This month’s cover was taken from the November 1957 issue.
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November is our annual scholarship issue, in which we print several of the best essays in the Protestant Reformed Essay Competition. This year we are publishing the four that we were given. They are interesting and well-written, so please enjoy them. Below please find the requirements and prompts given to all participants. This material will help put the essays into context and make them more understandable. The contestants were given the following choices of subjects on which they could write.

1. How important to our churches and schools is it to learn to speak other languages? Focus on currently spoken languages of the world (e.g. Spanish or Tagalog), not on the languages typically associated with biblical studies (Greek, Hebrew, Latin). Consider the possible uses or benefits, as well as who might take on the task of learning another language.

2. Explore the importance of Christian schools and missions relative to each other. Is one more important than the other? In our thoughts, our prayers, and our giving, does one seem to be more important? Think about Scripture passages such as Acts 2:39 to address how God gathers his people and how we ought to maintain a balance in our consideration of the cause of missions and needs of Christian schools.

The preceding are the topics on which you may submit an essay in order to qualify for a monetary award from the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund. Scholarship awards are granted primarily on the basis of essay quality, but financial need can also factor into total award amounts based on the discretion of the Scholarship Committee.

The God-given Means of Leading Young Christians in Covenantal Life

For the sake of this essay, two main types of young Christians can be identified. The first type of young Christian is one who is young in age and faith. He has been born into a covenant home, raised in the bosom of the church, and educated in Christian schools. He has been gathered into God’s covenant from the line of continued generations. The second type of young Christian is young in the faith, but not necessarily age. He has recently been called by the preaching of the gospel out of the darkness of either heathendom or apostate Christianity. The Spirit-driven preaching of the gospel that irresistibly called him to faith in Jesus Christ and gathered him into the fellowship of the covenant happened primarily through the work of a mission field or the evangelistic efforts of a local church. Both of these young Christians—from very different walks of life—have been adopted by God into the same covenant of grace. Not only are these two Christians related through their adoption into the covenant, they are also related through various practical out-workings of life within the covenant. With this in mind, two of the means God uses to guide these young Christians in covenantal life—Christian education and mission work—are of especially great importance and require our attention and support.

Before exploring the means by which these two Christians are guided in covenantal life, we need to...
examine briefly what the covenant is and what life within the covenant looks like. The covenant can be defined as the relationship of friendship of God with his chosen people in Jesus Christ.¹ The covenant is established by God. The covenant is not a covenant of works whereby man merits salvation and friendship with God; it is merely of God’s grace that man is included in the covenant. What then is covenantal life? In short, covenantal life is the walk of the elect with God through the outworking of his Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. With the Holy Spirit in their hearts (John 14:17), God’s people are enabled to live a life of sanctification in blessed, covenantal fellowship with God, seeking “the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God, and not things on earth.”² The Holy Spirit, promised by Christ in John 14:16–17, was poured out on the New Testament church on Pentecost, given with the covenant promise recorded in Acts 2:39: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” Here we see the two young Christians described above. In “you and your children” we see the first young Christian, gathered into the covenant in the line of continued generations with the help of Christian education. In “all that are afar off” we see the second young Christian, gathered by God into the covenant through the preaching of the gospel on the mission field or local church evangelism.

**God’s means of gathering the “you and your children” Christian**

The first Christian we described, gathered from the line of continued generations, is led in the life of the covenant through several means: the preaching of the gospel in the church where he has been baptized, education and discipline within the Christian home, and education in the Christian school. For the purpose of this essay, we focus on one of the means that God uses to guide this young Christian in covenantal life, namely, Christian education.

What important purpose does Christian education serve in the covenantal life of the young Christian? Christian schools, like public schools, teach skills like reading, writing, critical thinking, discipline, communication, and stewardship, but they do so from a godly and covenantal perspective. The skills he learns from this perspective are reflected in the way he conducts himself toward God and his neighbor. Prof. David Engelsma describes this type of education:

> The very instruction itself must tend towards influencing the children’s ethical attitudes and behavior. When all of the instruction is God-centered, the love and fear of God are stirred up in the children’s hearts. In addition, the Christian school points out to the child that in all the relationships of life he is called to love and fear and, therefore, obey God. This is the very foundation of morality. Out of thankful love to God and His Christ, he is to honor his parents, submit to his teachers, subject himself to the State, live purely, love his neighbors on the playground, and work at his studies to the best of his ability.³

The skills he learns from the godly, covenantal perspective are critical not just for life in general, but specifically for life within the church. The many skills the young Christian learns in the Christian school are important for the future of the church, not only for its governance, but also for evangelism and mission work. When witnessing to the ungodly or to the apostate Christian, the child of God must not only know and love scripture, but he must also know how to communicate it effectively.

**God’s means of gathering the “all that are afar off” Christian**

The second young Christian introduced above is gathered by God into his covenant of grace by means of the preaching of the gospel. This happens primarily on the mission field or through local church evangelism efforts. The personal evangelism of believers also contributes to the gathering of new converts into the sphere of God’s covenant by bringing them into contact with the preaching of the gospel. Rev. J. Kortering emphasizes the covenantal goal of personal evangelism, which we can extend to mission work as well: “As Reformed believers, our

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² Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 18, Question and Answer 49, in *The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches* (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 102.

goal is not simply to ‘save souls’ but to bring souls into God’s covenant, including the church, home, and school.”

What purpose, aside from calling out of darkness and into the sphere of the covenant, does the preaching of the gospel serve in the life of the young Christian? Has the preaching of the gospel accomplished its only task upon the conversion of the young Christian? By no means. As a part of their covenantal life, having been converted, they must be converted daily, nourished, preserved in the faith, and edified by the preaching of the gospel. The church fathers of Dordrecht were convicted of the importance of this aspect of the preaching of the gospel as well—the preservation of the believer—when they wrote: “And as it hath pleased God, by the preaching of the gospel, to begin this work of grace in us, so He preserves, continues, and perfects it by the hearing and reading of His Word, by meditation thereon, and by the exhortations, threatenings, and promises thereof, as well as by the use of the sacraments.”

Not only does the preaching of the gospel gather God’s elect from darkness and into covenantal life, but also it preserves them in that covenantal life of fellowship with God and their fellow believers.

Two means of gathering into the same covenant: similar importance

Christ’s last words to his disciples before he ascended into heaven can give us some insight into how Christian education and missions are of similar importance. “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19–20, emphasis is mine). One among many of the things that Jesus commanded his disciples was to “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14). Jesus commanded his disciples and us to gather his people from the four corners of the earth through the means of the preaching of the gospel. But he did not leave it at that. We are to bring our children to Christ, educating them in the Christian school as well as the Christian home, because these young Christians are as much a part of the kingdom of heaven as the young Christians gathered through mission work.

A second way we can see the similar importance of Christian education and mission work is through the communion of saints. The Heidelberg Catechism describes the communion of the saints as follows: “that all and every one who believes [gathered from the line of continued generations by Christian education or from heathendom by the preaching of the gospel], being members of Christ, are, in common, partakers of Him and of all His riches and gifts.”

The two Christians we described, whether gathered from the line of the covenant or from heathendom, are gathered into the same covenant fellowship with God. How then are we to judge which means is of greater importance in the plan of God to save his elect?

A third way that Christian education and the spread of the gospel through mission work have similar importance can be seen in the wisdom of the authors of the Heidelberg Catechism treating them in the same sentence in the explanation of the fourth commandment. “What doth God require in the fourth commandment? …that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained.”

A fourth way that suggests that Christian education and the preaching of the gospel are of similar importance can be seen in the way that the two means complement each other. The preaching of the gospel complements Christian schools by instilling in new believers the calling to educate their children in the fear of the Lord as a demand of the covenant they have been gathered into. The demand of the covenant upon the new believer is brought home through the preaching of passages such as Deuteronomy 6:7: “thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children;” Psalm 78:5–6: “For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which

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4 Jason L. Kortering, Evangelism in the Established Church, (Grand Rapids, MI: First Protestant Reformed Church Evangelism Committee), 42.
6 Canons of Dordrecht, Fifth Head of Doctrine, Article 14, in Confessions and the Church Order, 176.
7 Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 21, Q & A 55, in ibid., 104 (emphasis is mine).
8 Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 38, Q & A 103, in ibid., 128.
he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children: that the generation to come might know them;” and Ephesians 6:4: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.” This demand of the covenant is also placed on faithful parents when they take upon themselves the baptismal vow to “see these children...instructed and brought up in the aforesaid doctrine, or help or cause them to be instructed therein.” In addition, Christian schools complement missions by instilling in covenant children a burden for their lost brothers and sisters who have not yet been brought into the sphere of the covenant. The Christian schools can also encourage young Christians to partake of the communion of the saints with those who have been recently gathered into the fellowship of the covenant. The schools can do this through various mission awareness and pen pal programs. The schools also teach children to communicate effectively, preparing them for future evangelism opportunities and also for communion with new converts from different walks of life.

A fifth way in which these two means God uses to gather into the covenant are of similar importance is the reality that both of the young Christians described above are at a most delicate stage in their godly lives. Extending the picture Paul gives in 1 Corinthians 3:6, the planting has occurred, but the watering has only just begun. Christians learn throughout their whole lives, but the beginning stages are especially important since they are foundational. Both are beginning their lifelong journey into the word of God. Both of these young Christians are in the earliest stages of their walk of sanctification. How and what they learn at this point in their walk has a great influence on their future development and walk as a child of God. In this regard Christian schools and missions each have their own important aspects, but they each share the common goal of leading young Christians in the way of truth; therefore they both deserve our enthusiasm and support.

Finally, both the preaching of the gospel through mission work and Christian education are important means God uses to teach antithetical living as an outworking of covenantal life. Antithetical living implies not only living holy lives separate from sin in this world, but also implies seeking the kingdom of heaven while in this world. Prof. Herman Hanko explains seeking the kingdom, making the connection to mission work and Christian education:

To seek the kingdom of heaven means...to seek the cause of God in the world, and that in distinction from the cause of the kingdoms of the world. The cause of God is represented by God’s church where the gospel is preached. All that belongs to that cause of the church and ministry of the gospel is part of that kingdom. And all that stands related to it belongs also to the manifestation of that kingdom here below. To this belongs the work of missions, the work of Christian education, the work of the home in the establishment of the covenant home, the work of every saint in his station and calling in life as he labors for the coming of the kingdom of Christ.

From this we see the importance of mission work as well as Christian education as means God uses to teach antithetical living. As Reformed Christians living in a fallen, sinful world, our high regard for the antithesis, while necessary and good, may cause us to focus heavily within our circles (especially Christian education) at the expense of our focus on our witness to the world (especially mission work). We must not forget our calling to help the cause of the spread of the gospel in whatever way we can.

Connected with this, our tendency may also be to have more enthusiasm for our Christian schools and less enthusiasm for missions simply because of the fact that for the most part we don’t live near mission fields. We do live near Christian schools. We send our children to Christian schools and we participate in Christian school functions. In this regard we are very aware of our place within the sphere of the covenant. The danger is that we become so aware and focused on our place that we become less aware of the place of God’s elect that have not yet been gathered into the sphere of the covenant. Rev. J. Kortering pleads the cause of greater mission awareness:

We can work harder in our churches, homes, and schools to stimulate mission work. Parents, teachers, as well as preachers, have a wonderful opportunity to encourage our children and youth to consider the lost. I am impressed with the willingness of the youth of the church here

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9 Form for the Administration of Baptism, in *ibid.*, 260.

Both Christian schools and missions demand a place in the life of the Christian.

On the one hand, missions are an imperative. They are a biblical mandate. Jesus Christ himself put great emphasis on them. As related in Go and make disciples!, “Each of the four Gospels ends with a ‘Great Commission’...Jesus says that his will is that his disciples take the gospel to all peoples everywhere.” Four texts are then cited: Matthew 28:18–20, Mark 16:15–18, Luke 24:44–48, and John 20:21–23.

Missions are people being sent to communicate the gospel to others. Missions include missionaries, the message that they bring, and the official calling of being sent. We perceive missions as important in many ways. We read the monthly newsletters, bulletin announcements, and blogs. We give to the collections. We hear the prayers by pastors.

On the other hand, there are Christian schools. Christian schools are also an imperative. Though one would be hard pressed to find a text that specifically mandates Christian schools, there are many texts that support Christian education. Deuteronomy 6:7 and Proverbs 22:6 are often cited. Martin Luther wrote A Sermon on Keeping Children in School. In the sermon he addressed various questions: What would happen if we did not have Christian schools? What would happen if we did not support Christian education? Why does the devil oppose Christian schools? At the dawn of the Reformation, it was immediately recognized that if the movement were to continue, consistent Bible-based education of children must be the norm. The fact that the Christian schools are opposed by the devil proves that they are important.

Christian schools are teachers training the youth in what they need to function as mature Christians in today’s society. Children, teachers, and Christ-centered education constitute the Christian schools. We perceive Christian schools as important in many ways. Children come home singing songs, telling stories, and relating chapel talks. There are homework, after-school activities, sports, and evenings with friends. Friendships are formed. Volunteers get involved. Work bees commence. There are call.” We can do better in this regard. We must do better. God gathers his own through many means, two of which are Christian education and the spread of the gospel through mission work. He uses these means to gather his own into the same covenantal fellowship with himself. In light of our place within this covenant, we are to view these means as similar in importance. With this in mind we are encouraged toward a more balanced approach to both.

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collections on Sunday, fund drives, and bulletin announcements. There is spiritual growth in the lives of the children.

Christian schools and missions are very different. The daily work associated with the school is close at hand, but the daily work associated with missions is many miles away and easily escapes our notice. Also, school work is pressing and urgent. School work needs to be done ASAP. Mission work seems like it can wait. If we don’t get to that mission work, our lives don’t change much. Further, Christian schools are felt to be an obligation by parents. Parents and teachers share the responsibility to train and educate the children. But mission work is often seen as the missionary’s job. It could easily be said, “I’m not a minister. He is. Isn’t that why we sent him, so that he can go out and preach?”

When these differences are placed next to each other, something happens. The tug and the pull and the urgency of the school tend to nudge out missions. Missions tend to get slighted. Christian schools, because of the five-day-a-week routine, weekend activities, and evening social functions, push any missions thinking right to the back of our brains. Yet there are similarities between Christian schools and missions. Each of them involves people who teach. Schools have teachers and support staff. Missionaries are themselves the teachers. Each of them has a group that they teach. There are children in the schools. There are men, women, and children on the mission field. Each of them has a message to communicate. The schools have the job of training in the three R’s, specifically using a Christ-based curriculum. The missionaries have the calling of opening up and explaining the scriptures.

Acts 2:39 applies to both: “For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” This passage names three groups. The first is you, the adults, the ones who are teaching. The second, children, are those whom we train in the Christian school. The third, those who are afar off, are the people with whom mission work is done. The promise is to all three groups. As many as are called will receive salvation in Jesus Christ. Members from each of them will be gathered into God’s covenant.

This brings us to a question. How do we do justice to both Christian schools and mission work at the same time? How do we maintain each of them without slighting either of them?

We need balance. Balance is essential when considering Christian schools and missions. Balance is a part of our lives. Every day we make decisions. We do one thing, and by doing it, we decide not to do another thing. Some things don’t make the cut. It seems that some things we never get around to.

Many factors influence balance. We all have the same limited amount of time to use every day, and we all balance it. Sometimes we run out of time at the end of the day. Sometimes we are busy with work. Each of us also has a limited amount of resources. We all have a finite amount of money. We balance it between spending, saving, and giving.

As time passes in our lives, as our resources are spent day by day, balance generally turns into habit. For example, we each have our favorite way to relax at the end of the day. Or, out of every paycheck we put a little money in the collection plate. These actions soon turn into habits. Without thinking, the habit is formed. Habits can be good. Habits can be bad. Either way, they soon form, and then we are not consciously thinking about what to do. Often we are just doing it.

Our habits are often modified. Sometimes, against our will, our habits are changed by pressing needs that are in front of us. Emergencies happen. Cars break down. Instead of going home on time, duty calls, and we work late to get the job done. Other times, we willingly change our habits. We realize that what we are eating impacts our health, so we change. We become convicted through the preaching, so we live our lives differently.

What should the balance in our lives between Christian schools and missions be driven by? Habits or something else? Our balance should be driven by our station and calling in life. Station and calling is referred to in the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 49, which refers to each man’s performing “the duties of his station and calling.”

Each of us has a station and calling. Some are students in school. Some are mothers. Some are fathers. Station and calling includes more than one thing. Using the example of a student, not only can a person be a student, but he also might be a child, sibling, co-worker, and next-door neighbor; also a friend to multiple people, a grandchild, a cousin, and a teammate.

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3 The Confessions and the Church Order of the Protestant Reformed Churches (Grandville, MI: Protestant Reformed Churches in America, 2005), 138.
A man is placed in his station and calling by God’s providence. We must attend to each aspect of our station and calling because God has placed us in that exact position. God has set before us the obligations of our lives by his providence. Station and calling are often what moves a man. Because God has determined that one is a student, the student is the one who will need to react to an incident with a fellow student. The normal, everyday situations in life are what determine our actions.

Within our station and calling we also have opportunities. Many times God obligates us to act, but we are not obligated to a particular course of action. When a pastor receives a call to be a missionary, he is obligated to give an answer, but either way he answers the call can be viewed as an opportunity to serve in a different area. Three weeks later he either continues to serve his church or he picks up his life and moves to a mission field. When the parents in a small church are fed up with the world-centered education that their children are getting fed, they have the obligation to continue to ensure their children receive a Christ-based education, but at a certain point, they have the opportunity to form a society. The obligation is to continue to educate. The opportunity is to form a school society.

This is also seen in the Good Samaritan. God placed before him an obligation to help, but not a command to help in a specific way. What did he do? He seized the opportunity, took advantage of the situation, and gave assistance. He gave his time, talents, and resources for the man whom God placed in his path.


The common thread in these three, a person’s station and calling, the Christian school, and missions, is the mixture of love with knowledge. Love knows that missions are wider than the official work of the church. Missions consist of more than just missionaries. Missions need books: shipping them, writing them, translating them. Mission fields need prayer. To pray well, you must be informed and knowledgeable. Thus they include people who visit and report back to others. Missions also include our personal witness. We evangelize. We talk to others about what God has done for us. We show concern for our neighbor.

Missions are about a mindset and a way of thinking. As Christian schools are the mindset of some, missions are the mindset of others. We must care for and love those around us enough to want to help them, to seek their good, to care for them, whether they are our children or those who are many miles away. We must pray for them.

There is a directive within our station and calling. We must prioritize our opportunities. Galatians 6:10 puts things in perspective: “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” This text speaks of opportunities. These opportunities come to us with respect to all those who cross our path. We must be willing to avail ourselves of opportunities, to think outside the box. This puts in place a priority in our station and calling. Our station and calling must be first toward those who are within our reach, but then also to those who are further away. Each must be done. We may not do one to the exclusion of the other. To emphasize one so much that we have no time for the other is failure. The imperative to do both applies even within the ranking of opportunities.

Though no two situations are the same, each of us has opportunities. Though dad works, mom is busy in the home, and the homework for the student is demanding, each will be given opportunities. What opportunities are on your path? How will you lend a hand in support of the Christian school or missions? Will you give your time to a particular aspect? What projects might you be a good fit for? Will you allocate some of your resources for a cause? What resources has God given to you as a steward to allocate? Will you be involved in the cause? Will you keep up on the writings that come out? Will you pray about these things? How will you see the opportunities that will present themselves?

Each of us has some time and resources. We need to make both Christian schools and missions a priority in our lives. By being close to both, we will see the opportunities. By becoming involved, each of us can be ready assistants within our own particular station and calling.

Darren is a second year student in the Protestant Reformed Seminary and a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

The church of Christ is a universal one. This means not only that its members are drawn from all over this earth, but that they come even from varying ethnicities and walks of life—“every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9). This diversity of the elect in my opinion is one of the most beautiful truths expressed in scripture. The spiritual descendants of Abraham truly do number greater than the sands of the seashores. This number then includes not only the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, but also members of other varying denominations, as well as peoples not even associated with any particular church. But this begs the question: how do we balance mission work with work in our own churches? Should precedence be given to one or the other? Is one more important? It seems to me that our churches have almost come to an unofficial decision in this regard that I am not sure is appropriate. Whether because of closeness to the situation, selfishness and lack of caring for missions, or whatever else, we seem to give more weight to our own schools with respect to prayer and especially to our giving. I believe it to be vital to maintain a more balanced approach to our schools and our mission work.

As far as our prayers are concerned, it seems that we focus more on our own schools than we do on foreign and domestic mission work. However, the sorts of things we typically pray about are not necessarily wrong. We often utter prayers asking for God to provide for the various support drives of our schools. There always seem to be shortfalls in the schools’ budgets, and these drives become necessary to enable the schools to continue operation. However, slightly rarer are the prayers for the accomplishing of the work of God’s servants in the mission field. Even when our thoughts are directed to mission work, how often is not the thought expressed not one of, “Grant, O God, that more ministers might be trained up, for the fields are white with harvest”? Even in praying for missions, we so frequently place the emphasis on our own situation. Certainly, it is not wrong to pray for the training up of ministers; mission work necessitates this. But this thought often seems to serve as a nice transition into speaking of our seminary, which then leads back to our schools once again. It may be better occasionally to speak in our prayers simply of the ministers already present at a mission that they might have the strength to continue to take up that labor, and for the saints affected by the spread of the gospel there that the Spirit might continually work in their hearts, causing them more and more to see what wondrous works the Lord has done.

It can be very easy to overlook mission work in our prayers in favor of our local Christian schools. The most likely reason for this is that most of the time, we are simply so far removed from missions in our churches. Even our domestic missions are many hundreds, even thousands of miles away from most of our churches. It is simply a natural thing for us to think more about what we relate more to. The only real remedy for this is to pray that God might constantly help us to hold mission work in the forefront of our minds. In the Heidelberg Catechism’s introduction to prayer (Lord’s Day 45), the question “What hath God commanded us to ask of Him?” is posed (Q & A 118). The beginning of the answer given is very interesting. We read, “All things necessary for soul and body.” While it may not be the meaning originally intended by our spiritual fathers, it may well be appropriate to apply the use of the word body in this case to the whole body of Christ. We must ask God all things necessary not only for ourselves, but for the whole of the body. This includes mission work. However, the gravity of the matter comes out not in the answer, but in the question. In asking what God commands, the Heidelberg Catechism implies that now having the answer, we view these things as our calling. This really puts a new emphasis on mission work in our prayer life.

But what of our giving to these causes? It seems that if we are doing well in one of these categories, it would necessarily be the case that we do well in
the other. However, this means the opposite is also true; whatever shortcomings we have in the one regard will transfer to the other. This holds true here as well; our giving seems to have a heavy emphasis on our local Christian schools. It frequently seems to be the case that when my own congregation’s bulletin publishes the numbers from collections, the amount given to the schools listed far outweighs the amount given to missions, whether foreign or domestic. I have noticed a similar trend in my own giving to collections as well. I frequently give more money to collections for our schools than I do to anything else, aside from the General Fund. I am beginning to see this as inappropriate.

The prompt for this essay mentioned Acts 2:39 as a verse to think about. I find it interesting that this verse is so frequently used as a proof for infant baptism because of the beginning (“For the promise is unto you, and to your children”), but we always seem to forget about the ending of the verse (“...and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call”). This seems to me to be a very good summary of how we so often think. We focus so strongly on our own children and bringing them up in the fear and admonition of the Lord that we forget the gospel is for all kinds of people—once again, “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” If we keep this thought in mind, I feel that many of us, myself included, will change our habits with regard to our giving; how could we not give to causes which promote the spread of the gospel? As Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma pointed out in an article of his, “There is a qualifying factor.” It is important to note the phrase “Even as many as the Lord our God shall call,” because the call of the gospel will not convert all mankind. However, as he also pointed out, proclaiming the gospel call is still a necessity: “By means of missions, others are called out of darkness and grafted into the vine of God’s covenant” (Bruinsma—“Defining Missions”). What a humbling thought that our offerings help in the spread of the gospel and the gathering in of the elect!

Our calling then is to find an appropriate balance between the two extremes of considering only missions and considering only our own schools and churches. Rev. Lee wrote an article in Beacon Lights a few years ago that speaks well of this idea. In it he said that it is important not only to think about Genesis 17:7, which speaks of the promise to Abraham’s children, but also verses 4 and 5, which speak of the surrounding lands, as Abraham was made the “Father of many nations.” Rev. Lee writes, “It is easy for a Reformed church to take a one-track approach to the covenant and be focused only on the covenantal duties and obligations connected with Genesis 17:7: catechism instruction and the covenantal education of our children. This other extreme is also something we do well to avoid” (Lee).

The obvious problem proceeding from this then is how to obtain a solid balance. Unfortunately, God does not give through scripture some sort of perfect formula for us to follow here. He never tells us to pray or give three parts to our schools for every two parts to foreign and domestic missions. He never even implies that this is supposed to be an even 50-50 split. Rather, this is something for which we simply must continually pray for guidance. We must pray that we not only give proper emphasis to the future of the established church through the education of our own children, but also to the spread of the gospel through the work of missions. In so doing, we must pray that God gives us an added measure of grace continually to resist the temptations that lead us to give wrongful emphasis to one side of the spectrum or the other. For example, when we find ourselves focusing too much on our own schools, we must guard against selfishness. When the focus is almost entirely on mission work, we must step back and remain careful that we are not operating out of a desire to Christianize the world.

Finding a proper balance between these two kingdom causes can be difficult. I am not trying to insinuate that our churches should seek always to have a perfectly even hand in our prayers and giving, nor am I saying that we are necessarily even very far from where we should be. But I do think we have some amount of work to do in this regard. In my own admittedly limited experience, missions seem to always take a back seat to our schools. As Rev. Bruinsma wrote in another article, “…if we see [mission work] only as a secondary labor of the church, we do injustice to the truth of God’s covenant” (Bruinsma—“God’s Covenant”). We should never allow ourselves to slip into the thinking that the conflict between giving of our thoughts, prayers, and monetary gifts to missions or to our schools is as it were an “us vs. them” situation. We are all unified by the blood of the Lamb, which redeems God’s people out of “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.”
I was never required to take a foreign language class until I got to college. A few foreign language classes were offered at my high school, while my grade school did little to nothing with foreign language. As far as I can tell, this seems to be the case in most of our Protestant Reformed grade schools and high schools. Foreign language is not a common topic in catechism classes or a point of discussion in sermons or societies. While our schools are lacking in the foreign language department—be it from lack of qualified teachers, interest, or resources—public schools are rapidly expanding their foreign language departments. Are we forgetting the importance of foreign language in our own schools and churches? I believe knowledge of foreign languages and the ability to speak them is very important for all believers in their place in the kingdom of God.

So important is language to God that Word is used in the Bible to speak about God himself or his Son. As sinful, earthly men we weren’t able to fully comprehend this Word that was God the Father. Therefore Christ, being very God and very man, came to us in a way that we could understand. He became like unto us for our benefit. The Word came to earth as a man. Lord’s Day 14 (Q & A 35) explains Christ’s incarnation, “What do you confess when you say: He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary? The eternal Son of God, who is and remains true and eternal God, took upon himself true human nature from the flesh and blood of the virgin Mary, through the working of the Holy Spirit. Thus he is also the true seed of David, and like his brothers in every respect, yet without sin.”

Just as God came to us in a way that we could understand—Christ as very man, so must we approach others in a way that they can understand—in their native languages. Coming to someone in their native language shows respect for that person. By learning other languages besides our own, we respect the uniqueness and diversity of all the different cultures God has created. While this creation is full of diversity, we should also be seeking unity. Genesis 11:6 reads, “And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” There is power in unity. By learning other languages, we seek to unify ourselves with the people of that culture.

Learning someone else’s language in order to bring the word to them in an understandable way also shows love for that person. It shows that you care enough about them and their salvation that you would put the time and work into learning their language. Not only does it show love for the other person, but it also shows a humble spirit. You are admitting that your language is not better than another, and by implication, that your culture or group of people is not superior or more loved by God than any other, for God tells us in Revelation 7:9 that the elect shall be gathered from “all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues.”

I believe that foreign languages have importance...
for every believer, whatever their role in the kingdom may be. For some members of the church, the importance of foreign language to them is clearer. Missionaries must learn the language of whatever group of people they are ministering to in order to build relationships built on trust, respect, and community. Ministers in general could benefit from a more general knowledge of different languages, especially the prevalent minority languages in the area they are serving. If someone would come to the church seeking information about what we believe, the minister being able to communicate somewhat with that person would give credibility to what the minister says and show a welcoming attitude.

It would be a great resource for our churches to have evangelism committee members and writers who were familiar with more than one language. The purpose of evangelism committees is to get the word into every area of the world in order to bring about Christ’s second coming, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come” (Matt. 24:14). Thankfully we have translators who are able to assist in this process, but if we had these resources within our own churches the process could be much more efficient and powerful. Article 2 of the Belgic Confession of Faith discusses how we know God: “…Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.” The Bible is one of the primary tools by which we know God, and yet many do not have access to this great resource because of language barriers. Translating scripture and religious materials into all the languages of the world is one way to fulfill our calling from Mark 16:15, “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”

Knowledge of and appreciation for foreign languages should also be important for our teachers. One purpose for this would be so that our schools can offer more foreign language classes. But a simpler purpose is that if our teachers appreciate the diversity found in cultures and languages around the world, they can instill this appreciation into their students. Children will grow up being more aware of the fact that the body of believers is made up of people from every nation, tribe and tongue. This knowledge will help our children to be less self-centered and could spur on more passion towards missions.

Christian businessmen should also recognize the importance of foreign languages and should consider learning another language. As a college student, I am frequently told that if I want to make myself more hirable, I should become fluent in a foreign language. Large corporations already do a good job of marketing to other cultures and areas of the world because they have employees who can form relationships with these people in their native languages. Businessmen know that in order to be successful, they need to be able to form relationships built on trust and respect. Christian businessmen could be more of a witness around the world by learning different languages so that they can do honest, trustworthy business with other groups of people.

Ministers, evangelism committee members, teachers, and businessmen might benefit the most from knowing another language, but general knowledge about different languages and therefore different cultures as well, is important for every believer. It is neither expected nor practical that every believer be fluent in many different languages. Simply realizing that not everyone speaks the same language as us or comes from the same background helps us to be more aware and appreciative of the diversity God created in this world. It also encourages us to know and understand our doctrine thoroughly so that we might be able to explain it clearly and simply to someone we might come into acquaintance with who only has a limited vocabulary in our language. God places opportunities for each and every one of us to be witnesses out in the world and an appreciation and knowledge of foreign languages will help us to become better witnesses.

References


Dallas is a college senior pursuing a teaching degree.
Read Psalm 134

The master painter for Pharaoh’s tomb is under constant surveillance. He has to go through security every time he leaves or returns to the pyramid, and must always leave his tools at the site. He lives in a special village built specifically for the pyramid laborers and is always watched there as well. Yet, he and many of his friends still manage to steal from the very tombs in which they work on a regular basis. The underground network is vast, even encompassing the tomb of the governor and the police chief.

Psalm 134:1 says, “Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, which by night stand in the house of the Lord.” Matthew Henry explains that some of the Levites had to stand guard in the temple to keep the precious items from being stolen. This was something I had never thought of before, but hearing it made me think of this real tomb robbery story we learned about last year in ancient world history class. Wicked man loves money and will do whatever he can to obtain it. This is the type of hunger we need for spiritual riches.

Sing or pray Psalter #172.

Read Psalm 134; Numbers 6:22–27

“Behold!” Pay attention! You are in God’s presence! He has promised to bless you! God’s blessings are the only thing we need to fill us with joy. His blessings, blessings of the covenant, communion with God, and all other spiritual blessings, are the best blessings, better than any earthly blessing. Furthermore, it is the God who made heaven and earth who blesses us; therefore, we know that he has all possible blessings at his disposal and can and will perform them. Finally, we ought to pray for these blessings not only for ourselves, but for others also.

God taught Moses and Aaron to bless the people of Israel in Numbers 6:24–26: “The Lord bless thee and keep thee: The Lord make his face to shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” God then promises at the very end of verse 27, “…and I will bless them.”

Sing or pray Psalter #228.

Read Psalm 135:1–5

Our God is great and greatly to be praised. These verses in Psalm 135 lay out three reasons for praise, as explained by Matthew Henry. First, we must praise God because he is good. The word good is generally used to describe something that is desirable, but not overly so. We are not desirable of ourselves. All we can do is sin in our old man. God, on the other hand, is the only one to be desired. Second, we praise God because it makes us joyful. In our new man, we enjoy singing praises to our God. We seek his will and not our own. Third, we praise God because of all he has done for us. Through his goodness, he has sent his Son to die the accursed death on the cross to save us from our sins, which makes us sing songs of joy out of gratitude. We need to be mindful of all these reasons for praise when we come to our God in prayer.

Sing or pray Psalter #373.

Read Deuteronomy 3:1–8

In Psalm 135 we read about how God slew the great kingdoms of Sihon and Og, who lived in the promised land, and gave them to his people Israel. We can learn more about these stories earlier in the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 2 and Numbers 21, Israel asked Sihon if they could travel through his land. They promised not to touch anything on their way through, but Sihon would have none of it. Instead of causing him to worship God and seek peace with Israel, the defeat of his fellow Amorite king only made Og more eager to fight God’s people. Both kings were utterly destroyed. Deuteronomy 3:3 says that the Israelites smote Og “until none was left to him remaining.” Not just the warriors, but also the women and children were slaughtered. These were mighty kingdoms with scores of cities, and Israel completely wiped them off the face of the earth. Truly God had given them a mighty victory, which is only a picture of the victory that is ours through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Sing or pray Psalter #16.
November 12

Read Psalm 135:6–12

There’s a physical battle going on inside your body right now. Most of the time we aren’t even aware of it, but the ongoing warfare between cells and viruses is real. Viruses are blindly aimed at destruction. All they want to do is get into the cell’s nucleus and replicate themselves thousands of times until the cell can no longer contain them and bursts. Viruses keep coming up with new ways to attack the cell, and the cell must adapt as well in order to ward them off. Our cells are constantly forced with the decision to change or die.

Wicked men and nations are merely tools used by God to obtain his purpose. They think they are thwarting all of God’s plans when they are actually just acting in accordance with them. The more the Egyptians persecuted the Israelites, the more they thrived. The more wicked nations attacked Israel, as Sihon and Og did, the more prosperous and powerful God’s people became. In the same way, the more the viruses try to defeat the cell, the stronger the cell gets. God gives us so many pictures of spiritual things in creation, and this is just one more example.

Sing or pray Psalter #145.

November 13

Read Genesis 4:19–24

These verses in Genesis 4 talk about the three famous sons of wicked Lamech. These men were extremely skilled. They were people that the world would look up to. It’s interesting to see how often the earthly strength of wicked men is brought out in Scripture. King Og, mentioned in Psalm 135, was also a very imposing figure. From Deuteronomy 3:11 we can glean that he was probably close to the size of Goliath! We don’t read these same things about the people of God. Although Genesis talks about the great deeds of the children of Cain, these kinds of things aren’t mentioned in the line of Seth.

Why would God include these details that seem to glorify wicked man? He’s showing us that worldly might means nothing without him. You think you’re special because you are skilled in music, Jubal? Well, God can make the rocks themselves sing forth his praises. You think you’re great because of all the earthly wealth you have, Jabal? Well, it all vanishes the moment you die. You’re impressed with yourself for inventing things, Tubal-cain? Well, God created the entire universe in just six, twenty-four hour days.

Sing or pray Psalter #375.

November 14

Read Psalm 135:1–7

Psalm 135:7 reads, “He causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.” Fire and water don’t mix. Water poured on a fire will extinguish it, and a blazing fire will cause water to evaporate quickly. Yet, God uses these together in the storm. The water and fire come down from the heavens, neither eliminating the other.

Water and fire are used throughout scripture to show God’s power. We baptize our children with water, which is a picture of the fire baptism performed by the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist brings this out in Matthew 3:11, where he says, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire.” God has already destroyed his creation once, and he will do it again at the end. The first judgment took place through water, and the second judgment will happen with fire. In the storm, God shows us his power to judge the world and preserve his people.

Sing or pray Psalter #128.

November 15

Read Job 38:1–15

One of my favorite classes in high school was Cults class. It was very interesting to learn about what some of these false religions teach. Out of all of them, I probably remember what we learned about Mormons the best. Mormons believe that Jesus is our brother, and just like this universe was given to him, we can each have our own universe when we die. By “we” I mean men, of course. Women can attain this glorious afterlife only by marrying a man who has done so.

In Psalm 135:5, the psalmist writes, “For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.” Of course, this doesn’t mean that there are other gods and that God is just the most powerful among them, but that there are NO other gods. Believing in lesser gods would be bad enough, but the Mormons go even further than that, claiming that we can all be equal with God. In Job 38, God asks Job where he was when God did all his mighty works, showing plainly that he is in complete control and none can stand before him.

Sing or pray Psalter #275.

November 16

Read Psalm 135:8–14

Psalm 135:14 reads, “For the Lord will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.” I think Matthew Henry does a good job of explaining this verse. According to him, we see here two ways in which God shows his kindness to us. First, he judges for his people, so that they are preserved. We see how he has done that throughout history in the preceding verses, with Israel’s deliverance from Egypt and entrance into the Land of Canaan. Second, God is merciful to us and shows love to us, weak though we are. We know how easily we can become frustrated with one another, but God is not like us. He is always longsuffering towards his people. Israel forsook God many times throughout their history, but he always brought them back “with a strong hand and a stretched out arm” (Ps. 136:12). The same is true for us, the New Testament Israel. God may remove
himself from us for a time when we fall into sin, but we have the wonderful assurance that he will always call us back to himself and never forsake us.

Sing or pray Psalter #13.

Read Psalm 135:15–21

These verses demonstrate the senselessness of trusting in idols. How could you put your trust in something you created? If you created it, doesn’t that mean that you are stronger than it? Idols created with men’s hands don’t even have the ability to sense things that we do. They can’t do anything. Those who trust in something this hopeless are no better themselves. They have earthly senses, but no real understanding. They are spiritually dead.

These things are so blatantly obvious to us, yet we do the same thing when we exalt ourselves above God. We like to think we don’t do this, but that is indeed what we are doing whenever we fail to put our trust in him or submit to his will. We are telling God that we, whom he has created with his own hands, know better than him. We must always praise God alone, as we are commanded in this chapter, for “whosoever the Lord pleaseth, that did he…” (Ps. 135:6a).

Sing or pray Psalter #308.

Read Psalm 136:1–9

Psalm 136:8, 9 say that God made the sun “to rule by day” and the moon and stars “to rule by night.” These heavenly bodies rule us in many different ways. Our lives are governed by time. We need time to tell us when to get up, when to go to work, when to have meetings, etc. Without it, we are helpless. There are many accounts of people becoming insane in dark prison cells because they had no light and no sense of time. Speaking of light, that is another reason these things rule us. We need light to work. Without light, all activity ceases, as it did at the time of the plagues in Egypt and during the three hours of darkness when Jesus hung on the cross. Another way in which the moon rules us is by controlling the tides. The moon’s gravitational pull on earth causes the oceans facing the moon to bulge outward, creating a high tide. You experience a low tide when the moon is perpendicular to your location on earth. These are just a few of the ways in which the heavenly bodies rule our lives.

Sing or pray Psalter #378.

Read Psalm 136:10–26

“Heaven and the Confessions that, apart from the saving grace of God shown only to those that are elect unto eternal life, there is also a certain favor or grace of God which He shows to His creatures in general.” This is the First Point of Common Grace adopted by the Christian Reformed Church in 1924. A refutation of this teaching can be found at prca.org, a portion of which reads, “The truth is that grace is not in things. All things are but means which God uses to the salvation of the righteous (elect) while He uses them to the destruction and damnation of the wicked (reprobate).” We see that in this passage regarding the Red Sea. The same thing that was a passageway of deliverance to God’s people was a passageway into hell for the Egyptians. Things are good of themselves, but the wicked can only use them to make their damnation all the greater.

Sing or pray Psalter #376.

Read Psalm 137

In Psalm 137 a picture is given us of the faithful people of Israel weeping by the rivers of a foreign land. They wept deliberate tears, tears of consideration as they remembered Zion, the holy hill on which the temple was built. They did not weep for their own lost homes, but for God’s house.

These mourning Israelites sat by the rivers and hung their harps in the willows, for they were so sad that they had no heart to use them. While they had the hope that someday they would have reason to play them again, at this present time, God had “turned their feasting into mourning, and their songs into lamentations” (Amos 8:10). That their enemies would command them to sing songs of Zion was cruel. Similar to when Belshazzar drank wine from the golden temple cups, they sought to mock God and his people.

Jeremiah wrote in Lamentations 1:7, “Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.”

Sing or pray Psalter #379.

Read Psalm 137

As we said yesterday, in this psalm the Babylonians are mocking God’s people and commanding them to sing one of the songs of Zion. Music is a powerful thing. It stirs up our emotions. Any little child will demonstrate this by skipping around the room when a lively tune is heard. Music also has the power to help us commit words to memory. We know that the psalms were sung and we use our own Psalter today to sing them. We can all attest to the fact that it is much easier to memorize a Psalter number than the actual verses that number is generated from.

Music is a very powerful tool that has been given us,
and we must be on guard against using it in the wrong way. The songs of the world exalt every sin imaginable, and it can be easy for us to sing these songs without even thinking about what we are saying. Popular songs today are laced with profanities, premarital sex, and murder. Just as the Babylonians mocked the spiritual songs of their captives, so the world today mocks us with its complete corruption of this gift. May we never take part in it.

Sing or pray Psalter #222.

**Read Psalm 137**

That which we love, we love to think about. These faithful Israelites who wept by the rivers of a foreign land loved God and therefore God’s house. Some of them had never seen or been to Mt. Zion, and yet they wept for its ruin. They mourned for the house of God. It was a love like David wrote about in Psalm 69:9, “For the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up.”

Furthermore, these Israelites steadfastly resolved to never forget Zion. Psalm 137:5 says, “If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.” They desired to be unable to play their harps if they forgot Zion and its songs. They wanted to remember it and desired it above their chief earthly joy. “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth,” said David in Psalm 26:8.

Do we love God and his house above our chief earthly joy? If separated from God’s house, would we pray, “If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth” (Ps. 137:6)?

Sing or pray Psalter #380.

**Read Obadiah**

Revelation 13:10 says, “He that leadeth into captivity shall go into captivity: he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword. Here is the patience and the faith of the saints.” This is what the Israelites prayed for at the end of Psalm 137. They desired that the Babylonians be destroyed.

The Israelites did not wish only for Babylon’s destruction, but also for the destruction of Edom. Edom had been a neighbor of the kingdom of Israel, and when Babylon’s army surrounded Jerusalem, the Edomites helped them and rejoiced when Jerusalem fell. Those who rejoice at the calamities of God’s people shall not go unnoticed. God will remember them at the day of judgment and they shall be punished. The book of Obadiah is all about the judgment of God upon the Edomites. First, it gives the reasons for Edom’s destruction. Verse 12 says, “...nor shouldst thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction...” Then it tells Edom’s fate. Verse 15 says, “...as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.”

Sing or pray Psalter #148.

**Read Psalm 138**

The last verse of this chapter is a tough one to read. Just the thought of reading this verse in a room full of Christian haters makes me break out in a sweat. I can just imagine the looks of shock and disgust.

“You really believe that? This is why the world needs to get rid of hate-filled people like you!”

This is the word of God, and we must not contradict it, but how do we explain such a gruesome statement to our own children and the world around us? In order to understand this verse, we must understand that we aren’t speaking about doing this to any specific person we meet in this life. This verse refers to the hatred we have for evil. We desire the destruction of all those who seek to destroy our God. However, it isn’t for us to know who is saved and not saved in this life. Therefore we seek the destruction of the wicked, but desire the salvation of every person who crosses our path, for we do not know the thoughts of the heart.

Sing or pray Psalter #156.

**Read Psalm 138**

David’s use of the word gods in Psalm 138:1 refers to the kings and mighty leaders of the nations around him. He will worship before them with his face towards God’s holy temple as God has commanded. David hopes that his godly example will cause these heathen rulers to worship God also. “All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth” (Ps. 138:4).

We also must be a godly example to the people we interact with every day. Whether it be our boss or our children, our classmates or our little league teammates, our grandmother or our next-door neighbor, all must see by our words and works that we love our God. May it never be said of us that we give cause to those around us to ridicule and blaspheme God. Instead, they must be moved to praise God with us. Then we can say with David in Psalm 138:5, “Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.”

Sing or pray Psalter #381.

**Read Luke 16:19–31; 1 Cor. 1:25–31**

David writes in Psalm 138:6, “Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” In the parable of Lazarus, Lazarus was a perfect example of lowliness, eating the crumbs from under the rich man’s table. Yet he loved God, and when he died he was carried up to heaven. The rich man however, who was “clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day”, did not love God. In hell, he lifted up his eyes to heaven where he could see Lazarus and begged for a drop of water from his finger. Of course, Lazarus could not bring
him a drop of water, for the “gulf” between heaven and hell is too great to be crossed.

In 1 Corinthians 1:28, the apostle Paul writes, “And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hast God chosen...” 1 Peter 5:6 states, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” May the Lord help us to be humble. Sing or pray Psalter #104.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–10
Continuing with the theme of humility from yesterday, Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:10 says of the other apostles, “I labored more abundantly than they all.” If we were to take this statement by itself, it would seem as if Paul was being very prideful here. In actuality, he was exhibiting much humility. This is shown in a couple different ways. First, Paul makes this clear in the surrounding verses. Immediately before this phrase, Paul confesses that he is not even worthy to be called an apostle for his persecution of the church. Then, immediately after this phrase, he states, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.” Second, this must have taken much humility to be able to say without it becoming prideful. I can’t even imagine being able to do this myself. Again, in Psalm 138:6, we read, “Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.” God used Paul greatly in spreading the gospel, for he was lowly. We pray that God grant us that humility, that we may be able to make such bold confessions with a clean heart.

Sing or pray Psalter #366.

Read Psalm 138
We just heard a sermon preached on the third commandment in which the uniqueness and power of God’s name was explained. Seminarian Feenstra clearly explained how God’s name is different from ours, because God is his name. We know God through his name. One example that was given was God’s name proclaimed at the burning bush, “I AM THAT I AM.” This name of God shows that he is unchanging God’s name is explained. Psalm 138:19–24 says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” What a bold confession! I look at myself and have a hard time seeing how I could make it. I know my sins and the evil thoughts of my heart. Why would I call on God to “see if there be any wicked way in me”? Wouldn’t I just be bringing God’s judgment upon myself? Also, do I really hate those who hate God with a perfect hatred? I know in my heart that I love God with a perfect hatred? I know in my heart that I love God

Read Hebrews 11:1–6
Psalm 139:5, 6 say, “Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.” There is so much that we cannot comprehend, because our minds are bound by time, space, and sin. We can’t comprehend how God can truly be three in one. We can’t comprehend how God himself could be made man. We can’t comprehend how God formed such an intricate yet vast creation in six days. We can’t comprehend where heaven is. We can’t comprehend what heaven is like. We can’t comprehend the idea of eternity. We can’t comprehend perfection. We can’t comprehend the fact that God has no beginning. We can’t comprehend the fullness of God’s love for us. We can’t fully understand any of these things, but we know that they are true. How? We know these things by faith, which is “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

Sing or pray Psalter #382.

Read Jeremiah 1:1–10
People usually talk about how tiny a newborn baby is, but to me they seem enormous. I didn’t always think this way. My perspective quickly changed when I had children of my own. Immediately after my daughters were born, I couldn’t believe that that entire person had been living inside my wife! I held the baby, looked at my wife’s belly, and couldn’t wrap my mind around how the whole child fit in there.

As you can imagine, your body is required to operate slightly differently in order to allow another person to grow inside of it. This process is so amazing that it clearly reveals the hand of God. For one thing, a woman’s blood supply grows by up to 50% during pregnancy! As if that isn’t crazy enough, she grows a whole new organ, the placenta, to house the child during its nine-month stay inside her! Something this amazing could only be the work of God, as brought out in Jeremiah 1:5 and Psalm 139:13. Here is yet another reason to praise him: “for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Ps. 139:14).

Sing or pray Psalter #383.

Read Psalm 139:19–24
Psalm 139:23, 24 says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” What a bold confession! I look at myself and have a hard time seeing how I could make it. I know my sins and the evil thoughts of my heart. Why would I call on God to “see if there be any wicked way in me”? Wouldn’t I just be bringing God’s judgment upon myself? Also, do I really hate those who hate God with a perfect hatred? I know in my heart that I love God
and hate evil, but so often I fail to speak out as I ought.
This bold confession leads us right to Christ. It’s only through him that we can make it. We’re born totally depraved, but we have been given a new heart through Christ’s shed blood on the cross. In that new heart, we truly do seek to do what is pleasing to God. Sin remains against our will in us, but we are fighting the battle of faith and building up our treasures in heaven.

Sing or pray Psalter #384.

Read Psalm 140
In this psalm, David is asking God for deliverance from the evildoer and that judgment might come upon that evildoer. Wicked man is described here as being like a serpent, being violent and being proud. This last one can especially hit home for us, because we all know how much we struggle with pride. We listen to the sermon and really hope that this or that person is listening to this point that we believe they really need to hear. We enjoy showing off our God-given talents in front of people so everyone can see how good we are. We are quick to see the sin in others, but so slow to see it in ourselves. We need to be reminded that pride is not something to be taken lightly. It is one of the key characteristics of the wicked man, and will not go unpunished. “Pride goes before destruction,” as it says in Proverbs 16:18. We must strive to get that adder’s poison out of our mouth and our mind.

Sing or pray Psalter #81.

Read 2 Samuel 17:1–14
As we stated yesterday, in Psalm 140 David is praying for deliverance from the “evil man.” In verse one, it appears that there is one chief enemy, for it says “evil man” and “violent man.” Yet in the rest of the psalm it refers to “they” and “their”. David had many enemies. Not only did they seek to kill him, but they also sought to draw him into sin. All this they did subtly. They aimed to destroy him and turn others against him secretly. Ahithophel is a perfect example of a secret enemy. While pretending to be David’s friend and counselor, he secretly joined Absalom and gave him advice on how to steal David’s throne. When David heard of Ahithophel’s betrayal, he prayed for God’s help. 2 Samuel 15:31 says, “…And David said, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counsel of Ahithophel into foolishness.” In 2 Samuel 17 we read about how God answered David’s prayer. In the end Ahithophel hangs himself. Psalm 140:9 says, “As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.”

Sing or pray Psalter #385.

Read Proverbs 9:1–9
I remember a friend bringing a coworker to church when we were teenagers. Our group had a good time joking around after the service, as usual. The next day, my friend confronted me. He told me that his coworker was less than impressed with my attitude following the worship service. He gently reminded me that we are called to be a positive witness for the truth, not a negative one. I was ashamed, and I’ve never forgotten that conversation. I was so busy trying to fit in and look cool, that I sought the praise of men over the praise of God.

In Psalm 141:5a, David says, “Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.” Proverbs 9:8 says, “Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.” David and Solomon saw what a blessing it was to receive correction from our brothers and sisters in Christ. Reproof is never easy to take, but we are all called to watch over one another and help each other walk the pathway to heaven.

Sing or pray Psalter #1.

Read Psalm 141
Psalm 141:6 reads, “When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.” This verse comes right after the verse about receiving reproof from fellow saints, which we talked about last time. Here, David asks that God might work in the hearts of his persecutors to receive reproof from him, according to Matthew Henry. We must always remember that it isn’t for us to know who is saved and who is not in this life. David himself is the ultimate example here. Saul hunted David to try and kill him, yet David continued to show respect to Saul and desire his salvation. We must show earnest desire for the salvation of all those who cross our path by humbly proclaiming the good news of the gospel to them and bringing gentle reproof when they live in open contradiction to God’s law.

Sing or pray Psalter #264.

Read Psalm 141
Just look at the terrorism that abounds today and you can easily see that we live in dark days. There seems to be a new terrorist attack every week. Most of these attacks involve suicide bombings, some even performed by children. It is amazing to see how blind wicked man is in his aim to destroy all that is holy. These people tell themselves that they have a heaven waiting for them where they can satisfy all the evil lusts of the flesh, and then they “fall into their own nets” (Ps. 141:10). They happily rush straight to their own destruction. In their efforts to destroy Christianity, they only succeed in destroying themselves. Death for God’s people is just the passage
The world declares to you, young brothers and sisters, that you never have enough and that you always need more: “More! More! More! Of what God has not given you, of what God has not promised, and of what God has not willed for you to have, you need that and need more of that.” The world declares, “Set your hearts upon the earthly good gifts of this life. Covet after those things because you can never get enough. Get more!”

That is the spiritual message of the big Friday sale ads that you may read in the newspaper later this week.

In this world of covetousness and in the coming weeks of much materialism, what a refreshing and peaceful confession it is to hear, “I have enough!” Nevertheless, be sure that you confess a contentment that is true to Christ. Do not confess as Esau and as many in the world and church world do: “I have enough.” Instead, confess as the repentant, humble Jacob did: “I have enough.”

**Enough of What?**

Both Esau and Jacob said, according to Genesis 33:9–11, “I have enough,” and it seemed true outwardly.

Esau was a very great man when he met Jacob. Esau was very wealthy, as Isaac had prophesied. He owned the whole region around Mt. Seir, southeast of Canaan. From Esau came the mighty nations of Edom and Amalek. (Gen. 36) Esau had many servants, soldiers, much cattle, and many children. From an earthly viewpoint, it seemed true that Esau had enough.

Though rich and powerful, this Esau was ungodly. Although he seems like a nice, honourable man, who reconciles outwardly with Jacob and who even professes to be content, he was ungodly. He lived away from Isaac and from the land of Canaan to serve his own gods. He married two daughters of pagan Heth and an ungodly wife from the line of Ishmael. He did not care about God’s covenant or the promise. His heart was set upon earthly wealth and power. This is the Esau whom God hated and had rejected (Mal. 1:3) and who confessed, “I have enough.”

Jacob also had many earthly gifts and earthly wealth. Like Esau, he had much cattle, many servants, and a large family.

However, Jacob actually had many things Esau did not have. Jacob had the birthright blessing. A few days before meeting Esau, Jacob was greeted by a host of the angels of God when he stepped into Canaan at Mahanaim. Jacob had seen God face to face the night before. Jacob had a new name: Israel. Jacob had the blessing of Jehovah. This is godly Jacob whom God loved according to election and who confessed, “I have enough!”

What did they mean when they each said, “I have enough”? They meant two entirely different things.
When Esau said, “I have enough,” a literal translation would read, “I have so very much.” In that he meant something like this: “I am strong, successful, wise, and powerful. I have so much that I do not have any needs. If I did have a need, then I could fulfil it myself. I have secured my wealth, kingdom, and glory. Enough I have, indeed.”

From that perspective, Esau refused Jacob’s presents. He had enough earthly things to satisfy his soul. Having all of that wealth and power, he could forgive Jacob, especially because Jacob’s past sin no longer stood in the way of his desire and ability to get the wealth and power that he coveted. He had enough, and in that enough he had a carnal contentment.

Listen carefully to the world in this week of Thanksgiving. You might hear on Thursday the wicked, with bellies full, confess, “I have enough,” but then the next day at the infamous Friday sales covet and pursue the things that the stores have to offer so that then they can exclaim with full shopping carts on the way out of the stores, “Now I have enough.”

Many in the world, who do not have Esau’s kind of wealth today, certainly covet the day when they can say, “I have enough.” There are sincere and faithful Buddhists, Hindu disciples, Muslims, or Roman Catholics who say on the basis of what they believe, what they have, and what they have done, “I have enough.” The Esaus of the church world claim the same confession. The Pope and his hierarchy in their heresy and man-centered religion say, “We have enough!” Such is the false, vain, foundation-less contentment of the ungodly.

In contrast, Jacob’s “I have enough” is a confession of substance. Jacob literally said, “I have all things.” He meant that because he did have all things, he needed no more. That is true. What more does one need, if he has all things?

Now, was this the old Jacob making a boastful, competing confession before Esau? His older brother had just said, “I have much.” Does Jacob, as competing brothers might do on occasion, now say in response, “I have all things?” Is Jacob trying to outdo his brother?

We understand that this is a true confession of Jacob by faith. Jacob did have all things. When he fought with God the night before, he received the blessing of Jehovah. He had the host of God’s angels protecting him for the sake of the coming of the seed of Christ. He had the covenant promises of Jehovah. He had God as his God and friend-sovereign. He had everything because Jehovah had him from eternity. Indeed, he did have all things.

That is the kind of full and true thanksgiving and contentment that we must desire. You as children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob must confess the same thing, not as Esau, but as Jacob. Do not merely say this week, “I have enough,” according to how much turkey and pumpkin pie with whipped cream you might eat. Let us not give thanks according to how much money and how many possessions we have been given. Rather, profess a true and satisfied confession of contentment. Say, “I have enough because Jehovah is my God and he has given me all these things as a blessing!”

**Why?**

Esau’s confession in his thanksgiving had a sinful reason. Esau based his confession on himself. Esau was proud. He thought that he had made himself powerful and wealthy. He concluded that he had enough because he was Esau. On that vain basis, Esau declared that he had many things.

What foolishness. He thought that he could satisfy his soul with his earthly wealth. Yet there was one obvious thing that he did not have: true wealth towards God. What would all of his money and possessions do for him in the day of judgment? It would amount to nothing before God, except to serve as many witnesses to his inexcusable unbelief and pride against Jehovah. Esau’s confession was a proud, self-centered boast in which he rejected the God of Jacob for his life and future. He believed that he had his “enough” without Jacob and the God of Jacob.

Very similar is the basis for what seems to be impressive thanksgiving among the unbelieving in the world and church world today. Man declares that he has enough because of himself or his gods. For many, the reason for their “enough” is their skill, power, or money. For the religious in the world, the reason for their “enough” might be Buddha, Vishnu, Shiva, Allah, an idol god, a spirit god, or the benevolent spirits of dead relatives. We can expect that in the day of antichrist, the man of sin himself will declare that the reason for his “enough” is himself. The antichrist will thank himself. In full pride, he will confess, “I have enough now, I have all things, and I have my kingdom on earth because I am god. Thanks and worship be to me.” That will be the climax of man’s boast of vain contentment.
throughout history.

Although wicked men may boast that they have all things, man lacks everything because he will never have God. The very same God that he refuses to thank will judge and destroy him. The thankful Esau of the church world have nothing: they do not have God.

That is important for us to realize when we observe the thanksgiving of the world and the false church. The ungodly, both rich and poor, may with their allotment of goods appear outwardly content. In all their prosperity or lack thereof, they have nothing. They do not have God according to his sovereign good pleasure.

However, we learn to give thanks unto Jehovah in life for a beautiful reason. Jacob said, “because God hath dealt graciously with me.” (v. 10) Implied in his confession is a godly statement such as this: “I have dealt sinfully towards God. I have mistrusted him countless times. I have filled my days with sin against God for which I deserve to be punished by him. In spite of all I have done, God has dealt with me in his eternal grace. He has redeemed me from my sin, from idolatry, from false doctrine, and from a trust in myself. God is my God, and therefore I have become his son. God has blessed me and given me a new name, Israel. Because God has graciously dealt with me, I do have enough.”

That was a confession of the forgiveness of his sin and the eternal life with Jehovah that was his through the atonement of the substitutionary death of the coming Messiah. Jacob confessed that all of his possessions were not the evidence of his power or skill. Rather, the benefits of his earthly wealth and his children that he had received from Jehovah were solely evidence of the grace of God to him. He had left Canaan empty because of his sin. However, Jehovah brought Jacob home full because of his grace. For that reason alone, Jacob could say, “I have enough. I have all things.”

Indeed, Jacob did have all things. He had Jehovah. He had the Christ in the promise and in his generations through Judah. In Christ, Jacob did have all things: life with Jehovah, an inheritance in the new heavens and earth, the final resurrection, and everlasting riches, far surpassing the total earthly wealth of Jacob, Esau, and all the kingdoms of the earth to this day.

What is the basis of your confession of faith and true thanksgiving: “I have all things?” Is it a proud boast? Is it something in us? No, it must never be that.

Our thanksgiving must be based carefully upon the eternal grace of God in Christ Jesus, which motivates God to give us our stuff as a real and lasting benefit. Let us confess, “I have enough, not because of me. I am just like Jacob, sinner. I have enough today only because God has dealt graciously with me. In fact, because of his grace alone in Christ alone, I have all things.”

**When?**

For Esau and man in general, the correct answer is that they never have enough. Unbelievers may boast that they have enough and forever. But the fact is that Esau, the world, and those like Esau throughout history always have nothing: nothing from eternity, nothing from birth, nothing in this life, and nothing in their death. In all his earthly prosperity, Esau had nothing, except for God’s curse, death, and destruction. In fact, the wicked in this life are judged by God in their false contentment by soon thereafter falling quickly back into the sin of covetousness. The thanksgiving and contentment of the unbeliever is fleeting, moveable, empty, and cursed.

But not so with the believing Jacobs. They have enough always.

Now let us be honest before the word of God. We do not always confess that we have enough always. As believers, we struggle with our old nature regarding God’s distribution of earthly things to us in our different circumstances in life. Often we fall into the sin of discontent and unthankfulness.

“God gives me only $100 today: I want $100 more. God gives me only one bowl of rice: I demand two more. God gives me long, straight hair; I want short, curly hair. God gave me a height of 5’ 10”: I want 5” more. God gave me a clunker of a car for transportation or no car at all, so that I must take public transit: I demand a new car. God gave me sickness: I want the health he did not will. God took away my dear friend through death to glory afterward: I want my friend back here with me.” So we speak according to our old nature in selfishness and unbelief.

In our murmuring against God, our confession of unbelief is, “I never have enough. I never have all things. I never get what I really want and what I think that I need. Thus I don’t have any reason to be thankful and happy.”

From that you and I must repent. Every day.
Christ by his Spirit calls us to faith and trust in him, and unto the confession that we do have in him alone all things always. We always have the blessing of Jehovah for the sake of Christ. (Ps. 3:8). We have that blessing only because God graciously deals with us always for Christ’s sake alone (2 Tim. 1:9). We have at God’s right hand our advocate, our Lord, who was crucified and raised again, in whom God sees us as righteous. (1 John 2:1–2). In Christ we are always worthy of his blessing, which is what motivates God to give us all the earthly gifts that we need for our heavenly profit (Phil. 4:19). In Christ, we have his blessing and our new name (Rev. 3:12). There are so many benefits Jehovah gives unto us daily (Ps. 116:12). What more do we truly need?

Whether your wage is $8 an hour as a grocery store clerk in Grand Rapids or $8 a day as a grocery clerk in Manila, for Christ’s sake, you, young believers, have enough! Whether you have little or much, you do have enough of what really matters in this life in Christ alone. You have all things that you need in body and soul!

Truly, you and I do lack nothing. We do have enough.

May the Lord give us the eyes of faith to see that truth.

Rev. Smit is pastor of First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan. This article is the text of his speech for Western Michigan PRYP societies combined Thanksgiving meeting on November 22, 2015.

The Universal Church

Monica Koole

British Reformed Fellowship Conference

Have you ever taken a good look at the name of this conference? I would like you to take a moment to do so now. That name describes the conference so perfectly. It is British, but I am more interested in the Reformed and Fellowship aspect. As we gathered together at this conference we truly and deeply experienced that Reformed fellowship. We took sweet counsel together and grew in our Reformed understanding of the truth. We learned much about the end times, and also developed together in our knowledge of the glory of our sovereign God who has called his children out of darkness and into his marvellous light.

What a diversity of people came to this conference! People came from Hungary, USA, Northern Ireland, England, Republic of Ireland, Canada, Singapore, Australia, the Philippines, and Wales. There were different races, nationalities, ages, and backgrounds. And yet what a striking and beautiful unity was found. I am sure we all came with somewhat different ideas of what we would hear, see, and learn. I cannot speak for others, but for myself this conference has certainly surpassed any preconceived notions I had. How can one put into mere human words the glory of God revealed during the conference week? In Exodus 33:18, Moses requested of God, “shew me thy glory.” God’s response in verse 19 was, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee….” God then proceeded to show Moses his goodness by proclaiming who he was, the LORD God “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Ex 34:6b–7a). This is our LORD God who was proclaimed to us through the conference speeches and the sweet fellowship enjoyed at the BRF conference.

The conference was held this year from July 16–23, at Castlewellden Castle, a Christian Conference Center in Newcastle, Northern Ireland. The setting itself was beautiful. The castle was a regal structure set up on a hill overlooking a lake that shimmered often with all the sunshine God provided during the week there. In the distance beyond the lake, mountains arose, creating a majestic view from the castle. There was a beautiful garden filled with a striking variety of plants, and behind the castle...
were trails that led to higher, vaster views of the surrounding countryside and rolling green hills. To me the beautiful views that we experienced during this week were a bonus feature adding to an already incredible week.

The theme of the BRF Conference this year was “Behold I Come Quickly: The Reformed Biblical Truth of the End.” There were six main speeches, three by Rev. Andy Lanning and three by Prof. David Englesma. There were also a few interesting bonus speeches added as well. Many questions concerning the end times were answered. The following are just a few of them. What is the difference between premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism? Is the period of 1,000 years literal? What is the significance of 3½ years at the end? Why is the view of the rapture wrong? Why must there be a great apostasy at the end? Who is the beast from the land and who is the beast from the sea? How must we live in the end times? Who are the two witnesses of Revelation 11? Why must these witnesses be overcome at the end? What is our hope with regard to the end times? If you have the time, I’d advise you to listen to these speeches for yourself. They have been recorded and posted on the CPRC YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/user/CPRCNI), and are very spiritually profitable and nourishing.

All week long we were fed spiritually as we listened to and discussed these speeches with others, asked questions, and searched the scriptures together for answers. Discussion flowed freely and the time passed swiftly! We talked about our faith, listened to one another’s stories and upbringings, and were reminded of the remarkable work of our glorious God who calls his peculiar people out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). We saw the glory of our Lord God who is merciful and gracious, who is abundant in goodness and truth. We came from so many different lands and most of us were meeting each other for the first time, yet because of our shared love for God, no one was a stranger. It was truly a foretaste of heaven, where God’s people from all nations shall be gathered together, united forever in fellowship and worship of our Lord God.

I want to share with you a few personal highlights of mine. First, I loved the speeches and the discussions that stemmed from them. Many intriguing thoughts that I hadn’t considered were shared. A new experience for me was singing the psalms from the Scottish Psalter. During the conference we sang from this, and also had a few impromptu gatherings to sing from this and also from the 1912 Psalter that we use, which I really enjoyed. Another aspect of the conference that I really valued was mealtime. Of course, the food was good, but more importantly, I enjoyed sitting by different people during the mealtimes and learning tidbits of their lives: where they were from, their history, where they currently attended church, and how they came into contact with the BRF Conference. Another new experience for me was staying in an actual castle. How many people can say that they have stayed in a castle? We also took a few day trips to some of the historic sites of Northern Ireland. Probably my favorite trip though was an unplanned hike that we did up Mourne Mountains, where we climbed the highest peak in Northern Ireland, Slieve Donard. The company during this week was amazing and the views were awe inspiring! These are only a few of the countless good memories I have of the time spent in Northern Ireland.

The BRF Conference was an amazing week, richly blessed by the word of God laid open to us in the speeches, with much godly discussion, and sweet fellowship that filled us. There was a word that a member of the CPRC in Northern Ireland used to describe the conference: feasted. I have decided to adopt it for my own as well to describe the time spent there. Together we feasted on good food, on beautiful scenery, on good fellowship, and most importantly on the word of God. We were filled and were strengthened by the feast that God set before us during this week. If God provides you with the opportunity to attend the BRF Conference, I encourage you to go. In this article I could only give you a small, grainy picture of the reality that is experienced when one goes to the BRF Conference. Perhaps you will have the opportunity to attend the next conference two years from now that is to be held at Hebron Hall in South Wales, for the dates of July 21–28, 2018. The theme of the conference will focus on the Family. Mark your calendars now. Go! Attend it, and see the glory of our Lord God who gathers his church from all tribes, nations, and tongues. Enjoy the sweetness of Reformed fellowship experienced at the BRF Conference.

Monica is a contributing writer correspondent of the Beacon Lights staff and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
I Will Rejoice

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

—Ihabakkuk 3:17–18

I will rejoice at this Thanksgiving time and say, “To God the Lord, who is my God eternally, The blessed God of my salvation, I will pray In perfect confidence that He will give to me The eyes to see and heart to know that—come what may— Whate’er He sends I will receive contentedly.”

Although the fig tree shall not bloom with fruits to eat And we shall find no clustered grapes upon the vine, The harvest of the barren fields will yield no meat, The olive tree that labored hard all year, shall pine And die, and flocks and herds from field and stall retreat In death in days of drought before Thy breath divine;

Although the wheels of industry grow slack and slow, And giant factories can give no work to men, And when inflation’s mighty power seems to grow, When economic answers are beyond man’s ken, When funds are tight and usury has stopped their flow, Still we rejoice in God and turn to Him again.

When social unrest seems to be a way of life And men rebel and stop their work to gain their ends, When greed is glory, bringing crime and hateful strife, When man and wife are no more married, but are friends, Or live in lustful unions, all their actions rife With evil, we rejoice, to Thee our prayers ascend.

Oh Lord, we do not joy in all these dreadful things As such: in famine and in drought in all the earth; For though the fig tree all her blossoms never brings And though the vines and olives fail because of dearth, We joy because they come from Thee. Our spirit sings, Our heart rejoices in Thy work, with thankful mirth.
BAPTISMS
“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for such is the kingdom of heaven.” Mark 10:14
The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
Louis Arth, son of Bro. Santy & Sis. Lina Adduru—Berean, Philippines
Alice Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nick & Kathryn Elzinga—Byron Center, MI
Brianna Paige, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Bob & Katie Birkett—Crete, IL
Denae Rose, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jesse & Lydia Lanting—Crete, IL
Joelle Kay, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel & Michelle Van Egdom—Doon, IA
Milen Benjamin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan & Bethany Whitely—First, MI
Davith Alexander, son of Mr. & Mrs. Alex & Cyndi Kalishek—Hope, MI
Asher Bryce, son of Mr. & Mrs. Steven & Melissa Tolsma—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Felicity, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Manuel & Emily-Kate Kuhns—Limerick, Ireland/Ballymena, N Ireland
Peter Zadok, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jacob & Bethany Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Makenzie Kate, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Eric & Katherine Pals—Redlands, CA
Lily Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Liz Thompson—Southeast, MI
Mikayla Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nate & Nancy Rau—Trinity MI
Adult baptism was administered to Jomar Madiam and Carlo Madiam—Maranatha, Philippines

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Arika Sporte—Hope, MI
Jordan Hoekstra—Hudsonville, MI
Kylie Mouw—Hudsonville, MI
Sam Moore—Loveland, CO
Hope Trinidad—Maranatha, Philippines
Tunis VanBaren—Randolph, WI
Ryan Schipper—Southwest, MI
Hailey Mulder—Trinity, MI

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Lucas Maatman and Miss Stacy Pastoor—Crete, IL
Mr. Cody Hoekstra and Miss Mariah Oostra—Doon, IA
Mr. Nathan Lubbers and Miss Susan Stouwie—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Adam Streyle and Miss Arika Sporte—Hope, MI
Mr. Justin Tolsma and Miss Holly Voortman—Immanuel, Albert, CAN
Mr. David Waldorf and Miss Anna Feenstra—Kalamazoo, MI
Mr. Jacob Riedstra and Miss Alyssa Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI
Mr. Kyle De Jong and Miss Alyssa vanHaaften—Sioux Falls, SD
Mr. Duke VanDenburg and Mrs. Ruth Engelsma—Southeast, MI
Mr. Todd Griffioen and Miss Denise Doezema—Trinity, MI

We joy not in calamities of industry,
In sordid poverty and strife on every hand;
It grieves us sore, O Lord, to hear the prophecy
Of war, and fears of mighty men in ev’ry land.
Our only hope is that we know it comes from Thee
And then, with thanks, we take all things as from Thy hand.

Now we give thanks to Thee, O Lord, Who art the God
Of our salvation. Give us grace each day to say
That we rejoice, for we are saved through Jesus’ blood!
No matter what may lie ahead, we’ll always pray
That Thou wilt show us mercies great and flood
Our hearts with thankfulness and joy along the way.
“Can I go ride my bike?” Danny poked his head into the kitchen where his mom was making supper.

“Yes, but make sure you wear your helmet.”

Danny hated wearing his helmet. It was hot and rubbed against his ears. “Do I have to?”

His mom moved a pot off the burner, shut the burner off, and turned to face him.

“Yes, you do. It is important to wear your helmet.”

Danny grimaced. If he had to wear his helmet, he wasn’t sure he wanted to ride his bike anymore.

His mom picked up the library book on Roman soldiers. “Roman soldiers used to wear helmets.”

Danny peered at the picture. A bowl-shaped helmet with pieces of metal hanging down by the sides of the face and a thick piece of metal at the back.

“This helmet did the same thing for the Roman soldier that your bike helmet does for you. It protected the soldier’s head. It protects the soldier’s brain.” His mom pointed at the book. “The brain is a vulnerable part of the body. If it is damaged, then back in Roman times, the person would’ve been dead. The Bible calls salvation our helmet. In Christ our salvation protects our mind from the attacks of the world and the devil. When we focus on our salvation, we keep our thinking thoughts directed toward God instead of elsewhere.”

Danny frowned. “I still don’t want to wear my bike helmet. It’s uncomfortable.”

His mom nodded. “I know. Sometimes things that are good for us aren’t comfortable or things we want to do.”

**Question to think about:**

1. Read Ephesians 6:17, 2 Samuel 22:36, Isaiah 26:1–4, and Philippians 4:8 by yourself or with your parents. How does our salvation guard and protect us?

2. How important is our mind? Where are we supposed to direct our thoughts?

**Find the following words in the puzzle below.**

- **ATTACK**
- **HELMET**
- **METAL**
- **MIND**
- **PROTECT**
- **SALVATION**
- **WORLD**

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