



HIGHLIGHTS

~ Thanksgiving Issue ~
2024



TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Ron Koole, Principal

Teaching is a challenging profession. There are so many areas where continual growth and development are necessary. Four or five years of university training, ending with a semester of student teaching, does provide enough knowledge, understanding of teaching methodology, and classroom management skills to enable many to teach at the age level and subject area of one's training. Once that "basic" training is completed and the teacher begins his/her career, there are many available resources for teachers to tap into to develop in these "basic" areas of teaching. Continuing education through in-person or online courses is available at many universities, and many teachers do pursue their master's degree in their field of teaching. There are also many good books to read, as well as webinars and seminars online for little or no cost. Most of our School Boards encourage teachers to avail themselves of these resources and even pay for and provide increased compensation for development and training in these areas.

But there is more, isn't there? Our schools not only need highly trained, qualified teachers, skilled in the art of teaching; but our schools need qualified CHRISTIAN teachers. The Christian school teacher must be able to apply the Word of God to the subjects taught and to the conduct and lives of the children. Since there is no Protestant Reformed University, the teacher must look elsewhere for sources that will be of assistance in this vital area of growth and development. Probably the best starting point is to read and re-read the book *Reformed Education* by David Engelsma.

Because years ago both school boards and teachers recognized the need for development in this vital area of distinctive Reformed instruction, organizations were formed to provide opportunities and resources to aid teachers' growth. There are two "PR School" organizations that many people either are confused about or wonder how these organizations are different from one another.

There is first the *Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies*. This organization came into existence in 1956 and is vibrant yet today. The Federation sponsors workshops, provides school boards with salary information, and prospective teacher lists. They also oversee a Teacher Training Mentor program, offer the Principals and Practices class taught by Prof. Dykstra, and provide resources for teachers. To learn more about the Federation and their purpose and work, visit their website at www.prcs.org.

The second organization is named *The Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute* (PRTI). This is a teacher organization whose membership is limited to Protestant Reformed teachers and prospective PR teachers. The main purpose of the PRTI is to engage in activities related to the field of education, in conjunction with the Word of God, in order that teachers may be better qualified to teach from a Protestant Reformed viewpoint. The PRTI seeks to accomplish this purpose by holding at least two meetings each school year which usually involve activities such as presentations, panel discussions, or speeches. The most recent presentations were "Teaching Students with Anxiety and Depression" by Tom Karel and "The Puritan's Godly Emphases, Problematic Excesses" by Chuck Terpstra. The PRTI also publishes its own magazine called *Perspectives in Covenant Education*. This magazine recently published the first issue of

its 50th volume year. The magazine's purpose is to advance the cause of distinctly Christian education as it is conceived in the Protestant Reformed community.

Maybe the most well-known function of the PRTI is the holding of its annual two-day Teachers' Convention. Last month the 69th convention was held at Adams Christian School. Nearly 200 teachers from across the nation gathered to fellowship, discuss, listen, and grow in their commitment to teaching the youth of God's covenant in the fear of the Lord. The theme of the convention was "Planted by the Rivers of Water" based on Jeremiah 17:7-8. Rev. J. Smidstra delivered the keynote speech, in which he emphasized the blessing of trusting in the Lord. We treasure what we trust in, and the children must see their teacher's trust in the Lord and be shown that the result of trusting in the Lord leads to true happiness, abiding security, and lasting well-being. The children must be shown the hand of God in all things as their instruction is permeated with the Scriptures. They must be shown God in all His beauty, power, and glory. He is the only one in whom they must place their firm trust, like a tree rooted in Jehovah, the fountain of living water. What delightful work is the teaching of the covenant youth!

The Lord has provided many good means for PR teachers to grow and develop in their understanding of their calling to teach from a Reformed perspective. The above two organizations contribute to those opportunities. Pray that the Lord uses all this for the rearing of another generation of children of God who know and love their Lord.



FROM THE SCHOOL BOARD

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Steve Langerak, Chairman
Scott Moelker, Joel DeVries, Matt DeBoer

God is faithful! The Board can see evidence of this each year when He provides qualified men and women to stand with covenant parents in the Godly instruction of their children. God's faithfulness is explicitly stated in Deut. 7:9 "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations."

The Education Committee meets each month with the administrator and receives reports from him detailing the monthly teachers' meeting and concerning the day-by-day operation of the school. We are thankful for the work of our administrator, teachers, discovery room, teacher aides, and volunteers and the Godly instruction our children receive through them. Soon it will be time again for the annual teacher reviews and the committee looks forward to this opportunity to encourage and thank each teacher and hear how things are going in their classroom.

The Technology Committee has recently installed four new computers and plans to upgrade our server in the near future. They work closely with the staff to keep their iPads, Chrome books, SMART boards, and projectors up to date and running smoothly. Thanks for your work, guys!

Robotics has 16 students participating this year. They meet after school each Wednesday and Friday to program, practice, create poster boards, and eat donuts. A big thanks to Matt Elzinga and his able helpers: Matt Rutgers, Ben Petroelje, and Matt Moelker for the great job they have done in preparing these kids for RoBowl X, which takes place on Saturday, November 23.

Mr. Ron Koole informed the committee in September that he plans to retire at the close of this school year. You may have seen the advertisement in your church bulletin, that we are seeking a qualified individual to take up this work that Ron has done so well. We are confident that God will provide as He always does. Please pray that God grants us wisdom as we begin the process of preparing for this transition.

FEDERATION, PUBLICITY, CIRCLE, CONTACT COMMITTEE REPORT

Philip Kalsbeek, Chairman
Joel DeVries, Tom Huizinga

On October 3 our committee met with all the Protestant Reformed schools for the annual Federation Association Meeting. We elected Matt Regnerus from Faith Christian School (Randolph, WI) to the Board. We also appointed Randy Kuiper (Heritage GR) to the Teacher Training Committee Managing Director for a three-year term, as well as Ben Laning (Loveland CO) as teacher representative. We discussed the areas of need that our Boards have in common and some of the challenges our schools face. We talked about the importance of the Teacher Development Program and how it prepares and trains our teachers. Kyle Bruinooge, the Executive Director, does a lot of the work developing new curriculum and assisting our schools with ideas and developing new policies and communicating them to all our schools. The blessing of our schools is seen, as well as the support by so many people working together to help our teachers and students grow.

Our committee continues to work with Laurel Lotterman, the school secretary, to keep the school website up-to-date throughout the year. The content is reviewed and updated during the summer and we thank Laurel for all her work.

The FPCC committee continues to work with the School Circle to discuss potential projects. The School Circle this year helped fund a security camera system in our hallways and exits and window blinds in many of the classrooms. Both projects will be complete sometime this school year, D.V. The School Circle continues to assist the school in many ways, which shows their love for the school. Their work does not go unnoticed.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Josh Meulenberg, Chairman
Vance Grasman, Kevin Koole

I can't believe that it is almost Thanksgiving and that we are coming to the close of another year! We are four months into the 2024-2025 fiscal year so we will give you a glimpse of where things are at financially at Hope School. We are glad that we can report that many of the line items are right in line with our approved budget amounts. If you take a quick look at the financial statement, you will see that on the income side, we are right in line with the budgeted target (34.7% vs 33.3%). On the expense side, we are tracking just below the expected target (31.6% vs 33.3%). Thanks to the parents for paying tuition on time, and to our supporters for their generous giving in church collections and in the fall drive this far.

Regarding the fall drive, you should have received the drive letter in your mailboxes. If you have not, please reach out and we will make sure you receive one. To date, we have received \$94,900 toward our goal of \$173,000. Lord willing, with your help we can surpass this goal set for the fall and get a big jump on our \$346,000 target for the year. Please continue to support the drive as it is a healthy amount of our annual budget of just over 1.3 million dollars. The drive allows us to maintain reasonable tuition rates for families while giving opportunity for all supporters to assist in Christian education.

Kaptein Dykstra & Company recently completed an annual review of our financial records and everything was found to be in good order. They also recently completed and submitted the necessary tax filings required by the IRS each year. We are thankful for their services and also for the work of our financial bookkeeper, Mr. Larry Meulenberg. Every month, the Finance Committee is amazed at all the work that he puts into the finances of Hope School and thankful for the knowledge and information that he provides from years past.

As we celebrate Thanksgiving this year, may one of the many things we thank God for, be the financial provision of Hope Protestant Reformed Christian School. As a Finance Committee, whoever closes in prayer, always gives thanks to God for His providing for Hope School. May we all be filled with joy and thanksgiving for this wonderful blessing.



*Hence because everything we possess, and everything in heaven and on earth besides, is daily given, sustained and protected by God, it inevitably follows that we are in duty bound to love, praise, and **thank him without ceasing**, and, in short, to devote all these things to his service as he has required and enjoined in the Ten Commandments.*

– Martin Luther's Larger Catechism, 1529

Actual to Budget. YTD October	Actual	Budgeted	%
<u>Income</u>			
Church Collections	14,538.32	46,000.00	31.6%
Gifts and Pledges	94,900.75	346,000.00	27.4%
Gym Rental	2,750.00	5,000.00	55.0%
Hope Foundation	25,000.00	50,000.00	50.0%
Miscellaneous			
School Circle Gifts	0.00		
Special Ed Society	0.00	15,583.00	0.0%
Tuition	311,894.32	841,960.00	37.0%
Z - Bus Fees	10,485.48	19,950.00	52.6%
Total Income	459,568.87	1,324,493.00	34.7%
<u>Expenses</u>			
Accounting Fees	1,300.00	7,000.00	18.6%
Band Expenses	2,000.00	3,000.00	66.7%
Building and Grounds - Y/E	14,291.40	50,000.00	28.6%
Class Trip Fund	1,000.00	3,000.00	33.3%
Educational Supplies and Books	20,000.00	35,000.00	57.1%
Federation Dues	0.00	5,136.00	0.0%
Insurance, General	8,730.00	17,436.00	50.1%
Insurance, Group	30,472.94	103,200.00	29.5%
Insurance, HRA - Y/E	0.00	4,000.00	0.0%
Insurance, Workers Comp	1,247.54	2,478.00	50.3%
Janitors Supplies	859.83	4,500.00	19.1%
Library Fund	1,000.00	2,000.00	50.0%
Long Range Building Fund Trans	6,666.68	20,000.00	33.3%
Miscellaneous Expense	365.38	2,500.00	14.6%
Office Equipment - Y/E	0.00	1,500.00	0.0%
Office Supplies	0.00	1,600.00	0.0%
Payroll - Band / Choir	7,565.60	25,400.00	29.8%
Payroll - Building Maintenance	514.85	2,500.00	20.6%
Payroll - Discovery Room	25,596.52	94,924.00	27.0%
Payroll - Janitor	12,000.00	36,000.00	33.3%
Payroll - Lawn Maintenance	1,840.75	5,000.00	36.8%
Payroll - Librarian	915.00	5,250.00	17.4%
Payroll - Office	11,571.00	39,900.00	29.0%
Payroll - Substitute Teachers	0.00	2,000.00	0.0%
Payroll - Teachers	202,917.76	611,664.00	33.2%
Payroll - Teachers Aids	5,233.00	23,328.00	22.4%
Payroll - Technology Maintenance	0.00	3,000.00	0.0%

Payroll Taxes	18,980.05	65,214.00	29.1%
Phys Ed Uniforms	866.88	1,000.00	86.7%
Repairs and Maintenance	2,529.39	10,000.00	25.3%
Retirement Plan	5,557.99	20,050.00	27.7%
Snow Removal	0.00	3,500.00	0.0%
Teacher Classroom	1,700.00	1,700.00	100.0%
Teacher Development - Y/E	584.95	2,000.00	29.2%
Technology Supplies	210.00	5,000.00	4.2%
Utilities, Electric	6,447.77	23,000.00	28.0%
Utilities, Gas	633.37	12,000.00	5.3%
Utilities, Internet & Phone	1,537.80	4,400.00	35.0%
Utilities, Trash	653.47	2,000.00	32.7%
Utilities, Water & Sewer	614.13	1,400.00	43.9%
Z. Bus Expenses			
Bus Depreciation Fund Trans	6,666.68	20,000.00	33.3%
Bus Driver Cost Subsidy	1,250.00	1,000.00	125.0%
Bus Driver Payroll	5,982.50	25,250.00	23.7%
Bus Driver Payroll Taxes	561.57	1,927.00	29.1%
Bus Driver Workers Compensation	503.46	1,000.00	50.3%
Bus Insurance	1,719.46	2,136.00	80.5%
Bus Repair	5,453.31	7,000.00	77.9%
Gas and Oil	2,450.79	13,500.00	18.2%
Transportation Supervisor	1,500.00	3,000.00	50.0%
Total Z. Bus Expenses	26,087.77	74,813.00	34.9%
Total Expenses	422,491.82	1,337,393.00	31.6%

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

November 28-29	Thanksgiving Break
Thursday, December 19	Band/Choir Concert – school gym - 7PM
Friday, December 20	Christmas Assembly – school gym - 1:15PM
December 23-Jan 1	Christmas Break
Friday, January 17	End of 1 st Semester (1/2 day)
Saturday, January 18	Family Fun Night – 4-7:30PM
January 20-23	MAP Assessments
Friday, January 24	Fearfully & Wonderfully Made Day
February 6-7	Parent/Teacher Conferences
Thursday, February 13	PTA
Friday, March 14	Friends & Family Night
April 7-11	Spring Break
Wednesday, April 23	Kindergarten Program
Thursday, May 1	Elementary Music Program

STAFF & STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS

GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS IN OUR GENERATIONS

Mrs. Becca Lubbers, Discovery Room

*Unchanging is the love of God,
From age to age the same,
Displayed to all who do His will
And reverence His name.*

*Those who His gracious covenant keep
The Lord will ever bless;
Their children's children shall rejoice
To see His righteousness.
(Psalter 278 vs. 4 & 5)*

On August 6, 1930, Alvin Rau was born in an old farmhouse in Lone Lake, South Dakota. His childhood days were spent helping to complete all the chores on the family farm and make ends meet. His schooling was completed in a one-room public school that housed grades one through eight. The only faith that Alvin knew throughout his childhood was that of the Lutheran Church, but by God's gracious providence that began to change when he met and married his wife, Phyllis, in 1950. In God's amazing, sovereign, and eternal plan, a man named Herman Mensch attended our Protestant Reformed Seminary, accepted a call from a German Reformed Church in Leola, South Dakota, and ended up living a mile south of Alvin and Phyllis. Through many conversations on the farm and Wednesday night catechism classes, Mensch led them to see the differences between Lutheran beliefs and Reformed Christianity and where there were errors. Although leaving the Lutheran Church placed significant strife between them and Alvin's family, God sustained them in their new faith and understanding of the truth.

The Lord in His infinite wisdom then led Alvin and Phyllis to move from South Dakota to Grand Rapids, Michigan on March 7, 1957. They left family, friends, and everything they had ever known to become members in a Protestant Reformed Church and, most importantly, to send their children to a Christian school. They packed their meager belongings in the car, piled their 3 children in the backseat, and drove hundreds of miles to a new home that they had never seen before. What a sacrifice and what dedication! All for the purpose of Christian education!

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;" (Deut. 7:9)

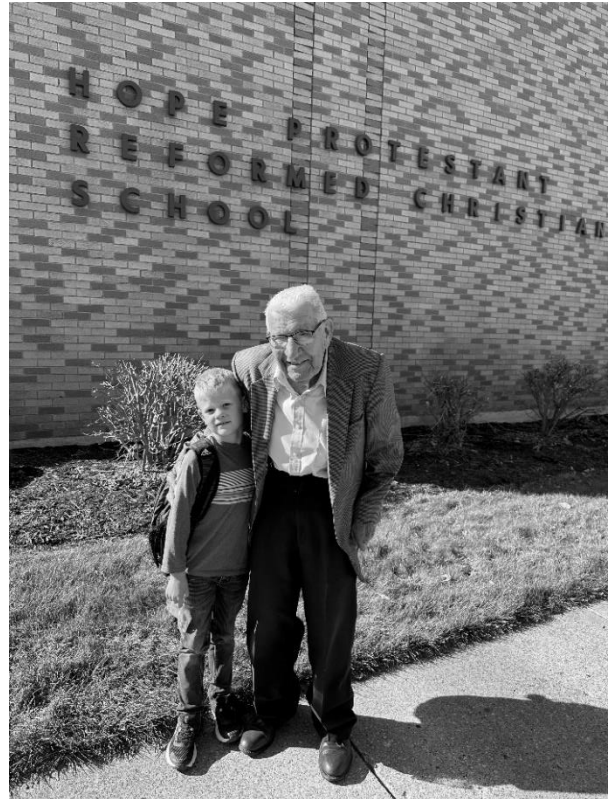
The Lord has continued to be faithful to Alvin and his family through the years. Four more children were born shortly after moving to Michigan. They were all able to attend Hope School and Covenant Christian High School throughout their school years. The Lord continued to be faithful even when two of their beloved children tragically died in their youth. He was faithful as their children grew, got married, and started families of their own. And He continues to be faithful eight and a half years after Phyllis has gone to glory and Alvin lives on, now 94

years old. Although Alvin prays that the Lord calls him to his heavenly home soon, he finds so much joy spending time with his 5 children, 24 grandchildren, 74 great-grandchildren, and 16 great great-grandchildren at every opportunity possible.

I have the privilege of knowing Alvin Rau as my great-grandfather. His dedication to our Christian schools is seen in all the concerts, programs, society meetings, chapels, school functions, and grandparents' days that he continues to attend yearly. In his love for his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great great-grandchildren, he desires that they attend good Christian schools and know the importance of having a Christian education. It is a gift that ought to be treasured and not taken for granted.

The beginning of this school year not only marked 67 years since Alvin's oldest son started Kindergarten at Hope School, but this was also the first year that one of Alvin's great-great-grandchildren started Kindergarten here. What a blessing to see children to the fifth generation attending the same school he left his home to send his son to! In this, great-grandpa Rau's confession is "Just thanksgiving to the Lord for his covenant faithfulness to us as Protestant Reformed. Our churches are full twice on Sundays and it's only because of the instruction that our children receive from little on up. I certainly hope the generations following continue. It's our hope and our prayer. I think of Psalter number 192, 'Gracious God forsake me not.'"

In God's loving faithfulness, we continue to have the amazing blessing of our Christian schools. Do we treasure this gift as we should? Do our children know what their parents, grandparents, great-grandparents, and past supporters have sacrificed to begin and maintain Hope School and the precious Christian education given here? We ought to thank and praise God every day for our Christian schools. He uses them as a means to rear our children in the truth of His Word, continuing His covenant of friendship and fellowship with the next generation of His people. How can we not sing His praises every day!



*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee:
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided-
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!
(Hymn- Great is Thy Faithfulness)*

OBSERVING THE CREATURES OF THE AIR

Mr. Dan Hanko, 4th Grade

In fourth grade we spend the first six to eight weeks of school studying vertebrates and invertebrates in science. In October we take a trip to the Outdoor Discovery Center in Holland. We spend the day talking about God's creatures – how they survive in a particular habitat and how they protect themselves. God has given each creature its own enemies (predators) and its own food source (prey). We spend an afternoon looking at the Birds of Prey exhibit and listening to a guide while she shows us a few birds up close. I am always amazed at the many varieties of birds and the way God has made them unique. They have different types of beaks to eat certain foods; different feet to allow them to perch, or climb, or run, or swim; different wings for diving, silent gliding, or soaring; different fields of vision to locate prey or spot a predator. God gives some birds a sense of when to migrate and the ability to sense danger. God cares for His winged fowl and gives them a place to rest, to hunt, to fly. Psalm 104: 10, 12, 16-17 says "He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches. The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house." As God cares for the birds, so are we assured that He will graciously provide for us. In Luke 12:6-7 a question is asked and then answered, "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows."

We can learn a few lessons by observing the birds. For God has fashioned each child of His with weapons to survive in this sin cursed world. We too need constant nourishment to survive our spiritual warfare. The enemies are real: Lord's Day 52 lists them for us in Q and A 27 when it says "Which is the sixth petition? And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; that is, since we are so weak in ourselves, that we cannot stand a moment; and besides this, since our mortal enemies, the devil, the world, and our own flesh, cease not to assault us, do Thou therefore preserve and strengthen us by the power of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may not be overcome in this spiritual warfare, but constantly and strenuously may resist our foes, till at last we obtain a complete victory." How are we equipped to survive? God cares for us and gives to us His armor. He feeds us with a steady diet of His Word. He works faith in us to know the truth and discern both good and evil. He strengthens us by his Holy Spirit.

As birds sense danger and quickly fly away, so must we sense dangerous teachings and temptations and flee from them. We must avoid places and situations which we know draw us into sin. We must be alert and on guard always as Satan attempts to draw us into sin. Birds warn other birds of immediate danger. Blue jays will do this. They warn other songbirds and jays by imitating the red-shouldered hawk. Upon hearing the alarm, the smaller birds scatter. Does not God warn **us** in the Scriptures of our enemies? Do we not then warn others? Do we not sound the alarm for our children or fellow saints of particular dangers in this world, alerting them of false ideas and warning them of the pleasures and riches of the wicked.

Although birds often flee from danger, they also defend. They will defend their territory when they have a nest of eggs or newly hatched chicks. They will dive bomb an intruder and send out a raucous alarm to scare away a predator. Do we not defend our little young ones and our school age children? We must constantly be watching so that we can protect our

children from the wiles of the devil. This takes humble prayer, much reading and careful study of the Word. By His grace, God will equip us for this battle.

May we as God's people flock together for safety. May our churches and schools and homes be trees of protection for our young children. What a blessing it is to gather as saints in church to be fed the sincere milk of the Word! What a blessing to have our own Protestant Reformed schools where children are taught subjects in the proper worldview! May we pray for the Holy Spirit to work in us and rest under the shadow of His wings. God is our protection. He is our shield. He will be with us in our spiritual warfare.

God has delivered us from the power of sin and death. He has sent His Son to die for us and now sits at God's right hand. He has given to us salvation. He will protect us until we die and then will take us to live with him. Psalm 57:1-3, "Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah."



The magazine Ignited by the Word printed an article written by Mr. Rick Mingerink entitled "The Way of the Grape Vine". Early in the year my fourth-grade students were given the article to read and told to write a response telling what they learned. They could write a paragraph about what they learned about grapes or some spiritual lessons they learned from the growing of grapes. What follows are a few responses.

The article "The Way of the Grape Vine" taught me to be thankful for my parents. If they did not teach us when we were young, we would become careless and not think of other people. Our parents guide us to the right path. This might remind you of growing grapes. A farmer has to put a stick in the ground, and when the grape vine is still young, he twists its stems around it. The farmer has to do that if he wants to get fruit. A mother has to lead a young child and teach and guide him down the paths. Sometimes we want to be like a wild grape vine, but a wild grape vine has no purpose. It might as well be cut down. If you look at a picture of a wild grape vine, and then at a grape vine that has been trained, you would much rather be the one that was trained well. I think you should read this article and see how much you are thankful for them too.

~ Kate Fogal

I learned many things about grapes in the article about the grape vine. First, it takes a lot of work to grow grapes. If you do not take care of the vine, it will become a wild grape vine. If you want to have lots of grapes, you build a trellis. This allows the grapes to get sun. You train a grape vine by gently bending the branches and tying them to the wire. Then it will become a strong grape vine. These are the things I learned about grapes.

~ Jayden Guichelaar

The article about grapes taught me to be thankful for my parents. A gardener who grows grapes wants the grapes to grow in the right direction. In order for the grapes to grow

in the right direction, the gardener has to tie the grapevines on a wire. So our parents want us to grow in the right direction. That means that our parents want us to live Godly lives. Our parents teach us what is right and what is wrong. That is why the article about grapes taught me to be thankful for my parents.

~ Clara Rutgers

The article "The Way of the Grape Vine" taught me a lot about grapes. I learned that you can grow grape vines. Also, I learned that to help a grape vine, you need to build a structure called a trellis. A trellis allows the grape vine to grow fruit in the full sun. Also, a trellis is made from wood and wire. It looks like electrical wires you see along a road, but a trellis is much smaller. I also learned that if you plant a grape vine under a trellis, it can grow to the wire and attach itself to the wire. Also, you have to train a young grape vine to hang on to the trellis. You have to train it in a certain way. You have to gently bend the branches and tie them to the wire. Over time it will become a strong vine. You should read the article "The Way of the Grape Vine".

~ Benji DeVries

"The Way of the Grape Vine" taught me that my parents are like the gardener, and I am like the grapes. For example, the gardener has to teach the grape vine to grow the right way on the trellis, and my parents have to teach me the right way in life. The gardener has to take care of the grape vine. If he does not, it will become a wild grape vine. If my parents do not care for me, then I will go astray and be wild in the world and its sins. This article has taught me that children are like the grapes, and my parents are like the gardener.

~ Ava Meulenberg



More fourth-grade writing samples:

A Beautiful Cat



An ocelot is a medium-sized spotted wild cat that reaches up to 16-20 inches in height. The ocelot prefers areas close to water sources. The ocelot lives in North America. It is the most commonly found in Texas and Arizona. When it is threatened, it will climb a tree. Ocelots are very good swimmers. They are also good at leaping. A young ocelot can be easy to tame. God has given ocelots many ways to protect themselves. They can hide in leaves because their coat matches the leaves.

They also have sharp claws to help them climb. It also has sharp eyesight, and can see very well at night. I think the ocelot is very beautiful.

~ Paige Schipper

Black Mambas

A black mamba is a black snake that lives in Africa. God gave the black mamba fangs to survive. It uses its fangs to kill animals for its food. If a black mamba is threatened, it will raise its head and hiss. It can bite really fast and hit its target and inject venom. Black mambas are one of the most dangerous snakes and can be five times deadlier than a cobra.

~ Cole Huizinga



Cheetahs

I am writing about cheetahs. Cheetahs have great eyesight. God gave cheetahs sharp claws to defend themselves against predators. God made them so that they can run fast. They can run up to seventy miles an hour.

~ Brooklyn Kregel

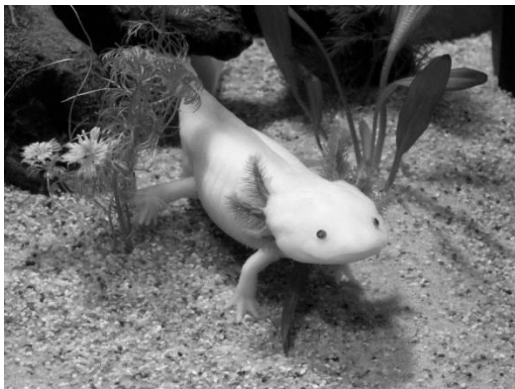
How God Cares for Ferrets

God cares for ferrets, and this is how. Ferrets are around twenty inches long. Ferrets protect themselves by having odors to scare away predators. When something chases them, they hide in abandoned prairie dogs' holes. God created ferrets to make hissing noises to frighten animals. This is how God takes care of ferrets.

~ Hannah Vandenberg



Axolotls



An axolotl is a type of salamander. Axolotls live in Mexico and in some places in America. Axolotls have a few ways to protect themselves. They can regenerate (grow back) almost all of their limbs! This helps them to survive. They also are awesome swimmers! They can swim up to 10 mph! Axolotls have some predators including storks, herons, and carp. Axolotls have a normal appetite. They eat a few things, for example: mollusks, worms, fish, and insects. The axolotl stays baby-like its whole life. Other amphibians live in the water only when they are young. Axolotls live in the

water their whole lives. This is how God created axolotls to survive in the wild.

~ Alexa Feenstra



The Big White Fox

The arctic fox lives on land and ice somewhere in the Arctic Circle. The arctic fox can live to be three to six years old. It gets about twenty inches long, not including its tail. God gave this animal thick fur. The thick fur protects it from the extreme cold. The fur is white to help it camouflage with the snow to catch its prey. God designed all kinds of animals, but I chose this one out of all the kinds of animals that God has made!

~ Teagan Feenstra

THE GOD OF JUDAH

Mrs. Faith Kalsbeek, 6th Grade

History is not a subject that I enjoyed learning while I was growing up. Since becoming a teacher, however, I have been able to grow in appreciation for the subject. One of the earlier studies that we do in 6th grade covers the empires of the Fertile Crescent. As you may recall from your history lessons, this is a crescent shaped region which lies in Northern Africa and Western Asia. The land there was especially rich and fertile due to the Tigris, Euphrates, and Nile Rivers providing water and nutrients.

There were a variety of nations that had control over the Fertile Crescent at different times. From around 800–600 B.C. the Assyrians were in power. This nation was infamous for their terrible warfare. They invented chariots that devastated enemy lines. They used battering rams, ladders, or tunnels to get past the walls of enemy cities, sometimes killing all of the inhabitants. When some people were kept alive, they were often tortured in order to strike fear into the hearts of other enemies... It worked, because some cities surrendered at the sight of the Assyrian armies—before the fight would even begin!

The Bible gives evidence of the fear that all nations had for the Assyrians. In II Kings 19:10-13, King Sennacherib of Assyria sends a letter to King Hezekiah of Judah. Sennacherib asks why Hezekiah thinks that his God will deliver Jerusalem from the hand of the mighty Assyrian armies:

“Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezech, and the children of Eden which were in Thelasar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?”

Sennacherib was boasting about his armies’ power and might. He thought that no nation or god could face them.

Hezekiah's response to receiving this letter was to bring it before the Lord in His house. He praised God and pleaded to Him. God responded to Hezekiah through the prophet Isaiah, saying that He would defeat the Assyrians; He had given them their power in the first place. God delivered His people by sending the Angel of Death into the camp of the Assyrians, killing 185,000 soldiers.

Although the work of the Assyrians was brutal, the fear that they created and the power they wielded was nothing compared to God. God turned their might into weakness in order to glorify Himself and save His people.

This story is told beautifully by the poem "The Destruction of Sennacherib," by Lord Byron:

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.

Like the leaves of the forest when Summer is green,
That host with their banners at sunset were seen:
Like the leaves of the forest when Autumn hath blown,
That host on the morrow lay withered and strown.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride;
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,
And cold as the spray of the rock-beating surf.

And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow, and the rust on his mail:
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.

And the widows of Ashur are loud in their wail,
And the idols are broke in the temple of Baal;
And the might of the Gentile, unsmote by the sword,
Hath melted like snow in the glance of the Lord!



Inspired by this poem, our class created our own poems about the Assyrians and the way that God used them.

"The Mighty Assyrians"

By Miles Fogal

The Assyrian king took a battering ram to town,
And made the walls come crashing down,
But Sennacherib still had a frown,
So he decided to take a prod
At the mighty city of God.

But Jerusalem put up a fight
And Jehovah with all His might
Decided to make things right.

So came the Angel of Death,
And many Assyrians breathed their last breath.

And the Assyrians lost of pride
To Judah no more did chide.

Thus ends the poem,
For the Assyrians no more do roam.

"The Wicked Assyrians"

By Darla VanDenTop

The Assyrians were cruel,
Their king was a fool.
They would gouge out eyes,
And flay people alive.

They lay in open land.
To Judah they would send a band.
To their idols then they prayed,
Of Judah's God they were afraid.
Judah shouted over all,
Even those that had to fall,
"Our God won the fight,
With His power and might!"

"The Assyrians"

By Ainsley Huizinga

The Assyrians were all cruel
Each one as but a fool
Their enemies were full of fear
Each Assyrian used a spear

Their enemies they did skin
The Assyrians were full of sin
Their enemies fought in vain
When the Assyrians came

Though the Assyrians were great
They were all full of hate
Never was anything the same
When the Angel of Death came

When Hezekiah prayed
His faith in God had stayed
Down God's wrath went
The Assyrians never did repent

"The Assyrians"

By Tony Oosterhouse

The Assyrians are dreaded
You will be beheaded
You should probably flee
Or to Sennacherib bend the knee
Your city is being nailed
You will probably be impaled

The battering rams are coming
You should probably start running
God gave them their power
To make the enemy cower

"Watch Out!"

By Jude Rutgers

When the Assyrians come,
You'd better watch out,
You'd better run,
Or they'll take your eyes out.

They'll feed your bones to the dogs,
Behead you like frogs,
Put you in new places,
Without familiar faces

"The Assyrians Defeated"

By Kennedy Guichelaar

The Assyrians lived on wide open land
Until the attacks were too many to stand.
They then chose to attack instead
Attacking until the enemy was dead.

They would gouge out their eyes
They would even tell lies
'Till the people could no longer cope
They would instead all lose hope.

The Assyrians were very gruesome
But one day they were stopped by Jerusalem
For God sent His angel in the night
Showing all His power and might.

"Assyria"

By Kelsey Minderhoud

The Assyrians were very proud
They had public speaking, and it was loud.
Sennacherib was their king,
He thought that he could rule over everything.

The Assyrians were hated,
"We must attack, not be attacked,"
They stated.
Using a ladder they would climb a high wall,
They used battering rams to break the city wall
And watch as they'd fall.

Assyria was very, very cruel,
But in the end they were fools.
Assyria thought they were mightier than all,
But God was and is mightier and made them fall.

ON THE PATHWAY TO CONTENTMENT

Miss Suzanna Smith, 7th Grade

As a child, I looked at the adults in my life and thought, "Wow, they have it all figured out." To me, everyone appeared to have their place in life, seemed to have a complete grasp of all of their responsibilities, and looked (from the outside at least) to have this 'adulting' business down pat. However, as I began to reach the age of adulthood, I started to have more and more concerns about being ready to be independent and be on my own. These included, "What should I do after high school? What if this career path is not right for me? Which college should I attend?" Thankfully, those around me brought continual reminders to direct my prayers to the Sovereign God, knowing He is a Loving Father who directs our every step, and a pathway was made clear to me.

However, as we all know, life is full of concerns and worries beyond the responsibilities of independence. Friends have moved away; friendships have drifted apart. We have heard of many brothers and sisters brought to heaven earlier than we ever thought possible. We have

seen friends and family walk away from the churches, and even walk away from faith altogether. We may be tempted to think, "Why me, Lord? Why now?" We cry out with the psalmist, "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul. I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me. I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God." (Psalm 69:1-3)

As we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, which is this life, there are times for sorrow and mourning. To every thing there is a season. There is a time to laugh, but there is also a time to weep. However; in these times, let us bring our sorrows before the Lord. Let us pray for strength and wisdom and a grace sufficient for every day remembering the words of Psalm 55:22, "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee:" and Matthew 11:28-30, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Nevertheless, while there is much to sorrow over, we are also called to be satisfied with our lot in life. We are called to live all things joyfully to the Lord. While this may be difficult, let us consider the example of Paul to see what contentment is and how to pursue it. Philippians 4 gives us the following direction, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." Paul's letter here is incredibly helpful, for he reveals that contentment is not about what we have or have not been given, but how we respond to what we have been given. Coming from one who suffered shipwreck, beatings, and imprisonment, this means much. If we are full, we rejoice in the food given and ask the Lord to bless it to our bodies so that we may have the strength to do much in our lives of thankfulness. If we are hungry, whether spiritually or physically, we are to pray to the Lord to grant His blessing unto us. We are to ask the fellowship of the saints to sustain us. Yet, even so, we are to rest in the Lord, recognizing that He has placed us in that situation for a purpose. However He answers our prayer, it is for our good.

One thought and verse that has personally sustained me through many sorrows are the words of Job. "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD." Personally, it is an excellent reminder that the things of this earth, including my life here, are given by God. It is not for me to demand or want what has not been granted. Joys will come into my life, and joys may be taken away. However, we still have many reasons to praise and thank God. We have been granted a beautiful gift that cannot become moth-eaten or rusted; it is a beautiful gift, that now given, is ours eternally. And that gift? A never-ending life of perfection with the Great Gift-Giver.

SAVE THE DATE: SATURDAY, MAY 24, 2025
27TH ANNUAL HOPE CLASSIC
REGISTRATION TO OPEN AFTER SPRING BREAK



7th Grade Student Writing:

~ Author: Reuben Langerak ~

Dear Quincy Lewis,

I am Jabari Khumalo, a 36-year-old African who was captured at the age of 16. I was born on July 18, 1660. My parents got along fine, and I had 3 siblings, 2 sisters and 1 brother.

I was just chilling in my umbrella thorn tree, and these men came and cut the tree down. I jumped before the tree was down. My legs killed as I vigorously sprinted for the safety of my dear life. They chased me for what felt like forever. While I was sprinting from the other men, another leapt from a bush. I fought and kicked, but it was no use. He was probably a 27-year-old man versus a 16-year-old boy. They chained me up and took me to a place not far from the place I was captured. The place had many Africans as myself. There were many ages, ranging probably from 10 to 50 years old. Then after a few minutes we started for the cruel walk to a ship. The sun was so ferociously hot that it felt like a rattlesnake was biting me everywhere.

When we got to the ship, we were crammed under the deck with minuscule rations. It took about 3 months just to get from Africa to America. Then we were shoved in cages to be sold. I was sold to a man named James. He would never tell me his last name though. He had about 30 other slaves. He treated some of his slaves great but others like me he treated horribly. When I was about 23 years old, I and some of his other slaves left in the dead of night. We all wanted to go somewhere different, but I went to England. Now I am living very well.

Take Care,
Jabari Khumalo

~ Author: Nolan Moelker ~

Dear Jabari Khumalo,

Hello, I hope thou art doing well. I am not quite sure what thou art up to, but at the time hopefully thou art not captured. I would like to inform thee that I joined the Lawmakers Institution Against Slavery. I have been elected the chairman of this Institution. I and my fellow members of this will try our best to stop or slow slave trading. Our biggest threats and rivals will be the sea merchants, as that is how they supply for their families. We are still searching for members across Europe to help and join our Institution, therefore we will have more power and much more help in order to stop or suspend slave trade in a much wider range of area. This method will work much faster than the size of our current board.

We are targeting your area and areas that are large slave trade cities, while sending smaller groups to smaller area to get started on those areas. Once the bigger groups are done with the bigger cities we'll divide them among the smaller cities to cover a much bigger area to save time. We are also working on a mission to stop the Caribbean Islands and the American colonies (especially the Caribbean Islands) from receiving the ships. We are not sure on a way to do that yet but we have a committee to help with that. This Institution consists of many

committees with a wide range of topics regarding anti-slavery. There are some very well-known and important people in Europe that have much power and are going to be very hard to stop. Although the reason we created this Institution was to stop these people and slave trade.

I, Quincy Lewis, hope that thou mayest survive through the next months and perhaps next year or so. The Lawmakers Institution Against Slavery will try our absolute hardest to stop slave trade and to help the slaves. We believe that slaves are real people and are trying to make people realize that. That is the main reason why we made this institution. Why don't you fare well until our mission is accomplished.

Take Care,
Quincy Lewis

~ Author: Libby Kleyn ~

The Escape

"Dear prisoner,

Tonight at midnight we reach land. We escape tonight, or we die tonight. Sleep by the door. We escape at midnight. I, a ship crew member, will open the door. We have three hours while the crew leaves to make arrangements on land. I and one other crew member were told to stay to keep you from escaping. We have to avoid only one person, then you will be safe from slavery."

Jan. 2, 1756

Dear Diary,

6:00 P.M.

Last night I lay by the door and felt something tickling my back. It was this letter. Am I supposed to believe it or ignore it because they are just trying to trick me. It is a matter of life and death. Should I listen, or should I ignore, live or die.

12:00 A.M.

I woke up. What was that noise? Then I heard it. The door creaked, and there he stood. I didn't know whether I wanted to cower there in the corner pretending the letter was not read or run over to him and tell him I read the letter. I decided to quietly run to him, so as to not wake the other prisoners. I whispered, "I read the letter. How do you plan on escaping?"

He answered, "I told my mate to guard the exit to the ship so as not to make him suspicious of my actions. If he stays there, the plan will still work. We will exit over the other end of the vessel. But we will have to swim. Sorry, but that is our only hope of escaping."

I didn't know what to answer and I found myself just staring. After recovering my speech I blurted "You realize that it is January and the water will be frozen?"

"This is the last ship to leave Africa for that reason, no more sailing until spring. But to answer your question the water is not quite frozen though it might feel that way. I do this every year and take one of you prisoners off every ship. Never got caught yet, though it might happen soon. My mates are getting a little weary of me. Come on, we have to leave soon or we will be noticed."

We jumped off the ship. The water was so cold I could hardly keep myself from screaming. Several yards in we heard someone yell, "They are escaping! I knew it was him!" then a splash as someone else jumped in after us. It took all my willpower not to just give up. It felt like we were losing them, but I was too afraid to look. By the time we came to shore, my whole body was numb. I could barely walk, but somehow I ran. All of a sudden we turned into the bushes and in front of us was a house. It was small, falling apart, and it had no windows. We ran in with no knock, and a black woman appeared in front of us. She congratulated our leader for saving another person.

He responded with a nod, "This time you are going to have to save me. The crew figured out what I was doing. I cannot return."

I was confused about what they were going to do with me so I said, "Where should I go? What are you going to do with me?"

The woman responded, "We are going to my mother's house, she lives in Africa. We will all go this time because it is obvious he cannot stay here."

I slumped to the ground in relief. We were going to Africa.

~ Author: Baylah TenBrock ~

Name: Sir Tyler Cornsmith

Date: October 22, 1839

Dear Diary,

I have acknowledged my amazing deeds because I am superb. I have captured yet another slave today; my 679th slave this week. The wind has favored us these past days, pushing us across the Atlantic. The ship is nearly full of slaves and it is quite nice. It is the uttermost best feeling to be a man of such authority, to command both the seas and men beneath me. The crew knows their place; they look to me for guidance, and I give it (sometimes). Each man on this ship owes his part to our trade, and none would dare to speak against it. They know the worth of the slaves, but they do not speak to its cost. They leave that to me.

We took on a fresh load of slaves this morning, rounding them up from the coast of Africa (obviously). The traders there were glad to unload them. Fewer were in fit shape than I'd hoped, but we'll get better ones next trade. Some of them are rebellious, as always, but fear sets in quickly once they realize resistance is forbidden. I've had two whipped already for disobedience, making an example to the others. Discipline is key on this ship. Any sign of weakness, and both crew and slaves will descend into chaos.

The ship reeks of sweat, and the stench of bodies crammed too close, but it is the smell of money. Each life down there is a coin in my purse, and I could say I'm pleased to hear that. We'll reach the Americas soon, where the slaves will become nothing but money. And I? I will be rich, as their master, the one who brought them across this void of salty ocean. The sea is my kingdom, and in it, I am master of all.

November 16, 1734

Dear Leena,

You wouldn't believe what has all happened to me in the past few months. I woke up one morning, about a month ago, and there were these white men at our door. My papa and mama were there talking to them and mama looked frightened. Just then the captain signaled to his men behind and they chained my papa and mama up. I shrieked in terror. What rights did they have to grab my parents? I stood in front of the chief. "If you take my parents then I am coming too," I declared.

"Katelyn, no!" yelled mama.

"If she says so, then bind her up too," said the chief.

The men led us all to a group of people where they were being separated into men and women based on their working conditions. In all the commotion I was separated from papa. This is not what I had expected or wanted to happen. I clung to mama. "Where are they taking us?" I asked mama.

"It is for our good," replied mama. "We will get work and all will be fine."

I knew that part of this was not true. They were beating up some people who refused to board the ship.

About 10 minutes later, which felt like an hour, we were boarded on. Just when I thought we were going to leave, more people were brought on. It was stuffed already as it was. Some people were sitting on each other. I lost track of time from there on. I fell asleep, and when I awoke, it was dark. I tried to fall back asleep, but I was too cramped. I waited in the cold until the sun finally rose over the horizon. In all the hurry of being brought away from home, I hadn't grabbed anything for there was no time. Now I wished I had grabbed my cloak, for it was chilly.

Over the next few days we got fed with watery soup and only at noon. If we missed the food, then we didn't get any until the next day. I got to know the girls by me. One was 13 years old like myself whose name was Makena, and the other was 8 years old whose name was Amara. They had both been pulled away with their families and promised the same as us. We all thought that the worst was over. We were going to the New World to get paid for our work and find homes.

None of us expected what came next. A girl near me pulled out a worm from her soup. Some girls found worms in their soup before they ate them, but others weren't so fortunate. They got sick and some of them came near to dying. Now the ship reeked with the smell of sickness and dying. Every day there was someone new who cried out in pain. The sound of moaning filled the room.

One day my mama wandered over to me. I didn't even know that she was on the same ship as me. She was sweating. "Mama! You have a fever!" I cried.

"I know," moaned mama. "I came to say goodbye because I might never see you again."

"NO!" I yelled. "You can't make me. You are going to live and we will stay together."

"I know this is hard but you are going to have to understand," said mama.

I was not going to allow this to happen so all through the night I slept by her. I changed out a damp cloth every couple hours. The next morning mama would not wake up. I tapped mama's shoulder. "Mama," I said. "Wake up."

"Kate." whispered Makena.

I whipped my head around. It was only Makena. "What?" I asked.

"I don't think she will wake up again," replied Makena.

"No!" I said. "It can't be true." But it was true. When I felt mama's chest, there was no heartbeat.

I was heartbroken. Amara and Makena tried to comfort me. The rest of the way to the New World was devastating.

When we arrived, we had about 600 girls out of the 1,000 that we had started with. Many mothers and friends had died and been thrown overboard along the way. The Englishmen did not care about them. Those who were too sick to work were sent to a camp where they were to recover. The rest of us were split into groups of 30 and sent in wagons to plantations.

We are not being paid for our work but are slaves. If we don't do our work properly, then we get whipped. My work is to clean the chamber pots each day and make beds. I also help with the baking. In my spare time I must take care of Charlotte and Abigail, the twins. They are crazy. Neither of them sits still.

There are also about 30 men who work in the fields, but papa isn't one of them. I have made friends with a girl my age whose name is Maria. We don't have similar jobs in the house. She dusts the house and mops the floor. We both take care of the twins though. Our master is very strict about what we are allowed to do. If we try to sneak a bite of the baby's food, we get punished. Our food is soup and burnt bread.

This is not at all what any of us imagined. It is hard work and seems very unfair to us. I miss you so much and hope that you are safe.

Your best friend forever,
Katelyn Asha Miller

~ Author: Deakin Pipe ~

To James the Duke of Fredrickberg and a Faithful Friend,

As the Chief Advisor and lawmaker for the King of England, I am convinced that I should formulate a scheme to stop slavery. As you have read my last letter, I have realized the issue. I have watched the ships come and go as they beat the slaves to row faster to their own slavery.

A man said to me that the slaves are stored closely together so that they can fit more. When this happens, diseases pass easily to other slaves which wipes out many of them.

We as officials must start convincing the other dukes to agree. While I am gone, please start the work that I have just told you to do. As you said in your previous letter, I assume you and I are like minded on this issue. Now that I have given you this instruction, do as I have commanded you. For as I believe it is the Lord's will to do as I have just read in His word. This talk of not freeing slaves is absurd. I will do as the Lord commands me, not what pleases his Majesty or what pleases other men.

From Deaker: The Chief Advisor of the King, Member of the Royal Court, And
Lawmaker for the King