
Beacon Lights

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*“Do violence to no man,
neither accuse any falsely; and
be content with your wages.”*

Luke 3:14b

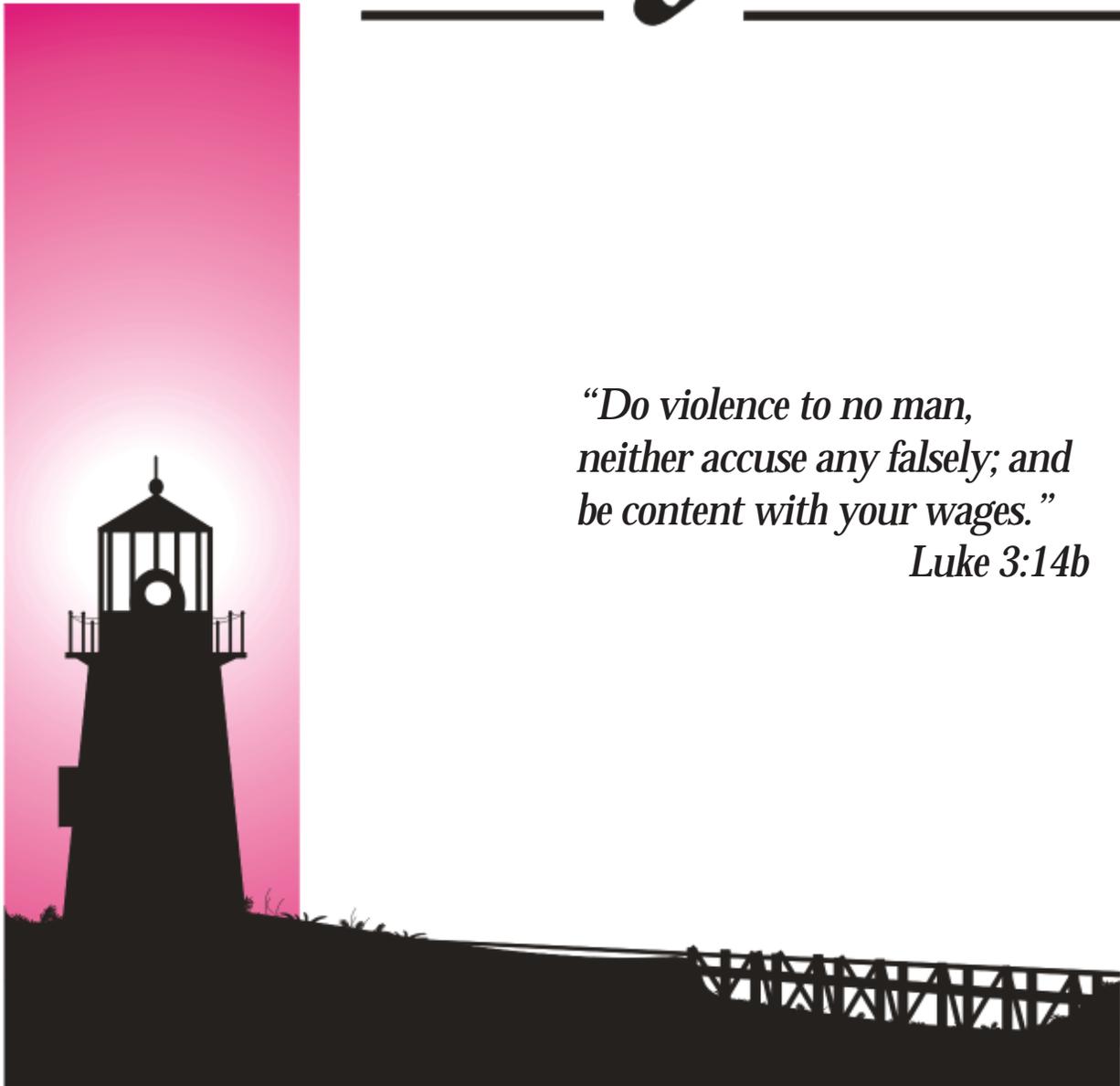


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Children Of Time Reformation— Are We?

by the late Rev. Herman Veldman



Again we are about to commemorate what the undersigned considers to be the greatest event within the Church since the days of the apostles. God, Who alone does His work throughout the ages, accomplishes this work by means of the weakest instruments and when His time is come. The Lord has chosen the poor, the base, the ignoble, the despised of this world. Hence, the reformer, Zwingli, merges from an alpine shepherd's hut; Melancton comes from an armourer's shop; and Luther is born in the cottage of a poor miner. The time had come when the Church of God was about to be released, delivered from the shackles of Rome, from the spiritual imprisonment of the Roman clergy, and return to the freedom of the Word of God and the service of and fellowship with the alone and ever blessed God. Unto this end the Lord raised up a man, Martin Luther by name, lawyer-monk-priest-doctor of Divinity, who, on the thirty-first day of October, 1517, four hundred and thirty-two years ago, ignited the spark which set the entire Church ablaze, when he nailed his ninety five theses to the church door at Wittenberg the evening before the Catholic All-Saints Day.

What is the Reformation, its chief significance, and what is the calling which this tremendous movement enjoins upon us? We pride ourselves in the fact that we are the children or sons of the Reformation, but what does this mean? October 31 is and should be observed by us with the greatest joy and the most profound gratitude. But this also implies that we must walk in the steps of the Reformation, must also reveal ourselves as true sons and daughters of this great movement of God.

The Reformation, from the viewpoint of Luther's role in this tremendous movement, was almost purely soteriological, a matter of personal salvation, of rest and peace for his soul. Who is not acquainted with his unceasing, feverish quest for rest and peace for his troubled, sin-laden soul? He was always brilliant in his studies, and his father, recognizing this ability in his son at an early age, resolved to give him a thorough education and prepare him for a place of prominence and distinction in the world. Martin was to become a doctor of law. While attending the university at Erfurt, after having completed preliminary study at Mansfield, Magdeburg, and Eisenbach, the intrepid German reformer came under the preaching of an evangelist preacher in that city, who boldly exhorted his hearers to read the Bible, and preached sin and condemnation. Through the instrumentality of this preacher, Luther was brought to a consciousness of sin and guilt, which began to plague and torment him more and more. Thereupon Luther had gone forth in search of a Bible, but was unable to find any.

It was this consciousness of sin and guilt and his feverish quest for rest and peace for his tormented soul which determined the reformer's career. This explains why he now decides to abandon his career as lawyer, and also, despite the vehement protests of his friends and the denunciations of his father, to enter the quiet of a convent, there to give himself wholly unto the Lord. In this convent he fulfills all the duties and obligations laid upon him, constantly in search of peace for his troubled soul; and there he finds a Bible, reads it untiringly, and becomes acquainted with the truth that salvation is of grace alone, and with

the wonderful words, "The just shall live by faith alone." Later, Luther becomes a priest and doctor of Divinity.

At this time in his life, however, Luther had not as yet broken with Rome, and he continued to view the Church and his salvation as inseparably connected. It is because of this that he journeyed to Rome, begins to climb Pilate's Staircase, stops in the midst of his ascent, and flees from the place in horror and terror, when the truth of God's Word, that the just shall live by faith, strikes into his consciousness as a thunder bolt. While in Rome he had been amazed and profoundly shaken by the corruption of the Church which he had witnessed there. Returning home, he pondered upon his spiritual problem and the now thoroughly familiar words of Scripture, "The just shall live by faith," began to take ever deeper root in his heart and soul. Soon after this incident, he opposes the shameless Tetzal who was selling indulgences, and, in opposition to this shameful practice, nailed his ninety five theses to the church door at Wittenberg on October 31, 1517, the evening before the Catholic All-Saints Day. This act of Luther was the spark which has set the entire Church world ablaze. Finally, he was put under the ban, but nothing could separate him from the blessed consciousness of his justification and forgiveness of sins; and his words, spoken at the Diet of Worms in April of 1521, "Here I stand, so help me God," have resounded and re-echoed throughout the ages.

Now we are enabled to understand the chief significance of the Reformation. The important heritage of this tremendous movement is the liberation, the freeing, the unshackling of the Bible, the written, infallibly written Word of God. Luther knew that he obtained peace for his soul through the Bible. He therefore, set out, not to destroy the Church but to reform it, and he began to denounce the corrupt practices of the Church, which bound the consciences of the people of God and deprived them of the blessedness of forgiveness. He would have the Church return to the Scriptures. In this, however, he was frustrated and opposed and finally put under the ban. The reformer, however, refused to budge; he clung to the Word of God; and later translated the Scriptures into the German language, the language of the people. And so the Bible had been removed from its shelf of retirement and bondage, and once more became the property of the common people.

What is the implication of this tremendous truth for us, especially for us as young people? We pride ourselves in the fact, do we not, that we are sons and daughters of the Reformation. Do we rejoice in the fact that the Scriptures have been removed from their shelf of ecclesiastically forced retirement and returned into the hands of the common people? If so, permit me, then, to ask a few pertinent questions. Do we acknowledge the Word of God as the sole standard of all life and doctrine? Do we bow before that Word as having absolute authority? Do we constantly examine all things, our Confessions and also ourselves, in the light of that Word? Do we really rejoice in the possession of it, which must imply that we study it? It can hardly be said of our young people, generally speaking, that they really busy themselves with the Scriptures. Do we read spiritual literature, spiritual books, and do they serve their purpose of leading us to the Bible?

We are indeed the sons and daughters of the Reformation. Let us, then, also walk as such. May it indeed be said that the Word of God is a lamp before our feet and a light upon our path. The Word of God has been liberated from its Roman Catholic bondage. May it be that liberated book also among us. And remember, as Protestant Reformed young people, we occupy the position that we may read those Scriptures in the most glorious light which has ever been cast upon the blessed Word of God. The Word has been liberated and is free; let us study it, conscientiously and prayerfully, and we, too, shall be free, yea, free indeed. ❖

Rev. H. Veldman was a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches from 1932 to 1978. This article was reprinted from the November 1949 issue of Beacon Lights.

Be Content With Your Wages

By Lynette Moelker

The summer of 1929 was a hot, dry, Pennsylvania summer. The whole country was in the midst of a depression and many farmers were struggling to pay for their farms. God used one family's struggle to show a young boy the truth.

Sam breathed the warm summer air as he walked through the forest and down the path that leads to his family's farm. The owl called out from a branch on his right. The crickets and frogs sang their melody. He looked up at the full moon amazed at how bright it made the night. A slight fog was rolling in.

Sam ran his fingers through his dirty blonde hair as he thought about the car he had passed on the side of the road. The car belonged to Mr. Pennytight, the owner of the bank in town. The hood was still hot when he had touched it, but he didn't see anyone in the car.

"I wonder why Mr. Pennytight would be out this late?" Sam thought, as he continued down the path.

Sam was coming up to the little bridge that goes over Bar Creek, when he heard voices. He quietly tiptoed from tree to tree peeking around to see who it was.

"Aren't you finished yet?" a female voice said.

"No. Now keep a look out. There isn't going to be anyone out this late so you don't have to worry." A male voice retorted.

"I don't like this, Max. Can't we just take it home with us?" the female voice pleaded.

"No! We don't want anyone to be suspicious, do we?" the agitated male voice responded. "Come on, Liz! I'm finished now. Let's get going."

The couple appeared from under the bridge and made their way toward Sam. He ducked into the brush, too scared to confront them, and too tired to run.

After they passed, he sat there for a while wondering why they had been under the bridge. Of course his thirteen-year-old curiosity got the better of him and he went to take a look.

The light reflecting from the moon on the water allowed him to see the sloping banks of the creek quite well. Sam climbed down the bank and searched for anything that might be out of place. He saw footprints leading under the bridge. The creek was very shallow because of the drought. He waded into the creek to look under the bridge. The cool water rushed past his feet as he looked around.

Sam saw loose soil turned up and stamped down where the bank and bridge met. He climbed the bank and knelt near the upturned soil. As he brushed some of the soil away an old seed bag was revealed. He dug with his hands until the bag was free.

"Wow!" Sam exclaimed, "They were hiding *money* and lots of it!"

Sam decided it was safer to put it back just as he found it and forget he had ever seen it. He hid the money, but could he really forget about all that money? Once again he began his long walk home.

"Samuel Marsh, where have you been?!" Sam's mom asked as he walked into the kitchen early Saturday morning.

"I had to work late at the mill, Mom. But I made extra money for us!" Sam answered.

His mom smiled at him because he was such a good boy to be caring about his family like that. "Well, you'd better get a little sleep before your father gets you up for chores."

Sam's mom didn't notice the mud on his clothes because they were usually dirty from the mill. He climbed the squeaking stairs to the loft where he and his three sisters slept. Soon after he said his prayers he was fast asleep and dreaming of the money in the forest.

"Sam! Get up! I've already let you sleep longer than I should." His father called up the stairs.

Sam got dressed and rushed downstairs. He sat down to eat a little oatmeal, and his father read the Bible. Then they prayed together before starting a long day's work.

They began their morning in the barn. They milked the cows, checked all the plow equipment, and harnessed the plow horse. They were ready for a day of plowing.

The day went on rather uneventfully. Chores were done by all members of the family. Sam's mother and the girls gathered eggs, washed clothes, and weeded the garden. Sam and his father got the soil ready for planting. At lunch, as the family all sat together, they talked about other farms that weren't doing very well. After reading and praying, Sam and his father made their way to town in their mule-drawn cart.

At the general store Sam overheard the owner talking to another customer.

"I know, Mark, I never thought that our town bank would ever be robbed, but sure enough! It happened last night. The two that robbed it stole Mr. Pennytight's car and were found dead in the ravine this morning. The fog was so thick that they didn't see the turn in the road. They drove down into the ravine hitting a tree at the bottom."

"Really? Who were they?" Mark inquired.

"They were a couple from Rose County just east of here. They lost all their money and their farm because of these hard times." Their names were Maxwell and Elizabeth Browsfeld," said the owner, and then left to help a customer.

Sam's eyes grew large as he thought back to last night. Their names were Max and Liz so the money that he dug up must have been stolen from the bank. Since he had passed Mr. Pennytight's car just a short distance from where the accident happened, it must be them! Now he was the only one who knew where all that money was.

"Sam? Are you ok?" Sam's father asked. "You look a little pale. Is everything all right?"

Sam nodded 'yes' and they left for home.

On the ride home Sam thought about the money and wondered what he should do. His father's farm is on the verge of being taken by the bank and all that money would surely pay off the farm. Sam could bring home a little of the hidden money every time he came home from the mill. No one would ever know he had the stolen money, but *God* would know. Sam couldn't decide what to do. He continued to think about it for the rest of the night. Even when he was supposed to be having his own devotions his mind was clouded with thoughts of the money.

Sunday morning his family got ready and drove to church. Even sitting in the pew before the service started, he was thinking about the money. Their minister preached

a beautiful sermon on Lord's Day 42; "What the eighth commandment is." He preached that any way one tries to obtain what is their neighbor's is stealing. He made it clear that one should be content with their wages (Luke 3:14) and that everyone should promote their neighbor above themselves in every instance. Sam tried hard to push thoughts of the money to the back of his mind so he could listen to the sermon, but it didn't work. They kept coming back to him.

At home that night Sam prayed to God, giving thanks for His guiding light. Then early in the morning, while the moon was still lighting the sky, Sam quietly left the house. He followed the path to the bridge over Bar Creek. While the owl watched and the frogs sang, he dug up the money and carried it back to his house. By the time he got home his family was already up and sitting around the table. Sam plopped the bag of money on the table, to the surprise of his family, and began to tell the whole story. He finished by telling them that he intends to bring it back to Mr. Pennytight.

His parents said, "Yes, that is the right thing to do." His father said they would ride into town as soon as morning chores were finished.

At the bank, Sam and his father were greeted by the skinny, spectacle-wearing Mr. Pennytight. Sam told him how he found the money and that it was all still there.

"What a fine young man you are." Mr. Pennytight said. "I would like to give you something to reward you for your honesty. Now, let's see, what would you like?"

Sam had an idea and he whispered it into Mr. Pennytight's ear.

Tears came to Mr. Pennytight's eyes as he looked at Sam and then at Sam's father. "You have a fine young man here Mr. Marsh. Yes, a fine young man. I would be glad to do that for you, Sam."

On the way home Sam told his Father, "I asked Mr. Pennytight for some extra years on the farm loan. During those years I will use the money I earn at the mill to help you pay off the farm loan.

Sam's father smiled at Sam, knowing God was pleased. ❖

Lynette is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan. This story is a Beacon Lights writing contest winner.

Our Good Works and Degrees of Reward and Punishment (1)

Reverend Laning,

If our good works profit us nothing, then why do we believe that there will be different levels in heaven?

What kind of levels are the levels of heaven? If heaven is perfect and we are perfectly happy, will the people in levels higher than us be *more* happy, or *more* perfect?

If all sins are equal, why are there different levels of hell? (or aren't there?)

My friends and I have been discussing this for awhile and we have only come up with more questions. If you could try to explain these, that would be greatly appreciated. You could also write about it in the *Beacon Lights*. I think my friends would appreciate that.

Thank you,
Laurel Lotterman

Dear Laurel,

I thank you very much for your letter. You ask some very important questions on some subjects that are very commonly misunderstood. You also expressed your questions very well, and I would like to take a number of articles to answer them.

Saved Solely by Christ's Works; Yet Rewarded According to Our Works

With regard to our good works, the following two statements are both true. They are not contradictory.

- Our good works do profit us.
- Our good works are not even part of our righteousness before God.

Let me explain the second statement first. When we ask the question, Why are we righteous in the eyes of God? The answer is: Solely because of what Jesus did for us in our place. Our good works cannot contribute anything, because God can approve of only perfect righteousness, and even our best works are imperfect and defiled with sin (Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 24).

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The unbeliever cannot do any good works. The believer can do good works; but in this life even his best works are defiled with sin. He cannot do even one perfect work, as long as he still has his sinful nature.

But it is still the case that our good works do profit us. God rewards us according to our works, so that the more good works we do, the greater our reward. At first this may seem contradictory, but we can see clearly that it is not when we consider the following:

- The reward we receive is not a reward of merit, but of grace (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 63). In other words, it is not something that we have earned, it is a gift of God's grace that we receive because of the work of Christ.
- God rewards us *according to* our works, but not *on the basis of* our works. We are rewarded on the basis of what Christ has done, not on the basis of anything that we have done. The blessings God's people receive are blessings Christ purchased for them by His suffering and death. But God gives to us these blessings in a way that relates to the good works we perform. The more good works we do, the more blessings we receive. In this life, God is constantly rewarding us according to our works. And the reward we will receive at the final judgment will also be according to our works.

It is important that we see that Scripture and our Confessions clearly teach that God rewards us according to our works. Let us begin with our Confessions. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches this briefly in Question and Answer 63:

Q. 63 What! Do not our good works merit, which yet God will reward in this and in a future life?

A. 63 This reward is not of merit, but of grace.

Here the Catechism says that God does indeed reward our good works, and that He does so both in this life and in a future life. It then adds that this reward is not a reward of merit, but of grace.

In Article 24 of the Belgic Confession we confess the same truth:

Therefore we do good works, but not to merit by them (for what can we merit?), nay, we are beholden (i.e. indebted—JAL) to God for the good works we do, and not He to us, since it is He that worketh in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure.... In the meantime, we do not deny that God rewards our good works, but it is through His grace that He crowns His gifts.

God is the one who graciously works in us so that we will and do the good works, and then He rewards the very good works that He gave us the grace to do. Thus we see that this reward is all of grace.

When we turn to the Bible, we will see that our Confessions rightly summarize the teaching of Holy Scripture. There are a number of passages that I would like to look at in this regard, and, Lord willing, I will begin with this next time. ❖

Do you have a question that has been on your mind? Something that came up at school or during a discussion with friends or co-workers? You can be sure that there are many more people reading these words who have had the same question and are looking for answers just like you. Rev. Laning of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan is waiting to answer them. Don't worry, if you would rather your name was not published with your question, we will honor your request. We do, however, ask that your name and either your home or email address be included so that Rev. Laning can respond privately if need be.

Please send your question to:

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Things Don't Just Happen

*Things don't just happen to us who love God
They're planned by His own dear Hand,
Then moulded and shaped and timed by His clock.
Things don't just happen, they're planned.*

*We don't just guess on the issues of life,
We Christians just rest in the Lord,
We are directed by His Sovereign will
In the light of His Holy Word.*

*We who love Jesus are walking by faith
Not seeing one step that's ahead,
Not doubting one moment what our lot might be
But looking to Jesus instead.*

*We praise our dear Savior for loving us so,
For planning each day of our life,
Then giving us faith to trust Him for all
The blessings as well as the strife.*

*Things don't just happen to us who love God,
To us that have taken our stand.
No matter the lot, the course, or the price:
Things don't just happen, they're planned.*

This poem was found in Laurie Buiters' needlework box in "Ma Buiters'" condo basement. Laurie intended to make a needlework project of it some day. We're not sure who wrote it, but it was special to her in her afflictions. She passed on to glory on April 30, 2005.

Rev. C. Hanko

Chapter 5

School Days

edited by Karen Van Baren

Editor's Note: Rev. Hanko began school when Christian education was in its infancy. Nevertheless, the education he received was superior one, equipping him for his life's work as a pastor.

On a Saturday afternoon in the latter part of January, 1912. My sister Sena washed me and got me ready for a shopping spree. This involved going to the Wiersma's store on Logan Street to buy the necessary equipment for starting school. Barrels containing kerosene, molasses, boxes of cookies, cases of candy, a balance scale with various weights, and every other object that might attract a neighborhood customer stood around. We bought a slate, slate pencils and a pencil box. Proudly, I walked home with my new possessions eager for Monday and the start of a new adventure.

On Monday morning I ventured off to Sigsbee Street between Diamond and Eureka where the old, brown, wooden, four-room schoolhouse stood serving the lower grades. It had double seats for two children to occupy, a blackboard, a crude wooden floor, and a straight-laced teacher, who wore her hair in a bun and dresses touching the floor. At Diamond and Baxter stood a white brick building that housed the upper grades.

In those early years the teachers had no more than an eighth grade education. It was some time later that a high school education was required to teach, and still later that a college degree was demanded.

I went off every Monday morning with a nickel a week, which was carefully checked on the tuition sheet. Since I was the fifth one of the family going to school, my tuition was cheaper than the other students.

Since I started in February, instead of the usual September enrollment, I was placed in the first grade. This made me virtually the youngest in the class, and required that I plug along a bit harder to keep up.

The school board expected that the small children had not learned English at home, so the first semester was in Dutch. I hardly needed that because I had an older brother and sisters who spoke English. Our lessons were written on the blackboard and copied on the slates. Whenever a lesson was complete a pan of water was passed around the room for every one to wash his or her slate. You can imagine what a confusion that created, when some twenty or thirty children were blowing and puffing and swinging their slates in the aisle to hasten the drying process.

We did pass on quite soon from slates to pencil and paper. The teacher taught reading by showing us a large picture with identifying words printed underneath. The class stood in front of the room and pronounced the words. Spelling words were written on the blackboard and we were required to write them a number of times. A test would determine how well we had done.

At recess time a pail of water with a dipper was set on the porch to quench our thirst. The janitor stood by with his knife to sharpen the pencils that needed attention. His left thumb was black from holding the lead of the pencil against it.

I can well recall that when we arrived in the fourth grade the first word of our spelling lesson was "geranium." That floored me. I decided that if that were the first word I would never make the grade. But somehow I did.

One day, one of the boys and I were playing by the back fence of the school grounds. Sigsbee Street was up a hill from Logan Street; the chicken coop in the backyard of Logan Street was below the school grounds. First we watched the chickens. Then the notion arose to throw stones at the chickens. This was a pleasant past time. Not that we were always successful in hitting a chicken or a rooster, but when we did the bird would become

quite perturbed. We were so occupied in our sport that we did not notice a big fellow from that house climbing up the wall until he was almost to the top. I raced off and instead of mingling with the other kids, I hid behind the school door where I was soon discovered and brought to the teacher. I do not recall what punishment I received, but it was likely a number of slaps on the hand with the ever present ruler.

While I was still in the primary grades, the school moved from Sigsbee to Baxter Street. A new section of red brick was added to the school, so that all the grades were now in one school. We all “helped” to move, some carrying waste baskets with supplies, others carrying other paraphernalia, until we had arrived at our “new school.” The father of Tom and Sid Newhof bought the old building and made it into a barn in the back of their lot. In front, Tom built a house for himself.

In 1920 I graduated from the eighth grade in Baxter school. In those days a writing diploma was given to those who by the time of their graduation had finished in an acceptable manner all the lessons in the Palmer Method book. I was near the top of my class.

But that did not mean much the next semester when I went to Grand Rapids Christian High School at the corner of Madison Avenue and Franklin Street. Earlier, the old Calvin Seminary building occupied that corner. Since a new building had been erected at Franklin and Giddings, large enough to include the college for instruction in the fine arts, this old building at Madison Ave. was no longer in use and became the home for the Christian high school.

As it happened there were three hundred students enrolled in the high school that first semester, far more than had been anticipated. The result was a tremendous shortage of teachers and seats in the classroom. When



Baxter Street Christian School.

the class met young teenagers were lined up along the walls. Besides, there was no teacher prepared for teaching Algebra and Latin even though these courses were offered.

Substitute teachers were brought in from time to time, but very few students got hold of the basics of algebra and Latin. Nearly the whole class, except for those whose parents had been able to help them through, took the course over again. By the second semester everything was far better organized, except that the assembly room was used for a study room, and had so many students gathered there, that the disturbance was not conducive to quiet study.

In many ways these were happy years. The high school was more than a mile from our home, but we usually enjoyed the walk since it was not uncommon to meet other students on the way. We made many new acquaintances, so that the days and weeks slipped swiftly by. ❖

Karen is a member of Protestant Reformed Church in South Holland, Illinois, and a granddaughter of Rev. C. Hanko.

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

October 1 Read Psalm 24

“The earth is the Lord’s.” Is that your confession people of God? As we see what man calls the catastrophes of nature and the devastation caused by war, do we confess that “the earth is the Lord’s”? Most in the world do not. They would not say that the suffering caused by such events are caused by God. They would not say that hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and such like are sent specifically by God to a specific region. But He does. This must be our confession. We must also see that His purposes in these things are for His glory and the good of His people. It is His earth and He does with it what He pleases. Sing Psalter 59.

October 2 Read Psalm 25:1-11

In verse 4 we read, “Shew me thy ways, O Lord;” Yesterday we saw that all that happens in the world is by God’s almighty hand. Today we pray to God that He will show us His purposes in those happenings. It is fitting that we do this on the Sabbath. As we rest from our worldly pursuits, we can more clearly see what Jehovah says to us in the events of history. As we attend worship services, and then as we meditate on that word preached to us, we must say with Samuel, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth.” Are we doing that today? Are we listening each and every day? Do we want the paths of the Lord? Let us pray that He will lead us in those paths which we must know are good for us. Sing Psalter 64.

October 3 Read Psalm 25:12-22

In verse 14 we read of the covenant. What a blessed truth this is! What a comforting truth this is for the people of God! The covenant with all of its beautiful ideas of friendship and fellowship afford to us much peace. Because the covenant is established and carried out by God, we do not have to fret that our sins will dissolve that covenant. God, in His mercy, sent His Son to establish that covenant with us and with our children. As we continue through this week, let us glory in that friendship we have with our God Jehovah who reigns on high. Sing Psalter 65.

October 4 Read Psalm 26

Young people, reread verses 4 and 5. Is this your confession? Are those you company with vain persons or are they those who confess God in truth? These are questions that you must face daily. During those times you are not under the watchful eyes of your parents, you must be careful of those around you. You must hold them up to Scripture’s test. If you do not, then you will not find the peace that comes from those who walk in Jehovah’s way. Parents and grandparents, pray for our young people. They need those prayers to help them walk in the way of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 69.

October 5 Read Psalm 27:1-6

The first part of this Psalm is an account of the child of God’s walk in this life. As he examines his life, he must realize that God must be and is on his side. During all of his life experiences, he must see that God is with him. In response for Jehovah’s help he must seek the house of God. It is in the church where we find true peace and solace. As we walk through this life led by God’s hand, we must break forth into singing the praises of Jehovah. In doing this we thank Him for all of His works toward us. Sing Psalter 71.

October 6 Read Psalm 27:7-14

As we walk throughout this life do we live the confession of verse 14? Our world is not a waiting world. We want everything now. We want instant gratification in much of what we do. But David tells us to wait. To wait means to have patience and to trust in someone else. That someone else is our Jehovah God. He will care for us as we walk along life’s pathways. He will lead us to glory in the land of the living. When we are in despair and all looks hopeless around us, we must turn to this verse and wait. By waiting on Jehovah we confess the trust that we have in Him from whom all blessings flow. People of God of all ages, let us wait upon the Lord. Sing Psalter 72.

October 7 Read Psalm 28

People of God, do we spend a proper amount of time in prayer to God? I am afraid that you must confess as I do that we do not. Yesterday we saw that we must wait upon God to give us all things in His time. The way to wait is to

pray. First of all we must bring our needs to Him who will supply all our needs abundantly. Secondly we must pray for the patience to wait upon His time which is the best time. Coming to our God in prayer will help us in this wicked world. Coming to our God in prayer will help us in the adversities of this life. Let us pray and pray without ceasing. Sing Psalter 75.

October 8 Read Psalm 29

Tomorrow we will once again go up to God's house to worship Him. It is fitting today that we look at verse 2. Do we worship Jehovah in the beauty of holiness? Are we preparing ourselves today for that worship? Have we prayed throughout the week so that we are ready to meet God in worship tomorrow? Are we looking forward to singing the songs of Zion with God's people? The way we worship will determine the beauty of that worship. Our worship must be completely God-glorifying in every aspect. If even one speck of glory is given to man in worship, that worship will be ugly. Let us be ready to worship tomorrow and let that worship be holy. Sing Psalter 76.

October 9 Read Psalm 30

It is fitting that we begin this Psalm today. This Psalm shows us the way we must worship Jehovah. Yesterday we prepared ourselves for this glorious day. Today we must carry out that worship. We must be ready to pray. We must be ready to approach the throne of grace to find help in our time of need. We must sing with all of our being praises to God and to God alone. Finally and most importantly we must be ready to listen to the words of Christ as they are delivered by one of God's ministers. Let us worship with our whole heart as we await the eternal Sabbath which will be ours in heaven. Sing Psalter 77.

October 10 Read Psalm 31

This Psalm was obviously written as David was being pursued by some enemy. David realized that all that he could do was commit his spirit into God's hand. He knew that God would save Him. Is this our confession? Do we trust in Jehovah completely no matter what situation into which He brings us. This is what we must do as we live our life in this valley of the shadow of death. We will fear no evil for God is our God. Look at verse 15. We must confess that our times are in God's hands. We must realize that no matter in whatever circumstance that God leads us, He will care for us. Trying circumstances should not bring us into despair, but rather they should fill us with hope because God is with us. Also look at verse 24. In this closing verse we see that we must be filled with courage no matter what circumstance we may be in. Because our times are in His hands, we can trust that He will sustain us in all things. Sing Psalter 80.

October 11 Read Psalm 32

This well-known confession of David should be read by us often. We like David fall into sin. Our sins are a grief to God. But He has provided for us a way of escape. He has covered them in the blood of the Lamb. Because He has covered them, we are truly blessed. We see that David found no peace until God led him through the way of confession. Let us pray that He will lead us in this way as well. Then we can truly be glad in Jehovah and praise His name with all joy. Sing Psalter 83.

October 12 Read Psalm 33:1-11

Verse 11 tell us much about God. We read about the creation which He fashioned. He did it in His counsel; from there His very thoughts brought all things into fruition. Because His counsel standeth forever, we can rejoice. We can rejoice because we know that our salvation is sure. We can rejoice because we know that all of His promises will come to pass. This affords to us much comfort as we read through all Scripture. We never have to doubt Him whose counsels are forever. Sing Psalter 85.

October 13 Read Psalm 33:12-22

In this section we see one of the anthropomorphisms which God uses to describe Himself so that our inadequate minds can comprehend His greatness. He uses the figure of the eye. God is all-seeing. He looks upon all men. He sees His people and He sees the wicked. Because He sees us He protects us from all evil. Because He sees us, He looks upon us with mercy. Because He is the all-seeing God, we can have great hope in Him. We can know that He will care for us. Let us hope in Jehovah; trusting that He sees us and cares for us. Sing Psalter 87.

October 14 Read Psalm 34:1-11

Are there any more beautiful words for our children and young people than those found in verse 11? He calls them to come unto them. Jesus said the same thing during His ministry on this earth. Because He calls our children unto Him, parents, we can rest assured that He will care for them. He will care for them even when we are not around. He will care for them even if He takes us from them. Children and young people, obey this command, and learn the fear of Jehovah which will protect you all the days of your life. Sing Psalter 89.

October 15 Read Psalm 34:12-22

One of the greatest evils which we commit is the sin of the tongue. Whether we blaspheme God, slander the neighbor, or lie to each other or ourselves, we cause much trouble for ourselves in our lives. Many lives have been devastated by the improper use of the tongue. From very little on our tongues cause grief. People of God, we must be on our guard not to let our tongues cause damage in the church of God. Children and young people, you, too, must watch

your tongue because it can hurt in so many ways. Let us use our tongues aright and for the honor and glory of God. Sing Psalter 90.

October 16 Read Psalm 35:1-16

David had many enemies in his life. Some of them tried to bring physical harm upon him while others tried to bring him to spiritual ruin. In our lives most of us do not have to deal with those who try to do physical harm to us. That is not to say that none of God's people have this affliction. There are those in this world whose very lives are at risk because they confess that Jehovah is God alone. But Satan will use those around us to bring us to spiritual ruin. Like David we have but one recourse. We must go to Him who is our shield and buckler. We must recognize the danger and fight against it. We are not without hope nevertheless. God will give to us salvation and in that we may be joyful. Sing Psalter 92:1-4.

October 17 Read Psalm 35:17-28

This Psalm continues with David's walk through this life. He prays that God will not wait to deliver him. He prays for this deliverance and asks God to see the troubles that the wicked bring upon Him. Then in verse 27 his mood switches. David does see God's salvation. He does know that God will deliver him from all troubles. He then asks the righteous to praise God for the salvation wrought on his behalf. People of God, do we rejoice when God delivers our neighbor from distress? Do we ask for such joy when we are delivered? Do we see that the object of such joy is God's name? Let the words of verse 28 be in each and every prayer that we utter. Sing Psalter 92:6-8.

October 18 Read Psalm 36

Notice verse 5. In contrast to the utter wicked of the reprobate, God's mercy and faithfulness is boundless. What a blessing this is for us! We have no reason to doubt any of His covenant promises because He will bring them to pass in His infinite grace towards us. Because He is the light we will see the light. But yet we must not become puffed up with pride. We must not think that it is because of some measure of good in us. We must see that it is only on the Lord's doing. Blessed be His holy name! Sing Psalter 94.

October 19 Read Psalm 37:1-13

There are many gems found in this passage of God's Word. Take some time to search them all out and meditate upon them. Notice verse 4. Do we truly understand what it means to delight ourselves in Jehovah? Do we make this our goal for the day, for the week, for the month, for the year, or for our whole lives? Delighting ourselves in Him means we will really seek Him every waking moment. We will be happy with the way he leads us. When we delight ourselves in Him, we can rest in Him and be at peace with

the way he leads us. Let this be our goal today and every day. Sing Psalter 95.

October 20 Read Psalm 37:14-26

Another gem is found in verse 18. Here we find another attribute of our great God-knowledge. His knowledge is different from ours. His knowledge is not a mere memorizing of facts. His knowledge also has action associated with it. When God knows something, it will come to pass. When He knows something for His people, it will come to pass with the love which can only be found in the covenant of grace. His knowledge is sure and gives to us the confidence that what He has ordained is right and will be everlasting. Because God knows us, He loves us. In this we can trust. Sing Psalter 98.

October 21 Read Psalm 37:15-40

Young people do you carry out verse 27? Do you depart from evil and do good? Satan wishes to entrap our beloved young people. He brings them into wicked places and tempts them to fall. Young people you must leave those wicked places. What will be your entertainment tonight? Where will you be? If you come upon a wicked place, you must leave that place and find somewhere where you can do good. There are some that would have us believe that we can do good in an evil place. This is nonsense. Only evil can come from evil places. Let us depart from evil and do good. Sing Psalter 100.

October 22 Read Psalm 38:1-9

As we end another week and prepare to go into God's house, we need to say the words of verse 9. Do we lay out all of our desire before God? Do we know what should be our desire? Do we desire to glorify God with all of our being and pray to Him to preserve us in all our way? David realized that he had sin in his life. This must be our realization as well. We must know that we must go to our God and confess our sins. In the way of this confession we will know the way that we must go. Let us bare our soul before Jehovah even as we seek to enter His house tomorrow. Sing Psalter 102.

October 23 Read Psalm 38:10-22

David continues in his lament for God's mercy. As we go to church today, we, too, must call upon God to deliver us from our sins. We must hope in the Lord. We must hope in Him with the confidence that He will hear our prayers. Let us confess our sins before Him as we enter His house. We can pray that He not forsake us because we have this hope. Do we want His help? Do we want it in His way? If we do, let us pray that He will hasten to help us as the God of our salvation. Sing Psalter 103.

October 24 Read Psalm 39

Some of the aged saints among us can identify with this Psalm very well. They are awaiting God to come for them

and take them to their eternal home. But saints of all ages need to find the comfort in this Psalm. We need to ask God to show to us the end of our pilgrimage here on this earth. We must see that this earth is not our abiding place, but rather our home is in heaven where we will be joined with all the saints. We must ask Him for strength to be a pilgrim and stranger in this wilderness, but we must do this knowing that we will not inherit this earth. Sing Psalter 106.

October 25 Read Psalm 40:1-10

What a Psalm of triumph we have before us. Not triumph that we have gained of ourselves, but rather triumph that God has worked for us and in us. His wonderful works are for us and for no one else. Because He has delivered us we must constantly praise Him. We must seek those who are His people and praise His name among them. Do we delight to do His will? Do we make that our goal each and every day? Let each of us be the happy man who puts his trust in Jehovah. Sing Psalter 108.

October 26 Read Psalm 40:11-17

Do we hide the righteousness of Jehovah within us? Do we tell those around us of the hope that is ours? David did this. David did this even when he was oppressed by wicked men. We must constantly be doing this. We must speak of God to and with our families. Our children must know that God is good and full of mercy toward His people. We must speak of Him to those in the family of God. God's people must rejoice together about the greatness of Jehovah. And we must speak of Him to those whom He places on our path in this life. Young people, do you do this? Do you talk to your co-workers about God? Do they know by your words that you are a believer? Let us say continually, "The Lord be magnified." Sing Psalter 110.

October 27 Read Psalm 41

There are several interesting things about this Psalm. First of all we see David as a type of Christ illustrated in it. In verse 9 we have a reference to Absalom's rebellion when David's close friend and advisor went over to Absalom's side. This is obviously a prophecy of Judas Iscariot as he betrays Christ. David knew what he must do as when he faced disappointments of this type. Do we go to God in prayer and ask for His help? Secondly the book of Psalms is divided into five "books". This is the end of the first one. We see a doxology in the last verse. This doxology should be on our lips often. Let us make it a part of our spiritual life. Sing Psalter 113.

October 28 Read Psalm 42

Here we have a favorite Psalm of many of God's people. I am told that our Dutch grandparents loved the Dutch versification of this Psalm. It is a Psalm which shows to us our way through this life. No matter what trials are brought

upon us we can go to our God at any time. When we are in the depths of despair, we can cry unto our God for deliverance and solace. The words of this Psalm have the same meaning of the last verses of Romans 8. Read both of these passages and see if you agree. Let us praise the health of our countenance and our God. Sing Psalter 114.

October 29 Read Psalm 43

This Psalm seems to be a companion or continuation of the previous Psalm. The last verse seems to indicate this fact. Examine verse 3 again. The Psalmist knows what he needs. He needs God to lead him to the holy hill. Is this our prayer as we prepare to enter His sanctuary tomorrow? Do we pray that God will send His light and truth to us to lead us? If we think that we have light and truth, we will fail miserably. We will not get to God's house in this life or in the life to come. Let us make verse three our prayer today and every day. In doing so we will have confidence in the hope of our salvation. Sing Psalter 120.

October 30 Read Psalm 44:1-8

One of the blessings of hearing the word preached is hearing about saints of old. God has given to us chapters such as Hebrews 11 to instruct us in the way He will lead us even as He led those who are among the clouds of witnesses. When we read and hear about these saints, we can confess as is confessed in verse 4 that God is our King. Because He is our King, we do not have to fear what the enemy wishes to do to us. As we worship today, let us make sure that our worship is true and gives to God the glory due to His name. Sing Psalter 121.

October 31 Read Psalm 44:9-26

Children and young people, do you know what day today is? Do you know what holiday is celebrated today? No, I am not talking about the devilish Halloween celebrated by the world around us. There should be none of its evil trappings cluttering up our lives. No, today is a kind of birthday. Martin Luther nailed 95 statements to a church door which condemned a wicked church for many wicked things. This church had become an enemy of God's people. In fact as we read Psalm 44 we can imagine Martin Luther studying its words and taking comfort from them. The church's enemy has not gone away. He tried to cause David to fall, he tried to cause Jesus to fall, he tried to cause Martin Luther to fall, and he will try to cause us to fall. Let us pray the words of verse 26 as we seek deliverance from Satan's work. Sing Psalter 123.



Scripture Twisting (2)

by Rev. Angus Stewart

II Peter 3:15-16 tells us two ways in which false teachers twist the Scriptures. First they abuse the “hard” places, the texts that many do not understand, and then they make the easier text conform to their twisting of the harder text. This corrupt method is widespread today. For example, regarding election and reprobation, people *should* start with Romans 9 and Ephesians 1, *chapters directly addressing the subject*. Instead, Scripture twisters find some hard verses here or there and build their theory on it. Then they torture Ephesians 1 and Romans 9 to fit with their view. John Wesley’s commentary on Romans 9 is a good example of this.

Second, the Scripture twisters play biblical writers and books against each other. Peter states that he and Paul taught the same thing (II Peter 3:15), for there were some who challenged this. Also Peter places Paul’s (inspired) writings on a par with the Old Testament (15-16), for there were some who challenged this too. Many today are at the same wicked craft. Like Marcion, a heretic in the early church, they believe that the Old Testament teaches a lower deity than the New Testament. Others teach that Paul’s theology differs from Christ’s teaching in the four gospel accounts. It is increasingly popular to say that there are various New Testament theologies—those of Paul, Peter, John, the author to the Hebrews, etc.—and that these theologies contradict each other. These spiritually “unlearned and unstable” men twist the Scriptures “unto their own destruction” (16) when they allege that the New Testament (or Old Testament) writers belie each other. For, while it is true that the various inspired penmen have different approaches and styles, God’s Word is one, a revelation of the unity of His one Being and the product of the one divine Breath (the Holy Spirit) who teaches the one “wisdom” (15) of God in Jesus Christ. A more subtle lie is that *biblical* theology (a study of the doctrine of the various biblical

books or authors) makes *systematic* theology (an integrated presentation of the whole body of biblical doctrines) unnecessary. This springs from doubt about the possibility of absolute truth, especially in the form of a world-view which gives the “big picture.”

Scripture twisting is in evidence today in many ways. Have you not heard people defend their drunkenness with a garbled reference to I Timothy 5:23: “use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities?” This verse may be used to defend the lawfulness of taking alcoholic drinks *in moderation* (Eph. 5:18) but it is grossly abused to defend drunkenness. In I Timothy 5:23, wine is used not for intoxication but for medicinal purposes: “for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities.” Moreover it says, “use a *little* wine” and not a *lot* of wine.

Those seduced by feminism twist I Timothy 2:12 which declares (regarding the church institute), “I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man.” We are told that this was only for their day, as if the ascended Christ was not laying down rules for the governance of His church till the end of the age (6:14). We are told that Paul was a bigot or a male chauvinist, as if “our beloved brother Paul” were not an inspired apostle who wrote “according to the wisdom given unto him” (II Peter 3:15).

Scientism teaches that the universe was formed through a massive explosion billions of years ago and that life evolved from the primeval slime. Those who swallow this false teaching and seek to retain some connection with the Bible then “reinterpret” (i.e. “twist”) Genesis 1 and other passages. The fourth commandment’s “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth” goes onto the torturer’s rack, as do the “days” and the “mornings and evenings” of Genesis 1. And, lo and behold, we find that “days” here are millions and millions of years.

Professed Christians twist Scripture when they claim that it does not condemn sodomy, and so we could continue. In fact, some modern hermeneutical theorists are arguing that the reader *and not the text* determines the text's meaning!

Against all Scripture twisters, the believer must hold fast the Reformed truth that Scripture interprets Scripture and that "the whole counsel of God" may be "deduced" from Scripture by "good and necessary consequence" (*Westminster Confession* 1.6). So watch out for Scripture twisting in seminaries and in churches; in books and in tapes; by theologians, by ministers and by professing Christians. Do not be deceived!

People perish in hell for
unrepentant Scripture twisting.

People perish in hell for unrepentant Scripture twisting. *Westminster Larger Catechism* 113 explains this as a sin against the third commandment which forbids "any

way perverting the word, or any part of it." Perverting the Scriptures "enables" a man to reject more of the Word and to live more loosely. Those teachers who twist the Scriptures lead others to perdition for "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:14). The Scriptures which they twisted shall judge them at the last day.

Scripture twisting is a characteristic of the false church. *Belgic Confession* 29 states, "As for the false church, she ascribes more power and authority to herself and her ordinances than to the Word of God, and will not submit herself to the yoke of Christ." The false church practices Scripture twisting to support her false teaching and her power. Therefore Christ will destroy the false church. ❖

Rev. Stewart is a missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches to the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship of Northern Ireland. This series is being reprinted with permission from the Covenant Protestant Reformed Fellowship website, <http://www.cprf.co.uk/> Volume IX, Issues 22–23.

Church Family

Church and School

by Gwen Pryor

Dear Editor

I have read with great interest the article entitled "A Church/School Dilemma" in the June issue, and also the rebuttal letter "Church/School Dilemma"—Misnamed" written by Mr. Jim Regnerus in the August/September issue. I feel that I have a unique perspective on this matter, as I am one of those who has grown up in one of our smaller congregations (Kalamazoo church) and am now married with children of school age.

For those of you who do not know, our Kalamazoo congregation is located approximately 45 minutes south of the Grand Rapids area where the majority of our churches are located. To have a congregation within

"striking distance" of our larger body of churches has been an interesting experience to say the least.

Kalamazoo Church, in recent memory, has remained one of the smaller churches. There were very few children in catechism classes (I was the only one in my class growing up).

By the time I reached young people's society, there was no one else to have society with. It was a *huge* struggle to determine what to do. We did not hear about mass meetings until after the fact, did not hear about events in the Grand Rapids area until long after they were over, and certainly did not know of ministers receiving calls and where they were to until long after they

were past. I struggled over driving alone to Grand Rapids as a young woman...wondering if it would send the wrong message to try to find a godly husband there. (Thankfully I did find a godly husband, but he did not come originally from our churches). It was said within our circles in Kalamazoo that Jamaica got more attention than our local church did.

Frankly, there were and still are, not enough people in Kalamazoo to start a PRC school. Kalamazoo Church has had many bitter trials over the years, which at times have sapped our numbers. As the years have come and gone, I have seen many changes in our local congregation for the better. However, some things still continue. It is still difficult, at times, to get information about events in the larger church communities close to us. Our pastor does a great job with helping us stay informed of the denominational news. Our young people still have a monumental effort to "break in" to the circle of young people from the larger church communities when going to conventions, mass meetings, and retreats. Amazingly enough, some of our denomination's young people still don't even know where Kalamazoo is! They ask, "Is it in Michigan?" We joke that it is closer for us to drive to Grand Rapids than the other way around! We hear of people (quite a few of them actually) who work in the Kalamazoo area, yet choose to commute almost an hour distance just because, as they freely say: "You don't have a school." It has even been said publicly by more than one minister of our denomination that he would not take a call to Kalamazoo if it was given because "you don't have a PRC school." People have stated to various of our members who have moved to Kalamazoo, that "sooner or later you will want to move back to the Grand Rapids area." We have also heard criticisms spoken by others within our denomination that our more seasoned pastors (ours being one of them) have no business in the smaller churches. These people state that our more seasoned ministers belong in the larger churches where more people can be spiritually fed in one place. This has left many within our midst fearful for the future if our pastor takes a call in another place (which we know in time he will do). It has been expressed by one and agreed with by many that... "Many are capable as serving as an undershepherd, but who would be *willing* to come to *Kalamazoo*?" My first sentiment is to remind people that God is not a respecter of persons and that every saint, no matter how large or small the church, is precious in God's sight. This attitude is one of pride. I wonder what these people would think if these comments were directed at

them? As I am sure you can imagine, the feeling of being "second-class" members of our denomination runs deeper with each passing year. These things are expressed and with each passing generation. I am 41 and have grown up with it my whole life and it continues to follow me through denominational functions into adulthood.

While I agree with many things that Mr. Regnerus said, I am concerned over one of his closing sentences in which he stated: "I respectfully submit that perhaps we need to look at the lack of Protestant Reformed education in a location more as a symptom than as a cause, of what might be stagnating growth." I would ask to what "symptom" is he referring? I contend that it is what the writer of the first article was warning against placing importance of the school over the church. The church most certainly should have higher importance. However, this is not the message that has been sent by many outside of our area to families within our area.

I contend that there cannot be a PR school anywhere without willing, committed, faithful parents. If the foremost consideration in relocating church membership rests on whether or not a school is located with one of our PR churches, then maybe we need to relook at our priorities. "You cannot have a school without the church...not the other way around." The church needs to be strongly established and supported, regardless whether or not a school exists. As the church grows, God blesses that church by providing a school. But, if God does not choose to establish a school in a given place, that does not necessarily mean God's blessing is less in that place. That would be a dangerous sentiment.

Nor is having a PR school the end-all, be-all. I sometimes feel that there is a general feeling that "we have arrived" if there is a PR school in our midst. I sometimes fear that the opposite can be true: maybe by having the PR church, PR school, PR friends, PR employer, etc. we become so relaxed that we don't look outside of our little circle. We don't fight as hard for our faith. We don't have to witness to anyone. We go along in life without true examination as to why we do the things we do, and why we believe what we believe. It is not enough to do it just because it has always been this way. It is just plain easy to coast along and to not have to make the effort to reach beyond the little corner of our personal world to others of like faith. Sin still abounds in a PR school... sometimes maybe even greater because as Protestant Reformed youth, we know where the moral lines are and how much we can get away with. Maybe, we as parents feel that since the school is one with the church, the

school can do our job for us! We grow complacent. That is a real danger as well.

I understand that a PR school is a priceless blessing God gives to our covenant youth. However, it is a great danger to place the school on such a high pedestal that the local church suffers either in an exodus of families for areas where a school exists, or (in our church's case) withholding transfer in membership due to the "school or no school issue." The local church is then forced to survive strictly on new membership from outside the PRC circles, births within our own local church, and marriages within our own 20 families. That is a hard existence, but a reality for many years in Kalamazoo. This has only recently been changing in the last couple of years with a few marriages from beyond Kalamazoo borders. At times, I wondered if there was any love or care from our larger congregations to this plight only 45 minutes away or if it was expected as some said... "Just fold up...you belong in Grand Rapids." I personally remember my dad pondering Kalamazoo's future some years ago.

As far as our local church is concerned, we have started a school with a few other conservative reformed churches in the area. Our own pastor teaches Bible to the high school students there and has done so for a num-

ber of years. Several of our men from our PR church have served on the school board with a real presence. At this writing, my husband is the current president of the board. Would we love a PR school? Absolutely...but it takes willing families to join us to add to our numbers for it to happen. Because these families are committed to the love of the truth, (not love of a school first) they will join a community such as ours because of the church, and over time, create enough numbers to start a school. They will not join because we have a school first. They will join because there is a like-minded body of believers with a church formed, and God blesses that church with a school.

Thankfully, God has provided means for our covenant children with a Reformed education...even without having a sanctioned PR school in our local community. He has provided means to honor those vows we made at baptism. God has been faithful to us in Kalamazoo.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Gwen Pryor
Kalamazoo, PRC ❖

Book Review

The Case for a Creator

by Trisha Haak

Lee Strobel, *The Case for a Creator*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2004. Pp. 340. \$14.99 (paper).

In this instructive book packed with scientific information, author and journalist Lee Strobel interviews several scientists on the theories of Darwin and how well they have withstood the scrutiny of science within the last one hundred years.

Strobel, a former journalist for the *Chicago Tribune*, became an atheist after being exposed to evolution in high school and college. Satisfied by the evolution's explanation of the beginning of the universe, Strobel became convinced of the superfluity of faith and reli-

gion. Later, spurred by his wife's conversion to Christianity, he decided to take a true journalistic approach and investigate the information for himself.

Strobel interviews various scientists in the fields of cosmology, physics, astronomy, biochemistry, biological information (DNA), and the human consciousness. Each scientist gives sound evidence on how recent discoveries (recent being the last fifty years or so) have proved Darwin's theories false and support what they refer to as the "Intelligent Design" theory. Each scientist uses evidence or reason to show the improbability and even impossibility of the universe being the result of random acts of nature. Thankfully, although these sci-

entists have one or two PhDs, the scientific lingo is never too heavy. Illustrations and examples are often given to clarify.

Readers will find the book to be a fascinating journey through the world of science.

Readers will find the book to be a fascinating journey through the world of science and at times will be amazed at the intricate detail and precise order at which God created life and sustains it today. The world that we see with our human eyes becomes even more incredible as it is analyzed and peered at through telescopes and microscopes. Some highlights are explanations of the complex structures of cells and DNA, as well as detailed descriptions of our advantageous location in this universe, and the fine tuning in the laws of physics that make life able to flourish on this earth.

But in the end the book falls short as faith seems to take a back seat in this ride. Strobel gives little credit to the workings of faith and the scientists themselves give testimonials of conversion with little or no mention of the word of God. Readers should be prepared for a journalist's approach to this topic that often borders against a hope to redeem the scientific world for Christ. Readers will also be left with the impression that no scientist interviewed holds to an earth that is 6,000 years old or was necessarily created in six days.

For those interested in reading a good book, *The Case for a Creator* is an excellent read that illustrates how short the theory of evolution falls to explain the miracle of Creation. For those looking for a good read that accurately describes the relationship between creation and faith, they would do well to stick to more Reformed readings. ❖

Trisha is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church of Holland, Michigan.

Our Young People's Federation

Reflections on the Convention

by Laura Kaptein

What a busy year! Faith PRC had the privilege to host the 2005 Protestant Reformed Young Peoples Convention. When we started planning, sometimes it seemed we were getting nowhere. But finally, all the activities and programs were coming together and we were confident that it was going to be a success. Now that the convention is over, it was a very enjoyable time had by all.

I was chosen to be a representative from the Jr. Young Peoples Society to be on the steering committee and I was also placed on the activities committee. There was a good group of people on these committees, which made all the meetings and hard work successful.

Monday morning, June 27, 2005, at 3:00AM the conventioners started arriving at Faith PRC to begin

registration. They began loading the busses, and once a bus was full it began its 12-hour trip to Windermere Camp in Missouri, located on the Lake of the Ozarks. The bus ride was long, but many people slept, read books, or played games, which helped speed the trip up. We arrived at the camp around 4:00PM on Monday.

During the week, there were many activities for us to do. There was also a lot of free time, which allowed us to make new friends or hang out with our old friends. Also during free time, there were a lot of things for us to do. Four boats were pulled down to Missouri so we were able to go tubing, skiing, or wakeboarding. There were also canoes, kayaks, and paddleboats to use during our free time. An area in the lake called the Aqua Jump was also a lot of fun. The Aqua Jump consisted of four huge

trampolines, blobs, the iceberg, a teeter-totter, and also some water logs. This could be used for a half hour per person.

There were also things available after you signed up for them. One of these activities included a tour of a cave. This tour was very interesting, and also something that I was glad I could experience. When we got deep in to the cave our guide instructed us to sit in a circle and to turn our flashlights off. It was very dark. As we were sitting there, he began explaining that being in a cave without any lights is what an unbeliever is like without Christ helping them through this world. They do not know their way around and without Christ they are lost. But because we have Christ in our hearts he guides us and he leads us through this wicked world, just like our flashlights lead us through the cave. I really found this very interesting and I realized how important it is to have Christ in our lives.

The other activity that required sign-up was called The Edge. The Edge included a high ropes course and also a low course. I really liked doing it but I will admit that sometimes it made me a little nervous to be so high off the ground walking on little ropes in the air.

Other than free time there were also organized activities consisting of team games that we played on Tuesday and Wednesday. The camp also organized games that we played called the Barracuda Challenge. It involved games on land but also games in the water. Banquet was planned for Thursday night (which happened to be the only night it rained—only a light sprinkle though). After the banquet there was a sand castle contest and also a limbo contest. The winners of those contests received their registration fees back.

With all of these activities available, I really cannot name one specific part at the convention that could be considered my favorite part. I had a very fun time at this convention because there was never a time which I could say I was bored.

A couple of things did strike me during this convention. One was that everyone included one another. No one was left out. It seemed that nobody was afraid to meet new people, and if someone was alone they would be approached and included. It's nice to see young people act Christ-like and not be ashamed of their faith.

Another thing that struck me was that throughout the week we were constantly being reminded who we are; that we are children of God. Speeches were given that helped remind us of our calling in this world. The topics of the three speeches included: The Kingdom and

It's Royal Citizens, Our Worship of the King, and Our Kingdom Allegiance. At 4:00PM we had sectionals. These were different topics that we had to sign up for in our registration packet. There were 9 different themes that you could have picked from:

1. Esteeming Others and Self Esteem, a Christian View of Ourselves
2. Practical Guidelines for Personal Devotions
3. Technology and the End of Times
4. Dating Those of Other Denominations—What Should Be Considered
5. The Wonders of God's Creation
6. Christian Stewardship, Time and Talents
7. Dealing Biblically with Psychological Issues
8. Family Communication
9. Peer Pressure and Importance of Christian Fellowship

These were very interesting because they were subjects you wanted to learn more about. Then at 11:30PM we had devotions with the people in our cabins, with the chaperones leading them. During devotions we talked about our day, talked about who we met, talked about our problems, and then discussed a passage or theme. During this week we were constantly reminded about God and what He has done for us, and also how we are to act towards others and also towards Him.

This convention has taught me that we have to slow down from our busy lives and take a minute to spend some time with God, especially as teenagers. We often get caught up in our lives and forget to spend time with God. Let this convention help us to become closer to God and thank Him for all that He has done.

Finally I want to thank all those who made this convention possible. Those who helped with fundraisers, those who gave their time to be chaperones, and those who helped plan it. Thank-you for all your hard work. But finally we are to thank our heavenly Father who made all of this possible and who also gave us a safe and enjoyable convention. ❖

Laura is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

George M. Ophoff (25)

Polemicist

by Prof. Herman Hanko

We had promised to give to our readers in this article a quote from the first answer of Rev. Ophoff to those who were agitating for the Liberated position on the doctrine of the covenant. This article is found on pp. 350-355 of Vol. XXV of the *Standard Bearer*. We cannot quote the entire article. It is much too lengthy for that. But we will quote sufficient to give the general idea of Rev. Ophoff's answer. Here then follows the quote. The article appeared in the form of an open letter to a minister who had defended conditional salvation in the *Concordia*.

The last issue of the *Concordia* brought to us your 27th installment on the subject of the *covenant*. I am a faithful reader of your articles. I find them interesting and thought-provoking. You write in a fresh style. You have your own way of putting things. This does not mean that I can always agree with you. Such is not the case. I find myself at odds, for example, with your last few articles. It is especially these articles that cause me to take up my pen to write you this open letter. I would like to discuss with you the content of these articles. They gave rise in my mind to questions, which I have need of revealing and herewith do so as trusting that you will be willing to entertain them and give reply. You must have realized when you penned those articles that from certain quarters there would be some reaction to what you wrote. However, what you have from my pen in this article is not to be taken as criticism. All I desire is discussion for the sake of the truth. I take it, the truth is as dear to you as it is to me and to us all.

... You quote three texts in support of your contention that there are *conditions* in connection with the covenant...

Can it be that these texts or any other text in the whole Bible teach what you say they do?—teach namely, that God lets it be known to men that He

will save His people *on the condition* that they believe? From the sequel of your article it appears that this is what you mean...

Allow me to set forth what I believe to be the truth of God's Word on this point. And then the first question that confronts us is: What meaning does the dictionary give to the term *condition* when occurring in such conditional sentences as: the Lord saves His people on the condition that they believe. What is the idea of the concept condition in that connection? Let us turn to my dictionary. I have a good one here at my elbow; it's *The Century Dictionary, an Encyclopedia Lexicon of the English Language*, a work of ten volumes of microscopic print with each volume measuring 10×12×12½ and weighing seven pounds and two ounces. Not that it's good just because of its size and weight and bulk. But it's a good dictionary...

After a defense of his use of the dictionary and a long quote from it, Rev. Ophoff goes on:

What now do the sum and total of the expressions that form that definition spell? They spell uncertainty, don't they? This is self-evident. Anything that may or may not occur is uncertain. So that something—here salvation as a work of God—is dependent of faith as a condition, contingent of the will of a human being, or finite agent. It is characterized by uncertainty. And that, too, must of necessity characterize the faith of God's people as a condition, on which something—salvation as a work of God, is contingent. The faith of God's people as a condition is uncertain. It may or may not abide. Just because faith as a condition is uncertain, salvation as a work of God, contingent on such faith, is uncertain. In fine the characteristic of faith as a condition is uncertainty. It may or may not occur.

And what must that necessarily imply? The following: 1) Whether a man believes is solely dependent

on his own sovereign capricious and arbitrary will. 2) Hence, faith is not of God; it is of man. 3) Like the creature, God is limited in His power and knowledge and stands helpless over against man's unbelief.

It is plain that in the proposition, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe," that is, "Salvation as a work of God is contingent on the faith of the believer," we deal with a heresy of the first magnitude, destructive conceptually of God and of all true religion.

Isn't it plain, brother, that the term, condition, as a sentence-element in the proposition, "God saves His people on the condition that they believe," is a dangerous one? It doesn't fit in the thought-structure of the Reformed theologian. It has place only in the perverted system of theology hatched out by Pelagius and Arminius... Why should we exchange God's way of saying things for a heretical terminology? Why should we try to discourse on Reformed theology in the terminology of Pelagius and Arminius? It simply can't be done. What is there to be gained by such a doing? Nothing at all, as far as I can see. Absolutely nothing. And there is everything to lose. We all know how Satan works. He first smuggles in the terms, satisfied that his lies will follow. Why play with fire?...

Your definition of condition states that God... fulfills the condition (the faith of God's people as a requirement) and that salvation is also contingent, dependent, on faith as a condition. But that is impossible. Both cannot be true. That I have correctly stated your definition of the term condition is as plain as can be. You call faith a condition, which is equivalent to saying that faith as a condition is that on which something (the will of God) is contingent. At the same time you say that faith as a condition is fulfilled by God. So there you are.

"It seems to me then, brother, that you will have to do one of two things: 1) either stop saying that salvation as a work of God is contingent on the faith of God's people, (and if you do that, you deny, of course, that faith is a condition, something you do not want to deny, of course); 2) or stop saying that faith as a condition is fulfilled by God, something you don't want to do either. So what are you going to do now, brother?...

"Reading your article there is something that struck me as being very strange. It is this: At the beginning

of your article you write, "I cannot see a great importance in the question,"—you mean the question of the use of the term *condition*—except as it leads us back to the question, "What is the covenant?" You mean then that it is not an important question *by itself*. Yet, at the same time you devote your entire article to eulogizing the term and recommending the use of it to our people. At the close of your article you even write, "From this it may appear that we have no quarrel with the idea of conditions in the covenant, if they are negatively guarded against Arminian and Pelagian falsification, and positively seen in their spiritual necessity and beauty." I have a question. If, according to your way of thinking, *conditions* in the covenant are *necessary* and *beautiful*, how could you write, "I cannot see a great importance in the question," and why did you write that? Conditions in the covenant necessary and beautiful? I wonder. Fact is that as I see it conditions in the covenant are destructive of the covenant... There is great importance in the question. For me it is fundamentally a question of whether we as a communion of truly reformed churches are to be or not to be.

...A closing remark. I say again, what I have penned in this article is not to be taken as criticism. All I desire is discussion here in the *Standard Bearer*. It is true, I do express myself rather positively. But that has at least this virtue that you know exactly what I mean and think and believe, especially so because, as far as I am aware, I have been using my words according to the meaning that they have in the dictionary. I really do hope that you will thoughtfully examine my argument and give reply. You may call my argument anything you like—abject nonsense, sophistry, it makes no difference—providing that you do one thing: make plain that your characterizations are true...

This is the end of the quote. Really, the issues as laid down in this first article by Rev. Ophoff contain all the issues which were to be more extensively developed in the next four years in the voluminous writings which appeared on the subject. ❖

Prof. Hanko is professor emeritus of the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

"LITTLE LIGHTS"

The Ploughboy (7)

... let it shine!

by Connie Meyer

Henry Phillips was an educated, tall young man living in London—or rather, trapped in London. He was in dire circumstances. He had squandered his father's money with gambling, he was wanted by the authorities, and not one friend would own him.

But he was just the kind of man the Church of Rome was looking for.

Given a generous sum of money along with a servant for his use, Phillips was handed one clear assignment: *get Tyndale*. Agent after agent had failed, but Phillips was determined to prove himself worthy of the mission.

Though Antwerp was not a kind city to reformers, by now Tyndale lived in an area where he was surrounded by loyal, protective friends. His 1534 revision of the English New Testament had been completed and countless English citizens were reading the Scriptures. The country had tasted what was sweeter than honey, and now there was no going back—England's appetite grew.

Tyndale was given a comfortable room at the home of Thomas Poyntz, one of Tyndale's most faithful friends. In fact, Tyndale was able to visit many friends in this part of town. But who was this traveling, young student that Tyndale invited to dinner one day? Poyntz was wary of him, but he seemed to be a friendly, knowledgeable chap who agreed with Luther's writings. He was a pleasant companion, and so Poyntz showed him around Antwerp. Then he left.

Poyntz was a wealthy merchant and had business to do in a neighboring town. Several days later he departed and was to be gone for about a month. Now was Phillips' opportunity.

He came back to Mrs. Poyntz as the friendly student that she thought he was, and managed to get invited out to lunch with Tyndale. In the meantime, Phillips had extra officers ready. As Phillips and Tyndale left together and

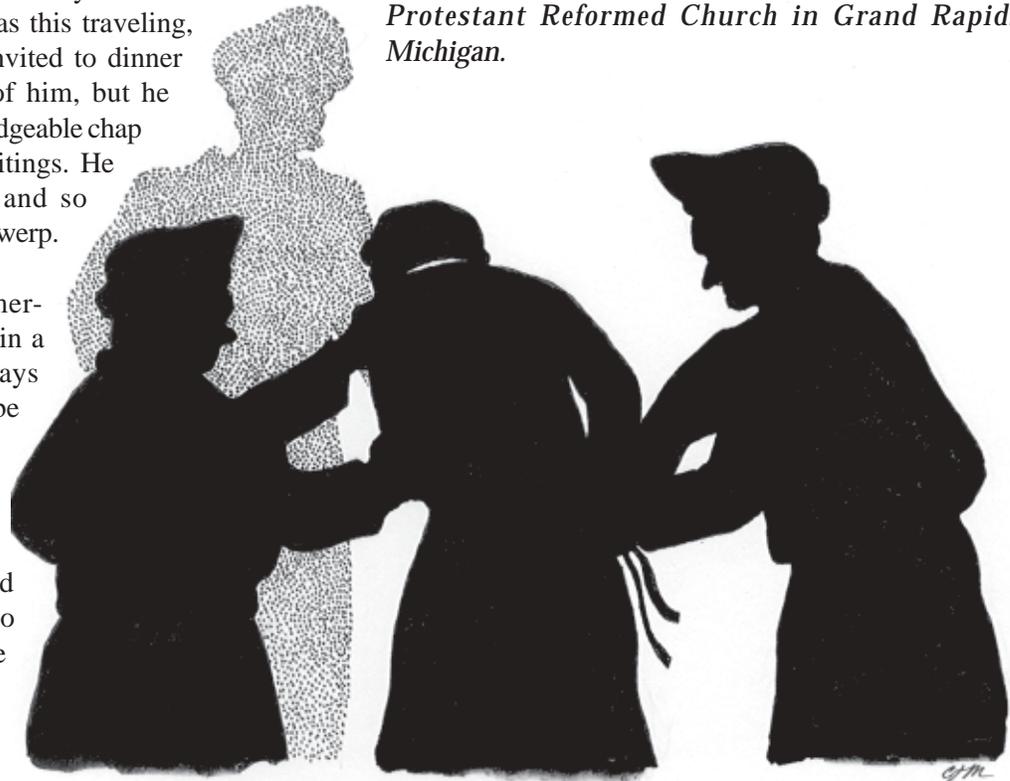
traveled down Antwerp's twisting streets, Phillips politely stood aside to let Tyndale enter one of the narrow alleys first.

Such was Tyndale's last moment of freedom. Phillip's two officers captured him in the alley while Phillips stood behind in all his height, pointing out Tyndale as their prey and preventing his escape.

It was a cruel end to the important work of one of God's precious servants, but it would be an end not unworthy of the calling... ❖

Were all of David's friends, true friends? What did one of David's friends do to him? Read Psalm 41:9 to find the answer!

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



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Church News

BAPTISMS

"For the promise is unto you and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." Acts 2:39

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Kyle Jon, son of Mr. & Mrs. Brent Wynia—Doon, IA
Brooke Elisabeth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Clay Spronk—Faith, MI
Samuel Thomas, son of Mr. & Mrs. Tom Bergman—Faith, MI
Zachary Paul, son of Mr. & Mrs. Phillip Kleyn—First, MI
Braydan Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ryan Dykstra—Georgetown, MI
Ellie Makayla, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Risk—Holland, MI
Dylan Matthew, son of Mr. & Mrs. Doug Feenstra—Hudsonville, MI
Derek Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Gritters—Hudsonville, MI
Emma Rae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Derek Van Den Top—Hull, IA
Jamie Renae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Glenn Kooima—Hull, IA
Sawyer Dean, son of Mr. & Mrs. Craig VanBriesen—Hull, IA
Gavin Elliott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Rob Andringa—Hull, IA
Garrett Samuel, son of Rev. & Mrs. Gary Eriks—Loveland, CO
Derek John, son of Mr. & Mrs. Michael DeJong—Peace, IL
Chloe Lynae, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Stephan DeJong—Peace, IL
Rylee Joan, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brain Bruinsma—Peace, IL
Megan Jannet, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Moore—Peace, IL
Hanna Jo, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Vermeer—Peace, IL
Ashley Beth, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Krosschell—Randolph, WI
Tyler Scott, son of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Kooienga—Southwest, MI
Evan Allen and Rylan Paul, twin sons of Mr. & Mrs. Eric Petroelje—Southwest, MI
Summer Lynn, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Medema—South Holland, IL
Tori Anne, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Nathan Haak—South Holland, IL
Allison, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Joel Holleman—South Holland, IL
Morgan Sue, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Hib Kuiper—Trinity, MI
Conner Patrick, son of Mr. & Mrs. Pat Lenting—Trinity, MI
Adult baptism was administered to Jessica Nicholson—Kalamazoo, MI

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."
Proverbs 22:6

Public confession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

John Scott—Byron Center, MI
Matthew Scott—Bryon Center, MI

Tiffany Burns—Faith, MI
Julie Kuhtic—Faith, MI
Ethan Kalsbeek—Faith, MI
Matt Elzinga—Grace, MI
Brad VanOostenbrugge—Grace, MI
Jared Wesorick—Grace, MI
Sarah VanUffelen—Holland, MI
Brian Brummel—Hull, IA
John Bishop—Kalamazoo, MI
Jennifer Schwarz—Loveland, CO
Eric Solanyk—Loveland, CO
Kellie Baker—Redlands, CA
Kristina Gaastra—Redlands, CA
Levi Alsum—Randolph, WI
Curtis Stouwie—South Holland, IL
Ryan Worries—South Holland, IL
Michelle Looyenga—Wyckoff, NJ

MARRIAGES

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

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:

Mr. Derrick Buiter and Miss Heather Oosterbaan—Byron Center, MI
Mr. Daniel DeJong and Miss Lori Dykstra—Faith, MI
Mr. Jason Van Oostenbrugge and Miss Cassie Kooienga—Faith, MI
Mr. Jeremy VanDyke and Miss Tiffany Burns—Faith, MI
Mr. Steve Uittenbogaard and Miss Denise Noorman—Faith, MI
Mr. AJ Karsemeyer and Miss Marie VanderVeen—Faith, MI
Mr. Bruce Doezeema and Miss Alisha Dykstra—First, MI
Mr. Philip Rainey and Miss Julie Newhof—First, MI
Mr. Joe Lubbers and Miss Stacy Nowicki—Grace, MI
Mr. Mike Cnossen and Miss Rachel Koole—Hope, MI
Mr. Brad Butler and Miss Kelly Zwak—Hudsonville, MI
Mr. Toby Boogerd and Miss Jaci Hoekstra—Hull, IA
Mr. Shannon Schuller and Miss Bethany Hoksbergen—Hull, IA
Mr. Evan Bleyenbergh and Miss Kimberly Tolsma—Loveland, CO
Mr. Everett Langerak and Miss Michelle Tolsma—Loveland, CO
Mr. Adam Bosman and Miss Caroline Huizenga—Peace, IL
Mr. Timothy DeJong and Miss Laurie Kooy—Peace, IL
Mr. Don Haak and Miss Anita DeJong—South Holland, IL
Mr. John Anderson and Miss Cora Frisch—Spokane, WA
Mr. Kyle Ten Broeke and Miss Melissa VanUffelen—Trinity, MI