THE ISSUE AT HAND

This month’s issue of Beacon Lights is an open edition, which means that it departs from our usual pattern of having a focused theme for all the feature articles. The open format provides an opportunity for writers to submit articles on topics they find interesting and profitable to share with other members in the body of Christ. Two of the feature articles this month fit this description. We thank Dr. Marco Barone and Mr. Brian Buiter for their willingness to contribute insightful discussions on the importance of joy and delight in covenant life with God and the proper view of assurance concerning covenant children who die in infancy. Both pieces of writing are fine examples of the kind of material we are happy to include as stand-alone articles in Beacon Lights.

Readers are encouraged to keep this practice in mind. If you have a topic that is of interest to you, please feel free to reach out to the editorial staff to find out if it could be included in one of our open editions. We are always eager to receive new articles and ideas from enthusiastic young people who are willing to contribute to the mission of Beacon Lights. Sometimes a college term paper or a written assignment for a high school class turn out to be far more interesting than you expected. If you’ve composed a piece of writing with spiritual relevance that was received favorably by a teacher at either of these levels, let us know so that we can consider it for publication. And if you are a teacher who is reading this sort of material, please encourage your students to polish their work and send it to us for consideration.

The open edition format for this month also provides us with an opportunity to publish written versions of a 2019 chapel speech by Mr. Nick Kleyn and a 2021 graduation speech by Prof. Brian Huizinga. These two speeches were separated by an unusual year during which time few chapels or graduations were held in Protestant Reformed Christian schools due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID19 pandemic. Our prayer is that this experience has renewed our appreciation for the privilege of Christian education, which includes the public gatherings that are part of a regular school year. May we never take for granted the simple pleasure of gathering in a gym or music room to meditate upon God’s word and sing his praises with fellow children of God!

We hope that you enjoy the diverse content of our feature articles this month along with the regular Current Events, Little Lights, and Devotional rubrics. In the next edition, we will return to a topical approach as we look forward to Reformation Day and the work of Christ in reforming his church.
TRULY CHRISTIAN POLEMICS

In a time of controversy, the church of Jesus Christ often becomes immersed in something we call polemics. This might be a new word for some readers, so it’s worth defining and explaining in some detail before we discuss how it fits into the Christian life. A polemic is a strong verbal or written attack on the position taken by another person. Like many of our English words, this one comes from the Greek language as a derivative of polemikos, which means “warlike” or “hostile.” Polemics, therefore, are fighting words.

The work of polemical writing is a difficult thing for anyone to do well. As a kind of persuasive writing, polemics have the purpose of convincing others that they are wrong by exposing their error. Convincing someone else that they are wrong is always hard, but especially so when the method that one must use is essentially negative. No one likes to be contradicted when it comes to matters of doctrine or the Christian life. Fighting words about the Christian faith are hard words to bring and even harder to hear.

Nonetheless, polemical writing is a necessary tool for the church to combat error both inside and outside its walls. Anyone who doubts this is directed to an excellent series of articles by Prof. Gritters in volume 88 of the Standard Bearer, which lays out the necessity and challenge of polemics in significant detail. Here we will be brief, focusing simply on the principles that ought to direct the way in which polemical writing is conducted.

Anyone who engages in the use of polemical writing as a tool for exposing and condemning error within the church of Jesus Christ ought to be concerned about how to use it as effectively as possible for the good of those who are in error. The temptation is to use polemical writing as a club to beat others into submission. This is unbiblical and usually leads to greater division rather than persuasion of a brother or sister in Christ. For a polemic of any sort to be an effective tool for exposing and condemning error in the church, it must meet all the necessary criteria outlined by the word of God in 2 Timothy 2:22–26.

Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.

Verses 25 and 26 of this chapter demonstrate that this passage is referring to polemics. The stated goal is for God to give repentance to “those that oppose themselves” to the truth, that they may be recovered “out of the snare of the devil.” This is serious business. It is a matter of salvation, not simply a matter of “foolish and unlearned questions” (v. 23) that so often find their way into the body of Christ.

At the same time, the passage also makes clear that this exhortation is aimed at controversy within the church and not society in general. Verse 22 indicates that the subjects of its admonition are those “that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” This passage is not about polemics against unbelieving persons and practices in the world. These are brothers and sisters in the church, and thus, the manner in which a writer composes his polemics matters enormously! From this passage we can extract four key criteria for effective polemical speaking or writing against
erroneous doctrine or practices in the church.

First, polemical writing must be truthful. This means that the polemic must have an objective standard against which it can be compared, which can only be the word of God. In the opening verses of this chapter, Paul exhorts Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus…and the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses” (vv. 1–2). As an inspired apostle, Paul gave to Timothy the word of God concerning sound doctrine and Christian practice. The standard of Scripture is the word of God against which it can be compared, which can be judged as correct.

Being truthful, however, means more than simply that the position being defended is formally correct. It also requires that the verbal methods and arguments being used are righteous (v. 22). A righteous argument is one that is honest, transparent, and consistent. It does not misrepresent or overstate the error it seeks to combat, nor does it attack the person who holds to this error. This bar is higher for polemical writing than any other sort of persuasive writing because polemics, by nature, assume the moral high ground. To seek good ends by dirty means will upset the effectiveness and purpose of polemics.

Second, polemical writing must be irenic—that is, aimed at peace (v. 22). The word irenic is another one that might not be in our everyday vocabulary, but it has a long and noble history in the church of Jesus Christ as a description of those who seek peace and reconciliation between believers who are at odds with one another. That one who is writing “warlike” words (polemics) could be seeking peace seems at first to be contradictory. But polemics and peace are not opposite ideas because peace functions as a goal while polemics are a methodology. It is therefore entirely possible to be seeking unity and peace while engaging in polemics—providing, of course, that the attitude and manner of a polemic are upright. In the context of the church, any polemic aimed at a target within its midst must seek to be irenic. A purpose other than unity and peace inherently tends toward schism, which is sin.

Third, polemical writing must be pastoral. By this we mean that it ought to work by means of gentle and patient instruction rather than by contentious striving (v. 24). This is necessary because polemics serve as a correction to erroneous thinking or practice in the minds and hearts of living, breathing people. Assuming that the goal is to mediate peace and unity among people who hold opposite positions, this is best accomplished in a posture of humility and meekness (v. 25). Very few people will be persuaded by one who comes in arrogance and accusation or in a contentious spirit of strife. But one who teaches gently, showing what is wrong and demonstrating what is right according to God’s word, is more likely to be heard. Proper correction may still hurt, but any pain administered ought to be at the hand of God and not from the violent words or attitude of any man.

Fourth, polemical writing must be loving. We end with this criterion because charity is the chief characteristic that ought to flavor every written or verbal exchange among those “that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (v. 22). It is also fitting here to remember that love may not be disconnected from truth at any point or used to overrule one who seeks to speak the truth of God’s word in correction to the church or its members. It is not loving to ignore fellow believers’ opposition to the truth of Scripture, or to allow them to flounder in the “snare of the devil” (v. 26). The call to charity, however, is the reminder to seek a fellow saint’s extraction from the snare by gently exposing and disassembling its mechanism—not ripping it free by brute force. The end might be the same, but at what cost to the body of Christ?

What true love looks like in the context of polemical discourse is beautifully illustrated by the following paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 with which we will end.

We could camp out here at length, using the criteria of love to illuminate what faithful Christian irenics, including polemical irenics, should look like. Loving critique takes time to understand its opponent, and has regard for his feelings; it is not motivated by a desire for one-ups-manship, to prove that one is just as smart as the opponent; it does not proceed from a conviction of one’s personal superiority,
or offend for the mere sake of being offensive. It does not insist that “it’s my way or the highway,” that everyone has to think exactly like oneself; it does not proceed from rankled personal feelings, a desire to get revenge for bruised pride; it does not take pleasure in discovering an error, so that one can look smart in comparison to the opponent’s folly, or have fun debunking it, but looks for truth wherever it is found, and is excited to reach agreement in the truth. It bears every insult, it takes the opponent at his word, it puts the best possible construction on his intentions and holds out hope in the possibility of persuading him, it is willing to sacrifice time, credibility, perhaps even friendships in the task of winning the opponent over from error to truth. All of these characteristics of love could warrant close attention—for how often even the most conscientious of us fails to conform our discourse to this standard.\(^\text{2}\)

\(^{2}\) Littlejohn, “Speaking the Truth in Love.”

We are called to obey God’s will out of gratitude because we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. The Heidelberg Catechism famously describes its third part as “how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance” (Answer 2), and Lord’s Days 32–44 are a detailed explanation of our walking in gratitude toward the Lord. This is indeed our chief motivation for obedience.

The confessions and Scripture, however, do not talk only of gratitude. They also talk about delight, joy, and love. Here are some examples with emphasis added to identify some key words:

Q. What is the quickening of the new man?

A. It is a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 90)

Q. What doth the tenth commandment require of us?

A. That even the smallest inclination or thought contrary to any of God’s commandments never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 113)

The elect in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves, with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of election pointed out in the Word of God—such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness, etc. (Canons 1.12)

We beseech Thee...that they may daily follow Him, joyfully bearing their cross, and cleave unto Him in true faith, firm hope, and ardent love. (Form for the Administration of Baptism)

We beseech Thee, show him Thy mercy, that he may become more and more assured in his mind of the remission of his sins, and that he may receive from thence inexpressible joy and delight to serve Thee. (Form of Readmitting Excommunicated Persons)

It is appropriate for these documents to mention joy, love, and delight. In fact, it is possible to be grateful to someone without necessarily delighting in or loving that person. In contrast, believers walk in the way of holiness because we love holiness, as it deserves to be loved. We love holiness because God is holy. More than that, God is holiness. And we love and delight to walk in godliness because it is in the way of our obedience that the triune God has been
pleased to transform us by his Spirit. We walk that way out of love for and delight in God in addition to our gratitude for his great saving benefits. We do this just as a faithful son obeys his good father, not simply out of gratitude (which ought certainly to be there), but because he loves his father and rejoices and delights in obeying him.

We have every reason for delighting in God’s beautiful holiness and in practicing godliness. God is beautiful. Even more than that, he is beauty. It is right to rejoice, love, and delight in our God who is true beauty. This beauty explains why God is attracted to and loves himself above all else: he is the standard of love and beauty in his own being. Prof. Herman Hoeksema states: “As an attribute of God, grace is that divine virtue according to which God is the perfection of all beauty and loveliness and contemplates himself as such with infinite delight.”

Related to this idea of beauty, we understand that God’s law is the reflection of his character. Every commandment is a glorious and beautiful revelation of his character to his people. Consider the following:

- Why shall we have no other gods before him? Because he is the only God, the sole creator of all things.
- We shall not worship any image because “there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God…eternal, incomprehensible, invisible…” (Ex. 33:20; Belgic Confession art. 1).
- We shall not take the name of the Lord in vain because God is his name (Ex. 3:14).
- We shall not steal because God is the creator and owner of all (Ps. 24). We shall not kill because God is life and is the only one who owns life and death (Deut. 32:39). We shall not lie because God is truth (Ps. 31:5).

As it is natural and right to delight in God who is holiness and beauty in himself, so it is natural and right to rejoice and delight in the law that reflects his holy character. Through obedience to that law, we are transformed according to his holy and beautiful image. In addition to their gratitude for God’s deliverances, the psalmists repeatedly mention their delight in and love for God’s law: “I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved” (Ps. 119:47). I encourage you to read though the psalms with this theme in mind.

Gratitude does not exhaust the motivation for our walking in obedience. When I truly love a person who is in authority over me, who loves me, and who cares for me, I enjoy that person’s company and delight in serving him. I also rejoice in pleasing that person. Similarly with God. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37). The triune God is not only our Lord, but our Father. And Jesus is not only our Savior, but our mediator and eldest brother. True love for him certainly involves gratitude, but it is not limited to gratitude alone.

Saints delight and rejoice in serving the Lord through an active faith because of all his benefits and because of who he is. Saints love God because of their justification and their sanctification in Christ. And they delight in and are attracted to such a beautiful God, desiring to be changed by grace according to his image. Taking on the image of God means that we become “partakers of the divine nature” (2 Pet. 1:4) in the way of obedience to his commandments. “Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Ps. 97:12).

Let us all go to Jesus in gratitude and delight! Not only have we full forgiveness for all our sins and shortcomings in Jesus, but we are indwelled by the regenerating and empowering Holy Spirit! Holding fast to Jesus and his finished work for us, and relying on the Spirit who Christ sent to dwell in us, let us all join the psalmist and pray: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law… Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works” (Ps. 119:18, 27).

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1 See especially Ps. 27:4; 29:2; 39:11; 45:11; 50:2; 90:17; 96:6, 9.
3 See especially Ps. 1:2; 37:4; 40:8; 112:1; and nearly all of Psalm 119.
In head 1, article 17 of the Canons of Dordt, we confess that “godly parents have no reason to doubt of the election and salvation of their children whom it pleaseth God to call out of their life in their infancy.”

The question that arises from this statement is, “What does this mean?” Do we have assurance that all our children who die in infancy are saved, head for head? Or is our knowledge on this subject limited, so that we don’t really know anything about the condition of such children’s souls? Answers to these questions are important since they touch on an experience that can be a great trial to parents—the loss of a child by miscarriage or death before they can confess the name of Christ.

**What does Canons 1:17 teach?**

First, the article instructs us not to doubt the election and salvation of our children who die in infancy. Whether you follow the English translation used by the Protestant Reformed Churches (“have no reason to doubt”) or the alternate translation (“ought not doubt”), the intended meaning is the same. To have “no reason to doubt” something means you assume that it is true. If you “ought not doubt” something, you should assume that it is true.

Second, the article limits our knowledge to what is revealed in Scripture. It starts by saying, “Since we are to judge of the will of God from His Word.” We must look at what Scripture tells us about the subject and make conclusions based on that. The article does not say “all children of believers who die in infancy are elect” because this absolute statement cannot be proven from Scripture. The article does say that we have no reason to doubt since nowhere in Scripture are we given reason to doubt the election of our infants.

Third, the article bases this instruction on the covenant of grace. Two scriptural concepts are presented in this connection: first, children of believers are included in God’s covenant (Gen. 17:7; Acts 2:39; and many other passages), and second, the children of believers are therefore holy (1 Cor. 7:14).

Article 17 instructs us to make the charitable assumption that all children of believers are elect unless proven otherwise by their manifestation of unbelief. It especially comforts grieving parents by exhorting them to look at God’s gracious dealings with us by maintaining his covenant in the line of generations, rather than to curiously inquire into God’s secret counsel.

**What have Reformed theologians taught?**

A brief review of various commentaries on this article by Reformed theologians demonstrates general agreement with the ideas explained above.

John Calvin, in a letter to a grieving father whose infant had died before being baptized, stated, “By virtue of what our children are saved, if not by that of the saying: I am the God of thy offspring? But for that they would not be capable even of being baptized. If their salvation is assured by the promise, and the foundation on which it rests is sufficiently solid of itself, we must not conclude that all the children who die without baptism go to perdition.”

Calvin is here emphasizing the fact that we trust God’s promise, and his statement that the children’s “salvation is assured by the promise” applies to all infants of believers.

Homer C. Hoeksema, in *Voice of Our Fathers*, limits the scope of our “not doubting” to a conscious knowledge that the matter of election and reprobation ultimately lies with God, but that based on the covenant of grace given in Scripture, we have reason to believe that a deceased child is elect. His example prayer over the grave of a dead infant clearly shows this: “To thee we consecrated that child, that it might be a child for thy covenant...we rest satisfied in thy way...knowing that thou...dost save thy children out of our seed.”

Hoeksema also lists the opinions of others prior to the Synod of Dordt who generally agreed that Christian parents must not doubt the salvation of their children, because the covenant

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promise is to them and their children. They also generally agreed that the children of unbelievers are reprobate, and that whether or not reprobation may also take place in children of believers who die in infancy is not something we should curiously pry into since Scripture cuts off all reason for doubting. Scripture always testifies of the good inclination of God toward them.

Prof. David J. Engelsma, in *The Covenant of God and the Children of Believers*, makes clear that the ground for Canons 1:17 is not that our children are holy in themselves, but that God establishes his covenant with us and our children.³ He notes that we don’t know with absolute certainty anyone’s election, other than our own, but argues that we have solid reason to believe that fellow church members (adults and infants) are elect. He also points out that all the examples in Scripture show that reprobate children of believers grow up to clearly manifest themselves as reprobates, and that these examples are authoritative for us in considering this question.

Rev. Martyn McGeown, in *Grace and Assurance*, agrees with Engelsma and even states that “God does not call the reprobate children of believers out of this life in their infancy. God causes the reprobate seed to grow to maturity, so that they can fill up their cup of their iniquity, and so that God can be justified in their destruction.”⁴ He points to examples in Scripture of Esau, the sons of Eli, and Absalom.

Dr. N. H. Gootjes, in a *Clarion* article titled “Can Parents Be Sure?”⁵ states that it is a “well established interpretation” of article 17 that the election and salvation of such children is certain, though some doubt the positive certainty of it. He claims that Canons 1.17 is in response to the false Arminian charge that the Reformed doctrine has God ripping infants from mothers and casting them into hell.

Cornelis P. Venema, in an article titled “The Election and Salvation of Children of Believers Who Die in Infancy: A Study of Article 1/17 of the Canons of Dordt,”⁶ states that this article in the Canons is remarkable in that it expresses “full confidence regarding God’s favor toward such children.” He agrees with Gootjes that the purpose of the article was to refute the Arminian charge. Venema also argues that if we allow doubt as to the election of such children, we open the door to doubting our own election. He concludes by saying that this is based on nothing but God’s good pleasure, as it is revealed in his word, according to the covenant of grace.

**Conclusion**

To carry on in the same vein as these theologians, we could add 1 John 2:19: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.” This verse clearly expresses the overall biblical truth that reprobation serves election—God reprobates the unbeliever in the service of his church. Applying this to the current discussion, we understand that the purpose of God is for reprobate children of believers to grow up in order for them to be used by God to try his people. Through this trial he will cause them to know his mercy and grace in a deeper way as they struggle with their loved one’s unbelief. For other passages that teach that reprobation serves election, see the parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13, Romans 11:25, and the many references in Scripture to chaff and wheat (e.g., Matt. 3:12).

In summary, we can affirm that there is no passage in Scripture that specifies the spiritual condition of dead infants of believers; however, the idea that God elects and saves such children aligns with what Scripture reveals about how God establishes and maintains his covenant. Therefore, we may and do have a certain confidence of their salvation, grounded in God’s gracious covenant established with believers and their seed. This is a great comfort to those whose children die in infancy or childhood before they can actively confess their faith in Christ.

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This article is the modification of a graduation address delivered for Hope PRCS in Walker, MI, this past June. The eighth grade class text was Isaiah 43:2 and the class theme “Preserved by Jehovah.”

“When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa. 43:2).

Water and Fire

How blessed is the knowledge of Jehovah’s preservation of us as promised in Isaiah 43:2.

Water and fire always threaten our safety. “When” says the text, not “if.” “When thou passest through the waters…and through the rivers…when thou walkest through the fire...” Although water is essential to life and the sprinkling of water in baptism is a beautiful sign, too much water can drown us, even as God used water to destroy the first world in the flood. Thus water (lots of water—“waters” and “rivers” plural) is sometimes used in Scripture as a symbol of destruction, as is fire, which burns hot and consumes. Waters and fires that threaten to destroy!

Water and fire are figures. The “waters” were literal waters for Israel when they approached the Red Sea, and the “rivers” were literal rivers when Joshua and all the people came to the Jordan with the ark. The “fire” and “flame” were literal when Daniel’s three friends were cast into Nebuchadnezzar’s furnace. However, the text is using a figure in which the overflowing water and burning flames represent the greatest adversities and difficulties that threaten the spiritual destruction of the individual believer and God’s church in the world. God does not promise to preserve our physical life should an enemy of the gospel tie us to a stake and set us on fire. God is promising the preservation of our soul.

There are three ways we might experience the waters and fires. First: in anticipation. Sometimes the difficulties loom before us like a Red Sea. We are not in it yet, but we see, anticipate, and dread it. Maybe what we fear as deep water or hot fire are the difficulties accompanying the first day or week at a new job or school. It is not uncommon for many incoming freshmen to tremble in fear as they look ahead at the size of their new school building, the large number of students, the new faces, the number of changes, the advanced curriculum, and all the pressures coupled with a sense of their own inadequacies and insecurities.

Second, sometimes the great adversities are unexpected. What began as just another day at work quickly became the day you will never forget as you fell off a roof and were paralyzed for life. Or you answered your phone to discover that your older sister was in a serious automobile crash, is being airlifted to the hospital, and your parents are racing to see her before she dies. Before you even have time to fear the water and fire, they suddenly surround you.

Third, other times our experience is that we are in the midst of the water and fire, and they are unrelenting. Faith grows dim; destruction seems certain. God brings a destructive kind of cancer, and in addition to the ravages of the disease itself, there are the intense chemo treatments and drugs that leave you nauseous and frail so that you feel mentally, emotionally, and spiritually deflated month after month. And the fear—will this bring death? Perhaps you endure crippling anxiety and periodic panic attacks, and even stop attending school for a time. Or perhaps your home does not feel like a refuge from the world but a battleground for your parents’ strained marriage. How long will these waters roar and this fire rage?

In addition to any personal adversity, there is always the adversity that threatens to destroy God’s church (“Jacob” or “Israel” in v. 1). When Isaiah first wrote these words, he was speaking from the prophetic viewpoint as he beheld Judah in captivity in Babylon, where they were far from their smoldering temple and where they would dwell seventy years surrounded by all the carnal pleasures of Babylon and the reproach of their cruel captors. The trouble was God’s chastisement for Judah’s sin.

Our world is so wicked, and Satan’s goal is to use all the immorality and the easy access to it through technology to overwhelm you in evil so that you reject God for a life of rebellion. How great also are the threats that can appear within the church in...
the corruption of the holy gospel, or in hatred and strife among biting and devouring brethren. Yet the deepest water and the hottest fire for the church is always the fear that in the greatest adversities, God is against her. True Israel always knows her sin and that she deserves God’s wrath. Thus she is tempted to fear the water and fire of Babylon’s hatred as an expression of God’s hatred.

**I Will Be with Thee**

How lovely is the promise of Isaiah 43:2!

*Jehovah!* When we are in distress, we need a protector who is greater than the water and fire and one who so loves us that he is willing to use his power to protect and preserve us. We are not greater than the water and fire (trust not in yourself!); neither are our parents, officebearers, teachers, or friends. But God is. Jehovah loves us. Jehovah has formed us. Jehovah has redeemed us. Jehovah has a covenant with us and calls us by name and promises to be faithful to Jacob-Israel forever. Even when Jehovah is angry with Israel, he will chasten his elect remnant in love and bring them to repentance and restore them.

*With us!* God is not merely watching over us when we are in the water and fire so that he sees us; he is actually with us as the Son of God was with the three friends in Nebuchadnezzar’s burning fiery furnace. Jehovah is with us by uniting us to his Son Jesus Christ so that we are “in Christ” by faith. When we are “in Christ,” we have a protective barrier that surrounds us: Christ. If the waters will touch you, they must surge past Christ. If the flames will touch you, they must burn through Christ.

The water and fire of God’s wrath, which we all deserve for our sins, cannot touch us. On the cross, Christ was submerged in the waters of God’s just judgment, and he suffered the flames kindled by God’s just wrath against our sins. That is our redemption. “I have redeemed thee, O Jacob!”

Now when the waters and fires of adversity come, God sends and controls them. He does that now in the exalted Christ. Christ sends and controls the fiery devil, fiery cancer, and whatever happens to you this year at work or school. We are in Christ and Christ will avert all water and fire or turn it to our profit.

Sometimes you feel all alone in the water and fire. God says, “I will be with thee.” Sometimes the church must pass through fires that cause so much hurt to the soul that you say something remarkable: “I would rather have my body burned in a fiery furnace than pass through these fires of adversity that cause so much pain, sorrow, and grief to my soul.” Nevertheless, the believer always continues with joy and gratitude because God is with us and strengthening our faith. Even when he sorely chastens us, he is with us in love.

“I will be with thee.” You believe him, don’t you? You see his faithfulness, don’t you, in your own life and in his history-long preservation of his church? He is with us in the water and fire.

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**Nick Kleyn, Jr.**

**HOW AND WHY I JOINED THE PRC**

In May of 2019, Mr. Kleyn was asked to give a chapel speech at Covenant Christian High School about how and why he moved to the US and joined the PRC. The following is a condensed version of that speech.

I was born and raised in Tasmania, a small island state south of mainland Australia, with a population of 500,000. It is almost on the exact opposite side of the world from Michigan. When I was growing up, I didn’t know anything about Grand Rapids or the Protestant Reformed Churches in America (PRCA). My journey to both started when I was twenty years old.

My parents, who were born in the Netherlands during World War II, both migrated to western Australia with their families in the 1950s. After settling, their families helped start the Free Reformed Church of Australia, which was a daughter church of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. So my roots are from a Reformed church background.
In 1988, I was twenty years old. We lived in a town called Burnie, Tasmania, population 20,000, and at that time we were members of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). But we had no minister. The EPC is a small denomination and back then had only five small congregations. The congregation in Burnie was around thirty people, and more than half of those were Kleyns and Bosvelds.

What the EPC did have was contact with the PRCA. I believe the EPC learned about the denomination through the *Standard Bearer*. This was before internet and cheap phone calls, so communication with the PRCA was initially limited to letters. But early in 1988, my uncle Albert Bosveld suggested we contact them to see if they had a minister whom they could send to us for a year. A few months after our letter, the PRCA agreed to send us Prof. Homer Hoeksema for a year. We couldn't believe it!

The son of Rev. Herman Hoeksema who helped start the PRCA, Prof. Homer Hoeksema arrived in Tasmania in July 1988 with his wife, Gertrude. He was recently retired from seminary, having just been replaced by Prof. David Engelsma. We found the Hoeksemas a house to stay in, filled it with furniture, and tried to provide for all their needs—I even lent him my 1972 Holden sedan. Prof. soon settled into preaching, teaching catechism, and Bible study. And could he preach! As a small group of believers that had never before been blessed by such preaching and teaching, we quickly fell in love with the Hoeksemas.

The Hoeksemas were a really neat couple. Prof. was well-known across the PRCA as being somewhat aloof and hard to interact with, but we in Burnie, Tasmania, didn't experience that. Maybe it was because we had never met or heard of him before and had no preconceived notions about him. It might have also been that because he was far from home with no other PRs around to see, he let his hair down around us! Either way, the man we grew to love was a great blessing to us.

I think Prof. loved being a pastor again, and he took up the work seriously, preaching three times every Sunday. He would preach twice in Burnie and would then be driven two hours each Sunday afternoon to preach in the town of Launceston. It was a big commitment. Mrs. Hoeksema was fun to have around too. She taught us how to sing in parts, beginning with Psalter 83. Though we were an a capella church, we didn't know how to sing parts and had lots of fun learning from her.

For those of us in Tasmania, Prof's time was to us a period in our lives where we got to hear solid, Reformed teaching like we had never heard before. It was also a time in which we learned about the PRCA. If your parents or grandparents remember Mrs. Hoeksema now, it's probably as a great storyteller. She spent many hours telling us about what the PRCA believed, about the split of 1953, about First church and the issues they had with safety during the race riots. When I think back, I feel privileged to have met and learned from the Hoeksemas.

At that time, the PRCA was also planning to send Prof. Herman Hanko for a few weeks to a conference with the EPC. A man in Tasmania named Alan Duff was making the arrangements, and on one of his calls to the United States (US), Sharon Hanko (Prof. Hanko’s daughter and now Rev. Daniel Kleyn’s wife) answered the phone. Alan suggested that Sharon should come to Tasmania with her father. She agreed and brought along her friends Deb Kuiper (my wife) and Joan Hanko.

The group arrived in September 1988. My brother Daniel and I got out of work early and drove two hours to Launceston to check out these American girls. We put on our Aussie charm, and over a period of ten days we showed the girls around
Tasmania and went to speeches by Profs. Hanko and Hoeksema. After the group left, Daniel and I went into letter-writing mode. We each wrote four or five letters per week, with eight to ten pages per letter. Each letter took ten days to get to or from the US, so it took about three weeks for us to get answers to our questions!

Then, in January 1989, Daniel and I visited the US for five weeks, during which time we each got engaged. Once home, I sold my property, my cars, everything, in preparation for moving to the US in May 1989. Deb and I were married in June 1989. A quick romance, for sure, but the Lord has blessed our marriage and has been with us.

Moving to the US came with some struggles, but I enjoyed the adventure of it. I was twenty-one years old, newly married to a beautiful wife, and adjusting to life in the US. Living here your whole life, you might not see the adventure in it, but for me, everything was new. In a sense, I was here by myself, the first Aussie of my family in the PRCA.

After learning to speak and understand the American version of English, I started a new job as an electrician. I had experience as an electrician in Australia, but working here was very different and felt like learning a new trade. I also learned to drive on the other side of the road (and had some close shaves!) I made new friends, most of them from Hope church in Walker, Michigan. Both that congregation and my new wife’s family welcomed me with open arms, and pretty soon I felt at home.

As a twenty-something living in Tassie, I was rather down about finding a godly wife. But God, through his providence, provided me with the best wife I could have asked for. I learned that God knows what is best for us. As you, young people, look forward to your futures, remember that God knows what will happen. Think about this: in just over a year, I went from not knowing anything about the US and the PRCA to falling in love, getting married, moving to Michigan, and joining a new denomination. Some of you young people may have similar experiences in the near future; you just never know what God has in store for you. Wait on him and make good choices!

Nick is a member of Grace Protestant Reformed Church and owner of Kleyn Electric, Inc.

**Current Events** Scott Van Uffelen

**GEORGE WASHINGTON’S TEETH**

Florida led the nation in tragic news and events in the last weeks of June. There were shark attacks, a condo complex collapsing into a pile of twisted metal and rubble, and a truck careening through a parade route killing one, critically injuring another, and almost hitting a convertible that was to drive Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz. These stories ran for days thanks to the sensationalized titles that served as clickbait offering details of tragedy, death, and blame.

Looking more closely at the final story, I believe there is something for us to learn in how the news relates stories and how we feast on the sensationalized tragedies of others. When the news first broke about a white Dodge truck careening through an LGBTQ parade, the news stations were calling the event a “massacre,” a cold-blooded act of homophobic revenge, even a deliberate attempt by right-wing radicals to kill Congresswoman Schultz. Emotional responses and irrational fears fed this news story for days and put everyone on edge in the Fort Lauderdale area. The official police report, offered days later, tempered these emotions, calling it an “unfortunate accident at the start of the parade.” The driver, a member of the Fort Lauderdale Gay Men’s Chorus, struck his own colleagues who were pedestrians in the parade, killing one and seriously injuring the other. His truck continued onward crossing all lanes of the road and crashed into a fence on the opposite side of the street where the congresswoman’s car was waiting to join the parade route. The seventy-seven-year-old driver, being unable to walk, had been chosen to have his truck lead the parade. Inching into the parade route, he suddenly accelerated, and the tragedy unfolded before everyone’s eyes, dutifully recorded on multiple phones and etched in the
bystanders’ memories.

The slow pace (two days!) at which the actual facts in the story unfolded serves as a reminder to us to be careful in rash assumptions and knee-jerk reactions. Emerging information was reported and logical conclusions were drawn. The story continued to grow and change as more and more facts were made known. Dozens of different accounts were written before the police presented their official report.

Facts disabled the unfounded bias and irrational fears with which the initial accounts began. One fact, a truck careening through a parade route, made this story newsworthy. Additional facts made it sensational. It was an LGBTQ parade. A congresswoman’s car was almost hit. There were facts, eyewitnesses, and videos, everything necessary to understand the event. Except the truth. There is no magic number on the quantity of facts needed to come to the truth, but the basic questions of who, what, when, where, why, and how get you awfully close most of the time. In this case, we had the who (the victims, potential victim, and the driver), the where, the when, the what, and the how. We were missing the why. Without waiting for the why, readers and observers filled in the blank themselves, something that we are very comfortable with doing as rational creatures.

This story reminded me of an assignment I had during graduate school. The internet was not the vast treasure trove of information it is now (yes, I pre-date Google!), but there was sufficient information online to do quality research. The assignment was to write down facts on a note card and circle the one where you went “Oh, wow! I did not know that!” or “Wait! Is this true?” The purpose of the assignment was to show that we rarely know all the facts and that our initial understanding rarely fits with all of them. The topic given to me was George Washington’s teeth. My notecard read as follows:

1. George Washington had dentures
2. He had his first tooth pulled when he was twenty-four
3. In his late fifties he started wearing dentures
4. His dentures being made out of wood is a myth!
5. He had multiple sets of dentures, but only one remains (on display)
6. These dentures are made of gold, lead, ivory, horse teeth, and donkey teeth
7. A second known set was made from human teeth: from slaves and poor people!
8. George Washington was a slave owner (three hundred slaves at the time of his death)
9. Washington purchased nine teeth from his own slaves (nine British pounds, about $100)

Number six was my “Wow” fact. Can you imagine having animal teeth in your mouth? Number seven was my “Wait a minute!” fact. I have not revisited this topic in twenty years, and some of the “facts” might have changed, but the principle remains. The more information I found, the more my thoughts on the topic and my understanding of the time period grew. I could have gotten by with only the first four or five facts for the assignment. Everything made sense and fit within the reasonable thoughts I had of our first president and the time period. Facts seven through nine made me both gasp and want to dig deeper into the story. I read one article after another on the topic of a man’s teeth! It was no longer about his poor oral health or his wealth, but now it was about slavery, the true cost of human life, and the conditions wherein people sell parts of themselves just to make ends meet. There is nothing new under the sun, and I should not have supposed the beginnings of our nation were any different, but the textbooks had not portrayed the time period so fully.

Young people, consider the news you read and how carefully and fully the news is presented. We are to be understanding of the times and to live in accordance with the proper understanding of what is happening around us. Learn from these examples, ask the right questions, and continue to dig for facts before coming to a conclusion. The truth is worth the effort.

Scott is a member of Zion Protestant Reformed Church and a teacher at Covenant Christian High School.
THE BEST SERMON EVER: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Every nation or kingdom has a set of rules for its citizens to live by. So too does the kingdom of heaven. Citizens who desire to honor their heavenly Lord will seek to follow these rules in his service. Our passage for devotions this month, Jesus’ sermon on the mount in Matthew 5–7, provides an instructive summary of what God requires of heavenly citizens. Here Jesus is speaking to the crowds and his disciples, explaining what characterizes such people. We could sum up the whole sermon with this phrase: you are salt and light in this world (5:13–16). But what does that even mean?

In Bible times, people didn’t have refrigerators. Salt is a preservative that kept their food from going bad. Salt removes moisture, which stops the growth of microorganisms that cause rotting and can make one who eats them sick. So why does Jesus call us salt? Part of his point is that the witness of his heavenly people repels the evil of this world like salt repels rot and decay. We are the salt in the evil culture around us. By the grace of God, this is what we are and who he has made us to be, for the power of spiritual salt is Christ.

Salt is also a seasoning. You can tell when salt is missing in a recipe, even if it was just a small amount. The recipe just isn’t right, and everything tastes a bit flat. In the world today, we see plenty of examples of nations that lack a Christian presence or history. These societies are spiritually flavorless without the influence of the gospel. Without Christ and his kingdom, the world is a dark and tasteless place. The world needs spiritual flavor, and according to Christ, his people are the salt that provides it. However, salt does no good if it is kept in the shaker. The flavorful purpose of salt is only realized when it leaves the shaker and reaches our taste buds. So too for the citizens of Christ’s kingdom, who are called to be in the world but not of it. When elect unbelievers come into contact with a true citizen of the heavenly kingdom, they may wonder, “What am I missing?” The gracious work of the Spirit using that salt gives them a thirst for living water. Not everyone will experience that desire (you aren’t sugar, you are salt!), but by God’s grace your saltiness will bring others to a living faith in the same Lord who loves you.

Being a light in the world carries similar meaning. Even the smallest flame is seen in a dark room. That is what disciples are in this very dark and sin-filled world—shining lights. The purpose of that light is to give glory to our heavenly Father. God’s intention is for the world to hear your confession and to see your acts of love for God and your neighbor. You are not to hide this light. Hiding this light means you aren’t showing your love for God and are instead trying to hide in the shadows of darkness. We need to shine our light so brightly that even the darkest of places become brightened to the glory of God.

So, what are the attributes of human “salt and light”? The beatitudes provide a good place to start. We are to be poor in spirit (5:3), meaning we are completely dependent on God for salvation and we refuse to rely on our own merits. Our sin causes us to mourn (5:4), and God comforts us by telling us we are forgiven by the blood of his Son. Meekness (5:5) does not equal weakness. Just like a “broken” horse controls its power and uses it for another’s will, so too does the meek disciple in relationship to Christ. We are to hunger and thirst for righteousness (5:6) and to pray that this thirst is evident in our lives. God has been merciful to us, so we must be merciful (5:7) to those around us! One who is pure in heart (5:8) is wholly devoted to God in heart, mind, and soul. Peacemakers (5:9) speak with their words and actions that God’s message of reconciliation through Jesus is the only means to bring peace where there is mayhem caused by sin. The response to people with these traits is often negative; thus we will be persecuted (5:10–12). However, we have peace with God, knowing he loves us and will richly bless us in heaven.

The spiritual standard that Jesus teaches in the sermon on the mount continues to build through
chapter 5. Unlike the teaching of the Pharisees, who emphasized the outward keeping of the law so others would see them, Jesus is focused on the heart. The phrase “but I say unto you” illustrates this difference. Jesus indicates through his teaching that he was not rejecting the Old Testament law but was rather come to fulfill every aspect of the law and the prophets. He ends chapter 5 by saying, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (v. 48). We can be thankful that Christ came to fulfill the law of his kingdom, for it is a standard we certainly cannot maintain by ourselves. As a reflection of his own perfect character, this law points us to Christ and the cross for complete fulfillment.

Having been saved and made righteous before God in Christ, we are freed to pursue a life of thankful obedience to the Lord of our heavenly kingdom. This sort of thankful living is reflected in our pursuit of other teachings from the sermon on the mount, which include Jesus’ instructions on giving to the needy (6:1–4), prayer (6:5–13), forgiveness (6:14–15), and fasting (6:16–18). By living in this way, we glorify God as shining lights in a world that is full of darkness and evil.

A person focused on kingdom work and the things of heaven will see God’s work more clearly in his or her own life. Conversely, if you are living a life that is focused on the darkness, it will be much harder to see that source of light that you have been given (6:22–24). Continue to work as a kingdom citizen and strive to see God more and more through a life of kingdom work. Build your life on the Rock that is Jesus Christ (7:24–27). When the rains, floods, and storms come, he will keep you steady. Others will see your peace in the storm and look to see where your strength is coming from. Live a life that makes the Rock on which you stand visible to every eye that sees you. Live a life that makes people hunger and thirst for the living water. Don’t build your life on the sand that is yourself; when the storm comes, you will fall. Cling to the Rock that is higher than you.

Sermon on the Mount Reading Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Read</th>
<th>Study Question</th>
<th>Sing or Pray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sept 8</td>
<td>Matthew 5:1–3; Isaiah 61:1-3</td>
<td>When was the last time you realized you were not in control and needed God’s help to even breathe?</td>
<td>Psalter #81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 9</td>
<td>Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10</td>
<td>Have your sins ever caused you to weep, or are you so comfortable that you are no longer astonished by them?</td>
<td>Psalter #12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 10</td>
<td>Matthew 5:5; Psalm 37:11</td>
<td>Are you using your power for your own personal gain or in service to the living God?</td>
<td>Psalter #90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 11</td>
<td>Matthew 5:6; John 7:37–38; John 4:1–45</td>
<td>Do you crave to read the Bible and to become more like Jesus as much as you crave status or human relationships?</td>
<td>Psalter #48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 12</td>
<td>Matthew 5:7; Matthew 18:21–35</td>
<td>Do you regularly judge others in pride? Do you ever stop to think of the mercy God has shown to you in Christ and change your attitude toward others?</td>
<td>Psalter #94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 13</td>
<td>Matthew 5:8; 2 Timothy 2:22</td>
<td>It is so easy for us to follow God’s laws just so men will see our works. What can you do to guard yourself from this sin?</td>
<td>Psalter #26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 14</td>
<td>Matthew 5:9; James 3</td>
<td>What are some ways to be a peacemaker?</td>
<td>Psalter #341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 15</td>
<td>Matthew 5:10–12; 1 Peter 3:8–22</td>
<td>Instead of a study question, look up churches that are persecuted in the world and pray for them specifically.</td>
<td>Psalter #187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 16</td>
<td>Matthew 5:13–16; Ephesians 5:1–21</td>
<td>Are you letting your light shine? Is your salt coming out of your shaker? Talk with your family and friends about how you can be better salt and light.</td>
<td>This Little Light of Mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 17</td>
<td>Matthew 5:17–20; 2 Timothy 3:10–17; Romans 9:30–10:4</td>
<td>Jesus followed the law perfectly because he loved God with all his heart. Is your heart in it, or are you living the way the Pharisees lived?</td>
<td>Psalter #40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 18</td>
<td>Matthew 5:21–26; James 4:1–12</td>
<td>Do you struggle with anger? What other sins does anger cause like a domino effect in your life?</td>
<td>Psalter #301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 19</td>
<td>Matthew 5:27–30; Psalm 19:14</td>
<td>Do you hold yourself and fellow members of the body accountable by calling out the sin of lust? Are you helping your fellow members to fight and flee from this sin?</td>
<td>Psalter #334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 20</td>
<td>Matthew 5:31–32; Deuteronomy 24:1–4</td>
<td>Can you explain why you don’t believe in divorce and remarriage? Are you able to be a peacemaker with others who disagree with you?</td>
<td>Psalter #360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 21</td>
<td>Matthew 5:33–37; Proverbs 10:19</td>
<td>Are you known for your honesty? Or are you known for being a good liar? Do people believe you when you make a promise?</td>
<td>Psalter #21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 22</td>
<td>Matthew 5:38–42; Luke 6:32–36</td>
<td>How do you resist the urge to retaliate against someone who has hurt you? What is the right way to flee revenge?</td>
<td>Psalter #91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 23</td>
<td>Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 10:25–37</td>
<td>Do you pray for those who hurt you? How does this affect your ability to forgive and respond in love?</td>
<td>Psalter #113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 24</td>
<td>Matthew 6:1–6; Matthew 23:5–7</td>
<td>Are you motivated to serve others to hear the praise of men, or because you love God and seek to glorify him?</td>
<td>Psalter #19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 26</td>
<td>Matthew 6:16–18; Psalm 35</td>
<td>Have you ever fasted? Is this still a good practice for the child of God in the twenty-first century?</td>
<td>Psalter #184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 27</td>
<td>Matthew 6:19–24; Matthew 19:16–30</td>
<td>Are any of your possessions an idol to you? Are there any of them (maybe a phone?) that you can’t live without?</td>
<td>Psalter #428</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 28</td>
<td>Matthew 6:25–34; Philippians 4:10–20; Job 38–40:2</td>
<td>What point is Jesus trying to make with the two pictures of nature he uses to explain anxiety? What does it mean to seek the kingdom of God first?</td>
<td>Take It To the Lord in Prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 29</td>
<td>Matthew 7:1–6; Proverbs 9:7–12</td>
<td>How can you guard from the sin of pride in judging others? Who are the dogs and pigs that Jesus is describing in verse 6, and what are the holy things and pearls?</td>
<td>Psalter #69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sept 30</td>
<td>Matthew 7:7–11; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Peter 5:6–7</td>
<td>Do you trust that God’s will is truly best for you? Do you pray that God’s will be done in your life?</td>
<td>Psalter #48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 1</td>
<td>Matthew 7:12; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 22:37–40</td>
<td>Is there anyone in your life who makes the “Golden Rule” hard to follow? Why is this?</td>
<td>Psalter #13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 3</td>
<td>Matthew 7:15–20; Matthew 24:3–28</td>
<td>Are you able to identify false prophets? What are the “fruits” that you should be looking for?</td>
<td>Psalter #21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 4</td>
<td>Matthew 7:21–23; Romans 2:12–29</td>
<td>Have you ever benefited from the teaching of a person who turned out to be a false prophet? Is this possible?</td>
<td>Psalter #10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 5</td>
<td>Matthew 7:24–27; Ezekiel 13:10–14; Psalm 118:22–23</td>
<td>What are some examples of the rain, flood, and wind that threaten to knock down the spiritual houses of modern-day Christians?</td>
<td>Psalter #36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 6</td>
<td>Matthew 7:28–29; 2 Timothy 3:16–17</td>
<td>Jesus’ audience was astonished at his teaching. What part(s) of the sermon on the mount astonished you as you studied this month?</td>
<td>Psalter #14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct 7</td>
<td>Matthew 5:7</td>
<td>How often do you turn to the sermon on the mount to remind you of what it means to be a kingdom citizen?</td>
<td>Psalter #428</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Laura a member at Zion Protestant Reformed Church and a homemaker in Hudsonville, Michigan. She is temporarily filling in for our regular contributor Abby Van Solkema who plans to return to this rubric after a short break this summer.
“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest” (Prov. 6:6–8).

For school-age children, you are now going back to school this month after the summer break. Adults are going back to more full-time work after the vacation season of the summer. September is a time to focus on hard work and the labors that God gives us.

We can be tempted to shy away from doing that work. We love the rest of summer. We love being able to do what we want instead of having to do the work required of us. It can be tempting to be lazy and refuse to put effort into the work God puts before us. But God calls the person who is capable of working and yet refuses to do so a sluggard—a lazy person. Laziness is different from taking time to rest and become refreshed. God provides healthy rest, knowing the weakness of our bodies. But for those who are strong and able to work, God commands work and provides the work he has ordained for each person.

For the ant, God gives the work of gathering food and storing it for the winter so that the ant colony will survive. The ant works hard all summer to find food, and God has ordained by his good pleasure to use that work as the means to keep the ant and its colony alive. So too, God provides daily bread for his people. He uses our hard work, whether as students now or when we are adults later, to provide for our families and for the church.

The task before you as students this year may appear daunting. You might feel like a little ant surrounded in a large world with a large and heavy burden to carry on your shoulders. Pray to God for the strength to complete the work he gives you to do.
**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:
- Declan Scott & Brylee Grace, children of Mr. & Mrs. Bryan & Elisabeth Landheer—Byron Center, MI
- Jonah Peter, son of Mr. & Mrs. Andrew Lenting—Crete, IL
- Adriana Jane, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Mingerink—Crete, IL
- Jonah Perry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph & Sherry Mantel—Doon, IA
- Eva, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad & Leanne Pipe—First, MI
- Grayson Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan & Taylor Vitale—Georgetown, MI
- Graham Henry, son of Mr. & Mrs. Austin & Rachel Brower—Hope, MI
- Liam Alvin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel & Larissa Rau—Hope, MI
- Edmond Douglas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jon & Tina Mingerink—Hudsonville, MI
- Carly Jade, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Mitch & Jenn Zuverink—Hudsonville, MI
- Quinn Renae, daughter of Rev. & Mrs. David & Carisa Noorman—Southwest, MI
- Ruby Lou, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Tedd & Abby Van Solkema—Trinity, MI
- Grayden Jay, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jared & Karli Zandstra—Unity, MI
- Elise Mae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Preston & Karissa Crich—Wingham, CAN
- Dean Bradley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Liam & Kari Kikkert—Wingham, CAN
- Mr. Fred Lewis—Wingham, CAN

**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:
- Caroline Duistemars—First GR, MI
- Kaitlyn Dykstra—First GR, MI
- Leah Gritters—Hull, IA
- Zoe Groeneweg—Hull, IA
- Shawna Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
- Sierra Meyer—Hull, IA
- Taya Dykstra—Lynden, WA
- Thomas Heystek—Lynden, WA
- Laci Kooienga—Lynden, WA
- Joshua Houck—Peace, IN
- Emma De Vries—Randolph, WI
- Jennifer Hoksbergen—Randolph, WI
- Grant Kooiker—Randolph, WI
- Fred Lewis—Wingham, CAN

**MARRIAGES**

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

Mr. Ryan Westra & Miss Meghan Bennett—Cornerstone, IN
Mr. Douglas Timmer & Miss Elisabeth Van Drunen—Georgetown, MI
Mr. Torrey Heynen and Miss Hannah Baker—Hull, IA
Faith PRC Young People’s Convention 2022

rejoicing in our God

Psalm 63
August 1-5
Camp Cedarmore - Bagdad, Kentucky

https://prcconvention.com