Should I be a teacher?

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I was going to introduce this issue of *Beacon Lights* by expressing the need that we have for teachers. I was going to make the point by referencing a letter that the Federation of PR Schools sent out recently, expressing that great need. I was going to punctuate my introduction with a lengthy quote from John Calvin and a shorter, pithier quote from Augustine.

And all the people yawned.

My problem was that I started writing the introduction before I read the articles. Blame it on deadlines, but I thought I could get ahead of things by writing it early.

The burden of my article was going to be that you, young person, need to consider becoming a teacher because it is a higher calling than that of ditch digger, bean counter, or tile installer. But how do I say that and do justice to the idea of vocation that Luther restored to the church in the Reformation? Maybe being a teacher is a higher calling, but maybe it isn’t. “He who engages in the lowliness of his work, performs God’s work, be he lord or king.”

And then I read the articles, and realized I was approaching this all wrong. Why should you become a teacher? Read Annica Kuiper’s article and tell me that it doesn’t move you. You can picture those children looking up at her, and then you envision yourself in her shoes, and you see those kids looking up to you, and you desire it. You envy her. Not for selfish reasons, but because you love those children, children you have never met. You read Kyle Bruinooge’s article and your heart breaks for those children from a broken home, and you want to help them. You want to be that person that they should have at home, but don’t, because their father

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1 **Luther on Vocation**, Gustaf Wingren, 9.
abandoned them. You desire, for a few hours each day, to be something of the mother they don’t have. You don’t say it, but as a redeemed child of God, you sense that here, right in front of you, is one of “the least of these my brethren” (Matt. 25:40) and you want to serve them.

And then a part of you says, “But the money isn’t great, and if I go into business, I can have a lot more stuff.” So you put down this issue, pick up your phone, and after a few YouTube videos, the urge goes away.

But you make the mistake of re-reading the articles, and the importance of that stuff fades away. “The human being who in his vocation serves his fellow-men fulfills his task out of love for Christ and receives the same poor measure of gratitude as Christ did.” Money? You tell me a better paying job would have greater rewards than those the authors of these articles receive? Without doing injustice to

the cobbler who himself makes shoes out of love for Christ, you realize there is something special in the job of a teacher. The pay represents a “poor measure of gratitude,” but you love and serve Jesus Christ, and that is enough.

I can exert myself to convince you to become a teacher because of the great need.

Or I can let the teachers in their own words convince you that being a teacher rivals any job in the world.

Imagine a profession where your work day is a day you “look forward to every single night.” Imagine a career where “for a few hours each day” you get to teach “the precious jewels in the crown of the King.” Imagine a vocation where you exclaim, “There’s nothing like it in the world. What a privilege! What a delight!”

Imagine being a teacher.

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2 Ibid., 31.
something beautiful: teaching covenant children in a school supported by the church community. Are you worried about the financial burden of going to school for five years? Maybe you are already married and have a family to support. Can you really afford it? Consider that in addition to living within your means, you will find other financial helps, including participation in the PR Scholarship essay competition, help from family members, and unexpected financial gifts that show up in your mailbox. Your church community understands the great need for teachers and many people are looking for ways to help out prospective teachers.

As far as a master's degree is concerned, while not required in our schools, it is certainly helpful. If it is true that all people benefit from being lifelong learners, then certainly this holds true for teachers. If you do not enjoy learning, you will not enjoy teaching.

“I don't think I can do this. I wasn’t a very good student in high school and I feel like I might not be qualified for this.”

Have you ever considered that you might be very good at relating to students who struggle to get good marks simply because you were that student at one time? A teacher who was an average student in elementary and high school has the potential to be really good at connecting with students who are in the same boat.

What about qualifications? God, if he is leading you down the path toward the vocation of teaching, will certainly qualify you with the necessary abilities. While much preparation is a good thing and is required, we are too often like Jacob, who many times tried to stay one step ahead of God's plan for him instead of just trusting God to provide for him in whatever situation he found himself. If we were fully in control of making sure that we had all of the necessary qualifications and abilities, we would fail every time. Good thing God is the one who qualifies the prospective teacher. Trust him.

“It’s too much to think about, so I’m just going to forget about it. I’m going to ignore the feeling that God might be leading me down the path to becoming a teacher.”

You might have the continual feeling that you will end up becoming a teacher someday, but it causes you much anxiety to think about it because you simply don’t know. In the meantime, as you observe the perpetual stream of bulletin announcements advertising for more teachers, you say, “someone will fill in, the schools always somehow or another have been able to make it work in the end.” Then you move on and stop thinking about it. You try to forget about it. If God has planned for you to be a teacher, he will not let you forget about it. No matter what, you shouldn’t try to forget about it anyway. Even if you feel strongly that you will not be a teacher, if you have only a passing thought about the possibility, you must pray about it.

“How do they [other prospective teachers] know with so much confidence that they will be a teacher?”

It might even bother you that some people are so confident that they will become teachers. How do they know? Did God write in the sky, “You will be a teacher”? Looking from the outside, it seems as if the decision was relatively easy for them. Maybe they loved school. Maybe they come from a family of teachers. Maybe they are by nature a leader.

Or maybe they struggle with the same doubts and fears listed above and below and you just don’t know it.

In light of this possibility, it is important that you reach out to other prospective teachers and discuss these things. In the end every prospective teacher will struggle with some sort of doubt or fear. Regardless of what others struggle with, you must take your struggles to the Lord in prayer.

“If only I had figured out my life right after high school, then I would have graduated from college already and could apply for one of the many jobs that are being advertised.”

You’ve seen the bulletin announcements from year to year. One teacher needed at this school. Three teachers needed at that school. The need seems overwhelming at times. You say, “If only I hadn’t messed up and waited to pursue my degree, then I could have…”

You didn’t mess up.

You didn’t “mess up” by “finally figuring it out” later in life. You see yourself as having waited too long to go to school for teaching. God sees you as having waited until the right time.

His time.

God in his providence governs all things, including which vocation you will pursue, when you will pursue it, and how many detours you will take before you get there. He will bring you to your life’s vocation when he knows you are ready to begin. Maybe there are some circumstances in your life that you need to experience before you are ready to take that big step to go to college. Maybe there are some gifts he has given you that you never saw until later in life.

So, should you be a teacher?

I can’t tell you that, but I do hope that you can
relate to some or all of these doubts and fears if teaching is the vocation you are currently pursuing or hope to pursue in the future.

Annica Kuiper

THE BEST DAY

“This is the best day, Mrs. Kuiper! Do you know why?” I look down at his grinning face, happy blue eyes awaiting my guess. I take some time to think before I answer. It’s important. To show that I take him seriously. To show that I care.

I think about the day and how it began. Me, alone in my room, Bible open, praying the words of Solomon. So many children, all of them different, all of them special. And so the same prayer, every morning. “Lord, give me wisdom!”

And how they came in, 17 of them, so full of energy and stories and sunshine that I can barely get out a “Good morning” before they are surrounding me with news of last night’s ballgame, and tonight’s gymnastics, and tomorrow’s sleepover...“Here Mrs. Kuiper, I drew you a picture!”, and you never guess what it is, never, you will always be wrong. So I say, “Thank you! You colored it beautifully, can you tell me more about it?” And they say it is me, reading a story to them, and I think, I’m glad I didn’t guess a sailboat. But it is beautiful, they all are, and I add it to the many masterpieces already covering the filing cabinet and the wall. Finally, with gentle reminders, they settle in and the whirlwind subsides a little, and the day has begun.

The best day.

The day that I look forward to every single night.

We are reading the Psalms for our devotions. One psalm every morning. I always find one interesting or important detail to draw their attention to by showing an illustration of some sort on the board. This morning we are reading Psalm 56 and I wanted to talk about verse 8: “Thou tellest my wanderings: put thou my tears into thy bottle: are they not in thy book?” First graders think in concrete terms so I displayed a picture of an old bottle, hoping to discuss the idea of God numbering our tears and knowing our sorrow. They love to guess what our psalm might be about, and today, they are pretty close to the target. “A cup?” “A water bottle?” “The wine of astonishment?”

The wine of astonishment??

I am speechless. How does he know about that?

I stare in wonder at the student, and he says, “I was reading ahead in church and I read about that.” *He can read the word ‘astonishment’!* Incredible. And four days later, as we begin our day with Psalm 60, he reads verse 3 aloud for the class: “Thou hast shewed thy people hard things: thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment.”

*Lord, give me wisdom.*

In math we are learning geometry—I tell them that is a fancy word that is almost as big as they are, and it means “shapes.” Even though it is their first time learning it in school, they have really known it all their lives. A square and a triangle make a house. A rectangle and two circles make a car. They love shapes because that is how they see the world.

“What shape has three sides and three corners?” I ask. A hand waves desperately in the back of the room. I call on the student.

“Last night, our cat had kittens, and one of them died,” she says.

But most importantly, they are the precious jewels in the crown of the King. They are his children, covenant children. And for a few hours each day, I get to teach them. There’s nothing like it in the world. What a privilege! What a delight!

My brain—which had been thinking *triangle, triangle, triangle*—comes to a screeching halt. *Not now!* I think. But their timing is rarely perfect and sometimes there are more important things to learn about than sides and corners. And so we gather in a circle to talk about the bigger things in life—beloved pets, cherished memories, and death. They ask me hard questions. Questions that make me smile: How does a cat have kittens without going to a hospital? Questions that make me think: Do our pets go to heaven?

*Lord, give me wisdom.*
My hardest question was yet to come.
We are just finishing our Bible story when she raises her hand. Such a quiet student. Hardly ever talks above a whisper in class. I’m curious as to what finally prompted her to speak. She asks her question.

“Mrs. Kuiper, how come God gets mad at us when we sin, if he’s the one who lets us do it?”

Oh, Lord, give me wisdom!

How can I explain to a six-year-old the truth of God’s sovereignty over against man’s responsibility for his own sin? I am incapable of myself. And so, by the power of God’s grace, we discuss his Word. We take an honest look at our own sinful natures and we rejoice in the redeeming love of our Savior. Together, we think and share and grow in our knowledge of our Father. And I can’t help but marvel at their love for their Lord and their desire to learn more about him.

The best day, I think.

They are challenging, invigorating, astonishing people and they are only six years old. They make me consider things I never knew I’d have to think about (“Is a whale shark a whale, or a shark?”). They make me say things I never thought I’d have to say (“Rocks belong outside, not in your mouth.”). They make me laugh like I never knew I could.

But most importantly, they are the precious jewels in the crown of the King. They are his children, covenant children. And for a few hours each day, I get to teach them. There’s nothing like it in the world. What a privilege! What a delight!

I look down and he’s still there, dancing blue eyes. But before I can answer why it’s the best day, he tells me.

“My mom gave me a Gatorade in my lunch today and I STILL have some left!”

Pure joy stretches his smile across his cheeks and I can’t help but smile back.

The best day.

Annica teaches 1st grade at Adams Christian School in Wyoming, Michigan and attends Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church with her husband Zach.

Kyle Bruinooge

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER

As with most jobs, when the alarm goes off in the early hour of the day, the first reaction can be a few sighs as one briefly contemplates the work ahead. Thoughts can immediately go to all the tasks that await, and for me as a teacher, the thoughts become concentrated on the lessons that will be presented, perhaps some of them less exciting than others. But then the day develops. I arrive at my desk between 6:30 and 7:00 am and sit down for personal devotions. I peruse through the material for the day, looking at the sequence of the lessons and how I plan to teach the material. I think of spiritual application for the young people in each of the main ideas of the lessons. I might do some grading for assignments I want ready to be passed out that day, and I make sure any copies are ready to go. Often, I make a last-minute change in how I want to do something in a particular class.

It’s quiet in the classroom before classes begin. And then a slow crescendo of student banter develops outside in the hall, and I’m reminded why I became a teacher. The interaction with the students is the joy of my work. It’s not the subject matter—that’s secondary in a certain sense. It’s time spent with these great young people who, for the most part, enjoy being at school each day.

As the time gets closer to the first hour, I look forward to getting started. As the first bell rings, I try to meet all 20 freshmen at the door to say “Good morning.” I’m not expecting eye contact and a resounding “Good morning!” from each one, but I get a few who seem to make an effort. A barely audible mumble is better than nothing.

Active conversations before the second bell rings are what I want. A morgue-like atmosphere can make for a long class period. I want active students who are ready to be engaged and interact in class. I begin each class period with a loud “Good morning” which is both to greet them and also to indicate we’re ready to begin. They now know that class has officially begun. After a little back-and-forth between them and me, perhaps a “How was your weekend?” exchange, it’s time for morning devotions which sets the tone for the rest of the day.
Algebra is the first class of the day. I can’t think of a better way to start. As the class period progresses and I’m presenting, some students are willing to answer questions quickly, and others are more content to be gleaners. That’s okay. From time to time I’ll call on that quiet kid to show them that I know they’re there, even if they think I’ve forgotten about them. They all have different personalities, and the longer I’ve taught, the more I’ve readily accepted the diversity of students.

As the first hour comes to a close, they scurry out with some last-minute reminders from me. There’s no break, however, as a new group of 25 begin coming in for Worldviews class. This new group is seniors, with many of them reacting to this part of the day as vampires at dawn. Many of them mutter “So tired” as they plop down. That’s good. Now it’s my task to wake them up. Challenge accepted.

But the joy of the work is building relationships and watching them grow in spiritual maturity. The reward is showing them Christ in each subject that is taught, and equipping them with a reformed worldview that they can take with them as they face new challenges and experiences. High school teaching is a blessed work.

Morning break comes next which allows me to walk the halls a bit, have a few brief conversations with kids, maybe throw down a snack, then back to it. 3rd hour. 24 new students come in for New Testament, and we’re back to freshmen. A little more awake, a few louder conversations, but then as the bell rings we get down to business. 4th hour brings another crop of New Testament freshman, this time 22 in number. A different group means discussions will perhaps go in a slightly different direction. I love that. That’s the type of variety that makes teaching enjoyable. As we work through the material in New Testament, a student may ask a question I haven’t thought about before. It forces me to study further and to come the next day with a good answer. Saying “I don’t know” in front of the group is healthy—it’s showing you are a real person who doesn’t have a perfect answer for every question right out of the box. I find students appreciate that more than when the teacher is afraid not to have an immediate response to the question.

The 4th hour ends with some closing devotions and dismissal for lunch. 91 students have sat in my classroom between 8:15 and 11:45. Finally, a moment to sit down and try to enjoy a brief lunch before the bell rings at 12:10. I walk the halls again—maybe interject a few conversations to see how students are doing. I try to ask students about their lives—jobs, sports, etc.—to try and make a connection. Maybe there is a struggling student who comes from a difficult home or has other challenges. I want to engage them, too, and perhaps offer a bit of encouragement.

After lunch is a study hall and a free period, which goes by like lightning as I begin planning the next day and attempt to put a dent in any grading of papers that ended up on my desk during the morning. Students will filter in and out during my study hall and free period to ask questions, so it’s hard sometimes to stay in the groove, but again, that’s okay.

The last period is Algebra again—ending as I started. I can’t image more fitting bookends to my schedule. The 7th hour can mean either the students are much more awake, or it could mean they are worn out from a long day. Either way, I have fun with the 14 students who get to end their day in my room. A nice sized class. A few digressions and lame jokes end the day.

As the final bell rings I like to hang out at my door. I’m located in freshman hall, so that’s who I wave goodbye to. Many of them are whipping out their phones faster than a gun-draw in the Wild West. It has been seven hours of social media deprivation—time to get back to it.

As I come back into my room, I try to get a bit organized and prioritize what has to be done before another day begins tomorrow. I reflect on how things went. Sometimes I reflect on my work and come to the conclusion that high school teaching involves carefully crafted lesson plans met with casual indifference. While this can be the case, I have to remind myself that many students appreciate what they have at a Christian high school and are genuinely interested in the subject matter.

As I said earlier, the subject matter is in a sense, secondary. It’s important, don’t misunderstand me, but going into teaching because you love history, for example, may be a mistake. My love for the students must supersede my love for the subject matter. If I seem to love the material more than I show care for them, they can sense it instantly. If I don’t show enthusiasm for both them and what I’m teaching, then I dare say I’m in the wrong profession. It’s time to get out.

High school teaching is challenging, yet certainly rewarding. The problems students face, as well as the pains they endure developing in spiritual maturity,
can make for burdensome times. Knowing the brokenness of homes that some students leave each morning and return to each night can be difficult to bear. But the joy of the work is building relationships and watching them grow in spiritual maturity. The reward is showing them Christ in each subject that is taught, and equipping them with a reformed worldview that they can take with them as they face new challenges and experiences. High school teaching is a blessed work.

Kyle teaches at Covenant Christian High School in Walker, MI and attends Trinity Protestant Reformed Church with his family.

Cal Kalsbeek

THE QUESTION I NEVER WAS ASKED

There are tons—and that’s a lot—of questions I never was asked. Some of them might be labeled frivolous: Do you like sushi? Or, what is your fourth favorite color? Others might be considered meaningful: Who is the most important U.S. President and why? Or, how important is the U.S. Constitution to you? Then there are questions I’ve never been asked that are quite significant: How has the doctrine of the covenant affected your life? Or, why is it important to you to maintain the doctrine of reprobation?

However, I’m talking about “THE” question I never was asked; not “A” question I never was asked. This suggests I have in mind a specific and very important question that everyone should consider, but that I never was asked, and one that maybe you have never been asked either. But before I ask you THE question, allow me the freedom to relate a few of my life experiences that relate to the question I never was asked.

Since Covenant Christian High School did not exist when I graduated from 9th grade at Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School, my parents sent me to Unity Christian High School (1960–1963) in Hudsonville, Michigan. Thinking back, although I liked to read, I was not all that interested in school. Nevertheless, I reluctantly heeded the advice of Mr. TenHarmsel, my adviser, to take a college preparatory course of study. Surviving that (including chemistry and Latin), when I graduated from Unity, I did the expected and began working as an apprentice for the business established by my father and uncle, Kalsbeek and DeJong Plumbing (now Kalsbeek Plumbing). After three years and at the tender age of 20, I had my state of Michigan journeyman’s license in hand. I was well on my way toward a lifelong career as a plumber.

Though “the question I never was asked” still was not asked, over the next four years my sovereign Lord was leading me by his counsel (Psalm 73) to a career change. Regrettably, for most of that time I was oblivious to his leading, but looking back I can see his hand at work. He worked especially through my older brother, John, who had completed college and was teaching in our South Holland Protestant Reformed Christian School. Visits with John opened my eyes to “the question I never was asked,” which by this time I began asking myself. The Lord also worked through other circumstances in my life. Being single, financially sound, and working for my father and uncle made attending college and working part-time as a licensed plumber a very manageable situation. Consequently, at the age of 24, I had the freedom to begin college, which I did. At first, I was not committed to a specific goal, though all the while I had teaching in the back of my mind. The circumstances surrounding my mother’s death in an automobile accident during my second year at Grand Valley, confirmed the Lord’s guiding me by his counsel to what I saw as the calling to teach in one of our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools.

With a diploma signed by the president, Arend D. Lubbers, and the chairman of the board, L. William Seidman, in hand; on the “ninth day of June, nineteen hundred and seventy-three” I was available to teach; but where? In God’s providence, one teaching position was available in the Protestant Reformed Christian Schools that year (Adams), and I was contracted to fill it. Nine years later the Lord led me to Covenant Christian High School where I spent the last 29 years of my teaching.

Reflecting on my own experience, I believe there is value, not only in asking others “the question I never was asked,” but also relating some of the blessings that will result from an affirmative response to that question. Consider for example the blessing of working every day in an environment in which
After defeating the Syrians, Ahab ignores God’s decree to kill Ben-Hadad and instead makes a treaty with him. We do not know the exact motive of Ahab here. Perhaps he thought that a friendship with Ben-Hadad would secure an alliance with Syria against common enemies, such as Assyria. But in verse 42
an unnamed prophet speaks this message of judgment to Ahab, “Thus saith the Lord, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.”

Do you have any “Ben-Hadads” in your life? By that I mean someone or something that God has clearly commanded you in his word to cast off, but you still stubbornly hang on to. Maybe it’s that app on your phone that you know you should delete or that friend who you know is a bad influence. You think, “I’ll just try to be stronger next time.” If we make a treaty with temptations, we are foolishly disobeying God’s command to flee what is sinful and pursue what is right. Sing or pray Psalter #1.

**August 9** Read 1 Kings 21

The well-known story of Ahab and Naboth that is recorded in this chapter serves as an important reminder that outward circumstances do not work inward peace. Ahab was the king of Israel. He had vast wealth, land, and power. Yet, the desire for one vineyard that belonged to another man had him “heavy and displeased.” “And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread” (v. 4). Ahab would not rest until he obtained what rightfully belonged to Naboth.

Are you tempted to make your happiness and contentment contingent on earthly goals? We may dream of relationship successes, weight loss goals, financial security, or a specific career. “If I can just get this one thing, then I’ll be happy!” But if we base our contentment on earthly things, we will never be truly satisfied. The only source of genuine contentment is who God is and what he does, not our own accomplishments. And true happiness can only be found in living a life of thankful servitude to God. It comes from seeking to please our heavenly Father, not ourselves. Sing or pray Psalter #7.

**August 10** Read 1 Kings 22

In contrast to wicked King Ahab, Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, walked in the ways of his father, Asa. Yet here we see godly King Jehoshaphat seeking out an alliance and friendship with Ahab. We will read later, in 2 Chronicles 19:2, about Jehoshaphat being rebuked for his actions by the prophet Jehu. “Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.” One result of Jehoshaphat’s ungodly friendship was that his son turned away from the Lord and served other gods.

Like Jehoshaphat, we may also be tempted to seek out friendships with ungodly people, possibly our co-workers or our classmates in college. While we should certainly maintain good working relationships with those around us and take advantage of opportunities to witness to them, we also need to be careful not to form close friendships with those who are clear enemies of God. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). “For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14) Sing or pray Psalter #383.

**August 11** Read 2 Chronicles 18

It is clear that Ahab did not want to hear what the godly prophet Micaiah had to say before they went to battle against Ramoth-gilead. He had imprisoned and ignored him in the past, and would have liked to continue doing so. If Jehoshaphat had not persisted, they probably wouldn’t have consulted Micaiah at all. Ahab would much rather have listened to the 400 false prophets because he knew that they would tell him what he wanted to hear instead of the true word of God.

It can be easy to have the same attitude as Ahab when it comes to our friendships. Are you seeking out friends who bring you the gospel, or friends who make you feel good? Do you shun the friends who will humbly point out your sins and instead seek out false friends who will tell you what you want to hear? Too often friendships are characterized by mutual encouragement to sin because we are trying to be “nice” or “supportive.” This is not true, godly friendship. “Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:5-6). Sing or pray Psalter #24.

**August 12** Read 2 Chronicles 19

When Jehoshaphat appoints a system of judges in order to better govern the kingdom of Judah, he sets them to their task with this command, “Thus shall ye do in the fear of the Lord, faithfully, and with a perfect heart” (v. 9). These judges of Judah had a responsibility to faithfully carry out their calling and make decisions, not to please man, but for the Lord. Jehoshaphat was reminding them of the ultimate goal of their work, which was to glorify God and make known his name among the people.

Although most of us are not judges, we still bear this same responsibility in whatever calling we have
been given right now. Perhaps that involves being a student, or entering the workforce, or some combination of both. When the Spirit works the fear of God in our hearts, we will act out of that respect and adoration for our heavenly Father. We will be characterized by actions and motives that are faithful to the word of God, not self- or people-pleasing. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col. 3:23). Sing or pray Psalter #90.

**August 13** Read 2 Chronicles 20

A great multitude of Moabites, Ammonites, and their allies are on their way to attack Judah. Yet King Jehoshaphat is not focused on his military readiness. Instead he “set himself to seek the Lord” (v. 3). He proclaims a fast for the entire nation, and calls the people to the temple for a time of prayer. By doing so, Jehoshaphat showed that he trusted in God more than he trusted in the power of his army. The end of Jehoshaphat’s prayer is a beautiful statement of total dependence on God, “for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee” (v. 12).

When our pride blinds us, it is easy to forget that God is in control of everything and that he is always with us. We become too focused on practical solutions because we want to feel as though we are doing something to fix the problem. When you are faced with a trial, do you seek God first to ask for help? Or do you try to figure things out on your own, and then pray as a last resort if nothing else works? Pray for the faith to trust God first in every situation. Sing or pray Psalter #80.

**August 14** Read 2 Chronicles 21

Following godly kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, we read of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat’s son, taking the throne. In contrast, “he wrought that which was evil in the eyes of the Lord.” Why was this wayward son so different from his godly father and grandfather? We find the answer in verse 6, “for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife.” Athaliah, the daughter of Jezebel, was not only an evil influence on her husband, but her son as well. In the next chapter we will also read about Ahaziah, that “his mother was his counselor to do wickedly” (2 Chron. 22:3).

The influence of an evil woman led not only her family astray, but an entire nation. Ladies, take note of this. The impact that you have on your boyfriend or husband should not be underestimated. Is it a positive one? Guys, take note of this. Are you seeking the kind of girlfriend and wife that will support you in serving the Lord, or try to lead you down the wrong path? Sing or pray Psalter #328.

**August 15** Read 2 Chronicles 22

Do you remember reading yesterday about how the Lord would not destroy the house of David, even though they had turned away from him because he had promised to “give a light to him and to his sons for ever” (2 Chron. 21:7)? This light symbolized God’s covenant faithfulness to David and his descendants. Here we see evidence of that light, even during the dark and bloody reign of Athaliah. For six years, no one knew about the surviving heir. It seemed like all was lost, yet God sovereignly preserved the covenant line through baby Joash.

No matter how many times the people turned away from God, his covenant with them could not be broken. This same promise comes to us today. How wonderful that God establishes and maintains his covenant by his own work of grace and it is not dependent on our weak, sinful works! This assurance should not make us careless, but instead lead us to proclaim with the psalmist, “I will sing of the mercies of the LORD forever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations” (Ps. 89:1). Sing or pray Psalter #241.

**August 16** Read 2 Chronicles 23

James 3:13 asks, “Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? Let him show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom.” The life of Jehoiada, the priest, epitomizes the conduct of a wise man. Jehoiada courageously helped his wife hide Joash in order to preserve the covenant line, despite the threat of certain death if Queen Athaliah had found them out. He was patient and prudent when planning how Joash would ascend to the throne. He was a godly advisor to the young king, and the nation of Judah served the Lord all the days of Jehoiada.

What was the source of Jehoiada’s courage and wisdom? He believed in and worshiped the one, true God. The confidence that he had in God’s promises enabled him to act boldly. And his knowledge of God taught him to act wisely. Jehoiada was honored for faithful service to his God and country by being buried among the kings in the city of David (2 Chron. 24:16). Take note of his godly example! Sing or pray Psalter #35.
**August 17  Read Obadiah**

You may remember that the Edomites were descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob. Edom was a very proud nation. And they were guilty of violence against their “brothers,” the nation of Judah. Here Obadiah brings them a message of humility and judgment. “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee,” he says in verse 3. The Edomites boasted in their physical defenses, political alliances, and earthly knowledge. But all of these are no match for God’s justice. Edom’s punishment for their crimes against Judah was total and complete destruction.

This warning is also important for the church to hear. It is very tempting to find our confidence in money, modern medicine, national defenses, or any number of other things. But human pride and self-security will always fail before the judgment of God. True safety can only be found when we lay aside our pride and place our trust completely in him. “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me” (Jer. 9:23–24).

*Sing or pray Psalter #136.*

**August 18  Read Psalm 82**

In Psalm 82 we read about the responsibilities of civil officers to rescue the weak and needy. This psalm gives the hope of justice to God’s people, who are not usually the powerful and influential members of society. God will judge unjust human rulers who do not fulfill these responsibilities, even if it seems like they are “getting away with it” on this earth. Everyone must face God’s judgment in eternity.

Even if we do not hold a position of authority ourselves, we are nevertheless called to defend the poor and needy and fight for justice for the helpless in whatever sphere of influence God has placed us. We must use the resources that we have been given to serve and protect others, and in doing so show the love of God to them. Because of our sin, we often fail at this responsibility to care for the needs of our neighbors. But our Heavenly Father never fails. He is “A father of the fatherless, and a judge [defender] of the widows” (Psalm 68:5). *Sing or pray Psalter #223.*

**August 19  Read Psalm 83**

When God’s people were facing an attack from their enemies, it was the custom to come together as a nation and pray for deliverance. Psalm 83 is a prayer that would have been used in this situation. The people are asking God to thwart the plans of the wicked men who were plotting against them. They are not only praying for their own deliverance, but that God’s power and protection of his children would cause even their enemies to seek his name.

As we draw nearer to the end of the world, God’s children will face increasing persecution. The kingdom of the antichrist will try to wipe us out, just as the Canaanites conspired against Israel. Will Psalm 83 be your prayer? Plead not only for your own deliverance, but “that men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth” (Psalm 83:18). *Sing or pray Psalter #224.*

**August 20  Read 2 Kings 1**

Ahaziah committed blatant idolatry by sending his servants to inquire of Baalzebub, god of Ekron, about whether he would recover from his injury. “What is idolatry? Idolatry is, instead of, or besides that one true God who has manifested Himself in His Word, to contrive or have any other object in which men place their trust” (Heidelberg Catechism Lord’s Day 34, Q&A 95). Ahaziah very foolishly and publicly placed his trust in something other than the one, true God, and his punishment was that he would not recover from his injury.

Idolatry did not end with the Old Testament. Although they may not have obvious names like Baalzebub, there are plenty of things in the 21st century that we may foolishly place our trust in. Take a moment for self-examination. Do you have any idols? Are you tempted to worship something in the creation rather than the Creator? Pray that God will help you to relegate earthly things to their proper place, and place your trust only in the One who is worthy of it. *Sing or pray Psalter #123.*

**August 21  Read 2 Kings 2**

As Elijah prepares to be taken into heaven, he asks Elisha for any last requests. Elisha answers “let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me” (v. 9). What is the significance of the double portion? It was what the oldest son would normally receive as his inheritance from his father (Deut. 21:17). Remember the call of Elisha from 1 Kings 19? He had forsaken his earthly inheritance by leaving his family behind to serve with Elijah. Here he requests something that is more important—a spiritual inheritance. It is evident from the ministry of Elisha that God granted his request.

As adopted children of God we also will receive
a spiritual inheritance. “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom. 8:17). Just like Elisha left his earthly family to serve the Lord, we are called to take up our cross and follow him (Luke 9:23). The great inheritance we are promised overshadows all the suffering that we experience on this earth as followers of Christ. Sing or pray Psalter #105.

Both Christians and worldly psychologists can agree that music is powerful. Music can have the ability to calm you or stir you to action. It helps us to remember words, and different melodies evoke various emotions. In verse 15 of this chapter, Elisha calls for a musician to calm his anger and facilitate the Lord speaking to him. Similarly, in 1 Samuel 16, Saul’s troubled spirit was calmed by the songs that David played on his harp. Music is part of God’s good creation, and it was made to glorify him. However, because of the fall, music can also be used for sinful purposes. The music that you listen to matters! Does it exalt Christ or exalt the world? Are you listening to music that brings you closer to God and enables you to worship him? “…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” (Eph. 5:18, 19). Sing or pray Psalter #259.

All of the miracles that God performed through Elisha in this chapter demonstrate a heavenly Father who provides for his people. He provided oil for the widow to sell in order to pay her debts. He provided a son for the Shunammite woman and also restored that son’s life. He killed the poison that was in the pottage of the sons of the prophets. And he provided food for the 100 men that were with Elisha by multiplying the loaves of barley and corn.

Our heavenly Father provides for us as well. When there is a grocery store around every corner, it can be easy to forget where our food ultimately comes from. “He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth; and wine that makes glad the heart of man, And oil to maketh his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man’s heart” (Psalm 104:14, 15). Have you thanked God today for providing all your needs? Sing or pray Psalter #286.

In 2 Kings 5 we read about the miracle of Naaman being healed from his leprosy after consulting with the prophet Elisha and bathing in the Jordan River as instructed. But how had Naaman, a Syrian, known to seek out this man of God? His wife’s Israelite maid told him. Despite being taken away from her parents by the Syrian army and sent to live with strangers, she was a faithful witness to her heavenly Father. God led this servant girl to Syria for a special reason. He had a greater purpose in her suffering. Just like Naaman’s servant girl, God has placed each one of us in our specific circumstances for a purpose. Are you also a faithful witness to your heavenly Father? Do your words and conduct testify of him to those around you? “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Pet. 2:9). Sing or pray Psalter #48.

The king of Syria was surrounding the city where Elisha was. Yet Elisha is not afraid. “Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them” (v. 16). Elisha knew that God had sent an army of angels to protect him. He had faith that the angels of the Lord were more than capable of fend-off the Syrian army.

We can often feel discouraged just like Elisha’s servant when our enemies are very visible and tangible, while our great God and his host of angels are invisible. The Lord opened the spiritual eyes of Elisha’s servant to see that he was surrounded by a protective heavenly host. He also works faith in our hearts so that we can hope in things that are not seen instead of being blinded by our circumstances. Pray with the apostle Paul that “the eyes of your understanding” will be opened, ”that ye may know what is the hope of his calling…And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power” (Eph. 1:18, 19). Sing or pray Psalter #249.

At the end of the last chapter, we read about how the king of Israel blamed God for the siege of Samaria, instead of acknowledging that Israel’s problems stemmed from the fact that they had forsaken God as a nation. So here they come to the house of the
prophet Elisha and demand an answer, and Elisha gives them one—the siege will be over by this time tomorrow. The king’s right-hand man is not satisfied with this seemingly impossible promise of God. And he pays the price for his unbelief with his life.

Have you ever doubted God’s promises to you because you couldn’t figure out how he was going to keep them? Unbelief is a very serious sin. It is the opposite of faith. It is disobedience to God’s command to trust in him. When we doubt God, we are saying that his promises are lies and that he is not powerful enough to keep them. Revelation 21:8 says that the unbelieving “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.” Unbelief keeps us from enjoying the blessings of God and steals the hope that we have in his promises. Pray that the Spirit will work the confidence of faith in your heart. Sing or pray Psalter #201.

August 27  Read 2 Kings 8

God knew the wicked things that Hazael would do, and he showed them to Elisha—things so terrible that they made him weep just to think about it. But even these evil deeds were sovereignly decreed by God and would be used by him for his own purpose. “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things” (Rom. 11:36).

It can be difficult to understand how God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility fit together. God is not the author of sin. God’s foreknowledge of and sovereignty over Hazael’s future sins do not diminish Hazael’s responsibility for them. Human responsibility is not determined by God’s plan or his providence, but by his commandments. In the judgment day there will be no excuses. We will all be held responsible for the wrong that we did. Christ is the only one who can take the blame for our sins and save us from eternal punishment. Sing or pray Psalter #236.

August 28  Read 2 Kings 9

King Joram asks in verse 22, “Is it peace, Jehu? And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?” The way of sin will never be the way of peace. The unbelieving world desires peace, but not peace with God. The world around us tries to put up a convincing front of happiness, but inwardly they are in turmoil. “But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:20, 21). There can never be peace for those who are enemies of God because he is the only source of peace. We all desire peace, but how can we obtain it? The simple answer is found in Proverbs 3:5: “Trust in the L ORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.” Sing or pray Psalter #8.

August 29  Read 2 Kings 10

It is made clear in the Bible that Jehu was a very ambitious and zealous man. Even his driving habits attest to this fact. After he was anointed, Jehu quickly accomplished all that Elisha had instructed him to do. He says to Jehonadab, “Come with me, and see my zeal for the L ORD” (v. 16). However, Jehu obeyed the command of God only for his own honor, not the honor of God. He did not truly love the Lord, as evidenced by the fact that he did not strive to keep the law of God and he still kept (and worshiped) the golden calves (v. 31). Do you follow God’s commands so that people will think you’re a good person, or simply to gain a reputation in the church? This is not true obedience. God’s children endeavor to gratefully obey his commandments in order to glorify his name, not their own. Sing or pray Psalter #206.

August 30  Read 2 Kings 11

Perhaps you’ve heard of a husband and wife who have been married for a while having a vow renewal ceremony. They use it as a way to celebrate their relationship and reaffirm their commitment to each other. We read here of Jehoiada having a covenant renewal ceremony. God has always been faithful to his covenant, but this was an opportunity for the people to recommit themselves to obeying, honoring, and serving the Lord. The best relationship between a king and his nation will be one where they are both rooted in serving the Lord, and in doing so, serving each other. The same is true for marriage. When a husband and wife strengthen their commitment to the Lord, in doing so they will also strengthen their marriage. A biblical marriage is one where husband and wife each seek after God’s purposes, not their own. Are you seeking that kind of relationship? Sing or pray Psalter #73.

August 31  Read 2 Kings 12

During the reign of Athaliah, the house of God had fallen into disrepair. The condition of the temple was indicative of the hearts of the people at that time. The things of God were just not important to them.
But when Joash takes the throne he sets out on a worthy campaign to repair the temple. The funds for this endeavor would come from both routine temple income, and also freewill offerings. When this was unsuccessful (because of the priest’s poor administration of the money), Jehoiada bores a hole in the lid of a chest and places it in a very visible place so that the people could give specifically to the cause of the temple repair. This was similar to what Moses did (at the command of God) in Exodus 35. He called for all the people to bring freewill offerings to be used for the service of the temple.

We too should follow this same guide when there is a specific need in the church that requires fund-raising. The deacons will make the need known and every member is called to give as he or she is able. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Thank the Lord for wise deacons who care for the needs of the congregation and manage the finances of the church faithfully. Sing or pray Psalter #164.

September 1 Read 2 Kings 13

Under the reign of Jehoahaz in Israel, we see again the same pattern that was so prevalent in the nation’s history, beginning already during the time of Moses. Israel had forsaken God, so God causes them to be oppressed by their enemies. Then they cry out to the Lord, and he sends them a deliverer. Soon after, they give up on their half-hearted repentance and begin serving other gods again. And the cycle continues. Over and over they were unfaithful to God, yet he still kept his promises to them.

This pattern is present in our lives as well. What a blessing that salvation is all of grace! “That believers do not lose their salvation is not due to their obedience, their faithfulness, and their efforts, but solely to the grace of God that keeps and protects them from falling away” (Hanko, Doctrine according to Godliness). Sing or pray Psalter #214.

September 2 Read 2 Chronicles 24

Although Joash started off his reign by doing that which was pleasing to God, as soon as Jehoiada died, he leads the nation back into idolatry. But we read in 2 Kings 12 that even when Judah had been under the godly influence of Jehoiada, the high places still had not been taken away, making it easy for the people to slip back into idolatry. Only two kings in the history of Israel and Judah had followed God’s command to tear down the high places; all the rest allowed the people to worship here. Already during the time of Solomon the people had begun making sacrifices at the high places instead of solely at the temple as God had commanded in Deuteronomy 12.

What was so attractive about these high places? The people liked that they could serve God how they wanted to, as it was right in their own eyes. Sacrificing in the high places was similar to how the nations surrounding them worshiped their gods. It’s easy to see how this led to them serving other pagan gods as well. Are you worshiping God as he has commanded in his word? Or have you set up “high places” in your heart? Sing or pray Psalter #77.

September 3 Read 2 Kings 14

It is interesting to note how quickly many different kings rise and fall from power during this time in the history of Israel and Judah. It serves as an important reminder that earthly rulers are simply instruments in God’s hands. Although God has given them some limited sphere of power on this earth, at the end of the day they are still subject to his eternal plan.

Especially when it is an election year, it is very easy to get too caught up in who the president is going to be and what kind of impact he (or she) will have on our country and our life. We may spend hours watching news coverage, posting memes that degrade certain candidates, and debating with people in person or online. In order to gain proper perspective, we must remember that kings and presidents only rule for a short time, but God has been ruling since eternity, and will continue to rule forever. He is the “blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). Sing or pray Psalter #267.

September 4 Read 2 Chronicles 25

After Joash was killed by his servants, his son Amaziah begins to reign in Judah. We read this description of him in verse 2, “And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.” Amaziah’s reign was one of contradictions. He followed the law of Moses, but still kept the high places for idol worship. He trusted in the Lord for victory over Edom, but then served the Edomite gods. His whole heart was not devoted to doing the will of the Lord; part of it still served his own selfish desires.

The life of a Christian should not be characterized by half-hearted service of God. Our entire heart will eventually be given over to the purpose of serving only ourselves. Pray that God will give you
an undivided heart, a heart wholly devoted to doing his will. “Teach me thy way, O Lord; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name. I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart” (Ps. 86:11, 12). Sing or pray Psalter #233.

September 5  Read Jonah 1

God was calling Jonah to do a difficult task. He must go to a strange city, full of people who would very likely be hostile towards him, and tell them to repent of their sins. It is easy to understand why he was reluctant to go to Nineveh. But how foolish Jonah was to think that he could escape from the presence of the Lord! “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the Lord. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the Lord” (Jer. 23:24).

At times, we can be similarly foolish in our thoughts as well. How do you react when God makes it clear that you must do something difficult? Perhaps you’ve never boarded a ship to try to escape the command of God, but do you always eagerly head in the direction that he is pointing you? Sing or pray Psalter #384.

September 6  Read Jonah 2

From the belly of a fish, Jonah offers up a beautiful prayer of thanksgiving to God. It is interesting to note that Jonah quotes from many of the Psalms in his prayer. If you were to look up Psalms 18, 31, 42, 69, 88, 116, 120, and 142, you would recognize phrases from Jonah 2. Jonah obviously had a great knowledge of the word of God as they had it at that time. It is so important for the people of God to know the Scriptures and hide them in our hearts. When we are in times of trouble and cannot even think of what to pray, the words of saints that have gone before us can be our guide. “This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me” (Ps. 119:50). Praying through the psalms is also an excellent way to teach yourself how to pray. Usually we tend to pray very man-focused prayers but using the psalms can show us how to be more God-focused instead. And what better guide is there to praying according to the will of God than the very word of God? Sing or pray Psalter #81.

September 7  Read Jonah 3

In Jonah 3:10, we read that “God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not.” Does this mean that God changed his eternal plan in response to Nineveh’s repentance? No, of course not. From eternity he had purposed to save Nineveh. Although he uses the people’s repentance here as a means to serve his end, it was still all the work of God. “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18).

What a comfort the eternal providence of God is to his people! We can never do anything to alter his plan for our salvation. All circumstances are under his power and he uses even our weakest moments to accomplish his divine purposes. Nothing happens by chance, but by the will of our heavenly Father. Sing or pray Psalter #81.

Our Goodly Heritage Mark H. Hoeksema

INTERVIEW WITH VIVIAN HUNTER (3)

Mark H. Hoeksema: So on short notice, you headed for Guam.

Vivian Hunter: Right.

MHH: And he did have a job?

VH: He did have a job. He was the superintendent of the workshop for handicapped adults. We were there for five years. Rev. Wade died of his cancer during the time that we were there. During the time we were on Guam, we went through another big typhoon. In fact, the Chicago paper’s headline the next morning was, “Guam is Gone!” A very lush and beautiful island was flattened. No coconut trees, no anything. Everything was flat. Most of the houses were flat because a lot of them were made of sheet metal. They just blew down.

We lived in a complex of about eleven homes. Toni Bourdine was living in a house on the beach. I called her about three o’clock and
said, “Do you want to come and stay with us?” She said, “No, my friend is here with me.” Her friend who would become her husband. “I put all my things up high,” she said. “I think we’ll be OK.” It wasn’t an hour later she called and said, “The police say I have to evacuate because the beach is going to be gone.” So she came with the clothes on her back and a few other things to stay a few nights. But her house was gone the next day. There was a house across the street from us that the family never came back to and had to have a little bit of renovating. She lived with us for awhile, and that’s the house they moved into when they got married.

**MHH:** So during your five years on Guam, this Pastor Wade died from his cancer. What happened next, and what brought you to leave Guam?

**VH:** Well, our first introduction to the Protestant Reformed Churches was through Antoinette Bourdine, who was a member of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids. She had the permission of the consistory to spend her two years plus on the island of Guam teaching school. She did that for several years. During our five-year term then she and Ignacio [Quenga] became married. We stood up for them at their marriage. Rev. Wade and Chaplain Zeller, who was from the Reformed Episcopal Church, both officiated at the service, and Chips and I stood up for them. Toni had a baby within a year, and when he was a year old, they came back. They came back to the States in 1965. Rev. Wade had died in February of that same year. The typhoon had practically ruined the rehabilitation center. They were in the process of building a new one, and my husband didn’t really want to leave until that project was finished. He never was one to leave anything unfinished. So in 1966 we came back to the United States. He had a job lined up in San Luis Obispo by the man who had been his supervisor when he first went to the rehab center. Just as we were ready to leave Guam, it was supported by federal funds. The funds were withdrawn, so the job was withdrawn. As we were heading for that part of California, Toni wrote and said, “Just come to Grand Rapids.” She sent us a copy of the “Classified Ads” from the Saturday night **Grand Rapids Press.** My husband checked off 27 jobs he could apply for. Toni’s family got busy in the meantime, and her brother made arrangements for him to interview at the children’s workshop at Pine Rest. So very shortly after we came back to Grand Rapids, he was employed again in the work that he loved, which was teaching people to do things. Oh, he loved the work. And within a week or so after we got back, I had a job in a nursing home. When I first took it, I thought, I’ll just keep this until he gets a real job. I only stayed 20 years (laughter).

The first nursing home I worked in was a little one that originally had been the Posthumus funeral home—before they built that beautiful new big one on Grandville Avenue. So it had been converted into a twenty-six bed nursing home. That’s where I started.

But when we went to Grand Rapids, we were not convinced that the Protestant Reformed Church was the place for us. We were still loving our roots in the Orthodox Presbyterian church, even though Rev. Wade was gone and we hadn’t found a church to our satisfaction. In fact, when we first went to Grand Rapids, there was no OPC there at all. We first attended Seventh Reformed, and we enjoyed going to [Rev. Gordon] Girod’s preaching, very, very much. I felt kind of bad for Toni. She had enrolled our children in Hope School before we got back. We came back on the 31st of October, and they went to school on November 1st. The next day we had a blizzard (laughter) and they didn’t go to school. But they went to school there for three years before we became Protestant Reformed.

**MHH:** And in the meanwhile, you’re going to Seventh Reformed?

**VH:** Seventh Reformed. We went to another one downtown—it was a DeJong—but we didn’t like his preaching. Then Rev. Girod got kind of off course. He was becoming more political, and he was not really loved by the Reformed church. They said he made too much trouble at classis. I can imagine he did, because he was thoroughly Reformed until he started going Birch-wise [John Birch society].

In the meantime, two gentlemen had started a mission work up in Lincoln County, near Lincoln Lake—37 miles from Grand Rapids. They found a church building that was empty and they were renting that. They asked the CRC to help them, but the CRC wanted nothing to do with it. I don’t know how they got connected with the OPC, but they did. They got our name, so we were charter members of that church. Our first minister was a young man (I can’t even think of his name anymore). He was fresh out of Westminster Seminary. He preached well. But these two gentlemen who had started the work said, “You can’t preach about sin so much. You can’t tell people what sinners they are. We’re never going to get anywhere that way. You have to tell them more about the love of God.”
My husband said to me one night, “We belong in the PRC.” I was having trouble with my bad leg then, and the long ride up there and back twice a Sunday was a bit much on a day when I was supposed to rest. We’d been going to Hope [PRC] on the Sundays I didn’t work. He would go with the boys out of some sense of loyalty up to Lincoln Lake. Finally one Sunday, he said, “This is where we belong.” And that’s when we came into the PRC. That was in 1970. We were thoroughly convinced and convicted that we no longer belonged in the OPC. It was our introduction to the Reformed faith. It had been preached to us so faithfully that to hear it watered down, we couldn’t swallow it.

MHH: I understand. So did you join Hope Church?

VH: Yes, we did.

MHH: Who was the pastor?

VH: When we started going there, Rev. Kortering was the pastor. When the boys were in school, they weren’t being catechized because it was too far for the preacher up there [Lincoln Lake] to come down for two kids. So I called Rev. Kortering and said, “Can our children go to catechism with the children from Hope School?” He said, “They certainly can.” And that very day he took the books over to Jo Dykstra and said, “Give these to Skip and Lynne when they leave school today.” He marked in the book what they were supposed to study.

We were slow in getting our papers from the OPC. That was at the time that Hull was calling Rev. Kortering back. One Sunday morning, with tears in his eyes, he said, “I have accepted the call to Hull.” He said, “Those people have been without a minister for four years, and my reasons for wanting to stay in this area are personal.” His parents were getting older. They were in Holland, and he was close to them. So it was hard for him. And, of course, it was hard for us.

So then we were vacant for the first two years that we first went to Hope. Our first pastor was Rev. Van Overloop.

MHH: And, what can you tell me about your life subsequent to that time?

VH: Oh, we loved going to Hope Church. We looked down on our children in catechism. We stayed in Grand Rapids for twenty years—the longest I ever lived any place in my life, and I thought I was there forever. My husband had his two heart attacks, and he had to retire after the second one. They couldn’t do it now, but they were able at that time to put him through the disability business through the Medicare program, so he received what he would have received if he’d been on social security. I kept my job until 1984. We both retired at that point. But they kept calling me back to the nursing home because they needed people to fill in. My husband got tired of that. I came home from work one day, and he said, “We’re putting this place up for sale and we’re going to buy a trailer and we’re going to go to Florida in the winters and just spend our summers up here.” He was kind of a “house-husband” at that time, and felt kind of penned in.

So, I was shocked again. But we did. [Name redacted] came and he was so angry with us, because he did not believe that people should do that. If you had to stay in the house all winter, you just stayed in the house all winter. It didn’t matter whether you got to church or not. You stayed where the church was. But we did it, and we were on our way to Florida. It was also the year of my husband’s fiftieth anniversary of graduating from high school. So we went to the West Coast first, and visited in Apple, California at his high school graduation. Then we went on down to Modesto. Rev. [Steven] Houck was in Modesto at that time. We stayed there for three weeks in a campground and enjoyed him and his family and their fellowship because we were at Hope Church when they came to Grand Rapids, and while he was in seminary they were visitors in our home often on Sundays. His children have always called me “Grandma.”

Then we went to where Rev. Koole was preaching in Redlands. We were only going to be there over the weekend, but he said, “Oh, just stay a couple more days and we’ll take you up the mountain.” So we stayed there awhile.

Then we went to Houston, Texas by the next Sunday. It was around Thanksgiving time we got there. So we went down to Corpus Christi and visited there, and came back to Houston and stayed through Thanksgiving. Then we might as well stay for Christmas. We never got to Florida. The next year we went down there [Houston] with our papers.

MHH: Because the congregation had organized at that time?

VH: Oh, they were already organized before we got there. Rev. Ron Hanko was preaching there at the time we went there. He had come in August of that year that we went there. Yes, they were organized. That was after Rev. Bekkering had been there, so they had been organized for awhile.

MHH: So you spent your summers here and your winters...
VH: Summers here in Grand Rapids and winters in Texas. When we brought our papers in ’87, we went earlier and we stayed later. We would leave late October and then come back early in April. We didn’t do that. They were delighted to have us. It’s the church I enjoyed the most because we were really needed. We weren’t just people filling in a pew. We were really needed in the whole thing.

They were always so happy to see us when we’d come back in the fall. I’ve just recently gone over the number of people who were our friends when we were there that are gone to heaven now.

MHH: So now you are living part time in Houston and part time in Grand Rapids. What happens next, Mrs. Hunter?

VH: Well, the last time that we went to Texas was the winter of 1996–1997. As we were coming home, my husband said, “I don’t think we can do this again.” The Interstate highways had become so complicated. You had to be in the right lane at the right time with that big rig. It was getting too hard for him at his age to do that. We had already talked to the people in Texas, and they understood why we would not be back again in the fall of 1997. So that was our last trip to Houston. We had plans to remain in Grand Rapids and during the summertime that we were there we found ourselves not having much contact with either of our two children who lived in that area. Ignacio and Dwight were very busy. Skip said to us at that point, “You might as well come to Doon.”

So we thought about it. We didn’t know where we were going to live. And there were two sets of fourplexes in Doon up the street from where Barb and Skip lived. I tried to contact the manager, and I didn’t get any answer for about a week. We were planning to go back to Grand Rapids. I was fixing lunch and decided all of a sudden to call Henry Tenbrock one more time. When he answered the phone, I said, “How do I get my name on the list to rent one of the apartments?” He said, “I have one vacant now, and you may have it. Come over in about two hours and I’ll give you the key.” We just felt that God’s providence was speaking to us again. So we made a complete move from Grand Rapids to Doon, Iowa.

I thought, now I’ve moved for the last time in my life. We were in Doon for almost eleven years, and Skip informed us that there was an occasion for him to change jobs. He said, “Will you move?” By then I had lost my husband. He had died in December of 2005, and this was in the spring of 2008. I said, “Yes, I’ll move.” The opportunity was in Edgerton, Minnesota. The school board gave him a contract, so in the summer of 2008 we came to Edgerton. We found the preaching as orthodox in Edgerton as we had found it in Grand Rapids, in Texas, and all the places in between that we had gone. The people here have been gracious to us, friendly to us, helpful to us in every way possible. I’m content with God’s obvious bringing us to this place.

MHH: That’s quite a story! Your commitment to the church certainly shines through all of the comments that you have made. You have certainly lived a very interesting life, and I thank you for sharing that with us. Before I leave you, I would like to ask one last question. Are there any issues that you would like to address or any opinions that you would like to give?

VH: I certainly have no complaints about the way we have been treated in any of the Protestant Reformed Churches that we have attended, either as a visitor or as a member. When I think about the fact that the relatively short time that we have belonged to the Protestant Reformed Churches, we’ve probably been members of more churches than people who grew up in the PRC (laughter). Of course, you don’t always like everything you hear. You don’t always like all of the people that you meet. But I would not have anything adverse to say. We have been treated well in all the congregations that we belonged to. For many years our summers when we were in Grand Rapids, we went to First Church. The people always welcomed us and treated us just as if we were members there. I can truthfully say that our membership in Houston was the one that made me feel the most used in God’s kingdom, because the congregation being so small, there were many things for everybody to do.

One thing I forgot. If anybody ever questions the sovereignty of providence, I have only to tell them about my life—the places God has taken me, the people he has placed in the places where I was which have brought me to this point in my life—I’ve been totally controlled by my heavenly Father. And to him I give the thanks and the glory.

MHH: That’s a wonderful note on which to end. Thank you, Mrs. Hunter, for sharing your life story with us. We wish you God’s blessing.
We have emphasized that too much stress is most often a contributing factor to depression and anxiety. To combat this two-headed monster of depression and anxiety, we must learn how to minimize stress. And to do that we must be guided by the Bible as we view ourselves and as we live our lives in a world filled with many pressures. In that connection we have in these articles touched on proper sleep and eating habits, on the proper way to deal with adversity and crisis in our lives, on the need to avoid sinful behavior which always brings with it trouble and sorrow, and finally on proper self-esteem.

Now we turn our attention to seeking God’s approval on our lives rather than living for the approval of others.

Most depressed people are overly concerned with the approval and acceptance of others. One of their biggest fears is to do something that will bring the disapproval of their peers. Often the driving principle that determines what they do or don’t do is to be accepted, approved and even praised by others. The drive to be accepted by their peers will even lead teens to join in activities that they know are wrong and that have the potential to get them into trouble with their parents and even the law. This is peer pressure at its worst.

This often arises out of low self-esteem. Those who see themselves as inferior and having little worth crave acceptance and the approval of others. They seek the approval of others that they may approve of and accept themselves.

But what stress this causes!

First of all, it is impossible to please everyone. There are always those that expect things of you that you cannot attain. Parents may have expectations of you that are unrealistic. Friends and family may expect you to fill a role for them that is impossible. An employer may simply be trying to use you for his own gain. It is very stressful to try to live up to everyone else’s expectations for you.

And as we have just noted, to please others often complicates your life with sinful behavior. There are always those who do not accept you unless you run with them in their sins. And that soon brings trouble and sorrow. Sin always complicates life with horrible stress.

Finally, there is the fact that the drive to please others will leave you wondering whether you made a good impression. You will find yourself rehearsing in your own mind how others reacted to you. Were they pleased? Did you fail in their eyes? This is stressful! And the stress of these things is almost always an essential ingredient of depression.

To avoid this, we must seek God’s approval, rather than men’s approval.

This is what we are told to do in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”

The meaning of this passage is very clear. God has given us work to do. As we have seen in the previous article, each of us in Christ has an important place of work in God’s kingdom for which he has uniquely fitted us. That work will change during the various phases of life. As teenagers, your work is to prepare yourselves for future work in God’s kingdom by receiving and embracing the training you receive in your home, church, and Christian school. For most of you, your work will soon include that of a husband or wife and then a parent. The future work for you young men will be to enter the workplace to earn a living for your family. The future work for you young women who become mothers will be primarily to be keepers at home (Titus 2:5). For some there will be the work of serving in the offices of the church; for others the work of teaching in the Christian schools. God has called each one of us to be a “workman” in his kingdom and fitted us for that work. We have God’s approval when we in Jesus Christ take up this work to the best of our abilities. And when we fall short due to our sinful nature, as we do every day, we are approved of God when we seek forgiveness in the blood of Jesus Christ. Those who study, i.e., exert themselves, to be approved of God as workmen in his kingdom need not be ashamed. Though everyone else would disapprove and shame us, we need not be ashamed when we have God’s approval.

And how wise it is to seek God’s approval. Who is it that cares for our needs, controls the events in our lives, and determines where we spend eternity? It is not the parent who is always critical and can never be pleased. It is not the friend that expects us
to fill a need that we cannot fill. It is not the group that will accept us only if we join them in sinful activities. It is God, who has saved us and given us the privilege of being “workmen” in his kingdom!

And do not overlook the fact that it is much easier to find God’s approval than others around us. What others require to give their approval is often difficult or impossible. What God requires for us as his “workmen” is attainable in Jesus Christ. Not only does God fit us wonderfully for the work he has for us, but he also gives us the grace to do it. In keeping with this Jesus said, “Take my yoke upon you...

For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29, 30).

What a weight is lifted from the Christian’s shoulders when he lives for God’s approval as God’s workman that needs not be ashamed, rather than for the approval of mere men.

One more thing we need to reflect on and that is the tendency of being a perfectionist. Most depressed people are perfectionists. That will be another article.

Rev. Slopsema is minister emeritus in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

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:
Maylee Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Karli Zandstra—Byron Center, MI
Bennett Kurt, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kurt & Valen DeJong—Crete, IL
Nathan Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brandon & Christina Huisenga—Crete, IL
Naomi Joelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel & Jessica Van Oostenbrugge—Grace, MI
Norah Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Gerrid & Kylie Mouw—Hudsonville, MI
Michael David, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brian & Shelly VanderKolk—Hudsonville, MI
Lawson William, son of Mr. & Mrs. David & Michelle Veldman—Hudsonville, MI
Carson Jacob, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jacob & Rebecca Wesorick—Hudsonville, MI
Charlotte Grace, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David & Michelle DeBoer—Hudsonville, MI
Isaac Michael, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Tina Mingerink—Hudsonville, MI
Gabriel Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael & Rachel Cnossen—Hudsonville, MI
Elyse Jordyn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jordan & Alyssa VanBaren—Hudsonville, MI
Jordan Wayne, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike & Kellie Jabaay—Redlands, CA
Felicity Susan, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Daniel & Rachael Miersma—Redlands, CA
Quentin Charles, son of Mr. & Mrs. Zachary & Lauren Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Ty Jameson, son of Mr. & Mrs. Charles & Katiedan Hopkins—Redlands, CA
Sadie Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mark & Melinda Moore—Spokane, WA
Jade Morgan, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jed & Heidi Pipe—Southeast, MI
Tillie Joy, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Garth & Stephanie McKinney—Southeast, 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:
Seth Bleyenberg—Byron Center, MI
Anna Maatman—Crete, IL
Megan Zevenbergen—Doon, IA
Juanita DeBoer—Lynden, WA
Riley Moore—Lynden, WA
Bethanne Howerzyl—Redlands, CA
Suzanna Smit, Redlands, CA
Abigail Feenstra—Redlands, CA
Benjamin Vasquez—Redlands, CA
Samuel Vasquez—Redlands, CA
Emily Horan—Southwest, MI

MARRIAGES

“For this God is our God forever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.” Psalm 48:14

Mr. Ethan Brummel and Miss Lanae De Jong—Crete, IL
SYNOD OF DORDT PART 7: THE REMONSTRANTS

While the war with Spain had been waged across the Netherlands, another war had been quietly simmering in the background. Jacobus Arminius, a professor at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, had been promoting a theology that opposed the five points of Calvinism.

When Arminius died in 1609, the same year as the truce with Spain, his followers began to push his theology on a broader scale. Freed from the warfare with Spain, the Remonstrants, as Arminius’ followers were called, published *Five Articles of the Remonstrants* and a war over biblical doctrine began.

Back then, there wasn’t the separation of church and state that we are familiar with here in the United States. Religious divisions were also political divisions. The controversy between the Gomarists, those holding to the five points of Calvinism led by Franciscus Gomarus, and the Remonstrants spread to the politics of the Netherlands as well.

Many leaders, including Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, sided with the Remonstrants. Johan van Oldenbarnevelt was an opponent of Prince Maurice of Orange and began gathering a militia in Utrecht to fight Prince Maurice if necessary.

What would Prince Maurice do? He could side with van Oldenbarnevelt and the Remonstrants and perhaps gain unity in the Netherlands once again. Or he could side with the Gomarists and maybe face a civil war against van Oldenbarnevelt.

In the end, Prince Maurice sided with the Gomarists, those who stood for the five points of Calvinism.

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

It’s time to pack your bags and prepare for a fun filled week!

Important items to include:

- Bible, Pen & Notebook
- Footwear for water activities strongly encouraged
- Modest swimsuit & beach towel
- Money for snack shop/gift shop
- Sunscreen & Bug Repellent
- Water Bottle
- Luau Banquet Attire

Consider downloading “The Psalter 1912” app for free time singing

*Note: The following linens and towels will be provided by the camp: a pillow, pillow case, fitted sheet, flat sheet, blanket, two towels, a hand towel, and a washcloth. Please note that you must bring your own beach towel.