not “looking down
on us,” or involved in our lives on earth at all (Eccl.
9:5–6). They are in heaven, enjoying the glory of
that wondrous place. Our hope is that they sleep in
Jesus and will be resurrected on the last day. More
than that, our hope is that we will be with Jesus too.
Being with our loved ones again is strictly secondary
to being with Jesus.

Second, it is argued that it is a sign of God’s
judgment. While you could argue that in the case
of Achan (Joshua 7:25) and Saul (1 Sam. 31:12),
that is not true in every case. Certainly, Saul was an
ungodly man, but his godly son Jonathan was also
cremated.

Generally speaking, Christians have preferred
burial to cremation. Certainly, that is the practice
of the godly in Scripture (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob,
Joseph, etc.). However, the Bible never prohibits crema-
tion. The issue, of course, is the proper disposal
of and honor for the body after death. Since Jews in
the Old Testament and Christians in the New Testa-
ment believe in the resurrection of the body, they
dispose of the bodies of their dead honorably and
in accordance with that hope. In that connection, we
do not believe that, if a Christian is cremated, he will
not be resurrected on the last day. Countless saints
were burned alive, torn to pieces by wild beasts,
deestroyed in explosions, and lost at sea. God will
resurrect all of them (Rev. 20:13).

Whether our bodies are incinerated in a crema-
torium or decompose in the earth, what God said is
true, “Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:19).

So, what should you say to your relative? (I assume that we are speaking of a Christian relative). You explain to him the biblical principle of the resurrection of the body, you encourage him to organize a funeral in accordance with that principle, and you leave the details to Christian liberty.

Schuyler

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**Interview with Edwin Gritters (Part 2)**

Mark H. Hoeksema: So this small group that was left did what? They reconstituted, but what did they do for a meeting place and a pastor, and what happened after this?

Edwin Gritters: They immediately asked Rev. Hoeksema to come and help them to decide what to do about it. So Rev. Hoeksema came. One of the main things that he had to do with our group was to convince them as to the need for the Declaration of Principles. Even today a lot of people know very little about the Declaration, to my mind. We reconstituted as the Protestant Reformed Church of Redlands. So then for a year or two, we had two Protestant Reformed Churches in Redlands, each saying that they were the Protestant Reformed Church. And…

MHH: Eventually the larger group went back to the Christian Reformed Church.

EG: Eventually, after two or three years. Shortly after we reconstituted, we called Rev. H. H. Kuiper. Rev. Kuiper was our first preacher there after the split of 1953. He came there probably in mid 1954.

MHH: And where did you meet?

EG: We met in a lot of different places. We met in the Foreign Legion Hall at times. We met in different church basements, wherever we could find a place to meet. Finally we were able to obtain a Seventh Day Adventist Church because they met on Saturday so we could meet on Sunday. Shortly after that, we purchased a small church in Redlands. We bought that, I think, from the Methodist Church. And we met there then for several years, until we moved to our new location. One of the churches that we rented during those years did go back to the Christian Reformed Church. They amalgamated with the Christian Reformed Church after about three or four years. Then, we ended up renting our old building back.

MHH: How ironic.

EG: Yes—that we had to rent our own building back that our parents had built.

MHH: And then where did you end up getting permanent property after the little church?

EG: After the small church, we bought the church at the corner of Colton and Webster. We had not yet gotten suitable property to build a school and church on. So, for a time, we rented our old Protestant Reformed Church at the corner of Legonia and Clay.

MHH: Was it the thought already at that time to reestablish the school as well as build a church?

EG: I think that was always in the back of our minds, because we had always had a school and they wanted a school. But it was difficult when we reorganized with so few families. It would have been a very small school.

MHH: So, what happened with the school? It was started anew…

EG: It was started anew in 1975. At that time our minister was Rev. Marvin Kamps. He was a good block-layer. He and George Joostens, with help from others, built the entire school with our own people. It was a thought that some day we could worship there on Sundays in the school rooms while that was happening—I guess that was when we rented...
the church at Clay and Legonia—our old former church building. A few years after the school was completed, then we were able to see our way to start building a church. We were first just going to build a part of the church and meet in it. But we figured that once we were started on that, we might as well continue and just build a church and the social hall. And that’s what we did. The idea was that maybe we would meet in the social hall and then build the rest of the church later, but we ended up building it all at one time. We held our first service in that new church on Thanksgiving Day of 1983.

MHH: So the school preceded the church by eight years.

EG: At least at that location. But the idea was that it was large enough. It was five acres and plenty adequate for a new school and our church, even as it stands today.

MHH: And it still is there today?

EG: It still is there today, and it’s still adequate for our use.

MHH: How large is Redlands congregation and how large is the school today?

EG: I think that Redlands congregation today is about 55 families. I think that we have about 35 kids in our school. It has been going down, but we have a lot of young couples in our church and a lot of young kids, so we expect the school will continue to grow, the Lord willing, in the next couple of years.

MHH: Mr. Gritters, one small item, going back a little bit earlier in our conversation, to this anonymous letter that you got and your visit with Rev. Vermeer. I don’t understand what would be his motivation for sending you an anonymous letter.

EG: To me, it was just revenge for me leaving his group and going with the other group. He wrote another letter to someone else also at that time. I think I mentioned that earlier. His purpose in writing the letter was to hammer away on me; whether he thought I would change my mind or what, I don’t know. But I think it was just a vengeful revenge for me leaving with the other group. We worked together side-by-side for six years. The parsonage sat right between the school and the church, so I saw him quite regularly. Once in a while, when he’d have something that he wanted to do on the spur of the moment, he’d even have me lead a catechism class, which some of the elders said he had no business doing that. You may only have an elder do that.

But I did that a couple of times and being a young man, not having been in consistory, I didn’t know that it was improper for me to lead the catechism class. I figured, well, I’m a Christian school teacher. I’m able to do it. So I thought nothing of it. I said, “Yes, I’ll do that.”

MHH: Were you ever able to confirm the identity of the author of that anonymous letter?

EG: Not really. Only by circumstantial evidence, by his reaction when I brought the letter to him, and showed it to him, and he said, “Oh, I’ll do something with this.” He immediately crumpled the letter up and dumped it in the wastebasket. I said, “I would like to keep that letter.” So he begrudgingly took it out of the wastebasket, and I uncrumpled it and kept it. Then a little later than that, we asked him and Mrs. Vermeer over to discuss that with him. Mrs. Vermeer would not say one word about the anonymous letter. So I think it was my wife and my feeling that she was aware that there was something not right. She was probably aware that he was the author of it. But there again, you can’t prove things like that. But she was very quiet.

MHH: Not everything was as it should have been. I want to ask you this question, Mr. Gritters. Other than the things that you have mentioned so far in tracing the history, is there anything that stands out in your mind connected with the history of the church?

EG: Only that we had to jump from one place to another from 1955 to maybe 1960 before we obtained a place where we could meet. And that was when we bought the Free Methodist Church that just happened to come up for sale at that time. That was exciting to get in our own church. But there was no school there, so we were immediately looking for property that would be suitable for a church and a school on the same property. When we were able to obtain the land where we are now on East Brockton Avenue, we sold a parcel of land that we had bought for that purpose on the northern edge of Redlands, on sort of a secluded street. No one really liked that particular piece of land. They kept saying, “Let’s get rid of that; we don’t want a school and church there.” So we did get rid of that piece of land we had on San Bernardino Avenue in north Redlands, and we were able to obtain this chicken ranch with five acres of land with it. The owner of the chicken ranch, the house that was there, was almost adequate for a parsonage, but it needed some fixing up. So we put
Beacon Lights

quite a bit of work into it to make it suitable for a minister. We have that same parsonage there today, and have added on to it once.

MHH: You’ve spent pretty much all of your adult life in the Redlands’ congregation. How would you characterize the congregation?

EG: Oh, I think we’re pretty much unified on everything. We have very few disagreements that I’m aware of on any matters, other than just minor things. But I’d say that there’s harmony in the congregation.

MHH: Are there a lot of professional people, a lot of talented people?

EG: Several of them I guess you could call professional people. I guess about five or six of them work the same place I did. I guess you’d consider that professional work—civil engineering with the state highway department. We had a couple of pretty large dairymen and we had other people that over the recent years got involved more in computer-related industries and things of that nature.

MHH: So, do they pull together in the financial support of the church and the school? It is, I assume, self-supporting?

EG: It is self-supporting, yes. The congregation is very supportive of the school. I think that about fifty-five percent of the cost of running the school comes from donations, which is mainly from the rest of the members of our church there.

MHH: Who don’t have children in school.

EG: But even some of those with children in school will pitch in a little extra if they are able to. So we’ve always been able to be self-supporting, while at the same time we’re taking up collections to send to places like Lynden and Wisconsin. Sometimes I’ve wondered about that, because we never saw any of their financial statements to see if they needed theirs as badly as Redlands needed it.

MHH: Another question. As you look back over your life and over the history of the church, how would you compare the church of today with the church of your youth? Would it be the same, would it be different? If so, how? Any comments in comparing the church as we know it today with the church of your youth?

EG: Well, I think when you’re a young man, you are very respectful of all the people in the church. You feel that they’re all one in word and deed and doctrine. As you get older, you find out that there are differences within the church. I see differences even today, but I think we still preach the same word as faithfully as we did when I was a kid in Iowa. When I was in Iowa, I admired the ministers we had there. When I was in Hull, our first minister was Rev. C. Hanko—he baptized me, but I don’t really remember him. I think after him, Rev. L. Vermeer was there for a short time. And then the one that I can remember very well was Rev. Andrew Cammenga. I thought he was just the greatest minister there was, you know? Never anyone like him. That’s what I recollect from there.

Now I don’t have feelings like that about ministers. When we have a minister, yah, we like our minister. But I don’t think I respect them or look up to them as I did when I was young. When I was young, it was almost like worshiping them.

MHH: Do you think the church is as conservative today as it was in your youth?

EG: That’s hard to tell because I grew up during the depression, and many of the people were very conservative because they had nothing. My parents went from one rental farm to another. I went to three or four different grade schools in Iowa and three different high schools in Minnesota, and then back to Western Christian High School in Hull. I don’t think that the church was nearly as financially prosperous in those days as it is now.

MHH: It’s also been said to me in the course of some of my prior interviews that there are some who believe that we are slipping as far as the sharp edges of our doctrine is concerned. A couple of subjects that were mentioned include the doctrine of the antithesis and a lack of emphasis on election and grace vs. man’s responsibility. Would you care to comment on those?

EG: I would not agree at all that either one of those has been the case in the church of Redlands. Our ministers, I believe, have always been very much straight down the line—no question about what they believe. Some of them may be better speakers than others. Over the years we’ve had some ministers you admired because they were great orators as well as great composers. But, I don’t think we ever had a minister who was questioned about his doctrine, whether he was leaning towards Arminianism or any of that. I don’t think we’ve had any of that in our ministers.
MHH: That certainly has been a blessing for Redlands church then.

EG: Yes, I think so.

MHH: Are there any issues of any kind that you would like to address or any opinions that you would like to express? That’s a pretty wide-open question. But this is an opportunity for you to discourse on anything that you would like.

EG: Those in our church cooperate well.

MHH: Yes, you’ve gone through a considerable amount of history.

EG: Yes, we have.

MHH: But it is nice to know that Redlands seems to be prospering yet today.

EG: Yes, this will be my sixtieth year in Redlands. My wife just turned 80, so it’s her eightieth year in Redlands, although the church didn’t exist when she was born. It started when she was 3 or 4 years old—in 1932. Even then, the church of Redlands at that time (I read books on that, and other members of our church agreed) did not really start in 1932 or 1933 over doctrine with the Christian Reformed church. Everything was going pretty good in the CR church. The argument was totally over how many Dutch services a day. There were a lot of people, old Dutchmen in the church, who figured if you went to the English one, you were sending your children to hell because you can’t bring the word in English. And that did split the church.

MHH: Which direction did the PR church in Redlands take? Towards the Dutch?

CG: Towards the Dutch. [Here Ed’s wife Clarice (CG) joins the conversation]

MHH: That’s quite a reason for starting a church.

CG: But always my dad was still here and my grandfather didn’t like it.

MHH: Mrs. Gritters, you are a lifelong member of Redlands church. What can you tell me about the origin in the early years of Redlands congregation?

CG: My earliest remembrance was driving to church one Sunday morning. I told my dad, “You didn’t turn on the right corner.” He said, “We’re going to a new church.” That was in 1932. I was four years old. I remember hearing a lot of arguing and discussions about church. I did hear that my dad was put out of consistory. In fact, some place I have a letter from the consistory of the Christian Reformed Church telling him that he was no longer needed.

So my grandfather, J. R. VanderWal, wrote to Rev. [Herman] Hoeksema and asked him to come out here and preach for them. That’s how we got started.

MHH: Do you have any knowledge of what the issues were, other than the matter of a Dutch language service vs. an English language service?

CG: No, I just remember, I remember hearing that. But I also remember hearing that they didn’t like the preaching of Rev. Scotts, I remember that name. And that’s really about all. I was just too little to....

MHH: You remember 1932 when you went to the new church. Do you remember anything of the meetings or were you too young?

CG: I couldn’t go to the meetings. We had a babysitter.

MHH: Mr. Gritters has thought of a comment that he’d like to make about the isolation of Redlands congregation.

EG: Yes, at one time there was a small church in Bellflower, but mostly Redlands was pretty much on its own. Whenever we would lose a minister, it would sometimes take a long time before we’d get another minister. Being so isolated, it was very hard to get pulpit supply. So the elders (and I was one of those elders during most of my lifetime), during that time when we were vacant for so many years at a time, [would read printed sermons]. I had a record of it at one time. I think I read in our church over 150 times. Sounds impossible, but I have a sheet of paper that shows the first Psalter number. The next time I read I scratched it out and put in another one. Pretty soon I had Psalter numbers way across the page. Finally there was no more room. So I counted them, and there were about 65. And I started a new piece of paper. So even though it sounds like I’m exaggerating, I think I read at least 150–200 times.

MHH: It’s a good thing that, being as isolated as it is, Redlands does have unity and does stick together. But it must be difficult during the long periods of vacancies.

EG: It is. Once in a while we do get our classical appointments. But then there were long periods of time when we had no classical appointment, and that meant that it was reading.

MHH: This concludes my interview with Mr. Gritters and a couple of comments from his wife. Thank you for your time and for your answers, Mr. Gritters.
I joined the Beacon Lights staff sometime in 1993 while attending Calvin College in preparation for seminary. My memories of working with Beacon Lights include the monthly meetings with a staff who became life-long friends working through the routine, never-ending task of generating topics and encouraging writers. From time to time we also worked through questions about improving the overall appearance of the magazine, updating style, and solving issues relating to mailing or printing. I enjoyed the fellowship with staff and being able to serve the church in this way.

As I became more acquainted with all the work that went into getting an issue into the hands of our readers, and how much of that work was done by others outside of the monthly staff, I was especially intrigued by the fact that Jim Huizinga was printing every copy on a printing press in his basement. I enjoyed machines, and an old working printing press that was chinking out our Beacon Lights was something I just had to go and see. After an issue had been put together by the staff and typeset by Bob Vermeer, a copy was printed out for Jim. Jim took the copy and set it on a little platform under a giant camera which took a negative image of the page on a gel plate. These plates were then placed in a tank in which an electric arc flashed between two carbon electrodes like a welding booth. The ultraviolet light hardened the gel where the lettering and pictures were on the plates. When the gel was hard, the soft gel was washed away and Jim assembled the plates on drums within the press. These would turn against an ink roller, and then roll on the pages as they passed. It was a huge, grand machine that filled half his basement. The press spewed the pages onto a rotating collating table where Jim’s family members each took their station to gather the pages into the correct order and ready it for the stapling. I never actually got to see it all in operation, but I saw the equipment, and Jim explained it to me. I probably don’t remember it all correctly, so you will have to talk to Jim if you want more accurate details.

Another huge job was maintaining the subscription list, printing off the labels, sticking all the labels on the magazine, and sorting it for mailing. At least once, our volunteers (I believe at the time it was Bill and Fran Leep) were unable to do it for the month and the Beacon Lights staff met with some additional friends to get the job done. Once again I learned another dimension of the great amount of work that is involved with getting Beacon Lights out each month. From what I understand, the volunteers who did the mailing invited friends and looked forward to a monthly time of fellowship while doing this work. The longer I was involved with Beacon Lights, the more I could see how this publication had been a labor of love and dedication to the youth and young people of our churches, and it was exciting to be involved with young adults who were excited to see this work carried on into the future.

Within a year after taking up the role of editor, I moved to Wisconsin in 1996 to begin teaching at Faith Christian School. By now the internet had made it feasible to have a business meeting via Skype and manage the articles and minutes with email. So we thought we would give it a try keeping me on as editor while living in Wisconsin. Nothing can substitute for face-to-face meetings, and over the years as familiar staff members retired and new members joined, the meetings began to lose their effectiveness. In the meantime, Jeanine Van Baren and I were married, and she helped us consolidate two old and separate databases (one with subscription information and the other with address labels) into one up-to-date system.

As editor I also became the recipient of a set of Beacon Lights archives in boxes. Wow! What a treasure. Being a teacher eager to make good information available to students, and now living in the digital age of information, it seemed a top priority to me to get Beacon Lights scanned and available for anyone to read and research. Beacon Lights bought me a Scan Snap scanner. I carefully cut the pages loose of each old issue, and began
scanning. Eventually the files were uploaded into a website and then we began running all the scans through text recognition software so the text could be searched. My wife and I solicited help for this from a number of different people, but the time and dedication needed for family and another move, this time to Iowa, eventually brought an end to our close involvement with this work with Beacon Lights.

I have hoped and prayed that someone with technical skill and organization would be able to bring the work of scanning and making the archives available online to completion, and these prayers have been answered in the form of a new and developing website. It has all the scanned issues available, and they are adding the searchable text as it becomes available. In its current form, searching is limited, but with some organization and sharing of work with a Google spreadsheet, my sophomore English students at Trinity Christian High School in Hull, Iowa were able to glean a wealth of information from the 1940s about the Young People’s conventions and write essays comparing them with conventions of today. This resource gave them a whole new perspective on our church history and the wonderful heritage of conventions. I have included some of their essays for publication. [Some of these essays will be published at a later date. Ed.].

We live in a day with so many distractions, but if our parents and teachers work together to promote the reading of Beacon Lights, The Standard Bearer, and RFPA publications, God will bless those efforts. Now that we have a good resource for doing some research into Beacon Lights, teachers ought to put some work into preparing to use that resource in their classroom. It is a work in progress, and it is worth checking it out. Beacon Lights has been a wonderful publication. The archives are a treasure chest for our young people to learn from, and they need to continue reading the current issues to keep a finger on the pulse of the life of the church to which they belong. They also need to contribute and continue to solicit writers who will give them an accurate picture of the life of the church, as well as the world around them. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to serve the body of Christ through Beacon Lights, and I am thankful to see that work carried on by energetic and spiritually minded young leaders. I am very excited about the future of Beacon Lights and the young people who are graduating and taking up their places in the body of Christ under the guidance of its light.

John is a former editor of Beacon Lights.

I went by the field of the slothful, 
and by the vineyard of the man 
void of understanding; 
And, lo, it was all grown over 
with thorns, and nettles had covered 
the face thereof, and the stone wall 
thereof was broken down. 
Then I saw, and considered it well: 
I looked upon it, and received instruction. 
Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, 
a little folding of the hands to sleep 
So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; 
and thy want as an armed man. 
—Proverbs 24:30–34
Stress is something that is very evident in young people today. It is something that happens consistently throughout their day-to-day lives. Young people have a lot put on them with school, jobs, responsibilities at home, and commitments to other things, and it can be very easy to get stressed out and worry about things that are to come. I personally struggle with anxiety and worrying about what the future holds. God calls us not to stress because it makes us take out the trust that we have in God and place it in the things of this world; if we remember, however, that God is always with us, then we have nothing to worry about.

Anxiety and worry are things that come so easily to us. Many different things cause stress and anxiety. School is one of the biggest causes of stress in a young person’s life. The homework, projects, and tests that teachers give cause students to worry about the deadlines and the final grade. Also, the pressure to get good grades and get into a good college have an effect on stress. Jobs and after-school responsibilities also cause stress for young people, especially when they take away from school work and time at home. Issues at work and all of the chores that must be done at home may lead to young people becoming stressed out. All of these things working together cause worry and stress in young people.

Stress, anxiety, and worrying are all things that come to young people, but worrying and being anxious about things is something that God warns us not to do. In Isaiah 41:10 we are told, “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be thou not dismayed; for I am thy God.” This verse shows that when young people do have worries about the future things in life, they are not putting their trust in God. God calls young people to rely on him, and when they do, he will make their paths straight (Prov. 3:6).

When young people put their trust in things other than God, they are doubting God’s plan for them. When they worry about things that are happening to them right now, they think only of their own plan, and how their plan will change their future. However, they fail to recognize that God has a plan for them as well. When they do recognize it, they do not think that his plan means anything for their life. God’s plan always has a meaning, and it is wrong to go worry about what God has in store for each of his children.

There are many examples in the Bible of God’s children who struggled with worrying. Abraham is the first one that comes to mind. Genesis 12:11–12 states Abraham’s fear. “And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.” Abraham was fearful and worried about going to Pharaoh when Pharaoh took his wife. He was scared because Pharaoh wanted his wife, and he wondered what Pharaoh would do to him when he went back to get his wife. He put his trust in God and was given strength to go to Pharaoh and get his wife back.

Another example of one of God’s children worrying in the Bible is Martha. Luke 10:40–42 says, “But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things. But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.” Martha worried. She was worried about making Jesus’ stay perfect. Mary, on the other hand, was sitting at the feet of Jesus and listening. Martha was so worried about what Jesus thought of her serving and how her house looked, but she was worried about the wrong things. She was more focused on the physical things and was less concerned with listening to the amazing words that Jesus had to say. This is a lesson for the young people because it shows that we need to listen to what God has in his plan for his children.

The only way in which young people can know...
for sure what the plan of God is for them is through prayer. When young people are constant in prayer, they know that God is going to take away their worrying and anxiety. Prayer makes this burden of worrying a little easier to bear. Philippians 4:6 says, “Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” When young people struggle with worries, they are called to make those worries known to God in prayer. God already knows the things that are in the heart, and God will listen.

Another way in which worries can become easier is through devotions. Young people are called to devote everything that they have to God, and doing devotions consistently throughout the course of the day is a way in which young people can give up all of their worries to God.

In order to give up worries, young people need to trust in God. We need to trust that he will be there to help and guide us through all of the fears that have been given to us. God will calm the concerns of life, and we young people need to remember that. Our calling is to trust. This calling is found in 1 Peter 5:7: “Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.” Laying all of our fears on God is what we have to do because God cares for us.

When worrying about school, or jobs, or the future, we must remember to rely on God because he will help and guide us through his plan. We must trust in God because he will care for our worries. He will listen to the problems that are brought to him through prayer, and will be there to catch us when we fall. We are not to worry, because nothing is impossible with God at our side.

Kennedy is a senior at Covenant Christian High School and a member of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.

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Poem

Thelma Westra

**Our Country**

We live in a country whose beauty is great;  
The mountains, lakes, rivers, with grandeur abound;  
The flowers, trees, grasses, which God did create,  
And the deserts and fields us with splendor surround.

We are thankful that we who inhabit this land  
May have freedom to worship, to speak, and to write,  
And we pray that our lives as examples may stand  
For our neighbors; reflecting in our lives, Christ’s light.

So lift up a prayer that our rulers may be  
Used of our God, in his infinite love,  
To rule us in wisdom, so to fit you and me  
For the time we’re transferred to the kingdom above.  

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Kennedy is a senior at Covenant Christian High School and a member of Georgetown Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.
Read John 10:23–38
The Pharisees had become obsessed with trying to trap Jesus in his words so they would have an excuse to kill him. However, every time they made an attempt they only succeeded in exposing their own hypocrisy. In these verses, Jesus tells the Pharisees that they do not believe because they are not of his sheep, which makes the Pharisees fume. Jesus asks them which good work they plan to kill him for performing. The agitated Jews respond that they are seeking to kill him because he claimed he was God. In response, Jesus just feeds their frustration by referring to Psalm 82, where the judges are referred to as gods, since their power is given them by God. Jesus isn’t trying to backtrack and deny the truth of his divinity, but his time has not yet come, so he destroys their trap quickly.

Sing or pray Psalter #223.

Read Psalm 36
Just ask my dad, birds are very protective of their young. Before coming to the Protestant Reformed Churches, he served in the US Navy. During one deployment in Alaska he unwittingly got too close to an eagle’s nest, and those enormous birds starting swooping down at his head. Birds make him nervous to this day. Psalm 83:3 refers to us as “God’s hidden ones.” Calvin says that this phrase is explained by the fact that we are hidden under the shadow of God’s wing, as stated here in Psalm 36. Just as a bird will do anything to protect her young, God will always be watching over us. Since we are under his wing, the world can’t get to us without going through him first. Nothing happens that wasn’t according to God’s perfect plan.

Sing or pray Psalter #163.

Read Psalm 2
Psalm 83:5 says of the church’s enemies, that “they are confederate against thee.” When we hear the word confederate, most of us probably think of the Civil War. “Confederate” means joined by an agreement or treaty. During the time of the Civil War, the states of the Confederacy were joined together to create a country separate from the United States. Since the name United States was already taken, these states chose the name Confederate States, which has basically the same meaning.

The wicked men and nations of the world hate one another, but one thing that unites them is hatred of the church. Psalm 2 talks about the rulers of the earth taking counsel together to destroy God’s people. We have seen this in the world empires throughout all of history, and we see it happening again today, with organizations such as the United Nations and European Union.

Sing or pray Psalter #224.

Read Judges 4:10–24
In Psalm 83 Asaph calls upon God to judge Israel’s enemies, as he has done in the past. An example of this past judgment is the story of Jabin and Sisera. Jabin was the king of Hazor, and Sisera was the captain of his army. We read of a Jabin, king of Hazor, twice in the Old Testament. The first time we hear about Jabin, he has gathered a huge army to fight against Israel and Joshua, but the Lord delivers Israel, Hazor is burned, and Jabin is killed (Joshua 11). In Judges 4, we read about the Jabin who has Sisera as the captain of his army. Israel has fallen into sin, and Jabin has taken them captive, but God delivers his people again. Just as Barak needed a woman (Deborah) to get him going, so Sisera was killed gruesomely by a woman (Joel). Israel was so weak that no man was willing to stand up and be their leader, but God still delivered his people.

Sing or pray Psalter #13.

Read Psalm 83
In geography class we are learning about Europe, and just finished talking about the story of St. Patrick. It’s interesting to study the stories that have largely been lost behind modern-day festivals. Patrick was born in Britain, but was forced into slavery in Ireland as a teenager. Although he escaped, he later returned to Ireland and became a famous missionary. Patrick went to find his former master and forgive him, only to find that the man had burned his mansion down around himself. It was too much for the man’s pride to be publicly forgiven by his former slave.

When we talked about this in class, the students had a hard time understanding why this situation caused the man to take his own life. A worldly man without his pride has nothing to live for. In Psalm 83, Asaph calls on God to shame the wicked. Pride is a very dangerous thing, and something against which we must always be on guard. Instead of looking for judgment on the wicked to feed our own pride, we must seek it, “That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art the most high over all
the earth” (v. 18).

Sing or pray Psalter #104.

May 13

Read Psalm 84

During my years in Iowa, I worked as a CNA at a nursing home behind our house. The people who lived there often watched the religious channel. I quickly learned how much the televangelists love to tell fantastic stories in an effort to get people to donate large sums of money. They were always talking about this or that person who gave their life savings to the church, only to find the next day that they had won the lottery or something ridiculous like that.

One verse that these false teachers might use to defend their position is the second part of Psalm 84:11, where we read that “no good thing will [God] withhold from them that walk uprightly.” This is the infallible word of God and definitely true, but not in the way many interpret it. Everything that God gives us is good, but that good thing might be sickness, death, or abandonment. It might be the loss of our job or the hatred of our coworkers. Earthly riches are good in themselves and can be used for the cause of the kingdom, but God is not bribing us into good behavior with the promise of earthly things.

Sing or pray Psalter #226.

May 14

Read Psalm 84

David longed for the house of the Lord. The exact reason is unknown, but David had been unable to visit God’s house for a long time. It could have been when Saul was chasing him, or when he fled from his son Absalom. Either way, David yearns to be able to worship God in his house. Daniel must have yearned for the same thing. Three times a day he faced Jerusalem and prayed, even when it meant death. The sick and the aged who are prevented from worshipping in God’s house surely know this same feeling of the longing desire to be in God’s house, worshipping with their fellow saints.

Those of us with the freedom and ability to worship twice every Sunday also need to long for God’s house. That is where the preaching is, the main means of salvation, and where we can be strengthened and taught by our fellow saints. We must not take this for granted, for it may happen in our lifetime that this freedom is taken away. Let it be true for us also that a day in God’s courts is better than a thousand dwelling with the wicked (Ps. 84:10).

Sing or pray Psalter #225.

May 15

Read Psalm 28

“For the Lord God is a sun and shield” (Psalm 84:11a). Just as the sun brings life to the earth, so God gives his people true life through his Son’s shed blood. Just as the burning sun lights the world, so God’s Son has brought us light when we were in the darkness of sin. Not only has God given us life, but he also preserves that life. He is the creator and the sustainer. Many today blatantly deny this beautiful truth. They want to portray God as the clockmaker who creates the clock and then lets it run on its own. However, this is in direct contradiction to this passage and the rest of Scripture. In order for us to have life, we need God not only to give that life to us, but also to preserve it. We are weak and there are temptations all around us. We thank God for the confidence we have in knowing that he is not only a sun, but also a shield.

Sing or pray Psalter #75.

May 16

Read Psalm 85

Easter will be long past when you read this devotional, but as I write, it’s only a couple of weeks away. Therefore, it came to mind when I read Psalm 85:2, which says, “Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people, thou hast covered all their sin.” Our sins were covered by Christ’s death on the cross and his resurrection on the third day, which we celebrate on Easter Sunday. The world celebrates this day as well, though they just associate it with bunnies and eggs. Although these ideas are not found in Scripture, I thought it interesting that there are some spiritual ideas behind these traditions. Eggs have been used for centuries as a symbol of life, fertility, and rebirth, and rabbits were associated with it because of the rapidity with which they reproduce. God has given us these pictures in creation of the life that has been merited for us by his Son’s death on the cross.

Sing or pray Psalter #232.

May 17

Read Luke 24:1–12

The Roman Catholics go even further in their use of eggs to picture the resurrection of Christ. Eggs are painted all different colors today, but they were initially painted red to symbolize the blood of Christ. The eggshell represented Christ’s tomb, while the cracking of the egg pictured his rising from the dead. Eggs were also eaten in large quantities at this time, since Easter marks the end of Lent, a forty-day period in which the Roman Catholics are forbidden to eat eggs. Lent is supposed to symbolize Christ’s fasting in the wilderness. There is even an egg rolling contest at the White House on the morning after Easter. According to History.com, this event has no religious significance, but some people like to think it’s a picture of the stone being rolled away from the tomb on that sacred Sunday long ago. These non-scriptural examples might not be the best, but it’s amazing to see the countless pictures of heavenly truths that our God has given us in his creation.

Read or pray Psalter #183.
for the lynching of this racist school administrator. Obama even stepped in and kindly invited the persecuted child to the White House.

As it turns out, the whole thing was staged to create an outcry over treatment of Muslims in this country. Lies like this are everywhere, and yet people are so quick to believe them. As we near another presidential election, this can be seen quite clearly. The candidates will say anything that makes the others look like monsters, while spewing grandiose promises of prosperity and tranquility that have no foundation in reality. This is what characterizes the kingdoms of this world. On the other hand, the kingdom of God is characterized by “mercy and truth,” as we read in Psalm 85. May this be the kingdom that we seek.

Sing or pray Psalter #21.

Read Psalm 86
Most of us have probably heard of purgatory. The Roman Catholic Church teaches that after death you go to this place called purgatory, where payment for sins must be made before you can enter heaven. Which verse in this chapter do you think they use to help “prove” this false teaching?

Psalm 86:13 reads, “For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell.” According to Roman Catholicism, this “lowest hell” refers to purgatory. This teaching is a direct attack on Christ. Calvin goes so far as to say that it is “too rotten to stand in need of refutation.” What does it matter that Christ died for us if he’s going to have to do more than that. Suddenly, a huge explosion blows them backwards.

A ball of fire has descended from heaven and devoured the entire altar, including the water around it. The people are all shaking, and fling themselves upon the ground in fear, including Ahab himself. Truly, “Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord; neither are there any works like unto thy works” (Psalm 86:8).

Sing or pray Psalter #182.

Read Matthew 24:29–44
By nature, we are pretty quick to jump to the conclusion that other people just aren’t quite as smart as we are. Keeping this in mind, think about what it must have been like to be Noah building the ark. Can you even imagine how many people must have laughed at him? Here was this man attempting to build a floating animal village because water would come pouring down from the sky and cover the entire planet. I’m sure that got more than a couple of raised eyebrows. The amount of faith that God must have given Noah to be able to complete this task is truly a testament to his preservation of his people.

In Psalm 86:17 David requests of God, “Shew me a token for good; that they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed.” The laughter of the wicked was stopped in their mouths at the time of the flood, and the same will be true at the end of the world. Just when it seems as if the Church has been completely wiped out, God will send his Son as a token for good to the righteous and a token for evil to the wicked.

Sing or pray Psalter #235.

Read Psalm 87
Psalm 87:3 says, “Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God.” What are those glorious things? God spoke of the temple in 2 Chronicles 7:16: “For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there forever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.” Psalm 48:2 says, “Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”

Such beautiful words are spoken of the Old Testament
Sing or pray Psalter #238.

Read Isaiah 51:9–16

Rahab is compared to the dragon, the kingdom of antichrist, in this passage. It is also used this way in other places throughout scripture, including Psalm 87:4. The word denotes one that is raging, according to Gesensius’ Hebrew Lexicon. This fact, along with the context in which it is found, has led scholars to conclude that the term refers to Egypt.

Upon learning this, I became curious about how this Rahab and the woman who saved the Israelite spies were connected. As it turns out, they aren’t. Although they have been translated the same in English, these are actually two completely different words in the Hebrew. The Rahab of Isaiah 51 is spelled correctly, but the woman Rahab would probably be better spelled as Rachab. This is because the pronunciation of the name requires a guttural sound that we don’t use in English, a sound not used in pronouncing the Rahab of this passage.

Sing or pray Psalter #237.

Read Psalm 88

The man who wrote Psalm 88 was a man of prayer. He prayed all the time, but especially in times of affliction. “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray…” (James 5:13).

Earnestness characterizes this prayer of the psalmist: “But unto thee have I cried” (v. 13) and “stretched out my hands unto thee” (v. 9). His prayers are also constant: “I have called daily upon thee” (v. 9), yea “I have cried day and night before thee” (v. 1). Third, his prayers were directed to God, and he expected and desired an answer from God: “Incline thine ear unto my cry” (v. 2).

Some compare these prayers of the psalmist to Christ’s prayers in the Garden of Gethsemane. Both were men of sorrows. Both cried to God in the midst of their sufferings. The psalmist said in verse 3, “For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.” Christ told his disciples in the garden, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). Christ, when praying to his Father, ends his prayer with submission: “Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). May we do the same in our trials.

Sing or pray Psalter #240.

May 26

Read Job 40

As I was writing the previous devotional, I was reminded of Job. He also was a man of sorrow. Great was the tribulation that God placed upon him. In fact, he prayed that he might die, his affliction was so great. As one tribulation after another fell upon him, he, like the psalmist, thought that God had forsaken him. Indeed, in Job 3:1 it says, “After this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.” He wished he had never been born. Had God truly forsaken Job? Did God truly hide his face from the psalmist (Ps. 88:14)?

“Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said… Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:1, 4). He rebukes Job for questioning and doubting him. “Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it” (Job 40:2). Who are we to question God? If we are ever tempted to doubt God, may we fall on our knees like Job and say, “Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth” (Job 40:4).

Sing or pray Psalter #202.

May 27

Read Psalm 89:1–18

The psalmist begins this psalm by praising God. The first fourteen verses speak of the power, wisdom, and wonder of our God. Verses 15–18 then speak of how amazing it is to belong to God, to be part of his church, and to be one of his children. Verse 15 says, “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance.”

What is the “joyful sound” that we hear? This could refer to the shout of a victorious army. God was present in the battles that Old Testament Israel fought, and they often returned with joyful shouts of victory. This “joyful sound” could also refer to the joyful singing Israel did while offering sacrifices and observing the feast days. After all, they were free to worship their God how he commanded. Finally, to us, the gospel is a joyful sound. It is a sound of victory, of liberty, and of communion with God. Blessed are the people who hear it!

Sing or pray Psalter #241.

May 28

Read Psalm 89:16–29

Recently we watched a nature video in class, which included a clip of male ibexes fighting for the right to mate. It was amazing to see, but I still can’t believe that their horns and necks were able to withstand the blows. These mountain-dwelling animals would rear up on their hind legs and hurtle themselves down on their opponent from above. Their heads crashed with such force that it was painful to watch. A male ibex’s horns are enormous and very important in determining his rank. In fact, the dominant male’s horns curved around into nearly
The Bible uses this picture of a horn often to symbolize strength and power. This chapter speaks of the horn of the righteous being exalted in Christ. In verse 17, the psalmist is speaking to God and saying, “For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favor our horn shall be exalted.” Then, God himself speaks in verse 24 and confirms that the horn of the righteous will be exalted in his name. Through Christ, we have true confidence in our salvation.

Read Zachariah 8:1–8

We live in dark times. There is no denying that fact. As technology advances more and more speedily, wickedness keeps pace alongside. The church is being attacked on every side. The final tribulation is a complete circle.

In times like these, how can we not live in fear? How can we have joy?

Recently, a sermon was preached in our church on that very subject. The text was Zachariah 8:5, which reads, “And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” Children play only when they feel safe, and the children in this verse are a picture of God’s people.

How can we feel safe in these times? The answer is found in Psalm 89:35: “Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.” God will never forsake his covenant. He has sworn this by his own holiness, as there is none greater than he is. We live in the consciousness that all the signs of the times around us are happening exactly according to God’s will, which culminates in Christ’s return on the clouds of glory to deliver us from this world of sin. Knowing this gives us true joy even in life’s most difficult trials.

Read Ephesians 2:1–10

One of the few talk radio stations our car picks up happens to be Roman Catholic. Since the CD kept skipping on me today during my drive home, I decided to give it a listen. The host was talking about the subject of free will. He said that God was such an advocate of free will that he allowed Adam and Eve to fall into sin. He was willing to live with the consequences of their sinful actions.

So God had no intention of sending his Son to this earth to suffer and die for his people until man messed everything up? The coming of Christ was Plan B? Of course it wasn’t. Christ has always been the center of history. Ephesians 2 talks about how God preordained all the events of history and determined that we would be saved, “That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.” Psalm 91 says that no evil can befall us with God our Father watching over us, Yes, Adam and Eve sinned grievously at the fall, but God used that sin for the good of his people.

Read Proverbs 8:22–36

Psalm 90:2 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible, maybe because I enjoy hiking so much. My favorite part is standing on top of a mountain and just seeing mountain-tops for miles and miles. Standing there brings to my mind Psalm 90:2, “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.”

Proverbs 8 also speaks of the everlastingness of God. It is about wisdom, and God is wisdom. Even before the
world was created, wisdom was there. “I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was” (Prov. 8:23). We must seek wisdom, “For whoso findeth [wisdom] findeth life, and shall obtain favor of the Lord” (Prov. 8:35).

Sing or pray Psalter #254.

Read Psalm 90:1–6

It says in Psalm 90:3, “Thou turnest man to destruction: and sayest, Return, ye children of men.” Matthew Henry gives four meanings for the last phrase, “Return, ye children of men.” First, God through sicknesses and other afflictions is often calling his people to return to him, to repent of their sins, and to live a new and godly life. Second, sometimes God brings us so low, even near to death, and then returns us to life again. 1 Samuel 2:6–7 says, “The Lord killeth, and maketh alive: he bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich: he bringeth low, and lifteth up.” Third, all men die and our bodies return to the dust of which they were made. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Fourth, at the end of time, all men will be raised to face the final judgement. Daniel 12:2 says, “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

Sing or pray Psalter #244.

Read Psalm 90

In Psalm 90 Moses speaks about the brevity of man’s life. Who better to speak of this than the man who just watched an entire generation die in the wilderness? Moses also knew of the patriarchs, many of whom lived close to a thousand years. Yet, what is a thousand years compared to infinity? 2 Peter 3:8 states, “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

Our God not only has no beginning and no end, but he also remembers everything that has happened in eternity. The events of a thousand years ago, or even a hundred years in the future are present in his mind as if they were happening at this moment. Many of us probably can’t remember what we had for breakfast last week Monday, but God remembers. He knows what every person in the world had for breakfast two years ago. More importantly, he knows all our needs and will always supply them. What an amazing God we have!

Sing or pray Psalter #247.

Read Psalm 91

Psalm 91 is a psalm about security. Security, according to Webster’s dictionary, means to have safety from danger of any kind, and to have such a certainty and confidence in that safety that one is free even from fear. This is the kind of security we have in God.

We can be without fear from the dangers that surround us, for we have the certain knowledge that God will deliver us. “He shall cover [us] with his feathers, and under his wings shall [we] trust” (Ps. 91:4).

Only those who make God their habitation can know this security. As was discussed a couple days ago, our home must be with God in order to have security and peace. Isaiah 26:3 says, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.” Therefore, the wicked will never know perfect peace because they do not love God.

Sing or pray Psalter #248.

Read 2 Samuel 5:6–10

In 2014, after fifteen years of excavation, archeologists uncovered most of the “Spring Citadel” (biblicalarchaeology.org). Boasting twenty-three foot thick walls, this fortress guarded the spring at Gihon, which provided water for many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. This is believed to be the stronghold mentioned here in 2 Samuel. In addition, it was likely the place where Solomon was anointed king in 1 Kings 1:33–34. The Jebusites were so confident in the security of their stronghold that they claimed even the blind and lame would be able to defend it. However, God gave David the victory. The thickest-walled fortresses of the world are nothing before God. He is the only fortress (Ps. 91:2) who provides complete security.

Sing or pray Psalter #249.


We just learned about this story in Bible class at school. Here we get a glimpse at the agony Jesus went through as the time of his death drew near. In fact, he was in such agony that “there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him” (Luke 22:43). What an amazing comfort it is to know that the angels are watching over us, just as they did the man Jesus. The Bible is full of passages that make this clear to us. Psalm 91:11, Matthew 18:10 and Hebrews 1:14 are three examples of texts in which we are told that God has commanded his angels to watch over the elect. Then there is the story of Elisha and the Syrians in 2 Kings 6. Elisha and his servant are surrounded by an enormous army, and the servant is in despair, but through Elisha’s prayer the eyes of his servant are opened to see that “the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17b). Man is truly powerless before the God of hosts.

Sing or pray Psalter #299.
Patrick: Missionary to Ireland

Patrick’s life reads like an adventure story, with chapters on pirates, kidnapping, foreign lands and languages, slavery, prophetic dreams, a daring escape over land and sea, a shocking return to the pagan barbarians, druids, leprechauns and fairies, and war. By the time he was 16, Patrick had had more real life adventures than most of us hope to have in a lifetime.

Underlying Patrick’s personal adventures is the more important story of how God used Patrick as a missionary to bring the gospel to Ireland, and from Ireland to many other places in Britain and Europe. The mission work of Patrick was one fulfillment of God’s promise in Psalm 67:7, “God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.”

Patrick’s life is instructive for all Christians, but Patrick’s story is especially gripping for young people because Patrick’s adventures began when he was still in his teens. As you read on, imagine what it would have been like to be Patrick, subjected to these great struggles, and learn from his response how to endure the lesser or greater struggles that God may send into your life.

Patrick’s story begins on the western coast of the island of Britain, sometime around 389 AD. At that time Britain was ruled by the Roman Empire, which had sent its soldiers into Britain centuries earlier. The Roman soldiers had brought the Christian faith with them, so that by the time of Patrick’s birth the island was at least nominally Christian. Patrick’s father was a deacon in the church and his grandfather was a priest, so Patrick was raised in a Christian home. However, Patrick took his Christian home for granted. He was lazy in his studies and did not take his faith to heart. Later, when Patrick looked back on this time of his life, he concluded with shame that he was an unbeliever as a child. Young Patrick was about to learn the folly of his wasted youth, as God prepared to take his precious Christian home away from him.

Covenant youth, mark the value of your Christian home. Like Patrick, we are not always as sensible of this great gift as we should be. Sometimes we simply become so used to having a Christian home that we forget how rare a thing it really is. After all, a Christian home is the only kind of home we have ever known. All our friends are in Christian homes. Everyone at church has a Christian home. It seems to us that Christian homes are the rule. But look beyond the walls of your home and see that what you have is a rarity in the world. Asia has the most populous countries in the world, and therefore has by far the most families and homes. But these houses overflow with idols to a host of Chinese and Hindu gods. Turn to the Middle East, and you find the families in their homes bowing down to Mecca five times a day in worship of the false god, Allah. Turn even to the Western nations in Europe, Australia, and North America that have traditionally been Christian, and you find homes ruled by the unholy trinity of pleasure in unrighteousness, abounding iniquity, and open hostility to God’s law, where man has made himself god. What you have in your covenant homes, young people, compared with the rest of the world, is a precious and rare gift of God. Do not take the gift for granted; certainly do not spurn the gift, but treasure it as a token of God’s love and be grateful.

When Patrick was 16 years old, God took him away from his covenant home and brought him to the pagan island of Ireland. Although the Roman Empire had subjugated much of the island of Britain, that was the limit of its reach. Across the Irish Sea lay the unconquered island of Ireland. There the people remained untouched by Roman law and order. They worshiped the ancient Celtic gods of earth and stone, sky and water, and believed in magical realms populated by leprechauns and fairies. The druids were the priests of this Celtic paganism, and they were suspected of practicing dark magic, including human sacrifice.

Occasionally pirate raiders from Ireland crossed the sea to Britain to slave and to steal. One day the raiders came to Patrick’s home, enslaved him, and carried him back to Ireland. He was sold to a farmer.
and spent his days and nights tending the man’s cattle, without adequate shelter in the wet, cold weather. Patrick was intensely lonely, living against his will in a strange land, separated from his family and all whom he loved. But God was using Patrick’s suffering to prepare him for a life of mission work. Patrick picked up the Irish language, as well as the customs and ways of the Irish people. More importantly, in the fields of Ireland God converted Patrick from his childhood unbelief to faith in Jesus Christ. In his deep anguish, Patrick cast himself upon the Lord, praying 100 times a day and almost as many times each night. Patrick was filled with devotion to God out of a sense of his great spiritual need.

Patrick’s fervent devotion is an example for covenant young people today. In his sovereign providence, God sometimes brings young people into great affliction, as he did Patrick. Isaiah 40:30 teaches us, “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall.” Although you may be in the prime of your physical strength as youth, all human strength is vain, so that even youths can suffer greatly. In your deep need, you must cast yourself upon God. As Isaiah 40:31 puts it, you must “wait upon the Lord.” Turn to him in prayer as often as the need is felt! 100 times a day! Turn to his word and memorize uplifting passages, so that your mind is stayed on God. Just as God lifted Patrick in his grace, so God will lift you. He has promised it!

“But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

Finally, after six years of slavery in Ireland, Patrick found an opportunity to escape. He fled overland to the coast, where he found a ship willing to carry him back to Britain. All told, he traveled over 200 miles to reach his home. Once he arrived, he resumed his education in earnest. As hard as he studied, he always felt that he was behind in his learning. Yet by God’s grace, Patrick was no longer a careless, lazy, immature youth, but a godly, mature young man.

In his growth to Christian maturity, Patrick is an example for covenant youth. God still calls the young people of the church to reach for spiritual maturity. God uses the means of your Christian homes, your Christian education in a Christian school, your godly friends, your life in the world but not of the world, your work, and all the circumstances of your life to bring you to this spiritual maturity. The primary means God uses in your maturing is his word. In 2 Timothy 3:14–17, Paul told Timothy that the holy scriptures “are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.” He says that “all scripture…is profitable…for instruction…that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” Therefore, Timothy—and we—are to “continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of.” Timothy grew to spiritual maturity through the word; Patrick grew to spiritual maturity through the word; and we must grow to spiritual maturity through the word.

After several years in his home, Patrick became convinced that he must return to Ireland as a missionary. Although his six years a slave in Ireland had been miserable, Patrick’s heart was now burdened with the need to bring the gospel to the Irish people. Interestingly, God used the means of special dreams to guide Patrick’s decisions. One night he dreamed that a man from Ireland handed him a letter that was entitled, “The Cry of the Irish.” As he read the letter in his dream, he heard the Irish people crying out to him, “Holy boy, we are asking you to come and walk among us again.” This was not the first time that Patrick had been guided by a dream, for his escape from slavery had also been prompted by a dream.

In his reliance on dreams Patrick is not an example for covenant youth. Patrick lived among superstitious people, so it is not entirely surprising that Patrick himself would be influenced by some superstition. Nevertheless, taking our dreams as revelations from God is superstition. God guides us by his word and the application of the principles of his word to our life. God uses our circumstances to open and close doors. God uses prayer as a means of subjecting our will to his will. But God does not use dreams to tell us what to do. In this Patrick was mistaken, although God sovereignly used even Patrick’s superstition to accomplish his purpose. Young people, look to the scriptures for your guidance, not to your dreams.

When Patrick was forty years old, he was ordained as a bishop by the church in Britain and sent to Ireland as a missionary. Preaching was his main labor, but he had many other responsibilities as well. He baptized, trained, and ordained bishops (elders), established monasteries, and traveled far and wide in Ireland to bring the gospel. Patrick recognized the need for hard work, and consciously
labored diligently in his calling. At the same time, he attributed all of the fruit of his work and the hard work itself to God.

Patrick and the Irish church suffered persecution as a result of their faith in Jesus Christ. As it turned out, the Britons were just as capable of piracy as the Irish had been. A Briton named Coroticus led a band of soldiers into Ireland in order to kill, capture, and enslave some of the newly converted Christians. Patrick wrote a letter condemning Coroticus’ actions, pronouncing God’s judgment on his barbaric act, and excommunicating him from the church. Patrick himself was insulted and reproached throughout his mission work, and on at least one occasion he was cast into prison. Rather than abandon the gospel, this persecution made Patrick and the Irish church all the more zealous for the truth.

The fruit of Patrick’s mission work, under God’s blessing, was that many people were converted from Celtic paganism. Patrick himself spoke of thousands of converts, including some influential members of Irish society. The Roman Catholic Church perpetuates the idea that Patrick converted all of the kings and chieftains of the Irish tribes, but this is most likely a myth. However, it is true that many churches were established, elders were ordained, pastors were taught and sent out, and the true gospel of salvation through Christ alone was proclaimed in Ireland.

Through Patrick’s labors, paganism began to decline in Ireland as many people left behind their pagan gods and believed in the one true God. Human sacrifice was almost entirely eradicated, and the slave trade between Ireland and Britain came to a halt.

God used the conversion of the Irish to preserve the gospel for Europe. The Roman Empire was in severe decline, and the pagan barbarians were driving Christianity out of the European lands that were formerly under Roman control. However, in Ireland the knowledge of the scriptures was preserved, as well as the disciplines necessary to understand the scriptures, such as reading, writing, and logical thinking. The churches and monasteries established by Patrick were the centers from which the gospel would return to Europe.

Yes, Patrick’s life reads like an adventure story, and there are many lessons to learn from it. As God’s covenant youth, let us continue in the faith of our spiritual fathers, for God’s glory.

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What is the most essential foundation of every relationship? Trust? Love? Respect? If we really think about it, knowledge of one another must be the basis of a relationship. A person cannot trust another if one does not know the other. Neither can he or she respect or love. Really knowing another person sets up the foundation for a close relationship. This applies in our relationships with God as well. To have a blessed relationship with him, we have to know him. God has given us various means to learn about him, including literature like this magazine. Learning about and knowing God is something that we have to do intentionally. Choosing to seek God allows us to know him, and the experience of knowing God blesses us more than anything in this world.

As Christians, we often hear the phrases seek God and know God. What do these commands mean for us? One seeks something when he or she looks for it. Seeking implies an intentional action. This person does not accidentally stumble upon something, but until he finds it, he will continue to look for it intentionally. God commands his people to seek him continually. Essentially, then, we are actively looking for him. However, we know that he is always with us. For what, then, are we looking or seeking? God is a complex being, whom we can never begin to comprehend. When we seek him, we look for who...
he is. We seek to find out more about him. This ties directly into our calling to know God. As the word know is often used in the Bible, this calling refers to a deep and intimate knowledge of another. When we consider the depths of God, we realize that we can always know him more intimately. The more we seek God and look into who he is, the more we will know him.

Saints in the Bible sought to know God. As seen in Psalm 63, David says, “O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee, in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary” (vv. 1–2). During the Babylonian captivity, Daniel sought God by prayer, supplication, fasting, sackcloth, and ashes (Dan. 9:3). He made an intentional effort. In his prayer for the people, he appealed to who he knew God essentially was, as seen by his attributes. “O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee…. To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgiveness, though we have rebelled against him” (vv. 7 and 9).

In Hebrews 11:6, the great chapter of the heroes of faith, the author writes that God “is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” Amidst these great examples of faith, the author, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, points out that these people sought God. Seeking God is so important because it leads to knowing him. Jehovah promises, “And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). When we actively seek God, we will know him better. Jesus states the importance of intimately knowing God through seeking him in John 17:3: “And this is life eternal, that they might know the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.” Seeking and knowing God is not just any calling; to do this is to have eternal life.

One way that we can actively seek God is by reading Christian literature. Amidst other, more obvious ways, we often overlook this one. Reading gives us knowledge. God commands us to seek him to know him; we do this through our regular Sunday activities, our devotions, and Bible studies, but what about the rest of our time? In everything we do, we make choices. If we choose one option, we choose not to do the other one. In every moment and in everything we choose to glorify God or ourselves; there is no in-between. This may not be a conscious thing in every choice, but making the choice to spend the next hour or 15 minutes knowing God more by reading about him is always a good one. The more we choose God, the more it will also become a habit.

If we choose to read about God, whether in Beacon Lights, in a book, or in something else, we will be blessed. An author has spent time and energy to write what he or she knows about God, based on study and experience. We can never begin to scratch the surface of who God is, but these authors know something about God and have written it down for us. We have the blessed opportunity to learn it. Even if it is something we think we already know, we can see it from a new perspective. Whenever we look at things from new perspectives, we gain insight. Growing up, I have heard things of God explained in nearly the same way. Reading books about different topics has opened my eyes to looking at something differently. This activity requires a lot of discernment, but that is a good exercise for our souls.

Looking at something from a different angle or viewpoint provides a fuller and clearer picture. Last year, I remember driving from Crete, Illinois, back to Grand Rapids. A week later, I rode a bus on the same route, but I sat in a seat that faced the back. Nothing looked familiar. Even on the part of the route I took every day to school, I hardly recognized anything. I realized that I was only seeing half of what I thought I knew so well. I could not fully understand the landscape until I looked at it from a different angle. That is a simple example, but it applies to our understanding of complex concepts. God is a complex being about whom we should want to know as much as we can. Reading others’ perspectives helps us understand more fully. Authors explain aspects of God in different ways, and by this, we can easily see how invaluable Christian literature is to us.

Only when we truly understand what it means to know God and the blessing that results will we be able to appreciate Christian literature. God is amazing. His complexity is beyond every person on this earth. The more we know about God, the more we will be amazed and love him. The more we know about God, the more we will see the contrast between him and us in our sin. We will see how unworthy we are, compared to him, and we will see his great mercy. That is a beautiful picture. So the more we know about God, the more we will fall at his feet in humility and thanks, and the more we will give glory to him for what he has done in our lives.

If we love God, why would we not want to know him as well as we possibly can? Do we spend more
time with the person whom we date? We are the Lamb’s bride; our duty to him is to know him. Look at what God has done for us; he commands us to know him. We have all these books and articles that explain to us who he is. The means are available; we have to use them. Thank God for the people who write them that we may glorify God through the literature!

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**Grief**

Medical professionals are taught that there are five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. It is argued that those who grieve will experience each of these stages, although everyone experiences them differently. They occur in different orders; some people skip a stage and then come back to it. Some experience two stages simultaneously, and others flit from stage to stage as grief swirls uncontrollably around them.

I believe there is some truth to the theory of staging grief. But I also believe that it is lacking immensely. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, “To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:4 says, “A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.” Psalm 30:11 says, “Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness.”

In Ecclesiastes God tells us that he has his own timeline for grief. He has given us a time for everything, for every purpose under heaven. He has given us time to weep, and he has given us time to mourn. He feels our pain and our grief as a father feels for his child, so deeply that he knows the grief better than we know it ourselves. He also gently tells us that there is a time to laugh, and a time to dance.

I don’t believe that there are strict stages of grieving. One moment you’re weeping and can’t fathom ever laughing again, but in the next moment, you laugh. Throughout a day spent grieving, mourning and dancing weave and swirl together, so much so that you lose track of where one begins and the other ends. They mix together as finely as two sands poured into the same sieve. Mourning and dancing become one and the same. Laughing and weeping are soon indistinguishable. Mourning is laughing, as you recall memories. Weeping is celebrating, as you revel in the mystery of God’s all-consuming peace. How can such an emotion be staged? Or explained? Or understood even by those who experience it?

Only the God who is sovereign over all things, including grief, can fully understand it. Only the one who created you can fully understand how you grieve. He understands that the time to dance and the time to mourn often walk so closely together that they become one. The theory of the five stages of grief is lacking so immensely because it has left out the comfort, the hope, the trust, and ultimately the peace that the child of God experiences throughout the grieving process. God takes you by the hand and ever so gently leads you through the tumultuous sea of emotions. He sweeps you from mourning into dancing, the transition so fluid and quiet that you cannot pinpoint the moment when your heart moved from downtrodden to joyous. He turns your weeping into laughter. He mixes them together. He turns laughing back to weeping and back again. He has created you, and he has designed a timeline for grief that is just for you. And all the while, his promises hold strong and sure. No matter what emotions swirl angrily around you, he holds you still. He promises to work those emotions toward your good.

Maybe you’re laughing, or maybe you’re mourning. Maybe you’re weeping, or maybe you’re dancing. Maybe you’re doing all of these at once. Everyone travels through grief in his own way. But we do not travel alone, and the destination is the same.
God gently and lovingly walks you through every time, through every purpose under heaven. And when you finally reach heaven’s gates, he sweeps you into his arms, into a place where grief no longer exists, and where mourning and weeping have fallen softly and sweetly away.  

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From the Classroom  
Brantley Van Overloop

Keeping the First Commandment in Regard to Sports and Athletes

The first commandment states in Exodus 20:3, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” The Heidelberg Catechism says in question and answer 95 that “Idolatry is having or inventing something in which one trusts in place of or alongside of the only true God, who has revealed himself in the Word.” The topic of this commandment is a touchy subject because everyone has that person or thing that they hold very highly in their lives. This becomes even harder when talking about sports and athletes. Everyone has that player that he idolizes. Athletes of this day and age are praised by men far more than God is praised. I can say that this is a struggle for me also. The first commandment is something that not only the world struggles with, but it also hits home to me because sometimes I make sports a priority in my life. I must be reminded to put sports and athletes where they belong and bring God to the center of my life.

The world makes gods of athletes and sports every single day. Men and women are paid millions of dollars to run around on a field tackling people or throwing a ball. The athletes get whatever they want in the world. There are entire television and radio shows dedicated to informing the world about what is happening in sports every day. On these shows, announcers talk about how athletes performed in their sport and praise them for it. Athlete’s faces are put on commercials to entice people into buying products. Little kids run around trying to imitate their favorite player and be just like them.

A classic example of the world worshiping an athlete is LeBron James. He is known as “The King” by the whole sports world. He walks around and acts like he owns every building that he walks into. People will do anything for him. Everyone in the world knows his name and talks about him as if he were a god. Another example is the University of Michigan’s head football coach, Jim Harbaugh. Michigan fans call him “The Savior of Michigan.” He is supposed to end all troubles that Michigan might have on the football field.

This is wrong because people are making an idol out of men. LeBron James is not a king. The Lord is our king. He alone is to be praised. The news media is saying that a man is equal to God when they call Jim Harbaugh the savior of Michigan. They are putting their trust in someone other than God. Jim Harbaugh cannot control providence; only God can do that. The idolization of these two men is exactly what the first commandment is talking about.

The first commandment affects me personally, not because of a specific player or coach, but because I think about running too much. Running is often on my mind, and it has become a god to me. I look at times that other high school runners have run, and I make it my only goal to beat them. It consumes more of my time than it should. I lose focus as to where running fits on the importance scale in my life; it becomes higher than godly things.

There is nothing wrong with running; in fact, it is very good for me. But when it is all that I think about, then I am violating the first commandment. This is a horrible sin because I am putting running above God. When I start thinking about running during church or school, then I need to tone it down.
and put it in its rightful place. I also look at other runners, and think about how cool they are because they can run fast. I look at record holders, and think that they must be worth something because they can run fast, but they are not. Compared to God, they are worth nothing.

The first commandment is a command to worship God alone and not make other gods. It is a violation of the first commandment to put trust in anything that is not God. If someone even thinks about something more than God, he is in violation of the first commandment. Why would anyone want to put his trust in anything other than God? He alone is infallible and all powerful.

The comfort of the first commandment is that God is more powerful than everything else. God will protect those who put their trust in him. Nothing will happen to you that is not in his will. God saves his people from their sins. Whatever someone puts his trust in, whether it be a sport or an athlete, cannot save him from his sins. It does not make sense to worship someone or something that is fallible, when you can worship God who is infallible. Does anyone want his salvation to rest in the hands of a person?

Do not get caught up in Sports Center or other media sources that will tell you that your god is a player on the television. The world needs to be careful with the sports in their own lives, but I need to be just as careful. The devil uses these gods to try to pull God’s people out of the church. Do not be deceived by the world, but put your trust in Jehovah God. Jesus says in Matthew 22:37, “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”

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Poem
Thelma Westra

Prayer For Our Graduates

Lord, as they enter a new phase of life,
May they retain what they have now been taught;
Not so that earthly gain and wisdom be their aim,
But that they love and serve thee as they ought.

May their perspective not be mammon’s goals
Of fame and wealth and seeking earthly pleasure,
But give them grace to fix their eyes of faith
On heav’nly joys—the true, unfading treasure.

The skills they’ve learned, may they apply aright;
May they be fitted for the awesome task
Of being stalwart members of thy church.
This is the goodly blessing that we ask.

“Study to show thyself approved unto God,
a workman that needeth not to be ashamed,
rightly dividing the word of truth.” –2 Tim. 2:15
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:
Travis Harvey, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Amy Terpstra—Crete, IL
Dustin Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Derek & Liane Bruinsma—Crete, IL
Clara Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brian & Debbie Baldwin—First, MI
Jackson Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Danielle Warner—Hull, IA
Makenna Navae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nate & Kolette Villalobos—Hull, IA
Lovis Richard, son of Mr. & Mrs. Luke & Debbi Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Wyatt James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Grant & Kyla Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Adeline Elizabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff & Marusa Hendriks—Redlands, CA
Addilyn Ruth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Rebekah Kuiper—Southwest, MI
Sadie Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Owen & Rosie Wiersma—Trinity, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”
Proverbs 3:6
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Richard Moore—Crete, IL
Kayleigh Bos—Grace, MI
Kristen Lotterman—Grace, MI
Monica Engelsma—Hope, MI
Emily Koole—Hope, MI
Brandon Miersma—Hope, MI
Gabe Orzechowski—Southeast, MI

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Dennis Offringa and Miss Erin Braaksma—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Michael Peters and Miss Abigail Feenstra—Kalamazoo, MI

CELEBRATING THE 100th Anniversary of Hope Protestant Reformed Church
Walker, MI

“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.
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First Jenison Christian Reformed Church
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The commemorative program will be live-streamed at www.sermonaudio.com/hopeprc
Sandals of the Gospel of Peace Part 1: Preparation for Battle

After getting home from school, Danny dropped his backpack on the floor and threw his shoes from his feet. His sister Becky set her backpack next to his, took off her shoes, and neatly placed them in their spot on the rug. Their mom walked in behind them and put her purse on the counter.

Danny spotted the library book about Roman soldiers lying on the counter where he’d left it. “I wonder what Roman soldiers wore for shoes.”

Becky looked at the book. “They wore sandals.”

Their mom joined them by the book. “Roman soldiers wore a very special kind of sandal called caligae. Rome had a very big empire, and their armies did a lot of walking over different kinds of ground. They needed a type of sandal that wouldn’t wear out. If their sandals wore out, the soldiers would have injured feet and wouldn’t be prepared for battle.”

Danny wrinkled his nose. “Like when I wear out the bottom of my shoe and you use duct tape to hold it together until you can buy a new pair?”

“Yes, like that. Except that the Roman soldier wouldn’t be able to buy a new pair if his sandals wore out in the middle of a battle.” Their mom pointed at the picture of the Roman soldier in the book. “The caligae had rounded, iron nails attached to the bottom. These iron nails kept the leather sole of the sandal from wearing out when the Roman soldier had to walk over rough ground. The iron nails were also placed in a specific pattern so they supported the soldiers’ feet, just like the soles of our shoes do today.”

“So what do sandals have to do with that passage in Ephesians we’ve been talking about?” Becky glanced at the Bible still sitting open to Ephesians 6 on the dinner table.

“The gospel, the good news of redemption, gives us peace. This peace supports us and protects us as we go through rough times. It also prepares us so that we are ready when we do have to face battles in this life.”

Danny cocked his head and stared at the picture. The Roman soldiers had cool sandals.

Questions to think about:
1. Read Ephesians 6:15, Romans 1:16; 10:15, and John 14:27 by yourself or with your parents. How does the gospel of peace support and protect us as we walk through this life?
2. How does the gospel of peace prepare us for battle?
August 8-12, 2016
Lake Williamson Christian Conference Center
Carlinville, IL

Activities to look forward to:
- Lakefront - Zipline
- Lakefront - Waterslide
- Lakefront - Blob
- Softball
- Basketball
- Horseshoes
- Tennis
- Pingpong
- Billiards
- Racquetball
- Walleyball
- Disc Golf
- 9 Square
- Black Light Sports
- Gaga Ball
- Bonfires

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