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MAKING MUD PIES IN A SLUM

Have you ever considered what the church world would look like today if Martin Luther had not been around to start the Protestant Reformation? What if this was the front page article of the Wittenberg Times in July 1505?

Promising Student Found Dead

On Wednesday, July 2 a group of travelers making their way through a fearsome storm came across a young man who had been struck by lightning. Although they rendered what little aid they could they were not able to revive him and he died on the scene. The young man was Martin Luther of Eisleben, and according to his family he was preparing for a doctorate in law.

When we consider the tremendous impact of the Reformation, we shudder to think of the condition of the church world today had Martin Luther not lived through that storm. As we celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation this month, let us give thanks to God for his providential care in preserving the young man Luther! We ought to celebrate the Reformation and all that God restored to his church through that mighty work of the sixteenth century. However, we have to ask ourselves if we are using those good gifts that God gave us, or if, by their lack of use, we are thanking God for something in principle while despising it in practice. Of all the blessings of the Reformation, I intend to focus on one: the restoration of the Bible into the hands of the people and our use of that gift today.

One striking feature of the Roman Catholic Church is that you will not find Bibles in the pew racks. In Luther’s day, the Roman Catholic Church did all they could to keep the people from reading the Bible. Therefore, not only did the people not have Bibles in the pews, they did not have the Bible in their own language. As Luther saw it, the people’s “very lives” depended on their ability to read the Bible. So he determined to translate the Greek New Testament into the language of the people, and he did so in eleven weeks.

Luther was not the first person to translate the Bible into German, nor was he alone in the work of translating. However, as Aaron Clay Denlinger points out in his contribution to the book The Legacy of Luther, Luther’s work was head and shoulders above the rest. “Although Luther consulted the (Latin) Vulgate—he translation was ultimately based on the best available Greek and Hebrew texts of Scripture.” Most important however, were the “accuracy, readability, and—indeed—beauty in the German language.” According to Luther, the Bible was meant to be written in the kind of German that was spoken by “the mother in the home, the children on the street, [and] the common man in the marketplace.” Denlinger points out that Luther would have been most pleased with the criticism leveled by Johann Cochlaeus, one of Luther’s Roman Catholic opponents: “Even shoemakers and women and every kind of unlearned person, whoever of them...had somehow learned German letters, read it most eagerly as the font of all truth. And by reading and rereading it they committed it to memory and so carried the book around with them in their bosoms. Because of this, in a few months...they did not blush to dispute about the faith and the Gospel, not only with laypeople of the Catholic party, but also with priests and monks.”
Technology and the Business of Keeping us Hooked

Think you are immune? Download the app Moments and track your own phone usage. If you are average, you are using it for three hours a day and picking it up 39 times a day. Alter points out that this kind of “average” usage translates to a “staggering eleven years” of someone’s life!

So we must ask ourselves if we are like the people of Luther’s day who “read (the Bible) most eagerly as the font of all truth” and “read and reread it and commit it to memory?” Or has something else taken its place? Do you think that the devil, having lost the battle in 1517, has conceded the war? We know how subtle the devil is, so we know better (Gen. 3:1). The devil tried to have an institution keep the Bible away from us in 1517. In 2017 he must be thrilled to see how he has won this battle.

Luther himself spoke to this idea in a sermon in 1522, “Beware! Satan has the intention of detaining you with unnecessary things and thus keeping you from those which are necessary.” Ask yourself, how much of the three hours you are on your device is spent on “unnecessary” things?

The amount of time we spend in our Bible is directly related to the strength of our desire to know Christ.

What is this joy, this blessing that is found in reading the Bible? It is a “lamp unto (your) feet, and a light unto (your) path” (Ps. 119:105). It provides a corrective for the sin you find in your heart and in your walk. When you pick up the Bible and read, you will find there a rebuke against your pride (Prov. 8:13) and a solution for your quick temper and sharp tongue (Eccl. 7:9, Prov. 17:27–28). Are you troubled by the circumstances of life? Be comforted for it is only “through much tribulation (that you) enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22) and the day comes that “inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s suffering; that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Pet. 4:13). Young person, do you find only mockery and contempt when walking in the ways of the Lord? Be reminded, “the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him” (2 Chron. 16:9). God himself is strong in your behalf! All of this is lost when we check our Twitter feed instead of our God feed.

But there is more, because to read and meditate on the Holy Scriptures is, as Luther pointed out, “rightly to learn to know Christ.” The amount of time we spend in our Bible is directly related to the strength of our desire to know Christ. Throughout the entire Bible you will find yourself pointed to the “way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6), a “lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18–19),

Beacon Lights has had a series of articles on the dangers of technology and the risks that it poses to us as Christians, young and old. This is reinforced in a new book titled Irresistible: The Rise of Addictive Technology and the Business of Keeping us Hooked by Adam Alter. He makes the case that the danger most of us face is not being addicted to heroin or cocaine. The danger is much more mainstream. We are addicted to technology. The numbers he relays are indisputable, but so is the anecdotal evidence. Everywhere you go you see people of all ages with their heads down as they pore over their devices. Think you are immune? Download the app Moments and track your own phone usage. If you are average, you are using it for three hours a day and picking it up 39 times a day. Alter points out that this kind of “average” usage translates to a “staggering eleven years” of someone’s life!

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Convention Reflection Carter Dykstra

2017 CONVENTION

October of 2014 was the date of the first steering committee meeting to plan the 2017 convention—almost three years of planning for one week of activities. As a member of Holland Young People’s Society, I had a unique view of the 2017 convention and the hours of time and work that went into it. The immense amount of work put into planning clearly shows the importance of convention for the Protestant Reformed young people and the church as a whole.

The theme of this year’s convention was “Holding Forth the Word of Life” based on Philippians 2:15–16. “Holding Forth the Word of Life” was applied to witnessing in all three speeches. The first speech was “Being Bold in the Lord,” by Rev. Bruinsma. He spoke on how we must witness about our God without any fear, and that we should not have any fear because he is our Lord. Rev. Smit spoke in the second speech on “Walking in the Light.” He addressed our life specifically and how we must by our conduct show who our God is. Our final speech was given by Rev. Daniel Kleyn. He showed the young people that we must be very careful with our witness and not offend the person we are witnessing to. As members of God’s church we are required to be “all things to all men.” We must do this by understanding their life and culture, and he showed how this is especially important for a missionary in another country.

We had two discussion groups throughout the week. The first was on “Effective Personal Bible Study” and the second on “Praying in Harmony with God’s Will.” These were chosen in connection with the convention theme because one cannot effectively witness without thoroughly knowing the scriptures, something a believer achieves through personal devotions and diligent prayer. In the first topic we discussed the challenges of maintaining personal devotions and the proper way to overcome these challenges, and overall the discussion was meant to encourage the young people in their personal spiritual battle. The second topic was directed...
specifically to prayer and went into depth on the struggles of what to pray for and how to pray to our Lord.

Everything talked about so far deals with strengthening our relationship with our God, but there is another very important part of a convention, and that is strengthening our relationships with fellow church members. Although the speeches and discussion groups are very important parts of the convention, they are not the only part. Throughout the week there are team games, tournament games, and hours of free time with various activities. Making new friends and strengthening old friendships in our churches is very important for young people. 1 Corinthians 12:12 speaks very clearly of the importance of knowing the other members of the church: “For as the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.” We know from this passage that the church must act as one body and with no schism, caring for one another, as shown in verse 25. The convention is important so that members of the church from across the country and even from other countries can fellowship and form godly relationships, so that the church can work as one body.

The fact that the convention is effective is very evident in several different ways. There are life-time friendships that are formed through conventions, and even marriages that might never have happened without it. The smiles throughout the week, the constant conversations, the friendliness of chaperones and conventioneers alike, the competitiveness of the games, and the teamwork displayed throughout all the competition show that the convention is doing its job of bringing the young people of the church together. Finally, the effectiveness is also shown on the tears on many young peoples’ faces when they have to say goodbye, and the hugs on Friday that show the very close friendships created. All of this and more meant that the many hours of hard work are more than worth the effort.

Carter is a member of Holland Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.

Convention Speech Rev. Wilbur Bruinsma

BEING BOLD IN THE LORD

As most of you, I was born and raised in a typical Protestant Reformed family. I was a member of South Holland Protestant Reformed Church (now Crete) and attended the Protestant Reformed grade school. We did not have our own high school yet, so my parents sent me to the local Christian high school. There I entered into the normal debates over common grace, predestination, Christ’s love for everyone, and so on. I was convicted of what I believed. As a result, I was involved in arguing right doctrine as opposed to wrong doctrine. Now, I suppose that was a form of witnessing, but certainly not the type of which I wish to address in this speech. While attending pre-seminary and seminary I was thoroughly trained in the Reformed truth. I learned to love and appreciate more what God had given by his grace to us as churches and to me as an individual. The first few years of my ministry were spent in Faith [Protestant Reformed] Church in Jenison, MI. I was busy as a young pastor in the affairs of the church and for that reason spent little time speaking to others outside of the church about God’s word.

After almost six years in Faith church I took the call to be missionary in Jamaica. When my family and I made the move to this island I was confronted with something for the first time. These people knew nothing of the scripture, much less the Reformed faith. The way of life that characterized many of the people with whom I worked revealed a lack of faith and very little knowledge of the word of God and his covenant. There was little marriage, lots of fornication, no family life, and as a result no church life. It was a matriarchal society. Wow! Where does one start? With witnessing! Yes, I preached every week in one of the little churches. But what was required of me was to sit down and speak one on one or in small groups with the people in Jamaica. Just speak with them of the wonderful works of God. No debates over the intricacies of Reformed truth—just a plain and simple witness to the truth.

That was hard since I really had little experience in this whole area. We Reformed, Dutch people are not very outgoing, to say the least! Often we take the path of least resistance, that is, not stepping
outside the group of friends we have and carrying on a conversation with others. Then to add to that conversation speaking about our faith, our salvation in Christ, our place in God's fellowship and covenant? We have a hard enough time discussing that with each other in our young peoples societies, much less speaking of our faith to one who is not a friend or fellow church member. I was forced to do that while in Jamaica. It was a good learning experience for me. Witnessing: speaking to those who are not of the faith about the wonderful works of God. Who would be so bold to do this?

Yet, this is the calling of the church and her members. We are called to testify to others of the gospel of grace. This witness must not only be given by the church institute through the preaching and mission work, but it is the calling of every believer. We must be willing at all times to give a reason for the hope that dwells in us. To do that takes the boldness and confidence of faith. But it also takes zeal and enthusiasm inspired by our own salvation.

The Believer's Zeal

It must have taken guts for the apostle Paul to sit down with a group of learned philosophers at Mars Hill in Athens. When Paul entered this city we read that his spirit was stirred in him when he saw the city given over to idolatry. What did he do? He disputed with the Jews in the synagogue there. He also witnessed in the marketplace concerning Christ and his resurrection. This witness of Paul drew the attention of the Stoics and Epicureans who encountered him and brought him to the place where men spent their day discussing philosophy. There Paul boldly related to these men the Christian faith. That, I say, took guts! What would motivate Paul to do this? Why didn't he shy away and just simply stay close-lipped about what he believed? Paul answers this question in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”

Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Can we who live in these last days say that of the faith God has worked in our hearts? Paul was passionate about what he believed. He was genuinely zealous. He loved the gospel of Christ! It was the very power unto his own salvation. It is what had delivered him out of the hold that sin and unbelief had on him. His zeal for the gospel empowered him to speak to others of what he believed. When you or I are passionate about something we talk about it all the time: a new car, basketball, a new girlfriend or boyfriend. The subject is always on our lips. Would that we could be so passionate about what we believe! What we believe is not just a set of doctrines that our churches maintain as true, so we do too. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not mere abstract doctrine that we hear about on Sunday but the moment we are out of church our interests turn elsewhere. The gospel of Jesus Christ is not something we learn about in catechism and reluctantly are forced to talk about in young people's society. The gospel of Jesus Christ is life! Your life and mine. Consider for a few moments with me what the gospel of Christ is.

My mother used to sing to me an old-time hymn when I was small: “Count your blessings, name them one by one, count your many blessings see what God has done.” When is the last time we thought about the many spiritual blessings we have received in Christ? We have been saved! Saved from what? We have been saved from the horrible corruption of sin. The wicked of this world are blind spiritually. Because they do not know God and Jesus Christ they walk about in the corruption of their sin. They act happy, but they are miserable because they cannot find rest to their souls! They find temporary fixes to their misery in drugs, alcohol, wild dancing, and illicit sex. Their goals and direction in life are so shallow, earthly, and empty. All is vanity!

Through salvation in Christ Jesus we have been delivered from that blindness and darkness of heart and soul. By God’s grace we have discovered a better life—a life filled with joy, peace, and holiness. And except for the few of us who might be as dogs returning to their vomit, we have been given joy and direction in this life that the unbeliever cannot find! And more—we have been saved from an eternity in hell too! Ever think of that? We deserve to die—everlastingly! We deserve to be punished for our sins against God. But through the precious blood of Jesus Christ shed for us on the cross we have been delivered from the wrath of God. We are righteous in the blood of Christ. To know that is of great relief too.

Yet there is still more: not only have we been saved but we have been given so much by God in his grace. Because of Christ’s work we have been reconciled to God. We have been adopted to be his very own children. Can we begin to fathom the depths of our relationship with God? We are his children whom he loves. He gives us all things for Christ’s sake. We belong to the sovereign God of heaven and earth who controls all things. If he is for us nothing in this life can be against us. He uses everything to our profit. God has also given us a place in his church. In the church we find safety and security. We have
a place to grow up and be nurtured. We have office bearers who care for our needs. We have family and friends. Count your blessings, name them one by one! What a wealth is ours!

Now some in the church may not think all that much about these marvelous gifts. But the believing young person deeply appreciates what God has done for him. And that gratitude is incentive to speak to others of what God has done for us. I love Psalm 66: “Come hear all ye that fear the Lord, while I with grateful heart record what God has done for me. I cried to him in deep distress, and now his wondrous grace confess, for he has set me free!” I bubble over with gratitude! I am willing to speak about God’s wondrous grace because it is my passion. It is more important than anything else in my life! God is my Father! I love him. Let me tell you what God has done for me! That is witnessing. Nothing else can define it. It is speaking to others of the wonderful works of God.

When I see the sad condition of this world and those around me, my heart is glad for what God has done for me. I could be lost in that sin! I could be damned to an eternity in hell! But God has delivered me. And maybe God will deliver that unbelieving neighbor too. And maybe, just maybe, he might use my witness to do so. I do not know, of course, unless I enthusiastically tell my neighbor of what God has done for me. In thankfulness Paul was bold in the Lord to speak of Jesus and the resurrection. So also must we be bold.

**The Believer’s Preparedness**

But that is easier said than done, you might say. I know! It is for me too. First of all, the wicked world is intimidating! People are easily offended and are quick in anger to tear into a person when that person attempts to share anything personal about what they believe. Then I am tempted to come up with the excuse, “Well, why cast your pearls before swine?” The wicked people of this world are not worthy of hearing my testimony of what God has done for me. But wait! Am I worthy of my salvation? Young people, are we in ourselves more worthy than the unbeliever? By God’s grace (unmerited favor) alone we are believers! We were and are as unworthy in ourselves as that unbelieving man or woman. But I know the fear. The wicked are intimidating. When we speak of our faith the unbeliever often times responds by mocking us.

There is another fear that also might keep us from speaking to others about what we believe: we feel we are not knowledgeable enough. Perhaps when I am speaking to others about what I believe someone will argue with me and I will not be able to defend the truth properly. I will not be able to out-argue the other person and then I will bring shame on myself and what I believe. Young people, every one of you has already been thoroughly trained in the doctrines of the faith. You have plenty of knowledge in the Old and New Testaments and in the truths of scripture. Perhaps we have not been taught to share it properly with others, but we do have the knowledge. Most people we meet today are either unchurched or attend a church that does not teach them the objective knowledge of the word of God. Why fear that we do not know enough? We have a whole arsenal of truth to draw from. We are prepared!

Being fully prepared, we must simply speak. This is the point of Jesus in his sermon on the mount in Matthew 5. You are the light of the world! You are lights that shine forth with the blessedness of salvation! “This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine! Hide it under a bushel—no!” You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, if your salvation is not spoken of to others it is thenceforth good for nothing but to be thrown away. Jesus’ point is: he will use his people to witness to unbelievers of the wonderful works of God. God grant us that boldness! Certainly we need that in these last days. I have discovered in my work that our land is in woeful straits. The knowledge of God is gone. The knowledge of Christ is gone. The need for salvation is ignored. How important that we zealously witness of what God has done for us! People need to see and hear that God has saved us and freely given us a place in his church. There are very few who are able to fill that need any more today—precious few. How urgent is the need for us to testify of our faith to others who perchance God has yet chosen to save by means of our witness.

**The Believer’s Witness**

What then must be the content of our witness? What must we say? I’ll answer that question by proposing three statements of what witnessing is. First of all, a person’s witness to others is not mechanical. I am not going to pass on to you a script of what your conversation with others must be. That would be the easy way. I am not going to give you a few patent phrases to use in order to witness to someone else. That being said, however, I also do not believe that to be a good witness we need to be able to walk up to a stranger on the street and start talking with him about Jesus. We can do that, of course. There is nothing wrong with that. But
a more effective witness is left when we speak to someone we know: a neighbor, a fellow worker, or a person who asks us of our faith. Then our witness is not superficial but much more meaningful. This will also determine what our witness will be. The subject we address when witnessing will be determined by the occasion and circumstances in which we find ourselves. It will be natural. Perhaps at college someone will want to talk to us about creation versus evolution. Others will want to talk to us about our holy lives. Then we can give witness to Jesus Christ and his salvation. Some will want to talk about membership in the church. Again, this leads us to the cross. Some will want to talk about membership in the church. Again, this leads us to the cross. Some will want to talk about their family difficulties or family life: marriage or the raising of their children. All these make for excellent opportunities to speak to them of the wonderful works of God, to speak with them about the gospel of Jesus Christ. Mind you, we need to have our eyes open for the opportunity. Most often when the opportunity arises we avoid it because we are either afraid or ashamed of the gospel. There are more opportunities that arise than we wish to admit.

Second, our witness need not be profound. We do not have to relate the dogmatical definitions of predestination, justification, God’s attributes, and so on. These issues may come up but we are not out to impress someone with our knowledge. Our witness is not proud but humble. And it is simple. A simple explanation is all that is necessary.

Third, witnessing is not winning an argument or debate. It is not being able to out-argue someone else. Sometimes we think that is what witnessing is all about: winning an argument. Then we can walk away, shine our knuckles, and be satisfied that we were an effective witness. Not really. We have only served to offend rather than to draw others to the gospel. We must be willing to listen and give a humble answer without leaving the impression that we are in any way superior to those with whom we speak.

May God bless you, young people, by means of the witness you leave with others. May you as covenant young people be a light on a hill that cannot be hid. And may we together be a blessing that draws others to Christ.

Rev. Bruinsma is a pastor at Pittsburgh Protestant Reformed Church in Pittsburgh, PA

Convention Speech Rev. Richard Smit

WALKING IN THE LIGHT

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. 1 John 1:6–7.

Introduction

The purpose of this speech is to teach and admonish us concerning our witnessing the word of life unto others whom we meet in our daily life. My speech this morning emphasizes not the boldness of our faithful witness of God’s word, nor the need to understand who the receivers of our witness are, but it emphasizes you: the giver, the communicator, the witness, the one who must hold forth, or shine out with, the Word of Life in your confession and walk of life.

Successful witnessing is not how many souls you were used by the Lord to bring unto repentance and conversion and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The repentance and conversion of some might be the fruit of your faithful witnessing, but that itself is not the success of witnessing. Successful witnessing is the faithful witness of the Word of Life to those whom God places upon your pathway so that he may be glorified, regardless of what kind of fruit he is pleased to give your witness. Who of himself is sufficient for that faithfulness?

We rejoice to know that our heavenly Father is also faithful to provide his blessing and grace to his saints, even saints in their youth, through the instruction of his word so that we may walk in his light unto faithful witnessing.

The Consistent Activity

Walking in the light is the activity of someone embracing the light and of rejecting the darkness. Now, what are these opposites of light and darkness?

Darkness is the lie and wickedness of enmity against God. Remember, darkness is something that
we have in common with the world because of our old nature. We were born with it. It is natural. It is our total depravity. Of the darkness within we must be keenly aware.

The darkness has developed in the world into many sorts of idolatry: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Taoism, Shintoism, and many other religions that serve idol gods of man’s invention and serve his carnal lusts.

In the sphere of the church institute, darkness has developed in the form of the false church, false prophets, false Christs, and false gospels, such as theistic evolution, universal atonement, well-meant offer of the gospel, conditional salvation, good works and obedience as a condition unto covenant life with God, post-millennialism, and antinomianism.

In society in general, darkness has developed in the forms of materialism, sports worship, selfishness, abortion, euthanasia, the wicked belief that men can decide what constitutes a lawful marriage, and the wicked belief that individuals can decide what their gender will be.

The antithetical opposite of darkness, of course, is light. The light is the Word of Life. God is light. Jesus Christ is the light. The light is full of righteousness, holiness, and truth. The light is the true knowledge of sound doctrine and the truth of the word of God over against idol worship, wickedness, heresy, and false teachings. It is the word that sets out for us the path of a true confession of faith and a walk of life in the light of God’s word.

Now, who determines what is darkness and what is light for us today? Who determines what is truth and what is the lie? Does each of us individually decide what is the light and what is the darkness, what is the truth and what is the lie? Who sets the standard of light and darkness, truth and lie, right and wrong?

The darkness would like you to decide what is right and wrong, light and darkness, for yourselves. The individual decides because, the darkness declares, there are no absolutes. Right and wrong depend on the individual and the circumstances in which he may find himself.

However, the Lord teaches in 1 John 1:6–7 that he is the absolute standard of truth and lie, light and darkness. He teaches this in the words: “...as he is in the light.” God is not only light (v. 5), but we must walk “as” God is in the light. We must walk according to the standard that God is light.

What determines the path for you to walk? What determines what you must confess and how you will live daily? God who is light! You find that standard for all of your life in the Triune God. And, God is pleased to give us himself as the standard in his infallibly inspired, Holy Word. Further, you and I are blessed by the Lord to have that standard of the holy scriptures taught and expounded to us in our Reformed confessions. Thus, with the word of God and the Three Forms of Unity, you are equipped to do what your baptism requires of you and admonishes you to do: walk in the light as he is in the light.

By doing so you will hold forth, or communicate, the Word of Life to those around you. Believing and living according to the word of God, you begin a life of faithful witnessing in your daily life: shining as children of the Light in the darkness of this present world. Not only will you be witnessing personally, but you will become more and more interested in and supportive of the work of the church in her mission work wherever the Lord sends his harvest laborers to shine as lights in the darkness of this present world in mission fields.

According to the standard of God himself in scripture, you must not merely say that you are walking in the light of the word of God, but also be walking in the light of the word of God by true faith. In other words, we must seek a consistency in our witnessing.

We communicate much and, surprisingly sometimes, over long distances by several things, and communicate in some ways without having to say a word to anyone. We say a lot by our church membership and our activeness in our church membership. We witness by our schools that we attend. Much is witnessed to others around us by our behavior at work or in the neighborhood. Much is said by our clothing or lack thereof. Much is communicated by our entertainment preferences and choices. Much is said by our interaction and communication with our parents. Much is made known by our regularity in worship and our sabbath observance. Much is communicated through our likes, photos, and comments on social media, such as Facebook, which can be read by friends and many others worldwide. Much is communicated to others, for example, by what we do before we eat our meal at a restaraunt or in a cramped seat on a very long overseas flight. We communicate to others in the seats near and behind us by what we do and watch on the seatback video display or various electronic devices on an airline flight.

When we communicate either verbally or by our actions, the Lord warns us against spiritual inconsistency and hypocrisy. If you say by your actions or words that you are a Reformed, Protestant,
Christian believer, but then by your actions say that you believe in theistic evolution, in universal atonement, and see no need to be a member of a local, true Reformed church, you are a liar. If as a confessing Christian you live for yourself, dabble in worldly entertainment, watch fornication and adultery in movies and prime-time evening TV shows, sing the world’s wicked songs, then you are a liar.

This is the judgment of the word of God concerning you and me, if we are walking in such sin and unbelief: “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.” The implied admonition is that from that hypocrisy and inconsistency we must repent, change our ways, and flee the darkness of our own wickedness and unbelief! Walk in the light! Walk in the word of life!

Indeed, before the Lord, we may not merely say that we are baptized, Protestant, Reformed, Christian believers, but we must seek a spiritual consistency of true faith in which we both say and show that we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ in true faith and that our life is governed by his word.

That consistent witnessing in the light is an active walk of genuine faith. Walking in the light is not first doing something for someone else, although our Christianity requires that we show mercy unto the poor and needy neighbor. Walking in the light is first knowing the light, who is our Father. Knowing the light is the activity of true faith, which in union to Christ, knows certainly and is heartily assured of the truth in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as revealed in his holy word. The witness of true faith is trusting in the Lord for everything: our salvation, our forgiveness, our sanctification, our fellowship with him, our preservation, all things that we need for body and soul to live a godly, faithful life. The witness of a true faith is a living faith, which hates the darkness and what is false, fights against it, but also loves and delights in the light of God’s truth, and defends it from the darkness.

Consistent, faithful witnessing, or shining with the light, arises out of Jesus Christ, the Light, by a true faith. We pray earnestly that the Lord will by his grace and Spirit grant us such faith so that, as we shine in the light of Christ, others will see it in our daily conduct, behavior, and speech.

The Divine Possibility

In order for us to walk in the light, we must be cleansed from our debilitating darkness. The kind of cleansing that we need is a two-fold cleansing. First, we need a cleansing that will wash away the guilt and stain of our darkness so that we are not condemned, but rather justified before and by God!

Second, we need the darkness to be purged and overcome within us. We need a cleansing that steadily removes the darkness of pride, unbelief, immorality, and the evil lusts of our flesh, and then works in us the light of truth, righteousness, holiness, wisdom, and all of the virtues of Christ. We need a cleansing that works in us more and more the light of faith in Jesus Christ unto a life of godliness.

But, can we ourselves provide such cleansing so that we may have peace and life with God which are necessary for shining with the light?

Some world religions think that it is possible to cleanse ourselves from sin by good works and rituals. Some false gospels even tell you that you can cleanse yourselves by your free choice, your good works, your obedience, or even because of your act of believing. As a result you can witness people dutifully and sincerely doing their good works, walking great distances on challenging pilgrimages, and fulfilling all of the requirements in order to obtain blessing, health, peace, comfort, happiness, and hope. They are sincerely wrong because man cannot cleanse himself from his darkness by his obedience in order to have fellowship with the Father. Impossible.

However, the glad tidings of the gospel is that only Jesus Christ can and does cleanse his own from the darkness by his blood and Spirit. First, his shed blood washes away our guilt and establishes our righteousness before our Father. He has redeemed us from sin, removed fully God’s eternal wrath against our sin by suffering God’s eternal wrath in body and soul on the cross, and earned for us all obedience to the law of God for us. He established for us by his death and resurrection deliverance out of the darkness of the curse unto the light of God’s blessing. Through our Lord Jesus Christ and because of his atonement, we appear before God as white and pure as the light. That is ours by faith alone. Do you believe that?

Then, Christ also cleanses us by his Spirit. He raises us out of our darkness and establishes in us his light through regeneration. He calls us into the life of his light by the means of grace, chiefly the preaching of the Gospel. He works in us the light, i.e., the knowledge and life of his salvation. Thereby his Spirit removes the darkness of corruption, selfishness, wickedness, immorality, and all the lusts of the flesh and works thereof. He works in us more and more as children of the light, the light of faith, godliness, and truth.

The Light works that faith through the means of
grace, chiefly the preaching of the word.

Just as the Lord works in the plant world with the sun, so he works in our salvation. The sun shines and it gives energy to the plants to do that wonder of photosynthesis, and to grow and bring forth fruit. So, also the Sun of Righteousness shines upon you, whom the Holy Spirit has made living plants in Christ, to drink in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. That light energizes you to hate the darkness, flee from it, and to delight in the light and in your new life of fruit-bearing.

When the Lord shines by means of the preaching of the word, the Light does his work. The light of Christ does not make everyone to grow in his light, because his light also causes many to reject him, turn away from him, and to persecute anyone in whom his light shines. This happened to Jesus in his own earthly ministry, and continues to occur even today wherever the faithful preaching of the word goes forth.

But, in the righteous, the Lord works his light: true knowledge of him and his word. By the power of the light through the Holy Spirit, we learn our only comfort in life and death: our three-fold knowledge of Christ in the Scriptures. We also learn consistency between the truth and life, between doctrine and godliness. We learn the beginning of that new life of daily repentance from our darkness and true believing in Christ alone. Believing in true faith the word of God and living in daily conversion, we do shine forth with the light, the truth, of Jesus Christ to others around us at church, at home, at school, at work, in our neighborhoods, on vacation, and wherever we are led in life.

Walk in the light, and there will be very definite and clear results in your personal witnessing.

The Desired Results

In response to your witness, there may be those who refuse to walk in the light at all, or those who continue to walk as hypocrites, saying that they walk with the Father, but actually walk in darkness. Such will reap to themselves miserable results. Their walk in unbelief is a path of misery that leads to bitter destruction. In that path, Lot walked and gained only misery to his soul, and lost all. If we would persist impenitently in that path of hypocrisy, then we may not expect to inherit the kingdom of God. Those who walk in the dark path of hypocrisy may not expect God’s blessing and approval upon such wickedness. Such may go to church falsely thinking that they can walk with the Father and the world and then conclude all will be well with their souls. However, God is not deceived. He who is not only merciful, but also righteous, will not let such unbelief go on, but he will judge such spiritual inconsistency.

God makes his displeasure against a hypocritical witness known by bitter fruit. For example, those who do not walk in the light consistently, rejecting the admonition of scripture to do so, set forth a religion and faith which is false, selfish, dishonoring to Christ, and unbiblical. An inconsistent witness will bring shame upon the church. Such a witness is easily an offense to new converts to the Reformed faith who have come out of the darkness and with a zeal embrace the light of God’s truth, and sets before them a grievous stumbling block. It can only deserve the judgment mentioned by Christ, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matt. 18:6). That must be our righteous attitude toward an unbelieving, hypocritical witness that has the potential to offend the little ones, whether the youth or new converts, that are led by the Spirit to believe in Christ.

But, to those who daily seek the Lord for his sustaining mercy and so walk in the light, they will see blessed results. They will enjoy fellowship with other saints for encouragement, for correction when necessary, for instruction, for guidance, and for mutual help in pursuit of the worthy things of the kingdom of heaven. Their Reformed confession and godliness will be spiritually magnetic and attractive, for the building of healthy friendships like Jonathan and David’s, or Mary and Elizabeth’s. In this age of deepening and threatening darkness, you and I need such encouragement for perseverance in the path of the light. Such fruits of fellowship in the light of Christ are truly priceless.

Moreover, the light will shine out to others who are yet in the darkness of unbelief and wickedness. On the one hand, we may expect that faithful witnessing will result usually in persecution from the darkness. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). There are many such clear examples of persecution in the New Testament church recorded in scripture and in church history books. We may expect and must prepare for it ourselves.

On the other hand, we may also expect that faithful witnessing results in others, who are known to Christ from eternity as his sheep, being delivered out of the darkness of their unbelief into his marvelous conti...
light. We may be privileged to be a tool in his hand for their conversion, for their faith, and for their baptism into the church and fellowship of Christ. Sometimes we may be used by the Lord, but may not meet in this life the people that the Lord has brought to the faith and his church by our witness in speech, conduct, or writing. Nevertheless, we believe and rejoice that the Lord in his mercy and grace is pleased to use our feeble witness however he wisely determines to bring his other sheep into his light through repentance and faith in him.

Finally, faithful witnessing is personally encouraging in our battle against our own darkness. As we walk in the light by faith with the Father in worship, in prayer, in singing, in the reading of his word, and in meditation thereon to his glory, we are encouraged unto faithfulness over against the reality of our own ever-present darkness and unbelief until our death. Although our walk with the Father now is ruined with much of our own darkness and unbelief, yet we have by faith alone in Christ Jesus the beginning of his life of walking with the Father, and the sure hope of sinless perfection. In that sinless perfection, we with all of God’s saints will walk in the truth of the fullness of Christ’s holiness and know God face to face everlasting.

In that blessed hope, walk in the light and hold forth the Word of Life for the glory of God foremost and for all those whom we meet in life, both believing and unbelieving.

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Convention Speech Rev. Daniel Kleyn

BEING ALL THINGS TO ALL MEN

The two previous speeches (articles) reminded us of our calling to witness boldly by what we say to others as well as by how we live. Those speeches focused on the message and on the messenger. We now direct our attention to one other factor in witnessing: the person to whom we witness. That person is anyone whom God in his providence places in our paths. While it is true that the most important thing in our witness to that person is the message (what we say by word or by life), the method is also significant—especially with a view to being effective in our witness. As we witness, we need to take into account the hearer, the listener, the person who is the object of our witnessing. Not everyone to whom we witness is the same. We need therefore to be all things to all men (1 Cor. 9:22).

To be all things to all men basically means that we seek to understand the person to whom we witness. We take the time to understand such things as his/her life, culture, circumstances, background, and religious beliefs. Taking such things into account, we then (as much as is possible and legitimate) adapt ourselves and adapt what we say to that person. We do this in order to avoid unnecessary offense and thus hopefully to increase that individual’s receptivity to our witness.

For myself as a missionary in the Philippines, this includes the following. The most obvious is language—we work at learning and we strive to use the local language, Tagalog. But we also adapt ourselves to such things as their food (e.g., eating tripe or balut), their ways of communication (e.g., express appreciation for a dish, not verbally, but more indirectly by taking seconds), their view of time (e.g., a willingness to adapt to a “rubber clock” and thus to begin meetings later than the scheduled time), etc. That is, we show a willingness to enter into their lives and culture and ways. We strive to be like Filipinos.

More significant than these types of things is the need to understand the religious background of Filipinos. We need to know what that background is, whether Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, Baptist, or some other religion. This affects how we speak to them about certain things—e.g., the sacraments, the special gifts of the Spirit, or dispensationalism. It also affects what we speak about first—e.g., we do not immediately criticize them for their erroneous beliefs, but instead discuss what we might have in common and/or present the basic truths of the gospel.

But what about being all things to all men within the USA and Canada? Are there things that we need to be aware of and adapt to here? The answer is, yes. There are different cultures within our home countries. You will not always be witnessing to white,
Dutch Americans. You will not always be witnessing to Christians. There are many different nationalities and religious backgrounds. Also, the experiences and circumstances of each individual you witness to differ greatly. Thus we need to ask ourselves, how must I be all things to an unbelieving neighbor? How to someone at work who curses, parties, and boasts of sin? How to a person who is divorced and remarried? How to a family member who never comes to church? How to an ungodly person who is a drunk or a homosexual? How to those from different races (Mexicans or African Americans)? How to those who serve other gods (Muslims or Hindus)?

1 Corinthians 9:19–23 guides us in our answers. Verse 22 mentions being “all things to all men.” Verse 19 indicates that this means being a “servant unto all.” That is, being “all things” means being “a servant.”

A servant gives up his rights and freedoms. He is at the mercy of his master. He cannot think about and be focused on himself. That’s what we must do in witnessing. We must forget about ourselves. If it helps our witness, we are willing to sacrifice our personal comforts, our plans for the day, our own name and reputation, our personal opinions and/or preferences.

To help us in understanding the idea of being all things to all men, the apostle Paul gives us some examples. He mentions that he was a Jew to the Jews. If he was with Jews who wanted to keep the Old Testament feasts, Paul joined them in doing so. If he was with Jews who refused to eat unclean meat, he also refrained from doing so. If he was with Jews who still gathered for worship on the seventh day of the week, Paul worshiped with them in the synagogues on that day. Paul knew very well that Christ had come and had fulfilled the ceremonial laws, but during the period of transition from the Old to the New Testaments, he did not immediately condemn the Jews for not believing this—not by his words, nor by his actions.

Paul also mentions that he was a Gentile to the Gentiles (to those that without the law). If they ate pork, he ate it too. If they ate meat sacrificed to idols, he also ate that meat. Paul did not live and behave as a Jew when he was with the Gentiles. Nor did he expect them to do so. He did not require that the Gentiles conform themselves to Jewish laws and practices.

Much more significant than the example of Paul is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ. He, more than anyone, became all things to all men. He, more than anyone, became a servant. He became a man in order to save men. He made himself poor for those who were poor. He even died for those who were dead. He became all things to us in order to accomplish our salvation. He became all things to us in order to fulfill and thus also to declare the gospel to us by his life and work. He became like us in all things, sin excepted.

These examples clearly show that when we witness, it is not about us—our name, opinions, or preferences. The important thing on our minds is the person to whom we are witnessing. As servants, we forget about ourselves and do everything we can to win others to the faith. We avoid driving them away. We strive to build a rapport with them. We seek to establish a friendship and a connection. We show that we care about them. We work to create an atmosphere that is friendly and thus conducive to their being interested in the truth.

We do well to examine ourselves in this regard. If it is true of us that we come across as considering ourselves better than others, or holier than others, or more knowledgeable than others, then we fail to be all things to all men. If we give the impression that we are always right, that we are right with regard to everything, and that we have nothing to learn, then again we fail to be all things to all men. And if ever we give the impression that we are absolutely sure that we are going to heaven but not so sure about that as regards those to whom we witness, once again we fail to be all things to all men.

However, the idea of being all things to all men needs to be clarified. If we take and apply the language of the text to our lives, what does it really mean? Does it mean being a drunk to a drunk, a partier to a person who parties, a drug-user to a drug-user? Does it mean being a movie-goer to a movie-goer, or a Sabbath-breaker to a Sabbath-breaker? Does it mean being one who curses and swears to someone who curses and swears? Does it mean? Does it mean being a drunk to a drunk, a partier to a person who parties, a drug-user to a drug-user? Does it mean being a movie-goer to a movie-goer, or a Sabbath-breaker to a Sabbath-breaker? Does it mean being one who curses and swears to someone who curses and swears? Does it mean that we should join an unbeliever in his worldly activities in order to establish common ground and thus have an opportunity to witness?

At times, we might be tempted to think along such lines. One might be inclined to say, “If I’m invited to a party with an unbeliever, then I should probably go. By saying yes, I won’t offend or upset him. And that will give me an opportunity to witness.” Or someone else might say, “It’s okay to be a friend to an unbeliever. It’s even okay to be a boyfriend or girlfriend. Being all things to all men means I can be and should be. And that will give me so many opportunities to witness to him/her.”

I trust that we are all wise enough to know this is
wrong. For one thing, it is contrary to the theme text for our YP Convention—“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15). It is also clearly contrary to the fact that our own lives must be a witness to others. Besides, do we really think it will work to lead a drunk or adulterer or Sabbath-breaker or a cursing and swearing unbeliever to Christ and to the church by joining him in his sinful activities? The answer is obvious.

Being all things to all men does not mean being absolutely all things to all men. It refers, rather, to being all things that are lawful.

We may not be like those to whom we witness as regards what is wrong or immoral or forbidden. When it comes to godly living, there may never be any caving in or compromise. Never may we say, “I will go along to the party with others from school or work or college so that I can witness to them if they do wrong.” Never may we say, “I will be a friend to an unbeliever and date him/her for a while because then I will have opportunity to witness.” Never may we say, “I will try to be like them in every possible way. I will look like them, act like them, and speak like them, so that then they will be receptive to my witness.”

Being all things means being willing to be like and to adapt to others with regard to the adiaphora—the things indifferent. These are things concerning which there is no direct command given in scripture. These are the things concerning which there is no right or wrong.

In this connection, we do well to be careful not to be too quick to judge things as wrong. That is always a temptation whenever people cross our paths who are different from us. What we need often to remind ourselves concerning others is this, “What they do or think or say is not necessarily wrong, it might simply be different.”

This is perhaps our greatest struggle in witnessing—we are quick to judge. If someone’s worship style is different, we consider it to be dead wrong. If someone is unemployed, we immediately judge him to be lazy. If someone is an Arminian, we right away figure it is a waste of time to try to convince him otherwise. If a person is of a different nationality or skin color, we are quick to think that God is less likely to save that person, and in sinful pride we consider ourselves more lovable in the eyes of God and thus more savable.

Instead, we need humbly and patiently to seek to understand those we meet. We need to be sensitive to their struggles, their current beliefs, and their possible reactions to what we might say. We need to let them know they are important to us. We need to make ourselves approachable and thus to create an atmosphere in which they are interested in what we say to them concerning God and the gospel of his grace in Christ.

God has given us a wonderful gospel to bring to others. God is pleased to use us and our witness to gain others to Christ. The apostle Paul spoke of his goals (1 Cor. 9:19, 22): “That I might gain the more” and “that I might by all means save some.” He mentions these goals five times—one in each verse. He was zealous and passionate about winning others over to the faith. May we be motivated by this as well, with a view to the salvation of the elect. And may God bless our efforts and use our faithful witness to draw his chosen ones to the church and thus to Jesus Christ.

Rev. Kleyn is a missionary to the Philippines.

Devotional Sarah Mowery

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

October 8 Read 1 Samuel 4
A Tragic Day
Proverbs 19:3 declares, “The foolishness of man perverteth his way: and his heart frettetl against the Lord.” Thus was the case when the Philistines smote Israel. Israel’s sin led to their defeat, but instead of repenting, they grumble: “Wherefore hath the Lord smitten us today before the Philistines?” Rather than turning to Jehovah, they decide to take the ark of the covenant with them to the battlefield. Such is the folly of those who content themselves with an outward show of religion,
though their hearts are far from God.

To Eli, the news of the slaughter of the Israelites and of the deaths of his sons pales in comparison to the tidings that the ark of God has been taken. When he hears that, the old man dies. Let’s learn from the sad end of this aged saint and avoid the sins that made his final years so bitter: he lacked self-control, fattening himself on the offerings of the people, and he similarly indulged his children rather than disciplining their sinful behavior. On this tragic day God began to execute the judgment of which he had spoken to Eli, for those who honor him will he honor, but those who despise him shall be lightly esteemed (see 1 Sam. 2:30).

Sing or pray Psalter #26.

October 9  Read 1 Samuel 5

Jehovah’s Heavy Hand
The Philistines worshipped an image that had the hands and head of a man and the body of a fish. But though it had hands, the image of Dagon was incapable of handling (Ps. 115:7). In contrast, the Philistines were forced to acknowledge that the destruction that befell them was the work of Jehovah’s heavy hand (1 Sam. 5:6). Note how God used even the Philistines’ superstition for his own glory: because the severed head and hands of Dagon were found on the threshold, none stepped on that threshold for years to come. In that way Jehovah reminded every worshipper that entered Dagon’s temple of the complete helplessness of their idol, and generations of Philistines were left without excuse for changing “the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man” (Rom. 1:23).

Matthew Henry comments, “When Christ, the true Ark of the covenant, really enters the heart of fallen man…all idols will fall…sin will be forsaken…the Lord will claim and possess the throne. But pride, self-love, and worldly lusts…still remain within us, like the stump of Dagon. Let us watch and pray that they may not prevail. Let us seek to have them more entirely destroyed.”  

Sing or pray Psalter #308.

October 10  Read 1 Samuel 6

The Ark Returned
The Philistines return the ark with a trespass offering: five golden emerods, or tumors, and five golden mice. But a man cannot give gold in exchange for his soul. Rather, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins” (Heb. 9:22). The Philistines are quite sure that these plagues have come upon their bodies and their fields from Jehovah’s hand, but they would still like to think that they came by chance (1 Sam. 6:9). In contrast, the child of God rests in the knowledge that “all things come, not be chance, but by His fatherly hand” (HC, LD 10).

Bethshemesh was a city of priests, men who knew God’s instructions regarding the handling of the ark (Josh. 21:16). Consequently, they first treat the ark with a sort of reverence, setting it upon the large stone that dominated the landscape and offering the two cows as sacrifices to Jehovah. But then they remove the cover of the ark and look inside. God swiftly judges their impudence. Commentators debate the total number of people killed because the tallies of 70 and 50,000 are rendered separately in the original text, but the point is clear: our God swiftly and severely punishes rash, presumptuous sins. Sing or pray Psalter #40.

October 11  Read 1 Samuel 7

Ebenezer
1 Samuel 7:2 ends with this phrase: “And all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord.” For twenty years Israel has served the Philistines while the worship of Jehovah languished. Now, in response to their lament, Samuel commands them to put away their idols. They obey. He then calls them to repent and recommit to Jehovah in a formal ceremony at Mizpeh. The Philistines assume that Israel has gathered for battle and attack. God’s people are terrified and cry to Samuel to pray for them. Samuel first offers a sacrifice, and, on the basis of that sacrifice, Jehovah hears his prayer and smites the Philistines. After the battle, Samuel sets up a great stone and calls it “Ebenezer,” which means “Hitherto [that is, “all the way until now”] hath the Lord helped us.” How had God helped them? First, by saving them from the enemy within by working repentance in their hearts. Second, by saving them from the enemy without.

When you consider your life, are you able to confess, “Here I raise my Ebenezer. Hither by thy help I come. And I hope by thy good pleasure safely to arrive at home.”? Sing or pray Psalter #47.

October 12  Read 1 Samuel 8

Make Us a King
1 Samuel 7 records a high point in the history of Israel. Jehovah had worked repentance in their hearts, and he rewarded that repentance with victory over their enemies. 1 Samuel 8 records a low point. In this chapter the elders of the people come to Samuel and demand a king. Samuel is troubled by their request. Instead of answering them immediately, he goes to God in prayer (v. 6). Let’s follow his example when we’re troubled and perplexed.

In obedience to the Lord, Samuel solemnly protests the people’s request, but they refuse to listen. Jehovah
gratifies their request in his wrath, for in asking for a king they have not rejected Samuel and his sons, but Jehovah himself, “that I should not reign over them” (v. 7). Do we own Jehovah as our king? Do we willingly submit to his reign in all areas of our lives? Sing or pray Psalter #394.

October 13 Read 1 Samuel 9

A Choice Young Man
In 1 Samuel 9 God brings to Samuel the man whom he must anoint king. And what a man he is! Young Saul is tall and handsome. Therefore we might presume that he was arrogant and self-centered, but not so. He honors his father not only in deed, but also in word, and his relationship with his servant is one of mutual respect. But this man of physical and social prowess is a spiritual weakling. Though Samuel had judged Israel for decades, Saul does not know or recognize him. Instead, he views God’s prophet as a good luck charm. Saul is not interested in the word of God: he only wonders if Samuel can help him locate his lost possessions. And he presumes that Samuel’s services can be bought with money.

Why would Jehovah command Samuel to anoint such a man to be king of his people? In order that he might clearly show how desperately Israel needed a king who loved the Lord. That King would be typified in his father, David, who penned these prophetic words about the King after God’s own heart: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Ps. 40:8). Sing or pray Psalter #111.

October 14 Read 1 Samuel 10

“By Me Kings Reign”
1 Samuel 10 can be divided into two parts. First, Samuel privately anoints Saul and foretells three signs that will take place that very day, confirming that his anointing is of the Lord. Then verses 17ff record the public assembly at which Saul is selected by lot to be king. Why did God have Samuel anoint Saul privately first? In order that Saul himself would know that he became king not by chance, but by God’s choosing. In the words of Daniel 4:17, “To the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.”

Our God alone rules in the kingdom of men. He declares the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done. His counsel shall stand, and he will accomplish all his purpose (Isa. 46:10). Do you believe that he is mighty enough to perfect that which concerns you, too? (Ps. 138:8). Sing or pray Psalter #223.

October 15 Read 1 Samuel 11

The Spirit of God on Saul
In 1 Samuel 10:6 Samuel tells Saul, “And the Spirit of the L ORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt...be turned into another man.” He adds, “For God is with thee” (v. 7), and verse 9 states, “And it was so, that... God gave him another heart.” But we know that later God removes his Spirit from Saul. Is not God’s grace irresistible? Doesn’t Jesus teach that the Holy Spirit abides with his people forever? (John 14:16)

Saul’s anointing with the Holy Spirit was not a saving work. Matthew Henry comments, “A new fire was kindled in his breast, such as he had never before been acquainted with: seeking the asses is quite out of his mind, and he thinks of nothing but fighting the Philistines, redressing the grievances of Israel, making laws, administering justice, and providing for the public safety; these are the things that now fill his head. He finds himself raised to such a pitch of boldness and bravery as he never thought he should be conscious of.” Though the Spirit empowered Saul to lead, note this: Saul does not desire to obey nor does he delight in God’s will any more than he did before. That is the fruit of the Spirit’s saving work in a person. Sing or pray Psalter #391.

October 16 Read 1 Samuel 12

Only Fear the Lord
To demonstrate that God’s people were not justified in requesting a king, Samuel recounts Jehovah’s past faithfulness to them. He then reiterates a principle they knew from experience: obedience ensures blessedness, while disobedience brings ruin. But as a sign of his displeasure with their request, God sends a mighty thunderstorm at a time of year when such weather was very unusual. Shortly before Jehovah had discomfited the Philistines with thunder (1 Sam. 7:10). Now he visits his people with the same sign. Greatly afraid, they entreat Samuel to pray for them. “Now they see their need of him whom awhile ago they slighted. Thus many that will not have Christ to reign over them would yet be glad to have him intercede for them, to turn away the wrath of God” (Matthew Henry). Samuel typifies our Lord in his longsuffering response. He comforts, encourages, and reminds God’s people that Jehovah will not forsake them for his great name’s sake. And not only will Samuel pray for them—to do otherwise would be sin—he will continue to teach them as well.

Aren’t you thankful for the High Priest who unceasingly intercedes for us? And do you view prayer for God’s people to be your duty, as Samuel did? Sing or pray Psalter #350.
“I Forced Myself”
Saul has reigned for two years, and he is in a predicament. His army of three thousand men, who, except for him and Jonathan, were armed only with crude farm tools—plowshares, sickles, and pickaxes—is deserting him. Why? Tens of thousands of Philistines are ready to engage Israel in battle, and Samuel, who promised to come and intercede for the Israelites’ victory, has not yet made an appearance. So Saul offers a burnt offering himself. We might sympathize with him. After all, we’re quick to excuse our sins just like Saul did: “The people were scattering! I thought you’d be here by now! Look at the size of that army! I had no other choice…but to force myself.” Samuel replies, “Thou has done foolishly.” Saul sinned, and his attempts to justify that sin were futile.

When you and I sin and are tempted to point to others or excuse ourselves, let’s come instead with truly repentant hearts, hearts that acknowledge that we alone are responsible for our trespass and God alone is holy and just. “Against thee, thee only, have I sinned” (Ps. 51:4a). Sing or pray Psalter #141.

A Rash Father and a Brave Son
In 1 Samuel 14 Saul again demonstrates that he is not worthy of the high office with which he’s been entrusted. No longer is he little in his own sight (see ch. 15:17). He is both wise in his own conceit and hasty in his words. Of such a man scripture declares, “There is more hope of a fool than of him” (Prov. 26:12, 29:20). “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (James 1:19).

In contrast to his father, Jonathan proves himself to be a wise, godly, and valiant young man. Oh, to have the faith that Jonathan had and to confess as he confessed, “Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving by many or by few.” Do you confront the trials in your life with the confidence that nothing is too hard for our God? Sing or pray Psalter #392.

Jehovah Hates Sin
Samuel comes to Saul with this command in 1 Samuel 15:1: “Hearken unto the Lord.” But Saul does not hearken, though he first brazenly purports to have obeyed and then points to “the people” as those who were responsible. Samuel responds with familiar verse 22: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” Is that how highly we value hearing and obeying God’s word, or are we like Saul, quick to excuse our disobedience?

Is there a contradiction in this chapter? In verse 11 Jehovah declares, “It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king,” while in v. 29 Samuel maintains, “The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent.” Verse 11 is an example of an anthropomorphism, the attribution of human characteristics to the divine being. Jehovah changes not, but the inspired writer of the scriptures has no better way to express his deep revulsion of sin than to write that man’s sin compels him to “repent.” Sing or pray Psalter #428:1-5.

A Young Man After God’s Heart
Saul’s successor, a man after God’s own heart (see ch. 13:14), is an unlikely candidate, primarily because of his age. In familiar verse 7 Jehovah says to Samuel concerning David’s oldest brother Eliab, “Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.” Do we devote more time to adorning our hearts or our outward appearance?

What did Jehovah see when he looked on young David’s heart? Consider the testimony of Psalm 132:2–5: David “…vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob…I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, until I find out a place for the Lord…” Where was David when he made this earnest vow? Verse 6: “Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.” He was still a youth, shepherding his father’s flocks on the hills surrounding Bethlehem! Young people, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Sing or pray Psalter #428:6-10.

Shaped in Private
It may seem as if David arises out of nowhere to slay Goliath. But 1 Samuel 17 (and the preceding chapter) contain clues about David’s character that render his victory less surprising. First, David was not self-seeking. After being anointed king, he returned to shepherding. Only in God’s providence was he brought into Saul’s court. When Saul, again timid in the absence of God’s Spirit, leaves the palace for the battlefield, David returns to his sheep once more (v. 15). Second, David is obedient. When David’s father sends him to his brothers,
David readily complies. But he is also responsible: he first arranges for the care of the sheep. “His faithfulness in a few things fitted him to be ruler over many things. He who is best qualified to command, is the one who had previously learned to obey” (Pink).

Where does David come by the unshakable faith with which he faced the terrible giant? “In the solitude of the fields...Let the foe be met and conquered in private, and we shall not have to mourn defeat when we meet him in public” (Pink). Dear reader, is personal communion with God the source of your strength? Sing or pray Psalter #367.

Praise and Envy
Consider Israel’s song when God delivered them from the Egyptians through Moses: “I will sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously: the horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea” (Ex. 15:1). David approached Goliath in the name of Jehovah of hosts and declared, “This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand” (17:46). But Israel didn’t praise God for this victory: they praised the instrument he used instead. They sang, “Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands” (18:7). How poor was the spiritual state of God’s people under the rule of their God-forsaken king!

Such high praise could have been a temptation to pride, even for a man after God’s own heart who “behaved himself wisely” (v. 5 and 14). But Jehovah checks what could have tempted David to conceit with Saul’s envy. At the same time, he gives David allies in Saul’s children, Jonathan and Michal, for the hearts of all men are in his hands. Sing or pray Psalter #368

Weak Faith, Strong Friendship
A man after God’s own heart doesn’t always dwell on the mountaintops of faith. In contrast to Psalm 59, 1 Samuel 20 and 21 reveal David at a spiritual low point. At the end of chapter 19, David wisely fled to Samuel, and while he was there, four times God miraculously saved him from Saul and his messengers. David doesn’t remain with God’s prophet, though. He seeks out Jonathan, and his words to his friend testify that his focus is no longer on Jehovah but on himself and his troubles. So weak is his faith that he asks his friend to lie.

Though Jonathan knows that David, not he, will inherit the throne, he loves David. Their friendship is free of envy. Jonathan sympathizes with his friend, endangers his own life to determine his father’s intentions, warns David to flee, and encourages him in the name of the Lord. Are those characteristics that you seek in a friend? Do they describe what kind of a friend you are? Sing or pray Psalter #328.

God is my Defense
What thoughts filled David’s head as Saul’s messengers surrounded his house, intent on his life? What emotions consumed him as Michal let him down through the window and he fled into the darkness? We know, for David recorded them in a song, Psalm 59. David did not panic; he did not stow over the injustice of his situation. No, he went to God in prayer. His thoughts and his emotions were directed to God. Is that where we turn when we are troubled, or do we give in to the temptation to futilely fret or despair?

As he crept away from the sleeping city, David prayed to Jehovah to awake and help him, to awake and punish Saul and his accomplices. Even as he prayed, David recalled that God had been his defense and refuge in the past. He remembered, perhaps, the victories that Jehovah had given him over the lion, the bear, and the giant, and he was encouraged that he would save him again. In that confidence, David looked forward to morning, and vowed that he would then sing aloud of God’s mercy. Sing or pray Psalter #157.
October 26  Read Psalm 11

In Jehovah I Put My Trust
Psalm 11 gives us a glimpse into David's heart as once again he flees from Saul. David confesses that he trusts in Jehovah, but Saul's injustice still pains him. From an earthly point of view, David cannot petition a redress of grievances, for Saul's government is thoroughly corrupt. Therefore, David laments, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (v. 3). But as soon as those words leave his lips, he amends, “The Lord is in his holy temple, the Lord's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.” He comforts himself with the knowledge that while Jehovah tries the righteous, he sends those trials in love. Even as he hides from Saul, David consoles himself with the thought that he cannot hide from God: “his countenance doth behold the upright.”

Dear Christian, the trial that you face right now is sent to you not in wrath, but in love. Trust in him. The eyes of our heavenly Father are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry (Ps. 34:15). **Sing or pray Psalter #20.**

October 27  Read Psalm 27

Love for Jehovah's House
We don’t know exactly when David wrote Psalm 27, but we do know that as a fugitive he despaired his inability to worship Jehovah in his house. David desired to go to the tabernacle to see the beauty of Jehovah, to inquire of his will, to offer sacrifices of joy, and to sing his praises. Every element of the worship of the tabernacle pointed to the salvation of the people of God, and there David believed he would be safe from his troubles. Throughout his life David’s actions were consistent with his claim to love Jehovah’s house. When his days of fleeing and fighting ceased, he determined to replace the tabernacle with a temple. God denied him that privilege, so David busied himself with gathering materials out of which Solomon would later build it. Can you confess that there is none upon earth that you desire beside the Lord (Ps. 73:25)? Is your life consistent with that claim?

Though David could not frequent the tabernacle, he still trusted that Jehovah would never forsake him. He also trusted that he would experience God’s goodness to him in this life, in the land of the living. What evidences of God’s goodness to you do you see in your life? **Sing or pray Psalter #71.**

October 28  Read 1 Samuel 21

Danger Signals
Do you find that the Christian life is full of ups and downs? That was true of David’s life, too. Previously he asked Jonathan to lie. Now he himself lies to Ahimelech, to whom he had come to inquire God’s will (see ch. 22:13). The man who as a youth faced Goliath doesn’t dare face Jehovah’s priest! And instead of confessing, “There is none like unto the Lord our God,” David put his faith in Goliath’s sword, saying “There is none like unto it.” Then he seeks refuge in the land of the Philistines with the sword of their former champion, whom he had slain, in his hand! “Where a saint has aggrieved the Holy Spirit, even common sense no longer regulates him” (Pink). But in his mercy, God does not permit backsliding David to fraternize with the ungodly for long.

“God forbid that we should take the failures of those who preceded us as excuses for our own grievous falls... Rather let us seek grace to regard them as danger signals, set up to deter us from slipping into the snares which tripped them...Faith must be tested, and we must learn by painful experience the bitter consequences of not trusting in the Lord will all our hearts...” (Pink). **Sing or pray Psalter #21.**

October 29  Read Psalm 34

A Contrite Spirit
David fled to Philistia because he sought refuge from one enemy—Saul—in the territory of another. Jehovah led David to Philistia because he would have him learn this lesson: “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man” (Ps. 118:8). David learns this lesson well. In response to his experience he pens Psalm 34, which exalts Jehovah as the savior of the righteous. David had not been in communion with God: now he celebrates Jehovah’s nearness. To whom is he near? To “them that are of a broken heart” and “a contrite spirit.”

That David’s repentance is sincere is evidenced in his desire to teach others—particularly the young—what he has learned about the fear of Jehovah. He asks, “Do you want to live a long life?” That’s what David desired, and in his foolish lack of faith, his fear that Saul would take his life from him had driven him to lie and behave deceitfully in the presence of Achish. But now he instructs, “If you desire to live long, ‘Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good...’” (vv. 13–14). **Sing or pray Psalter #89.**
God is for Me
In his fear of Saul, David had trusted that the Philistines might save him. Psalm 56 verifies the lesson he learned from that experience: “What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee…I will not fear what flesh can do unto me” (vv. 3–4). David’s enemies twist his words, conspire against him, hide themselves, and mark his steps. But David comforts himself with the knowledge that God knows all his wanderings and sees his every tear (v. 8).

2 Timothy 3:12–13 declares, “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” We live in perilous times, yet we must confess with David, “God is for me” (v. 9). Instead of retreating in fear when we’re slandered or falsely accused, we must remember that no one can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect: Christ has died for us. Nothing can separate us from his love. In him we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:33–39).

In the Cave of Adullam
The anointed king of Israel now resorts to a cave. Like the King whom he typified, he had “not where to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). David also pictured Christ in that he was rejected by the leaders of the children of Israel. Instead, only a beleaguered remnant resorted to him. Likewise, our Lord Jesus calls those who are distressed by their sins. He draws those who recognize their inability to pay the debt they owe God. He saves those who are discontent with the vanities of this world.

Among those who resort to David are his own family members. In his book The Life of David, A. W. Pink suggests that 2 Samuel 23:8–17 are key to understanding this period in David’s life. David and his men engage the Philistines in battle, for Saul has abdicated even this responsibility to pursue David. The Philistines are encamped near Bethlehem, threatening the home of David’s family and causing David to long for water from the family well. To ensure his family’s safety, David arranges for them to stay for a time in Moab, the homeland of his great-grandmother, Ruth, while he waits to “know what God will do for me.”

Wonderful Salvation
David escapes from Keilah, a fenced city (v. 21), to the rocky wilderness of Engedi. But he hides there confessing that Jehovah alone is his strong rock and fortress (vv. 3 and 4). David’s many and varied afflictions qualified him to write so many Psalms. David’s name means “beloved,” and in his psalms he speaks for all of God’s beloved, his elect. But ultimately, the voice we hear in Psalms is that

son Abiathar: “I have occasioned the death of all the persons of thy father’s house.”

In grief and horror, David again takes up his pen. In Psalm 52 he describes the man who loves evil rather than good. That man devises treachery, and his tongue is the weapon he uses to execute his destruction. In contrast to the wicked, God’s goodness endures continually. How could David declare that at such a time? He knew that even the wrath of man praises Jehovah (Ps. 76:10). Doeg’s murder of the priests fulfilled God’s words to unfaithful Eli in 1 Samuel 2:31: “I will cut off…the arm of thy father’s house, that there shall not be an old man in thine house.” God also used these events to ripen Saul for judgement and to add the high priest to David’s camp, which would soon prove to be a great comfort and help to David (see ch. 23:6, 9 and 30:7–8).

So even in this tragedy David confessed, “I will praise thee forever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name…” (v. 8–9). Sing or pray Psalter #145.

In Sweet Communion
It’s a joy to witness David once again in communion with Jehovah. Nor is he concerned solely with himself any longer: he desires to save the people of Keilah. But David doesn’t act impulsively; he inquires of God’s will. David’s men, on the other hand, fear being caught in the crossfire between two enemies, Saul and the Philistines. Isn’t it true of the Christian life that doubts or hindrances can sometimes be placed in our minds by fellow believers? David doesn’t berate his companions, however. He simply goes to God again and asks his will. This time God not only tells him to go, he also assures him of the victory.

What dilemma do you face at present? Is there an important decision you must make? Do you truly desire that the will of God direct your way? “Where God is truly sought—that is, sought sincerely, humbly, trustfully, with the desire to learn and do that which is pleasing to Him—the soul will not be left in ignorance. God does not mock his needy children” (Pink).

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Thou Hast Done It
As we read yesterday in 1 Samuel 22, David’s lie to Ahimelech had terrible, far-reaching consequences. David acknowledges his responsibility to Ahimelech's
of the Beloved Son in whom God is well pleased. Like David, our Lord was popular for a brief time, but soon his neighbors and brethren forsook him. Even his disciples fled from him in Gethsemane (v. 11). Like David’s enemies, Christ’s enemies conspired against him with lies and devised to take away his life (vv. 6, 13). Jesus’ strength was consumed, not because of his own iniquity, but on account of the iniquities he bore for the sake of his people (v. 10). When his work on earth was finished, he prayed, “Into thine hand I commit my spirit” (v. 5).

Oh, how great is God’s goodness, which he has laid up for them that fear him! How wonderful the salvation which he has wrought before the sons of men for all who trust in him! (v.19). *Sing or pray Psalter #82.*

### November 4 Read 1 Samuel 24

**Events of Providence**

Once again David and his men huddle deep in a cave. (Like 1 Sam. 24:3, Jonah 1:5 and Ps. 128:3 use the expression “in, into, or by the sides of” to mean “in the heart of.”) Saul enters the same cave to relieve himself, and David’s men are elated, certain that God has delivered Saul into David’s hand. Undoubtedly God’s providence brought Saul there. Saul himself confesses that in verse 18. But why? David’s tender conscience told him that this was not a God-given opportunity to disobey the sixth commandment; it was a test.

“We need to be exceedingly cautious how we interpret the events of Providence and what conclusion we draw from them, lest we mistake the opportunity of following out our own inclinations for God’s approbation of our conduct…He so orders his providences as to try our hearts and make manifest what is in them…An accurate knowledge of God’s Word, a holy state of heart (wherein self is judged, and its natural longings mortified), a broken will are absolutely essential in order to clearly discern the path of duty in important cases and crises” (Pink). *Sing or pray Psalter #151.*

### November 5 Read Psalm 7

**Avenge Not Yourselves**

A “Shiggaion” is a wandering poem composed under intense emotion. The heading of Psalm 7 notes the origin of this Shiggaion: the words of Cush the Benjamite to David. Some speculate that Cush was a relative of Saul who falsely accused David of attempting to harm the king; hence David’s parenthetical remark in verse four. Whatever the case, Cush wrongfully accused David of evil, and David’s response is recorded for our benefit. Instead of seeking revenge, he turns to God in prayer.

Have you ever been wronged by another? Such an occasion becomes both a temptation from Satan, who would have your soul devoured by self-righteousness and hatred, and a trial from your heavenly Father, who would have you learn to more fully trust in him as your defense. “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath [that is, “commit to the Lord the right to judge”—Calvin]: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord…Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:19, 21). *Sing or pray Psalter #13.*

### November 6 Read Psalm 120

**The Light of Life**

In 1 Samuel 24:9 David asks Saul, “Wherefore hearest thou men’s words, saying, ‘Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?’” That text suggests that Saul’s lying lips were not the only ones from which David prayed to be delivered; others were guilty of slandering him as well. How beautifully David, who is for peace, pictures the Prince of Peace, for when given the opportunity to address Saul, his soft answer turns away that wicked man’s wrath. And how strikingly 1 Samuel 24:22b—“And Saul went home; but David and his men gat them up unto the hold”—foreshadows John 7:53–8:1: “And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives.”

This past summer our family toured a cave. In one of the cave’s many rooms, our guide turned out the lights. “There is no darkness on earth as deep as the darkness in a cave,” he said. But the psalms that David penned in the dark caves in which he hid demonstrate the truth of Jesus’s words in John 8:12b, “He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” *Sing or pray Psalter #343.*

### November 7 Read Psalm 140

**The War Within**

David prayed continually to Jehovah for deliverance from the evil men who purposed to overthrow his goings, and repeatedly Jehovah delivered him. God preserved his life because the Promised Seed was to come from his line! But God also gave David the victory over himself. “There is a continual warfare within every real Christian between the principle of sin and the principle of grace, commonly termed ‘the two natures.’ There is a spiritual Saul who is constantly seeking the life of a spiritual David; it is the ‘old man’ with his affections and appetites, seeking to slay the new man” (Pink).

Are you and I conscious of the war between the old and new man within our own hearts? Are we as faithful as David was to pray for deliverance from the evil man, who would overthrow our goings? Are we always on guard against his relentless attacks? *Sing or pray Psalter #385.*
BAPTISMS
“Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Mark 10:14
The sacrament of holy baptism was administered to:
Adalyn Nicole, daughter of Miss Emily Monsma—Byron Center, MI
Lucas James, son of Rev. & Mrs. Nathan & Carrie Langerak—Crete, IL
Jaxon Tytus, son of Mr. & Mrs. Bart & Michelle Grochowski—Crete, IL
Grant Daniel and Logan David, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Scott & Rose Ferguson—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Cornelius Anthony, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Tracy van den Berg—Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
Braylon David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Eric & Kirstie Miedema—Georgetown, MI
Madalyn Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave & Anna Mokma—Georgetown, MI
Eden Renee, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jesse & Danielle Busscher—Georgetown, MI
Owen James, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Amanda Gritters—Grace, MI
Zoey Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Cameron & Amy Van Overloop—Grace, MI
Emma Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Jill Koole—Grace, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Mr. Matthew Duncan—Grace, MI
Nixon Jude, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Holly Kooienga—Hudsonville, MI
Dawson Cole, son of Mr. & Mrs. Nate & Courtney Holstege—Hudsonville, MI
Alex Theo, son of Mr. & Mrs. Peter & Cindy van Iperen—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Rahab Laelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Maria Wierenga—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Kaylee Carolyn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Justin & Holly Tolsma—Immanuel, Lacombe, CAN
Asher Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joe & Heather Regnerus—Randolph, WI
Emma Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan & Laura Kearney—Sioux Falls, SD
Hudson Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan & Jessica Hiemstra—Southwest, MI
Simon Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. John & Lynn Kalsbeek—Southeast, MI
Dillon Elliott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan & Kristin Schimmel—Southeast, MI
Ellisha Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Doner & Susanna Bartolon—Spokane, WA
Beckett Reid, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel & Laura Noorman—Trinity, MI
Andrea, daughter of Sis. Rebecca Tabaday—Maranatha, Philippines
Justin Joy, daughter of Bro. & Sis. Alvin & Jo Castillo—Maranatha, Philippines
Alexa Joyce, daughter of Bro. & Sis. Alvin & Jo Castillo—Maranatha, Philippines
Adult baptism was administered to Sis. Rachel Anne Tabaday and Bro. John Eleasar Madiam—Maranatha, Philippines

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH
“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Matthew 10:32
Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:
Bro. Hero Curammeng—Berean, Philippines
Sis. Cynthia Ruth Bongat—Berean, Philippines
Amanda Ophoff—Crete, IL
Garrett Varner—Crete, IL
Shelby Altena—Doon, IA
Alexzandria Brower, Alison Eriks, Trevor Miedema, Britanny Scholten, Josie VanderKolk, and Kara Zwak—Hudsonville, MI
Noah Kamps—Trinity, MI

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Dave Jabaay and Miss Haley Swan—Crete, IL
Mr. Nick Holtrop and Miss Katie Bleyenberg—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Jacob VanderWall and Miss Laura Dykstra—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Daniel DeMeester and Mrs. Carol Huizinga—Hope, MI
Mr. & Mrs. Drew & Brianna Buiter—Randolph, WI
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“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” Psalm 73:24

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