

The Standard Bearer

A Reformed semi-monthly magazine

July 2018 • Volume 94 • No. 18

Synod issue

2018 highlights

Compelled to action

Rev. Steven Key

Synod 2018: Obedience and covenant fellowship

Prof. Russell Dykstra

God's armor for us: The Shield

Rev. Brian Huizinga

Memory

Dr. Nathan Lanning



The *Standard Bearer* (ISSN 0362-4692 [print], 2372-9813 [online]) is a semi-monthly periodical, except monthly during June, July, and August, published by the Reformed Free Publishing Association: 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

Postmaster

Send address changes to the *Standard Bearer*, 1894 Georgetown Center Dr, Jenison, MI 49428-7137.

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Subscription price

\$27.00 per year in the US, \$39.00 elsewhere
esubscription: \$27.00
esubscription free to current hardcopy subscribers.

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Website for RFPA: www.rfpa.org
Website for PRC: www.prc.org

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REFORMED
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Meditation

Rev. Steven Key, pastor of Loveland Protestant Reformed Church in Colorado

Compelled to action*

Nehemiah 2:1–8

One thing that stands out in the Old Testament book of Nehemiah is Nehemiah's heartfelt love for God's cause. Nehemiah received word of the great affliction and reproach suffered by those who had returned to the promised land, and his heart burned within him for grief. But Nehemiah also laid hold of the gospel promise.

God had said that He would gather His people from wherever they had been cast and would bring them to the place where He had chosen to set His name. We understand, too, that the promised inheritance was not simply Jerusalem or the land of Judah, but something far greater, the heavenly glory of which Jerusalem was only a type, and the promises that would be fulfilled in the coming Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ. That explains why Jerusalem and the promised land were so important, and why the commitment to God's cause as seen in Nehemiah is a commitment that must be ours as well, even as we approach the labors of Synod 2018.

Nehemiah prayed that God would use *him*. It is evident already in that last verse of Nehemiah 1 that Nehemiah had in mind leaving his comfortable position as the king's cupbearer, that he himself might make the journey to Jerusalem. He prayed: "Prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cupbearer."

Now in chapter 2 we find the answer to that prayer. As we consider the first 8 verses of Nehemiah chapter 2, I take as the theme of this text, "Compelled to Action."

Constrained to serve

Nehemiah's love for God constrained him to serve God's cause.

Let us not overlook the amazing providence of God when it comes to Nehemiah's office as the king's cupbearer.

We always do well to stand in awe before God's work. That, in fact, is where we must begin. For God's work always leads to and comes to culmination in the revelation of His own dear Son as our Savior.

God would use Nehemiah for a very important work, as we shall see. But for the sake of that work, God had installed him into that office within the king's court, the office of the king's cupbearer. God does such things for the sake of His church.

In Nehemiah's calling as the king's cupbearer, he had labored faithfully. He had done so, not only as a servant of Artaxerxes the king, but as a servant of Jehovah. That is evident from his relationship to the king, the trust that the king could give him, and Nehemiah's faithfulness in his office as the king's cupbearer. If he had not shown himself faithful in his daily labor, he could not have been counted on for the weighty labors that God had in store for him in Jerusalem. Had he not shown himself faithful as the king's cupbearer, had he not gained the highest esteem from the king, Nehemiah would never have been able to make the request for a leave of absence that he had to make to king Artaxerxes.

That is a good reminder to us that how we live from day to day in the various callings God has given us is a direct reflection on our relationship to God Himself, and the place that He and His cause occupy in our own minds and hearts. But Nehemiah's desire to serve God went far beyond the daily place and calling that God had given him personally and by which he received his income and social status.

Nehemiah's constraint to serve was compelled by a heartfelt desire to see the good of God's cause and God's people. That must be our motivation as well in our labors at synod.

Nehemiah's love for God was based on knowledge, the knowledge of faith. Nehemiah understood the Scriptures. He remembered from the Psalms that Jerusalem was the city that God had chosen for His habitation. He had chosen to set His name there and to reveal His covenant to His people, that covenant of grace which is the fellowship of His life and love by faith in Christ Jesus. But what was prophesied concerning God's purpose for Jerusalem could not be a reality while Jerusalem was in ruins.

In the last verse of chapter 1 there is reference not only to the prayer of Nehemiah that God might open

*2018 Pre-synodical Sermon, June 11, 2018.

the door for him to travel to Jerusalem to labor “hands on” in God’s cause, but there is also reference to the prayers of others to that end. “O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants....”

This would indicate that Nehemiah had spoken to godly friends who also loved God and God’s cause, and had sought their input concerning whether there would be a place for him to seek leave from the king and to go to Jerusalem to labor in the building project that was presently languishing. It may well be that these fellow believers gave counsel to him, and encouraged him to go. But one thing they certainly did: They joined in prayer with Nehemiah about this matter.

Certainly as delegates we have prayed for God’s blessings upon our labors at synod. But God’s people have joined us, and continue in prayer for us in the deliberations before us and the significance of the decisions that we must make.

God answered those prayers in providing Nehemiah the opportunity to speak about this matter to the king.

It happened one day when Nehemiah was called to serve the king and the queen in his calling as the king’s cupbearer. The king noticed that Nehemiah was troubled by something. “Sad” is the term used. It was expected that to be in the presence of the king would necessarily produce happiness. To look sad, therefore, could be viewed as an insult to the royal majesty of the king. It was life-endangering—which is why, when the king said to Nehemiah, “Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart,” Nehemiah writes, “Then I was very sore afraid.”

He “said to the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father’s sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?”

There, it was finally out. That which burned within him, his love for God’s cause, was finally known to the king.

What would be the king’s response? “Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request?” The moment has come. Nehemiah must now express his deepest desire, that he might be granted absence from the king’s court, to seek the glory of God in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah felt constrained to serve God’s cause in building the walls of Jerusalem. But how would the king respond? After all, Artaxerxes must grant approval to what Nehemiah was about to request of him, or Nehemiah would not be able, no matter how compelled he might feel, to serve God at Jerusalem.

Bolstered by prayer

Nehemiah’s compulsion to action as established in his

heart by the Holy Spirit was also bolstered by prayer.

Notice that before Nehemiah answered the king’s question, we read this: “So I prayed to the God of heaven.”

Before Nehemiah spoke, before he answered the king, he prayed. This prayer, mind you, took place right in the presence of the king. It was so brief that the king would not even have noticed. But in those flashing thoughts of crying unto God, Nehemiah confessed his humble dependence upon the God of heaven, the God far exalted above all earthly creatures, including kings.

Nehemiah in his love for God desired to go to Jerusalem to labor for God’s cause in the rebuilding of the walls of His holy city. Now the prayer of Nehemiah was for wisdom and guidance in answering the question of king Artaxerxes.

The king had just asked a question. We might think that even a moment of pause might be viewed negatively by the king. If we were in such a situation, we might even excuse the omission of prayer. But to Nehemiah, a momentary pause to pray was necessary. Nehemiah lived in the presence of God, as do you and I who are in Christ Jesus.

The Spirit carried Nehemiah’s prayer to the throne of Him who rules over all, and who turns the hearts of the kings like the rivers of water. So when Nehemiah answered the king, “If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father’s sepulchres, that I may build it,” the king answered, “For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me; and I set him a time.”

Bolstered by God’s answer to his prayer, Nehemiah continued. “Moreover I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come to Judah; and a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king’s forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.”

Nehemiah recognized what was happening here. God was at work. No less than when He had raised up Cyrus to decree the return of the children of the captivity to the promised land, so here God was at work providing for the needs of His people and the cause of His kingdom.

Blessed by God

The blessing of God upon Nehemiah was evident not only by this answer to Nehemiah’s many prayers, prayers that culminated in this silent prayer for the moment,

but also in the way in which Nehemiah's petition was answered. Verse 6 simply states, "So it pleased the king to send me."

What was involved in that *sending*? We might think initially that the sentence simply means, "It pleased the king to let me go to Judah for a time." But that word *send* signifies much more.

We learn in chapter 5, verse 14, that the king appointed Nehemiah governor in the land of Judah. God gave him an office for the service of His church in Judah. That appointment began here, during this twentieth year of the reign of Artaxerxes.

That explains too the granted provision. God was providing here for His people. There was a greater King than Artaxerxes at work here. The king of Persia was only a servant of the King of kings, who rules all things for the sake of His church. What is recorded in this first part of Nehemiah 2 is another small part of the wonder work of God and His faithfulness to His church for the sake of the coming of Christ.

In this text we are reminded too that, while we as delegates to the synod of 2018 are called to commitment

to God's cause and truth, all our activity depends upon God's blessing.

All our labors must be in that consciousness too. Commitment to God's cause requires us to labor for the welfare of God's cause, and not only to maintain but also to develop the truth that He has revealed to us. When you read the Book of Nehemiah you cannot help but be struck by the fact that there was never an easy period in Nehemiah's life as governor in Judah. He was always facing trials, and the burdens of his labors would most certainly have overwhelmed him if not for God's sustaining grace and repeated answers to Nehemiah's prayers. But Nehemiah committed himself to the work—not for any personal gain, but for the glory of God.

Pray and work. Do so in complete dependence upon Him. Do so in thankfulness for the covenant of grace He has established with us and realized in us by faith in Jesus Christ. He who has redeemed His people with the blood of His own dear Son also calls us to action in seeking the welfare of His cause. May our prayers as well as our activities as a synod be motivated by our commitment to God's cause and truth. Amen.



Editorial

Prof. Russell Dykstra, professor of Church History and New Testament in the Protestant Reformed Seminary

Synod 2018: Obedience and covenant fellowship

The 2018 Synod of the Protestant Reformed Churches convened on Tuesday, June 12 and recessed on Friday, June 22. At various times Synod recessed—once for an entire day—to allow committees to study and prepare advice. Because the actions of synod have been announced in church bulletins and can be read on the PRCA website, there is no need to recount these. This editorial focuses on one particular issue faced by Synod 2018, namely, the place of obedience (good works) in the believer's experience of covenant fellowship.

It has been said that the particular controversy brought to this synod could only occur in the Protestant Reformed Churches or in a church that maintains the same covenant theology. The covenant theology, briefly, is that God's covenant is a relationship of friendship that God establishes with His elect people in Christ. It

is a covenant with believers and their seed. The covenant is governed by election—God eternally chose His covenant people in Christ. The covenant, therefore, is not established with every child of believers, but with every *elect* child. In this covenant, Christ is the Mediator; He is also the Head of the covenant people. Everyone with whom God establishes His covenant is saved and cannot be lost. In this covenant relationship there are no conditions. Fellowship is enjoyed between God and His people—the covenant people are not robots. But they earn nothing and fulfill no conditions in the establishment or maintenance of the covenant.

The issue of the place of good works in the covenant life is important because the covenant and salvation are inseparable. A Reformed man will confess concerning salvation that 1) it is all of God; 2) salvation is found in

Christ alone; 3) God sovereignly saves His elect through faith in Christ alone. Likewise a Reformed man will say that 1) the covenant is all of God; 2) the covenant is established with Christ and therefore with those chosen in Him; 3) God effectually brings His elect into the covenant and gives access to fellowship with Him through faith in Christ.

Since salvation and the covenant are so closely related, the theology of the covenant must correspond with the theology of salvation. The Reformed theology of the covenant must agree with the five points of Calvinism—unconditional election, particular atonement, total depravity, irresistible particular grace, and preservation/perseverance of the saints. Reformation theology also insists that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone, and in Christ alone. Works are excluded in salvation—“For by grace are ye saved, through faith.... Not of works...” (Eph. 2:8, 9). Rather, works are the fruit of faith and the expression of gratitude to God for the salvation that God worked for us and in us.

The issue of the place of works is also important because error has been introduced exactly through a wrong idea of works. Around the year A.D. 400, Pelagius, while insisting that salvation was by grace, also taught that a man who used that grace of God to do good works was the one God saved. Augustine exposed that error, and the church of his day rejected it.

Pelagianism was revived in the church under Rome in the Middle Ages with some refinement. The theologians, insisting that salvation is by grace, taught that justification is by faith in Christ and the believers’ good works. The Reformers rejected that, insisting that justification is by faith alone without works. Man’s works contribute nothing to his salvation.

Not a hundred years later the Arminians in the Netherlands essentially returned to the position of Rome. They taught that man has a free will and, assisted by grace, is able to choose salvation. Election is conditioned on faith and the good works that men perform, God looking ahead to ‘discover’ who would believe and who would persevere in faith and obedience to the end. The Canons rejected that, insisting that election is unconditional, natural man totally unable to do good or choose salvation, and works earn nothing.

Of late, the men of the Federal Vision, using the platform of a conditional covenant, have inserted works into salvation. The child of the covenant is saved by filling the condition of faith, and is justified by faith and his faithfulness—his works.

In 1953, the Protestant Reformed Churches faced a wrenching controversy over the covenant of grace. The issue then was whether the covenant can be conditional.

Klaas Schilder insisted that one could teach a conditional covenant that was in harmony with the Reformed confessions. Some in the PRC wanted to make room for conditional covenant theology. Some indeed were convinced that it was the correct theology. The PRC rejected the position that a conditional covenant was within the bounds of the confessions. The Declaration of Principles demonstrated that conclusively. This is settled and binding in the PRC. The struggle of 1953 was painful, because over half the ministers and members left the denomination, eventually returning to the Christian Reformed Church. But it was a blessing to the churches to have the doctrine of an unconditional covenant maintained. And that view of the covenant is fully in harmony with the Reformed teaching on works—they are the fruit of faith, and do not contribute to salvation.

The point of the history is twofold. First, it demonstrates that the place of works is an important doctrine in our theology. We do well to sit up and take notice when a claim arises that works are given a wrong place and function in salvation. Specifically, the claim brought to synod was that good works are given a wrong place in the experience of covenant fellowship.

The other point of this history is that the Protestant Reformed Churches are well grounded on the doctrines of sovereign grace and the unconditional covenant. Coming to synod were not two groups of elder and minister delegates with opposing theologies. No one may imagine that in the PRC one group wants to have works contribute to salvation, and another group does not. It is not that one group has leanings toward Federal Vision theology, and another group opposes it. It is not that one group teaches justification by faith alone and another justification by faith and works. It is not that some want an unconditional covenant, while others want to make room for conditions in the covenant. All the delegates of synod, representing the churches well from a theological point of view, were and are committed to the theology of justification by faith alone and an unconditional covenant, rejecting Federal Vision and all such like heresies.

Yet, there was controversy. Objections were brought against the teaching of a minister, against the consistory’s defense of the minister’s teaching, and against a “Doctrinal Statement.” The issue was doctrinal, and it was significant. The task of synod was to reject the statements that were erroneous and set forth the proper way to express the place of good works in the experience of covenant fellowship. The discussion at synod was a united effort to do this. Not everyone agreed that this or that statement was in error. But all were committed to the truths that the Protestant Reformed Churches hold dear.

Let it be stated at the outset—these are some deep theological waters, for many of the terms in the controversy have not been defined in Protestant Reformed theology or even discussed in the Reformed confessions. The experience of covenant fellowship? The enjoyment of covenant fellowship? Are these the same as simply “covenant fellowship”? How is our experience of or enjoyment of fellowship with God related to a life of obedience?

In the Reformed theology of salvation the issue is clear, and all ministers, elders, and, I trust, members agree. Works have no place in salvation in the sense that works contribute to, earn, or merit salvation. Further, works are not an instrument to obtaining salvation or the blessing of salvation. Rather salvation is all of grace. All of salvation is in the crucified Christ. Salvation’s benefits flow to the believer through the bond of faith, for faith appropriates Christ with all His benefits. Works are but fruits of thankfulness. They do not make God love us more, be more disposed to favor us, or earn any mercy or grace.

The Reformed theology of the covenant of grace must parallel that. If works do not contribute to salvation, they also do not contribute to maintaining covenant life. Works do not merit fellowship, favor, or the enjoyment of fellowship. Rather, as an elect, regenerated sinner by faith in Christ enters fellowship with God, he lives a life of thankfulness, a life of good works. Another way of expressing that is this: “In the way of obedience, the believer experiences covenant fellowship.” Not, notice, *because* of obedience, but *in the way of* obedience. The ground for covenant fellowship is Christ’s cross and justification by faith; the access to God’s fellowship is Christ alone; and in the way of obedience, the believer enjoys covenant fellowship.

Confusion can arise at this point. Is it not true that good works are required of believers in the covenant? They certainly are. The Heidelberg Catechism teaches this in question 86: “Since then we are delivered from our misery, merely of grace, through Christ, without any merit of ours, *why must we still do good works?*”

Is it also true that when we fail to live a life of obedience, walking in sin and refusing to repent, we lose the enjoyment of fellowship with God? Yes, indeed. Canons V, Article 5 speaks of this result of the grievous sins of a believer:

By such enormous sins, however, they very highly offend God, incur a deadly guilt, grieve the Holy Spirit, interrupt the exercise of faith, very grievously wound their consciences, and sometimes lose the sense of God’s favor, for a time, until on their returning into the right way of serious repentance, the light of God’s fatherly countenance again shines upon them.

So, can it be concluded that good works are necessary in the covenant? Yes, for God requires them. Can it be concluded that good works are necessary *for* covenant fellowship with God? If one means that God requires obedience in the life of the covenant, the answer is yes. If one means that the good works earn or obtain fellowship with God, the answer is no.

While it is true that a life of impenitence results in the believer forfeiting the enjoyment of covenant fellowship, the converse is not true, namely, that the good works obtain or maintain fellowship with God.

Therein lies the problem. Synod judged that statements in a minister’s sermons were wrong because they gave to the believer’s good works “a place and function that is out of harmony with the Reformed confessions.” Synod added, “Necessarily then, the doctrines of the unconditional covenant (fellowship with God) and justification by faith alone are compromised by this error.”

Those synodical declarations demonstrate the significance of the error, and the reason that synod determined that the minister be examined by synod to remove any suspicion concerning his understanding and convictions.

However, synod did not declare this error to be heresy. Synod did not state that this teaching denies the unconditional covenant or justification by faith alone. The minister will be examined, but he is not suspended.

Let this be clear. Anyone who, from this date on, concerning the minister, consistory, committee to assist the consistory, or Classis East, anyone, I say, who alleges that those individuals or ecclesiastical bodies taught heresy, or justification by faith and works, or Federal Vision, or a conditional covenant, is guilty of slander. Such a one must be rebuked. Slander against officebearers, such serious slander, is the devil’s tool to divide the church of Jesus Christ. This is the sin of schism, a sin so serious that officebearers are deposed for it. And members excommunicated for it.

Painful as controversy is, God can use it to clarify His truth. I believe this happened at the Synod of 2018. Synod worked together to reject error and clarify right relationships. One particularly helpful explanation is the following:

Properly expressing the relationship between obedience as the necessary way of the covenant and the experience of covenant fellowship is: We experience fellowship with God through faith (instrument), on the basis of what Christ has done (ground), and in the way of our obedience (way of conduct or manner of living).

The churches are urged to study these decisions in the Acts of the Synod of 2018 when they are printed and distributed. Good discussions of this material will be reward-

ing. It will result in a better understanding of the place of Christ in our salvation—His saving work for us and in us.

And that in turn will lead to even more appreciation for God's gift of His only begotten Son for our salvation.



Search the Scriptures

Mr. Don Doezema, member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Wyoming, Michigan

Upon this rock (33)

My people love to have it so

Previous article in this series: May 1, 2018, p. 346.

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD; shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this? A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so.

Jeremiah 5:29–31

Indeed, “wonderful,” that is, “astonishing”! “For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, *in my house* I have found their wickedness, saith the LORD” (Jer. 23:11).

Calvin, here, is instructive.

It was no doubt enough to make all astonished, when these impostors assumed the name of prophets at *Jerusalem*, where God had chosen His habitation and His sanctuary: how great and how base a profanation was it of God's name? There were indeed at that time impostors everywhere, who boasted that they were God's prophets, who in many places passed as oracles the delusions of Satan; but to see the ministers of the devil in the very sanctuary of God (which was then the only one in the world), even in the very city where he had, as it has been said, His habitation and dwelling, was a monstrous thing, which ought to have made all men astonished.

Then there is this: “and my people love to have it so” (5:31).

“I have dreamed, I have dreamed,” said the prophets, thus claiming to be oracles of God, while they “prophesied lies” (23:25). And it was like music to the people's ears.

“The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these,” the prophets intoned (7:4). Surely we are secure...in Jerusalem. Because the

Lord has consecrated *this house*, the temple, for His abode. Surely He will defend it. Never will He let this house, and therefore this city, and this land, and this people fall into the hand of the enemy. Thus spoke the false prophets. And the priests (5:31) chimed in, saying, “Hear, hear!” “And my people love to have it so.”

And what was the answer of God?

But go now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel. And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but you answered not; therefore will I do unto this house, which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh. And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim (Jer. 7:12–15).

Nevertheless: “my people love to have it so.”

Why? Surely, at least partly because they preferred a promise of peace to a threat of destruction. But hardly was that the only reason. Or even the main one. More important, I think, was this, that, while the false prophets let them rest easy in their sins, Jeremiah did not. “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel,” Jeremiah said, “Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place” (Jer. 7:3).

“Amend our ways? What do you mean? We go to the temple. We bring our sacrifices. The priests offer burnt offerings, and they burn incense. Everything that the Lord requires is being done.”

Ah, yes, they did indeed frequent the temple. And they did not come empty-handed. Dutifully they brought the required sacrifices. Lambs from their flocks.

And they were no doubt scrupulous in the observance of new moons and the appointed feasts. But it was all an abomination to the Lord.

One hundred years earlier the Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, had condemned their whole religious system. “Bring no more vain oblations,” the Lord said, “incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble to me; I am weary to bear them” (Is. 1:13, 14). And now the Lord says the same through His prophet Jeremiah: “To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet to me” (Jer. 6:20).

Such was the force of “my people love to have it so.” Matthew Henry put it well:

If the priests and prophets will let them alone in their sins, they will give them no disturbance in theirs. They love to be ridden with a loose rein, and they like those rulers very well that will not restrain their lusts and those teachers that will not reprove them.

Hence the word of prophecy: “...because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but you answered not; therefore...I will cast you out of my sight” (Jer. 7:13–15).

By whom? Jeremiah was even clear on that.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel...I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant (Jer. 27:4–6).

Judah and for that matter other little nations in the western part of the Fertile Crescent had already suffered at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. Twice before, the Chaldean army had made successful incursions into the land of Judah. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar, after encountering little opposition in the land, encamped outside the city of Jerusalem itself, and after a short siege was able to enter the city. He robbed the temple of many of its sacred vessels, in order to place them in the temple of his own god in Babylon (Dan. 1:2). He carried away captive the ablest of the young men of Jerusalem (including some of “the king’s seed”), in order that, in Babylon, they might be taught “the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans” (Dan. 1:1–4). That included

Daniel and his three friends. It marked the beginning of the predicted 70 years of captivity (605–536 B.C.).

Nor had that been the end of it. The Chaldean army returned again to Judah in 597 B.C. to reassert Nebuchadnezzar’s authority after the king of Judah decided to stop paying the annual tribute that had been imposed in 605. Again, therefore, the armies of Nebuchadnezzar were outside the walls of Jerusalem. It seems that Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived on the scene when the fall of the city appeared imminent (II Kings 24:10, 11). Jehoiachin, recognizing the futility of further resistance, took his mother and his servants and his princes and his officers out to the king of Babylon and surrendered.

Entering the city, Nebuchadnezzar proceeded to ransack the temple and palace. He removed everything of value that remained after his first visit eight years earlier. And, already weary of the rebelliousness of this people, Nebuchadnezzar carried off the king and his servants and his princes and the best of his army and the craftsmen and smiths, leaving in Jerusalem only “the poorest sort of the people of the land” (24:14). Among the captives was the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:1, 2).

Nebuchadnezzar had then “made Mattaniah his [Jehoiachin’s] father’s brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah” (II Kings 24:17).

And now, it is to this king, Zedekiah, that that word of the Lord through Jeremiah came. “And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant.” And this: “Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?” (Jer. 27:12, 13).

Surely *now* the mouths of the false prophets will be silent, will they not? Surely *now* the king and his princes will heed the word of the Lord, will they not?

But such was not to be.

Zedekiah began to reign at the age of twenty-one. His eleven-year reign was marked by “evil in the sight of the LORD” (II Kings 24:19). One wicked king after another. Why? Interestingly, verse 20 of that chapter in II Kings provides the answer, for it traces the wicked rebellion of Zedekiah to God’s righteous anger against Judah and Jerusalem. “For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.” “My people love to have it so.” God gave them over to their sin, so that they quickly filled their cup of iniquity.

Next time: Nebuchadnezzar, my servant.



Believing and confessing

Rev. Rodney Kleyn, pastor of Covenant of Grace Protestant Reformed Church in Spokane, Washington

Honoring God-appointed authority

Lord's Day 39

Question 104. What doth God require in the fifth commandment?

Answer. That I show all honor, love, and fidelity to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

The law of the Ten Commandments is commonly divided into two groups: the first table (commandments 1–4) having to do with our love for God, and the second table (commandments 5–10) having to do with our love for the neighbor.

Understanding the connection between these two tables (or parts) of the law is important. We must not think that it is enough to love God and that it really does not matter how we treat others. Nor should we think that all that matters to God is that we are nice to and treat people well, and that what we say and think about Him is not all that important. Rather, the Ten Commandments fit together as a complete unit, such that if we truly love God, this will show itself in love for the neighbor, and also, if we are to truly love the neighbor, we must first love God and have a spiritual concern for the neighbor (I John 3:14–17).

Principles of authority

The fifth commandment treats the subject of authority.

One of the main expressions of man's depravity and sin in this fallen world is his resistance to and rebellion against authority. Already in the garden of Eden this was the sin of Adam and Eve, who disobeyed God's command for them. The age in which we live is marked by rebellion. II Timothy 3 tells us this will be one of the outstanding marks of the last days, "In the last days perilous times shall come, for men shall be...disobedient to parents." This aversion to authority can be observed in every sphere of society, and that makes this commandment a very important one for every Christian.

Behind the fifth commandment are several principles:

1. God Himself, as Sovereign Creator, has all authority in heaven and in earth. The right to rule all things, and everyone, belongs to God alone. "The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all" (Ps. 103:19).

2. God has invested all His authority in His Son, the ascended Lord Jesus Christ. "All power (read this as *authority*) is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18; cf. also Eph. 1:22).

3. God's rule for mankind is found in His Word, the Bible. The Scriptures are God's revelation in this fallen world and are the supreme authority for faith (what we should believe) and for life (how we should live). "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever" (Is. 40:8).

4. God administers His authority through others, that is, He delegates authority in our earthly relationships. There is a chain of command from God on down into all earthly relationships and each of us is under authority in some sphere of life.

Spheres of authority

Thinking about our relationships, we should ask, "How do I stand in relation to the other person? Am I in authority, under authority, or an equal?" Whatever the answer, God has placed us in that relationship.

Perhaps the best way for us to make application of this commandment to ourselves is to think of the different spheres of life.

First, and most obvious, there is the sphere of the *home*, where parents (both of them) are appointed to

a position of authority over their children: “Honor thy father and thy mother.” Further, in the home God has also appointed the man as head of his wife, another position of authority and responsibility. Parents, in their marriage, as well as their attitude toward authority in other spheres, should work to create an environment in which children learn to respect authority, and in this way are prepared for other relationships in life.

Second, and this must be mentioned for the sake of children, there is the sphere of the *school*, which is really an extension of the home. Because teachers stand in the place of the parents, children owe to them the same honor and obedience that they would give to their parents; should they not honor this authority, they should expect consequences from their parents.

A third sphere is the *church*, ecclesiastical authority. When Hebrews 13:17 says, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls,” it is speaking about the spiritual oversight of church leaders, pastors, elders, and deacons. Office-bearers in the church stand as representatives of Jesus Christ in His threefold office of prophet, priest, and king. Honor them! Obey them! Respect them and their decisions!

The fourth sphere of authority is the *civil government*, extending from the office of a king or president all the way down to a police officer or building inspector. Romans 13 tells us that the powers that be are ordained of God, that they are ministers of God, and that we owe them, not only taxes, but also honor.

Perhaps the most common sphere of authority for the majority of us is the *workplace*. The New Testament, in its explanation of the fifth commandment, often speaks of employers and employees (masters and servants). In the workplace we are under the authority of Jesus Christ as we work for somebody else. When we agree to work for someone, we pledge to them our honor and obedience, even when they are “froward” and use their authority abusively (I Pet. 2:18). We ought to approach each day of work prayerfully, with an attitude of honor and with a desire to do what will please the boss and serve him best.

There is one more, often forgotten, sphere of life in which we owe honor and respect. Leviticus 19:32 says, “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD.” There was a day when and there are cultures where you would never speak ill of one who is older than yourself. We do well to remember this and to instill this in our children. What we teach them with regard to respect not only for parents in the home but even for other adults will have an impact on their ability

to function in relationships and under authority later in life. Our children must understand that adults are not their equals.

What is required

The fifth commandment demands, not first a behavior, but an attitude—honor. One could, of course, obey without honor, but what God demands is a heart of love for the parent, elder in the church, boss, president, police officer, school teacher, and so on.

This love, which shows itself in honor, is contrary to our nature (we are “prone by nature to hate God and the neighbor”), and so must be developed and nurtured, not only in our children, but in each of us as we progress in the Christian life. Love always puts the other’s person, desires, and needs before our own (Phil. 2:1–5). This love includes a commitment and faithfulness that extends to the grave (I Tim. 5:8). This love bears with the sinful “weaknesses and infirmities” of the one in authority. Think of Shem’s honor for his drunk father, Noah; of David’s honor for Saul as “the Lord’s anointed”; or of Jesus’ submission to Joseph and Mary.

Though we may not obey a command that would involve sin on our part, still we must honor the authority and even accept consequences for our obedience to God rather than to man (Acts 5:29). The exception, which allows for disobedience, is not an endorsement for disrespect, dishonor, and hatred.

First commandment with a promise

If you want a miserable life, if you want a sad marriage, if you want a painful church life, if you want a fractured relationship with your parents, if you want to be in trouble with the law, rebellion is the way to go.

This is the implication of the promise attached to this command. Think of the misery of humans, from the rebellion of Adam and Eve, to the rebellion of Israel, to the rebellion today against God’s institutions and Word. Rebellion leads to a miserable existence!

At the same time, in the way of obedience, we can expect great blessing and even joy in our relationships in the different spheres of life, especially when those relationships are with fellow believers. And if our honor and obedience does not produce joy in these relationships, then we can be sure that in the way of obedience we will have peace and joy in our relationship with God.

That, essentially, is the promise of the fifth commandment. It is not a promise of earthly peace and prosperity, but points to life with God. The blessing in the Old Testament was a blessing of a long life in the

Continued on page 422.

Delegates to Synod 2018

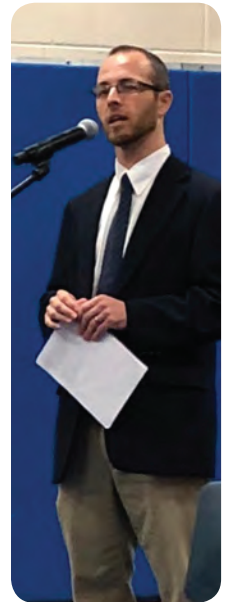
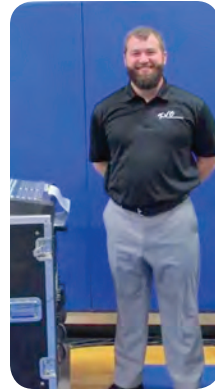
Back row: Al Meurer, Gary Kaptein, Rev. C. Spronk, Rev. G. Eriks, Rev. R. Kleyn, Rev. W. Langerak, Rev. B. Huizinga

Third row: Rev. A. Stewart, Rev. N. Langerak, Peter VanDerSchaaf, Howard Pastoor, James Regnerus, Elder Leong, Rev. J. Laning

Second row: Pete Adams, James Lanting, Rev. R. VanOverloop, Glenn Feenstra, Hilgard Goosen, Henry Ferguson, Rev. Trinidad

Front row: Rev. C. Haak, Prof. R. Dykstra, Prof. B. Gritters, Prof. R. Cammenga, Prof. D. Kuiper, Rev. S. Key





promised land of Canaan. Canaan, of course, is a picture in the Scriptures of heaven. The blessing we can expect is not so much quantitative but qualitative—a blessing of happiness in our home, a blessing of peace in the church, and the blessing of heaven in which we will stand and live in the presence of God in joy to eternity.

It is doubtful that you or I often feel convicted by this commandment, but we should. How are you really doing with regard to authority in your life? As a child, do you joyfully submit to your parents? As a wife, do you happily put your will under the will of your husband? Are you patient in the workplace with the “bad decisions” of your boss? Are we patient with the politicians that God has put in authority over us? Are you respectful of the decisions that church leaders and assemblies make or that the police officer makes when he pulls you over?

Or do we grumble to serve the Lord?

As we think through this commandment, let us remember the principles—that God possesses all authority and that He is pleased to rule us through the hand of others.

The hand that rules you, in every sphere of life, is the hand of God.

May we have submissive spirits to obey, not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but as unto the Lord.

Questions for discussion

1. What is the relationship between the two tables of the law? Can you find Scripture passages to help explain this?
2. Can you find at least three Bible passages that demonstrate that all authority belongs to God?
3. What is the authority of the Word of God?
4. Why is God pleased to use sinful people as the agents of His authority today?
5. Make a list of the six spheres of authority given in this article and then identify someone, in each sphere, to whom you owe honor and obedience.
6. Which of these six spheres do you least think of as one in which you owe honor?
7. How do we teach honor and respect to our children? What are some behaviors that might produce the opposite in them?
8. The following commandments (6–9) address behaviors. Why does this fifth commandment speak to an attitude (honor) rather than a behavior?
9. Why is this commandment expressed in the positive (“honor”) rather than the negative (“Thou shalt not”)?
10. Give some examples from Scripture of godly men and women who bore patiently with the sinful weaknesses and infirmities of their superiors. How are these instructive for you?
11. What promise is attached to this commandment? What did this mean for Israel? How is it an incentive to us?
12. What is your attitude toward the civil government? How is this reflected in your speech and behavior?



Strength of youth

Rev. Brian Huizinga, pastor of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Redlands, California

To teach them war (20) God's armor for us: The shield

“Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

Ephesians 6:16

Fiery darts! Who shall stand in this war against an enemy with arrows that drip with the angry fires of hellish unbelief, selfishness, worldliness, pride, and lust? The Christian soldier armed with the shield of faith, he shall stand! *Only* he shall stand. Learning war is learning to take the shield.

The activity of taking the shield

The inspired apostle continues his catalogue of the

armor of God in Ephesians 6 by describing the shield of faith. He begins, “Above all...,” which means, “over all” or “on top of all.” On the feet are sandals, on the waist a girdle, and on the chest the breastplate. Over it all as a second covering is the shield. The Roman soldier’s shield was not a small buckler comparable in size to an automobile steering wheel, but was large and rectangular, by some estimates four feet tall by two and a half feet wide. Designed to be as lightweight as possible, it was still solid, made of wood and either wrapped in a thin layer of metal or animal skins and sometimes slicked with oil. Over all the body armor the soldier would take this shield in one hand, and with a sword in the other, march forward amid a barrage

of fiery aerial assassins. Marching together with shields side by side, the Roman army could create a wall of protection for advancement.

Spiritually, the shield of faith is the shield that *is* faith. Faith here is not first of all the *content* of faith (our doctrines) but the *activity* of faith (our believing and trusting). Even as the physical soldier takes up the shield to protect his whole body in the heat of battle, we must exercise our faith for the protection of our heart from the darts of Satan.

From all eternity God determined to bestow the gift of faith as a shield upon His elect people in Jesus Christ. When we sinners are begotten again and sovereignly grafted into our living Savior, we receive all the benefits of salvation, including the ability to believe and trust in God and His word. Faith then is the powerful, conscious activity of the believer whereby he holds for truth all that God has revealed in His Word, confidently persuaded that the promises thereof are for him personally.

Faith fixes itself on the Word of God and says about everything in it, “Truth!” About the creation of the world in six days, or the virgin birth of Christ, or the everlasting punishment of sinners in hell, or the command to be holy, or the forgiveness of sins in Jesus, the believer says, “Truth!” More specifically, faith fixes itself upon the gracious *promises* of God’s Word and says, “They are true, and true for *me*!” About God’s particular promise to His people, “I sent my Son to cover all your sins,” or “For Jesus’ sake, though you be troubled, you will not be distressed, though perplexed, not in despair, though persecuted, not forsaken, though cast down, not destroyed,” or “Because you are grafted into Jesus Christ you shall never be stolen away into the camp of Satan to die there an unbeliever separated from My love,” faith says, “All these promises are true, and true for *me*!” Believing the promises, the believer clings to Christ Jesus Himself.

How powerful is faith! When everything is going well and the circumstances feel favorable on the battle field, but also when it appears that our sure destruction is imminent, we put our trust in God and walk by faith not by sight. When the whole world taunts a man as mad because it has never rained and he is building what he calls a boat, the man keeps building because God said, “A flood is coming.” When a childless one-hundred-year-old man living in a dead body and married to a ninety-year-old wife with a dead womb hears God’s promise, “You shall be a father of nations, having seed as many as the stars of heaven in multitude,” he staggers not in unbelief, but takes God at His word. Faith is the most remarkable power operating under the sun. It is the very power of its author Jesus Christ.

Faith is our shield, and we take it up when we consciously place our trust in God’s Word. Necessary for taking up the shield is the preaching of the holy gospel, which the Holy Ghost uses to work faith, the sacraments to confirm faith, meaningful personal devotions with the Bible to inform and strengthen faith, and fellowship and studies with fellow believing soldiers to sharpen faith. Not to be overlooked are good songs. The ditties and jams of the ungodly contaminate the soul with greed and lust and eat away at faith, while the weightier spiritual songs of God’s Word settle in our hearts, and the Spirit uses them to strengthen our confidence and joy in God.

To take up the shield of faith is to apply God’s Word to any temptation and threat believing God’s Word of truth instead of what sin deceitfully promises. And believing what God says, we shall stand. Taking our shields together and marching side by side, we are the church of the living God advancing victoriously.

The urgent need of the shield

Our fearsome foe makes the use of the shield urgent. The apostle states, “...wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.” “The wicked” refers to Satan. The Bible calls Satan “the wicked one.” Everything about him is wicked.

He has fiery darts or arrows. Like some enemies of the Roman soldier who shot their arrows dipped in a combustible substance and set afire, the devil has fiery arrows or temptations. Should one of these arrows hit the Christian soldier, it could potentially explode and set his passions aflame with hellish desires.

This is real. This is no sport. This is warfare. Satan lurks at work, at school, at church, at home, on vacation, when we have devotions, and when we are holding our cellphone. His craft is great, for his temptations do not come as big battering rams lugged by grunting brutes, but as subtle arrows—flying silently and swiftly as they burn. His wicked purpose as the wicked foe of God is to set our soul on fire with the desires of hell so that we deny God and sin against God until we finally burn in hell.

How urgent that we take the shield of faith and wield it so that the fiery darts are extinguished upon contact or are deflected and fall harmlessly to the ground!

Sexual lust is the most lethal fiery dart, for the Bible speaks of it as burning. I Corinthians 7:9 teaches, “But if they [the unmarried] cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn.” Proverbs 7 warns against the fool who walks by the house of the strange woman. She comes out to meet him in her seductive dress in the twilight of the evening, kisses him,

and draws him into the house. We read in vv. 22–23, “He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks; till a dart strike through his liver.”

The devil once used a wicked woman—the wife of Potiphar—to shoot darts at faithful Joseph in Potiphar’s house. That woman cast her eyes upon Joseph and said, “Lie with me.” He refused until finally she made bold and tried to force him. He fled. Maybe “Lie with me” was *not* her first move. Perhaps she began with a look—like an arrow coming quietly and quickly through the air. One look. There it was. Joseph had no way to know it was coming. He was not wishing for it. He was busy working, and all of a sudden she cast a seductive glance. Maybe a few days later she said nothing, but deliberately paraded past Joseph in seductive apparel. Joseph had no time to prepare. Then came the bold petition, “Lie with me.” Each move was a fiery arrow of the devil, a temptation designed to ignite blazing lust in Joseph’s heart with the thought process, “No one is around. No one will know. It will be so satisfying,” so that he would go after her as an ox to the slaughter.

Joseph stood in the evil day because he had taken the shield of faith, as must every one of us, whether single, dating, or married, and anywhere we may be, in the car, at work, or with access to the Internet. Joseph had the shield of faith in hand, took it up, and said in his heart, “I believe my God is holy and commands me to be holy! I believe in my God who forbids me to wound myself, dishonor Him, or give occasion to the Egyptians to mock Him. I believe God has saved me to be separate from these sins. I believe that the pure in heart are blessed and shall see God and shall enjoy pleasures forevermore at His right hand!” Quenched! Joseph believed in the God who warns that lust leads to death and promises that in the way of faithfulness there is blessing for the Savior’s sake. Joseph believed, and the fruit of his faith was his obedience in fleeing for his soul-life. Had Joseph not taken the shield of faith, a fiery arrow would have found a chink in his armor, pierced him, and exploded in detestable lust.

Is Potiphar’s wife at your work, on your campus, or on your phone? Of course she is. Diligently attend the chief means of grace and live prayerfully by faith in God’s Word which you read in the morning; and may the fruit of your faith be the obedience to go out of your way to avoid her or block her.

There are so many kinds of fiery arrows in Satan’s arsenal. When an upsetting situation occurs, Satan tempts us to become hot in anger and lash out, behave unruly, or curse in our hearts. Taking the shield we quench the anger-arrow saying, “I believe God’s Word. Anger is

sin. He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty. Jesus died to deliver me from the sin of anger. The Lord will help me let this trouble pass and look for the positives in it.”

Satan pressures us to doubt the Reformed faith we were taught from youth and to begin to make minor doctrinal compromises. He hopes that he can eventually kindle within us a raging fire of hatred for God Himself. Taking the shield of faith, we quench those fiery darts, saying, “I believe God’s Word!” Then we refer to those passages and creedal statements upon which our faith was built from childhood’s earliest days.

So many flaming arrows of jealousy are let loose by Satan to ignite within us a burning lust for another soldier’s looks, honor, position, or status. That arrow is quenched by the shield of faith, “I believe my covenant Friend abhors jealousy. He gave to each member a place in the body and different gifts that there should be no schism through jealousy but that the members have the same care one for another. I trust Him and rest in His perfect wisdom in making me as He did.”

The sky is always full of projectiles dripping with the flames of impatience. The youth expect instant results, instant replies to text messages, or the instant posting of grades by the professor. If impatience is not quenched, it grows and becomes a fire of unbelief that culminates in impatience for Christ, with the result that one scoffs at the idea of His near return. By faith we confess, “But my God shall supply all my need according to His riches by glory in Christ Jesus,” and the impatience is quenched.

Many are the fiery darts of the perfectionism of pride, which can explode in the soul and create the fire of anxiety. It has been said that young people in the world are excessively self-critical and more obsessed with perfection than many previous generations were. Young people put tremendous pressure upon themselves to be and look just perfect. Social-media has exacerbated this perfectionism (pride) as the youth are constantly being evaluated. They want to measure up. They rarely do. Anxiety results. We take the shield and say, “God loves me.” Say that, “God loves me.” Do you know how amazing that is? God—the eternal, transcendent God who is greater than the universe He made—He loves us. Live by faith in *that* knowledge.

Together we fight. Like the army marching behind a wall of shields aligned side by side, we fight together as the church militant against all the iniquities and heresies of Satan. When a comrade is struck and falls, we pick him up and exhort him to take up his shield of faith, believing in the pardon of the gospel and the power of the Spirit. We encourage each other to believe and to look to the cross, where all the fires of God’s wrath against

us were extinguished for us. Without the shield of faith the battle will soon be over, you and I will quickly fall injured and die. Standing all alone on the battlefield, we are no match for Satan's fiery arrows.

The certain victory with the shield

We *will* take the shield and we *will* believe because we belong to the Lord, the Author and Finisher of our faith. Taking up the shield of faith, we have certain victory. Ephesians 6:16, "Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye *shall be able* to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked." Ye shall be able! Ye shall have the power to! There has never been another shield in the history of warfare about which it can be said, "No man has

ever succumbed to defeat with this shield in hand." But faith is the victory that overcomes the world (I John 5:4). Indeed, faith is above all in importance. For without faith we cannot believe in the gospel of peace (sandals), cannot believe in the righteousness of Christ (breastplate), and cannot believe in the truth (girdle). Above all, we take the shield of faith. This shield is not the feeble and flawed armor of man and his works, but the impenetrable armor of God Himself. Psalm 3:3, "But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." With God as his shield, the soldier will victoriously exit the battlefield one day and be taken up into glory where Christ has a crown for him.



Go ye into all the world

Rev. Daniel Kleyn, missionary of the Protestant Reformed Churches in America, stationed in Manila, Philippines

Three missionaries in the Philippines

Our churches have undertaken something we have never done before in our mission work, namely, we have called and sent three missionaries to work together on one mission field. It was already a significant undertaking to begin calling (in 2008) and then to send (in 2009) two missionaries to the Philippines. Now we have three.

From our perspective as missionaries, as well as from the perspective of the churches and saints here in the Philippines, this is reason for much gratitude to God. He, the Lord of the harvest, has answered our prayers and has provided the three men for this work. We give Him humble thanks.

But one might wonder if it is really necessary to do this. Why three missionaries on the same field, and why three on a field where the established churches have their own pastors? Would not two be enough, or even more than enough? Could not the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines themselves take care of mission work in their own country? If we really are serious about doing mission work in "all the world" in obedience to the Great Commission (and I personally believe our churches are serious about this and striving to do it well), might it not be a better use of our resources if,

instead of having three missionaries in one country, we spread out more throughout the world and work toward calling and sending a missionary to one of our other possible fields of labor?

I trust we are agreed that we need at least two missionaries on our foreign fields. This is now an established practice in our churches for foreign missions. That began with Synod 2008's decision that "our churches adopt the normative practice in foreign missions of sending two missionaries to labor together." The grounds for this decision are also helpful in reminding us why we do this. Those grounds are as follows:

- a. Christ sent His disciples two by two (Mk. 6:7; Lk. 10:1).
- b. By the direction of the Spirit the apostles followed this practice (Acts 13:2; 15:27, 37, 40).
- c. There is benefit to maintaining continuity on our foreign mission fields.
- d. There is benefit for missionaries to work with a colleague for mutual counsel, encouragement, assistance, accountability, and objectivity.
- e. Due to the distance involved, as well as to the complexity of foreign labors, having two men on the field will provide weight to the decisions made on the field.

What this decision shows is that two men ought to be called and sent regardless of the amount of work there might be in a specific field. Synod was convinced that we should always send two. The matter of the amount of work was not even alluded to, let alone mentioned, either in the decision itself or in its grounds.

Yet, as anyone who has kept abreast of our work in the Philippines knows (from our newsletters, presentations, and blogs), the Lord has given us plenty of work for two men. More, in fact, than two missionaries along with the existing churches and their pastors can do justice to. Many are the requests for preaching and teaching in existing churches or groups of believers. Many are the opportunities to take up new work in various places throughout the Philippine archipelago. Great is the interest in the Reformed faith in this predominantly Roman Catholic country. The Lord of the harvest has given us a bountiful harvest.

All of this is a significant factor in why we need three men on this mission field. A third missionary could share in the abundance of work that God has provided. This was summarized well in Rev. Holstege's recent Philippines newsletter.

So why do we need three men? Well, because there is a lot of...work here.... Rev. Kleyn has been occupied with a wide variety of activities, including preaching at Bulacan, Maranatha, and occasionally at Provident; teaching church order at Maranatha and catechism at Provident; making monthly trips to Negros (another one of the Philippine islands) where he gives classes to a large number of pastors who are eager to become Reformed in all respects; advising committees of the PRCP; and more. Rev. Holstege has been occupied especially at Provident, preaching twice on most Sundays; teaching the church order and leading a youth Bible study; teaching the Canons of Dordt midweek and engaging in evangelism work; chairing Steering Committee meetings; attending Tagalog classes every Tuesday and doing the homework; and more.

There is, however, another and a more weighty reason why three missionaries are needed (as also pointed out in the above-mentioned newsletter). And that is for the sake of establishing a seminary and providing theological training for aspiring pastors.

The need for this is urgent. The laborers on behalf of the gospel of God's sovereign grace in Jesus Christ are few. The Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines consist of three churches, each of whom has a pastor. But one of these pastors is already in his early 70s. Soon one of the existing churches will need a pastor. That is also the case for another congregation that hopes soon to join the PRCP and does not have a pastor. In addition to this, the PRCP is doing its own denomination mission work.

They currently have a mission field in Leyte, and then also the possibility of more mission fields. The question they ask is, Where will we obtain the manpower so that we can send missionaries to these fields? The individual congregations also have ongoing outreach work that calls out for attention, yet the churches are significantly limited in manpower for this. We missionaries also continue to receive many requests for preaching and teaching. The Lord has given the PRCP and us as missionaries a field characterized by a great and a growing interest in the truths of the Reformed faith. More pastors and missionaries are urgently needed.

Specifically needed for all this work are Filipino pastors and missionaries. Men are needed who know the language and understand the culture of the Filipino people. While we as missionaries are learning the Tagalog language, we are far from fluent in it. It will take us many years, perhaps even a lifetime, to understand all the finer points and idioms of the language so as to be able to communicate well in it. And besides this, there are many other dialects throughout the Philippines (70 or more). As soon as we take up a work in a different part of the country, we confront a different dialect. And while English works well, it is not the first language of most Filipinos.

Indigenous pastors and missionaries are needed. Men are needed who understand and know the local languages and their own people, and who could therefore more effectively preach to, teach, and shepherd their own people than foreign missionaries can.

Additionally, we believe that Filipino pastors need to be trained in the Philippines itself. This is certainly preferable to taking the men away from their churches, their families, and a country in which they feel at home. Try to imagine yourself being required to live alone for four years or more in a country and culture that is radically different from what you are used to, and to study and train there for such a high and important calling as the ministry. Consider too that English is a second language for most Filipinos. The reality is that the great majority of their conversations take place in Tagalog (or another dialect). How would any of us fare if we were suddenly in a country for four years or more, for the purpose of studying, and yet English was not the spoken language?

With all this as the background, our churches have been calling (since 2016) for another missionary. And now the Lord has provided. The presence of a third missionary will serve well the goal of establishing a seminary. We and the churches here eagerly anticipate this.

The plan is to have one of the missionaries devote the majority of his time, in conjunction with the theological training committee of the PRCP, to the work of setting

up a theological school. There is plenty to be done in that regard, such as curriculum, entrance requirements, investigating what others have done, government registration, finding a suitable building, deciding who will teach what, preparing the courses, etc. Once these things have been worked through and subsequently approved by our mission committee and synod, then will begin the work of providing instruction. Perhaps all three missionaries will be involved in this. Perhaps we can also obtain the assistance, from time to time, of our retired seminary professors. We certainly hope so.

Setting up a seminary is a significant part of foreign mission work. We should not think that foreign missions simply involves establishing churches. Theological training is also a big part of it, especially once a denomination is in place. Even in our own churches, one of the first priorities at our inception as a denomination in 1924 was a seminary. That is what the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines also need. And they themselves realize it. Both the PRCP (the members, the Theological Training Committee, and the Classis) along with the PRCA (the missionaries, calling church, Foreign Mission Committee, and Synod), consider it a

priority to establish a seminary in the Philippines where indigenous pastors can be trained and then called by the churches to preach the gospel to their own people.

The fact that our denomination understands the need for and is behind this endeavor is evident from two of the three grounds of Synod 2016's decision to call a third missionary to the Philippines. Those two grounds read as follows:

b. A third missionary would enable the missionaries to expand their work of providing theological training for current and aspiring pastors. c. A third missionary would enable one of them to devote time to investigate the possibility of setting up a theological school in the Philippines.

The idea that foreign missions usually (if not always) includes the work of setting up a seminary is worthy of more attention. Perhaps we can return to and look at this in more detail in a future article. For now, suffice it to say that all of us here in the Philippines are extremely thankful to God for supplying another missionary. The churches are excited at the prospect of a seminary. We pray God will bless this endeavor for the further strengthening of His church and for the spread of His truth throughout this part of the world.



All Thy works shall praise Thee

Dr. Nathan Lanning, cellular and molecular biologist and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church, Redlands, California

Memory

**Remember His marvelous works that he hath done...
Psalm 105:5**

Take a moment to recall your earliest memory.

Perhaps your earliest memory is from a particularly happy moment, an exciting event, or a stressful situation. Mine is a combination of exciting moment and stressful event: I went with my mother to pick up my older brother from kindergarten for the first time. I was quite curious to get a glimpse of where my brother went during the day, but I was also anxious as to whether I would be required to talk to older kids or even a teacher! I can still remember the pegs in the hallway where the students hung their jackets and being a bit overwhelmed by the number of children in one building. I was 3 years old at this time, a common age for earliest recollections.

While a variety of definitions are applied to the term

“memory,” most definitions center on the capacity of an organism to acquire, consolidate, and retrieve information. The biological actions relating to encoding and storing information are also included in many definitions of memory. Using these characteristics to define memory,¹ we can conclude that the Creator has gifted both humans and animals with memory. We can reflect on how our memories give us insight into the human condition and how we are called to use our memories to the praise of our God.

As will be discussed below, the biological actions associated with memory are thought to be located in specialized cells called neurons. Essentially all animals studied to date that possess networks of neurons have

¹ Some of these characteristics also describe *learning*; however, learning is a component of memory.

some form of memory. We know that mammals such as dolphins and elephants remember events decades later. Countless rodents have been subjected to memory tests, where they are challenged to remember the path through a maze or remember the location of a submerged platform in a pool of water. Contrary to the popular factoid, goldfish memory persists on the timescale of days as opposed to seconds. Even tiny worms exhibit some memory-like capacity in how they respond to various stimulations. Just like humans, animal memories drive their behavior to a large extent. It can be endearing to watch Internet videos of dogs reuniting with their owners after the owners have been away for months. Animals will slink away from or exhibit aggressive behavior towards people who have mistreated them in the past. Animal predators exhibit surprising memories of the best hunting methods and locations, and their prey exhibit equally impressive memories that they utilize to avoid becoming dinner.

Even though many of us might wish we had better memories, the human capacity for memory dwarfs that of any animal. Ponder for a moment the amount of information you have acquired, retained, and are able to call to mind over the course of your life. There are literally millions of data points that you can remember. Many of these memories are important for us to effectively live our daily lives: technical facts related to our occupations, the names of dozens of family members and acquaintances, the driving route to church (it can be fun to test this out on children—at which age are children able to guide us turn-by-turn all the way to church?), and the fact that a loaf of bread should not be placed at the bottom of the grocery bag. Other remembered items are important to our personal quality of life: we enjoy remembering facts about our favorite topic, whether it be the details of the Normandy invasion or the statistics of our favorite baseball team; we remember whether we prefer dark chocolate or milk chocolate; and we remember that the forecast called for rain today so that we pack an umbrella.

Our memories also have an important impact on our behavior. For example, we will utilize different approaches to co-workers as we come to realize and remember their reactions in various contexts, or we become more likely to pursue interactions with people with whom we have had previous pleasant exchanges. In addition, we enjoy the simple act of engaging memories and the act of memorization itself (who does not enjoy reminiscing with friends about the old days, and how many games are not built around the object of memorization?). Further, memories can be an important aspect of who we are and how we view ourselves

individually. For example, when calling to mind our relationship with God, some of us cannot remember a time when we did not have faith in Christ, while others of us remember a time before we had faith. For both circumstances, this can lead to profound expressions of gratitude. New Christian converts in the early New Testament church were often challenged to remember their unconverted state in order to be encouraged to godliness and faith in Christ. Memory utilized in this way can be powerful indeed.

Most scientists working in the area of memory research will readily admit that the way in which memories are formed and how memories work remain largely unsolved. However, the current state of knowledge related to the biological basis of memory is fascinating and points to the incredible wisdom and power of the Creator. Animal studies, traumatic human brain injuries, psychologically stressful events, diseases, and brain cells studied in dishes have all informed what we know about this complex topic. Three basic biological events are thought to be involved in memory formation.

The first is the formation of something called “synapses.” Synapses are connections between two neurons (brain cells involved in memory) where the two neurons communicate with each other. When a stimulation occurs, one neuron sends chemical messengers to the second neuron, and the second neuron responds in some manner, often relaying the signal to another neuron. In the case of memory formation, the final neuron in a “neuron-synapse-neuron-synapse-neuron” chain can be called a “memory neuron.” The exact cellular response of a memory neuron that causes it to “store” a memory is not known. However, it is known that new synapses are formed to connect memory neurons with other neurons as new memories are formed.

The second biological event involved in memory formation is really a pair of related events termed “long-term potentiation” (LTP) and “long-term depression” (LTD). Both LTP and LTD refer to molecular actions occurring to neurons during memory formation. To illustrate these actions, we can take the example of a student learning new information. First, the student is in a lecture where a specific fact is presented (for example, terrorist attacks occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001). When the student hears the teacher say, “Terrorist attacks occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001,” a chemical called glutamate is released from one neuron at its synapse connection with a memory neuron. This glutamate binds to proteins on the surface of the memory neuron. In neurons that regulate body movement, this would immediately produce a result in the second neuron. However, in memory neurons, no result is produced.

The practical consequence of this is that only hearing a fact mentioned once in a lecture will likely not lead to a student remembering that fact. Now, if the teacher states the fact again, the first neuron will again send glutamate to the memory neuron. If this happens enough times, eventually the repeated binding of glutamate on the memory neuron will produce a result, which is that the student now remembers that terrorist attacks occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001. However, this does not necessarily mean that the student will remember this fact two weeks from now on the test. In order to form a longer-term memory, the new information has to be encountered again and again, preferably in different ways. If the student reviews her notes at home, glutamate again binds to proteins on the memory neuron. Reviewing her notes again later or having a parent quiz her on the information causes the glutamate to bind the proteins on the memory neuron again. This repeated action causes the following to occur: 1) more proteins that bind to glutamate are made on the memory neuron; 2) these proteins that bind glutamate become more sensitive to glutamate; 3) the memory neuron sends a signal backwards to the first neuron, causing the first neuron to send even more glutamate to the memory neuron. Together, this is LTP: essentially the glutamate signal from the first neuron becomes “louder” and the memory neuron “listens” more attentively. LTD is simultaneously occurring, which can be briefly described as the memory neuron pruning away all other signals coming to it, so that it only receives the signal from the first neuron, which correlates with the fact that terrorist attacks occurred in the United States on September 11, 2001. Repeated utilization of this newly memorized fact will further enhance LTP and LTD, leading to even longer-term memory storage.

In addition to new synapses being formed and louder and more sensitive signals occurring at the synapses, whole new memory neurons can be produced during the memory formation process in both adults and children. This is the third biological event that occurs during memory formation. All three of these events occur in specific regions of the brain that vary with the type of information being memorized. For example, there are separate regions of the brain that are used for visual memory, auditory memory, and tactile memory. Fascinating studies of blind or deaf individuals show that the regions typically used for visual or auditory memory and function are “re-wired” for utilization of memory and skills needed for those specific disabilities. (For example, in addition to using their tactile brain region for reading Braille, blind individuals also use their visual brain region.)

Whether or not the sovereign God will permit man to completely understand the nature of memory forma-

tion, man does have clear commands to use memory for specific purposes. Throughout the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit urges people to remember. Man is called to use his memory specifically by the fourth commandment (Ex. 20:8), and we are often called to remember the commandments themselves (Mal. 4:4). The Israelites were continually told to remember the LORD who brought them out of Egypt (for example, Deut. 6:12; and consequently, we are commanded to remember Jehovah, who delivered us from the slavery of sin), and we are often called to remember all of the wonderful works that God has accomplished for our salvation (Deut. 4:9; Ps. 77:11; Ps. 143:5; II Tim. 2:8). If we become discouraged with how long we think the Lord is tarrying or begin to slip into unholy living with the world, we are encouraged to remember what Scripture plainly tells us about the last days (II Pet. 3). Throughout the Scriptures, we are further instructed to remember the weak, such as the poor, the orphans, and the widows (for example, Acts 20:35; Gal. 2:10; Heb. 13:2). The act of remembering is also an important component of our praise and prayers to God (I Chr. 3:12; Ps. 42:4–11; Ps. 103:2; Ps. 119:55). Further, remembering is a key aspect of the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper (Luke 22:19).

From these passages we are encouraged to work on our memories for God’s glory. The act of Scripture memorization is not only for catechism and Christian school children. If we are to comply with God’s commands, adults will continue to memorize Scripture throughout their lives. Memorizing Scripture will allow us to call to mind all of God’s wonderful works guiding His church throughout history and accomplishing salvation for His people. In order to properly prepare ourselves to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we also have to exercise our memories by looking back at our life and bringing to mind the evidence of God’s sanctifying graces in us. Memory is integral to the Christian life.

However, we also have to recognize the effects of the Fall on our memories. We all experience the deterioration of our memories. In fact, many of our earliest memories are likely creations of our minds based on facts that were told to us or pictures that we viewed and then integrated into a “memory” (perhaps after reading this article my mother will inform me that I never did visit my brother’s kindergarten class). Even our memories of relatively recent events suffer from obvious defects. It has been demonstrated time and again that individuals’ memories change on an almost yearly basis. For example, across the country, individuals participating in a study have written down their recollections of the moments following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Years later, these individuals are given their written statements that now

are quite different from their current memories of these moments. In this and other studies, the study subjects are *certain* that their current memories are correct, and are profoundly confused as to why their written memories so plainly contradict their current memory. This is similar to the phenomenon of eye-witness testimonies in court frequently being unreliable and changing over time. We all experience this in more mundane ways in our daily lives. For example, if I do not put my car keys in exactly the same location every day, I will be late to work the next day. Similarly, most of us have experienced the confusion of walking into a room with a purpose that has completely slipped our mind. As an exercise to prove the point of our fallible memories, have everyone in your family try to remember what you had for dinner going back as many evenings as possible, and then compare notes. We also know that stress, distraction, lack of physical activity, and poor nutrition can negatively affect our memories. These produce almost the opposite effects of the biological events described above. Additionally, many of us have

experienced a family member suffering from Alzheimer's disease or other age-related memory loss. This too is an effect of the Fall on our memories. Disease and age can ravage the once-sharp memory of a loved one until every last memory has seemingly been torn away.

Therefore, a careful consideration of memory also exposes the frailty of the human condition and will incite in us a desire to look forward to the incorruptible bodies in which we will be raised upon Christ's return. However, even now in our corruptible bodies the Scriptures provide us great comfort when meditating upon memory. Our God's memory is incorruptible and active in our salvation. How many times does Jehovah remind us that He remembers His covenant with us (for example, Gen. 9:14–16; Ex. 2:23–25; Ps. 105:8; Ps. 111:5). He also remembers individuals in their particular needs (Gen. 30:22; I Sam. 1:19; Is. 49:15–16), and even causes us to remember Him to our salvation and His glory (John 14:26–27). Our memories are a precious gift from above—let us remember to use them to the glory of God's Name.



News from our churches

Mr. Perry Van Egdome, member of the Protestant Reformed Church of Doon, Iowa

Trivia question

The 2018 Young People's Convention is fast approaching! A record number of conventioners—over 500!—will descend on the Lake Geneva Christian Center in Alexandria, MN at the convention hosted by the five Siouxland area churches of the Midwest.

So, a question about early conventions: The first young people's convention was held in 1939. The April 1942 issue of *Beacon Lights* advertised the 4th Annual Convention to be held at Roosevelt Park PRC. "We have selected our theme for this year and it has to do with youth. What is always characteristic of youth—Of what is youth-ful? And that's the theme of the 1942 Convention." It never materialized. Do you know why? Answer later in this column.

Congregational activities

A new Allen organ with Geni-Sys technology was recently installed in Hope PRC of Walker, MI. May this beautiful new organ always be used to the glory of God in the worship of His holy name!

Pentecost Sunday was commemorated on May 20. In our worship we thanked God for the gracious gift of the Holy Spirit poured out on the church to give knowledge, comfort, love, and holiness.

The congregation at Wingham, AB, Canada is looking forward to new construction on the church building to add elevators and restrooms.

School activities

The 42nd annual all-schools band concert was held in Hudsonville (MI) Fine Arts Center. The bands of Covenant, Adams, Heritage, and Hope played a new piece by Matthew Fisher. All were welcome to come and enjoy an evening of beautiful music!

Graduations and commencements from our schools have taken place throughout North America! At the close of another school year, we reflect on and are thankful for the privilege and blessing of our own good, Christian schools. These extensions of our covenant homes are trustworthy for the proper instruction of our covenant children. To teachers and students alike: Enjoy the summer break!

Seminary/denominational activities

Two of our professors have special trips planned this summer: Prof. R. Dykstra will labor in our sister church in Singapore (Covenant ERC) for six weeks and Prof. R. Cammenga will be part of an exploratory mission trip to Mexico with Rev. C. Griess (First PRC, Grand Rapids, MI), Rev. R. Kleyn (Spokane, WA), and Doner Bartolon, one of our pre-seminary students who comes from the area to be visited.

The Synod of the PRCA convened on June 12 and finished its work on June 21. For the first time there was a representative from the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines, as Rev. Leovino A. Trinidad made the trip to the USA. Rev. Trinidad is pastor of the Maranatha PRC in Valenzuela City.

Mission activities

The Classis of the Protestant Reformed Churches in the Philippines met on June 12 in the Berean PRC.

Missionary-pastor Daniel Holstege and his family will be on furlough in the United States from June 11 through July 24 with stops in Michigan, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Colorado. He will be giving at least four presentations on the work in the Philippines.

Young people's activities

The Wingham PRC Young People hosted a dodgeball tournament on Saturday, June 2, at F.E. Madill High School in Wingham, Ontario, Canada. As many as 14 teams were expected, with each team having 8 players, high-school age or older. The proceeds of this tournament went toward the cost of the young people attending this year's PR Young People's Convention.

Evangelism activities

On June 13 the consistory of Trinity PRC sponsored a lecture by Rev. Angus Stewart entitled "Gottschalk: Medieval Confessor of God's Absolute Sovereignty" at 7:30 P.M. at Georgetown PRC. Rev. Stewart was in West Michigan for synod as a representative of our sister congregation, the Covenant Protestant Reformed Church of Northern Ireland.

Sister-church activities

This uplifting quote is taken from a recent bulletin of the Covenant Evangelical Reformed Church of Singapore:

How was your past week? Routine? Eventful? Busy? Stressful? Joyful? Discouraging? Did you live in the consciousness of the providence of God? Did you pause to consider the almighty and everywhere-present power of God that governs and upholds all things, including every moment of your every day, so that nothing happened by chance, but by His Fatherly Hand? Whatever may have happened to you, to your loved one or someone you know; whatever may have happened at home, at work, in school or anywhere around the world, all work together for your spiritual good, for the salvation of the church and ultimately for the glory of our Sovereign God. Therefore, let us be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and in all things that may hereafter befall us place our firm trust in our faithful God and Father, assured that absolutely nothing shall separate us from His love. But that in all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Trivia answer

The October *Beacon Lights* of that same year tells why the 1942 PRYP's Convention did not materialize. "In one word, who could have imagined that it would be possible for the war to so soon make such inroads into our lives that the Federation Board would deem it advisable to call off the 1942 meeting, even while the plans were in the making?" The rubber shortage had reduced traveling to a minimum. Most societies had their ranks greatly depleted by the call to service. The war with all its horrors tended to depress spirits. All in all, the Board felt that a convention was out of the question for some time. For two years Federation activity was reduced to the production of *Beacon Lights*. More trivia next time.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." Ecclesiastes 3:1.

Announcements

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Hope PRC in Walker express their Christian sympathy to Elder Rich Peterson and his wife, Betty, in the death of his mother, **Mrs. Irene Peterson**. May they be comforted in the words of Jesus Christ: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26).

Rev. David Overway, President
Joel Minderhoud, Clerk

Classis West

Classis West of the Protestant Reformed Churches will meet in Peace PRC on Wednesday, August 29, 2018, at 8:30 A.M., the Lord willing. All material for the agenda is to be in the hands of the stated clerk by July 30 (30 days before Classis convenes). All delegates in need of lodging or transportation from the airport should notify the clerk of Peace's consistory.

Rev. Joshua Engelsma,
Stated Clerk

Announcements continued

Resolution of sympathy

The Council and congregation of Georgetown PRC express their sincere sympathy to Bill and Carol Huber in the death of her mother, **Johanna Bomers**. It is our prayer that they and their extended family may receive comfort from the Holy Spirit in I Corinthians 15:55–57, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Rev. Carl Haak, President
David S. Miedema, Clerk

Resolution of sympathy

The Ladies Society of Hudsonville PRC expresses its Christian sympathy to Barb Jansma in the death of her husband, **Jimmy Jansma**. May she find comfort in the words of Psalm 116:15, “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.”

Matt Kortus, President
Brenda Hoekstra, Secretary

Wedding anniversary

On June 27, 2018, **Bob and Ruth Garvelink** celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. We rejoiced and gave thanks to our heavenly Father for the many years He has given them together and for their godly example as parents and grandparents. “For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

Craig and Samantha Garvelink
Jeff and Denise Lanting
David and Kimberly Monsma
Dan and Pam Kramer
13 grandchildren
10 great grandchildren

Hudsonville, Michigan

Reminder

Remember that the *Standard Bearer* is published only once during the summer months: June, July, and August.

Wedding anniversary

It is with thanksgiving to God, that our parents, **Bret and Deb Dykstra**, celebrated their 40th anniversary on May 19, 2018. Our hearts overflow with gratitude to Jehovah God for His blessings and faithfulness.

Psalm 128:4, 5: “Behold that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.”

Nathan and Brenda Dykstra
Kaitlyn, Emmalie, Seth, Brianna, Levi, Rebekah
Jeremy and Amanda Venlet
Brendan, Jerod, Aric, Nolan, Liliana, Aubrielle,
Avalynn

Bruce and Alisha Doezeema
Ryan, Nicole, Calvin, Jennifer
Bret and Kyndra Dykstra
Christy, Lydia

Hudsonville, Michigan

Teacher needed

The Edmonton Protestant Reformed Christian School is in need of a full-time teacher for the 2019–2020 school year. The school will be starting with grades 1–4, and the board is willing to work with the teacher on a curriculum suited to their preference. Please contact Gord Tolsma at gr.tolsma@gmail.com / 780-777-5780 or Scott Ferguson at s_r_ferguson@hotmail.com.

Reformed Witness Hour

Rev. Carl Haak

- July 1 “Blessed Are the Merciful” Matthew 5:7
- July 8 “Blessed Are the Pure in Heart” Matthew 5:8
- July 15 “Arise, God, and Cry Against It” Jonah 1:1, 2
- July 22 “The Prophet Who Ran Away” Jonah 1:3
- July 29 “The God Who Would Not Let Him Go”
Jonah 1:4–17