

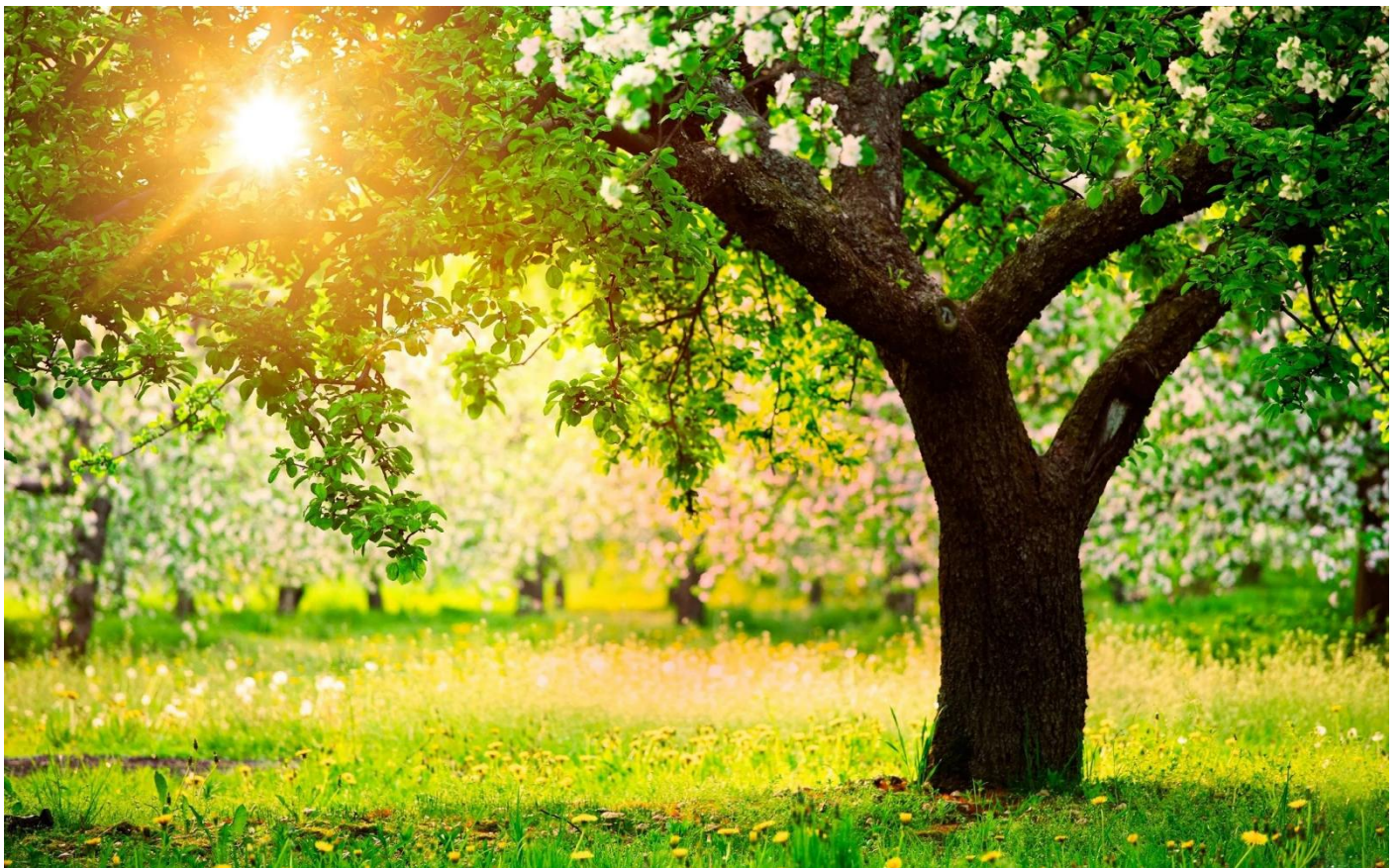


HIGHLIGHTS

Spring Issue

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March 2025



FOR, LO, THE WINTER IS PAST, THE RAIN IS OVER AND GONE; THE FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH; THE TIME OF THE SINGING OF BIRDS IS COME, AND THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE IS HEARD IN OUR LAND; THE FIG TREE PUTTETH FORTH HER GREEN FIGS, AND THE VINES WITH THE TENDER GRAPE GIVE A GOOD SMELL. ARISE, MY LOVE, MY FAIR ONE, AND COME AWAY. – SONG OF SOLOMON 2:11–13



FROM THE ADMINISTRATOR



SEEKING WISDOM
Mr. Ron Koole, Principal

We and our children live in a world fallen in sin and under the curse. God gave to us the book of Ecclesiastes to instruct us in spiritual wisdom and to teach us a proper world-and-life view. I highly suggest that fathers lead their children through this book for family devotions. The commentary on this book written by Rev. T. Miersma and published by the RFPA would be a valuable purchase to serve as a helpful aide in gaining a rich understanding of the wisdom of the Preacher.

The central theme of the book is “The vanity of man’s life in this fallen and sinful world which is under the judgment of God.” One of the main purposes of the book is to guard the child of God (especially the youth) from the folly of this world which seeks its life and happiness here below. The Preacher teaches that the true meaning of life and its purpose cannot be found in the world itself “under the sun”. Instead the inspired writer (Solomon) teaches that life has meaning and value only by viewing all things through faith in the work of Jesus Christ. No, believers are not to give up their labor and retreat to some secluded life or to despise life altogether, but having been shown all the vanities of life we would be lead beyond the things that are made, to the Creator of them all. We must teach the children to fear God and to keep His commandments – to remember their Creator in the days of their youth.

We and our children must examine and evaluate the profit of all of man’s labor. What does it all accomplish and what of the works of man abides? There are seemingly endless cycles – we are born and we die, generations come and go. The creation itself is in constant motion and there are vicious cycles of water, wind, and seasons – “nothing new”, “vanity”. Solomon gave his heart to seek and search out these things by wisdom and he found all to be vanity and vexation of spirit. What was the reason for this vanity and sore travail? He found that the crooked could not be made straight and that in much wisdom is much grief and the increased knowledge increased sorrow (Ecclesiastes 1:18).

Natural man doesn’t want to hear this conclusion. In his pride he deceives himself that he can make the crooked straight. He thinks he can make this world “heaven” and that he can overcome or even remove the results of sin and the curse from this world. He dreams up his theories of evolution as well as dreaming up his pre and post millennial views. Fools they are as the evidence of God’s judgments increase in creation through storms as well as the increase of crime, suicide, and despair.

But the Preacher is truly wise. Does he think that he in his wisdom can make the crooked straight? No, wisdom too has limits. It cannot supply that which is lacking – not of man to do so. Sin is that which is crooked and bent. Man cannot take away sin! This is what the children must be shown. Don’t despair but remember their Creator. We must lead the children to see Jesus Christ who alone takes away the sin of the world and whose suffering, death, and perfect obedience can, will, and does make the crooked straight. What appears hopeless for all earthly points of view leads the child of God to spiritual sobriety. This world is not our home. Do our children see us holding loosely to the things of the world? Do they see us setting our affections on things above? Do they see us setting spiritual things above earthly? Only through the work of our Lord and Savior can the crooked be made straight. Only with this proper perspective of life, will we by word and example show the children the proper view and use of the things of this world, joyfully.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

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

The theme for the annual teacher reviews held in January was *Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD*. These words are taken from Psalm 78:4 “*We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done*”. It is evident to the committee and to anyone who visits a classroom or walks the halls of Hope School during school hours, that our teachers and staff do not hide any of God’s wonderful works from our children and grandchildren, but they delight in shewing them all of his glory and leading them in praise of His name. These reviews are always enjoyable for the committee and we hope for the staff as well. It gives us an opportunity to connect with the staff and allows them a time to voice any concerns or needs that they may have. We do thank our covenant God for the teachers He has given us.

The committee is pleased to announce that Dan Kuiper has agreed to take up the work as administrator upon Ron Koole’s retirement, and we pray God’s blessing upon him as he begins his work at Hope. Dan has been teaching since 2009 and is currently teaching at Covenant Christian High School. Dan and his wife Jori, along with their seven children attend Hope Protestant Reformed Church and have been involved with Hope School for many years. The Board gives Dan a hearty welcome and looks forward to working with him in the years to come.

Ron has been busy in his normal activities of keeping the school running smoothly and his additional work of helping Dan transition to his new job. He has also found time to lead and encourage the staff in curriculum development, specifically in applying Biblical and Confessional references and principles to the various units of each subject. They began with the science curriculum and are now working on history, geography, and social studies. The goal is to update our current Curriculum Guide using this material once the work is completed.

The Technology Committee has been busy upgrading and replacing software, iPads, and document cameras for some of the classrooms and making some improvements to our computer server equipment. We thank Hank Vander Waal for his work as our Tech maintenance man for the past three years and welcome Dan DeVries as he steps back into this position.

The Board is humbled by the amount of support we receive at Hope and we thank our God for it, but it’s not just those who support us financially, (though we do need that) it’s all the work that is silently done behind the scenes that is important. We thank all for their part in that. We also ask that you continue to remember the staff, administrator, and School Board in prayer as we strive to glorify God in the instruction of his covenant children.

FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Josh Meulenberg, Treasurer
Vance Grasman, Kevin Koole

As I write this article, my heart is warm because the sun is shining and the temperature is in the 50's. Looking ahead this week shows much more of the same. It is refreshing to imagine that winter is behind us and spring, with new life, is just ahead! It is healthy for us to experience the sunshine and appreciate the warmth that comes with it. Our work on the Finance Committee the past few months is similar. We have been busy doing the mundane work that we do month after month, counting and recording the income we receive, and reviewing the finances of the school. But we have also been looking ahead to another school year! We have been pouring over the 2025-26 budget, soaking it all in, to get it ready for final approval. Although this may not sound as exciting to you as a beautiful sunny day, it is extremely necessary for the financial health of the school. We are planning and looking ahead. It also works a great appreciation into our hearts that every single year our good Lord provides for us.

This issue of the *Highlights* contains a financial summary as of the end of February. The end of February marks 2/3 of the way through the fiscal year, therefore we expect that revenue and expenses are about 67% of the annual budget. We are happy to report that we are doing well on both sides. The bottom line shows our income above at 71.6% of the budget, and our expenses below at 63.7% of the budget.

Although things are looking good on the financial statement there is still a big need for the upcoming Spring Drive. The total drive amount collected through February is \$218,091. This is down significantly from last year at this time, where we were at \$270,320. We ask that you strongly consider the need of the Spring Drive. With an annual drive goal of \$346,000, it leaves us with \$127,909 to be collected. Last year's Spring Drive collected \$103,760. Information related to the Spring Drive will be sent out soon. Please prayerfully consider this important need.

Overall, tuition collection has gone smoothly this year. For those who send in their checks, please remember to get your check to the office before the first of the month. We would like to remind all tuition-paying families that their last tuition payment should be made in May. All tuition should be paid by June 1st. We continue to email tuition statements every month, shortly after each Finance Committee meeting. Please review your statement closely to make sure that you are on track to have your last tuition payment in the office before the 1st of June. For those families taking advantage of EFT payments, the committee will adjust your last payment so that (if possible) you end the year with a zero balance. If you have any questions or concerns regarding tuition payments, contact a member of the Finance Committee.

It is a huge blessing to have our children taught in this Christian School, and we are thankful that the Lord continues to provide us graciously with the financial means necessary to operate this school. May we all revel in the warmth of God's Faithfulness!

Actual to Budget. YTD February	Actual	Budgeted	%
<u>Income</u>			
Church Collections	31,932.00	46,000.00	69.4%
Gifts and Pledges	218,090.75	346,000.00	63.0%
Gym Rental	3,510.00	5,000.00	70.2%
Hope Foundation	25,000.00	50,000.00	50.0%
Miscellaneous			
School Circle Gifts	0.00		
Special Ed Society	7,791.40	15,583.00	50.0%
Tuition	642,646.42	841,960.00	76.3%
Z - Bus Fees	19,576.35	19,950.00	98.1%
Total Income	948,546.92	1,324,493.00	71.6%
<u>Expenses</u>			
Accounting Fees	5,500.00	7,000.00	78.6%
Band Expenses	2,000.00	3,000.00	66.7%
Building and Grounds - Y/E	11,183.31	50,000.00	22.4%
Class Trip Fund	3,000.00	3,000.00	100.0%
Educational Supplies and Books	35,000.00	35,000.00	100.0%
Federation Dues	4,187.67	5,136.00	81.5%
Insurance, General	13,095.00	17,436.00	75.1%
Insurance, Group	56,692.76	103,200.00	54.9%
Insurance, HRA - Y/E	0.00	4,000.00	0.0%
Insurance, Workers Comp	1,871.31	2,478.00	75.5%
Janitors Supplies	2,926.84	4,500.00	65.0%
Library Fund	2,000.00	2,000.00	100.0%
Long Range Building Fund Trans	13,333.36	20,000.00	66.7%
Miscellaneous Expense	755.25	2,500.00	30.2%
Office Equipment - Y/E	0.00	1,500.00	0.0%
Office Supplies	0.00	1,600.00	0.0%
Payroll - Band / Choir	16,366.04	25,400.00	64.4%
Payroll - Building Maintenance	1,283.48	2,500.00	51.3%
Payroll - Discovery Room	59,559.63	94,924.00	62.7%
Payroll - Janitor	24,000.00	36,000.00	66.7%
Payroll - Lawn Maintenance	2,109.00	5,000.00	42.2%
Payroll - Librarian	3,435.00	5,250.00	65.4%
Payroll - Office	26,397.00	39,900.00	66.2%
Payroll - Substitute Teachers	890.00	2,000.00	44.5%
Payroll - Teachers	406,806.56	611,664.00	66.5%
Payroll - Teachers Aides	12,915.50	23,328.00	55.4%

Payroll - Technology Maintenance	90.00	3,000.00	3.0%
Payroll Taxes	39,473.65	65,214.00	60.5%
Phys Ed Uniforms	866.88	1,000.00	86.7%
Repairs and Maintenance	4,156.36	10,000.00	41.6%
Retirement Plan	11,837.66	20,050.00	59.0%
Snow Removal	2,453.50	3,500.00	70.1%
Teacher Classroom	1,700.00	1,700.00	100.0%
Teacher Development - Y/E	1,681.80	2,000.00	84.1%
Technology Supplies	4,797.17	5,000.00	95.9%
Utilities, Electric	13,157.35	23,000.00	57.2%
Utilities, Gas	5,288.08	12,000.00	44.1%
Utilities, Internet & Phone	3,095.00	4,400.00	70.3%
Utilities, Trash	1,157.68	2,000.00	57.9%
Utilities, Water & Sewer	975.63	1,400.00	69.7%
Z. Bus Expenses			
Bus Depreciation Fund Trans	13,333.36	20,000.00	66.7%
Bus Driver Cost Subsidy	1,250.00	1,000.00	125.0%
Bus Driver Payroll	16,582.50	25,250.00	65.7%
Bus Driver Payroll Taxes	1,167.13	1,927.00	60.6%
Bus Driver Workers Compensation	755.19	1,000.00	75.5%
Bus Insurance	2,452.73	2,136.00	114.8%
Bus Repair	10,405.14	7,000.00	148.6%
Gas and Oil	7,493.51	13,500.00	55.5%
Transportation Supervisor	3,000.00	3,000.00	100.0%
Total Z. Bus Expenses	56,439.56	74,813.00	75.4%
Total Expenses	852,478.03	1,337,393.00	63.7%

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Kevin Koole, Chairman
Matt DeBoer, Brent Kregel

As winter nears its end, we are happy to report that the routes, to and from school, have been safe for the children riding the bus. We thank our daily drivers (Jen Kalsbeek, Carol Boeve, and Dan Kuiper) and the substitutes for their commitment to get the children to and from school safely. We are thankful to our heavenly Father for granting safe travels thus far, and we pray for safety for the children and staff to continue in the future.

We need an afternoon driver (or a fulltime driver) for the 2025-26 school year. We also have an urgent need for a Transportation Supervisor for the 2025-26 school year. It would be beneficial to be certified to drive the buses (though not a must). We cannot run the routes without a supervisor. If you are interested in learning more about these positions, please contact Kevin Koole at (616) 819-8933 or kevin@mpdfinishing.com.

A reminder that busing is the safest form of transportation for the children and we are committed to keeping the bus routes available. Also, it is an opportunity for the children to let their light shine with one another, and with the driver as well, as they treat each other with love and respect while they commute with each other on a daily basis. We put our trust in God for the safe travels of parents, staff and students each day. His way is good.



STAFF & STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS



WHAT, WHY AND WHO NEEDS A READING INTERVENTION

Mrs. Jill Reitsma, Discovery Center

Reading intervention provides extra support and instruction for students who are struggling to learn to read. Intervention includes reteaching and providing instruction that strengthens students' skills. There are common pathways and progressions, but intervention should look different for every student. For example, a student who struggles to learn letter sounds will be provided with a phonics intervention. On the other hand, students who struggle with comprehension won't need phonics but will need extra instruction in strategies that help them understand what they read.

It is important to know the main skills reading intervention targets. There are five core aspects of reading. Students can struggle with any of the five, or a combination.

1. **Phonemic Awareness** – hearing individual sounds in words, able to separate words and create rhyming words.
2. **Phonics** – recognizing letters and sounds they make. There are 44 sounds in the English alphabet, represented by 26 letters and letter combinations.
3. **Fluency** – the ability to read with accuracy, appropriate pace, and expression.
4. **Vocabulary** – a knowledge of individual words and how to use those word in context. Kids pick up their vocabulary from being spoken and **READ** to.
5. **Comprehension** – the ability to understand what you read, this is the ultimate goal of reading. Readers who comprehend what they read can visualize a story, anticipate what

might happen, laugh at jokes, and make inferences about what the author is telling them.

Intensive or targeted instruction on the reading skills is needed to accelerate the reading skills of students who are below grade level reading. This instruction is in addition to core instruction. It can be one-on-one or small group instruction.

Not every child will need a reading intervention plan, and not every child who needs it will need it for the same amount of time. To figure out which students need intervention a standardized assessment is used three times a year. Hope School uses the Dibels for K-2 in the fall, winter and spring. The MAP is used for grades three through eight. Students who fall below the benchmark will also be given a diagnostic assessment to determine where they are struggling. Skills will be identified and retaught. The idea is to intervene and reteach skills from the most basic to most complex. So, a student who demonstrates weaknesses in both phonics and fluency would start with a phonic intervention because that is the most basic.

Once a student is receiving intervention instruction, data will be used to monitor progress and adjust intervention as needed. After a student takes the fall assessment, based on that score, we can see if that student is reading at or below grade level. We also give a diagnostic assessment to determine if the student has deficits in phonics knowledge. Then intervention and formative assessments are given along the way to monitor how the child is progressing.

The importance of early learning of letters, sounds, and hearing the spoken word cannot be stressed enough to families of our communities. God, in his infinite wisdom has given us this means to learn and educate ourselves. Exposing your young children to looking and listening to you read to them, showing them letters and what sounds they make, and rhyming words together can provide a great foundation for success in learning to read. We are finding more and more reading interventions being needed for students as the years go by. Investing in your child's learning is priceless!!

WHO AM I?

Mrs. Susann Grasman, 1st Grade

*"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."
- Galatians 2:20*

Our identity as children of God is a cornerstone of our faith. This wonderful truth signifies that we are not our own but belong to Him. This knowledge is a wonderful gift for the child of God to treasure and cherish. As the adopted children of God, we not only inherit numerous heavenly blessings but also enjoy a living relationship with our heavenly Father. As sons and daughters of the King, we are granted access to Him thru our mediator, Jesus Christ, by whose work on the cross we are redeemed from all our trespasses and sins. When Jesus died for His people, he paid the ultimate price to purify and cleanse us so that we are made whiter than the snow. Confident in this knowledge, we move forward without the guilt, shame

and burden of our sins. He has paid it all, granting us to live in the freedom that only comes from Him. This freedom empowers us to live with both comfort and hope as God grants the peace that transcends understanding and provides contentment amidst life's storms. To experience this peace is to know the comfort of God's presence and guidance throughout life's journey and allows us to surrender all our fears and worries to God while trusting His plan for our lives. We are able to do this only by resting in the knowledge that we are not our own, but belong to our faithful Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The following entries written by the first graders describe who they are. While they have written hints about their individual lives, personalities, and characteristics; they end with the most important description of them all – that they are Christ's and His alone. They are sons and daughters of the King, and their identity is only found in Him. They are children created in His image and redeemed in His blood. Truly, they are the children of the heavenly Father who are safely in His bosom gathered.



I have brown hair and blue eyes. My favorite colors are coral and aqua. I have kittens and I love donuts. I am a child of God. I am Lena Rutgers.

My favorite color is pink. I love to play soccer. My favorite snack are donuts. I have 2 brothers and 1 sister. I am a Christian. I am Abigail Kortus

I have blond hair and light skin. I am short. My favorite books are *I Survived* and my favorite food is pizza. My favorite sport is hockey and my favorite animals are snakes. I am a Christian and I am Kort DeVries.

I go to Faith PRC. I love pizza and ribs. I like dinosaurs and Legos. I like reading the Bible and singing songs. I have a dog named Koby who is 8 years old. I am a child of God. I am Carter Richards.

I have 12 people in my family. I love sharing with others. My favorite color is teal. I like ice cream the best. I love playing with my friends. I share a room with my sister. I love reading. I am a child of God. I am Greta Van Uffelen.

My favorite color is pink. I have a big family. Cupcakes are my favorite food. I like cats. I am 7. I am a Christian. My name is Lael De Boer.

I have new blue glasses. I like to play tag. I love the color blue. I have 5 people in my family. I have a dog and 2 cats. I have 1 sister and 1 brother. I am a Christian. I am Courtney Heyboer.

My favorite sport is hockey. I love donuts. My favorite animals are puppies. I like going to my Grandma's house. I am a Christian. I am Larkin Kalsbeek

My eye color is blueish green. I love to play tag in the summer but I also like the snow. I am a Christian. I am Isaiah Miersma.

I like to play with my dinosaurs. I like red birds. I like pizza. I like going to the zoo. I am a Christian. I am Boone Van Overloop.

My favorite color is purple. I have brown hair and brown eyes. I love spring. I love dogs best. I am a believer. I am Cora Doezema.

I like the color blue. My Dad is going to be the new principal. I like playing with my friends. I have a dog named Theo. I am a Christian. I am Olive Kuiper.

I like ponies. Tacos are my favorite food. I love Legos. I am tall. My favorite drink is pop. I was born in Canada. I am a child of God. I am Kaylie Huizing.

I like to play Legos with my friends. My eyes are brown. I am a Christian. I am Jace Huizinga.

I love to play with puppies. Pizza is my favorite food. I am a Christian. I am Skyler Vogel.

I like cats and every day I play with my cat, Hashbrown. My favorite color is blue and I like bluejays. My favorite food is pizza. I am a child of God. I am Grady Terpstra.

I like polar bears. I go to Hope PRC. I have 2 brothers. One is 4 and the other is 2. A new baby is coming soon. I like to play outside. I like donuts. I am a believer. I am Makenna Bosveld.

I like light pink. My favorite food is cantaloupe. I love giraffes. I am a Christian. I am Naomi VanOostenbrugge

I love pizza. My favorite colors are blue and green. I love to read and my favorite book is whichever one I am reading right now. I am a Christian. I am Mikayla Guichelaar.

I am a teacher. I love my students very much. Dogs are my favorites, especially Leo and Prim. I like pizza and my mom's leftovers. I am short, but that's ok. I am a wife, sister and aunt. I am a daughter of the King. I am Mrs. Grasman.

NORTHERN LIGHTS

Mrs. Julie Schwarz, 2nd Grade

"The spacious heav'ns declare the glory of our God, the firmament displays His handiwork abroad; day unto day proclaims His might, and night His wisdom tells to night. Aloud they do not speak, they utter forth no word, nor into language break, their voice is never heard; yet through the world the truth they bear and their Creator's power declare." Psalter #37

All of God's creation shows forth his glory and proclaims His wisdom and power, yet the heavens declare God's glory in such a unique and unfathomable way. As we sing in Psalter #37, the heavens do not speak a word out loud. They do not audibly shout forth what is happening in their vast recesses. Still, they are seen throughout the whole world and in a

powerful way they give witness of our God and all His glorious attributes. "The spacious heavens declare..." is the theme for this year's Friends and Family Night at Hope School and for the last few weeks the students and teachers have had a great opportunity to look at a specific wonder of God's heavens. In second grade, we learned a little about the Northern Lights, or the Aurora Borealis. As we studied the northern lights, we read about myths of old, we learned the scientific reasons they happen, and we learned some interesting facts about them. Through eyes of faith we saw the great glory of our God and stood in awe of his majesty.

Many years ago, before there was any scientific understanding of why and how these lights occur, people believed that these lights were the spirits of gods giving a message from departed loved ones. Some thought it was the fox god streaking through the night sky. Others believed it was the god Thor. Although these people of ancient times did not have the proper understanding of God, it is interesting that they attributed the lights to a higher being. Being given the eyes of faith we can see the hand of our great God.

Almost a year ago, many were able to witness these lights here in Michigan. If not with our own eyes, we were able to see some beautiful pictures taken by others. As our class researched these lights, we found that this happens when there is an intense solar storm. Usually, these lights occur only in places closest to the poles. The sun sends out energy in the form of tiny particles called the solar wind. These solar particles travel through space and reach earth. Earth has a magnetic field that protects it, but near the poles particles slip through and collide with gases in the atmosphere. The different gases like oxygen and nitrogen and the altitude where they are found cause the different colors in the lights. As we contemplated all this happening in our solar system, we realized how omnipotent God is. What a comfort it is that God controls all things and governs all things so that they work in an orderly way and always for our good.

As we looked at many pictures of the Aurora Borealis, we were awed at their beauty. They surely declare the beauty and majesty of God! *"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens." Psalm 8:1*



Following are some Haiku poems that the second graders wrote to describe the Northern Lights.

A magical swirl
Of colors including green
And other ones too
~ Nora DeVries

They dance in the sky
Dazzling in the dark night
They are colorful
~ Emma Koole

Shining in the sky
Purple, green, red, blue,
and pink
Beautiful lights
~ Nella Meulenber

Bright lights glimmering
Such beautiful colors
Lovely shining sky
~ Zack Heyboer

Created by God
Lights glimmering in the
sky
Glittering bright lights
~ Anson Feenstra

The lights in the skies
Aurora Borealis
Dance across the sky
~ Brody Feenstra

Blue, green, red, and pink
Majestic hues in the sky
God made these bright
lights
~ Oscar Peterson

Colorful and bright
Glimmering lights in the
night
Flowing pretty hues
~ Charlotte Rutgers

The magical glow
The green, blue, purple,
and red
In the pretty sky
~ Emily Tanis

A magical glow
Dazzling lights fill the sky
God's wonder is shown
~ Bethany Guichelaar

Magical lights glow
Wonders glimmer in the
sky
God created them
~ Ella Schipper

Created by God
Colorful lights in the sky
Bright shimmering lights
~ Savannah Veldman

Glorious wonders
Beautiful dancing lights
Created by God
~ Lucas Pipe

Created by God
Lights dancing so happily
Wonders all abroad
~ Zoey VanOverloop

Beautiful lights
Shining in the sky above
In the nighttime sky
~ Rowan Wassink

Created by God
Majestic lights in the sky
Pink, purple, or blue
~ Emerson Veldman

Dancing, shimmering
Dazzling, shining gases
Lovely shining lights
~ Michael Engelsma

HAVE YOU BEEN *SAD*?

Miss Gayle Lotterman, 3rd Grade

The third grade class has been studying different concepts about outer space in preparation for Friends and Family Night. Students always amaze me with how much they already know about planets, moons, and stars! Our most recent study has focused on the sun and moon, and I hope you enjoyed the creativity of their projects displayed at Friends and Family Night.

In our study of the sun, we learned a little bit about Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD). In brief, SAD is a type of depression that typically comes during fall or winter months due to a lack of exposure to sunlight. Students can often relate to SAD, many in my class even admitting to being more crabby or grumpy during the winter. We discussed how sometimes the gloom of dark and shorter days can creep into our attitudes and make us feel not just sad, but even more tired than usual too.

Oftentimes a day of sunshine can change a mood entirely, and I think most feel this more than they know. Even now as I sit in my classroom writing this article, sun shines through my window and warms my back, making me feel a little more energized to tackle my big to-do list. In general, many people feel way more motivated on a sunny day than a cloudy or rainy one. If you have ever felt any sort of "winter blues", you know exactly what I am talking about. On that first sunny Saturday in February or March (false spring or not), watch out! I'm coming for the dust bunnies that have collected in the basement all winter long. Suddenly, spring cleaning seems like a great idea! Or, simply heading outside to soak up some vitamin D on a

walk or a run. Of course, SAD can develop into a more severe depression that might need different treatment than just a day of sunshine to resolve, but overall in third grade I stick to teaching about the general symptoms and what we can do to get out of our seasonal funk.

What's neat about Seasonal Affective Disorder is that exposure to light can help symptoms. Some sufferers of SAD employ the use of light therapy every morning, and in as quickly as 2 days it can improve their symptoms. When teaching this to students, it opened a way for us to make a spiritual connection in our class discussion. We have before talked about how Jesus is the Light of the World, and we have also compared sin to darkness. Students noticed how sunlight is what is needed for someone affected by SAD, and just the same, the Light of Jesus Christ is what is needed for someone affected by the darkness and sin of this world.

There are so many comparisons to be made between the sun and Jesus Christ, but this one was a little more personal for some students. Dark mornings, dark evenings, and days spent at school means that even when the sun is shining, students are not always exposed to it for the amount of time their body needs. Sunshine or not, even just spending time outside and experiencing daylight can be effective for managing SAD. This is another spiritual comparison we can make. God's Word is also called a light in Scripture, and if our exposure to the light of God's word is minimal, we will still find ourselves trapped in darkness.

This presented us with some food for thought: how much time are we spending inside during the winter months, complaining that it's "too cold" to go out, even when it is what our body needs? And then, how much time are we spending on the activities of this world, compared to the time we spend in God's word, even when that is also what our body needs? These questions convicted us, and I hope they will you, too. As those who have perhaps been feeling down these winter months, let's make sure we are doing what is good both for body and soul to push away the darkness that otherwise so easily and quickly creeps in.



3rd Grade Writing Samples:

Winter Day

By Brielle DeVries

Last winter I had a really fun day! I'm going to tell you about that day. First, I got my coat, hat, boots, and mittens on. Next, I got the snow tube and went outside. Then, I set up the tube and ran and jumped on it! Zoom! Zoom! Last, I went really fast! I almost ran into the chicken coop! Maybe you should try sometime! I had a great day that winter!

How I Got My Dog

By Selah Kuiper

Do you want to know how I got a puppy? Let's find out! First, I went to go get donuts for breakfast with my dad. They looked so good! Next, we ate the delicious donuts. We loved them! Then, our dad said that when we finished, we had to clean. Then we were going to our aunt's house to pick a puppy. I was screaming. The older kids were not. Last, we went to our aunt's to pick the puppy. It was hard to pick. Finally, we picked the very best one. It was Theo. He is so cute. Theo is the best dog.

Lewis Family Farms

By Monroe Kalsbeek

Have you ever been to Lewis Family Farms? First, we woke up in the morning on Tuesday and went to school. Next, we got home from school and we went to Lewis Family Farms. Then, we got there and went on the playground. We played on the toys, and we went on a hay ride to the pumpkin patch. Last, we ate dinner there. Then we went home and went to bed. Someday you should go there! It is really fun!

My Cat

By Victoria Langerak

This is how my cat lost his foot. First, we got back from church in the afternoon and had lunch. Then, it was time to be quiet and take a nap, but I couldn't fall asleep. Next, I heard a knock on the door. I was too scared to open it, so I climbed into my mom and dad's bed and told them someone was knocking on the door. So, they opened the door, and it was our neighbor. Then, she told us that there was a cat stuck in the soccer net and wondered if it was ours. It was! The next day we got him out and he had a lot of wounds. Then we washed him up. He didn't like it. Last, the week after, his leg fell off and we found it in the yard. Now we have a three-legged cat. It was pretty weird.

Canoe Trip

By Rebekah Tanis

Have you ever gone on the father-daughter canoe trip? I have! Here's how it happened. First, I went to First Protestant Reformed Church. Emily and I each got a donut. We also split a third donut between us. Dad talked to his friends until it was time to go. Next, we got on the buses and rode all the way down to Rogue River. Then, we paddled down the river. We got stuck a few times. Once, Dad had to get out and push it back into the deeper part. Good thing he was wearing flip flops! Last, we met a seminarian and his two daughters from Colorado at the end of the river. We went back to the church and had lunch. Someday (if you're a girl), you should ask your dad if you can go on the father-daughter canoe trip!

Egg Salad

By Jesse Fogal

I think egg salad is the worst. I think eggs don't mix with mayo. To me they are gross together. Also, eggs and tomatoes with mayo is gross and it smells. Lastly, mayo hurts my stomach so bad. Egg salad is the worst food on the planet.

Art

By Julia Huizinga

I think Art is the best subject in the world. First, you can be creative with art. Secondly, you can make pretty things. Lastly, you can use lots of colors. That is why art is the best.

Gymnastics

By Lizzy Oosterhouse

I think gymnastics is the best sport in the world! Why I love gymnastics is because it keeps me fit. Second, it keeps me busy. Third, when I am worried it makes me calm. That is why I think gymnastics is fun!

Softball

By Anna DeVries

I think softball is fun. First, I think it teaches me teamwork. Second, I think it is competitive. Third, I like to play catch, and in a softball game you catch a ball. Softball is my favorite sport.

Fern the Cat!

By Breelyn Bylsma

I think cats are better than dogs! First, cats are better than dogs because they're cuddly. Second, cats catch mice and dogs don't. Finally, cats are friendly. That's why I think cats are the best!

Legos

By Davith Kalsbeek

I think Legos are the most fun toy in the universe! First, I think they are the most fun toy because there are different types of Lego sets. Secondly, there are different levels of difficulty. Finally, it's entertaining! This is why Legos are the most awesome toy on the planet!

2025-26 SCHOOL CALENDAR

August 25, 2025	First Day of School
Aug. 29 – Sept. 1	Labor Day Break
September 17	School Pictures
October 16-17	Teachers' Convention
November 27-28	Thanksgiving Break
Dec. 24 – Jan. 2	Christmas Break
January 16	End of 1 st Semester
April 3-10	Spring Break
May 25	Memorial Day
May 29	Last Day of School
June 1	Graduation

ELEMENTARY MUSIC PROGRAM

Thursday, May 1 – 7 pm

Hope School Gym

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