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Editor’s Note  Ryan Kregel

Nearly six years ago, Mark Hoeksema joined the Beacon Lights staff as the new editor. This month marks the end of his fruitful labors in that position. With a firm and experienced hand on the rudder, he has guided the staff from day to day in the maintenance of the magazine. During Mark’s time as editor, the magazine has undergone many improvements—the beginning of a massive archive project to preserve the history of the magazine online, a redesign of the website and the magazine itself, and a reorganization of many of the behind-the-scenes processes in the day to day management of the magazine. Mark has also written many editorials, addressing issues that are relevant to the young people as they strive to live spiritually disciplined lives in a world that does not value discipline. For all of this, we thank you Mark.

Replacing Mark as editor is Dewey Engelsma, member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan. Mark and I met with Dewey some time ago to discuss the possibility of his taking over Mark’s position as editor. What was supposed to be us interviewing Dewey turned into Dewey interviewing us. We knew we had our man! As the new editor Dewey brings not only wisdom, discretion, and passion for the young people of the church, but also talents in writing (see the October editorial) and copy editing. The Beacon Lights staff appreciates Dewey’s willingness to take the position as the man at the rudder and looks forward to working with him in the years ahead, God willing.

Editorial  Mark H. Hoeksema

FAREWELL

I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread (Psalm 37:25).

These words apply to me as I write my last editorial as editor. During my tenure as editor of Beacon Lights, I have studiously avoided or minimized interjecting a personal element into my writing, preferring to focus on ideas and principles. In this article I will continue this practice, but the reader will kindly indulge me for adding a personal element to my comments. In so doing I want to apply the words of Psalm 37:25 to David, the author of these words, to myself, as well as to our Protestant Reformed young people.

The main idea of the text is God’s covenant faithfulness in the line of generations.

David knew this truth by experience. As he pens these words, he is an old man, as he says. He is looking back over his life, reviewing the events that have occurred from the days of his youth.

“I have been young.” David had lived a hard life. As a young shepherd, he had killed a lion and a bear—no mean feat for a youth. As a young man he had unexpectedly attained a position of leadership in Israel by killing Goliath. After he was anointed as the next king of Israel—while Saul was the actual and reigning king—he had to flee for his life when Saul sought to kill him because he perceived that David was a threat to him. As king he fought many wars to establish the kingdom of Israel. During his reign his son Absalom attempted to usurp David’s throne. Again he had to flee for his life until his son was killed. All of this is undoubtedly on his mind when he says, “I have been young.”

“I have been young.” In no way can I match David’s experiences and the difficulty of his life, but I also do not have positive memories of my youth. I grew up in the days of the Vietnam war with its horrors and atrocities and its 58,000 deaths in a futile conflict, the only war that America has ever lost. They were the days of civil disobedience, sit-ins on college campuses, and demonstrations in the streets. They were the days of rampant racism and riots in the streets, they were the days of unbridled political corruption, of Watergate, of the resignation of Richard Nixon from the presidency and the ascension to the presidency of Gerald Ford. They were
the days of the assassination of John F. Kennedy, of Robert Kennedy, and of Martin Luther King. There were troubles in the church, and general social upheaval. It was difficult to avoid being caught up in the spirit of the age, and thus to be a Reformed Christian. I realize that all of this is likely foreign to you, young people, but as the saying goes, “You can look it up.” I suggest that you do precisely that, both from secular sources and in the Beacon Lights archives, available online.

“I have been young.” That was so long ago that I cannot remember many of the details of those days. I do remember that in one or more instances I was a convention delegate, and also served on the Federation Board, though the details are fuzzy in my mind. I also remember that upon graduation from high school, I produced an index to Beacon Lights with the help of Don Offringa, my contemporary, who remains a member of the PRC. So, I was involved in leadership positions. I have no doubt that my involvement was flawed, since young people of my age were still developing their judgment and wisdom abilities.

David’s words about his youth make me think of the Beacon Lights staff. They are young, as befits a youth magazine. Most of the members are between nineteen and twenty-five years old. They are remarkably capable, inventive, and enthusiastic, which speaks well of the young generation in the churches. During my tenure as editor there has been a complete turnover of the staff, with the exception of Ryan Kregel, our managing editor. Yet when the young staff members move on, as is to be expected, there remains a certain continuity in the staff, which insures the quality that our readers expect. For all the hard work by our young people I am most thankful.

But everyone matures and eventually becomes old, as David points out: “and now am old.” This leads me to reflect on how I became editor of Beacon Lights. When I received a phone call and a letter asking me to assume the position, I was incredulous. I was 63 years old. My children were long gone, and it was impossible, and even a bit absurd. At first I did not really give the idea serious consideration.

I was requested to appear at the next staff meeting for an interview and an answer to the request I had received. As I was getting ready to leave for the meeting, my wife asked me, “What are you going to do?” I replied, “I’m going to listen politely and respectfully to what they have to say, and then I am going to refuse the position.”

The Beacon Lights staff, however, had other ideas. In the course of their interview of me (and I of them), they produced compelling and cogent reasons that I could not gainsay. Exactly what they were is irrelevant. But they were extremely persuasive. Five months prior I had had quadruple heart bypass surgery with complications that necessitated three open heart surgeries in three days, followed a month later by a stroke, all of which prompted my physician to forbid stressful activities (such as being responsible for the publication of a monthly magazine). Despite his injunction and my own misgivings, I succumbed to the staff’s persuasiveness and agreed to accept the position. When I returned home that day, my wife asked me, “So what did you do?” I replied, “You won’t believe what I just did.”

Now almost six years later, it is time to pass the torch to a much younger man. When I interviewed for the position, my major argument against becoming editor was that I was too old, and that it would be much wiser to choose a younger person who could relate better to our young people. Now this will happen, in the person of my capable successor, Dewey Engelsma. We have worked together for six months to insure a smooth transition, and I have no doubt that he will do a wonderful job. I ask that you give him your encouragement and support, as you have to me.

Now it is time for me to say, “I have been young, and now am old.” I have almost reached the biblical three score and ten. Because Beacon Lights is not about individuals, but about a cause, I am convinced that the magazine will continue to exist and flourish in the days to come. It is already more than 75 years old, and I hope it continues long into the future.

I write this farewell letter to our young people in the confidence of David: “yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.” David can say these words because he rests in God’s covenant faithfulness to his people. He knows that God always maintains his covenant and always sends his blessings upon his people, both young and old. This truth of the covenant means that in our generations our seed will never spiritually beg for the bread of life, even though they may not always prosper materially.

In the context of David’s words, I have good confidence that Beacon Lights will continue to prosper as a means to prepare the coming generations to take their places in Christ’s church. I sincerely thank
Our Goodly Heritage Mark H. Hoeksema

INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD POORTINGA

It is June 21, 2008, and I am at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Richard Poortinga in Dyer, Indiana

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

Richard Poortinga: I was born in Munster, Indiana, not too far from here. December 25, 1924.

MHH: A Christmas baby!

RP: A Christmas baby, yes. It was also the time when they had the big dispute in the synod of 1924.

MHH: So that’s a fairly easy birthday to remember. It has double significance.

RP: Right. But the Christmas party wasn’t the greatest (laughter). My mother loved it.

MHH: Who were your parents?

RP: Mr. and Mrs. Steven Poortinga.

MHH: And what was their background and history? Tell me a little bit about your family.

RP: My dad came from Friesland in Holland. My mother came from Zealand (“Sayland,” I guess they call it in the Netherlands). My father emigrated here. I think it was first his sister and a brother who came over here. They earned some money, and they sent the money back to Holland. Then [my father] and his brother came here. They worked here for awhile, and then they made enough money with the four of them to send over for the whole family to come over here. They lived right in Lansing, Illinois. That was at the turn of the century.

MHH: And you have how many brothers and sisters?

RP: Originally there were eight in our family. My sister died when she was, I think, 15 years old. And now there are four remaining yet of us. There are three sisters and one brother left.

MHH: Did you grow up in the Lansing area?

RP: I grew up between Munster and Lansing. And now I’m living in Dyer.

MHH: What did your father do for a living?

RP: My father was a farmer. He farmed and he also truck-farmed. When he originally came from the Netherlands, I think he worked on a farm too. He did other work occasionally, but he mostly was a farmer.

MHH: What are your memories of your youth? Tell me a little bit about your childhood and adolescence.

RP: Well, I only remember the Protestant Reformed Church when I was young, because my dad went to the Protestant Reformed Church in 1926, when I was only two years old. So, I was a charter member, but I don’t remember much of it. And I always went to a Christian School—Munster Christian School (now it’s the Lansing Christian School). And I had my catechism all in the Protestant Reformed Church until 1943.

MHH: What is significant about 1943?

RP: That’s when we had the problems in South Holland Church with the minister, Rev. [L.] Vermeer. I think that’s pretty well known to some people, to some people not.

MHH: It’s not well-known to me, so would you like to talk about that?

RP: I was young at that time. It was very traumatic to me.

MHH: You’re speaking about an issue that took place in 1943 regarding Rev. Vermeer, who was pastor of South Holland at that time.

RP: What I remember—a lot of it is hearsay, and I don’t really want to slander anybody. There was this group that was going to the consistory and saying that Rev. Vermeer attended taverns. He did like to drink, and he had obviously tried to quit. There were
people from the Lansing region who went to the Reformed church. They said, “Boy, your minister is really a cut-up. He is a nice man.” They enjoyed him because they met him at the taverns. This was actually not a tavern so much as a road house.

**MHH: What does a road house mean?**

**RP:** They had women there, too. A roadhouse was not too good of a place, as far as I’m concerned. It was in Calumet City. My father and others knew this, and they protested to the consistory with this. I don’t think they did it the right way. When you protest, you have to have proof. They didn’t have proof. They had hearsay. It’s these people who said he was there. And hearsay doesn’t really stand up in the consistory. I know that. I know the way it should be done. Of course, they didn’t want to go down there and catch him in there. Although, at the end of the whole deal somebody did go down there and found him over there. I don’t know if you want me to say the name.

**MHH:** Sure.

**RP:** I think it was Menno Smits. He was a member of the church. He found him over there, and he went to the consistory. The consistory worked with him for awhile, and they put him under censure. It was Abe Poortinga, my dad, and Mr. Miedema, and I don’t know who else, who were put under censure.

**MHH:** For what reason?

**RP:** It was probably because of slander. They were slandering the minister. They were telling stories that weren’t right about the minister. I could feel the undertone in the house between my mother and my father. He was very moody at times, and at last she couldn’t take it any more. She just couldn’t take it any more. So then after they had him under censure, he left the church.

**MHH:** And went where?

**RP:** Went to Munster Christian Reformed Church. That’s where I met my wife.

**MHH:** What was the upshot for Vermeer and for South Holland congregation? Was this resolved or swept under the rug? What happened?

**RP:** I could tell you how it happened. We came back with my dad—I and my brother Dan, all came back in 1957. We left in about 1943. We all came back to [the Protestant Reformed] church because we knew we didn’t belong in the [Christian Reformed] church. And my wife came back with me at that time. The upshot was that Rev. Vermeer left South Holland in 1945.

**MHH:** Did he take a call?

**RP:** He took a call. And, as you know, every place he went, he had the same problems.

**RH:** I didn’t know.

**RP:** Every place he went he had the same problems. He left in 1953, and then he went to Bethesda and there he had the same problem. But there they caught him, and he was not a minister any more. And the end of his life was quite bad, because, I think, he had a lot of mental problems.

When we came back, then your father [Prof. Homer S. Hoeksema] was minister over there [South Holland, IL]. And there was one left of the old consistory that dealt with my dad. When they came back, they had to make it up—Mr. Lanting and Pa, they had to come together and they...

**MHH:** To reconcile.

**RP:** Reconcile their differences, yes.

**MHH:** And that happened?

**RP:** That happened, yes. So that was a good way to end it all.

My dad was never happy in the Christian Reformed Church. I remember we used to have an older minister in Munster. His name was Rev. Bolt. He was of the old [school], before ’24. He used to preach a sermon and then my dad said, “You ruined that whole sermon on the end. You had a good sermon, but you ruined it.” He had to preach common grace, of course. He had to bring it in, you see?

**MHH:** So he was definitely not pleased with a lot of things that were going on there.

**RP:** Oh, no. My dad was not. My mother passed away over there [Christian Reformed Church], and we had a lot of friends over there. I met this lovely lady over there (laughter), and we got married.

**MHH:** So you did not experience first-hand the entire history of the split of ’53.

**RP:** No. I did follow it a little.

**MHH:** Were you affected at all, Mr. Poortinga, by World War II?

**RP:** No. I had two brothers that went. Conrad went in the Coast Guard. He really enlisted in 1941. I had another brother that was drafted into the Navy. That was Daniel. He went back to the Protestant Reformed Church. Conrad never did. I went up to Indianapolis to be drafted. I needed a physical. I
passed the physical, but I was pulled out because when I went into the line I threw up. I was very nauseated. So they took me out and they sent me to another line. I had to visit all kinds of psychiatrists. Amazingly, when I came home, they gave me a 4F. I guess they thought I was a little psycho (laughter).

After that, then my other brother got drafted. He was on the farm. One of us could stay on the farm.

MHH: So you missed it and he went.

RP: Well, I was again drafted for the Korean War, and I was ready to go. The date was set that I had to go. Then I had an appendectomy (emergency). So for six months they couldn’t take me in the Army. And I turned over age after that—turned 28, so they couldn’t take me.

MHH: Really!

RP: (Laughter.) Providential. I say that’s the Lord’s doing. He evidently didn’t want me in the Army. That’s all you can say.

MHH: Yes, because they certainly missed you twice (laughter). That’s interesting. Was there anything else that helped to shape your character and your thinking or your attitude towards the church? You talked about the problems in the early 1940s. Are there any other events or incidents that stand out in your mind connected with the church?

RP: In 1957, if you recall, that was the time when divorce and remarriage was a big problem in the Christian Reformed Church. They were opening the doors to it. That really was very sensitive to us. We didn’t believe in it. Even her father and mother never believed that divorce and remarriage was right. I even remember having a debate. I still have the papers yet. We had a debate on that in our Men’s Society. Myself and one of the other fellows debated with the two ministers over there at present. And it was amazing. We got God’s word out, and they didn’t. They didn’t take what we said. They just said, they just took it for granted that it was good enough. But they all wanted hearsay—not God’s word.

MHH: Just purely a matter of opinion.

RP: Yes, just opinions.

MHH: Amazing. So that started already in the mid-50s.

RP: Oh, yes. I remember the limited atonement deal in the Christian Reformed Church—Dr. Dekker. I followed all this, and, yes, it was the Lord’s leading us back to the church. He took us back when our children were young, which we were very thankful for. There are some that came back from different groups, and their children were brought up in the Christian Reformed Church, and most of their children never came along.

MHH: It’s amazing when they’re born and educated in another denomination, and then they’re older when their parents come back. You see that so often. Parents know better and they come back, but the rest stay behind. [At this point Mrs. Tena Poortinga (TP) enters the conversation]. Mrs. Poortinga has some comments that she would like to add.

TP: When we came back, I went with Dick. I wasn’t used to that kind of [Protestant Reformed] preaching because I had my catechism in the Christian Reformed Church, and Prof. Hoeksema, Rev. Hoeksema at the time, talked about the “lie.” I didn’t know what he was talking about. In his sermons, it was always about the lie. Well, I had problems understanding him, so I wasn’t too happy with the preaching. But then they decided to have a doctrinal class. I think it was for my purpose your father did that. There were some other couples that came too: Frank and Eileen Van Baren were just married, and they came. She was having problems too. So then we had a doctrinal class and slowly on it started getting better. Now I had learned! I just wasn’t used to that type of preaching, so I had a lot to learn.

MHH: So, even in those days the Christian Reformed Church was becoming weak in its doctrinal teaching and positions?

TP: They didn’t believe like the Protestant Reformed Church did, so it was just a matter of learning for me, you know?

MHH: As you look back on your own personal history, are you glad that you’re here?

TP: Oh, it’s the best thing I did. I’m so happy that I did that, for my children, too. And for me. It’s about 49 years that I’ve been in the church. And, oh, I had a lot to learn. But I enjoy the preaching, and I would never, never go back.

MHH: That’s great.

TP: Very, very thankful. This was all in the Lord’s plan, too.

But I did have a difficult time at first, and I’m not the only one. There are more people [who have this problem] when they first come if it means anything to them.

RP: That’s what it really brings out—if they can just throw away the preaching that they had, then they
haven't been there. But they had to absorb the new preaching of God's word. And God's word, when it's spoken, bears its fruit.

MHH: Speaking of preaching and of the past, I'd like to direct this question to you. When you look back over your lifetime, how would you compare the church of today with the church of yesterday—say in either prior to the time that you left or perhaps after you came back in 1957?

RP: Well, I think there's been a development of the truth. I think the ministers and the seminary stand pretty strong. The preaching is a little different, I think. If I remember your grandfather [Herman Hoeksema], I remember going to church and hearing him preach a sermon in the morning, and then he said, “Well, I just can't quite get finished with it. I'm going to finish this this afternoon.” And Rev. Ophoff used to do the same thing. I still think that our churches are developing and the truth is developing. I can't say, “Well, they're going this way, they're going that way.” No, I think the church is developing in God's word. It's still strong. But there has been change.

MHH: In what way do you think? I'd like to pursue this, because I've heard this from others as well.

RP: I think the change is in the covenant view. They've developed the covenant so much. I think that's good. I've read a lot about it. I read quite a bit now, but I don't absorb it as much as I used to. When you're younger you can absorb more of it. And I think I can say, with all this doctrine of conditions, Federal Vision and all that, it brings out God's truth. You can see it all around us. You can see the churches departing. We can see it in our family so much. The ones that have left don't get preaching anymore. We have to be fed. I would say that some people say that the church is losing its distinctiveness. The preachers don't preach God's word anymore. I can't go along with that. I think they preach God's word.

MHH: I've heard it said that there has been over time a less sharp emphasis or even a compromise on the truth of the antithesis. Would you agree or disagree with that?

RP: I don't think so. I think the antithesis is still preached in the church. Sometimes the minister preaches the antithesis. He doesn't have to say the word “antithesis” all the time. If you listen to his sermon, you know he's preaching the antithesis. Naturally, there are weaknesses in the church. I mean, I'm not gonna say that the church is infallible. There are weaknesses, I mean to say, but, on the average, I'd say that our churches have been holding fast to the word of God.

MHH: I've also heard it said, that there is insufficient emphasis on grace and election and too much emphasis on man's responsibility. Would you agree or disagree with that?

RP: I can't say that there's such overemphasis on man's responsibility. I think it depends how you listen.

I'm not saying that the church is perfect. It varies from one minister to another. I know that. I can feel that. But to say that one minister doesn't preach God's word and the other one preaches God's word, one might be more doctrinal than the other, no. We have to live our doctrine. We can preach doctrine, but if we don't live the doctrine, what have we got?

MHH: Are there any other issues that you would like to address or any opinions that you would like to express? And that can be on pretty much any subject you choose in connection with the church—positive or negative, it doesn't matter.

RP: I served on the school board in the Christian school in South Holland. We had an issue there with the administrator we had there. We wanted to make a rule that the administrator only come to the board meeting to present his agenda to the school board and then he leave, that he doesn't attend the whole school board meeting. And that certain administrator did not like that rule. He wanted to be at the school board the whole time. That created a big problem in our school. I think we had a book about this thick that went to the classis because of writing between each other—the administrator and the school board.

And at that time we also voted in a minister into the school board, which was very unwise. And it divided the South Holland church and the Oak Lawn church.

MHH: That would have been Vanden Berg, right?

RP: Rev. [G.] Vanden Berg, right. I think that it's a very volatile issue when you start the school and you put the church with it. The school should stay separate from the church. The minister should never involve himself. He can give his opinion, but he should not give his opinion off the pulpit. That's beside the point. You have an opinion, and you have a right to your opinion. But then to get the church involved—that was a big issue in South Holland church at that time.

And it was also a big issue in Oak Lawn Church. I think it kind of broke that church up too.
most of them came to South Holland after they left [Oak Lawn]. It was all settled, but there were lots of problems.

[Here follows a lengthy discussion regarding recent school and church issues. While this is historically valuable, it contains many personal references that are not appropriate for publication. Regrettably this material has therefore been redacted].

MHH: This concludes the interview with Mr. and Mrs. Poortinga. My thanks to both of them for participating.

Devotional Sarah Mowery

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

December 8 Read Psalm 81

Hear! Hear! Hear!

Psalm 81 seems more familiar when one calls to mind the first stanzas of its only versification in our Psalter: #222. “Now to God, our Strength and Savior, render praise and loudly sing,” and, “Let the trumpet, far resounding, this our festal day proclaim…” This psalm begins with a call to joyful praise, for it’s a feast day, one of the days on which the priests sounded the call to worship with the trumpet. The keeping of this day is a law of the God who redeemed Israel from Egypt. He saved them: they are his people. Therefore, he has the right to demand that they hear and obey his word (vv. 8, 11, and 13). But they refuse to hear. Though Jehovah alone can satisfy their need, they turn instead to idols. And so, instead of filling their mouths and subduing their enemies, Jehovah in judgement gives them over to their sin.

Jesus promised that those who hunger and thirst after righteousness will be filled. Ps. 81 reminds us that we will be filled by opening our ears and hearkening—that is, hearing and obeying—the word of our Strength and Savior. He is the bread of life by which we shall live. Is his word sweeter than honey to your mouth (Ps. 119:103)? Sing or pray Psalter #222.

December 9 Read Psalm 16

Love and Life

Nothing that we are or do adds anything to the triune God. Even “the salvation of the whole church adds nothing to his glory, but is only a revelation of the glory he already has in himself” (Doctrine According to Godliness). David recognized this reality. “Thou art my Lord,” he exclaims in Psalm 16, “my goodness extendeth not to thee.” How does David respond to that knowledge? He resolves to do good to God’s people. David calls his brothers and sisters in Christ the “excellent of earth.” Is that how you view your fellow church members? Is your love evidenced by deeds you do on their behalf?

Psalm 16 is a Messianic Psalm. Do you hear the words of Christ in verses 9–10? David prophesied our Lord’s resurrection centuries before he was born. David also typified Christ in his dependence upon God in trouble and sorrow, and his refusal to look to other gods for joy or guidance. Because God did not leave our Savior in the grave, we can rest in hope, and we can bury our loved ones in hope. He will safely lead us through this life and raise us, too, to the place of “fullness of joy” and “pleasures for evermore.” Sing or pray Psalter #27.

December 10 Read Psalm 19

The Sun and the Son

This past August 21 marked “The Great American Eclipse.” Multitudes traveled to the fourteen states in which the eclipse could be seen in totality. As the moon blocked the sun, people responded with intense emotion. Excitement and wonder moved some to tears. Truly, there is no people or nation where the sun’s testimony to God’s eternal power and divinity is not heard. But the reprobate respond to creation’s inescapable testimony about the Creator by worshipping his creatures. When God’s people consider his creatures, they are driven to “contemplate the invisible things of God” (Belgic Confession, Art. 2).

The single source of light that sustains all life on earth pictures the Son, who is the source of all spiritual life. When the church’s bridegroom comes, he will shine with the light of 10,000 suns. The glory of his holiness will so fill the universe that every eye will see him. To some his coming will be terrible. To those whose sins have been washed away by his blood, his coming will mark the end of all their sorrows and the answer to all their prayers.
Do we anticipate his coming by delighting in his word? Are we, like David, fervent in our desire and our prayers to be cleansed from hidden and presumptuous sins? Sing or pray Psalter #39.

**December 11** Read 1 Chronicles 1

**All of Grace**

2 Timothy 3:16 teaches that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Mining wisdom’s treasures from the first chapters of 1 Chronicles might require a little more effort on our part than, say, mining Romans 8, but there are treasures to be found there. Let’s go digging!

1 Chronicles 1 traces humanity from Adam to Jacob and Esau and then follows Esau’s descendants, who became the nation of Edom. The whole human race has descended from one man. Yet how quickly two families manifested themselves in history: God’s elect and the reprobate. Did you recognize the name of Nimrod, the mighty hunter who founded the kingdom of Babel? Did you shudder when you considered the wickedness of the men who lived during the time of Peleg, in whose days the earth was divided at the tower of Babel? Did you smile in wonder when you read the name God gave Jacob, the deceiver: “Israel, Prince of God?” By nature, Jacob was totally depraved, just like his twin brother. But Jehovah chose Jacob’s children for his friends, while Esau’s were his enemies. Are you a friend of God? That’s a wonder of his grace! Sing or pray Psalter #244.

**December 12** Read 1 Chronicles 2

**From Sinners and Strangers**

1 Chronicles 2 traces the genealogy of the tribe of Judah, the line from whom Shiloh would come (Gen. 49:10). You recognized some of the names of Judah’s children, didn’t you? What came to your mind when you read Onan’s name – selfishness? Did Tamar’s name remind you of her fellow saints, his earthly perspective was replaced with righteousness, he endured as he strove to live a righteous life seem vain. Asaph’s focus was in the wrong place. He never voiced his complaint, however, because he loved God’s people and couldn’t bear the thought of dragging others down with him as he stumbled. Instead, he entered the sanctuary, and there, in the presence of fellow saints, his earthly perspective was replaced with an eternal one. There he saw that the pleasures and prosperity of the wicked are not bestowed on them in love.

The knowledge that Asaph acquired in the sanctuary bears fruit. First, he repents of his sins, naming them: foolishness and ignorance. In light of his own unfaithfulness, he rejoices in Jehovah’s faithfulness and willingly submits to his guidance. How would God guide him? By his word and Holy Spirit; in his providence; and to glory. Asaph also confesses that he desires no thing or pleasure more than God, and he resolves to continue to draw near to God and to declare to others his wonderful works.

**December 13** Read Psalm 42 and 43

**Past, Present, and Future Joy**

Though the chronological reading plan we’re following doesn’t link Psalms 42 and 43, they contain the same refrain: “Why art thou cast down, O my soul...?” In Psalm 42 the psalmist, thirsting for God, recalls the past when he joyfully attended God’s house with fellow saints (v. 4). Remembering his joy in God, he acknowledges that he shouldn’t be downcast (v. 5) but confesses that he is (v. 6). That’s certainly our experience at times, too, isn’t it? Still, the psalmist affirms that God is with him in the present, both by day and night (v. 8). Notice: at night, when waves of trouble threaten to billow over his soul, the psalmist directs his thoughts to God in song and prayer.

In Psalm 43, the psalmist still experiences bitter oppression from the enemy. Again he asks God, “Why?” But he also makes this confession regarding the future: “I will go unto the altar of God...” Though he is uncertain why God is sending these trials, he still longs to return to the tabernacle, where God, the source of his joy, dwells. He asks to be led there by God’s light and truth, so that there he might praise the God of his salvation. Sing or pray Psalter #120.

**December 14** Read Psalm 73

**God is Good to Israel**

Asaph was a Levite whom David appointed to minister in the tabernacle (see 1 Chron. 6:31–32, 39). Asaph opens Psalm 73 with a resolute declaration: “Truly God is good to Israel,” but only recently he had doubted that truth. He observed unbelievers who abounded in material wealth and mocked the realities of death and God. Their seemingly carefree lives made his daily struggle against sin and the chastening he endured as he strove to live a righteous life seem vain. Asaph’s focus was in the wrong place. He never voiced his complaint, however, because he loved God’s people and couldn’t bear the thought of dragging others down with him as he stumbled. Instead, he entered the sanctuary, and there, in the presence of fellow saints, his earthly perspective was replaced with an eternal one. There he saw that the pleasures and prosperity of the wicked are not bestowed on them in love.

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Does your weekly attendance in the sanctuary bear such fruit? Sing or pray Psalter #203.

December 15 Read Psalm 77

Doubt Again
In Psalm 73 Asaph recounted a serious spiritual struggle, at the end of which he declared that God is good to his people and expressed his intent to draw near to him. In Psalm 77, Asaph once again wrestles with doubt and dismay. He can’t sleep. He prays and meditates throughout the night, but thoughts of God bring him no peace. He wonders aloud if God has forgotten him, even rejected him. Those doubts and fears sound similar to the ones with which he wrestled previously, don’t they? That should comfort us, for how often don’t we overcome one temptation or trial, only to meet with—and sometimes succumb to—a similar foe on the following day?

What brings Asaph out of the spiritual pit in which he now finds himself? He calls to mind Jehovah’s works in the past. Chiefly, he reflects on the wonder of the redemption of God’s people from the land Egypt through the Red Sea (v. 14ff). The redemption of Israel from the bondage of Egypt pictures our redemption from sin and death. The next time you are tempted to doubt or despair, consider Jehovah’s wonderful work in saving you. Sing or pray Psalter #212.

December 16 Read Psalm 78

Instruction with a Purpose
In Psalm 78, Asaph recounts Israel’s history from the Red Sea to the reign of David. His storytelling has a purpose: the instruction of the children in Israel, “that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments” (v. 7). Parents, do we instruct our children with that lofty goal in the forefront of our minds? We must spend time applying their catechism lessons and memory verses to their lives, not just make sure they get every word right. And children and young people, don’t learn your Bible or catechism lessons well just to get a good grade. Remember: the history of God’s people was recorded for our instruction (1 Cor. 10:11).

The recurring negative theme of Psalm 78 is summarized in verses 10–11. Israel did not keep God’s covenant: they refused to walk according to his law. Repeatedly they forgot his works and wonders. They acknowledged God as their rock and their redeemer, but though they honored him with their lips, their heart was far from him (see Isa. 29:13 and Matt. 15:8). They were an unfaithful people. Israel’s negative example must elicit our own self-examination. What wonders has God worked in your life? Recall his faithfulness to you, and worship him in spirit and in truth. Sing or pray Psalter #215.

December 17 Read 1 Chronicles 3

Look for the King!
1 and 2 Chronicles originally comprised one book that was written around the end of the Old Testament, during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. Many believe Ezra to be the author of Chronicles, noting that the last verses of 2 Chronicles and the first verses of Ezra overlap. 1 and 2 Chronicles follow the genealogy of God’s people from Adam, the very first word of 1 Chronicles, trace that genealogy through David and his sons, and point God’s people to look for the coming of the Son of David, the Messiah. 1 and 2 Chronicles are inserted at this point in our chronological study because of their focus on events from the life of David and the building of the temple by Solomon. The books focus on the ways in which David typified the Messiah: Saul’s reign, as well as the more deplorable events of David’s reign, including his adultery with Bathsheba and Absalom’s rebellion, are excluded. The books also emphasize the priesthood and God’s presence with his people. They were written to encourage those who had returned from exile and wondered if God’s promises would ever be finally and fully fulfilled.

We live in the last days of the New Testament. As we study 1 and 2 Chronicles, let’s be encouraged that all of Jehovah’s promises to us are “yea” and “Amen” in the Son of David who is coming again. Sing or pray Psalter #207.

December 18 Read 1 Chronicles 4

The Prayer of Jabez
1 Chronicles 4 contains the obscure passage that occasioned Bruce Wilkinson’s bestselling book The Prayer of Jabez, published in 2000. Wilkinson suggests that mimicking Jabez’s prayer will “release God’s favor, power, and protection.” He wrote that because Jabez believed “a supernatural God” would “show up to keep [him] from evil” his “life was spared from the grief and pain that evil brings.”

But Jabez’s very name means “sorrow.” And for what exactly did this honorable young man pray? He prayed for Jehovah’s blessing, mindful that he would experience that blessing only in the way of keeping God’s commandments (Deut. 11:27). Though he lived during the time of the judges, when Israel did not yet possess all of Canaan, he prayed by faith regarding his inheritance. Jabez “looked for a city which hath foundations” (Heb. 11:10). He prayed that Jehovah’s hand would lead him, hold him, and even rest upon him in judgement, if need be (see Ps. 139:10 and 1 Chron. 21:17). And when Jabez prayed that Jehovah would keep him from evil, he prayed for deliverance not
from earthly trouble, but from sin. He understood that “many sorrows shall be to the wicked” (Ps. 32:10a). When interpreted correctly, in the light of God’s word, Jabez’s prayer is certainly a prayer we can imitate. *Sing or pray #385.*

**December 19** Read Psalm 44

**Sheep for the Slaughter**

How would a prosperity preacher apply Psalm 44 to the Christian life? For the theme of this psalm is that of faith and faithfulness that seems unrewarded. In vv. 1–3 the psalmist recalls the glorious past: with his own hand Jehovah drove the heathen out of Canaan and planted his people there. The psalmist confesses that still he trusts in God as the deliverer of Israel (v. 4–8). (Did you notice that throughout the psalm the subject switches back and forth from singular to plural, from I to we? This Maschil, or “teaching psalm,” may have been read antiphonally, with a single speaker leading and the congregation responding.) However, even though they boast in God, his people experience desertion, not deliverance. And this trouble has come upon them even though they have not forgotten God and have been faithful to his covenant (vv. 17–22). So they cry to him, “Awake! Arise! Redeem!” (vv. 23–26).

A prosperity preacher would not be able to apply Ps. 44, but the inspired apostle Paul was. Paul understood that tribulation is the lot of the believer, but he knew that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord (see. Rom. 8:35ff). Is that your confidence in trouble? *Sing or pray Psalter #121.*

**December 20** Read Psalm 49

**God Will Ransom My Soul**

As with all the psalms, Psalm 49 is an inspired song. But here the psalmist emphasizes that fact before getting to his main point. He declares that before opening his mouth to instruct others, he opened his ear to “a parable” and then meditated on the wisdom that he heard. Do we turn an open ear and heart to God’s word before we presume to counsel others? Wisdom doesn’t originate with us, but with the Almighty.

The psalmist then calls on all the inhabitants of the world to open their ears. He asks both rich and poor, “Why should I fear the wealthy who oppress me?” (vv. 5, 16). He notes that the ungodly rich man may be powerful in this life, but he can give none of his riches in exchange for his soul. Generation after generation sees that a man leaves his wealth when he dies, yet they perpetuate the folly of trusting in riches. In contrast, the psalmist trusts in God, and centuries before Christ’s incarnation, he makes the remarkable confession that God himself will pay the ransom price for his soul. In whom or what do we place our trust? *Sing or pray Psalter #135.*

**December 21** Read Psalm 84

**A Pilgrim Psalm**

Psalm 84 can be divided into three sections. In verses 1–4 the psalmist expresses his pilgrimage longing for Jehovah’s dwelling place. Far from Jehovah’s courts, he envies the little sparrows who make their nests and raise their young in the shelter of the altar of burnt offering. Commentator A. Moyter notes, “A daring and telling image. Such is the safety to be found in [Jehovah’s] altar that birds would dare to nest there and expose their young to the undying flame!” Is that the safety we find in the cross of our Savior, though resting there means we are also partakers of his sufferings? (see 1 Pet. 4:12).

Verses 5–9 describe the pilgrims’ journey to Jehovah’s dwelling place as a pilgrimage through an arid valley. Theirs is a difficult but blessed path, for these happy people find their strength in Jehovah, who refreshes and sustains them along the way. Finally, the psalmist lauds the pilgrim’s goal: Jehovah’s courts. Note: the courts are precious only because Jehovah, the sun (giver and sustainer) and shield (protector) of his people dwells there. In the New Testament Jehovah’s people are his dwelling place. Do you love his church as the psalmist did? *Sing or pray Psalter #229.*

**December 22** Read Psalm 85

**Mercy and Truth Met Together**

In Psalm 85 the psalmist recalls the grace Jehovah showed to his people in the past. He freed them from bondage in Egypt, covered all their sins, and removed his justly-deserved wrath. But now they again experience his indignation. Will he again forgive? The psalmist asks this and then resolves to hear Jehovah’s word, assured that he will speak peace to his people. Still, the psalmist qualifies the experience of that favor: the people must forsake their folly. Only then will their land flourish once more. How can the psalmist be so sure of Jehovah’s repeated blessing? His hope is in Jehovah’s covenant, the covenant that is Calvary-based. At the cross, mercy and truth met together; righteousness and peace kissed each other (v. 10).

When we experience dearth in our lives—a lack of spiritual zeal, weariness in soul and body—let’s follow the psalmist’s example. (1) Recall God’s past mercies. (2) Repent—or, if need be, plead that God will work true repentance in our hearts: “Turn us, O God!” (v. 4). (3) Listen to his word. (4) Meditate on the good news of the gospel. (5) And resolve by his grace to walk obediently in his way. *Sing or pray Psalter #230.*
December 23  Read 1 Chronicles 5

To God, Against God
1 Chronicles 5 contains the genealogies of the tribes that settled east of the Jordan River: Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. The chapter briefly notes the shameful incident that cost Reuben the birthright. It also contains two additional instructive anecdotes. The first recounts a time when the men of all three tribes crushed their enemies (vv. 18–22). These men were bold warriors, but they didn’t trust in their own strength or weapons: they trusted in God and cried to him in the battle. That war, the chronicler notes, “was of God” (v. 22). But the descendants of those valiant men came to a bitter end. Like their father Reuben, they were adulterers. They committed spiritual adultery with the idols of the surrounding nations and so forfeited their inheritance in the land of Canaan and their spiritual inheritance in heaven.

When we are tried, do we turn to God or do we set ourselves against him? Sing or pray Psalter #147.

December 24  Read Psalm 93

Jehovah Reigns
To gird oneself is to secure one’s loose clothing or to fasten a weapon onto one’s body to prepare for action. Psalm 93 says that God girds himself: he girds himself with strength. He’s ready to act. That knowledge comforts the psalmist because he’s surrounded by a tumultuous sea. He refers not to a literal flood, though Jehovah is certainly sovereign over the terrifying storms that sometimes take place at sea. No, the psalmist paints a word picture of the wicked, who “are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isa. 57:20).

The psalmist then lists three things that Jehovah established sure and immovable: the earth, his throne, and his testimonies. Spurgeon comments, “As the rocks remain unmoved amid the tumult of the sea, so does divine truth resist all the currents of man’s opinion and the storms of human controversy.” What comfort for us as the storm of secularism and the tide of Islam lift their voice against God’s word and against his saints! All these waves are in the hand of the King. In his ears, the raging of the ungodly is just a bunch of futile noise, noise that he can and will still at his appointed time. Sing or pray Psalter #252.

December 25  Read 1 Chronicles 6

Atonement for Israel
The genealogy of the Levites in 1 Chronicles 6 includes some familiar names, including Moses, Aaron, Miriam, and Aaron’s sons. Azariah was the first to execute the office of high priest in Solomon’s temple (v. 10; see 1 Kings 4:2). The prophet Samuel, son of Elkanah and Hannah, served as judge of Israel and anointed both Saul and David to be king. Included in the Levitical line were those who served as singers in the temple. Among them were Heman, who wrote Psalm 88 (v. 33), Asaph, author of Psalm 50 and 73–83 (v. 39), and Ethan, to whom Psalm 89 is attributed (v. 44). But it’s the ministry of the sons of Aaron that was most central to the temple worship, for they were appointed “to make an atonement for Israel” (v. 49). Those priests, declares Hebrews 8:5, served “unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.” They pointed to Jesus Christ, the high priest of God, who “offered one sacrifice for sins forever.”

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession…” and “…come boldly unto the throne of grace.” (Heb. 4:14–16). Sing or pray Psalter #302.

December 26  Read Psalm 88

The Psalm Without Hope?
The single psalm attributed to Heman is a bitter lament. The psalmist suffers under God’s wrath, and he’s terrified of dying in such a state, sure that then he will be among those whom God remembers no more. Yet he’s not sure life is worth living anymore, either: it’s bad enough that he’s been forsaken by lover and friend, but what’s a believer to do when even God seems to hide his face? Psalm 88’s heading tells us that it is a Maschil. What can we learn here? Despite his trouble, the psalmist holds fast to his profession: God is his Savior. This psalm has been called “the psalm without hope,” but there is hope in the psalmist’s address of God: “LORD God of my salvation.” Nor does Heman fail to pour out his heart to God. In verses 1, 9, and 13, he notes his urgent, ceaseless prayers.

Perhaps you have experienced such troubles. Perhaps you haven’t. There is one man who experienced the grief that Heman knew to an immeasurable degree: our Lord Jesus Christ. What troubles and what great wrath the holy Son of God bore for our sakes! Sing or pray Psalter #240.

December 27  Read Psalm 102

God Answers God
One commentator refers to Ps. 102 as “holy ground.” He uses that expression for two reasons. First, this psalm provides an intimate glimpse into the intense suffering of our Lord Jesus Christ. Second, it contains a conversation between Christ, God incarnate, and God. In verses 24 Christ speaks, “O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.”
God replies, “Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands... they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end. The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee” (vv. 25–28). How do we know that verses 25–28 are God’s answer, and not a continuation of Christ’s address? The writer to the Hebrews tells us so in Hebrews 1:10–12, when he refers to this passage to prove the Son’s superiority over angels, that is, to prove his divinity.

That Messiah, truly man and truly God, the one by whom God upholds all things, purged our sins and now sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Sing or pray Psalter #275.

**December 28 Read Psalm 103**

**Eight Alls**

Psalm 103 is attributed to David, but, unlike many of his psalms, there is no reference to enemies here, and no allusion to a specific circumstance, good or bad. This is a meditation on Jehovah and his great mercy toward them that fear him. Jehovah is all-sufficient; his mercy all-encompassing. He forgives all our sins and heals all our diseases. (The psalmist speaks of spiritual disease. Matthew Henry comments, “The corruption of nature is the sickness of the soul; it is its disorder, and threatens its death. This is cured in sanctification; when sin is mortified, the disease is healed; though complicated, it is all healed.”) The psalmist charges his soul to remember all of Jehovah’s benefits, of which forgiveness and healing are only two. It is not enough that his soul bless Jehovah: all that is within him must bless his holy name.

The four alls in verses 1–3 are balanced by four alls in verses 19–22. There the psalmist notes that Jehovah’s kingdom rules over all. He has bidden his own soul and all that is within him to bless Jehovah: now he calls on all Jehovah’s hosts and all Jehovah’s works in all places of his dominion to join him in praise. Sing or pray Psalter #283.

**December 29 Read Psalm 104**

**That Man May Serve his God**

Psalm 104 poetically details God’s creation and his providence, which the Heidelberg Catechism defines as his “almighty and everywhere present power, whereby, as it were by his hand, he upholds and governs heaven, earth, and all creatures” (Q&A 27). Article 12 of the Belgic Confession provides a striking reason why God upholds and governs all his creatures: “for the service of mankind, to the end that man may serve his God.” The psalmist of Psalm 104 arrives at that end. He confesses that the earth is full of Jehovah’s riches (v. 24), but, unlike the ungodly, who make idols out of God’s creatures, Jehovah’s works compel him to meditate on God himself (v. 34). Is the same true of us? Romans 1:20 teaches that the invisible things of God are clearly seen in the things that are made. But even though his “creation, preservation, and government of the universe” is “before our eyes as a most elegant book,” “he makes himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word” (B.C. Art. 2).

May his manifold works and holy word compel us to “sing unto the Lord as long as [we] live” (Ps. 104:33). Sing or pray Psalter #288.

**December 30 Read 1 Chronicles 7**

**Soldiers for War**

1 Chronicles 7 contains the genealogies of the tribes of Naphtali, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Asher, as well as the tribe of Benjamin in part. (Benjamin’s children are listed in greater detail in the following chapter, 1 Chronicles 8.) These children of Jacob are warriors, “valiant men,” “soldiers for war,” “valiant men of might,” “mighty men of valor,” and “apt to the war and to battle.” It’s fitting that Joshua, who led Israel in conquering Canaan, is included among these strong, brave men (v. 27).

The Bible teaches that we, too, are soldiers engaged in a great war. Ours is a spiritual battle, led by the captain of our salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh” (2 Cor. 10:3). Have we equipped ourselves for battle today by putting on the whole armor of God (See Eph. 6:10ff.) “(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:4, 5). Sing or pray Psalter #35.

**December 31 Read 1 Chronicles 8**

**These Dwelt in Jerusalem**

1 Chronicles 8 lists the genealogy of the tribe of Benjamin. During the time of the judges, the tribe of Benjamin was nearly obliterated when, because of the sin of the men of Gibeah, the eleven other tribes of Israel went to war against them (see Jud. 19-21). But God restored the tribe; from Benjamin came a judge, Ehud, Israel’s first king, Saul, and the apostle Paul (Phil. 3:5). Remember that the chronicler lived during the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. From that point of view, it’s interesting that in verses 28 and 32 he notes certain Benjaminites who lived in Jerusalem, for in Nehemiah’s day very few desired to live there (see Neh. 11:2). At that time, it was difficult to earn one’s living in the city, and living there was also dangerous, for Jerusalem had many enemies.

Did our ancestors have their conversation in the new
Jerusalem? Then we “should thereby be engaged to set [our] faces thitherward and pursue the way thither, whatever it cost [us]” (Matthew Henry). *Sing or pray Psalter #239.*

**January 1**  
**Read 1 Chronicles 9**

**Look for the King! (2)**

1 Chronicles 9 contains the genealogies of those who returned to the land of Israel from Babylon per Cyrus’s decree. The chronicler began in the garden of Eden with Adam. Through the following chapters, the many names he lists both bring to mind the sins and the unfaithfulness of God’s people and the faithfulness of Jehovah. The genealogies conclude in 1 Chronicles 9 with God’s people worshipping him in Jerusalem. (The chronicler repeats the genealogy of Saul in verses 35–44 to bring the reader to the beginning of the book’s historical chapters: chapter 10 commences Israel’s history with Saul’s death.) Remember the chronicler’s purpose: he would remind God’s people of his faithfulness in order to encourage them to look beyond their hardships to the coming of David’s Son.

All our hope is in that King and his coming, too. *Sing or pray Psalter #89.*

**January 2**  
**Read 1 Chronicles 10**

**Saul and Self-Murder**

The chronicler briefly recounts Saul’s death. Saul had already proved himself disobedient, and in the height of rebellion, he kills himself. “As he had lived, so he died: proud and jealous, a terror to himself and all about him, having neither the fear of God nor hope in God” (Pink). God himself later summarized Saul’s reign when he said, “I gave thee a king in mine anger, and took him away in Adam. Through the following chapters, the many names he lists both bring to mind the sins and the unfaithfulness of God’s people and the faithfulness of Jehovah. The genealogies conclude in 1 Chronicles 9 with God’s people worshipping him in Jerusalem. (The chronicler repeats the genealogy of Saul in verses 35–44 to bring the reader to the beginning of the book’s historical chapters: chapter 10 commences Israel’s history with Saul’s death.) Remember the chronicler’s purpose: he would remind God’s people of his faithfulness in order to encourage them to look beyond their hardships to the coming of David’s Son.

All our hope is in that King and his coming, too. *Sing or pray Psalter #89.*

**January 3**  
**Read 2 Samuel 5**

**King in Zion**

For seven and a half years David reigned patiently over the tribe of Judah in Hebron. Now the other eleven tribes request that he rule also over them. Their change of heart typifies true conversion, and they base their plea on their relation to David: “We are thy bone and thy flesh” (v. 1). Likewise, we come before God on the basis of our relationship to Christ, “for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones” (Eph. 5:30). David is not idle after his coronation: he would reign in Zion. The Jebusites who dwell in Jerusalem regard David with contempt. Judah and Benjamin had both previously failed to drive them out (Josh 15:63 and Judges 1:21). Now they ridicule, “thou shalt not come in hither, for the blind and the lame shall drive thee away.” (Pink suggests this is a better rendering of v. 6b). Nor is our exalted Lord idle, “for he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25). Hiram of Tyre acknowledges David’s rule and sends materials for his house, foreshadowing the day when the Gentiles would come to Christ’s light and be “builted together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22).

Even as David grew great, he attributed his success to Jehovah (2 Sam. 5:10). “He counted it a higher honor to be the Lord’s servant than to be Judah’s king” (Spurgeon). He knew that he had been exalted for the sake of God’s people (v. 12), and in all things he inquired the Lord’s will and obeyed his word. *Sing or pray Psalter #199.*

**January 4**  
**Read Psalm 21**

**Our Eternal King**

In Psalm 21 David refers to “the king” in the third person. In Psalm 20 the people pray, “The Lord...grant thee according to thine own heart.” In Psalm 21 they exclaim, “Thou hast given him his heart’s desire.” What did David ask of the Lord? He prayed for life and deliverance from his enemies. David’s requests were not motivated by selfishness; rather, he prayed for those things for the sake of God’s people, so that Jehovah’s name would be exalted by them (v. 13). Is that the motivation behind our petitions? Then “this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14).

Psalm 21 prophesies of the King, Jesus Christ. Through his prayers and under his rule God’s people are “prevented with the blessings of goodness.” God has laid honor and majesty upon him. He is most blessed forever, the one to whom God has given “length of days for ever and ever.” He is his people’s strong defense, the one who finds out all their enemies and judges them for troubling the saints of God and obeying not his gospel (2 Thess. *Sing or pray Psalter #156.*
January 5 Read Psalm 87

Zion’s Children
Psalm 87 celebrates the glory of Israel’s new capital city, Jerusalem, referred to here and frequently in the scriptures as “Zion.” What made Zion so glorious? Jehovah himself chose her, founded her, and dwelt within her. David cast the Jebusites out of the city; Nehemiah would later record the genealogies of the Jewish people who lived there (Neh. 7:5ff). The psalmist looked to the day when the city of God would include sons and daughters from all nations, those born “not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:3).

In his hymn “Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken,” John Newton wrote:

_Blest inhabitants of Zion,
Washed in the Redeemer’s blood!
Jesus, whom their souls rely on,
Makes them kings and priests to God;
’Tis His love His people raises
Over self to reign as kings,
And as priests, His solemn praises
Each for a thank offering brings._

_Savior, if of Zion’s city,
I through grace a member am,
Let the world deride or pity,
I will glory in Thy name;
Fading is the worldling’s pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure
None but Zion’s children know._

Sing or pray Psalter #237.

January 6 Read Psalm 45

The King and His Queen
The psalmist’s heart is full of the King; his tongue bubbles over in a royal love song. He first describes 10 features of the King, the groom: he is beautiful, and his speech is gracious. Because of his gracious speech, he is blessed by God forever (v. 2). This King is the defender of truth, meekness, and righteousness (vv. 3–4). He is victorious over his enemies (v. 5). He is divine: because he is God, he will rule forever, and his rule will be a righteous rule (vv. 6-7). The King is appraised for his wedding and accompanied by a royal entourage (vv. 8–9). Then the psalmist turns his attention to the Queen, the Bride at the King’s right hand. He calls her to forsake her past and devote herself to the King (vv. 10–11). He acknowledges her preeminence, her beautiful apparel, and her companions (v. 12–14), and then relates the royal couple’s joyous homecoming to the palace (v. 15).

Dear Christian, we are members of the Bride of the King, who is both God and anointed by God. Let’s devote ourselves to him, looking forward to the glorious homecoming that awaits all who are arrayed in the robes of his righteousness. Sing or pray Psalter #124.

January 7 Read Psalm 92

A Psalm for the Sabbath
Psalm 92 bears this heading: “A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day.” The fourth commandment requires that God’s people keep the Sabbath day holy. The Israelites were commanded not to work on the sabbath day, but that does not mean they were idle on that day. Psalm 92 lists some of the activities that filled their Sabbath. On that day they gave thanks to Jehovah, and they sang his praise. Accompanied by musical instruments, they declared his lovingkindness and faithfulness in the morning and at night. They meditated on his great works and unsearchable thoughts. They considered the terrible end of the foolish and the blessed way of the righteous. The command to us to keep the Sabbath day holy does not mean that we must simply be inactive on the Lord’s Day. What activities occupy you on the Sabbath?

God promised that the O.T. saints who honored the sabbath day would find their delight in him and enjoy his rich blessings. That promise is for us who live in the New Testament as well. Sing or pray Psalter #251.

_IDOLATRY_ Ryan Schipper

THANKFUL USE OF MONEY AS COVENANT YOUTH

God is the supreme possessor of all things, for he has created all things, and indeed upholds and governs them as it were by his almighty hand. This fact alone ought to drive any man to consider his earthly possessions with deep humility, for truly the richest man then only possesses so much dust and ashes.
Thus humbled, a man should strive to employ all his goods in the service of God, for all other service is vanity and idolatry. But natural man is very proud and eager to think himself and his worldly goods to be quite something. Moreover, he is prone to hate God, and therefore, to love idols. This sin of idolatry with regard to money is certainly seen in our society, but more personal and of greater impact is the observation of this sin within our own hearts, no less among us as young people than among older generations. It is therefore necessary that we, covenant youth, elect of God, bought with a price, and called out of darkness, consider this calling of the thankful life, that is, to fight against the worship of money.

As soon as you get your first job, your perspective on life changes. Not the least part of this change in perspective is your relationship with money. Where previously money was of little concern as the business of “grown-ups,” it suddenly becomes very relevant and very real. You put in real hours of your time and earn a real paycheck at the end of the week, for which you are really responsible. Further, you begin to realize that generally as a young person, you aren’t making all that much, because looming up ahead in life is college tuition, vehicle expenses, housing costs, and much more besides. The enormous role of money is impossible to ignore in making the transition from teenage child to independent adult.

Different people approach this reality with different mindsets. One option is to focus completely on saving for the future. The mind set becomes, “I have to work as much as I can, and I need to save all my money now so that it will protect me from financial struggles down the road.” With this “every penny counts” mentality can come various temptations in the workplace, like stretching the time clock or the attraction of extra income through Sunday work. Even if these temptations are successfully avoided, it remains a tiring and stressful attitude. To the person with this mindset comes the word of God in Matthew 6:24ff to “take no thought for the morrow” but rather to consider the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field, both well provided for by God. Again, in Psalm 127:2, “It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.” God knows his people’s needs and will surely supply them. The one whose confidence lies in his own industry to ensure his success in life suffers from “little faith.”

On the other side is the mentality that says “I am still young, I need to take this time to enjoy life!” So a person works, not with an eye to the future, but with an eye to the weekend. He spends his money on himself. The lifestyles that the world portrays as fun, exciting, and carefree appeal to him, and he puts his money towards such pursuits, be they fashion, partying, cars, or any of a host of others. To have such skewed priorities surely leads to the neglect of other more worthy uses of money, and a lifestyle patterned after the world’s ideals carries with it many temptations. To a young person of this disposition comes the call of Peter to sobriety and vigilance (1 Pet. 5:8) lest the roaring lion come upon him as easy prey.

These attitudes and lifestyles present real threats, real sins that young people may be tempted to commit. Both make an idol of money, the former trusting in it for security, the latter for satisfaction. Both must be guarded against. However, these attitudes are the extremes. The average covenant young person is not a penny-pinching miser who takes every opportunity to make an extra buck at the expense of his employer or his spiritual life. Nor has he fallen headlong into the money-loving ways of the world, only wearing the highest fashions and caught up in the drunkenness and other sins of the party lifestyle.

Where these extreme cases are present, they cannot be excused, and measures need to be taken in the spiritual lives of anyone thus fallen. However, the reality is somewhere in the middle, or even more accurately, the reality can change day by day, even hour by hour. One minute you are feeling lazy and take some extra time on a job. The next, you think about your hourly wage and think how much nicer it would be if you were better paid. Then you think about how much money you have on hand, and how you plan to spend it, and your church budget somehow doesn’t make it onto the list. These are the everyday types of things that reveal our sinful nature’s inclination to be discontent, to serve ourselves, and, indeed, to idolize money.

But the way to fight against this is not with a long list of condemnations of all the idolatrous thoughts, actions, desires and motives that we have. We young people have been raised in the church, and we know what things are wrong for us to do, think, etc. (We also know that our sinful natures cause us to do them anyway). Rather, the answer that is profitable and productive for us in our walk of sanctification is the positive side of the law. It is studying and applying how we can love the Lord our God with all our heart and in every part of our lives, now with regard to money.

We return to where we started. God owns
everything. Let our foolish pride stop there. All that we may ever gain for ourselves is never in principle ours. As such, our first priority in the use of our goods must be for the glory of God. Besides that, God has saved us. All the guilt of all of our idolatry and every other sin has been imputed to Christ, who suffered in our place. Therefore we are called to use our goods in thankfulness to God for such great salvation. Let this knowledge constantly frame our thinking in every use we make of the earthly goods that God has entrusted to us.

Let no young person imagine that it is not his business to contribute to collection. Contribute with the consciousness that the God of our salvation, whom we gather in church to worship, gives us the direct opportunity to express thankfulness to him in the support of the church, the poor, the Christian schools, and other kingdom causes. A reminder: thankfulness does not have a dollar value. Give real, prayerful consideration to your giving, and then, with neither shame nor pride, but rather with a thankful heart, give.

The biggest money-related area of a person’s life is their job where money is earned. Therefore, carry the fight against idolizing money into the workplace by consciously considering your job as another of God’s innumerable gifts and as a part of his perfect plan for your life. Every job teaches you lessons and life skills, gives opportunity to consider God’s mighty works in different lights, and, of course, earns you money. Give real thought to how your job is part of God’s plan. Did you ever expect to be in the field you now find yourself in? Did a certain life event give you a change of plans? Or has God made your way plain before you? How will this job be part of God’s guiding you through this phase in your life? As for your paycheck, if you find yourself underpaid, look to God to learn contentment and patience. If you find yourself quite comfortable, learn humility and make use of this lack of stress to take on duties in the church. Contentment is the watchword of the thankful worker. Oh, and work hard. Laziness and half-heartedness have no place in thankfulness.

The point is not to outline every possible example of walking in thankfulness. The point is in the principle. God is so good. He is so good to you, covenant youth. And he gives countless opportunities to express our thankfulness in our use of the earthly possessions that he gives us. Also added is that he demands thankfulness, perfect thankfulness. Therein lies our call to continual repentance. Certainly we may try to drive out every vestige of idolatry from our thoughts and hearts, but, great sinners that we are, we cannot do it. Then we look to Christ, the perfect man, who was never discontent or proud, but was rather always obedient to the will of his Father. In keeping the law for us, Christ is to us righteousness and holiness. Looking to him we find the forgiveness of all of our idolatry, the freedom from all guilt, and the cause for ever increasing zeal in serving him as our Lord and savior. No greater riches could be desired.

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

FROM THE PASTOR’S STUDY Rev. Brian Huizenga

WHAT’S IN YOUR BIBLE? FISH

Some General Fish Facts from the Bible

Last time we looked at boats in the Bible; let’s go beneath the boat this time and look at fish.

1. Can you name some different kinds of fish? I will: salmon, walleye, garibaldi, and bluegill. The Bible names none. The Bible names many different kinds of birds (i.e., peacock, kite, cormorant, and sparrow) and land animals (i.e., coney, fox, dromedary, and deer). But the Bible speaks only of “fish, or a “great fish,” and remarkably no particular kind of fish is distinguished by name.

2. God created fish on day five of world history (Gen. 1:21–22).

3. No mention is made of fish being gathered into the ark, and so the fish that survived the breaking up of the fountains of the deep were the fish that entered the new world.

4. I don’t know how many ministers in our churches entered the ministry after being commercial fishermen, or how many elders are currently fishermen, but as you know, many of the first preachers in the new dispensation, such as Peter, James,
and John, were former fishermen. This occupation served them well. Not only are gospel-preachers fishers of men, but being a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee was strenuous, like the work of the church. Fishermen were exposed to all kinds of adverse weather conditions, making them stout and strong. They had to persevere amid trying circumstances and late hours, often toiling long and hard with little or nothing tangible to show for their labors. A wise God was preparing them for the apostleship.

5. Fish were always an important part of the diet of the Israelites. In Egypt the Israelites ate fish. We know there were plenty of fish in Egypt because when God brought the plague that turned the Nile River to blood, all the fish died (Ex. 7:21). And when Israel came out of Egypt and traveled through the wilderness the people complained, “We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely” (Num. 11:5). After settling in Canaan they ate fish again. The law of God in Leviticus 11:9 declared, “These shall ye eat of all that are in the waters, whatsoever hath fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, them shall ye eat.” Fish have fins and scales. The law forbade the eating of such things as reptiles, amphibians, eels, and rays because if the creature was in the water and did not have scales and fins, it was an abomination (Lev. 11:10). Eating fish for supper was lawful. Although Israel was not the land of ten thousands lakes, and though it bordered a big sea that was dead and fishless, there was to the west the Mediterranean Sea and to the northeast the Sea of Galilee with plenty of fish. Additionally, in the city of Jerusalem there was a gate called the fish gate (2 Chron. 33:14, Neh. 3:3), probably because there was a fish market near that gate. The Israelites ate fish.

**The Fish of the Bible**

Can you name any Bible stories that include fish? I will mention 6 main stories.

1. **Jonah’s Great Fish** (Jonah 1). The runaway prophet Jonah boarded a ship and was tossed overboard into the troubled waters of the Mediterranean Sea. He did not drown. Jonah 1:17: “Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.” Your worst experience sleeping on the stiffest bed, hardest floor, loudest room, or in the dirtiest hotel or campground could not compare to Jonah’s lodging arrangements for three nights. He lived inside a fish! But it was his salvation. And it was a miracle. Some men have said that the whales that swim around those parts of the Mediterranean Sea into which Jonah was plunged have narrow throats and they could not have swallowed a man. What cavils! Wicked unbelief always denies God. The God of miracles prepared a very big fish to swallow Jonah so he could live inside it.

2. **Peter’s Money Fish** (Matt. 17:24–27). One time some tax collectors asked Peter, “Doesn’t your master Jesus pay the temple tax?” Peter did not want them to think Jesus was a lawbreaking rebel so he said, “Yes, my master Jesus pays taxes.” Later on, Peter went into a house and Jesus pulled him aside, saying, “The king’s children do not have to pay taxes, only strangers. I am God’s Son, I do not have to pay taxes for God’s house.” But the problem was that the tax collectors did not believe that Jesus was the Son of God, and so they would have thought Jesus was just making excuses to avoid paying taxes. So Jesus told Peter, “Go fishing in the sea with a hook, and the first fish you catch, grab it and look in its mouth and you will find money. Give the money to the tax collectors. It will cover both of us.” So Peter went fishing, caught a fish, opened its mouth and there was a coin. Fishermen can reel in some bizarre catches, but a money fish! Jesus was teaching Peter something: “Alright, I will pay taxes to keep men from slandering me, but I am not obligated to pay taxes because I am God the Son. When the men object and say, “Nonsense! Jesus is not the Son of God,” show them your fish.”

3. **The Lad’s Two Small Fishes** (John 6). On a hillside was once found a crowd of over 5000 hungry people, 1 lad, 5 loaves of bread, 2 small fishes, and our miracle-working Savior. Jesus received the lad’s little portion of food and turned it into enough to feed the multitude with leftovers besides.

4. **The Many Fish of the Great Catch** (Luke 5). Once while fishing all night the disciples caught nothing. Each time they eagerly pulled up their nets, the nets were empty. Jesus told them to get back in their boats and let down their nets. They did and they caught so many fish that their nets broke and another boat was needed to carry all the fish. Both boats started sinking before they eventually made it to shore. Yet another fish miracle!

5. **Jesus’ Broiled Fish** (Luke 24:42). After Jesus arose from the dead, he came to the 11 disciples in Jerusalem and comforted them by showing them his hands and feet. Then they gave him a piece of broiled fish and honeycomb and he ate it before them. They were fishermen who ate lots of fish, and likely had some left over from their meal. They gave it to the resurrected Lord of glory and he ate it.

6. **The 153 Fish of the Later Catch** (John 21).
After Jesus arose from the dead, he went to the Sea of Galilee where Peter and the other disciples were fishing. They were not catching any fish. Jesus told them to cast on the right side of the boat; they did, and caught 153 “great fish.”

**Reasons to Praise and Thank our God**

1. **Let’s Praise and Thank him for his Providence.** Should you take a trip to your local pet store and look in one of the bigger aquariums, you would likely see more fish swimming in it than you would ever care to count. That is but one aquarium. How many billions and billions of fish are in the waters of the earth? Schools of fish are almost like galaxies of stars. Who can count them? Who knows each one of them and with his hand can uphold and guide them? Every twitch of the back fin of every little fish is governed by the hand of God. Who is so great as our God in the ordinary workings of his providence! And if by his almighty and everywhere present power he governs and cares for fish, how much more does he not care for us and govern every movement in and around us for our everlasting salvation? We are more precious than fish; we are the Father’s adopted sons and daughters. Let’s praise and thank him for his power that protects us.

2. **Let’s Praise and Thank him for his Miracles.** Almost every fish story in the Bible involves a miracle. To unbelieving man the story of Jonah involves what is seemingly the second most preposterous tale a tongue could tell. Jonah in the belly of the great fish is a story that elicits howls of unbelieving laughter. But we believe God miraculously brought that great fish to swallow Jonah, even as Jesus later miraculously multiplied fish, put a coin in a fish’s mouth, and filled empty fishing nets. Interestingly, the fish-miracles of Jesus surround and thus appear on either side of the greatest miracle he ever performed, a miracle resembling something of the great fish-miracle of the Old Testament, and a miracle that is indeed the most preposterous to unbelief—on the third day Jesus raised his own body out of the heart of the earth. He arose for us and with us so that we are raised with him unto newness of life. If Jesus can do miracles with fish—and he has—then Jesus can do miracles with us. He has. Our faith in him and his miracles is the evidence.

3. **Let’s Praise and Thank him for his Gospel that Gathered us.** We learn from one of the fish-miracles that we are like fish. The gospel, like a big net, goes out to catch all the people of God and bring them into God’s kingdom. Like the 153, each one of the elect is numbered and accounted for. When 153 fish are to be caught, the net will not contain 152 fish. Praise and thank God for the gospel that gathers you to Christ. And pray God’s blessings upon the preaching of the gospel in established congregations and by our missionaries on the mission fields so that the nets are continually filled.

4. **Let’s Praise and Thank Him for our Daily Bread...even when it’s Fish.** I enjoy eating fish, especially fish tacos. Maybe you dislike or even detest fish for food. Has your mother made a meal with fish or even something fishy of late? Did you pull up your nose and grumble? Jesus does not require you to like fish. But Jesus does require you to be thankful to your heavenly Father when he provides you with daily bread, whether it be bread or fish.

Rev. Huizinga is pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California.
**Book Review**

**Dr. Julian Kennedy**

**KNOWING GOD IN THE LAST DAYS**


This little commentary on 2 Peter is a gem: concise, clear, very readable, and packed with spiritual truth. The central theme is clear: the knowledge of God forms the basis upon which Christian graces are built and false teachers are recognized and exposed. The key verse is 2 Peter 1:3, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.” This knowledge must be precise, and Hoeksema’s seminary training and knowledge of Greek means that what we read is a precise exposition that simultaneously clearly shows how each section is related to the previous and following sections. He emphasizes that this knowledge must not just be intellectual but also experiential.

Here are some nuggets: “The promise is always and essentially Christ” (Heb. 11:39) and “so many promises that God gives to his church through the Spirit of Christ.” These promises form the ground of God’s command to be diligent in our Christian lives. He states, “Faith is strengthened through knowledge and knowledge is increased by faith.” My favorite is, “Hope concerns, first, the future (Rom. 8:24–25). Second, hope implies a longing for a future good (essentially full salvation, but never for anything unfavorable or undesirable). Third, unlike our use of the term, which implies uncertainty, hope is the absolute certainty that the object of hope will come to pass.”

The book is divided into the sections of each chapter—the first dealing with exhortations to advance in grace, the second covering the recognition and subsequent doom of heretical teachers, and the third covering eschatological truth, namely, that the history of the world is not one of uniformity (as evolution posits) but actually cataclysmic pointing to its ultimate apocalypse.

This little book ought to be read slowly because there is so much to unpack. I highly recommend it and would encourage its author to produce a study guide, which would encourage readers to dig into it for themselves.

*Dr Julian Kennedy is a member of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland.*

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**Federation Board Annual Financial Report**

For the Fiscal Year Ended July 31, 2017

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checking Account Summary</th>
<th>Revenues</th>
<th>Expenditures</th>
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**Revenues**
- Church Collections $1,733.27
- Federation Dues 11,673.05
- Convention Loans Returned 15,000.00

**Expenditures**
- Bank Charges $0.00
- Rental Fees 847.00
- Professional Fees 945.00
- Website 107.76
- Convention Travel Subsidy 0.00
- Convention Loans Disbursed 30,000.00
- Beacon Lights 0.00
- Scholarship Committee 0.00
- Standale Storage 650.00
- Miscellaneous 88.92

**Total Revenues** $28,406.32 **Total Expenditures** $32,638.68

**Notes for the Year Ended July 31, 2017:**
- Checks outstanding for Scholarship Committee ($3050), Beacon Lights ($610), and Convention Travel Subsidy ($11,000)
- Miscellaneous expenditures include the $20 payment to the state of Michigan for filing as a non-profit, and repayment to Sharon ($59.12) and Katie (9.80)
- Fed Board bought a storage unit to store convention items which costs $80 a month
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:
Oliver Winston, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Lenting—Crete, IL
Everett Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Andringa—Crete, IL
Autumn Sunshine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tim & Bridget Postma—Doon, IA
Kaylie Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin & Abby Huizing—Edmonton, Canada
Carly Joyce, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Chad & Melanie Noorman—Georgetown, MI
Kate Louise, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeremy & Kelly Langerak—Hope, MI
Kiptyn Robert, son of Mr. & Mrs. Randy & Kim Kuiper—Hudsonville, MI
Austin Samuel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Sarah Kiel—Kalamazoo, MI
Isabella Faith, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Jenna Brands—Loveland, CO
Brandt Logan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Janice Kooienga—Lynden, WA
Lucas James, son of Mr. & Mrs. David & Bri Ophoff—Southeast, MI
Travis Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike & Tammy Hanko—Southwest, MI
Maxwell Don, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Jennelle Van Overloop—Trinity, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Franny Holt—Hudsonville, MI

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:
Emma Bennett, Bethany Mancusi, Courtney Zandstra, Trevor Van Overloop and Alec Zandstra—Crete, IL
Henry Hoekstra and Austin Vanden Top—Grace, MI
Aaron Langerak and Larissa Langerak—Hope, MI
Jori Eriks, Erica Dykstra, Tyler Kraker, Ashley Schut—Hudsonville, MI
Hannah Bos—Loveland, CO
Olivia Pipe, Emma Atwood, Abigail Kuiper, and Madeline Riemersma and Colin Riemersma—Southeast, MI
Sean Cleary and Trevor Huiskens—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES
“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14
Mr. Michael Buiter and Miss Leah Birkett—Crete, IL
Mr. Cody Altena and Miss Suzie Kuiper—Doon, IA
Mr. Caleb Flikkema and Miss Whitney Schut—First, MI
Mr. Brad Ophoff and Miss Taylor Schimmel—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Trent Vanden Top and Miss Shelby Kruithoff—Grace, MI
Mr. Jason Langerak and Miss Deanna Tanis—Hope, MI
Mr. Spencer Crich and Miss Jessica Vandenberg—Wingham, Canada
**SOLA FIDE: FAITH ALONE**

Once there lived a man in what he thought was a beautiful country. He went about his job and his business without giving too much thought to the world around him.

But one day, he was given a pair of special glasses. The man who gave him the glasses put the glasses on him and told him that with the glasses, he would be able to see how the world really is.

The man wore the glasses and really looked at the country for the first time. It was a darker place than he had realized. Dirtier. Uglier. Scarier. And he wasn't quite the good person he'd thought himself to be.

But there was also the light and beauty that he hadn't realized existed before either. This light gave him hope even when he saw the darkness.

He discovered that the longer he wore the glasses, the better he could see the reality of the world around him.

He tried to tell others about what he saw with the special glasses. Some hated it when he talked about what he saw and wanted to be ignorant of reality. But others were also given glasses that they could see too.

**Something to think about:**

We can only see the true reality of our sins and God's salvation for us in Jesus Christ through faith. But this ability to see by faith is a gift given by God. Faith isn't something we put on ourselves. We should be thankful that we been given faith to be able to see the reality of what this Christmas season means. We celebrate the gift of Jesus Christ and the salvation that he bought for us and the righteousness he gave to us.

*Tricia is a member of Byron Center Protestant Reformed Church in Byron Center, Michigan.*
PRYP CONVENTION 2018

August 13-17

GUIDED BY GOD

Lake Geneva Christian Center
ALEXANDRIA, MINNESOTA

2018

“Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” Psalm 73:24

Hosted by the following 5 Midwest churches
(Calvary, Doon, Edgerton, Heritage, & Hull PRCs)