It will be helpful to read the July 2016 editorial if you still have a copy of this issue. The present editorial is in some ways a continuation of this earlier article. When it was written, the election had not yet been held and was being hotly contested.

Now the election is past, and we have a new president. In a matter of days Donald J. Trump will be sworn in as the 45th leader of our country.

As anyone who has followed the campaign (and how could anyone not be aware of it) knows, the focus was somewhat and secondarily on the issues but was often and even primarily concerned with personal issues. Each candidate hurled accusations against the other, asserting that the other was unfit to be president. Both were often correct.

Politics in America is a dirty business. It always has been and will continue to be such. The contest for the presidency usually degenerates into personal attacks rather than focusing on substantive matters of policy. It is nasty. It is egotistical. It violates Scripture’s golden rule of treating others as we would want to be treated.

Incidentally this is the reason that it is very difficult for a Christian to become involved in politics, notwithstanding the view and efforts of those who seek to Christianize the world. This election and its preceding campaign serve to show how unrealistic and impossible it is to Christianize the various spheres of life.

In this election we had a choice between two wicked people.

Here I reiterate my description in the July issue of the two candidates. Hillary Clinton (or as a friend recently described Bill and Hillary Clinton, Ananias and Sapphira) is a liberal socialist. She is untrustworthy. She is an inveterate liar. She is in favor of the murder of millions of unborn children. Donald Trump is a greedy money-grubber. He is a serial adulterer. The new first lady is his third wife.

So for whom should we have voted? More precisely, for whom did you vote if you were old enough? In my previous editorial I wrote this: “Based on the
teaching of scripture, I have a suggestion: don’t sit out the election, but vote for the candidate who does the least damage to the church of Christ, but is most favorable to the cause of the continuation of the preaching of the gospel. Who that will be you must determine for yourselves.”

Taking my own advice, I held my nose and voted for Trump as the lesser of two evils, and I suspect that most Beacon Lights readers did the same.

Subsequent to the election we have observed protest marches and gatherings against the result. What the shallow-minded participants think they will change completely baffles me. In addition there have been scattered riots in view of Clinton’s loss. This is shameful and completely wicked, not only in defiance of our political system—which provides for a peaceful transfer of power—but also morally and ethically.

So what must be our perspective on the results of this election, both as young people or as our older readers (of which there are many)? Especially for you young people, this matters. It matters because you are inheriting the country passed on to you by your parents and grandparents. Even if you are not old enough to vote, you soon will be. There are lessons to be learned from this history that you are now living.

The first and primary lesson is that God is always sovereign in all spheres and aspects of life. The liberal mainstream media were obviously biased in favor of Hilary Clinton. As the results of the election began to favor a Donald Trump victory, it was amusing to watch them stumble and stutter, not knowing what to say. But the media do not choose the next president or even influence the results. God chooses, and he made this plain in Trump’s upset win. All of the polls had Clinton as the victor. But they were wrong. Why? Because the polls did not determine the outcome of the election. God did. And in his inscrutable wisdom, God in his divine providence decided that against all of man’s odds, Trump will be the next president. What must we then say? This: God is always sovereign. This is our comfort and assurance that all things happen according to his will and for the good of his church.

The second lesson is that in Trump we as a nation have been given what we deserve (although not as much as if Clinton would have won). Just prior to the election, writing in a blog posted at rpha.org, Rev. Joshua Engelsma wrote: “The candidates are reflective of the wickedness of the nation as a whole. The comment is frequently made, ‘Out of all the people in this country, is this the best that we can do?’ God is giving to this country the ungodly rulers it deserves for her wickedness. The word of God in Hosea 13:11 is true today: ‘I gave thee a king in mine anger.’ The United States is not a Christian nation, as it once claimed to be. The nation is consciously throwing off anything that relates to genuine Christianity and the word of God. What we are seeing more and more is the spirit of this country being controlled by the spirit of Antichrist.”

Nevertheless, as he goes on to point out: “Remember, Christ is King! In Psalm 2:6, after describing the raging of the heathen, God says, ‘Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.’ That King is the risen and exalted Lord Jesus who rules over all things, great and small, upon the earth. And he does so for his Zion, his church.”

In his further comments I have changed Rev. Engelsma’s verb tenses and some minor wording to reflect the outcome of the election: “Our confidence is that King Jesus ruled over the election. What determined the outcome of the election was not the candidates and their campaign staffs, not the Democrat or Republican parties, not even the American people. The King of kings governed this country and this election, and he was the one who determined sovereignly who will occupy the oval office for the next four years.

“King Jesus ruled over this election guided by the eternal counsel of God. His determining of the next president served the grand purpose of God leading all things to the goal of his glory in his second coming, the judgment of the ungodly, and the salvation of the church.

“Our trust is in God and in his Anointed. Our faith is not in the American people, a certain political party, a particular candidate, or even in democracy generally. Our confidence today and every day that follows hereafter is in God alone.”

Third, in harmony with the teaching of scripture, we are called to obey, honor, and even respect (difficult as that may be) our new president, meanwhile praying that the church may live a quiet and peaceful life that gives us the opportunity to preach the gospel, both in the church and on the mission field.

Thus, trusting in God and his sovereign, providential rule over all things, we must remain faithful, leaving the outcome to the Lord.”
As regular readers of Beacon Lights know, 2016 marked the 75th anniversary of the publication of the magazine. We celebrated this milestone by reprinting a number of articles from the magazine’s history, beginning with a goodly number from the 1940s and continuing throughout the decades that followed. From readers’ comments it is evident that this historical look back was well received. Members of the staff spent a lot of time searching the archives for interesting and appropriate articles. They did such a good job that we have a number of leftover articles for which we did not have room in 2016. Now we have a pleasant problem. We have material that deserves publication, but our 75th year is now past. Rather than wasting all this effort and research, we have decided to publish some of this material occasionally throughout 2017. We hope you will enjoy this.

Also, beginning with this issue, we will publish a series of seven articles under the temporary rubric Prayers for the Church Universal. We as Protestant Reformed churches have extensive contact with other Reformed churches and groups throughout the world. They vary widely as to location, character, history, culture, and development in the Reformed faith. They all have needs, as do we. We have asked these various churches and groups to tell us about themselves and to tell us about their needs, which ought on our part to be the subject of prayers for them, as they undoubtedly pray for us. Beacon Lights thanks those who have written these fascinating articles. We hope that you will find them edifying and enjoyable.

In this issue you will also notice a transition in the devotionals rubric. Sarah Mowery and Ben Laning, both from our Loveland, Colorado congregation have finished their joint authorship of the devotionals based on Psalms, and will now take up a chronological treatment of scripture. I need say no more, since Sarah gives a good explanation in the previous issue. Beacon Lights thanks both of them for their faithful labors, and encourages our readers to use this material as a guide for their personal and family devotions.

The Beacon Lights staff is also giving consideration to a possible redesign of the magazine. The current design is nearly five years old, and the thought is that perhaps it is time for a fresh appearance.

We are also sponsoring a writing contest, complete with prizes for the best submissions. For the pertinent information, please read the article by Abbie Eriks that appears elsewhere in this issue.

Finally, as the calendar turns to a new year, Beacon Lights takes this opportunity to thank all those who have written for us and who have helped to make the magazine successful.

Interview with Agatha Lubbers (2)

MHH: And at that point you became...
AL: The principal until 1997. And I had the problems of being a principal.
MHH: For example.
AL: For example. There were people who felt that I was too severe. There were people who felt that I wasn’t severe enough on certain things. There were kids who lied to me. There were kids who didn’t lie to me. There were kids who were more like kids than like young adults. You simply lived with those kinds of things and you didn’t stick to those issues so much, but you tried to get young people, who ought to learn to be Christians in their life. I used to say to people—usually people who were unhappy in one of the other Christian high schools, “OK, you came here this morning. I want to say to you that I’m very happy that you came. But remember you did not just pass through the pearly gates when you walked in...
this school. You walked into a school that has sinful teachers, has sinful young people, and has young people who need to be correctly disciplined and loved. It’s going to be hard sometimes to love, it will seem that you’re loving them at a time that you do what you have to do, but that’s what you have to do. You believe that you have to do that, and you mustn’t be concerned about that. You have to be concerned between you and God that this is what you believe for the order of the school.” So between 1982 and 1997 I had very good years. But I always enjoyed working with young people. To me, that was my life. When I finally thought of retiring, I thought, shoot, not ninety-five percent of me has died, but a hundred percent (laughter). That’s what my dad said when his wife died. Yes, it was a good life. Not a sinless life. But a good life. We always do things about which you’d say, “Wow, if I could do it over.” But you can’t. You just have to live what you live as you live, and be willing to admit mistakes. If you feel that you’ve made a mistake, be willing to admit mistakes. If you feel that you’ve been too severe, be willing to admit that. I always believe that you have to be faithful and fair and forgiving.

MHH: After your enjoyable years at Covenant, you were apparently headed down the road for retirement. But somehow the train went off the tracks, so to speak, and you became involved with Eastside School. Could you elaborate a little bit on the background and the history of the formation of that school and your involvement with it?

AL: Yes. In 1997, there was work being done by people who were very unhappy with the fact that Adams Street Christian School moved from Adams Street to the west side of town. These were long-time supporters of Adams Street Christian School. They were descendants of people who were early advocates and early supporters of Adams Street Christian School, and they were convinced that Adams Street belonged on the northeast or at least on the southeast end if they could possibly work it.

Well, there was a greater desire to have Adams Street on the southwest end, and there were more people that wanted that. So that’s what happened. The people from the northeast end even sent their children to Adams Street when it was on Byron Center [Avenue], for a couple of years. Then it became pretty obvious that they were going to get started in September of 1997. And they needed a principal.

I thought about it, but not much. Then several people came to me and said, “Would you consider thinking about coming to Eastside as a principal?” I said I would consider thinking about it. Then I met with the board. I wrote a letter—not really a letter of application, but kind of a letter of acceptance because I never really received a letter from them, just personal requests. At that meeting, they said, “You’re our principal.”

I was going to go part time as a principal. That would be ideal—that I would be only a part-time principal. I was not going to teach, and I did that first one or two years. As a principal you teach, but I was not involved in the classroom. I was busy doing things to make it possible for the school to become a complete entity as a beginning school.

We had lots of help from many volunteers, and we had, I think, a good faculty. I think the school has gone on well. It is a small school—probably between 40 and 50 most of the time—a very small school, but very accommodating class size with sometimes not more than 8–10 students in a classroom. So the student there got a very good, close relationship with the teacher and lots of help. We’ve had good students graduate from Eastside because they’re good students. Eastside didn’t necessarily make them all good students, but good students come to a school, and then you use those good students. We have one of them as a valedictorian from Covenant Christian High School, and there were people with good grades in their ACTs. So I don’t think we really did poorly at all as far as our students were concerned.

We had to develop the curriculum. We patterned it pretty much after what the other schools were using as a curriculum. That probably was the easiest. But the building was not in existence when we started, so we had our classes in the basement of First Protestant Reformed Church. I was very much opposed to it. I said, “This is far too small for the number of people that you’re going to squeeze into this building. It will be absolute chaos. You can’t do it. No matter how many whips you have, you can’t do it. It’s not a teachable situation. The rooms would be way too small. It would be just a wreck-em derby of some kind (chuckle).” Fortunately they were able to find a building that they needed, and Eastside has prospered. I’m happy for that.

Eastside has prospered, not in the sense of numbers, but I think in the sense of the work that has been done. We tried to be not a charter school so much, but a classical school, because we taught
Latin and taught some logic (I taught the Latin and I taught the logic), and we used tape materials from a strongly logical school; in fact, it is called the Logos Christian School. I even visited the school in Moscow, Idaho, to see what kind of program they were using. That’s kind of the background of Eastside.

The actual school building came into existence about 5 or 6 years ago. It was built on to the church, and it really looks like a church-school. All Protestant Reformed schools are parentally operated, but they are church schools, no matter what you say. They are schools that most of the people in the church have promised to send their children to. They didn’t make that promise when they made their baptismal promise. They just said they’d see to it they were properly educated, but Christianly and piously educated. But they didn’t say, “We’ll send them to the Protestant Reformed Christian School,” because if they did, then there would maybe be a discipline case. I’m not sure.

MHH: Are there any other memories, events, incidents that you would like to mention at this point?

AL: I’m not sure exactly how long it is ago, but in the early 60s or late 50s Perspectives [in Covenant Education] came into existence. There was a desire on the part of the Protestant Reformed Teachers’ Institute for teachers to have an opportunity to express their ideas in print. As we started out, we borrowed from other Christian schools and other Christian organizations. I was the editor for the first ten years of the magazine. After that time, other men and women took over the editorship of Perspectives, and it is still in existence.

As it started out, we came out twice a year. Then we came out three times a year. Now Perspectives is coming out quarterly. I think it’s been a good development. It’s been an opportunity for our teachers to give expression to what they believe and how they conduct themselves in the profession that they have chosen to be in.

It’s a great reward to me to see so many young people that I have taught go into the teaching profession, and I praise God for having given me the opportunity to be part of that.

On the matter of the current situation [a controversy regarding the use of the Christian schools vs. home schooling]. If I look back over the years that I taught, I never in my whole life thought at all about the competitor called home-schooler. I knew that there were times in the history of the world and there were places in the history of the world where people were getting tutored by a tutor in somebody’s family. But for people to choose not to send their children to either the Protestant Reformed Christian school which had come into existence before I came into Grand Rapids or not to send their children to a public high school or a Christian high school, when I came to Grand Rapids that was the only thing that I was taught to believe. I was going to go to Calvin College. We may not have agreed with all that was taught, but we knew that Calvin was a good school in the sense of its academic proportions.

When I think about the current situation which has developed in the last fifteen years or so within the Protestant Reformed Churches, more people are saying that they are going to home school their children. I’d rather say teach their children at home, because a school is an institution. It’s a man-made institution, but it is an institution of some kind because people get together and say, “It’s our corporate responsibility.” Whether it’s their corporate responsibility or not, it’s sometimes up to them to decide whether or not it is their corporate responsibility to be part of that corporation. I mean, that is one of the theological reasons given for it.

I think one of the good reasons for having particularly a high school is that there is such a thing as people meeting a possible spouse or having good companionship—although young people are young people, and young people are by nature totally depraved, and they’re not necessarily going to be good when they’re not under the supervision of their teachers, and they aren’t necessarily going to be good even when they are under the supervision of their teachers. But in the current situation, it is my belief that you cannot prove from the Bible that people who teach their children at home are sinning against any of the commandments of God, or sinning against anything that they are taught in the scriptures. The scriptures say that they must be piously and religiously educated; they must be taught by fathers by the way, in the home, all of that. The father can get rid of that responsibility by organizing and becoming part of a corporation and listening to the urging of ministers and various people who for a long time have urged our own schools, for whatever reason they believed that was the right thing to do—usually because we could provide a more doctrinally safe and correct school.

However, I don’t believe that the Bible says
you have to have those. It’s something that people reading the Bible say that would be good to have. Abraham Kuyper believed that you should have Christian schools, and most of us believe that Abraham Kuyper was right on that. But there are people either for financial reasons or for other reasons who say, “We don’t want to send our children to the Christian school because Article 21[sic] does not say you have to send your kids to the school. It only says, ‘consistories shall see to it that there are.’” I believe that when you are a consistory member, you have to live up to Article 21. If you’re going to say there ought to be [schools], then you ought to send your children to that which you say ought to be.

I tell you that those interpreters who say the consistory shall see to it that there are good Christian schools are right. But they are wrong when they say that when you make the promise at baptism to have your children piously and religiously educated, you do not make the promise to send them to a Christian school, although there are some people who feel that they make that promise. If they did, they are not sinning against God that they made that promise and that was in their heart. But they had better carry through on their promise.

As far as I am concerned, I love our schools. I couldn’t have worked in our schools for 56 years if I didn’t love them. I would always advise people to send their kids to Christian schools. I would always say to them, “Our schools are not perfect. Our schools have people who use drugs. Our schools have people who don’t keep the seventh commandment as they should. Our schools have people who are not respectful to their parents and authority. Our schools are filled with all the sins. But so is every home, so you’ll find it there too.” So you can’t escape sin. You can only try as much as possible to teach sinners how to behave in the academic area, in the behavioral areas, in the relationship with each other area.

Somebody said to me, “You should be on our study committee.” I said, “Then you’d have another issue (chuckle) because I’d be coming in the back door instead of the front door (laughter).”

**MHH:** Miss Lubbers, how would you compare the church of today with the church of your youth?

**AL:** Well, I’ve been admonished not to be necessarily critical and not to be necessarily positive by Winifred Koole [AL’s lifelong friend and companion]. But this is going to be in the nature of a critique. Winnie always advises me on certain things that she thinks I might neglect. She has been a good companion in that way.

But in the form of a critique, I would say this. I was young when I became a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches—so young that I don’t even remember that I was a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches. Winnie, my friend here, had been a member of First Protestant Reformed Church since 1924. She was not baptized there, but she was a member in 1924, and remembers the basement being dug and all of those things. But I do not remember that.

I don’t remember bad things. Somebody asked me not so long ago, “Did you ever not like it that you were a minister’s daughter?” I said, “No. I always liked it because I liked my dad and I know he liked being a minister.” I liked it because I knew that he had an important position in the church. Not the most important position, but an important position. And I liked it because we had certain possibilities because of the fact that I was a member of the Doon Protestant Reformed Church, Pella Protestant Reformed Church, Randolph Protestant Reformed Church.

I’ll talk now about behavior. As far as my youth was concerned, we did not do some of the things that young people have the privilege to do today. We would not, for instance, in my early days have a group that was going to Detroit for a ball game. We just didn’t do that. We did not have those kinds of opportunities. We had perhaps a few people who attended theaters, but the movies in those days were just plain factual things and hardly any of the stuff that you find in movies today. And our churches have never taken a position on drama or movie attendance other than the fact that consistories have discouraged their young people from doing this.

Doctrinally I believe that we are the same, although I think we have become a little bit more affected by things that we did not emphasize in the early days. In the early days we said churches can go down the wrong direction because of common grace. They are going to justify things that are not to be justified. Herman Hoeksema said this would be one of the outcomes (and other men did, too) of common grace. I ask the question: “We did not espouse common grace. But why are our people often times doing the same things or even worse than the Christian Reformed Church?” I think it’s...
because of our evil natures, not because of our doctrine. Our doctrine doesn’t make them careless and profane. They are careless and profane in spite of the doctrine.

There are many Christian Reformed people who have a bad doctrine, who behave themselves very well. For what reason? That’s between them and God. I don’t judge whether they’re going to heaven or hell. I just judge whether they are behaving themselves according to the commandments. I think in that sense we have changed. Our preacher is preaching against smoking, for instance. These are things that belong to the Christian liberty of people. I think sometimes Christian liberty is not really understood in our community any longer.

As far as the synods are concerned, I think that the synod has become more authoritative than Herman Hoeksema would like it to be. I think he would like to see that it continue to be the case that there would be most control by the consistories in the church. Consistories can depose. Classes cannot depose. The Classes have to be very careful that they are dealing with problems that can approve the deposition of a minister, can approve that. And I sometimes think that there is an erosion in that way.

The other thing that I see as erosion is that ministers do not carry with them the absolute need of preaching Christ in every sermon. They end before they get to preaching Christ. I’m just saying that this is a critique and an analysis of what I think. Our minister once preached a very good, strong sermon from the Heidelberg Catechism on total depravity. It was excellent. Good strong sermon. But after church I stood and talked with some of the young people who were going to Calvin College, and they were having some questions about these good people who walk on the street. They don’t swear. They don’t cheat on their wives, and all of those kinds of things. What are you going do about them? So I said to the pastor, “Good sermon, but what about those people that these young people are talking about who don’t cheat, don’t do this or that? Is it common grace?” I said to the young people, “It’s not common grace that makes them that way, but it’s probably the natural light and the glimmerings of natural light that the Canons of Dort speak of. They know about good order in society and all of that.” He said, “You think I should preach another sermon on it?” I said, “Absolutely. Preach it so they understand the relationship between living a godly

life and what is not necessarily a godly life, but what seems to be.”

I think our young people’s societies have changed, and our young people’s conventions have changed, probably out of necessity. I remember the first kids that went to the first convention, I think it was in 1939 or 1940. It was before the war. I remember them going with Cecil VanderMolen’s truck from the front door of our parsonage in Pella [IA] (all these young people sitting on hay bales going to the convention) all the way to Oak Lawn [IL]. That was where the first convention was. From Pella to Oak Lawn, on the back end of a truck (which was about a 300 mile trip over and back). No buses. No air conditioning.

Ministers have changed too. I don’t think many ministers know how to butcher a pig anymore. They don’t know how to butcher a chicken anymore. My father butchered chickens. He butchered pigs. He kept gardens. He lived on a miniscule salary. I have to thank the consistory of Doon. They sent my dad (I’m not sure how much money it was), the money that he had not received (this is under the leadership of Homer Hoeksema) when he was a minister in Doon. He had a salary coming of $800, and he got $500. And he had three kids to feed in those days. When we went to Doon, we took a Model T Ford Roadster. There were five of us in it and just enough room for two in the front and three in the back. It was 800 miles [from Grand Rapids to Doon]. Fortunately nobody traveled in the winter because we hardly had a heater in those cars. You’d have to ride with robes on. I said, “Dad, did you ever have to change the bands?” “Nope.” “Did you ever have to back up the hills?” “Nope.” “How long did it take you?” He said, “It took me 36 hours from Grand Rapids to Doon.” I said, “Did you stop?” He said, “Yes, we stopped at Dubuque, Iowa.” I said, “How did you get going in the morning?” He said, “It was pretty tough.”

Then he said, “We came to Doon and the furniture had been delivered by Huizing’s furniture, and it had all been dumped in the front room.” You probably remember, Mark, the parsonage in Doon. There was no insulation, there were box elder bugs by the hundreds inside there. It was just really a very, very primitive place. It had cold rooms. My mother had a kerosene stove to do her cooking on, and she had probably an old washer of some kind. We did have an indoor toilet, I’ll have to say that for it.
But anyway, when they came to Doon, there wasn’t any furniture set down. The Doon people had been busy doing what they had to do—they didn’t have telephones in those days, and so they didn’t know what was going on unless somebody came over with a horse or something.

Well, a man rode up. My uncle Peter was along. They worked that night to get two bawling kids into a bed. My sister had a kerosene burn on her foot, and my mother was busy with all of that. And we had to be fed. There was no restaurant in the town. In the morning a young man rode up on a horse and said, “You guys need any help? I’m from the Doon church.” My uncle Peter was seventeen years old. He stepped out on the porch and said, “Nope, we don’t need any help right now. We’ve got it all arranged with whatever we’ve got”—which wasn’t much. Included was the table on which he was going to make his first sermon. He said, “Well, I can help you.” Uncle Peter said, “You can help me. You let me have that horse and I’ll get a plow and I’ll plow this man’s garden so that next spring he can plant his garden.” The kid went and got a plow, and Uncle Peter plowed the garden to get it ready for the next year.

Ministers today don’t have gardens. Some do, maybe. Most of them don’t. They don’t butcher chickens. They don’t butcher pigs. My dad was born on a farm, so fortunately he could do that. My dad painted buildings. My dad did many things that he had to do. He didn’t need a big education, but he needed the truth.

I’d like to repeat two unique stories that I think will be very interesting. Our ministers, all of them, would go to the Protestant Reformed young people’s conventions. You can look over the old pictures of the Protestant Reformed conventions, and you will see in the front row at almost all of those conventions a row of ministers, including the ministers’ wives. This was usually just before the banquet at the church, and everybody dressed up for it and they didn’t have any big-time themes. Herman Hoeksema was there, although he didn’t usually make that speech because he made the pre-convention or the first speech. He always said, “I made the first speech.” My dad said, “You didn’t do it. I made the first speech.” He said, “That’s OK, George. I’ll just keep thinking I made the first speech and you can think that you made the first speech” (laughter). He said, “We’re both right.”

One time they went to a convention and were on the beach (which they usually did). Rev. Hoeksema had taken his mile swim out and mile swim back, and he had taken his swimming suit off. My dad, who couldn’t swim a lick, wanted to get in that water, but he didn’t have a swimming suit. Rev. Hoeksema said to him, “You can wear mine.” So he went into the bathhouse and he put the bathing suit on. And he said, “Dominie, know what? I can fill your pants, but I can’t fill your shoes” (laughter).

At the time of 1953 my dad was at Classis, and he had made the concession and the confession that he had to go back on his writing on the majority report [which favored DeWolf]. He had to say, “No, I can’t go with this.” He had heard what Rev. DeWolf had said on the Classis. I had said to him on the way home from Classis, “You can’t support DeWolf any longer.” He said, “Nope.” He spent that whole night calling his cohorts and other people. Then the next morning he went to the Classis to tell them that he was not going to continue to support the majority report because of the position that had been publicly stated by Hubert DeWolf. They were standing in the hallway, one of the hallways of First Church, and Rev. Hoeksema was having a smoke. My dad didn’t smoke at that particular time, but he did smoke on occasion. He said, “Dominie, I think I’ve denied the Reformed faith.” Rev. Hoeksema said, “No, George, you didn’t deny the Reformed faith. You defended what you believed was necessary in the Reformed faith, but you didn’t know DeWolf. You didn’t believe DeWolf.” My dad said, “You’re probably right, Rev. I had a hard time believing that DeWolf could mean what he said.”

MHH: Very interesting recollections. Are there any other issues you would like to address or any other opinions that you would like to express?

AL: I just hope before God that the Protestant Reformed Churches will be able to maintain the basic stands that they have taken. I think divorce is going to become a really major issue in our churches. In my family we have two divorces at this point. How to deal with a divorce situation is always a huge challenge in a family. There are certain families who take it one way and certain families who take it another way. I think the church has to maintain what it has always maintained, and that is that divorce is wrong. God doesn’t want people to divorce. But if they have to because of the hardness of their heart, they had better, and if they do that, they cannot be a member of the Protestant Reformed Churches.
MHH: Very good. Thank you for your time, Miss Lubbers, for your thoughts, for the answers that you have given. They are all appreciated. This concludes this interview.

Ask Schuyler

Question for Schuyler

What do you believe is the proper way to deal with brothers or sisters who have left our Protestant Reformed churches for another, and in our view lesser Reformed church? I believe that they have sinned by going to a lesser church, but if they are still attending church faithfully and seem to walk a holy life, how must we associate with them? From what I have seen of this, there have been mostly two reactions. 1. We have little or no fellowship with such a one, or 2. We act like nothing is wrong and still continue the same friendship as before. We all know that scripture calls us to cut off those who walk impenitently in sin, but what about this situation?

Answer

Some believe that the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRCA) encourage shunning, and that the Protestant Reformed (PR) people practice shunning. Shunning is a practice common among cults. When a person leaves a cult, the members of that cult cut off all contact or fellowship with the former member, which leads to emotional hardship, especially if the former member was so wrapped up in the life of the cult before his departure from the cult that he has no family members or friends outside of the cult.

The PRCA do not practice shunning.

To answer the reader’s question, we should distinguish between different kinds of people who leave a church.

Some people leave the PRCA (or another true church. We do not believe that the PRCA and her sister churches are the only true churches in the world) because they love the world. Perhaps they leave so that they can marry an unbeliever, a divorced person, or simply to fornicate outside of marriage. Perhaps they leave to pursue a life of drunkenness, pleasure seeking, or worldliness. Perhaps they leave because they hate the preaching of the truth of God’s word. “Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). “They went out from us, but they were not of us” (1 John 2:19).

Some people leave the PRCA (or other true churches) through Christian discipline. Either they are excommunicated, or they effectively excommunicate themselves by leaving while under discipline. One who despises the admonition of the elders, asks for his membership papers while under discipline, and leaves the congregation commits a serious sin. In addition, if another congregation receives such a person, the elders commit a serious sin, for they should have inquired about the reasons for his departure from the former congregation. “If he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt. 18:17).

There is also a difference between the departure of a baptized member and the departure of a confessing member. Both cases are serious, but the latter is worse because the confessing member breaks his membership vows when he departs, and he sins against greater knowledge. He was thoroughly instructed in the truths of God’s word, the obligations of holy living, and the implications of church membership before he left. “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it, for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed” (Eccl. 5:4). By the way, the PRCA are not the only churches that practice Christian discipline or the only churches that take church membership seriously.

Having said all that, our reader’s question is different. He does not ask about a member who leaves to join the Roman Catholic Church, or to become an atheist, or simply to live as a godless worldling, an Esau who despises his birthright (Heb. 12:16). He does not ask about a member who leaves under the cloud of church discipline. He asks about a person who, for whatever reason (he has a romantic interest outside of the PRCA, he finds another church or congregation more attractive, he moves to a location where there is no PRCA congregation, etc.), leaves
the PRCA, and joins another true church, or another Reformed denomination, but one that has significant weaknesses in its confession of the truth. Some Reformed denominations in America and Canada, for example, compromise on evolution, marriage, common grace, the covenant, and some even harbor defenders of the federal vision. Many of these things are well known. Synodical decisions are on public record, and they are reported in church magazines. Moreover, such a person is still “attending church faithfully and seems to walk a holy life.”

There is a world of difference between a PRCA member who becomes a Roman Catholic, an atheist or a godless heathen, and a PRCA member who joins a weaker Reformed church. There is a world of difference between a PRCA member who renounces the godly life required by Christ and lives like the world, and a PRCA member who continues to lead a godly life outside the PRCA in another true church. And, yes, it is possible to be a Christian, to lead a godly life, and confess the truth in another church than the PRCA.

Do we view and treat godly ex-PRCA members in weaker Reformed churches as “heathens and publicans” (Matt. 18:17)? Do we apply 1 Corinthians 5:11 to godly ex-PRCA members in weaker Reformed churches so that we refuse even “to eat” with them? About godly ex-PRCA members in weaker Reformed churches do we say, “Note that man, and have no company with him” (2 Thess. 3:14)? Notice that by “godly ex-PRCA members in weaker Reformed churches” I do not mean those who have left the PRCA to commit adultery or to live in the world or to commit idolatry in the false church. Such are not godly ex-PRCA members, but ungodly, impenitent apostates. There is a huge difference between the two. I cannot stress that enough.

The answer is: “Of course not!” That would be to make a major category error. If they are our friends or family, we should continue to interact socially with them. We should continue to invite them to family weddings, celebrations, meals, and other social functions. We should still love them, even if we strongly disapprove of their actions in leaving the PRCA. Certainly, love includes admonishment and rebuke, but not only that. We must not spend every moment with them in rebuking them. (They will know that we disapprove, but we do not need to enforce our disapproval at every opportunity). We do not misapply 1 Corinthians 5 here, which is about excommunicated members, with whom we do not fellowship. “If any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one no not to eat” (v. 11). Eating, which is fellowship, is inappropriate because it gives the excommunicated person the impression that his sin has not affected the relationship between him and the other members of the church. The issue is not the act of eating, but the symbolism of eating (fellowship). As Christians we do eat with unbelievers (although we do not fellowship with them, because we do not have Christ in common with them), and with saints from other churches (even saints in other churches who left the PRCA), but we refuse to fellowship with excommunicated members, those who walk impenitently in sin. Paul warns that, if we do not apply this rule properly, we will have to leave the world and human society altogether (v. 10).

Having said that, when a person leaves the PRCA, there are consequences. Fellowship for all kinds of reasons is more difficult. If you normally see a member at church or at church functions, his absence will make opportunities for fellowship more difficult. You will have less in common, and conversations, social occasions, and even meals might be more awkward than before. In addition, an ex-PRCA member exposes himself (and, crucially, his children) to weak preaching, false doctrine, and other influences in a different denomination. Given the corporate responsibility involved in church membership, this is serious: if the church that the ex-PRCA member joins compromises on Genesis 1–11, divorce/remarriage, common grace and the well-meant offer, and the covenant, he makes himself responsible for supporting (by his presence and offerings) such errors. In addition, although he might remain uninfluenced by such errors, his children will most likely not escape unscathed. God cuts off negligent parents in their generations, even when he graciously saves the parents themselves.

The issue is never “perfect” versus “imperfect” churches. (All churches, including the PRCA, are imperfect). The issue is this: “Where is the truth of God’s word most purely and consistently preached and confessed? Where are the sacraments most faithfully administered? Where is Christian discipline most faithfully exercised?” Perhaps even more crucially, the issue is this: “What is the general trend in the denomination in which I am, or in which I
contemplate becoming a member? Is there a slide toward compromise of the truth of God’s word and the Reformed confessions, or is, by God’s grace, the church holding fast to the truth?”

Where in good conscience I can say, “This church most faithfully and consistently displays the three marks of the true church (as outlined in Belgic Confession, Article 29),” is the church where my family and I should be.

It is not true that to leave the PRCA is to place yourself on the path to hell. We must never tell a godly ex-PRCA member that, and we must never by our attitude to such a godly ex-PRCA member communicate that we think he is on the path to hell. The path to heaven does not run exclusively through the PRCA. The PRCA have never taught that, and, if there are some members who think that and who show that they think that, they must know that their attitude gives the enemies of the PRCA occasion to slander the churches.

Nevertheless, truth is important. The Bible does not say, “Believe as little of the truth as is possible, just enough to get you to heaven.” The Bible urges us to “buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). The Bible commands us to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18). While leaving the PRCA to join another less faithful, yet true, Reformed church does not damn the soul, it does constitute the selling of some truth, such as the truth of God’s particular, sovereign grace, and the truth of God’s unconditional covenant with believers and their elect seed, truths that we surely hold dear in the PRCA.

Let us love our neighbor, and above all, let us love the truth!

Schuyler

Abbie Eriks

Writing Contest

Beacon Lights is excited to announce that we will be sponsoring a writing contest this year! This contest is for anyone in seventh grade or older, and there will be a prize for the top three entries in each of the four age groups. The four categories and the writing prompts for each category are as follows:

- Grades 7–9: Judges—Give a history and application of the life of the judge of your choice. Write 600–800 words.
- Grades 10–12: Cults and Other Religions—Give a summary and description of the cult or other religion of your choice, focusing on the errors of the group and giving a biblical defense against the errors. Write 800–1000 words.
- Post-high 18–22: Active in the Church—describe the calling of every member to serve in the church of Christ. Include an application of this calling to your own life and to the role you must have in the church. Write 1000–2000 words.
- Post-high 23+: Called to Witness in the End Times—Write about the Christian calling to witnessness as the return of Christ draws near. Write 1000–2000 words.

Each article must be typed in MS Word format. Submit all completed entries to Beacon Lights Writing Contest email at blwritingcontest@gmail.com. No article previously published in Beacon Lights may be submitted. Each article will be judged on mechanics, quality of writing, and biblical accuracy. The deadline for all articles is April 1, 2017, so start thinking about what you want to write about today!

So what are the prizes, you ask? The first place prize for each age group is $200 to your choice of RFPA or Reformed Book Outlet and a free one year subscription to Beacon Lights. The second and third place prize for each age group is $100 to your choice of RFPA or Reformed Book Outlet and a free one year subscription to Beacon Lights.

Contact a Beacon Lights staff member with any questions you might have, and have fun writing! We look forward to reading all of your entries!
The Daily Press

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

January

Read Genesis 8

I may not be the most patient person in the world. I remember that when we bought our house, I just couldn’t understand why the homeowner was unable to provide us with an instantaneous response. The waiting was awful!

Noah knew how to wait. I can’t even fathom how antsy I would have been to get out of that ark. Just think about all the waiting that he had to do in that wooden box. After the animals all piled in with them, they had to wait seven days for anything to happen! I wonder if they could hear the mocking laughter through the walls of their craft. Then the rains came and covered the earth for a hundred fifty days, after which time the ark rested on Mount Ararat. I think I would have begun to feel relieved that this was the beginning of the end, but their stay wasn’t even half over yet! In all, Noah and his family stayed on the ark for a full year. What an amazing example to us of how God preserves his people and teaches them to be patient and wait on him.

Sing or pray Psalter #100.

Read Genesis 9

There are so many amazing pictures that God has given us in the rainbow. We recently studied this in Bible class, and I thought Gertrude Hoeksema did a great job of explaining these pictures in Show Me Thy Ways. First there is the beam of white light, which creates the rainbow and signifies God himself. That light is then reflected into seven different colors, a picture of God’s grace, since seven is the number of the covenant. Another ingredient for a rainbow is rain, a picture of how Christ washes away our sin. Besides light and rain, a rainbow also needs a dark background, a picture of God’s anger against our sin. God’s grace shines through this anger and brings us life.

Sing or pray Psalter #395.

Read Genesis 10

In history right now we are studying the colonization of America. It’s kind of humorous to see how the European countries got excited about sending an expedition to the New World so that they could claim a huge portion of land and name it after themselves. Just put the word “new” in front of it, and you are good to go. With names like New England, New Netherland, New France, and New Spain, they don’t exactly get points for originality.

Genesis 10:9 says of Nimrod that, “He was a mighty hunter before the Lord.” Nimrod was a very powerful and wicked man. He enjoyed the fame and respect that hunting wild animals gave him. Remember, this was soon after the flood, so the ratio of people to animals must have been much different than it is today. Nimrod sought his own glory by protecting mankind, but God used him to protect his church. The same is true with the colonization of America. The wicked nations sent expeditions to the New World only for their own benefit, but God used it to create a new center from which Christianity could be spread to all nations.

Sing or pray Psalter #257.

Read Genesis 11

When did we stop marrying our siblings? I posed this question to my students a little while back, who looked at me strangely and stated emphatically that they would never want to do such a thing. To this I responded, “Of course, but when did we start thinking that way?” Man hasn’t always been repulsed by the idea of marrying someone in his own family. Obviously, Adam and Eve’s children married their brothers and sisters, Abram married his half-sister, and Isaac and Jacob both married their cousins. I’m not sure what the answer to this question is, but my guess is that God caused there to be a natural progression away from this practice until it was put into writing in the Mosaic Law (Lev. 18). It’s interesting to note here that this chapter prohibits many different intrafamily marriages, but not a marriage between cousins. As far as I know, these types of marriages are not spoken against in the Bible. Marriages between first cousins were made illegal by the law of the land, and our way of thinking has followed suit.

Sing or pray Psalter #125.

Read Job 1

If someone asked us what the most powerful bomb in the world was, many of us would say the atomic bomb, and we’d be thinking of the two that were dropped on Japan back in 1945. To some of us, those bombs are viewed as the peak of destructive capabilities. Each killed tens of thousands of people and it’s hard to fathom their power, but they are truly nothing compared to the bombs we have today. The most powerful
bomb ever detonated is still the Tsar Bomb from all the way back in 1961, which was a whopping 3,333 times more powerful than the WWII version.

The point of this is not to terrify, but to remind us that God is in complete control. We see that in Job’s life, and it is no less true today. It’s easy to feel as if the United States is pretty well cemented in as the world power for the foreseeable future and not much is going to change, but God can change everything in a moment. This doesn’t cause us to fear, but to rejoice that the one who is in control will make all things for our profit.

Sing or pray Psalter #71.

Read Job 2

Job’s three friends sat with him in silence for seven days and nights. The following chapters of the book don’t paint a very nice picture of these friends, but here their actions are somewhat commendable. As Matthew Henry points out, it is better not to speak than to say the wrong thing at times of grief.

This reminded me of something from my own childhood. When I was a senior in high school, a classmate of mine was taken to glory. On our senior class trip, a beautiful message from the parents was read to us and bookmarks with Isaiah 40:31 on them were handed out. The night became serious in a moment, and I remember of mine was taken to glory. On our senior class trip, a classmate of mine was taken to glory. On our senior class trip, a beautiful message from the parents was read to us and bookmarks with Isaiah 40:31 on them were handed out.

This is probably how Job felt. He was so upset about the calamities that he must have done something terrible to be so afflicted. “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being unjustly afflicted. ‘Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being unjustly afflicted.” (v. 7). His speeches in this chapter and in the chapters to come are filled with this theme.

Sing or pray Psalter #93.

Read Job 3

Isn’t it kind of funny how quickly we forget? We forget what it felt like to have to wake up every couple hours during the night to care for the baby. We forget how weak we are, weakness shown by the fact that we forgot about it. We forget all the things we like about this or that person, because right now he is doing something that really annoys us. We forget how weak we are, weakness shown by the fact that we forgot about it.

In this chapter, Job forgot about all the joy that he had in life. He cursed the day he was born, giving as his reason, “Because it shut not up the doors of my mother’s womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.” Job now saw his whole life as one of sorrow. It is true that the life of the Christian is full of sorrow, but there is also the joy of our salvation shining through that sorrow, as illustrated by the rainbow we discussed earlier.

Sing or pray Psalter #210.

Read Job 4

Job 4 is the first speech given by one of Job’s “friends”. Eliphaz the Temanite did not come with words of comfort for Job. He did not console Job with words of God’s faithfulness and everlasting love for his people. He did not remind Job that God’s plan is perfect and that he works all things for our good. No, Eliphaz comes with rebuke.

Sometimes there are things that just have to be said even if they hurt, Eliphaz explains. Look at you, Job. You were a great man, giving advice and comfort to all who needed it. People respected you and were comforted by you. Now here you are, brought low by horrible trials of your own.

Eliphaz comes to Job as a theologian. He emphasizes God’s greatness and his judgment of sin. He believes that Job must have done something terrible to be so afflicted. “Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off?” (v. 7). His speeches in this chapter and in the chapters to come

Sing or pray Psalter #161.

Read Job 5

This is a rather strange chapter of the Bible, for in it we see Eliphaz say some pretty contradictory things. At the beginning, Eliphaz is trying to prove his theory that these calamities must be coming upon Job because of some horrible sins he has committed. However, beginning in verse 6, he reverts to bringing Job comfort in his affliction. Put this chapter into a classroom setting and it would come out sounding something like the following.

“You’ve worn that shirt three days in a row. It was already dirty yesterday. I think…yep, it smells pretty bad. No offense, but that’s kind of disgusting.”

At this point, you’d definitely be offended, right? Now imagine that your tormentor continues as seen below.

“I like your shoes though. Those are really cool. I’ve always wanted that kind, but mom says the ones I have are good for now. Where did you get them?”

You’d be so upset about the clothing comments that you wouldn’t even hear the compliment about the shoes. This is probably how Job felt. He was so upset about the unjustness of Eliphaz’s accusations that Eliphaz’s words of comfort were hollow to him.

Sing or pray Psalter #210.

Read Job 6

Job uses a great metaphor in verses 15–21 of this chapter to describe the actions of his three friends. A little stream can quickly turn into a raging river after a heavy rain or when the snow and ice of winter begins to melt. A traveler coming through the
area at this time would have more than enough water and would remember the place. However, if the traveler returned during the heat of summer, the stream might be all dried up. During the cooler springtime there was more than enough water, but now that the traveler is in dire need of it in the heat of summer, there is nothing for him to drink. This is just like Job’s three friends. They made a great show of coming to him, but had only accusations to bring. They were there for Job when he had many riches, but when he truly needed them they turned against him.

Sing or pray Psalter #327.

Read Job 7
When I was student teaching, I had the interesting experience of not only teaching in a Roman Catholic school, but a Catholic school that was also going to be closing its doors at the end of the school year. You want to see people who don’t care about their job, tell a bunch of middle-aged teachers that there won’t be a school for them to teach at the following year. I could have played hide-and-seek with the students throughout the property that entire semester; no one cared.

In this chapter, Job is talking like a teacher who isn’t afraid of getting fired, because he’s going to lose his job anyway. In verses 9 and 10, he talks about how short our life is. It’s no time at all before it’s over. Since he’s going to die anyway, Job claims, in verse 11, he isn’t afraid to voice his complaints. What’s God going to do, kill him? Of course, this is spoken in sinful despair, for Job is forgetting that death is merely the passage into eternal life, his true home.

Sing or pray Psalter #104.

Read Job 8
Have you ever had a situation in your church or school where you felt as if someone was being disciplined unfairly? You just can’t see any reason why that person should have certain restrictions placed upon him, and you think that something should be done about it. You don’t know the details of the case, due to it’s being a confidential matter, but you strongly feel that the consistory or school board is erring.

We all tend to think we know the answer without even understanding the entire situation. If you want an illustration of that, just ask a classroom full of children how some obscure place name is pronounced. They all have different ideas, each being quite certain his is the correct one. We see this weakness in Job’s three friends. All they know is that horrible things are happening to Job, and that’s enough for them to jump to the conclusion that these things must be the judgment of God coming upon Job for some heinous sins he has committed.

Sing or pray Psalter #369.

Read Job 9
Job 9:29 says, “If I be wicked, why then labor I in vain?” If God has decreed that he would be a wicked person, then why is he even trying to do good? This idea carries with it a very faulty view of predestination. It’s not as if the wicked would love to do what is pleasing to God, but he’s kept away from it by the God who decided that he would go to hell. This portrays the reprobate as being forced unwillingly into their sin. If Job was truly reprobate, he would not have any desire to do what is pleasing to God in the first place. I felt that this was one weakness in The Screwtape Letters by C. S. Lewis. The wicked people were kind of portrayed as those who would believe if only their minds weren’t clouded by the demons. In contrast, Proverbs 2:14 says that the reprobate “rejoice to do evil, and delight in the frowardness of the wicked.”

Sing or pray Psalter #156.

Read Job 10
It’s time for your second college class of the morning. You walk into the room, glance to your chair, and find that someone is in your seat! You can’t believe it! What is that person thinking? What would possess anyone to try to sit in a DIFFERENT seat than they did on the first day of class. The seat you pick on the first day is the seat you will sit in all semester. Everybody knows that.

This simple example shows what creatures of habit we are. We need order and structure in our lives. Without it we are like the dead man mentioned in Job 10:22. The dead man has no order in his life, because he lies in darkness. God created light to rule our lives by giving us order, a picture of how he rules over us. Light tells us when to wake up; it allows us to get certain jobs done; it tells us when to go to sleep. Without light we are lost, as the world was during the darkness in Egypt and the three hours of darkness when Jesus was on the cross.

Sing or pray Psalter #73.

Read Job 11
This past presidential election was pretty ugly. The process brought out the worst in our country, and it hasn’t even ended with election night. You have violent protesters screaming in the streets and holding up signs that say, “Love Trumps Hate.” How does it make sense to protest hatred by showing hatred? Hypocrisy is a great danger for all of us. It’s easy for us to point it out in others, but so often our minds are clouded to the same thing in ourselves. Here, Zophar rebukes Job extremely harshly for his hypocritical ways, accusations which Job largely didn’t deserve. Ironically, Zophar is being hypocritical himself by coming to Job as a friend, but then turning sharply against him with little basis for
much of what he says. This observation is consistent with the way the world often attacks the church. They take the very sin that they are guilty of, such as sinful hatred, and accuse the church of it.

Sing or pray Psalter #351.

Read Job 12

Isn’t it hard to believe the silly things that we are quick to be proud about? All it takes is for me to believe I’m better at this or that activity than someone else, and before I know it I’m getting pretty impressed with myself. It can be something as simple as winning in a game or receiving a compliment from someone. You might think that this temptation would start to go away as you grow up, but I haven’t found that to be true.

Job 12:2 says, “No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you.” Job is here sarcastically saying, “You are the wisest people on the earth, and no one else knows anything.” Job’s friends are convinced that they know all the answers. They know why these things are coming upon Job. They know the words of reproof that Job needs. They know how to live their life, but Job doesn’t know much about living his. They are proud. We are all weak, and one way we exhibit that weakness is by being quick to pride.

Sing or pray Psalter #323.

Read Job 13

We are reading The Witch of Blackbird Pond in class right now. The setting of the book is colonial America. At that time, not much was known about modern medicine. When someone got sick, the doctor would come to the house to bleed them, thinking that was the best way to get the “poison” out of their body. In reality, this technique only succeeded in weakening the patient further.

In Job 13:4 Job calls his friends, “physicians of no value.” Their presence has given Job no comfort. In fact, due to the harsh words they have spoken, he is actually worse off than he was before. This goes along with the story of the healing of a woman’s blood disease in Mark 5. In verse 26 of this chapter, we read that this woman “had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse.” We need to be knowledgeable doctors in our friendships, not 18th century physicians.

Sing or pray Psalter #78.

Read Job 14

In Job 14, Job ponders the life of man. Man is born of a woman and is frail (v. 1). Man’s days are few and pass quickly by (v. 1). They are like a withering flower and a shadow, in which we do not place our trust (v. 2). Man’s days are full of sin (v. 4). They are numbered, and God only knows how many days each man will live on this earth (v. 5).

In the parable of the rich fool (Luke 12), we learn of a rich man who builds greater barns to store all his earthly riches. Then he sits back and says, “Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry.” But God said to him, “Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.” This parable reminds us that God could take us to heaven at any time. Therefore we must use every moment we can to store up our treasures in heaven and not on this earth, “where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal... For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matt. 6:19–21).

Sing or pray Psalter #105.

Read Job 15

Eliphaz makes two grave accusations against Job in verse four of Job 15. “Yea thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.” The charges that Job no longer fears God and has given up prayer are severe. “See what religion is summed up in, fearing God and praying to him, the former the most needful principle, the latter the most needful practice. Where no fear of God is no good is to be expected; and those who live without prayer certainly live without God in the world” (Henry).

Eliphaz goes one step farther. He accuses Job of causing these things in others. He says that by Job’s idea that the righteous suffer just as much as the wicked, he makes others lose their fear of God and think they don’t need to pray. If all things come alike to all, everyone will be ready to say, like Asaph says in Psalm 73:13–14, “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.” We must never give in to this thinking.

Sing or pray Psalter #6.

Read Job 16

Have you ever listened to two people arguing about something and felt as if neither person was even listening to what the other had to say? I say “listened to,” because when we are involved in such a disagreement we are usually in denial of our own selective hearing. Simply arguing for the sake of arguing doesn’t get you anywhere. Job brings this out in verse 3, by saying, “Shall vain words have an end?” In other words, “We could argue about what all of us did or didn’t do wrong all day, but what’s the point?” Sometimes arguments need to be worked out, but we must not get sucked into the temptation of feeling like we must “win” the argument. This kind of thinking is detrimental to the life of the church. When we actually listen to the points made by the opposing side, we will often find we can begin to understand...
their position, although we still might not agree with it. 
Sing or pray Psalter #371.

**Read Job 17**

There is a lot of talk about the grave at the beginning and end of this chapter. In verse 1, Job says, “My breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me.” Then in verse 13, he adds, “If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.” Matthew Henry does not view these statements negatively. Instead, he points out that it is good for us to be conscious of the fact that we are dying from the moment we are born. Every day brings us closer to the close of our life here on earth. When we live in the consciousness of that, we “make our bed,” preparing for our death. We don’t fear it, because we know that death is only the passage into eternal life. The grave is just the bed where our body sleeps until it is reunited with our soul at the end of time.

Sing or pray Psalter #203.

**Read Job 20**

Matthew Henry states, “Never was any doctrine better explained, or worse applied, than this by Zophar, who intended to prove Job a hypocrite.” Zophar says this because he believes only a wicked man would suffer like Job. According to Zophar, the prosperity of the wicked is short and his doom is sure. “This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God” (v. 29).

Matthew Henry continues, “One view of Jesus, directed by the Holy Spirit, and by him suitably impressed upon our souls, will quell a thousand carnal reasonings about the suffering of the faithful.” God’s faithful people do suffer. Take one look at Joseph, David, the Israelites in Egypt, and at Jesus. Jesus, God’s own sinless son, suffered. He was mocked, spit on, whipped, and crucified by his neighbors and countrymen. He was denied by his own disciples. He is denied by us daily. Zophar is forgetting that this life is a pilgrimage and a battlefield.

Sing or pray Psalter #244.
who refuse to love God’s people refuse to love God. That is why the accusations of sin that Eliphaz proposes in Job 22 are so serious. When we don’t clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and provide for the widows, we also fail to do these things for Christ. We show Christ, our brother and savior, that we don’t care about the things he has done for us. If it were true that Job had done these things, then the harsh words of the friends would be justified. As it stands, these accusations do nothing but cause division and reveal Eliphaz’s foolishness.

Sing or pray Psalter #51.

Read Job 23
We recently finished studying the periodic table in school. This fascinating chart is comprised of the hundred or so elements that make up this world God has created. Near the bottom of the table is a row of elements called the rare earth elements. What’s interesting is that these elements aren’t actually rare. You can find bits of them in rocks all over the place. Instead, rare earth elements get their name from the fact that they are very hard to separate out from other elements.

Just as it requires a very difficult process to obtain pure rare earth elements, so Job was going through excruciating trials as God continued to purify him. Job 23:10 says, “But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” God tries his people that we may be made more like him. These trials are never easy, but the reward received at their final conclusion is always priceless.

Sing or pray Psalter #294.

Read Job 24
Job 24:1 says, “Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?” There seems to be some question as to what this verse means exactly, as much of the chapter talks about how God sometimes appears to be indifferent to wickedness, but when I read it I immediately thought of the last days. We talk about the fact that we are already in the last days, but we aren’t yet in the time of worldwide persecution. We see the signs of the times all around us, but we have so many earthly things that it is very hard for us to feel that those days are fast approaching. Sometimes I wonder how clearly God’s people will be able to see it coming when the time arrives. Will it be so quick that everyone is surprised, or will God’s people be able to see it coming a few months or years beforehand? Either way, we are called now to “Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 25:13).

Sing or pray Psalter #21.
Greetings again from the Fed Board! As your Executive Board, it is our duty to keep you informed on what we are doing and what we plan to do this year, as well as provide a reminder of who we are.

This year, the board consists of 11 members. Each member is nominated by the previous board and elected by delegates from each Young People’s Society at the yearly Young People’s Convention. This year the president is Taylor Dykstra, who leads the monthly meetings. The vice president, Brandon Kaptein, assists the president and presides over meetings in his absence. The secretary, Sharon Kleyn, compiles and records meeting minutes and is in close contact with the young people societies and other committees. She is assisted by the vice secretary, Katelyn Van Overloop. The treasurer is Joel Langerak, who manages the finances of the

Back (left to right): Rev. C. Spronk, Taylor Dykstra, Dan Langerak, Brandon Kaptein, Dan Gritters
Front: Sharon Kleyn, Elizabeth Ensink, Katelyn Van Overloop, Karl Dykstra, Rev. R. Van Overloop

Sing or pray Psalter #223.
Board (report for 2015–2016 can be seen below). He is assisted by the vice treasurer, Dan Gritters. The librarian is Elizabeth Ensink, who plans mass meetings and singspirations. We also have two spiritual advisors, Rev. C. Spronk and Rev. R. Van Overloop, who give the board spiritual guidance. The youth coordinator is Dan Langerak, who works in conjunction with Young Calvinists. The board has established the new position of Convention Coordinator, a position held by Karl Dykstra, who brings his experience in chairing a convention to the benefit of the Fed Board and future hosting churches.

As stated in the Constitution of the board, the purpose of the Fed Board is: 1) To enable all Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies to work in close unity; 2) To guide these societies so they develop in faith and doctrine, particularly by means of a Federation publication (Beacon Lights); 3) To give united expression to our specific Protestant Reformed character, or in other words, to uphold the doctrines and confessions taught by the Protestant Reformed Churches.

The duty of the Fed Board in general is to serve the young people of our denomination, and we do that in several ways. The board oversees the work done in planning the yearly Young People’s Convention, along with overseeing three other committees that serve the Young People: Beacon Lights, the Protestant Reformed Scholarship Committee, and Young Calvinists. The Fed Board also collects dues from the Young Peoples’ Societies, which help fund Beacon Lights, PR Scholarship, and some convention costs. Some other Fed Board duties include planning mass meetings and the annual pre-convention singspiration.

The Fed Board takes seriously our work to serve the young people of our denomination. To that end, we encourage you to continue to actively participate in your young people’s society so you may grow closer to each other as friends and grow in your spiritual life as well. You will become stronger in your faith and help benefit the church as the next generation. We as a board covet your prayers as we carry out our important work, and we in turn will pray for you as the future of the church!

In Christ’s service,
Taylor Dykstra, President

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

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### Federation Board Annual Financial Report

For the Year Ended July 31, 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checking Account Summary</th>
<th>Revenues</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning Balance (8/01/2015)</td>
<td>$59,974.81</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revenues</td>
<td>$43,643.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditures</td>
<td>$30,776.31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ending Balance (7/31/2016)</td>
<td>$56,842.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Revenues: $43,643.93  Total Expenditures: $30,776.31

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**Other Notes for the 2015-2016 fiscal year:**

- The Fed Board felt it necessary to pay the scholarship committee an extra $5000 this year to make up for previous FB errors.
- A bank account was started for the Young Calvinists committee with an opening balance of $5000.
- Outstanding convention loans include $15,000 to Grace PRC and $30,000 to First of Holland PRC. No loan has yet been requested by Hull PRC.
The India Mission and Grace Foster Home: Georgetown Church’s Work of Love

The work that God has given to the Georgetown PRC congregation is a great blessing for us as we seek to help the saints in Vellore, India grow in the Reformed faith and spread the gospel in a land that is over 95% Hindu and Muslim.

Our congregation was given this wonderful work by Rev. Kortering and funds from the Contact Committee when it was just beginning under the faithful preaching of Pastor Paul Raj. He had been trained in Singapore in the ARTS program that Rev. Kortering taught while he was a missionary there. About nine years ago Pastor Paul Raj with his wife Kasthuri (Kas) and his two children, Jason (14) and Joan (12), began their work in the city of Vellore in Southeast India. On a map it is about midway between the major industrial cities of Bangalore and Chennai. God soon began to gather his church there now called the Protestant Reformed Church of Vellore (PRCV). In addition, they felt called to begin a home for impoverished and/or orphaned children, called the Grace Foster Home (GFH). From this small beginning, God has gathered a congregation of nearly one hundred fifty saints, including the fifty children of GFH.

In the congregation of Georgetown, the work in the field is divided in an interesting way. The General India Committee is made up of about sixteen men and women aged twenty-five to eighty-five, which reports to the consistory of Georgetown. We supervise all the work in India through various subcommittees: Finance, Travel, Doctrine, Publicity, and Grace Foster Home. The GFH committee is one of the busiest because it supervises and supports all things related to the care of the children. It includes another eight members of the congregation. The support for all the work of the India Mission is through freewill offerings in the congregation. The children of GFH are cared for through sponsor families who donate monthly to the care of the children and write letters of encouragement to them. These families come primarily from many of our Protestant Reformed Churches. We also have fundraisers for special needs like the building projects.

The India Committee makes regular visits to the field that have increased over time in frequency and length. In the past 12 months, we have had a presence in India for over a month. Over the years, five couples from our congregation have visited, some more than once, as well as Prof. Gritters, his wife, and two ministers from the Foreign Mission Committee. The involvement of our church has also borne the fruit of visits by two young men from our congregation with more visits being planned by other young adults. We all return with hearts full of the wonder of God’s work among our brothers and sisters in India. We have learned the great benefits of having women of our congregation joining the visits because of the cultural restraints on the women of India in talking to men not of their own family.

Pastor Paul Raj, Kas, Jason, and Joan live with the children of GFH on the Eden campus where we have helped build both a girls’ dorm and a boys’ dorm just outside of the city limits of Vellore in a beautiful country setting. The boys’ dorm was built in 2014 with the help of saints from all over the world including Korea, the Netherlands, and Canada, along with Georgetown. This spring the girls’ dorm was completed through the gracious donations of Protestant Reformed members throughout the denomination. With these two buildings the children of GFH have a beautiful, safe, and stable place to live and grow.

Over several visits I have personally been able to make, two of them with my wife Donna, I have come to know and love the children and staff of GFH. My
wife and I consider them to be part of our family. Indeed, they have been brought into the family of God and the covenant life of the church through the work of Pastor Paul Raj and Kas. Imagine what it would be like to live in a family with more than sixty members in the same house. Together they worship, pray, study, do chores, grow and show the love of Christ. God has rescued these children from the dark and cruel idolatry of Hinduism and the unimaginable horror of abandoned children on the streets of India. The love and care of the children for one another and for their “parents” is evident from the first hours we stay with them. Their testimony of their love of God and his mercy toward them fills our hearts and brings tears to our eyes. Many times we have wept tears of compassion and joy with them.

In our last visit in early winter of 2015 we were blessed to witness eight baptisms and eight confessions of faith, most of which were of children, now young adults, raised in the Grace Foster Home.

Under the leadership of Pastor Paul Raj, the PRCV has embraced the Reformed faith as we know and love it. This diverse congregation, which speaks the Tamil language, is cared for by a consistory of two elders and one deacon. They love the truths of sovereign grace and speak often of their desire one day, in God’s timing to be a sister church of the PRCA. Along with the “normal” work of a church—preaching, catechism, Bible studies, worship, and church discipline—they are extremely active in their outreach. First, they care for a second congregation, VCC (Vellore Christian Church) which is made up of doctors, their families, and students of the Christian Medical College of Vellore. This group worships in English near the college campus. The core group of 10 to 15 members is very busy in learning Reformed doctrine and in witnessing to their colleagues. Second, the church is engaged in “Village Outreach” several nights a week, bringing the gospel to area villages. In connection with the outreach the members of the church maintain the “Tutor Program,” in which they help village children with their homework. Many members of the congregation participate in this wonderful work. A third and quickly growing part of the outreach of the PRCV is the training of local pastors in the Reformed faith. This work alone has borne much fruit and gathered many new contacts as it grows. This work includes preaching, training, and a magazine that is used to instruct ministers in sermon preparation, exegesis, and doctrine.

As you can see, the PRCV is very active in their witness. We continue, as Georgetown congregation, to be inspired, instructed, and encouraged by their determined and selfless sacrifice and enthusiasm in spreading the gospel of salvation by grace.

Future plans include more formal training for ministers connected with the field. Lord willing, we desire to build our own church building. Also, a matter dear to our hearts, we desire the establishment of our own Christian school for the children of the congregation and of GFH. These things are all in the Lord’s timing.

Condensing and communicating all the aspects of the blessings God has given to us through our work in India in a short article makes me feel at a loss for words. You can learn more by looking at our church website, Georgetownprc.org, and subscribing to our newsletter.

You can help by bringing this wonderful work to the Lord in prayer. Pray for wisdom to be given to Georgetown as we seek to be faithful in this work. Pray for the spread of the gospel through the work of the PRCV. Pray for Pastor Paul Raj and his family as they give themselves completely to this work, along with the consistory and the dear saints of the congregation. Also, pray for the Lord’s blessing on the dear children of GFH that they, along with the children of the congregation, may grow to stand strong as faithful members of the church in this land. Pray for the safety of the saints there as persecution increases. And finally, pray for the gathering of the church from the far corners of India in these last days.

You can also help with monetary support and by becoming a sponsor of a child of GFH.

Thank you for your support through gifts and prayer. Maybe you can also visit the field in the future. This is true of all of our denomination’s mission work. You will forever be changed, challenged, and inspired.

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

If you would like to sponsor a child of GFH, please contact:

Joel and Ellen Bruinooge
616.452.9252
ejkregel@sbcglobal.net
Happy New Year

“Happy New Year!” ring the words
So glibly from our lips.
“Have a good day”—“Have a good year!”
Do we mean those quips?
I suppose that in our minds
We wish the brother well,
Hoping that in peace and safety
He this year may dwell.

And yet as each new year unfolds
The end draws ever near;
The day when Christ comes on the clouds
In judgment to appear.
Yes, that will be a happy year,
’Twill be a happy day
When earthbound sinners leave this land
To live with Christ alway!

So until then, greet brethren true
And wish them happiness—
The happiness of saints of God
Who wait for Him to bless.
With happiness we even walk
Through pain and grief and woe.
Our happiness is based on this:
God walks with us, we know.

Then, with our hands enfolded
Within the hand of God,
We walk the way of holiness—
The path our Savior trod.
We flee the evil motive,
The sinful act and word;
We pray, we thank, we praise, we sing
To glorify our Lord.
I’d like to use this rubric for a time in exploration and explanation of interesting things—especially tangible objects—that appear in the Bible and often in the historical narrative passages. Typically in our preaching, teaching, and studying of the scriptures in which we are searching for the spiritual, gospel truth of the passage, time does not permit us to take some interesting physical object in the story and then consider it and its significance in light of appearances of similar objects in other stories throughout the Bible. But let’s do that here, and let’s begin with boats.

**Boats in the Old Testament**

1. **Noah’s Ark** (Gen. 6–9): Of the boats mentioned in the Bible, the biggest is the gigantic ark of gopher wood that Noah built for his family and many animals in order to survive the worldwide flood. If we take a cubit as measuring 18 inches, the ark was about 450 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. The construction of a full-sized replica of the ark has recently been completed in the United States as a project spearheaded by Answers in Genesis founder, Ken Ham.

2. **Moses’ Ark** (Ex. 2:1–6): The smallest boat is Moses’ ark. The life of baby Moses was endangered in Egypt because Pharaoh wanted to kill all the baby Hebrew boys. After Moses’ mother Jochebed hid him at home as long as she could, she made a tiny boat of bulrushes, waterproofed it with slime, and set it in the river of Egypt with baby Moses inside. Moses was eventually found and taken out of his little boat by Pharaoh’s daughter.

3. **The Jordan’s Ferry** (2 Sam. 19:18): Probably the most obscure and unfamiliar boat is the ferry of David’s men. David fled Jerusalem when his wicked son Absalom led a revolt and seized the throne. After Absalom was killed, David and his family made their journey back from the east and eventually had to cross the Jordan River to get home to Jerusalem. They used a ferry. The men of Judah who came to meet David assembled what was probably some kind of raft or pontoon-like vessel to aid the royal household in crossing the Jordan.

4. **Solomon’s Navy** (1 Kings 9:26–28, 10:11, 22; 2 Chron. 8:18, 9:21): The most interesting collection of boats belonged to Solomon’s navy. The boats themselves are not so interesting, for we know little about them, but their use is fascinating. Solomon had a navy stationed in Ezion-Geber, along the Red Sea. The Red Sea was south of Israel, and had two fingers poking northward—the western finger toward Egypt, and the eastern finger toward Israel. Ezion-Geber was along the tip of that eastern finger of the Red Sea (the Gulf of Akaba). Here in Ezion-Geber Solomon stationed his fleet of oar-propelled boats. The shipmen who navigated these vessels came from Hiram. Hiram was the king of Tyre, a city along the Mediterranean Sea to the north of Israel. He supplied Israel with boats and men to operate them. It seems impossible that boats could come from Tyre to Ezion-Geber, for the two cities were not connected by any waterway. Perhaps Hiram had his own port city along the Red Sea where he stationed and from where he sent ships. Solomon did not use his navy to wage war, but to transport precious commodities from distant lands into his kingdom of dazzling wealth. Into Israel, by the navy of boats, came gold, and lots of it, and silver, ivory or elephant’s teeth, apes, peacocks, precious stones, and various trees. Many of these resources came from Ophir, which was likely some famous region either in Africa, Arabia, or, many think, India. Interestingly, years later, Jehoshaphat, the usually upright king of Judah, slyly allied himself with the wicked Ahaziah, king of Israel, and they tried to build a navy together at Ezion-Geber so they could haul in gold from Tarshish and Ophir. God broke their ships (1 Kings 22:48–49, 2 Chron. 20:35–37),
perhaps with a strong wind (Ps. 48:7).

5. Jonah’s Ship (Jonah 1): Another well-known story involving a boat is the story of the run-away prophet Jonah who did not want to preach in Nineveh, that great city of the Assyrians. Jonah fled to Joppa, boarded a merchant ship and sailed through the Mediterranean Sea toward Tarshish. Jonah went down into a cabin of the ship and fell asleep. In his displeasure with Jonah, God sent a big storm on the sea so that the skilled mariners lost control of the ship. Jonah knew God was chasing him. At Jonah’s command the sailors threw Jonah overboard and the seas were stilled. Jonah was later swallowed by a great fish and spewed onto dry ground.

Boats in the New Testament

6. Ships used by Jesus and disciples (the gospel narratives): The Bible speaks of a boat or ship most often in connection with Jesus and his disciples, for they frequently travelled from one area of Galilee to another by sailing across the Sea of Galilee on a boat (Matt. 9:1, 15:39). Jesus used a boat as a platform from which to teach the multitudes (Matt. 13:1–3), and well-known miracles like the stilling of the tempest, Peter’s walking on water, and the great catch of fishes involved boats (Matt. 8:23–27, 14:22–33, Luke 5:1–9). Our Savior probably became quite familiar with boats and skilled in the navigation of them. His disciples certainly were, for many were former fishermen (Matt. 4:21). The boats of Jesus’ ministry were wooden fishing vessels with one main sail and a large oar out the rear acting like a rudder.

7. Ships used by the missionaries (Acts 13–21): Various ships, bigger than those Jesus ever sat in, were used by the apostle Paul and his fellow laborers in their missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean world. For example, Paul and Barnabas sailed to Cyprus (Acts 13:4), and later on the same journey they sailed from Asia Minor back to Antioch (Acts 14:26).

8. Ships bringing Paul to Rome (Acts 27): The longest and most vividly told “boat story” in the Bible is the inspired Luke’s chronicle of the prisoner Paul’s harrowing voyage to Rome to appear before Caesar. Paul and his fellow prisoners were loaded into a cargo ship of Adramyttium in Palestine and they eventually landed in Myra of Asia Minor. At Myra they boarded an enormous grain ship of Alexandria bound for Italy with a full load of cargo, a crew, 276 passengers, and outfitted with 2 rudders, at least 4 anchors in the stern, and eventually a lifeboat. It was in Fair Havens along the island of Crete that Paul instructed the captain to winter the ship mid-journey, for the seas were too dangerous. The instructions were ignored. Once that massive boat left Crete and headed west toward Italy, it became a miniscule speck in a vast and ever so tempestuous and perilous sea. The mighty waves began pounding the ship so badly that the sailors wrapped it in cables so that the planks with which the ship was built would not split open. Anything on the ship that was not absolutely necessary was pitched overboard into the raging sea. Soon all the wheat went over also. Most of the men were convinced the ship was going down and they would all drown at sea. However, Paul received a reassuring vision from God and restored confidence in his fellows. After fourteen days rocks were spotted. The next morning the ship ran aground on the island of Malta. Badly battered, the boat would never sail again. There was, however, another Alexandrian ship at Malta, and so after a three-month stay on the island Paul would be off again to Italy.

God’s Hand that Held these Boats

These boats we have mentioned are not only in the Bible, but were in God’s hand. All boats are in God’s hand. Little row boats and kayaks that skim the surface of quiet ponds are. So are submarines, gigantic cruise ships, and aircraft carriers that plough through the deepest waters of the sea. The Mayflower, Titanic, Lusitania, Beagle, Arizona, and Santa Maria were. Your boat, if you own one, is.

When we say these boats were in God’s hand we are using a figure of speech to confess the doctrine of providence, which refers to God’s almighty and everywhere present power whereby he upholds and governs all things in the universe. Looking at these boats in the Bible helps us understand and appreciate God’s providence. Since God’s providence always serves his covenant, God (and now Christ exalted in heaven) holds all boats and moves them for our salvation.

1. God used Noah’s ark to preserve the church amid the catastrophic flood he brought upon a wicked world. The covenant people and seed would have perished from off the earth without that boat.
2. God used a tiny boat of bulrushes to preserve the life of the infant who would become the typical deliverer and mediator to lead Israel out of bondage and through the wilderness. Moses was kept alive by boat.

3. God used the ferry in the Jordan to escort David and his family safely over the river and back to Jerusalem. The kingdom needed its king who not only had Christ in his loins but was a type of King Jesus. God’s providence controlled many details that served David and his rule, including a ferry.

4. Solomon’s kingdom of wealth and glory was a dim Old Testament picture of the glorious kingdom of Jesus Christ in all of its spiritual riches and ultimately a picture of the perfection of that kingdom in paradise. God used Solomon’s navy as the means to transport all that wealth into the kingdom and fit it for service as a picture of Jesus’ kingdom.

5. God would use the prophet Jonah to give a sign of the resurrection of Jesus. But in order for that sign to be accomplished Jonah needed to be in a great fish for 3 days and 3 nights. God was pleased to get Jonah out on the open seas by boat.

6. God used the boats of Jesus’ day to transport him, the seeking and saving Shepherd.

7. God used the boats of the missionaries to move them efficiently through the Mediterranean world as they brought the gospel from city to city for the salvation of the Gentiles. How would the gospel get to the island Cyprus when there were no airplanes? Must the preacher swim?

8. How the providence of God is on display in Acts 27 in bringing Paul safely to Rome where he could, under arrest, preach the gospel to some for their salvation, and demonstrate the power of the Spirit by whom Jesus promised the gospel would go to the ends of the earth.

By God’s hand all things work together for the church’s good—boats included.  

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Rev. Huizinga is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.
Danny tromped through the snow, poking at the drifts with a stick. When he got cold, he shuffled inside and shrugged out of his boots, coat, and snow pants.

His mom had a mug of hot chocolate waiting for him. Becky already sipped at hers, stirring in another marshmallow.

Danny wrapped his cold fingers around the hot mug. “Can we talk about the Roman swords now? They had swords, right?”

“Yes, they did.” Mom pointed to the picture in the book. “The Roman sword was called a gladius. It was carried in a scabbard on the soldier’s belt when he wasn’t using it. The regular soldiers would wear it on their right side, and the centurions would wear it on the left as a mark of status. The sword was also lighter than you might think, only weighing a little over two pounds. It was very sharp on both sides.”

“Cool!” Danny studied the picture, especially the sharp edges.

“The word of God is like a sword. It is sharper even than the Roman swords. The Roman swords could only cut into the body, but the word of God cuts into a person’s heart and soul.” Mom leaned onto the counter. “When we read the Bible and hear the word of God preached on Sunday, the word cuts out the evil from our heart, leaving room for the Holy Spirit to fill us up with God’s goodness instead.”

**Questions to think about:**
1. Read Ephesians 6:17 and Hebrews 4:12 by yourself or with your parents. What do these verses call the word of God?
2. How does the word of God act like a sword? What does it do to our heart?

**Unscramble the words below to figure out the hidden phrase:**

- DORWS
- RTIPSI
- HAPSR
- TOW-DEGDE
- TEHRA

Tricia is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.
Save the Date!
PRYP Convention 2017

Holding Forth the Word of Life
(Phil 2:15-16)

August 7-11, 2017
Michindoh Conference Center
Hillsdale, Michigan

Hosted by: First PRC of Holland
prcconvention.com