A Protestant Reformed Youth Magazine
beaconlights.org

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EDITOR
Mark Hoeksema, editor@beaconlights.org

CONTENTS COMMITTEE
Ryan Kregel (Managing Editor), ryankregel@gmail.com
Abbie Eriks (Contributing Writer Correspondent), abbie.riks@gmail.com
Jake Dykstra (Contributing Writer Correspondent), dykstrjh@mail.gvsu.edu
Macy Schimmel (Promotions), promotions@beaconlights.org
Joel Rau (Archivist), archives@beaconlights.org
Matt Rutgers (Business Manager)
Lenora Bodbyl (Secretary)

BUSINESS OFFICE AND SUBSCRIPTIONS
Matt Rutgers
PO Box 37
Hudsonville, MI 49426-0037
(616) 209-2824
subscriptions@beaconlights.org

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Melinda Bleyenberg, dbmbleyenberg@gmail.com

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Emily Kuiper
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The *Beacon Lights* staff thinks we have a problem. In fact, we are convinced that we have a problem. The problem concerns the reading of the magazine, or more accurately, the lack thereof.

Our subscription numbers have historically been tracked by our business manager and reported at our monthly meetings. For the last several years this number has remained relatively stable.

However, the subscription numbers do not necessarily translate equally to the numbers of those who actually read the magazine, especially our Protestant Reformed young people. This ratio is difficult to measure factually, although not impossible.

For a long time the staff has been concerned with this issue, and has searched for ways to measure our readership. Recently this discussion has intensified in the monthly meetings. Shortly ago the staff decided to send our promotions manager, Mary Grace Schimmel, to Covenant Christian High School to do some informal and anecdotal fact-gathering and to encourage the students to read *Beacon Lights*. She was given the opportunity to address the student body, numbering more than 350, at a chapel assembly.

Mary Grace began by asking how many in her audience have heard of *Beacon Lights*, with the result that about 98% raised their hands. She then asked how many of their parents or they themselves currently have a *Beacon Lights* subscription. The percentage dropped to about 85. Next question: How many read *Beacon Lights*? About 12% raised their hands. Her final query was, how many read the magazine from cover to cover? Two or three hands went up.

Admittedly this is not a scientific or technically accurate survey, but even if her numbers are doubled or even tripled arbitrarily, the results of her survey are a general indication of the reading status of *Beacon Lights* among this sampling of a large number of our young people. To the extent that these results reflect reality, we have a problem. The results are disappointing and even disturbing.

Why are they upsetting? Because the numbers surely show a lack of interest in *Beacon Lights*. This stands to reason. If a person has little or no interest in a certain activity—in this case reading—he will not perform that activity.

This brings up the question why only a few of you young people at most bother to read *Beacon Lights*. I can think of three reasons.

First, this is a matter of priorities. Young people today are very busy. There is school, church, catechism, homework, sports, perhaps dating, a part-time job, and possibly other activities and obligations. Somehow *Beacon Lights* gets shuffled to the bottom of the pile. It quickly and easily becomes the lowest priority.

Second is the rise and use of social media. I am convinced through my own observation that this is a huge influence upon most people, especially our young people. Almost everyone has a smart phone, a laptop, and an iPad. Most are on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Everywhere I go I see people texting. If they are not texting, they are talking on their cell phones. I call this black-ear disease. People, including you, young people, are virtually addicted to your electronic devices and the media they transmit.

The matter is really quite simple: should you spend your discretionary hours on Facebook, or should you read good literature, with *Beacon Lights* at the top of your list?

Third, I wonder if parental supervision of the use of social media has gradually deteriorated. I am convinced that some parents make sure that
their children read at least part of *Beacon Lights*. Thanks to those of you who do! But I also suggest and am afraid that many do not, and this is disappointing. Is not our calling as parents to see to it that our children develop good habits that are beneficial to their spiritual lives? They are the next generation of the church. Should not parents do all in their power to prepare them to do so? If the young people do not learn now (and *Beacon Lights* surely teaches!), then when?

What is the solution to this issue? I admittedly do not possess a silver bullet that will magically solve this problem, but I do have some ideas.

First, you young people need to reorganize your priorities. This is not easy to do, because it involves breaking habits, some of which are long-standing. But this is necessary. In the midst of your busy lives, those of you who do not read *Beacon Lights* need to reorder your priorities to make time to read the magazine. You are our target audience; *Beacon Lights* is written specifically for you. It is our desire out of Christian love for you that you read the magazine, along with other profitable, edifying Reformed literature. We do not publish it just for fun, but for your benefit. Besides, if you do not get into the habit of reading good Reformed literature now, what will happen when you get older and even busier?

Second, you need to reduce or eliminate your use of and dependence on social media. This is both huge and difficult, but if done, will reap good fruit. When smart phones initially became available, I had to make a decision whether or not to get one, or to fall behind in the development of advanced technology. Although they have some very attractive applications, I opted out because I did not want to be so connected. When Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter were invented, I again opted out. All I have is a cell phone, which is quite useful and fulfills my needs. Facebook and Instagram are tremendous time-wasters. I do not need to know what you had for breakfast or what you intend to do tonight in all the gory details.

Please, young people, do not dismiss me as an ornery old curmudgeon who is out of touch with reality. I assure you that I am not. The matter is really quite simple: should you spend your discretionary hours on Facebook, or should you read good literature, with *Beacon Lights* at the top of your list? Before God and your own conscience, you need to answer this question honestly.

Third, a word to parents. We know that many or most of you read *Beacon Lights*. It is your covenant obligation to bring up your children in the fear of the Lord. One aspect of this is to ensure that your young people read the magazine and other good Reformed material. Please put forth every effort to do this.

Last, a word to grandparents. Yes, grandparents. We know with absolute certainty that many of our oldest generation are avid readers, and we very much appreciate this. With that readership comes an opportunity to influence your young grandchildren. Many times a quiet word from Grandpa or Grandma is more effective than the admonition of a parent. I know, because I am a grandparent. That quiet word should be “Read!”

So why, young people, should you read *Beacon Lights*? Because after a great deal of time and effort, we have come out with an attractive cover-to-cover redesign of the magazine? No. Because a great deal of donated energy is put forth by the staff to produce a high quality and relevant product? No. Because your parents or grandparents tell you that you should read it? No. Because I just said so? No.

Rather, the reason is that *Beacon Lights* is part of your spiritual life and growth in sanctification. You can’t learn this from social media, but you can learn it from the excellent and interesting articles that appear in the magazine as we make our way toward heaven in the midst of a sin-cursed and increasingly wicked world.

So what really matters? How will you use your time? You decide.

**Editor’s Notes** Mark H. Hoeksema

If you are reading this note, you already know that you are holding *Beacon Lights*’ brand new look. The magazine has been re-designed from cover to cover, courtesy of Erika Kiel, a professional designer and a member of our Kalamazoo, Michigan congregation. *Beacon Lights* thanks her for working with the staff to produce an up-to-date and attractive design. We hope you like the results!
Our Goodly Heritage  Mark H. Hoeksema

INTERVIEW WITH ELSIE VERHEY (2)

Mark H. Hoeksema: Are there any other memories that stand out in your mind or any events that you recall about your life here in Edgerton and in the PR church?

Elsie Verhey: Can’t forget the Fourth of July picnics.

MHH: Tell me about it.

EV: Well, we had it out at the farm where we lived, or where Art’s parents lived first. Then later on we lived there. And that’s where it was. We had this big grove; it was a tree-planting. We set up the canteens and we had so much fun because the Friday night before, the young people would come out and we’d pick up sticks all over and have a big wiener roast. We just had such a good time. They built the canteen and put stuff in there. And we had over an hour speech, especially when Rev. Veldman was there. It would be “church-meet hour” (laughter). When you’re young, that really wasn’t supposed to be on the schedule. This is a holiday. Come on, guys, let’s have fun! You know, play ball again.

That was one of the things I remember. We had other outings than that, but that Fourth of July picnic, that was just…. Iowa—Doon and Hull—came too. Oh yes, it was just a big deal. It was every other year. One year we would go to Iowa, and the next year they would come here. For awhile, the young kids around here would get to the grove as early as possible in the morning. I remember Rod Miersma—he lived quite a ways away, but he would take his bicycle so that he would be there for the whole show.

Normally they started coming about 9:30. Then at noon, if you wanted, you could go buy food at the canteen, or most of them would gather with their families and have just a meal with their families out in the grove someplace.

Then they would play ball until 1:00. And everybody had better be there for the speech (laughter). We even had special numbers. I remember one time we had, I think it was Minn Huiskens and myself and Jerry Kuiper and Art sang a duet. And just different things like that—just something. Otherwise we would just sing a Psalter number a capella, but then, oh, we wanted a special number this year.

Well then, the other year we would go to Iowa. I think Doon and Hull would take turns. But it would be Edgerton/Iowa, Edgerton/Iowa. And I can’t remember exactly, but I think they took turns, the two of them.

And this went on until—I don’t even know what year we quit doing it. But it was the highlight of the year.

MHH: When was all of this occurring? Was this during the 60s and 70s?

EV: Well, it was even before that. It was before the Edgerton split. But it was at the Verhey grove. I don’t think the other side [the schismatics] ever bothered with it anymore.

We lived on that farm thirty years, and I’ve been here about fifteen. It was shortly before we moved to town, probably five years before that that they quit doing that.

MHH: Why do you think they quit? It sounds like it was a good time.

EV: It was. It was a very good time. But I know this one-year Art was kind of disgusted with it. He had some old cars in the grove that were fixer-uppers. Some of the kids came with big rocks and broke every window in those cars (groan). He was not very happy about it.

So then I think a couple of years we had it at the school. But it just kind of fizzled out. It just wasn’t the same as having it out in the grove with the canteen and the whole business.

MHH: But it sounds like you still miss it (laughter).

EV: It was a fun time.

RH (Ruth Hoeksema): It sounds like a lot of work for your family...

EV: Yes, but the young people came, and we played games like “Run, the good sheep run,” and all kinds of fun games. Even when the [Rev. George] Lantings were here, we still were playing some of those games that we played out in the grove. They really worked and picked up sticks. They had two trees with a big pipe between them with a barrel up there. They would fill that barrel with water. You’d have to run underneath that barrel, and if you’d get the stick right in the barrel, you’d be fine. But, if not, then you’d get all the water on you (laughter).
We had a lot of fun games.
Now with the school picnic, we still always have games for the kids.

MHH: You have a school picnic now?
EV: Oh, yes. Every year just after school gets out. We have the city park. We have games, and for the little bitty ones we have either pick up candy or they have a big tub of oats with pennies or dimes that they can dig out. One time when I was on the committee for games, we had Olympics. We’re going to have the shot-put, and we’re going to have the discus and all these different things. They’d say, “Oh, get the strongest one for that.” Well, a shot-put would be a straw (laughter) and the discus would be a paper plate (more laughter). We just had really, really cool stuff, and they really were a highlight too. But years ago, before they had the park here, we would have our picnic in the high school. One year it had rained, but they played ball. My daughters came home so full of mud! I thought they’d never get clean. They were dragging all those girls through the mud. They always had so much fun at those picnics. They always ended up in water fights, and the elderly ladies didn’t always appreciate that. I don’t know why. They were a lot of fun.

RH: Who got water?
EV: Water balloons or cans or anything they could get, they would have. I think they would take ice cream buckets from home and just totally douse each other. Well, hey, so what, you know? They’ll dry (laughter).

RH: Everyone was fair game to be shot at?
EV: Oh, sure. The kids, they loved it. They were hurt if they didn’t get wet (laughter).

MHH: Mrs. Verhey, you mentioned earlier that when you came to the Protestant Reformed church, after you were married in 1956, that there were still some residual effects or fall-out from the split. At that time, where was Edgerton church meeting? What was the history of that period?
EV: The Edgerton Church, after the split that were meeting in the church until (I don’t even know how long) they decided they didn’t want to be a separate church anymore, so they went to the Christian Reformed Church and rented the building of the Presbyterian church. And, like I say, I don’t know when that was, how long they met separate.

Then the consistory decided, “Hey, they don’t want the building, let’s go back to court.” And so it was decided then that we got the building back. But it was a very exciting day when they told us that we got the church. The Woudenbergs were there, so they got to move out of this old house on Howard Street into the parsonage. And, oh, how exciting!

MHH: So, at that point the continuing Protestant Reformed Church got the property back, and they’ve been meeting there ever since until the present time.

Mrs. Verhey, how would you compare the church of today with the church of your youth, from about the time that you got married and joined the Protestant Reformed Church?
EV: I think the preaching is pretty much the same. But I think they were a lot more strict. For instance, when my sister-in-law and brother-in-law moved to California, they had a farm sale, and they wanted to have the Ladies Society serve lunches there. The elderly gentlemen that were in the consistory said, “No, you don’t take money from the world,” which would be the case there. “You don’t need that kind of money.” Another thing they were vehement about was investing in stocks and that type of thing. And when Uncle Albert [Bleyenberg] died, he left a lot of money to the church, and the school and invested it. But, oh, they wouldn’t hear anything of that. Another thing they were vehement about was investing in stocks and that type of thing. And when Uncle Albert [Bleyenberg] died, he left a lot of money to the church, and the school and invested it. But, oh, they wouldn’t hear anything of that. Also, we had a discussion once a year of, well, ladies and men together. The discussion was on insurance, and there were a couple of the elderly who said you had to have car insurance—that was the law. But you don’t need health insurance; you don’t need life insurance; you don’t need fire and wind and all that. You had to have auto insurance—period.
Those are just a few of the things that really are different now. Also, now the young people will sponsor a soup supper or the school circle (in those days we mightn’t do that). You might not be selling things in church. You couldn’t have the soup supper in the church basement and have to pay for that soup in church! So those are a couple of the things.

MHH: Let me back you up just a minute here. I have heard comments and have read a little bit about that insurance controversy. What is your understanding of the thinking and the reasoning behind an attitude like that?

EV: Well, that you had to trust in God, that he would supply, you know. If your house would burn up, your church family and your own family would—if you didn’t have the money to rebuild—help you out. That was the plan. That’s what I was thinking.

MHH: Do you think there are still remnants of that old thinking?

EV: There probably should be more. I don’t know.

MHH: Why do you say that?

EV: Because with all this insurance, are we saying that, oh, the government or the insurance companies will take care of us if our family is in the church, and God doesn’t? I don’t know. I have insurance, too. I have home-owners insurance and I have car insurance and health insurance. But in those days, they were quite vehement that that was wrong.

MHH: And, let me follow up also on something else that you mentioned. What was the thinking regarding what you mentioned about the stock market? What was the problem there?

EV: Gambling.

MHH: They regarded investing as gambling?

EV: Yes.

MHH: That, too, has changed.

EV: It has. I wish I didn’t have any in it right now (laughter). I know of a lot of people that lost a lot, Mark, and I did.

MHH: You mentioned that the preaching has basically not changed. Do you think that some of the other changes that you mentioned are for the better or for the worse, or do they really matter? How do you regard the practice and the spiritual strength of the church today?

EV: Well, starting with the preaching, when I came to the Protestant Reformed Church, I was not used to any doctrinal preaching. It was all Bible stories, more or less, although this one minister we had when I was a teenager in Leota, he was more; I think he went a little deeper—it wasn’t just stories. But, like I have said, I didn’t know the Heidelberg Catechism or the Canons of Dordt—no idea until I went to this Bible Camp. But this one minister said “That’s the Reformed faith.” But I had my pen and paper and I jotted that down and showed my folks when I get home. “Oh, yes, yes. That’s what we believe.” But then it was never preached.

MHH: It’s interesting. Are there any issues that you would like to address or opinions that you would like to express on pretty much any subject that’s connected with the church?

EV: I can’t think of anything right now. I like this Young Adults’ retreat that they have every once in a while. Otherwise, I can’t think of anything that comes to mind right now.

MHH: I thank you very much for your thoughts and for your time, Mrs. Verhey. I appreciate it. This concludes this interview.

Letters

LETTER TO SCHUYLER

I was reading Beacon Lights of February 2017 with interest and wanted to comment or argue about two statements in “Ask Schuyler” regarding fellowship with unbelievers. First, “Therefore we cannot enjoy true friendship, which is a sharing of life,” and second, “In fact (our children) may not and cannot” (fellowship with the ungodly) in public schools.

Taking the second quotation first, I am sure Schuyler is well aware that many believing parents have no option but to send their children to public schools because they don’t have access to a
Christian school and home schooling is impossible. God can and does sustain his believing children through this phase.

Real, heartfelt friendship cannot be enjoyed between an unbeliever and a believer, but I am convinced that true friendships where life impacts life can and ought to be pursued. If an unbeliever sees our lives and hears our words up close, it is akin to the unbelieving spouse being won in 1 Peter 3:1 and the light in Matthew 5. Only such a person is likely to accompany us to our church when invited. “Cold-turkey” evangelism is frequently fruitless. My wife and I find that friendships where a common interest is shared, like sport, is one of the best places to get to know people and seek to be a witness.

Sincerely,
John Julian Kennedy

Answer
I thank Julian for his response. Indeed, I do acknowledge that for some (a minority) of believing parents in our Protestant Reformed circles, public school education is forced upon them because of the lack of suitable alternatives (good Christian schools and homeschooling). In my original article, I mentioned that “Public schools might be an option for some parents in the absence of a good Christian school and where homeschooling is impossible. (However, few Protestant Reformed parents are in that position, and we do not make rules out of exceptions).”

Julian’s second point begs the question: what is friendship/fellowship? What he and his wife do in seeking a common interest through sport with unbelievers is permissible, and in certain cases even commendable, but it is not friendship/fellowship, at least not how the Bible defines it and how I defined it in the article in Beacon Lights.

“Sharing of life” is more than sharing the volleyball court. Sharing of life is a “spiritual closeness and oneness that we enjoy with our fellow saints in the church.” Julian and his wife might, according to his testimony, share the former with their unbelieving acquaintances in sport, but they do not, cannot, and may not share the latter with unbelievers.

I want to encourage Julian, his wife, and all readers to endeavor to invite unbelievers to church. If that begins with a shared volleyball game, that is fine, as long as the antithesis is maintained.

Schuyler

Julian Kennedy is a retired physician and a member of Ballymena Protestant Reformed church in Ballymena, Northern Ireland.

Poem Gertrude Hoeksema

IN OUR FATHER’S HAND

Dear children of God, do your fears arise
When you look at your sins day by day,
When you know you have wandered much too far,
And as lost sheep have gone quite astray?

Remember: our shepherd is watching o’er us—
Our shepherd who knows us by name.
“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them all.
Follow me,” we can hear him exclaim!

Our shepherd takes care of us all of our lives;
He assures us we’ll never be lost.
We know why he never will let us go.
On the cross he has paid the great cost.

Our Father who gave all his children to him
Has put us in Jesus’ own hand,
Where we will be safe, protected in love;
And none can us snatch from his hand.

He has promised the joys of a wonderful life
For his children, the great and the small,
Where we never can perish—in heaven above.
For our Father is greater than all.

He tells us that no fearful enemies
Can keep us away from his love.
For we have the vict’ry! Praise to his name!
Our glory awaits us above!
THE DAILY PRESS
“press toward the mark…”
(Philippians 3:14)

May 8  Read Exodus 36
In verses 4–6 of this chapter, we read that the tabernacle workers had a very good problem on their hands. The people had been commanded to supply the materials for the building of the tabernacle, and they gave so liberally that the men had to actually tell Moses to instruct the people not to bring any more stuff.

What great faith is exhibited by the Israelites in this story! This is the model for us in our giving, yet so often we fall far short. Instead of trying to think of what else we can give, we tend to try to find the minimum that is necessary. We live as if we are doing God a service by giving a small portion of our things to him, and forget that everything we have is already his. In fact, even our bodies themselves belong to him. Psalm 24:1 reminds us of this when it says, “The earth is the LORD’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” Sing or pray Psalter #59.

May 9  Read Exodus 37
Throughout this section of the Bible that gives instructions for the tabernacle we see many references to shittim wood. This tree is more commonly known as the acacia. There are a number of reasons the Israelites used shittim wood for so many different parts of this project. First of all, it was available. The wilderness the Israelites were traveling through wasn’t exactly lush, but the tough acacia was one tree that could survive in such conditions. Second, it is very light-weight wood, which was very important to the Israelites who would be hauling the tabernacle around with them for generations. Third, it was strong. The Israelites needed strong poles that would keep the tabernacle erect in the wilderness where wind was often an issue. Fourth, once the bark was stripped off the branches this wood had a very nice, polished look, which helped make God’s house beautiful. Sing or pray Psalter #131.

May 10  Read Exodus 38
Throughout these chapters talking about the construction of the tabernacle, there is a lot of use of the pronoun he. He refers to Bezaleel, the chief architect of the tabernacle. Not much is known about this man who was so instrumental in the making of God’s house, but Biblegateway.com does a good job of summarizing the few things we do know about him. We know that Bezaleel, although ultimately captain of the entire operation, was chiefly in charge of all the wood, stone, and metal components, while Aholiab was in charge of the fabric used. Bezaleel’s name means “in the shadow of God,” a name very fitting for the one who would build the house where God would dwell in a cloud with his people. Bezaleel was a very skilled craftsman and the Holy Spirit gave him wisdom to perform this work exactly as God commanded. In the same way, the Holy Spirit provides each of us today with the strength and wisdom we need to perform the work we have been called to do. Sing or pray Psalter #134.

May 11  Read Exodus 39
Exodus 39:24 reads, “And they made upon the hems of the robe pomegranates of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and twined linen.” I don’t think I was even aware of what pomegranates were growing up in Michigan, but I know that those in our Redlands congregation are very familiar with them. I’ve had the opportunity to taste pomegranate jam while visiting my wife’s family out there, a jam that I would say is most similar to grape jelly. If you don’t know what it is, google it. The fruit isn’t much to look at on the outside, but then you open it and find inside tons of little juicy kernels. It kind of reminds me of a geode. I can imagine that making a jam with these takes a lot of time.

Here we read that pomegranates were sewn into the hem of the priests’ robes. Why pomegranates? I’m not sure, but I wonder if the answer has to do with the clusters of juicy, red kernels. Maybe the kernels are a picture of God’s people, and
the bright red color is a picture of Christ’s blood covering them and washing away their sins. What do you think? Sing or pray Psalter #111.

May 12 Read Exodus 40

The Book of Exodus ends by talking about how God led his people through the wilderness by a cloud. While the people were camped, the cloud would rest over the tabernacle as a sign that God dwelt there. When the cloud moved, that was the signal for the Israelites to pack up and follow it. They would then follow the cloud until it stopped somewhere and then they’d repeat the process.

This is a beautiful picture for us of how we are to look to God to lead us through the wilderness of this life. Yet, how often do we fail to look for the cloud? There are so many things vying for our attention. There are things we’d like to accomplish in our jobs. There are projects that we would like to do on the house. There are certain vacations we’d love to be able to go on. However, often we need to step back and ask ourselves what’s driving these ambitions. Is it the cloudy pillar or the glitter and glamour of this world?

Sing or pray Psalter #7.

May 13 Read Leviticus 1

In reading this chapter, I found it interesting that two different sides of the altar of burnt offering are specifically mentioned. First, verse 11 refers to the priest killing the sheep or goat on the north side of the altar. Second, verse 16 says that the crop and feathers of the sacrificed bird were to be placed on the east side of the altar. The exact reason for these specific directions is very difficult to discern, but some interesting connections can be made. We know that the door of the tabernacle faced east, towards the rising sun, from Ezekiel 43:4 and 44:1. In connection with the north side, the Hebrew word for “north” has with it the idea of being hidden. It was known that the days were shorter as one continued farther north on the earth. The sacrifice being slain on the north side of the altar could be a picture of its being full of the darkness of sin.

Sing or pray Psalter #109.

May 14 Read Leviticus 2

What stood out to me from this chapter was the command to season the meat offering with salt, but not to use leaven or honey. The reason why these specific things are mentioned is not easy to determine. In fact, Calvin himself says he doesn’t know why honey is referred to here. Keil believes that leaven and honey were forbidden because they cause fermentation and corruption, whereas salt was commanded to be used for its ability to preserve. Fermentation, he would say, is a picture of sin’s corruption, and preservation is a picture of our redemption in Christ.

It’s interesting to note that scripture speaks of leaven in both a positive and negative way. In Matthew 13:33, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven. However, just a few chapters later in Matthew 16:11, Jesus warned his disciples of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. It is not rare for us to see the same thing used to illustrate something both positive and negative in scripture. For example, we read in the Bible of both Christ and the devil being described as a lion.

Sing or pray Psalter #249.

May 15 Read Leviticus 3

Throughout these first few chapters of Leviticus, we read of the sacrifice having a hand laid on his head before he was killed. We see this action of laying a hand on someone or something’s head throughout scripture. In this case the action was a picture of one’s sins being laid upon the animal. Another place that this action is seen is when witnesses were called upon to condemn a blasphemer. The witnesses had to place their hands on the guilty party’s head, showing that the guilt was his own. This brings out the truth that we are guilty of a sin if we witness it and don’t speak out against it. In a different way, this action is also used in Numbers 27:22–23, when Moses lays his hand on Joshua’s head. Instead of guilt in this instance, this signifies God calling Joshua to be Israel’s new leader. In a similar way, the laying on of hands is used in the ordination of ministers (1 Timothy 4:14).

Sing or pray Psalter #3.

May 16 Read Leviticus 4

We recently finished reading Hebrews in family devotions. As we read Hebrews 13, we were struck by how it talked about Jesus suffering outside the camp and how we must go to him there. I thought I remembered learning that parts of the sacrifice were burned outside the camp of Israel, but, upon looking, we couldn’t find anything about it. Then I read this chapter in preparation for this devotional. Verse 12 talks about how a large portion of the
animals used for the sin offering were burned outside the camp. This offering was done when someone had sinned out of ignorance. They had done something wrong without realizing the error of their ways at the time. The fact that the animal was burned outside the camp showed that the sin had been placed on the sacrifice and the punishment for that sin was being cut off from the congregation. Christ was the perfect fulfillment of this, which is what is being brought out in Hebrews 13:11–12. Sing or pray Psalter #396.

**May 17**  
**Read Leviticus 5**

This section talks about the trespass offering, which seems very similar to the sin offering talked about in the previous chapter. According to my study Bible this is correct, because the trespass offering is really a special kind of sin offering that was made when the property rights of another person were invaded or disregarded. There were different requirements for the sin offering and the trespass offering. Sin offerings differed depending on the severity of the sin committed. In contrast, trespass offerings were all the same. They all required the offering of a ram and full repayment of the affected property, including 1/5 of the property's value.

These two offerings are contrasted a little differently at Bibletools.org. They summarize the difference by saying, “The sin offering of Leviticus 4 covers our evil nature, the heart’s sin. The trespass offering of Leviticus 5 atones for the fruits of that evil nature, the acts that are actually performed.” If I understand correctly, this could be summarized further to say that the sin offering covered the Israelites’ original sin, and the trespass offering covered their actual sins. Sing or pray Psalter #140.

**May 18**  
**Read Leviticus 6**

There are so many specific details included regarding these Old Testament laws, and one might be left wondering why God said these things needed to be included in his infallible word. The answer to this question is that these details force us to really dig into the scriptures to understand their meaning. Digging provides a good analogy here, because it is very labor intensive work. I remember having to dig a 6’ deep window well hole. Let’s just say I’d rather be teaching. We must dig with great zeal in order to find the treasure buried in God’s word. Nobody who buries treasure would put it right on the surface. You have to dig deep for that treasure. Christ encouraged us in this work in Matthew 7:7, where he says, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.” When we diligently dig into God’s word we will always find more hidden treasures. Sing or pray Psalter #333.

**May 19**  
**Read Leviticus 7**

Leviticus 7:6 says, “Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: it shall be eaten in the holy place: it is most holy.” According to Matthew Henry, this means that the functioning priest for the sacrifice could invite as many of his fellow priests as he so desired to eat with him. This would have helped maintain fellowship among the priests and taught those who had been given freely to give freely themselves. Reading this reminded me of the way the early New Testament church lived, as we read about towards the end of Acts 2 and 4. Acts 4:34–35 says, “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” Isn’t it amazing that they were able to make this work, even for a while? Can you imagine the strife this would cause in the church if we tried to implement this today? These verses don’t command us to make all our possessions communal, but they do remind us of the principle that we must live in the consciousness of the fact that everything belongs to God. Sing or pray Psalter #238.

**May 20**  
**Read Leviticus 8**

This chapter gives an overview of the priestly garments, the symbolism of which is written about at Bible-history.com. The priestly robes were very rich and beautiful, because the high priest was a picture of Christ. The ephod was made with different colored linen and split into two parts, one for the front of the priest and one for the back. These pieces were attached at the shoulder with an onyx stone set in gold. Each onyx stone had engraved on it the names of six tribes, showing that the high priest represented the nation of Israel before God. This also points to Christ, who carried the burden of our sins upon him. The breastplate was a pouch with twelve stones attached to it, representing the twelve tribes of Israel, who are all one in Christ.
The position of the pouch over Aaron’s breast showed God’s affection for his people. It was in this pouch that the Urim and Thummim were placed. These were used to determine God’s will, but not much more is known about them. It’s often speculated that they were a white and black stone, but the material and number of items is not known for certain. *Sing or pray Psalter #302.*

May 21  Read Leviticus 9

Fire is described in different ways throughout scripture. In this chapter fire comes out of heaven to consume Aaron’s sacrifice, showing God’s acceptance of it. This reminded me of 1 Kings 18, where Elijah challenges the Baal prophets to get their god to send fire from heaven on their sacrifice. After they try all morning, even desperately cutting themselves, God sends his own fire on Elijah’s sacrifice, consuming it and all the water that had been poured on and around it. Throughout the Bible, we see that God uses fire to show his power, both to save his people and to judge the wicked. Matthew 3:11 says that we are baptized with fire, and Psalm 104:4 describes ministers of the word as a “flaming fire.” At Pentecost, recorded in Acts 2, “cloven tongues like as of fire” appeared on the heads of the apostles. Fire is used to cleanse, as shown in Malachi 3:2, where Christ is described as “like a refiner’s fire, and like fullers’ soap.” We read of the destructive nature of fire in stories like the consuming of Sodom and Gomorrah and Nadab and Abihu. Hell itself is described as the “lake of fire” (Rev. 20:10). *Sing or pray Psalter #139.*

May 22  Read Leviticus 10

The sin of Nadab and Abihu must have had an extremely sobering effect on this joyous event. Aaron had just offered his first sacrifice to the Lord in the presence of the people. Special fire had come down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice, a sign of God’s acceptance. Suddenly, a very different fire comes from God. Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, broke the laws that God had set in place while they helped their father with the sacrifices. They knew that God had commanded them to light the altar of incense with coals from the altar of burnt offering, but they thought any old fire would be good enough. They took their own fire to light the incense and did it at the wrong time of day. In response, God sent fire from heaven that burned them to death. Can you imagine how quickly the scene must have changed? One minute the people are all rejoicing as God shows his acceptance of their sacrifice, and the next the charred bodies of Aaron’s sons are being carried out. God gave his people a very solemn reminder of the swift and just punishment that comes upon sin. *Sing or pray Psalter #138.*

May 23  Read Leviticus 11

I was struck as I read the laws about clean and unclean animals by the connection between God’s commands and general rules for good health. A Google search revealed that others had thought about this quite extensively. In fact, I found an article published in the *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* entitled, “The Levitical Dietary Laws in the Light of Modern Science.” Here, different theories on why some animals were clean and others unclean were examined. One theory says that God was simply testing Israel’s obedience with these laws, and the specific animals placed in each category is irrelevant. God doesn’t owe us an explanation, he simply commands us to obey him unquestioningly. Another theory suggests that God used these laws to help keep the Israelites thinking about him in their everyday life and remembering his authority over them. Another theory focuses solely on the hygiene aspect, that these laws kept Israel safer from disease. Yet another says that each clean animal was chosen because of the spiritual virtue it represented. Reading all these theories made me think about how God shows us from a book like Leviticus how much we have to learn from his word. *Sing or pray Psalter #38.*

May 24  Read Leviticus 12

Leviticus 12:6 says of a mother who has just given birth, “And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest.” This law is referenced in Luke 2:22–24, when Mary brought two turtledoves to the temple after she had given birth to Jesus. This makes two things clear to us. First of all, this proves that Mary was not perfect, as the Roman Catholics claim, because she needed to be atoned for by the sacrifice like everyone else. Second, this shows that Jesus was born into a very poor family,
for a pair of turtledoves was used for the burnt and
sin offerings only when the family couldn’t afford
a lamb. 2 Corinthians 8:9 says of Christ, “that,
though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became
poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.”
The physical poverty he endured was a picture of
the spiritual poverty he took upon himself for our
sakes. Sing or pray Psalter #241.

May 25  Read Leviticus 13

Leviticus 13 and 14 are all about leprosy and its
treatment. This disease is talked about a lot in the
Bible, but I still didn’t know much about it, so I
went to medicinenet.com and did some research.
Leprosy is an infectious disease caused by a spe-
cific type of bacteria. It is often called Hansen’s
Disease today, after the man who discovered this.
Interestingly, it is only mildly contagious, and is
believed to spread by frequent contact with the
bodily fluids of an infected individual. However,
it can often be years after the contact that the
person actually starts showing signs of the disease.
The disease is slow moving, and can break down
a victim’s skin and nervous system over decades.
Leprosy is also rarely transmitted to humans
through chimpanzees, mangabey monkeys, and
nine-banded armadillos. Over time leprosy can
result in the loss of fingers and toes, as well as
horrible facial disfigurement. Thankfully, the bac-
teria can now be killed with the use of antibiotics.
Still, it remains a problem, as about half a million
new cases are reported each year, with a couple
hundred of those being in the United States. Sing or
pray Psalter #327.

May 26  Read Leviticus 14

As I was looking into the frequency of leprosy
mentioned in the Bible, I ran into an article on
answersingenesis.org entitled, “Biblical Leprosy:
Shedding Light on the Disease that Shuns,” which I
found pretty interesting. Disease is a reminder to us
of the result of sin on this earth. Sin brought with it
death, and few diseases show that reality into our
face more than the disfiguration and decomposition
of leprosy. According to this source, the term is
mentioned 68 times in the Bible—55 times in the
The author believes that when leprosy is mentioned
in the Old Testament it probably refers to the
disease itself, as well as mold and mildew found on
clothing and walls. In the New Testament, however,
we see leprosy mentioned more in healing terms.
This pictured how Christ had come to save his
people from the spiritual leprosy of sin and death.
Jesus came to save those who knew they were sick.
The author goes on to say, “Like leprosy, sin starts
out small but can then spread, leading to other sins
and causing great damage to our relationship with
God and others.” Sing or pray Psalter #385.

May 27  Read Leviticus 15

This chapter really stresses to us the need to be
clean. If it’s so important that we remain clean,
then what things should we steer clear of that make
us unclean? This is addressed by Jesus in Matthew
15:11, where he says, “Not that which goeth into
the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh
out of the mouth, this defileth a man.” He then
goes on to explain everything that goes in goes out,
but it is the horrible things that come out of our
mind and mouth that remain and corrupt us. The
Pharisees were concerned with keeping their bodies
very clean and looking good on the outside, but
Jesus called them “whited sepulchers” in Matthew
23:27. The outside looked beautiful, but the inside
was full of decomposing bodies. Jesus stressed the
importance of not fellowshipping with those who
were unclean, because we could easily be sucked
into the same sin ourselves. In 2 Corinthians 6:17
God says to his people, “Be ye separate... and
touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.”
One way that we stay clean is by not mingling with
those who are dirty. Sing or pray Psalter #384.

May 28  Read Leviticus 16

According to Merriam-Webster, a scapegoat is “one
who bears the blame for others.” This term that the
world has adopted to mean anyone who receives
blame for something done by others originates
in this chapter. We’ve been reading about a lot of
sacrifices, and we know that these were a picture
of Christ, our perfect sacrifice. The shedding of
the animal’s blood pictured Christ’s blood being shed
on the cross. The scapegoat was a picture of Christ
too, but from a slightly different perspective. This
goat would be brought to Aaron, who would lay
his hands on its head and confess the sins of the
people. Then the goat, which now bore the people’s
sins, was led out into the wilderness to die a slow,
agonizing death. This goat pictured Christ in that
the people’s sins were placed upon him, just as
with the other sacrifices. The obvious difference,
however, was that this goat was left to die in the wilderness, while the others were killed immediately. This pictured the hellish agonies that Jesus bore all of his life leading up to the cross. Sing or pray Psalter #110.

May 29  Read Leviticus 17

Verse 11 of this chapter reads, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” In this verse, God is explaining to Israel why they were forbidden to eat raw meat. I thought that Keil and Henry both bring out some good points on this verse. Keil explains that the blood had to be spread on the altar to make atonement for the people, because the soul of the animal was in the blood. This was important because it was the soul of the animal that was offered as a substitute for the human soul. Matthew Henry builds on this to say that, since the blood was the vehicle for the soul, which had to be offered for atonement to take place, then the sins of the people could not be atoned for if they ate the blood. He goes on to explain that this blood is no longer needed for us, since the blood of Christ himself has now been shed for us on the cross. Sing or pray Psalter #136.

May 30  Read Leviticus 18

Leviticus 18:25 reads, “And the land is defiled: therefore do I visit the iniquity thereof upon it, and the land itself vomiteth out her inhabitants.” God here is warning the Israelites and telling them what will happen if they transgress his law and live like the wicked nations around them. If they wanted to live like the world, they would receive the same punishment the world received. This reminded me of a Bible story we studied recently in Joshua 10. Israel was fighting the Amorites, and God used the forces of nature to help defeat them. First, God sent massive hail down on the Amorites. By a wonder, the hail rained down on Israel's enemies, but not on the Israelites themselves. Can you imagine what that looked like? This wasn’t a normal hailstorm either, for Joshua 10:11b says that “they were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword.” Second, God stopped the sun and moon for a while. This made the day longer, giving Israel enough time to pursue and slay the fleeing enemies. Sing or pray Psalter #224.

May 31  Read Leviticus 19

One of the laws in this chapter really stood out to me, and I would be interested to learn more about it. This law is stated in verse 20, which says, “And whosoever lieth carnally with a woman, that is a bondmaid, betrothed to a husband, and not at all redeemed, nor freedom given her; she shall be scourged; they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.” If one committed adultery with a free woman, then they were both to be put to death. In contrast, if the woman was a slave who was not engaged, then there was no punishment at all. I was pretty confused when I learned this. God’s law teaches us that adultery is always a sin, so why would the punishment be less or nonexistent if the woman was a slave or not? Keil has no answer to this question, and Matthew Henry just says that “it was for the honor of freedom.” Building off this phrase, my guess is that this law was made to show our need for deliverance from spiritual slavery to sin, while also bringing out the importance of the marriage relationship. Sing or pray Psalter #234.

April 1  Read Leviticus 20

Our pastor recently preached a sermon entitled “Hated Without a Cause.” The text for this sermon was Psalm 69, where David is clearly seen as a type of Christ, the one whom the wicked truly did not have a cause to hate. As God’s people, we also experience the hatred of the world, which reminded me of something I had heard in a different sermon. In this case, the minister was talking about how the wicked often try to make themselves look very pious on the outside, whereas we sometimes tend to do the opposite. We know the hatred that will rain down upon us when we live according to God’s commandments and speak out against what’s wrong, so we try to lie low and blend in with the world. This chapter in Leviticus, and others surrounding it, speaks out against trying to be like the world. This is made clear in verse 26, which says, “And ye shall be holy unto me: for I the Lord am holy, and have severed you from other people, that ye should be mine.” Sing or pray Psalter #221.

April 2  Read Leviticus 21

This chapter talks about the restrictions placed upon priests and high priests. First, they had
restrictions regarding mourning the death of loved ones. In this context, verse 5 says, “They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh.” These were methods of mourning performed by other nations at the time, and God commanded his people not to take part in them, as further explained in the beginning of Deuteronomy 14. Leviticus 21 refers to the priests being commanded not to do these things, but Leviticus 19:27, 28 extends this command to all the people.

The priests also had marriage restrictions. They could marry a virgin or a widow who showed herself godly, even if she was not a native Israelite. The stress was on her character, which God also stresses regarding the wives of deacons in 1 Timothy 3:11. The high priest had more strict rules regarding mourning, and we see the same here with marriage. In contrast to other priests, the high priests had to marry native Israelites and she had to be a virgin, not a widow. Sing or pray Psalter #397.

**April 3**  
**Read Leviticus 22**

We’ve been studying the Book of Judges lately in Bible class, and it’s striking how those events stand in stark contrast to all the detailed laws chronicled in Leviticus. God gives us shocking stories, like the one in Judges 19, to show us just how far Israel had fallen. In this story, a disobedient Levite has a concubine who acts like a prostitute and runs away. He eventually goes to get her from her father’s house, and they start returning after a few days of partying. They end up spending the night at Gibeah, where a group of homosexual men seek to abuse the Levite. Instead, the Levite and his host throw the concubine out to the men, and they abuse her all night. When the Levite finds her dead on the doorstep in the morning, he carries her body home, cuts her into twelve pieces, and sends a piece to each of the twelve tribes. Notice the parallels between this story and the one of Lot with the two angels who stayed with him in Sodom. Israel deserved destruction with fire and brimstone, and this fall happened just one generation after the death of Joshua. Sing or pray Psalter #156.

**April 4**  
**Read Leviticus 23**

When we studied this section in Bible class this year, I thought that Gertrude Hoeksema did a great job of explaining a connection between the Passover and the Feast of Firstfruits. The Passover signified Christ’s death for us on the cross. Near the end of that feast, the Israelites were commanded to wave grain before the Lord, showing they confessed that their daily bread came from the hand of Jehovah. Paul calls these firstfruits Jesus’ resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:20, where it says, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept.” The Feast of Firstfruits then took place fifty days after the Passover, just as the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was fifty days after the crucifixion. As Hoeksema puts it, “At Pentecost, we celebrate the full harvest of salvation.” We believe that Christ died for us and rose again because of the Holy Spirit giving us spiritual understanding. Sing or pray Psalter #169.

**April 5**  
**Read Leviticus 24**

I remember sitting in the pew and hearing the minister announce the erasure of baptized members whom the consistory had been trying to work with for years. The congregation was urged not to fellowship with those who were walking in sin, for they were cut off from the body of Christ. Since I did not remember hearing an announcement like this before, a part of me was shocked at its severity. However, this chapter in Leviticus illustrates the fact that this announcement was indeed biblical. Here a son of the mixed multitude, Israelites who had married someone from a heathen tribe, blasphemed the name of Jehovah and cursed God’s people. The punishment that came upon this individual was extremely severe and final. Witnesses placed their hands on his head, and he was stoned to death. Can you imagine being able to carry out that punishment? It was severe, yes, but that was a picture of what happens to all those who reject the truth. Nowadays we don’t stone an unrepentant sinner, but that judgment was a picture of the death that comes upon all those who are erased from God’s church. Sing or pray Psalter #63.

**April 6**  
**Read Leviticus 25**

Just like the Israelites celebrated the Sabbath every seven days, they had a Sabbath year every seven years. During these years God instructed Israel not to plant any crops, for God would provide plenty from the previous year for them to live from. In fact, the Israelites weren’t even allowed to use whatever grew naturally that year. Instead,
Prayers for the Universal Church
Thilo Tanetschek and David Klautke

We are a small church in the city of Giessen in central Germany. Roughly 40 people attend the services each Sunday. Since the church is not very old (about 16 years), all of the families attended different churches before coming to our church, while some individuals came to faith in our church over the past couple of years. Thus the members of our church come from different backgrounds, which makes our church a very diverse place. Therefore, it is often a challenge for us to see ourselves as part of a body that actually belongs together rather than just viewing ourselves as a part of a random collection of people. Please pray that despite the fact that all families and individuals come from different churches, different places, and different backgrounds, we will be equipped to be a good representation of the body of Christ in Giessen.

We do not own a church building. Instead, we rent some rooms in a large office building. One of the rooms is big enough to fit all of us, so we use it as our sanctuary. Our facilities are big enough for those people who are attending regularly, but if we have a group of guests, it would be great to have a little more space.

As you can see, we are a small light—smaller than most of you are used to, when you think about your congregations.

Because of the slow but steady growth of our church, we are looking for a nice new place to get together on Sundays and Fridays right now. Please pray for that. It would be good to find something bigger and more fitting for the Sunday services and the different groups (Youth Group, Bible Study Group, etc.), which is in the center of the city so people could see that our church exists even if they are not looking for it.

When we first visited the Protestant Reformed Churches in Michigan, we were amazed by the size of your congregations. We enjoyed the fellowship with Christians from the United States very much. There are obviously some differences between your church life and ours. In addition to our Sunday Services, we meet for youth bible study or our prayer meeting during the week. These are good opportunities to meet other church members.

CONFESSING EVANGELICAL REFORMED CHURCH

April 7 Read Leviticus 26

God spends much of this chapter telling Israel what will happen to them if they do not obey his commandments. Verse 29 says, “And ye shall eat the flesh of your sons, and the flesh of your daughters shall ye eat.” We actually read of this happening in 2 Kings 6. Syria had laid siege to the city of Samaria, and the people were literally starving to death. Two women made an agreement that they would eat the first woman’s son one day and eat the other woman’s son the next day. They carried out the ghastly deed with the first son, but the next day the other woman refused to give up her son, so the mother of the eaten son actually went and complained about it to the king. Anyone in the church or world today would be in complete horror upon hearing this story, yet it is a picture of the vile wickedness running rampant in our day. The world speaks a lot about love and equal rights for everyone, yet they have no problem murdering babies and letting their children watch cannibalism and murder on the big screen. Sing or pray Psalter #21.

Sing or pray Psalter #271.

Sing or pray Psalter #21.
It is difficult to know where to start and how to explain my experiences in India. When people ask me how my trip was, the only place I know to start is to say “It was amazing!” I could write pages and pages on all of the experiences that I had, but unless you have been there yourself, it is impossible to understand fully what it was like, so I want to share with you just a few of the experiences that I will never forget, experiences that have become a part of me and added a new lens into how I perceive the world and the church.

I arrived in Chennai airport around 1am. As I stepped into the airport, I was greeted by the Hindu gods lining the walls. These countless gods I would see gazing down on me everywhere I went: on the roadsides, restaurants, shops, billboards, cars, and buses. Walking out of the airport, I was greeted with a warm smile and handshake by Pastor Paulraj, Kasthuri, and a couple older boys and girls from Grace Foster Home (GFH) and the church. I was presented with the traditional flower garland and then we started our long drive to GFH. We finally arrived around 5am. After a short prayer with Pastor Paulraj and Kasthuri, I went straight to bed. Though I was exhausted, I was not able to sleep because of my excitement.

The very first day there, I began to get an idea of how busy the lives of Pastor Paulraj and Kasthuri are. Every week Paulraj prepares 2 sermons as well as a Wednesday night Bible study, which is like a third sermon. In addition to that there are four village outreaches where he leads Bible studies, rotating visits with the elders and deacons. Paulraj is also going on house visits or hospital visits almost every day. There are also the monthly pastor’s conferences, editing and writing for publications, the girl’s dorm building project, and other maintenance things that Paulraj has to deal with. In addition to all of that, there are the responsibilities of caring physically and spiritually for about 50 children, widows, and staff.

One of the main reasons for my visit was to take video footage to make a documentary. I want to create a documentary that will show the power of the gospel in the lives of the people in India in a very personal way that people who have not been there can connect with.

I interviewed all of the GFH children for the documentary. I had heard some of the children’s stories, but it is different being there with the

Since a lot of us live long car rides away from the church we all attend different schools and colleges. Most of the schools and all of the universities are explicitly non-Christian. In general, it is a lot more difficult for us to spend time with our Christian friends from church. For example, both of us writing this article live 50 miles apart. That is the reason why there are more non-believers in our friend groups than is the case in Western Michigan.

Please pray for us so that we can be good witnesses and examples toward those who do not know Jesus as their Savior.

Despite these differences there are also a lot of similarities between our churches. What we believe is very similar to what you believe, since we both subscribe to the Heidelberg Catechism. Also the liturgy and the singing of the psalms was something that we were already used to, when we first attended church with you. So it was nice getting to know people that we have never seen before but still had so much in common with.

We hope we have given you some insights into our situation as a small church family in a very secular environment. If you want to know more about the history of the church you could read the article, “The Reformed Church in Germany” in Beacon Lights LXXIII Issue 3 (March 2014).

As you see there are several things that we ask you to pray for. Yet we are also very grateful for what the Lord has given to us. We are thankful for our church. We are thankful for our Christian families and friends here in Germany and from the Protestant Reformed Churches. Thank you so much for every prayer!

And if you happen to be in Germany for any reason you are more than welcome to visit us. Just let us know!
children and hearing the stories from them personally—hearing them testify of the love of God in their lives, bringing them into the GFH to be taken care of and learn the truth of Jesus’ sacrifice for us on the cross that brings us hope in this dark world of sin.

There are so many heartbreaking stories: fathers who abandoned their families, drunken fathers who beat their wives and children, mothers who committed suicide by fire or poison, parents who died from AIDS or other diseases, parents who went insane because of sorcery, and many other tragic stories. When interviewing the children, it was hard to hold back the tears. There is one story in particular that really impacted me. It is the story of Appun and Soundharya, a brother and sister at GFH.

When Appun was around two years old and Soundharya four, their parents got into a fight and their father left the house. When he was gone, their mother tried to give them poison. Soundharya knew what it was and said “We want to live, please don’t make us eat the poison.” Soundharya would not eat it and would not let her brother Appun eat it either, so their mother took the poison herself and died in front of them. About 10 minutes later, their father came in and saw what had happened. He grabbed the poison, left the house, ate the poison, and died.

Their father worked for a brick company. When he did not show up for work, his boss came and found the children alone and brought them to a bus stand. There Appun and Soundharya stayed for the next 10 days, begging for money that they would use to buy food. After that 10 days, a social worker found them, and not being able to find an adequate caretaker among their relatives, brought them to GFH.

Appun and Soundharya were the last two children for me to interview in my long second day of interviews. That night I read the children a book and handed out candy afterward. That night I read the children a book and handed out candy afterward. After all the candy was handed out, Soundharya walked up to me and said “Anna”, which means elder brother. I looked down at her to see a big smile on her face as she handed me the wrapper of the candy I had given her. She had twisted it into the shape of a cross. That is a memory I will never forget. After hearing the tragic story of her life and all that she had been through at such a young age, I now saw the outworking of God’s grace in her life, bringing her to a knowledge of himself, the loving Father who sacrificed himself for us and promises never to leave nor forsake us.

Later, as I sat alone at night, I read Psalm 27. When I read verse 10, I started to cry. “For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the LORD will take me in.” I could not help but think of Appun and Soundharya and the stories of the other children at GFH. I will never be able to read this verse again without thinking of their faces. And what a beautiful confidence follows in verse 13 “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!” The goodness of the Lord radiates from the GFH. Every smile, every laugh, every prayer, every scripture reading, every hymn sung by those children is a testament to the goodness of the Lord.

Another amazing testimony of God’s grace that I was able to witness during my visit was the recovery of Sathya. Sathya was the boy who accidently dropped the end of a metal rod on an 11,000 volt powerline while trying to hit fruit off a tree. He had electricity flowing through him for several minutes. He was declared dead at a local clinic, but started to breathe again as he was brought to the Christian Medical College Hospital.

Sathya came home while I was there, after over 40 days in the hospital. I was able to interview him and he testified of God’s grace in protecting and preserving his life. He said that “this incident has transformed my life, and now I know that God is all powerful and God is holy and I will testify of God in my life.” When I asked him what he wants to be when he grows up, he said he wants to be a minister. Sathya said when he was in the hospital, he never thought that he would be able to walk again. During the farewell program that the GFH family put on for me, Sathya not only walked, he danced.

There are roughly 15–25 million orphans in India. The fact that no one really knows how many orphans there are speaks to the tremendous
problem in India—orphans forgotten, hiding in plain sight with no one to care for them. The number of orphanages in India is in the thousands, but that covers only a fraction of the children who are abandoned. I have been told that the government-run orphanages in India are run very harshly. From talking with other orphan children at school, the children from the GFH have said that they would rather live with their relatives in poverty than live in a government orphanage with their physical needs met.

The difference is that it is not an institution, it is a family.

The GFH is different from the other orphanages in India, even different from most other Christian run orphanages. The difference is that it is not an institution, it is a family. The children do not see Paulraj and Kasthuri as their caretakers, they see them as their parents, they call them Appa (Father) and Amma (Mother). I couldn’t help but feel a warmth and joy in my heart every time I heard one of the children calling for Appa or Amma. It is hard to understand and appreciate this relationship without witnessing it personally. It is truly a blessing from God, bringing these children out of darkness and into his marvelous light, bringing these children into the sphere of the covenant family. Though the children are not legally adopted, they live in relationship to Paulraj and Kasthuri as if they were.

Another sign of the loving devotion that Paulraj and Kasthuri have to these children is in their care for them after they age out of the GFH. They are not pushed out into the world never to be seen again. Paulraj and Kasthuri are constantly busy with visiting the children who have aged out. They go on house visits every week, meeting with those who have aged out and their families. They read the Bible with them, pray with them, encourage them in their studies or work, encourage them to be regular in their personal devotions and church attendance. What a wonderful witness this is to the Hindu families that many of the children go home to. We serve a personal God who gave us the community of believers to love and care for each other, as he does for us.

Why do we sponsor these children? Sponsoring a child makes you feel good about yourself, which is why millions around the world sponsor children. But sponsoring a GFH child is different. There is a joy in sponsoring a child in a Christian home that an unbeliever will never feel. That joy is in hearing your sponsored child sing Christian songs, recite Bible verses, and pray. That joy is in seeing them help others and show love toward their sisters and brothers in Christ. That joy is in seeing them be baptized and confess their faith, joining themselves to the church. That joy is knowing that this relationship is not temporal, but one day there will be no more barriers of language, time, or space, and we will all be together as one. There is an unspeakable joy in personally witnessing God’s loving providence that shines a light in the darkness and brings hope to the hopeless.

It is impossible really to know and understand someone without personally meeting them. I often struggled with what to write to my sponsor child, Kishore. It almost became a burden each month. How sinfully selfish I am. Meeting Kishore changed everything. No matter how advanced technology gets, we will never be able to replace the intimate personal communion that God created us to desire and enjoy. I’m not married and have never had a child, but meeting Kishore and being with him for a month made me feel a small part of what it is like to be a father. Kishore was always holding my hand and lying on my shoulder, hugging and kissing me.

My greatest joy was not in seeing that he was clothed and fed and happy, it was in seeing him help others with happiness without being asked and in seeing him sing, read the Bible, and pray. In my letters I want to encourage him in the faith and pray for him. I want to go to India five years from now and find him as an active confessing member of the church. I want to go to India 20 years from now and find him as a man worthy of being an office bearer in the church. These children are the future of the church, and what greater joy can we have than to see them walk in the truth.

Jesus said, “I have come not to bring peace, but a sword.” We don’t see this division too much in America, but in India it is so very real. Many Hindus will reject, forsake, and abuse their own family members who follow Christ. Many of the GFH children will have to face this decision when they come of age and want to be baptized or get married. They will need to choose to be forsaken by their family in order to follow Christ. There is one such girl there now. She is a very devoted 15-year-old who wants very much to be baptized, but her mother will not allow it and says that if she does, she will no longer be considered her
Think back to your day yesterday. How many times did you pray? What did you pray for? Could you stay focused? Did you struggle with your prayer? Prayer is such an important part of a Christian’s life. As Martin Luther said, “To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing.” A Christian has a calling to a personal prayer life as well as to pray with and for others, and there are many practical ways that this can be put to use in the Christian’s life.

Let’s first look at the reasons for praying. First, God commands his people that they must pray. Martin Luther said, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes, and of cloggers to make shoes, so is it the business of Christians to pray.” The Bible also points this out in a command found in 1 Thessalonians 5:17: “Pray without ceasing.” Christians have to pray often; this is our calling from God.

Another reason for prayer can be demonstrated by thinking of a parent/child relationship. In order to have any sort of relationship, but especially a close relationship between parents and children, both the parents and the child have to communicate. In the relationship between God and his children, there also has to be communication. God communicates with his people through his word, the Bible. But that is only one side of the equation; the other side is us. We have to communicate too, and we have to do this through prayer. Simply put, prayer is children of God speaking to their Father with confidence of his love.

The third reason for prayer is that it is “the chief part of thankfulness,” as the Heidelberg
Catechism says in Lord’s Day 45. We have received so much from God! He gives us our homes, families, friends, churches, the list could go on and on. We need to pray to express our thankfulness to God for all of this. Going to God in grateful prayer is a way of worshipping him, because a truly grateful prayer will give him the glory that he deserves!

Although God has given us so much, we do need certain things for both our bodies and our souls. We need food and drink for bodies, so we can and should pray for these things. This does not mean that we can just pray for anything we might want but maybe think we need, like a nice new car or a bigger house. God is not a vending machine, there to give us anything and everything we might want. This is made very clear in the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus prayed, the ultimate template for our prayers. Jesus prayed “…give us this day our daily bread…” He was praying for just the basic necessities of life, not for a fancy meal with the best wine, and this applies to every area of our earthly lives. Pray for only the basic necessities of life. In regards to our spiritual lives or souls, we need God’s grace and help growing spiritually, just to give a couple examples. We can’t expect to grow in our spiritual lives if we don’t ask God for help. Praying for the things we need teaches us to rely on God for absolutely everything we need.

prayer changes us and our perspective on life.

Finally, prayer changes us and our perspective on life. There is a wrong thinking about prayer that Christians sometimes have, and that is the idea that if we keep praying relentlessly and get enough people to pray for something that we will finally persuade God to do something we want. When you might be tempted to think this way, remember what Jesus humbly prayed in the Lord’s Prayer: “Thy will be done.” As my dad, Rev. Eriks, said in a speech about prayer, “Prayer is not about changing God; this is wrong theology. We are coming before a God who is sovereign. Prayer does change things, but it doesn’t change God or my circumstances. It changes me. We aren’t here to change God’s mind. When you pray like you should, it changes the way you think about things and puts you in a right perspective in life.” We realize when we pray how much we need to rely on God. Whether we are praying for a sick family member or a friend who is struggling with something, prayer reminds us that we are not in control and that we need to trust in the one who is in control of our life’s circumstances.

Now that we have looked at why we pray, we need to apply these concepts to our lives practically. Prayer is hard sometimes, and the questions can be asked, “I have a hard time knowing what to pray about. What can I pray about?” One simple answer to this question is to use the acronym “ACTS” to remember the different subjects that we should pray about. “A” is for adoration, “C” is for confession, “T” is for thanksgiving, and “S” is for supplication. There should always be a good balance between all these things in prayer. One thing that might be helpful is to write down a list of things in each of those categories to pray for. You can even look at this list while praying. Another thing you can do is to keep a prayer journal. It can be helpful to have a journal or notebook to write down either your whole prayer or just a list of things you would like to pray for before you pray so that you are prepared. These ideas can help you be prepared for a public prayer and can also help you keep your mind on track so that it doesn’t wander during personal prayers.

Another thing to keep in mind is that although we want our prayers to be reverent, God is also our Father, and he loves us. We can pour out our struggles and hardships to him and just talk to him in our prayers. We have to remember that we as Christians have a relationship with God. He is above us, but still is our friend.

As you pray, also remember that the Word of God has a place in our prayers. Many Bible passages were written as prayers (Psalm 13 or Psalm 51, for example), but you can also change a passage of the Bible and use it in your prayers. An example of this would be to take Ephesians 1, where the fruits of the spirit are found, and pray to God about each one, asking for forgiveness when you did not exhibit one of them, thanking and praising him for when you did, and asking that he help you do better at exhibiting these fruits in your life.

Another aspect of prayer that I would like to touch on is praying with and for others. This is a very biblical aspect of prayer, built right in to the very first word of the Lord’s Prayer: “Our.” Another biblical example of this is when the Holy Spirit was poured out in Acts 2. The church was all gathered together and a huge number of people had just been added to the church. In Acts 2:42 it says this: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’
To be an eyewitness to any unusual phenomena is significant for the observer. Scripture is filled with many examples of miraculous events: the manna in the wilderness, the parting of the Red Sea, the draught of fishes, the stilling of the tempest, and many other spectacular events too numerous to mention.

Isn’t it true that it frequently takes the unusual to make us conscious of God’s omnipotence in the realm of nature? (Rev. Hofman’s personal experience of the earthquake in the northwestern United States testifies to this fact.)

Remember your goal in prayer is not to impress others, but to worship and respond to God.

Finally, choose a time and focus for your prayers. Set aside a time or multiple times every day where you stop everything and pray—and stick to it! You might even need someone to keep you accountable as you start this. Also, try choosing a focus for your prayers. Each time can be different, and here are some ideas: our churches and their leaders, our church family, missionaries and missions, our nation, the persecuted church, and the list could keep going.

To conclude, I would like to encourage you to talk to others about your prayer life and be honest about the struggles you face there. Prayer isn’t easy, and it takes work. I would encourage you to read books on prayer, talk to others about it, and even pray about it. Most importantly, learn about prayer from God’s word. There are so many examples of godly prayers in the Bible, starting with the Lord’s Prayer that Jesus prayed, and including Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 1, and Daniel’s prayer in Daniel 9:1–19. This all may seem overwhelming, but God will help and strengthen you! So think forward to tomorrow. How many times will you pray? But most importantly, what will you pray for? What will you do to help yourself stay focused? What can you do to improve your prayers?

Abbie is a contributing writer correspondent on the Beacon Lights staff and a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church.

75 Years C. De Boer

RAINING FISH

To be an eyewitness to any unusual phenomena is significant for the observer. Scripture is filled with many examples of miraculous events: the manna in the wilderness, the parting of the Red Sea, the draught of fishes, the stilling of the tempest, and many other spectacular events too numerous to mention.

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In a recent article of a leading scientific journal there is a very interesting communication entitled “Do Fish Fall From the Sky?” In it a world life biologist relates his unique experience. While partaking of his morning breakfast he was called outdoors to observe fish raining from the sky. To his consternation fish varying from two to nine inches in length and representing some five different species lay scattered over a wide area. Imagine the perplexity and excitement of the people! There were fish lying on roofs of houses, fish being run over in the streets, fish dropping on porches and
“Grow up!” “Man up!” How often do we not hear these phrases in the world in which we live? To a certain extent, our society scorns showing emotion. Crying is seen as a sign of weakness and immaturity, in particular on the part of men. Doing so somehow seems to make us lesser people, not only in the eyes of others, but oftentimes also in our own eyes. However, I don’t think this is appropriate; I believe sorrow, even to the point of crying, is a fundamental part of the life of a true Christian, whether male or female. This is true not only in situations of pain and loss, but also when we realize how deep our sin and the consequences of it are, and see what an incredible sacrifice it was for Christ to die for those sins.

There are many biblical instances mentioning crying and tears. Ecclesiastes 3, the well-known passage speaking of everything having a time and place, says there is a time to weep and mourn in verse 4. Certainly, this should come as no surprise to us. Jesus himself wept at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35). Anyone who has experienced the death of a family member or other loved one can attest to the fact that loss hurts. We are finite creatures who focus on the bonds that tie us together while members of God’s church on this earth. The severing of those earthly bonds is difficult for us to bear. This is not in any way a bad thing; in fact, sorrowing over the loss of a loved one is perfectly legitimate, even commendable in that it is a sign of the magnitude of the love that one had for a person. Just as Christ wept for Lazarus, so we can weep for our loved ones who have died.

However, this is not to say that tragedy and loss are the only occasions for believers to weep. We would be remiss not to mention sorrow for sin and its consequences. This applies to ourselves for the sins we commit, both secret and public, as well as on a larger scale for the sins of society and humanity in general. For example, John records in Revelation 5 his vision of the book with the seven seals. Upon realizing that “no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (v. 4), John was reduced to tears. He grieved because the sinfulness of humanity was so great that no man was worthy enough even to look at the book, much less to open the seven seals and read it.

We also sorrow at the instances of sin in our own lives. This idea is often highlighted in the Psalms. In Psalm 137, the author speaks of the people of Judah weeping along the banks of the

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rivers of Babylon when calling to remembrance the glories of Jerusalem prior to the captivity. How far the people of God had descended into sin! They wept as they realized all they had lost as a consequence of their having forsaken God.

Yet another powerful example of grief, this time over the sins of others who do not heed God’s law, lies in Psalm 119:136, where we read, “Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.” What powerful language that is! Rivers! To think that the psalmist had the courage to admit to this! Rivers of waters ought to run down our faces as well when we see the direction in which those who keep not God’s law are headed today.

Taking a step back a moment, it is worth noting that I am not saying that mourning is just an outward show. Joel 2:12–13 states, “Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: and rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.” Our calling is not only to outward signs of sorrow, but ultimately, to rend our own hearts in the agony of our sinfulness, and turn to God for our help in times of sorrow over loss. God hears his children when they call, and he sees when they are consumed with grief. We read in Psalm 56:8, “Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?”

All of our sorrow is known to God, and we can take comfort during life (what the Heidelberg Catechism in fact calls “this valley of tears” in Lord’s Day 9) knowing that there is a day coming in which God will wipe away all our tears; the former things will have passed away (Rev. 21:4). This means that there will no longer be sin and the sorrow over sins, or death and the pain of loss. As one of the elders pointed out to John to comfort him in Revelation 5:5a, “Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed.” What a knowledge! Christ has gained victory over sin and death! It is enough to bring joyful “rivers of waters” to our eyes, is it not?

Living a spiritual life of maturity involves many things. Sorrow of heart is one aspect that is often overlooked today. As totally depraved beings, we ought to be rending our hearts far more frequently than we do, and this will often involve tears being shed, whether over loss, sorrow for sin, or our realization of what a sacrifice it was to obtain our salvation. We need not feel shame for shedding those tears in front of others. The next time we are tempted to question a person’s emotional maturity on the basis of his or her tears, we ought to stop ourselves. That person may well be far more emotionally mature than we may have initially thought.

Matthew is a member of Southeast Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Christian Living  Monica Koole

THE MELODIES OF OUR HEARTS

Have you ever had it where you were in a dark mood, and within a matter of moments your gloomy thoughts were extinguished as a sunny tune filled the air? How about when you were in a sunny mood, and a slow sad melody was played, and quickly melancholy took over? We all have had these kinds of feelings to one extent or another. Music has a major effect on us. Each song is put to a tune to portray the emotions it intends to raise within a person when sung. God has created us to be an emotional people who show passion through the songs that we sing. He has called us to sing and make melody in our hearts to praise his most holy name. We are given the gift of music to glorify and extol our great and glorious God.

But the devil is sly. Don’t ever underestimate him. He constantly seeks to twist our emotions away from our calling by cunningly using this good gift of God and twisting it so that it becomes a perversion of what is good. Our own human natures help him along in this perversion. Many tunes are very pleasing to the ear, and thus we pay no mind to the words. We hear songs on the radio with lyrics that would burn our faces with shame and embarrassment if they were simply spoken to us by another person. But put to a catchy tune, we often find ourselves humming along. The words of that song soon follow along and are quickly
imbedded within our minds. The devil now has this corruption right where he wants it. It is only a matter of time before we find ourselves singing along with the world who hates the God we are called to praise.

Scripture tells us that what comes out of our mouths represents what is in our hearts. NEVER forget that. What we thought was just a harmless catchy tune to hum along with becomes a song that we sing and has become a sin within our hearts. The devil laughs as our human natures latch hold. He now has a foothold within our hearts, and we all know that once a door is opened to the devil, he as a roaring lion will pounce, seeking to devour us. What started as a simple catchy tune now fills our minds with corruption. Evil thoughts grow deeper as we allow ourselves to wallow in this sin. This happens with every sin we fall into. When we permit Satan to open a door to our hearts, and do not turn from the sin, he will push us away from our Lord God who has saved us. Satan is filled with glee as we turn our attention from heavenly praise and instead praise and extol man and his sinful lusts of the flesh. So quickly we are turned away from God and ensnared within the hold of sin from which we have been freed.

When we sing worldly songs we give the devil access to our hearts where the Lord Jesus Christ dwells by his Spirit.

Young people, let us not give the glory of our great God whose name is to be extolled above all to sinful man and his lustful, prideful self. This is exactly what we do when we find ourselves singing along with the worldly songs of today. Thus we displease the God who has saved us. There is no better time to do so than the present. This is the point where it pricks us to acknowledge that we do listen to corrupting music and need to change. Satan would have us laugh here and minimize the evil of having worldly songs in our lives. He would have us think that we can do this later when we mature more. No, we must never have that attitude with sinful addictions in our lives. We must not delay to depart from evil but must do so right away. Also, we may not do a partial job and figure that is good enough. No, when we are told to depart from evil we must fully turn away!

In departing from evil, we must not forget that scripture tells us to do good. From the positive aspect, we must take heed to the command of Ephesians 5:18b and 19: “Be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”. Once the evil songs are removed we must fill that void with holy songs. We must be selective even here, because the tendency is to enjoy the secular Christian music, most of which is watered down praises that speak mostly of man and his experience rather than doing justice to extolling the name of our great and glorious God. We must be jealous for the glory of our great God. We look for songs fitting for the ears of our Lord God, which properly extol him in all his
greatness. There are many CDs put out each year by our own Protestant Reformed Churches that are very fitting. There are CDs of Psalm Choir, Hope Heralds, CCHS choirs, and the list goes on. We must dare buy them, to play them in the midst of peer pressure that tells us to conform to the ways of the world, and even when our fellow brothers and sisters wrongly mock us for our “pious songs”, we must not be ashamed. Rather we count it a privilege to sing these precious songs of our Redeemer.

As we remove the filthy songs of this world, and fill our ears with the blessed songs of Zion, we will start to hum them, making melodies in our hearts. These melodies in our hearts will direct our thoughts to the treasures of heaven; and we will break forth in songs that witness of hearts filled with the Spirit of God, full of adoration for our great and glorious God.

Monica serves on the Beacon Lights staff and is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.

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**Church News** Melinda Bleyenberg

**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:

Olivia Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Rob & Jessica Westhuis—Byron Center, MI

Terek Ryan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jason & Brandi Boone—Crete, IL

Elizabeth Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Derek & Lynette Bleyenberg—Grace, MI

Luke Samuel, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron & Molly Cleveland—Hope, MI

Thea Annie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Dorothy Duistermars—Hope, MI

Brittyn Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Greg & Lexi Kalsbeek—Hudsonville, MI

Savannah Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Renae Veldman—Hudsonville, MI

Sierra Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Paul & Tena Hoekstra—Kalamazoo, MI

Ka’maya Marie, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David & Becky Dijkstra—Southeast, MI

Kenneth Owen, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tony & Laura VanDonselaar—Southwest, MI

Mason Reid, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan & Kaylynn Dykstra—Trinity, MI

Everly Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clint & Renae VanderKolk—Trinity, 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:

Alaina Ondersma—Byron Center, MI

Jeremy Cnossen—Byron Center, MI

Jaedyn Zylstra—Crete, IL

Hannah Kamps—Crete, IL

Jillian DeBoer—Lynden, WA

Caleb Dykstra—Trinity, MI
Praying into Battle

Danny and his sister Becky curled next to their mom on the couch as their mom read the Bible passage about the armor of God.

Danny sighed and frowned. “We’re all done with the armor of God.”

“Not quite.” Their mom tapped the Bible. “The next verses talk about prayer. Prayer is an important part of being a warrior in God’s army. Prayer helps us put on the armor. It gives us strength to march into the battle of this life. When this life wounds us, prayer is a healing balm. We can’t go into battle without prayer. It is our connection to our captain Christ Jesus.”

“How is prayer a connection to Christ?” Danny peered up at his mom.

“It is one of the reasons.” His mom hugged him. “While we are praying, we also pray for others, especially the ministers and missionaries in their preaching.”

Danny thought about the minister of his church. That night he was going to pray for him when he said his prayer before bed.

Questions to think about:

1. Read Ephesians 6:18–20 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17 by yourself or with your parents. How does prayer strengthen us?

2. What is the connection between prayer and the armor of God?
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Philippians 2:15-16

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