



HIGHLIGHTS

*~ Thanksgiving Issue ~
November 2017*



*Oh that men would praise the Lord
for his goodness, and for his wonderful
works to the children of men!*

*For he satisfieth the longing soul,
and filleth the hungry soul with
goodness.*

Psalms 107:8-9

TEACHERS' CONVENTION 2017

Mr. Ron Koole, Principal

The year of our Lord 2017 marks the 500th year anniversary of Martin Luther's nailing of the 95 thesis on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany. We thank the Lord for His work of restoring many true doctrines and proper worship to the Church of Jesus Christ. Not only were the members of the Protestant Reformed Churches reminded of the glorious events of this great Reformation in a recent conference sponsored by the Protestant Reformed Seminary, but also the Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute seized the opportunity to encourage its member teachers to consider one of the outstanding solas of the Reformation. Thus the theme of this year's Teachers' Convention, "Reformation and the Schools: Sola Scriptura" based on the text of II Timothy 3:14-17. Over 200 Protestant Reformed teachers from across the USA and Canada (plus teachers from Zion and Plymouth Christian Schools) gathered at Adams Christian School for the 63rd Annual Teachers' Convention. This year's convention, as the conventions in the past, was indeed an enriching experience.

Teachers must know and be able to apply the Scriptures not only to the subjects they teach, but also to the lives of the children. Prof. B. Gritters addressed all the teachers in his keynote speech, encouraging us to wield the Word in hope. Prof. set out four propositions. The following ideas were included in those propositions:

1. While the Scriptures don't make "the man of God", instruction in the Scriptures bring the immature children to the "complete man of God".
2. The goal in wielding the Scriptures in the instruction is to "equip and furnish these children unto all good works".
3. The teacher's view of the Scripture as authoritative, infallible, perspicuous, etc., as well as the proper use of this tool in the instruction to the spiritual maturity level of the children, is crucial to attaining the goal.
4. The teacher may wield the Scriptures in hope, as it is a means of grace in his hands and mouth to bring the children to spiritual maturity.

As means in the hands of God, teachers are to be much in prayer and must give evidence in their own lives of their love for and obedience to the Word of God.

It is often said that the Teachers' Convention is as good and profitable as the sectional presentations made throughout the two days of the convention. I think this is a fair barometer. From my point of view there were interesting sectional topics covering a wide variety of subjects and grade levels, thus providing profitable options for all.

Teachers are encouraged to share the workload by making a sectional presentation every few years. This year the following Hope teachers made presentations: Deb Hoeksema – "Teaching with Technology", Ed Bos – "Tour of Scotland", Ron Koole – "The European Union and Its Place in History", Deb Kuiper & Mindy Bleyenbergh – "Music in the Elementary Classroom", and Nate DeVries, Doug Dykstra, and Matt Elzinga – "The Cell Game".

All look forward to next year's convention to be hosted by Heritage Christian on October 18 & 19, 2018 D.V.



FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD



EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Mr. Tim Bomers, Chairman
Andy Bylsma, Aaron Cleveland, Jeff Kalsbeek

Greetings from the Education Committee. This year has been going very smoothly for which we are thankful. Once again there are many people involved in the covenantal education of our children. Following are just a few details relating some of the activities of a few of those involved.

Several of our teachers are taking college courses to further their education. Deb Hoeksema (Kindergarten) recently completed a course entitled, "Facilitating School Environments" as part of her pursuit of her Master's Degree. She hopes to complete the course work for her Masters by the end of the summer of 2018. Gayle Lotterman (3rd grade) recently began classes as part of a Master's program in literacy studies. And Stephanie Daling (2nd grade) is working toward obtaining her elementary endorsement in order to be certified K-12. Hope School also encourages the teachers to continue their education in various other ways, such as attending seminars. Deb Kuiper and Jill Reitsma recently attended a conference entitled "Dynamics of Dyslexia" held in Illinois. The purpose of the conference was to get new ideas and to stay current on practices to help struggling children learn. What they have learned is already being applied in the classroom setting. Eight other teachers from area PR schools also attended this conference.

Work by those in the area of technology is always ongoing. Matt Elzinga has been assigned the task of digitally cataloging previously approved band and choir music. A new server has also been purchased and set up along with a server power supply being installed in the copy room. We now have cloud backup instead of manual offsite backup. In addition, more wireless access points have been installed through the school. According to our annual replacement schedule, four new computers were purchase for teachers. Plans are to purchase a cart of touchscreen Chromebooks next summer that will be ready to use for the 2018-19 school year. Thanks to Dan DeVries and Matt Elzinga for their excellent technology work for Hope School.

Our School Circle provided \$1705 to again fund our robotics program being managed by Matt Elzinga and Jon Rutgers. The fourth annual RoBowl was held at Hope School on Saturday, November 18. A large audience watched five PR schools engage in friendly competition and an ice cream social was enjoyed by all after the event.

The School Board members have the privilege of visiting classrooms at least once during the school year, but Education Committee members have the double privilege of visiting twice. Education Committee members have an unfair advantage; it is a joy to be able to witness firsthand the dedication of so many individuals. It is difficult to give recognition to everyone. This article does not attempt to do so. We thank God for all the supporters of Hope School. Please continue to remember our teachers, administrator, and board in your prayers.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Jon Rutgers, Chairman
Phil Kalsbeek, Dick Kuiper, Mark Meulenberg

The writer of Proverbs gives wise instruction through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in Prov. 3:9 & 10. "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." The duty of each believer of denying himself and giving of the firstfruits is a principle that we must know and exercise. Like the Israelites, we too are called to give freely and cheerfully of the first fruits that we receive.

Giving is also a covenantal duty. Fathers must not only give for the family, but see to it that the children also be instructed in proper giving. From the earliest days of earning income, children must be taught to set aside first for giving. Question and Answer 103 of the Heidelberg Catechism identifies that "First, that the ministry of the gospel and the schools be maintained" as a requirement of the fourth commandment. A bit striking that this is first and mentioned prior to our diligent attendance of the house of God for worship. Fathers, please give to our schools and see to it that they are maintained and remember the high calling to also instruct our children on proper covenantal giving.

Our fall drive letter was sent out in the middle of October and we collected just over \$30,000 in the first ten days. Lord willing, we would like to collect \$150,000 in the fall which is half of the \$300,000 budget. Please continue the giving as the drive is nearly 30% of our annual budget of just over one million dollars. Perhaps consider another gift before the end of the calendar year. The drive allows us to maintain reasonable tuition rates for families while giving opportunity for all covenant believers to assist in Christian education. Please give as you are able to our drives.

A review of the first four months (33%) of the fiscal year is included in this *Highlights*. Our incoming and expenses are both at 32% which is right in line with where we should be. The income from church collections and the drive are less than budget; however, tuition is ahead of budget so they are balancing out. Our goal is that the drive will reach 50% of budget before the end of the year. We will keep you updated with bulletin announcements. As we reflect on the abundance of God's goodness to us during this season, please continue to show your gratitude by supporting the school with your gifts and prayers. Be motivated in gratitude to God who gave us Christ, the "firstfruits of them that slept." 1 Cor. 15:20.

2017-18 SCHOOL CALENDAR

November 23-24	Thanksgiving Break
December 14	Band/Choir Concert
Dec. 25-Jan. 2	Christmas Break
January 19	End of 1st Semester, ½ day
January 20	Family Fun Night
February 8	PTA
March 1-2	Parent/Teacher Conferences
March 16	Friends & Family Night (formerly 'Parent Night')
April 2-6	Spring Break
April 25	Kindergarten Program
May 11	Elementary Music Program
May 28	Memorial Day – No School
June 1	Last Day of School
June 2	Hope Classic Races
June 4	Graduation

**HOPE PROTESTANT REFORMED CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
INCOME STATEMENT
OCTOBER 2017**

33%

	CURRENT MONTH	YEAR TO DATE	PERCENT TO BUDGET	ANNUAL BUDGET
INCOME				
CHURCH COLLECTIONS	2,010.22	12,436.56	0.28	44,000.00
GIFTS & PLEDGES	36,045.00	41,500.00	0.14	300,000.00
HOPE FOUNDATION	-	10,000.00	0.50	20,000.00
GYM RENTAL	490.00	2,205.00	0.37	6,000.00
SPECIAL ED SOCIETY	-	-	-	7,610.00
TUITION	65,832.63	283,004.48	0.39	727,100.00
BUS FEES	2,800.00	11,247.00	0.39	28,500.00
MISCELLANEOUS	-	-	-	-
TOTAL INCOME:	107,177.85	360,393.04	0.32	1,133,210.00

GENERAL EXPENSES				
ACCOUNTING FEES	300.00	1,200.00	0.33	3,630.00
BAND EXPENSE	-	3,000.00	1.00	3,000.00
CLASS TRIP FUND	-	2,000.00	0.80	2,500.00
EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES AND BOOKS	-	14,000.00	0.64	22,000.00
BUILDING AND GROUNDS FUND	3,333.33	13,333.32	0.33	40,000.00
ELIM CHRISTIAN SERVICES	-	-	-	500.00
FEDERATION DUES	-	-	-	1,300.00
INSURANCE, GENERAL	-	2,409.42	0.26	9,350.00
INSURANCE, GROUP	6,290.40	29,262.25	0.33	87,600.00
INSURANCE, WORKERS COMP	-	794.75	0.26	3,100.00
INSURANCE, HEALTH REIMBURSEMENT	333.33	1,333.32	0.33	4,000.00
JANITORIAL SUPPLIES	333.35	2,250.58	0.56	4,000.00
LIBRARY FUND	-	1,500.00	1.00	1,500.00
MISCELLANEOUS	-	430.30	0.22	2,000.00
LONG RANGE BUILDING FUND	6,250.00	25,000.00	0.33	75,000.00
OFFICE SUPPLIES	79.50	262.00	0.22	1,200.00
OFFICE EQUIPMENT	-	-	-	1,000.00
PAYROLL, BAND	675.00	2,587.52	0.32	8,100.00
PAYROLL, BUILDING MAINTENANCE	19.00	361.00	0.18	2,000.00
PAYROLL, CHOIR	458.33	1,741.66	0.32	5,500.00
PAYROLL, DISCOVERY ROOM	4,350.50	9,302.75	0.20	46,000.00
PAYROLL, JANITOR	2,416.80	9,667.20	0.33	29,000.00
PAYROLL, LAWN MAINTENANCE	127.50	1,658.50	0.47	3,500.00
PAYROLL, LIBRARIAN	539.15	1,095.63	0.28	3,950.00
PAYROLL, OFFICE	2,360.00	7,935.50	0.29	26,950.00
PAYROLL, SUBSTITUTE TEACHER	-	-	-	2,000.00
PAYROLL, TEACHER	41,815.62	161,212.44	0.32	501,800.00
PAYROLL, TEACHER AIDE	1,327.66	2,477.78	0.25	9,800.00
PAYROLL, TECHNOLOGY MAINTENANCE	-	1,160.00	0.39	3,000.00
PAYROLL TAXES	4,222.15	14,617.24	0.30	49,100.00
RETIREMENT PLAN	-	4,236.10	0.23	18,100.00
PHYS ED UNIFORMS	-	744.75	0.83	900.00
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE	57.71	1,783.70	0.20	9,000.00
SNOW REMOVAL	-	-	-	3,000.00
TEACHER DEVELOPMENT	4,000.00	4,000.00	1.00	4,000.00
TEACHER CLASSROOM FUND	-	1,000.00	0.45	2,200.00
TECHNOLOGY SUPPLIES	-	8,000.00	1.00	8,000.00
UTILITIES, ELECTRIC	1,596.85	4,627.38	0.24	19,000.00
UTILITIES, GAS	-	258.66	0.02	13,000.00
UTILITIES, INTERNET	119.85	398.55	0.27	1,500.00
UTILITIES, TELEPHONE	305.06	1,137.44	0.69	1,650.00
UTILITIES, TRASH	127.11	508.44	0.32	1,600.00
UTILITIES, WATER & SEWER	328.26	660.28	0.51	1,300.00
CONTINGENCY	-	-	-	5,000.00
TOTAL GENERAL EXPENSES:	81,766.46	337,948.46	0.32	1,040,630.00

BUS EXPENSES				
BUS DEPRECIATION FUND	2,166.67	8,666.68	0.33	26,000.00
BUS DRIVER COST SUBSIDY	-	214.00	0.14	1,500.00
BUS DRIVER PAYROLL	3,988.00	6,950.31	0.22	31,000.00
BUS DRIVER PAYROLL TAXES	-	-	-	2,330.00
BUS DRIVER WORKER'S COMP	-	-	-	1,000.00
BUS INSURANCE	868.25	1,026.31	0.29	3,500.00
BUS REPAIR	352.13	(257.37)	(0.02)	11,000.00
GAS AND OIL	1,544.25	3,870.78	0.26	15,000.00
TRANSPORTATION SUPERVISOR	-	625.00	0.50	1,250.00
TOTAL BUS EXPENSES:	8,919.30	21,095.71	0.23	92,580.00
TOTAL EXPENSES:	90,685.76	359,044.17	0.32	1,133,210.00
GAIN OR (LOSS):	16,492.09	1,348.87		

FOUNDATION REPORT

Jeremy Meulenberg, Chairman

Andy Bylsma, John DeVries, Scott Kooienga, Dave Rutgers, Joel Vink

What is a Foundation and why does Hope PR Christian School have one? The meaning of the word Foundation, as we use it, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is “an organization or institution established by endowment with provision for future maintenance”. Hope School’s Foundation is then a committee appointed by the Board to “accumulate Endowment Funds, the income of which is used to help support the education needs of Hope PR Christian School”. (Hope Foundation’s Constitution).

Since 2009, the Foundation has contributed over \$178,000 to the operating budget of our school. Our desire is to grow our Endowment Fund so that we can increase the amount contributed for our current needs, but maybe more importantly for “future maintenance”, meaning being able to support not only the present educational needs of our children, but those of future generations as well. What you give to the Foundation is a gift that will continue to give for years to come.

Our committee’s main focus in “accumulating Endowment Funds” is to bring awareness to what the Foundation is and what it does in order to encourage you to remember us in your estate planning. If you need help or would like some direction in this area, feel free to contact one of the committee members and we can put you in touch with an estate planning professional. We also accumulate funds and bring awareness to the Foundation through our fundraisers. This year the Sporting Clay event was held in May and the Bass Fishing Tournament was held in August. Together these fundraisers profited the Foundation \$19,870. Thank you to all of our business sponsors and thanks to all of you who attended these events. Because of your patronage, our events were a success.

The current Endowment Fund Balance as of November 6, was \$539,520, a significant increase compared to our March 31 balance of \$507,429. Because our mission is to “accumulate Endowment Funds” we ask that you remember us in your year-end giving. The Lord has blessed Hope School with much and we pray that He will continue to be with us as we strive to train up our children in the fear of His name.

FEDERATION, PUBLICITY, CIRCLE CONTACT COMMITTEE

Aaron Cleveland, Chairman

Mark Meulenberg, Dan Schipper

Beginning with the Federation portion of our work, committee members attended the fall delegate meeting of the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies on the evening of November 2. The main topic of discussion was the newly formed Teacher Training Committee which is laying the groundwork for training new teachers in the distinctives of the Protestant Reformed faith.

Our committee is also responsible for overseeing the school website. Earlier in the year our committee proposed and the Board approved a website update protocol which is designed to keep the website up to date and fresh. We thank Laurel, our school secretary, for her work in updating the content of the website and replacing old pictures with new.

Overseeing the work of the School Circle and maintaining communication between the Board and Circle is the main portion of our work. This fall our committee met with the officers

of the Circle in order to know how their work is going. The officers reported that the work of the Circle is going well, a spirit of unity prevails in that work and the ladies enjoy the time they spend together in performing their labors on behalf of Hope School.

We want to take this opportunity to publicly thank the Circle for their often unnoticed, yet valuable labors in the school. From hot lunches to room mothers and Family Fun Night to the Teacher "Appreciation" Lunch, the mothers of the Circle make the *house* of Hope School into a *home*. There is a warmth and hospitality within Hope School that would not be there without the School Circle.



GUEST CONTRIBUTION



THE MUSIC OF HEAVEN COMES TO SCHOOL

Mr. Philip Rainey, Bus Driver

I listened to beautiful music the other day. It might have been the most beautiful I have ever heard. It was not a professional orchestral performance, nor that of a highly trained choir. It was not the music of Bach, Mozart or any great classical composer. It was the children of the third grade in Hope PR Christian School singing the psalms of the Bible at the start of the school day.

I had been in the school briefly before leaving for my second job and was in somewhat of a hurry. The school day had just commenced; everything was quiet and hushed; then the children started to sing. I stood in the hallway alone. I couldn't leave. It was beautiful: the children of the covenant singing the songs of the covenant. I was glad there was no one else there – my eyes were misty and watering and that's not something I like to show.

Doubtless, it would be appealing to hear almost any songs sung by these little ones. There's something about little voices blending together in this way. But this was different. There was a heavenly strain to their music. These were songs of faith, sung by those regenerated in earliest infancy and as such already the covenant friends of Jehovah. And God gave them His own songs to sing.

As I stood listening in the hallway, I was struck by the wonder of Psalm singing. Not only does Jehovah save poor sinners, bringing us into the fellowship of His own covenant life; not only does He work in us the desire to worship Him; not only does He give us fellow saints with whom to sing; but He gives us songs with which to praise Him.

The Psalter is unique; it is a wonder. In some respects it is the most wonderful book in all of scripture. The other books of the Bible are meant to be preached, read and meditated upon. Every word of Scripture is God-breathed; to hear the words of Scripture is to hear the very words of God. But the Psalter is not only to be preached, read and meditated upon; it is also to be sung. The Psalter is a book of songs whose author is none other than the Holy Spirit. That is its unique place in the canon of Scripture.

The content of the Psalms is also unique. To the writing of praise songs there seems to be no end. But not all praise songs are created equal. You will look far and wide for songs penned by men that call down God's curses upon certain men. The Psalms do this repeatedly. The Psalms are replete with the sharp distinction God makes between His eternal love for His elect and His hatred for the reprobate: "Thou, Jehovah, art a God who delightest not in sin;

Evil shall not dwell with thee, nor the proud thy favor win. Evil doers thou dost hate, lying tongues thou wilt defeat; God abhors the man who loves violence and base deceit” Psalter 9, stanza 2.

As Protestant Reformed people, we find the theology of the Psalms reflects our Reformed theology. That is why we feel at home in the Psalter; and that is why we want our children to learn and sing the Psalter – the Psalms sing our theology into our children. In this way, the Psalms become the songs of our pilgrimage; they become that too for our children.

One of the Psalter numbers I listened to the school children sing that morning was 233, “Confident Pleading”. They sang this stanza: “O Lord, incline thy ear to me, my voice of supplication heed; In trouble I will cry to thee, for thou wilt answer when I plead, for thou wilt answer when I plead.” Parents, there will come a day when you will no longer be able to answer your child’s cry for help. By teaching them to love and sing the Psalms they will have these songs in their hearts, so that when the day of trouble comes it will be with these words they direct their cry to Jehovah.

The words of this stanza were in my mind for days afterwards; I would hum the tune while thinking of the words. And what better words could be in the hearts and minds of our children than these songs given by the Holy Spirit to the church of all ages. It gladdened my heart to hear the children of the covenant sing God’s own songs; and I know too it gladdened the heart of our covenant God.



STAFF & STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS



TALKING TO TODDLERS

Mrs. Deb Kuiper, Discovery Room

I recently saw a young mom in my neighborhood taking a walk with her toddler. She was walking, but she was pushing the stroller with her forearms while she looked at her phone. Perhaps I’m showing my age, but it seemed like such a shame, not only because she was missing a chance to clear her head and enjoy God’s creation, but also because she was missing a great opportunity to talk to her child.

Research shows that children learn from interacting with others. During the first three years of life, our brains are developing at an amazing rate. More than 700 neural connections are being made every second, and one of the main ways these connections are made is through words.

Dr. Dana Suskind, the author of Thirty Million Words Building a Child’s Brain, researched how the way parents talk to their children impacts their learning. Dr. Suskind is a surgeon who performs cochlear implants. She found that children who received the same implant went on to learn at vastly different rates. Children who thrived after surgery, generally came from homes where their parents talked to them a lot. Those who failed to thrive, usually came from homes where their parents talked to them much less often. Dr. Suskind writes, “Without that language environment, the ability to hear is a wasted gift.”

Because she recognized the importance of this discovery, Dr. Suskind started the Thirty Million Word Initiative. The name of her initiative comes from a study published in 1995 by Betty Hart and Todd Risley. These researchers studied how often parents actually talked to their

children during the day and the ways in which they talked to them. They found that by the end of age 3, children with more affluent and professional parents have heard 30 million more words than those of low socio-economic backgrounds. This resulted not just in a difference in vocabulary, but in test scores and reading ability in school. Dr. Suskind saw the same effect in her patients. Those whose parents talked to them, made much higher and faster gains than those whose parents did not. This discovery made her want to get the message out to parents about how important it is to talk to children starting when they are very young.

Dr. Suskind's initiative has three components that she calls the Three Ts: Tune In, Talk More, and Take Turns. Tune In refers to the way that we respond to our children. This involves getting on the child's level, putting away distractions such as phones and TVs and really talking to them. Any talk is good, but baby talk is actually a good way to talk to babies. Because of its higher pitched and more sing-song tone, it makes our voice more interesting and makes our baby want to listen to us.

Talking More involves talking about everything we do as we go about our day. Explaining what we are doing and giving objects names helps children develop their vocabulary and language skills. Babies can understand spoken words before they can speak. Young children's listening vocabulary is higher than their expressive vocabulary. Listening to adult language will help pull them along into more developed speech. Talking More also includes reading to children. Books introduce children to new vocabulary and encourages conversation between parents and children.

Finally, Taking Turns means that we foster back and forth communication. This can start early. With infants, we respond to their cries and coos with words. With older children, we model good language and encourage short sentences. Being patient and giving children a chance to respond to us with their own words is not always easy, but is important in helping them learn how to speak.

These three Ts are not intended to be something parents have to set aside a special time to do. They are supposed to be a part of everyday life. Moms who are sorting socks or dads who are getting dressed for work and take time to talk to their children are helping their children's brains develop. This ongoing talk is a priceless gift that a parent can give a child and one that will benefit them for years to come.

BABYLON AROUND US

Mrs. Stephane Daling, 2nd Grade

I was recently reminded from the book of Daniel about the similarities between Daniel's life and the lives of our young people today, and I felt compelled to share the message with you. The book of Daniel speaks to us about God's sovereignty over time, circumstances, and individuals. Its purpose is to inspire God's people during difficult or uncertain times, and to remind them to have confidence in God's unfailing purpose to govern the world for His glory. The very first chapter of Daniel speaks to us about how God had given His people, Judah, over to the Babylonians. This captivity was the consequence of and chastisement for the nation's sin, and it was a just judgment from God. Daniel 1 speaks about how the children that were brought to Nebuchadnezzar, to be taught the way of the Chaldeans, were the very best children of Judah. Not only were they very wise and full of knowledge, but verse 3 also tells us they were "children in whom was no blemish, but well favoured." Physically, they had no defects or

blemishes. Intellectually, they were at the very top. Most importantly, they were covenant children. Daniel and his three friends were just a few of the children that were selected from Judah. They had been taken from their families and placed in the schools in Babylon to learn all about the way of the Chaldeans.

The children of Judah, while in Babylon, were given absolutely everything they needed. Nebuchadnezzar supplied them with their school, food, and clothing. The Chaldeans' goal was to try and persuade these children of Judah to throw away all their old habits and enjoy this new place they were now a part of. This is evident, because they gave them the absolute best of everything. In verse 5, we are told, "And the king appointed them a daily provision of the king's meat, and of his wine which he drank." Nebuchadnezzar wanted them to speak the tongue of the Chaldeans, and so he said they were no longer allowed to speak Hebrew. Instead, they were being taught about the culture and heroes of the Chaldeans. They were being told to just forget their old culture. Nebuchadnezzar did whatever he could to make this possible. He went as far as to change the children's names. Verse 7 tells us about the name changes of Daniel and his three friends. Their original names all had biblical meaning to them, and now they had been given names that had new meanings – idol names had been imbedded in them. This is the same thing the world is doing today to our children.

It is important for us to be aware and understand that we and our children are surrounded by our own Babylon today. We have a calling as parents and teachers to help instruct our children to remain steadfast in the truth like Daniel and his friends. It is not just as easy as saying, "I won't send my children to the public schools". Regardless of the school we attend, we are still in the Babylon of this world. It is all around us, and it is constantly seeking to tempt and persuade the church. The world around us is continually telling us to enjoy the pleasures, the possessions, to be like them – implying that these things are not that big of a deal! Babylon of our time focuses its efforts on our young children, just like the Babylon during Daniel's time. Our youth are not used to battling and they are vulnerable to the attractions of this world, and it appeals to their flesh. Take for example the colleges our children attend, whether it be public or Christian. I attended a public university, and it became so obvious that they try to teach the students the culture of this world. They are all about diversity and making sure you are knowledgeable about all aspects of life. The Christian schools have their own message wrapped in common grace. They are constantly pounding this message by asking the students to work with the world to make peace and equity. This is why our Christian schools are so precious – our message is entirely different!

Babylon is all around us and constantly trying to persuade us to join its side through the use of their "heroes" - movies, songs, and athletes. They want us to talk, look, and live like they do. They want us to love their athletes and worship them. The scariest part about this is that our children do not even need to leave the house in order to be instructed and persuaded by Babylon. They have it right in front of them with their cellphones, TVs, and the internet. It can so easily draw us in. How many times have you caught yourself mindlessly scrolling through social media or watching countless hours of sports? There's danger in this entertainment. We allow ourselves and our children to spend countless hours surfing the web or sitting on our phones and there becomes no time for reading the Bible or the newest RFPA book. As a result, the language of the church becomes more and more difficult for our youth to understand, and less time is spent in personal devotions and the studying of God's Word. We cannot escape this Babylon, but we have to understand that it is around us, and it is affecting us.

During the three years Daniel was in these schools, the goal of Nebuchadnezzar was to get these children ready to persuade the others in Jerusalem of the culture of Babylon. The Babylon of today wants the exact same thing. But God's goal is always for the good of His church. He places His people right in the middle of Babylon with all the pressures and temptations. He calls us to live IN the world, but not be OF the world. He wants the world to know that we stand by God's grace. We must glorify God and encourage our children to stand up for God in all circumstances. By placing us in the middle of this Babylon, God is making us strong and teaching us to pray for His grace to stand fast through all temptations. As parents and teachers, we need to instruct our children to be strong in God's grace, to be steadfast and to stand up for their beliefs, for God WILL preserve us.

Daniel's being taken captive illustrates the divine wisdom of providence. God made this event occur to be a means of testing and using Daniel for His glory. What Daniel did in service to God could not have been done if he had remained in Judah. It had to have been a traumatic experience for Daniel, but God used the trauma for good. This should be a lesson to us in trusting the providence of God that sometimes leads to difficult and uncertain circumstances. We must remember and tell our children that no matter what, God's way is ALWAYS best. Daniel was firm in His beliefs and was a wonderful example of what we read in I Timothy 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth: but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." This verse is a great reminder for us as we instruct our covenant children as they grow up in this Babylon around us.



In connection with these thoughts, I had my students do some of their own writing on why our schools are so important to them. Below are some their thoughts:

Our schools are important becus we pray and the other schools do not. – Sarah Brunsting

I am happy I go to Hope because I can read the Bible. I am happy that we can sing songs and pray. – Jacob DeBoer

Our schools are important because it is a Godle school and we have Godle teachers and if we went to a public school we wode not learn about God. – Dani Bylsma

Our school is good because it is a Crishtin school, and it teaches about God. – Jonathan DeJong

My mom and dad sent me here because it's a Godlee school. And to learn about God and read the Bible. – Jace Cammenga

This is a Christian school and some other schools are not Christian at all. I am glad my parents sent me here, because I can learn about God. We can grow more and more to understand the word and we can make the confesstion of faith in our church. – Jane Duistermars

I like this school beuse we can learn about God and because it is a christin school. Also because we have chritin teachers and we sing and learn how to incerigr (encourage) others. – Evan Cleveland

I think it's important because we can pray to God and sing praises to God. Also we can read the Holy Bible. – Ellery Engelsma

Mom and dad sent me here because this is a Christian school. We can read the Bible here. – Colton Huizinga

I think the most important thing about our school is that it is Godly and not public like some of the other schools. – Ondra Kalsbeek

If my parents sent me to an ungodly school I wouldn't be allowed to pray or do Godly things. – Miriam Kuiper

I think it is good to go to our schools because we can read the Bible and we can sing. And the teachers are nice. – Daniel Langerak

Our schools are important so we can learn how to read so that we can read the Bible. – Dean Langerak

I think it is special that we have a Christian school to go to not a wicked one. – Gwen Overway

I think our school is important because my mom and dad want me to go to a Christian school because they are Christian. – Cambria Rau

I am thankful for my school, because it teaches me the word of God. – Lucy Schimmel

Our schools are important because this is a school that talks about God. – Caleb Schipper

Our schools are important because it's a Christian school and we are allowed to pray. – Ruby VanUffelen

HAMSTERS AND HAMBURGERS

Miss Gayle Lotterman, 3rd Grade

I saw a comic once that was so relatable, I couldn't help but laugh. "When a teacher wants to know if there are any questions, she doesn't mean any question. She wants to be asked about the thing she's teaching. So if she's teaching you about Mexico, don't ask if 'Bubbles' is a good name for a hamster."

A lesson can hardly be taught in third grade without a student raising his or her hand to tell a story. In Bible: "We just learned about this in catechism last week!" In science: "I saw the moon last night!" In reading: "I think I read this story before!" In music: "We sang this song in church on Sunday!"

You have to love the enthusiasm, but the more stories allowed, the more problems arise. "We just learned about this in catechism last week!" "No, it was two weeks ago!" "Nuh-UH!" Mumbling and grumbling erupts from all corners of the room. Fights break out. Ambulances are called. (Okay, maybe I slightly exaggerate.) Pretty soon, a teacher isn't sure whether or not to call on the 13 different students with their hands raised, because you just never know what is about to come out of their mouths!

All kidding aside, this is a very real problem in the younger grades, and I imagine third grade is not even the worst. Yet, it is one of my least favorite parts of teaching. I will be in the middle of a math lesson about fast arrays and someone will raise his hand to share that he thinks my fast array drawing on the board looks like a hamburger. (This actually happened.)

Not only that, now all 28 students are thinking about lunches and hamburgers and pickles and ketchup instead of math. (Great. I didn't have anything to teach today anyways.)

The first time this happens, you might chuckle, then move on. The second time, you roll your eyes. The third time, you sigh and faintly frown. The fourth time, you muster up every ounce of patience you have not to chew out the offender. And then you make a big speech.

My speech goes something like this: "Students, you need to learn that there are appropriate times to share these sorts of things, but in the middle of class is not one of those times. It is better to keep your thoughts to yourself than to distract everyone, your teacher included. If the story you are about to tell or the question you are about to ask is not necessary to the topic we are discussing, think twice about raising your hand."

We remind ourselves of a few verses that we studied at the beginning of the school year when discussing our behavioral goals. Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer." Proverbs 17:27-28, "He that hath knowledge spareth his words: and a man of understanding is of an excellent spirit. Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shutteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding." In looking at these verses, we remember together that we can show our growth in wisdom by holding our tongues.

After that, we develop a little system. Sometimes I'm in the middle of a lesson and hands keep popping up. I continue teaching, trying to finish my thought so I don't forget it, but more hands rise. Sometimes I call on someone hoping it is a question about the lesson, but most times I first ask, "Is it important?" You would be amazed at the number of hands that drop as soon as I say those words.

Asking students this question out loud helps them to think twice. Learning how to differentiate between what is and isn't important is an essential skill. What I hope to achieve by asking this question is the more students hear it, the more they will think before they speak. At the same time, asking it this way helps to show students that questions can still be asked, we just need to make sure we stay focused and on task.

However, at some point this question needs to become an internal one. It turns into a matter of self-control the older students grow. Even so, we will be working on this the whole school year long, and if you were to observe my classroom anytime soon, you might still hear students telling stories and asking unnecessary questions. I have hope that this will get better with time, but for now, what are your thoughts – is Bubbles a good name for a hamster?

Family Fun Night

WHEN: JANUARY 20, 2017
WHERE: HOPE SCHOOL
TIME: 4-7 PM