

# Herald



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### A HOLY WALK MR. BRIAN KUIPER

*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.  
 I Peter 1:15-16*

Our prayer in accordance with the command of God is that our children daily participate in a holy walk with God. The word *holy* refers to a dedication or consecration to God. Unless thought about intentionally and deeply, this is a difficult idea to consider. We and our children get excited about the Bible stories that talk about Adam and Enoch who walked with God. We recall that the saints in the Old Testament were able to talk to God at different times in their lives. And, we think perhaps that they had an easier time walking the holy walk because they knew God could appear to them in some form at any time. However, the command remains as important today as it was in the Biblical times. When I consider this text a number of important things come to mind.

First and foremost, in order to have a holy walk with God, I have to KNOW Him. This comes from a life of dedication to the Word. When my personal devotions are lacking, my walk is impacted. When my family devotions are hurried or skipped, the walk of my family suffers. This passage is a good reminder to me that the Word needs to be at the front of each day and each decision I make.

In order to have a holy walk with God, I have to TALK to Him. This has a profound impact on my prayer life. When our prayer life is good, our level of contentment and peace increases. We have the proper perspective on life and on our calling. Our decisions conform to the will of God. Our words and thoughts are right with Him. Our holy walk improves when our prayer life is strong.

My holy walk is best when I WALK with His people. This is a key piece as well. The life of a child of God is enhanced greatly when he or she walks with Godly friends. They face the same trials and temptations that I face. They encounter problems like the ones I encounter. They strive to walk in the same way that I need to walk. They will be the best ones to strengthen me in my walk. Their words, accompanied by His Word, will lead me through times of temptation and trial and help me to make the right decisions in my daily walk.

Perhaps the biggest reason that this is on my mind is because I occasionally have opportunity to counsel children who have not walked a holy life for a time. My heart breaks when I find that the occasion for their sin is the encouragement of a brother or sister in the Lord. While we realize that the occasion for sin is always our

own sinful nature, the devil uses means. When these means are brothers, sisters, and classmates, then we realize that the holy walk being referred to is missed by not just the sinner, but the encourager as well. In these cases, discipline must begin with KNOWLEDGE of Him, and with TALKING to Him. That is, we begin with words from the Word, and

prayer. Through these means, the Lord Himself brings fruit upon our labors.

Parents, teachers, students – begin each day with a prayer that the Lord will lead you in your holy walk with Him. Then, encourage each other at all times in this holy walk.

### **BUILDING COMMITTEE REPORT ~ MR. JEFF SCHOLTEN**

It has been another exciting year for the Building Committee as we look both at the work completed and see how well the new facility is functioning, and at the anticipated future projects that will serve the continued growth of the school. After occupying and using the facility for a little over a year and a half, we are starting to recognize the benefits of the renovations completed with respect to the operational costs of the building. The annual expenses for gas and electric have been significantly less than anticipated as a result of the new high efficient boiler, major additions to the insulation, installing all new LED lighting, motion sensors, and the addition of electronic controls to maximize efficiencies. While these additions are not visible to most, they are proving to be money well spent in order to make the building much more economical to run and maintain.

Some of the more visible projects completed this year include the addition of our new music room off the east side of the junior high gymnasium. The room was completed in early October and has been actively used every school day since by the various band and choir classes. Having a dedicated music room was something we gave up in the transition from our previous building, and so we are very thankful to have one once again. For those who ventured from the parking lots on the west and north side of the building, you may have noticed the addition to the playground equipment that was installed this past summer to better accommodate the large number of elementary students. This equipment was purchased for \$5,000 (a small fraction of new cost) from a developer and installed

with much help from volunteers. Thank you to all who donated equipment, materials, and much of your time in order to remove and setup the equipment and make this improvement a success and benefit for our school.

On a continual basis, the Building Committee is working to maintain the building with the addition of new carpeting, more rooms being painted, mechanical repairs, and repairs made to the areas of the roof that have not yet been replaced. This coming June we anticipate replacing another large section of deteriorated roofing over the west side of the junior high wing. With your help from the donations given at “fund the need” during our auction on March 4, we hope to be able to cover most of this cost.

Our facility manager continues to work hard at both the janitorial and maintenance aspects of our building and has taken ownership on a day to day basis in a way that the Building Committee was not able to. It is no small task to effectively maintain a facility that is currently at 81,600 square feet, and so we thank Todd Timmerman for his diligent work each day to make sure the building and grounds are cleaned, maintained, and working in the most efficient way possible to serve the immediate needs of the teachers and students.

With thanksgiving to God for providing us with the means of this facility, we pray for the continued blessings of being able to provide our children with a Christian education in the way of Heritage Christian School.

### **INSURANCE COMMITTEE REPORT ~ MR. JORDAN VANDERKOLK**

God has richly blessed us, and we take care to not become complacent in our responsibilities to that which He has given us. This, the second year in our facility, has brought a level of stability to the operations of the school which includes property and liability insurances. The same cannot be said of employment benefits and in particular healthcare. Healthcare continues to be a hot button topic and plays a major part on the national political stage. As the School Board has begun planning for 2017/2018 budgets, on more than one occasion the question has been put to the Insurance Committee, “...and what about health benefits next year?” The

Insurance Committee has been busily trying to get a handle on the impacts of Affordable Care Act and the implications for insurance premiums and out of pocket expenses. Figures in the range of 40% increases in premiums have been quoted to move our staff to an ACA conforming plan. We understand for our staff, as with all of us, health benefits are an important piece of employee compensations and have a pronounced impact in our family medical care and finance decisions. The same is true for decisions and planning for our school and managing its budget. Health premiums continue to grow at a pace exceeding any other

single expense category with very little ability to actually control the increases.

In recent months the Insurance Committee, with the board approval, moved insurance agencies, which has allowed us to competitively shop all of our health and life premiums. We moved our dental, life and disability benefits, as well as provided an additional vision benefit at a lower cost with matching benefits

to previous years. This was done in order to partially offset the annual increases in the cost of medical health premiums. It appears the current administration is planning to defer at least for another year the impacts of ACA, but we continue to monitor and evaluate options. With thankfulness to our Heavenly Father for His care and provision, we joy in the work we have.

## **SOME THINGS HAVE CHANGED; MUCH REMAINS THE SAME**

**~ MRS. KATIE BAATENBURG**

Dear Parents, Grandparents, and Supporters of Heritage Christian,

It has been six years since I was in charge of my own classroom. In the end, six years is not that long of a time span, yet long enough to pause a moment to reflect. Through this reflection, I've come to realize that some things in teaching have changed, yet much remains the same.

One of the greatest changes I have seen is in technology. Six years ago, if a teacher used a PowerPoint presentation, he or she was at the pinnacle of technology. Now students are not only mastering PowerPoint presentations, but also Chromebooks, Google Drive, AirDrop, etc. The creature of habit in me comes out, and I start to bemoan for "the good old days." Still, I can see that even though the technology learning curve has been steep, the benefits are deep.

Yet even in the midst of all of these changes, the fundamentals of being a Reformed Christian teacher remain the same. Six years may have passed, but the Reformed teacher still heeds the calling to daily "cast [their] bread upon the waters," to faithfully carry out that calling that God has laid upon them. The teacher must be active in carrying out this calling whether they have been teaching for one day or several years, emphasizing the "ever, rolling stream" of life, the current of time that takes us through life at the pace ordained by God. This daily casting is done in the full confidence that God will bless faithful labors even if the reward is not imminent, but rather delayed to some future point down the road. Sometimes, the reward is revealed when the teacher hears of a former student making confession of his or her faith. Then, as a teacher, one is humbled to have been used by God for such a moment as that. The teacher sees their role not as the whole puzzle, but rather as a solitary piece in the life of that student.

The classroom still contains diversity as it did before, diversity that is reflected in the different personalities of twenty-four students. This diversity reflects the diversity of creation; how then could the classroom be any different? Yet even with these distinct personalities, the prayer remains the same: that each student would embrace the differences of the classmates around them, that each student would

see each classmate as uniquely created by a God for a specific purpose. The teacher, in the presence of Jesus the Mediator, comes boldly before the throne of God and beseeches Him to give the students eyes to see this and hearts to believe this. The teacher prays that the student may refrain from ever saying or thinking, "I have nothing in common with him or her." Still the prayer doesn't end there. The teacher prays that the student would even recognize that it is the Devil who wants them to believe the lie of exclusivity, the Devil who wants them to believe that there is comfort and reward in leaving others who are "different" out. The teacher prays that the student would stifle this lie with the Word of God, that they would come to believe that they have everything in common with their classmates, and that they would come to know that they and their classmates are children of the heavenly Father. They have a Savior who bridges all gaps, and that is enough of a foundation to build a friendship upon that will last a lifetime.

Even after six years, there is still that student whose way is in the sea, tried and true. As a Reformed teacher, one acknowledges that afflictions on the righteous must fall, even on children. This is hard to see. A teacher's limited earthly perspective comes to the forefront, and one starts to question, to wonder what good can come from these things. At times, it seems as if the affliction is going to overwhelm the student's very being. Then one is gently, yet firmly, reminded that this child belongs to God, and He loves them more than any father, mother, or teacher ever could. He fashioned the student; how much more will He be a faithful, heavenly Father unto him like none other can? God will bring them safely through all. The teacher can come to no other conclusion but to beseech that God would lead that student to the Rock that is higher than I.

In the end, the changes in teaching that I have encountered after an absence of six years can be navigated because the fundamentals of being a Reformed teacher are still the same as when the doors of Heritage Christian first opened. We continue to teach as we have always sought to do: under the guidance and providence of the One who never changes. This will continue as the years pass, however many years God ordains me to teach.

## MOMENT BY MOMENT: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

~ **MRS. BRENDA PASTOOR**

- 7:40** First Kindergartner (hereafter referred to as Kinders) arrives. Also, first sip of coffee.
- 7:45** Three Kinders in line to show me loose teeth, scraped knees and a new sweatshirt.
- 7:48** Receive first love note of the day (Dear Mrs. Pastoor, I love you! I wish we could go to school every day! I love school! Love, ND)
- 7:50** "Pete, please put your gym shoes on and hang up your jacket."
- 7:51** Receive second love note of the day, along with a fox shaped bookmark. (*Our class is the Fox Class, and these kids are so great at drawing foxes!*)
- 7:52** Bell rings, but we are still waiting on one bus to arrive carrying 6 of my Kinder boys.
- 7:55** "Pete, get some shoes on your feet, please, and hang up your jacket."
- 7:57** Student A: May I go to the bathroom?
- 7:57:15** Student B: May I go to the bathroom, too?
- 7:57:30** Student C: May I go to the bathroom? May I get a drink?  
\*Bathroom break requests and requests for a sip of water or a tissue are contagious!
- 8:00** Kinders are able to line up in reverse alphabetical order by first name – with no assistance from me! This is amazing to me! What fantastic memories these kids have.
- 8:03** Student devotions in the small gym, grades K – 4. Every other week we meet with K – 8 or K - 4, and the teachers take turns leading. New highlight for us is that a few of us have brought our own Psalters and can find the numbers we are going to sing!
- 8:10** Get goosebumps listening to the students sing Psalter #213 from the All School Program, even after the fact! Their intensity and facial expressions are so great!
- 8:15** Start heading back to our room with a reminder to *walk* in the hall and to be very quiet. Immediately see children skipping and hopping from one black tile to the next. Hear several siblings calling out greetings to each other. (Is that really so bad? They are still little and personal relationships are so precious...)
- 8:17** "Okay, let's pack everything up and get ready for Calendar."
- 8:20** 75% of the kids are ready, but the other 20% are still coloring or have been distracted by a loose staple which must immediately be fixed! The other 5% are busy trying to show their (supposed to be a surprise!) show and tell to a neighbor!
- 8:23** Student led calendar routine. This is going great!
- 8:24** Student D: "Ohhh! Mrs. Pastoor! Look at this HUGE scratch! (It's a hangnail.) Should I go to the office for an icepack?" No, honey, I can just give you a band-aid for that.
- 8:30** Bible Story: Constant amazement at how many details, main ideas and promises the kids can recall from previous lessons in God's Word!  
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- 9:25** Snack time. Open three little cups of mandarin oranges and only spill on myself once. Drool over four homemade bars and cookies the kids enjoy showing me. Sample a pretzel from another student who was not to be outdone by snack awesomeness!
- 9:27** Wipe up 3 yogurt spills and vacuum 7 crushed Cheez-Its.
- 9:28** "Mrs. Pastoor, I love having you for my teacher!"
- 9:30** Announcement on the intercom by Mr. (Brian) Kuiper. The Kinders all hush themselves to hear what "The Boss" has to say. They all sincerely believe that he is not only the boss of the school, but that he also bought the school and everything inside it for us! I've tried to explain that all of their fathers and grandfathers helped to buy this school, but they are pretty sure it was Mr. Kuiper who used to be rich but now isn't so much because of all the things he bought for us!
- 9:32** Time to get ready for recess. 23 kids = 46 boots, 46 gloves, 23 zippers, 23 hats and 14 scarves to check. Let's go!
- 9:35** Recess duty! Watch 6 kids attempt to cross the monkey bars, give 7 pushes on the swings, rub 4 knees to make them all better, and then count to make sure all 23 kids have lined up after recess.
- 9:50** Recess is over. 23 snow pants to hang up to dry, 23 jackets, 5 stray hats to find the owners of, 6 shoes to tie, and 23 stories to listen to.
- 9:53** Finish last swallow of now cold coffee. Mmmmm... Still good!  
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- 10:10** Handwriting! Everyone take out a pencil please... "Mom,... (eyes grow huge and cheeks turn red!) I mean Mrs. Pastoor! I can't find my pencil." Well, you used it this morning before recess. Did you look in your

- desk? "No." (slight pause) Why don't you look in your desk. "Found it!"
- 10:15** Invitation to join a student's family on their trip to Florida. Oh, the love!
- 11:20** Devotions before lunch. 6 interruptions to give me just a little more information about the animal from the Bible we are reading about. These kids are animal fact experts!
- 11:25** Dismiss kids with the following instructions: Go to the bathroom, wash your hands, get a drink, then get your lunch. Same directions they hear 7 times a day. Student is back in the room amazingly fast, still sporting *lots* of marker on his hands. Did you wash your hands in the bathroom. "I forgot!" Go back and try again.
- 11:26** Open two pizza lunchables, tell four kids to put their lunch in the microwave and count to 20 and check to see if it is warm enough. (Ha! Counting practice during lunch! Score!)
- 11:28** Wipe up two water bottle spills. Admire leftover Sunday dinner that one excited student brought in.
- 11:29** Greet three first graders who have stopped in to say hi!
- 11:31** Join Miss Holstege in the hall as we crawl around from one kiddo to the next to get 46 (69 on Fridays!) ready to play! Tuck the gloves in just right. Pull the snowpants over the boots. Tell students to switch their boots to the right feet.
- 11:39** Finally look up to see that everyone in the hall has headed outside. Hooray! Check the room and see two munchkins still eating. "May I be done?" Hmm... how about 6 more bites and then you can save it for last snack.
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- 11:50 – 12:10** Finally have everyone outside and have time to run to the restroom! Yay! Also a quick peek for any important emails. Oops! There's one. "Please tell my child that I will pick him up after school today instead of riding the bus home. Thanks for all that you do!" ☺ Always a thankful note at the end! So kind! Plus, I get to be the hero and inform student that he doesn't have to ride the bus today! Woohoo!
- .....
- 12:12** Helper of the day counts the kids in our line. 23. Good. Give directions (Go to the bathroom [and go potty!], wash your hands, get a drink, and find a place to read in the room) and head in for the afternoon haul.
- 12:18** Most of the Kinders are reading or looking at books (somewhat) quietly around the room. One slinks over to ask, "May I go to the bathroom?" But, of course! I know you didn't really have to go when I asked you to go before, but you do now. I get it!
- 12:19** Apply band-aid to old scab that is suddenly bothering one student.
- 12:20** Apply second band-aid to first student's friend.
- 12:22** Student wiggles into my lap to tell me a story about his brother from last night. Sometimes they just need a soft place to sit and share a story.
- 12:25** Individual assessments: Student that struggled with naming all of the letters and their sounds is dancing around my desk, begging to show me something. She knows them all! Letter names and sounds! We share a little celebration and giggle with delight!
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- 1:00** Math! The Kinders are amazing me, once again, with how well they can work out word/story problems in their minds in one group, students are teaching each other how to play WAR! in another group, and working independently in another! They are really getting this whole "school" thing!
- 1:05** "Mrs. Pastoor, may I erase the board for you?"
- 1:08** "Here Mrs. Pastoor. You can use my gluestick." Always so helpful and striving to delight their teacher. Their servant hearts are just beautiful!
- 1:10** "Grandma, is this right?" This earns a silent side-eye look... *Mom* I love to be called. *Grandma*? I think that's a little stretch yet, don't you?! ☺
- 1:15** "Mrs. Pastoor, my tummy hurts." Okay, try to go to the bathroom and get a *big* drink of water.
- 1:16** "That didn't help." Well, you are probably hungry and we will have snack soon. Can you wait until then? "No." Here's a "tummy medicine" (aka pink peppermint). See if that helps.
- 1:17** "My tummy doesn't hurt anymore!" Fantastic! (Not sure what really did help, but I'm glad something did!)
- .....
- 1:25** Snack time. "Mrs. Pastoor, can you open my Go-Gurt?" (Shoot! You didn't eat this yet?! Well, it still has a slight chill so I guess it's still good.) Here you go, sweetheart! Hold it at the top so you don't.... spill it down your shirt. Shucks. Here's a wipe to clean up your shirt.
- 1:27** "Teacher, I'm still hungry and I don't have anything left in my lunch." (Puppy dog eyes looking at me.) Well, let's check your lunch

box once. Hey, look! You still have a banana! "But I don't really feel like a banana right now. And, it has a brown spot." If you eat all of the banana except the brown spot and you are still hungry, then you can come and tell me.

**1:29** "I'm still hungry." Okay. Here are some pretzels. (Hehe! They are letter pretzels and the Kinders can't help but try to find the letter of the week or letters of their names or try to make words out of the letters they get! Another score!)

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**1:45** Story time. I read The Book with No Pictures again, by request. The kids laugh uproariously, again!

**1:52** As I move to put the book back on the shelf I hear a gasp! "Mrs. Pastoor! There's something wrong with your hair!" (I start to pat it down to see if anything is stuck in it or what not, wondering how long I have been wandering around looking like this!) "It's all black in the middle!" I am flooded by relief! It's just my roots showing! At least my little friend didn't mention all of the sparkly parts that were also showing!

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**2:27** Time to get ready to head home. We pack up our backpacks and get our boots and jackets and hats and gloves back on, one more time.

**2:28** "Mrs. Pastoor, my hair is all "waticky" again. Can you fix it?" (I figured out this was a cross between static-y and wacky that occurs when you put your hat on over long hair when your gloves are already on. ☺)

**2:29** (Student A), remember that Mom is picking you up today so don't get in the bus line and don't get on the bus! (Gives me a thumbs up and a huge smile!)

**2:29:10** Student B: "Do I have to ride the bus today?"

**2:29:15** Student C: "Do I have to ride the bus today?"

**2:29:20** Student D: "Can I go in the car line today?"

**2:29:30** Student E: "Can my mom pick me up today?"

**2:30** Proceed to tell each individual student how they are getting home today, just to be safe!

**2:32** Lead the bus line out to the buses. As the kids pass by I hear several "Good bye, Mrs. Pastoor's" and one, "I'll miss you!" Again, oh, the love!

\*\*I hesitated to print this for fear that each one of you will want to be a Kindergarten teacher now. Seriously, these kids are the best, and I love them all so much!

## **MUSIC ROOM ~ MR. ANDY KAMPER**

Our new music room is a great place in which to be teaching, learning, and making music together. It is a warm, comfortable, efficient and effective space to work and learn in. Following are some of the reasons why this is so.

Acoustically, the room has the right combination of space, shape, and environment. Two of the walls are not parallel to the other walls to allow the sound to diffuse better, rather than bounce straight back and forth. This allows us to hear each other much more clearly without distortion. It is a large room with a high ceiling which provides plenty of space for the sounds to mingle and blend. Band rehearsal spaces should have at least 400 square inches of area for each player in order to best hear each other. Our room is plenty large for this need. The correct combination of reflective and absorbing wall, ceiling, and floor building materials is very important to provide the best opportunity for listening to each other when rehearsing. Bands and choirs each need a different acoustical type space for this as choirs like more reverberation in the room, but bands want less. Special sound-absorbing curtains have been installed on two walls to help make our room work well for both types of ensembles. These curtains are

extended when the bands are playing in order to soak up more of the sound, and retracted when the choirs are singing in order to provide more reverberation.

The music room is designed very well for student traffic flow. Band members enter the room through double doors, then can immediately go into an instrument storage room through double doors, get their instrument and go into the rehearsal space through yet another set of double doors. This allows the students to all move smoothly in the same direction when entering and exiting the room.

In the back corner of the room is a large, comfortable office for the band teacher. There has also been audio and video recording equipment installed with internet display capabilities. We are able to use this technology to show the students other bands and choirs performing the same music we are practicing, to show them professional musicians playing, and to display pictures of the composers of the music we are learning.

We thank our heavenly Father for enabling us to add this fine room to our school in order to help us teach our children to praise Him with music.

## PAY ATTENTION PLEASE ~ MR. DAN VANDYKE

“... let’s take a moment to appreciate the magic of conscious life, the capacity to focus on one thing, like this article and this unfolding sentence, following it along until it ends with a little dot. No doubt, as a reader, you’re fighting the chronic digital urge to skim.” In a recent article in my *Desiring God* email, Tony Reinke makes some sobering observations about our attention. He notes that as recently as 10 years ago, a Christian’s daily walk of faith, especially our church-related activities, was much more singular in its attention. We weren’t bombarded for every waking minute by other attention grabbers. Even when doing menial chores around the house, we would have to make a conscious shift to pay attention to an alternative task. Vacuuming was just that, and there wasn’t the possibility of reading a book or chatting with friends during the process. In the intermediate snippets of time between tasks, a conscious decision would be made on which task to shift to, and distractions likewise would be a much more deliberate choice. Now with phones and tablets as demanding as a toddler and twice as needy, distractions are purposefully packaged by savvy marketing teams to fit cozily into the numerous attention gaps in our day. Even walking to the closet to retrieve the vacuum cleaner is an opportunity to check Facebook “quick a sec” or send a “quick” text message. And our children are watching and learning our skittish attention span. Their young brains are already struggling to maintain attention for more than a couple minutes on any one activity. How are we teaching them to focus to any profitable degree on a 20 minutes lesson or a 40 minute sermon?

The illustrations could go on, but let’s move on. Hand-wringing rarely edifies. What then should be our primary concern, and what should we do? First, we need simply to realize that like money, attention is a limited commodity. We only have so much to spend in a day. Many of us budget our finances. I challenge you to document your or your child’s attention budget for even one day. At least mentally note the expenditure of your focus for every minute. And please, do NOT plead, “I am multitasking.” Research has proven again and again that “multitasking” is nothing more than hyperactive attention, flitting rapidly between two or a dozen activities. Human brains **cannot** truly multitask. If you need to conduct your own research, try to have a meaningful conversation with a teenager who is looking at his phone. Awareness is the first step to resolution.

Second, intentionally train your children to focus on single tasks for longer and longer as they mature. This is a skill that we always used to take for granted somewhat. We can no longer afford to do so. One of the main reasons that we **need** the ability to sustain our attention is so that we are able to attend to 40 minute sermons. It’s a primary ingredient in our

spiritual diet. Merely teaching our children to sit quietly in church is not nearly enough. They must learn to listen **attentively**. We can no longer assume that our children will magically acquire the ability to do so with nothing more than 2 “practices” a week. We need to give them tasks which require prolonged attention throughout the week. This is just one more reason why reading is so beneficial. Reading is an activity which requires and hones sustained attention. More and more we are witnessing Junior High students who are struggling readers. They sit with an open book and even turn pages, but they seem to struggle to focus on the flow of words long enough to grasp the main ideas or the story line. The phrases and sentences float sluggishly past their conscious and focused thought without ever taking root. Read to them – yes, even to your older children – for even 15 minutes every day. Requiring them to follow along while you read will train them to read more fluently and to attend better on what they are reading. Notetaking in church has much of the same positive effect on their ability to pay attention for longer periods of time. Give them jobs and chores at home which are rigorous enough for their minds to demand their attention for longer than 5 minutes. Examples are organizing a bookshelf or a tool drawer, weeding flower or vegetable gardens, or deep cleaning a room in a series of planned steps. Only with purposeful activities can we hope to steer through the many attention thieves which we’ve invited into our homes.

Finally, teach your children to fill the in-between moments with intentional activities as well. Teach them how to plan their down-time and especially how to limit their time with these “distractions.” We all know how the time can fly once the scrolling begins. Even before our children have more freedom with electronic media, we need to teach them to discipline themselves in their use of their time and attention. Both are precious gifts from a loving Father who demands that both be used always in grateful service to Him. Even our distracted moments must serve to relax our minds so that we can soon resume the focused tasks that He has given us. Attending with focused concentration all day long would be truly exhausting. Rest is a good thing, but let us be careful that we nor our children drift into a lifestyle where rest is the normal activity of the day and focused attention to a task is the intermittent distraction from that rest.

If you made it to the end of this article, congratulations. I would not be surprised if you are among a small minority. I do not say that with hand-wringing, but only to close with one more kernel of evidence. How long does it take to read a short article or devotional in a worthwhile publication? How many memes, vines, or posts could you have scrolled through in the meantime? Budget carefully, dear saints. Attention is a precious and limited commodity.

## **HE IS COMING! ~ MR. GREG HOLSTEGE**

Fake news. Illegal executive orders. Crooked politicians. Uprisings across the land with people dissatisfied with the government. A famous singer talks about blowing up the White House. These and many other headlines have been blaring across the news media and on our television sets the last couple of months. Since January 21, 2017, the day of the inauguration of President Trump, a new government has been in place. One would think the country is falling apart when watching the media portray what is happening in Washington and across the country. "Chaos" can be found in the great USA because of the President's policies that he is trying to put in place. Never mind the fact that most of these policies are policies that are being put back in place after former Presidents had put them aside with little to no fanfare.

Despite what all is going on in our country today, should we as Christians be so surprised at this?

What is going on today is exactly what our Lord Jesus Christ foretold would happen in Matthew 24. In verses six through twelve we read, "And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Jesus was speaking to his disciples when He gave them the signs of the end times. These words of Jesus were given shortly before His crucifixion and resurrection. They helped enforce His words concerning the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, who were not only to be looking for the coming bridegroom but were to be prepared for his coming as well. The signs Jesus gives us in Matthew 24 certainly have been seen throughout history since then but are now more prevalent today than ever before.

One only needs to look around us in 2017 and see the war of Isis around us with the domestic terror attacks, and wars that have been found around the world leaving death and carnage. The news is filled with the plight of other third world nations where people are starving or other nations who have been devastated by natural disasters such as

earthquakes of great magnitudes. Chicago and other cities are dripping with the blood of hundreds dying from gang violence in areas that resemble war zones. Christians in this land and in others that hold to the sanctity of marriage as defined by Scripture are mocked and reviled by the homosexual movement. The Supreme Court has vindicated lawful marriages of the same sex which denies the God-ordained institution of marriage of one man and woman.

One wonders what will be next for our generation to see as our Savior's time to return draws closer. Can man's hatred towards his fellow man get any worse? We can be sure that it will in ways that may be unfathomable. Man's wickedness will only grow more intense as time marches on to its end. Even as many of Christ's followers are being persecuted today across the world, that too will change as many more in places where Christianity is tolerated will face the wrath of the "dragon of Satan" during the days of Antichrist. Families will have loved ones betray their Christian brethren to the authorities during the fiercest of persecution.

I now propose this question. "Are you looking for our Savior's return?" We currently live in a period of prosperity, where we have freedom to have our churches and worship on Sunday. We can send our children to a school where we know our children are being taught the truths of God in their classroom. We have excellent homes to shelter our families in. Food overflows our pantries along with our refrigerators and freezers. God has given us gifts far more than what we are deserving of. God has indeed been gracious to us. But are we prepared for these things to be taken from us? Are we ready to endure hardships, are we ready to "bear our crosses" for Christ's sake?

We must prepare ourselves for that day to truly fight the battle of faith. Pray for strength to follow Christ in all things. Grow in our knowledge of His Word through Bible studies and attending the pure preaching of the Word each Sabbath day. Do not forsake it and follow the "false prophets" that will arise in these last days. Continue to support our Christian schools so that our children can be prepared for those days as well by the teachers who love the truth. Be vigilant with your children in discussing the signs of Christ's coming, keeping them aware of what is happening around them. It is then we will be as the wise virgins were in the parable, with our lamps trimmed and burning, awaiting the return of our King. Oh, what a glorious day that will be!



## **YOU ARE JUST AWE-FULL! ~ MR. JASON HOLSTEGE**

Once again, I come with an eye-catching title for this annual rite we call “writing a Herald article.” And once again, I have to give credit for this idea to a really helpful book that my wife and I completed together (*Awe: Why It Matters for Everything We Say, Think, and Do*, by Paul Tripp). In this book we were reminded as parents and as a teacher that, yes, we are awe-full, or to put it more gracefully, “awe-filled” creatures, and so are those children whom God has given to us in our homes and classrooms.

To summarize, the author argues that God created us with an “awe capacity” in our senses by which we can take in a myriad of items and events from the awesomely-created world around us. These items and events then are meant to point us to the Creator, whom we ought to adore and worship rather than the creatures he has made. But we know what happens all too often: we think the awesome stuff itself (money, power, fame, possessions, etc.) will satisfy, when that is not what it was designed to do.

In Psalm 145: 1-5 we are given a detailed picture of what the awe of God looks like in the life of one of His children as the inspired psalmist exclaims: “I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever. Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts. I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.”

If we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that we do not sound like this very often in the everyday moments of life. We are prone to idolizing the items and events that make us happy and bitterly complaining about the ones that don't. And that is problematic, especially in light of verse 4: “One generation shall praise thy works to another.” If we are not in awe of the God who loves us and bought us and works all things for our good and salvation, then we certainly cannot expect that our children will

have their lives shaped by an awe of God. To that end, here are a few points to ponder:

1. Our goal in instruction in the home and at school is to help our children see the problem that lies within their (and all human) hearts. They desire to be their own authority in their lives, and they consider themselves to be fully capable of themselves of doing what they are supposed to do. Parents of teenagers might find this description obvious, but how often doesn't this problem begin during those early years when the children are the cutest – and their tantrums are the ugliest. Instruction in the poisonous effects of self-deception and in the antidote of self-denial should start from their earliest years.
2. Part of this antidote, then, is for our children to be continuously exposed to our own personal awe of God. That is how “one generation shall praise thy works to another.” Every day parents have the opportunity to point their children to the presence and power of God in the “mundane” events of life. It is not “unnatural” to do this; in fact, as Paul Tripp points out in his book, it's “positively unnatural” to NOT talk about God every day. Teachers who stand in the place of the parents would do well to remember that this is one of the reasons parents invest thousands of dollars every year in them: to intentionally teach their children the praise of God and His works.
3. And finally, we ought not deceive ourselves – this is a difficult task. The fervor with which children can defend this sports team or extol that TV show or salivate over the new toy is a testimony to the “idol-factory” that their (and our) hearts are. But God gives the grace to us to do this work, and He gives us to our children as the instruments to accomplish this great work.

The Biblical goal for each of our children is a heart that willingly submits to God's authority in awe and reverence of him. May God graciously grant us homes and schools where it is an everyday occurrence that one generation praises His works and declares His mighty acts to another.

## **FIELD TRIPS ~ MR. RICK GRITTERS**

Many adults have fond childhood memories of their elementary school field trips. How many of you reading this right now can think back to some of the places you went to with your class? I can still remember the whale watching trip out of Newport Beach we took with all the students in grades kindergarten through ninth. Even though we didn't see many whales, the trip was amazing. I can also recall the one hour road trip in the opposite direction to the lower desert to hike through Joshua Tree National Park among the tarantulas, snakes and

cacti. And even a five minute ride to the Redlands Community Center where we got to spin a ball of clay into a cup or bowl, fire it in the kiln, and then decorate it with paint is etched into my mind. In fact, I have that cup I constructed in my classroom today. And it doesn't matter where you grew up (the greater Grand Rapids area, the Chicago suburbs, the rural area of Northwest Iowa), you likely have your own school field trip experiences and memories.

If you do a little bit of research and reading today about elementary field trips (especially in public schools, and especially about the type of field trip that is considered culturally enriching or educationally valuable), you'll learn that in the last ten years or so there has been a sharp decline in the number of out of classroom excursions that many schools are taking. There are a variety of reasons that may be contributing to this decrease. Some suggest that with money harder to come by because of budget cuts, field trips, which are seen as a frill by many, are one of the first things to go. Others point to the No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law by President Bush, and the Every Student Succeeds Act, signed into law by President Obama and set to take full effect in the 2017-2018 school year. Both of these acts put a lot more focus on raising student performance and scores on standardized tests in reading and math. And so time spent in the classroom preparing for these tests is considered more important than a field trip because higher scores often means more government funding. A third possible reason that some point to is a change in the attitude or philosophy of younger teachers. A recent survey of 500 Arkansas teachers showed that those who had been teaching for at least fifteen years were significantly more likely to believe that the primary purpose of a field trip is to provide a learning opportunity, while more of the junior teachers were far more likely to see the primary purpose of a field trip as a reward or simply for enjoyment. And as a result, more and more schools are taking students to amusement parks, sporting events and movie theatres instead of art or history museums, local government municipalities, or historical sites.

But in spite of these trends in the public schools, field trips, if organized and planned properly can be very valuable to students of many ages. There are at least a couple of things that should be kept in mind when planning for a field trip. First, and as much as possible, trips should be aligned with the curriculum. In other words, any excursion should be tied in with what the class has learned or will be learning during the school year, and even better yet, connected to what the students are studying that month. If this is done, students are given the opportunity to connect classroom lessons to real life experiences. Studies show that whenever a teacher can make a connection to real life, students are able to learn well and learn more. Secondly, students should be involved before going on and upon returning from the field trip. Goals for the trip that the teacher has should be discussed, and major things the students will see and learn should be talked about ahead of time. Also, upon returning, the teacher would be wise to require them to respond to their experience in some way. Small group discussions could be shared with the whole class, and paragraph or page length summaries could be written so that students have

practice putting thoughts and memories into written language. This will help them remember the information and experience longer.

And so a classroom field trip, when planned and executed in a careful and organized manner, will give the kids opportunity to learn in a natural environment and experience things first-hand and from real objects instead of only from textbooks and photos. It can give them access to and knowledge about history, culture, art, geography or government that they may not be able to get in regular classroom instruction. Additionally, a field trip can help elementary students see themselves as part of a bigger world than what they experience at school each day, the world that God has placed them in.

Recently, I asked the 5<sup>th</sup> graders to respond to the following 4 questions regarding any of three field trips we have been on this school year. (Federal Courthouse in Grand Rapids, Grand Rapids Symphony, Capitol Building and Michigan Historical Museum in Lansing)

1. *Tell a little bit about your favorite part and why it was your favorite.*

**Caleb Drnek:** I liked it when Representative Garcia announced we were there because everyone looked up and clapped.

**Lily Groenendyk:** My favorite part was that you got to touch stuff.

**Abby Schimmel:** I liked the part where there were pictures up on the screen because it kind of tells the story behind some of the music that was playing.

**Alayna Ensink:** My favorite part was the WHOLE museum because I like to see those kinds of history things.

**Elsie VanderKolk:** I liked the dome the best because it is a work of art and I love art. The whole place was very pretty.

**Myron Langerak:** I liked the mine in the museum because I like going through what other people experienced.

**Caleb Decker/Nick VanOverloop:** The mine in the museum felt like it was going to fall on you.

**Alden Corson:** I liked the mine because it was dark and it felt like it was a real mine.

**Elyse Ritsema:** In the museum, I liked the Civil War section. I'm like my Grandpa.

**Danika Holstege:** My favorite part was when we got to see Judge Jonker's office because it's cool and he is awesome. He knows ME!

**Maddie Engelsma:** My favorite part was the music because it was interesting to hear my favorite song, the song by Beethoven.

**Jaydon Gritters:** My favorite part was seeing the governor's office because it is (or at least I think) pretty rare to do that.

**Michael DeVries:** My favorite part was looking at the World War II section because I like old war stuff.

**Reece Cleary:** I liked the old schoolhouse because I go to school every day, and see what it was like to go to school back then.

**Carson VanBaren:** I liked Beethoven's 5<sup>th</sup> Symphony because Beethoven is my favorite composer.

**Sophie VanderKolk:** The Lansing Capitol was my favorite part; I loved the governor's office!

### 2. Describe the part that most surprised you.

**Trista Drnek:** That some of the walls and ceilings still had paint from the 1800's.

**Dylan Ondersma:** When I saw the guy on my trading card, the cello guy!

**Joelle Dykstra:** It surprised me that our representative got to talk to us.

**Emma Byker:** How they still have some of the same artwork on the walls of the Capitol.

**Taylor Kooienga:** It surprised me that the director was so short and that there was a male flutist.

**Tessa VanBemmel:** I was surprised to see Danika's Grandma working at the courthouse.

**Carter Scholten:** I didn't know the glass floor in the Capitol building was an optical illusion.

### 3. What part will you remember the most?

**Tessa VanBemmel:** I'll remember that Danika's Grandma works at the courthouse ☺

**Lily Groenendyk:** I will probably remember the part about evolution.

**Alayna Ensink:** The part that I will never forget is lying on the glass floor looking up at the dome.

**Eliza VanSingel:** I remember when we walked up to the Capitol building how big it was and taking pictures with some friends there.

**Sam Kamps:** That the stars at the top of the dome, if you were close up, would be the size of your hand.

**Myron Langerak:** 5/8 of an inch of glass for the floor can hold eight elephants and thirty students.

**Alden Corson:** I will remember the old fashioned cars in the museum.

**Leanne Wassink:** I'll remember the unfinished painting of a governor, and also that Mrs. Garcia got our school's name wrong.

**Addison VanOverloop:** We were announced at the House of Representatives, but she said Heritage ACADEMY instead of CHRISTIAN.

**Anne Smit:** The part that stands out is the mining part at the history museum.

**Emma Byker:** I'll remember the BIG elevators in the museum.

**Deana Bleyenbergh:** I will remember the painting of the governor that wasn't finished.

### 4. If you could, what would you change or do differently?

**Caleb Decker/Nick VanOverloop:** Take a slight change of directions and go to EAST LANSING, Go STATE!!

**Joelle Dykstra:** I would make the governor be in his office when we got to see his office.

**Maddie Engelsma:** I wish they would do more songs and have longer concerts.

**Taylor Kooienga:** I didn't enjoy listening to the guy at the museum talk because he was talking about boring stuff. After we left that part for awhile, I still saw him talking to other kids that were listening before we came there. I felt bad for them.

**Deana Bleyenbergh:** I would go to different restaurants on our way home.

**Michael DeVries:** I think we should go slower at the museum.

**Reece Cleary:** I went to the same McDonald's last year in 4<sup>th</sup> grade with Adams Christian School.

**Sophie VanderKolk:** I wouldn't change anything, except for the long walk to the Capitol.

## ALL SORTS OF READERS ~ MRS. SARAH KORTUS

Students come into my classroom each year, having a broad range of reading experiences. While some experiences are positive, there are others who have had negative experiences with regards to reading. Some label themselves as readers and others label themselves as non-readers. Some can read chapter books by third grade. Others can't. Students who see themselves as non-readers see reading as a talent that they don't possess, not as a skill that can be learned. Often we, as teachers and parents, don't aid our students in sharpening their skill of reading. Our students need support from us in order to grow in

their reading abilities. Some of them already are developing readers, while others are dormant readers and still others are underground readers. We must encourage our students to read.

Developing readers are commonly referred to as struggling readers for many different reasons: inadequate reading experiences, learning disabilities, trouble reading, etc. With help choosing books that interest these students, they often may grow in their reading stamina, and with practice could soon be reading much better! This requires lots of time working one-on-one with such students to make sure

they are reading books they enjoy that are also understandable and enjoyable.

Dormant readers are those who move through our homes/classrooms with little or no motivation to read. They haven't found something really worth reading. These students need help choosing books to read because they really aren't sure what they like. When given a book that they enjoy, they thoroughly enjoy reading. Often though these students don't have a book they are reading, but rather multiple books that they never really finish. It takes skill and hard work to read books at these students' levels. We, as teachers and parents can and should be reading books at our students' levels so we can make recommendations to them about which books they might enjoy reading.

Which of these readers is your student? All readers need encouragement. There are so many ways we can help our students grow in their reading habits and abilities. All students love to talk about a good book they've read. They enjoy sharing the funny or exciting parts. There are also times when they come across a book they didn't like at all; we, as parents

and teachers can relate – we all have attempted to read books that we never finished. So, talk about books that you've read (even at your own reading level!) and books that your students have read. Talk about your favorite parts and even the parts that you thought were a bit boring. In order to talk about books, you must be a reader yourself. Bring your students to the library, help them pick out books, read to your students, and have your students read to you. You'd be quite surprised at how enjoyable the books our students read actually are; and you can read them quite quickly. ☺

Here are just a few reasons why my students enjoy reading:

"I read because I learn a lot."

"When you read, you learn new things."

"I like to read mysteries because I can solve them."

"I like to read *Spy* books because I like looking and finding things."

"Reading is fun!"

## **A TRUE PATRIOT ~ MR. BILL JOOSTENS**

With President's Day just past, we are reminded again of the precious nature of the liberties and freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States of America. Our sense of patriotism is heightened with the reminders of this holiday. Our towns fly "Old Glory" proudly on their main streets. Our local businesses celebrate with their President's Day sales. We might patriotically display our national flag at our home. Daily, we fly our national flag in front of our school and in classrooms! Fresh in our minds is our recent exercise of our patriotic duty to vote in an all-important presidential election. What do these expressions of patriotism bring to mind for us as Christians? What is our role in patriotism? What makes a true patriot?

We really are called to a unique kind of patriotism, something special precisely because we are Christians. Our zeal and enthusiasm for our country is deeper rooted in the sense that it is based upon our love of God as sovereign and almighty provider of all good gifts, including this particular nation we call our own. I mean to say by this that we don't primarily love our country because it may be the strongest, or best, or because it is a democracy, or it may have the best leader, which are solely "secular" reasons, but that our nation serves a much higher purpose as God's means to accomplish His will for us. We love our country because it is God's gift to us and His means for our good. We usually don't think of our country as gift, yet we go through each day enjoying the freedoms it provides us. Freedoms like

conducting our church services this past Sunday in peace. We hope to be able to do the same next Sunday don't we? Or consider the freedom our country, its government and laws, still provides us to establish and freely maintain our good Christian schools we so cherish as parents and grandparents. Together with our children, we enjoy the spiritual fruits of these schools and we sincerely pray that may continue. Every day we awake to these and many more freedoms. All too often, we take these and countless other privileges for granted, while they are provided through God-given means of government and leaders.

Did you know that our leaders are "ministers," that is, servants of God "ordained" to serve Him? God ordains ministers in our churches, but He also ordains leaders in the governments of the world too. Both are His ordained servants in the earth. The church serves to spread the gospel and feed the souls of His people. The governments of nations serve Him by preserving order so God's people may live in the earth. Romans 13:1-5 speaks of the ruler's calling to be a terror to the workers of evil by maintaining law and order, and reward those that do good by encouraging dutiful citizenship. God provides such rule in our nation so His people can peacefully exist with their families, and their Christian labors can be fruitful so His church may prosper and His Kingdom work may be accomplished both within our nation and abroad. What a wonderful gift God has provided for us through our land which continues

to support a climate of peace “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life.” (1 Tim. 2:2) The Christian’s desire to live “in all godliness and honesty,” the very kind of life God calls us to live, has been historically protected in our country and continues to be protected to the present time. In this way, God provides the means through which we can serve Him! That should indeed make us joyful for the country God has given us.

It should also be no surprise that we ought to pray for those leaders. That is part of a special patriotism we must carry out. We must pray for those in our government, that they may provide us an environment supportive to the life of a Christian. In 1 Timothy 2:1-3 we are taught of this prayer: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men; for kings and for all that are in authority...For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” Consider again the lofty mission God gives them as “ministers;” (Romans 13:4) “...for he is a minister of God to thee for good.” They are servants of GOD, and therefore they must be the subject of our prayers too. Even though they may not show themselves as servants perfectly or even acknowledge that servanthood, our prayers must still be of thankfulness for that which they do provide as touches the support of the church and our Christian lives and continued preservation. Is prayer for leaders then a duty of our patriotism? Absolutely, and this ought to be apparent in our prayers, especially in our times!

Do you think that a Christian patriot’s thankfulness will be reflected in his citizenship? It cannot be any different! Thankfulness will be revealed in an attitude of love for the country God has provided. If we are thankful for it, we will honor it as the servant of God that it is. Reformed believers are called to honor God’s servant. We are inundated presently with dishonoring, disrespectful and even false comments in reporting from news outlets resisting our chosen (God-given) leaders and observe rebellious protesting to undermine them. That is the way of the ungodly who despise all authority in general. We may not take part with them, but because God Himself has ordained the leaders to rule over us we are emphatically called to honor them – “Fear God.

Honor the king” (1 Peter 2:17). Neither may we be disobedient to our government though we consider it in some ways “corrupt.” The opposite is true, we must submit to “all in authority over us and patiently bear with their weaknesses,” (Heidelberg Catechism, LD 39). Our obedience must be to God as supreme “for conscience sake” (Rom. 13:5). That is why we obey our government in such a way that will be pleasing to Him and evident in our life. There is but one exception, that is, if rulers demand of us something against God’s law, even then we must remain subject but “we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

You see then that our patriotism is NOT blind devotion in everything that the leaders do or everything our country stands for, but instead is a testimony to our love of God as He has provided us precisely with this country and its leaders to safeguard our Christian lives while we are citizens on earth. Patriotism is letting our Christian light shine through dutiful behavior toward our leaders in our lives: when we pay taxes (“...tribute to whom tribute...” Rom. 13:7, as a timely reminder this time of year), when we carry out our solemn citizen’s obligation to vote in our democratic republic which designates the people to participate in their rule (“...custom to whom custom...” Rom. 13:7), when we obey the speed limits and the officers that enforce them, when we obey judges, when we serve in the armed forces, and when we carry out all other responsibilities pertaining to our national citizenship (“...honor to whom honor..” Rom. 13:7). As we carry out our Christian calling to obey, honor, and support the government God has put over us, we must make a very visible testimony before men that true patriotism consists of obedience ultimately to God. This, by the authority of the Word of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ over all nations, must be the foundation of our patriotism. Let’s make THAT shine through in our lives as United States citizens in the allegiance we show to our country. Indeed, who but a Christian can say, “One nation, under God” with TRUE sincerity.

## **STUDYING THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH ~ MR. RANDY KUIPER**

There are numerous reasons why teaching Bible stories is the highlight of my week at Heritage. Of course, I consider it a blessing to teach about God on a daily basis knowing that this is the reason parents choose to enroll their children in Christian education! It is very endearing to see the way in which students

are engaged during these stories since they are so enthralled with Biblical history. Another reason I enjoy teaching Bible stories is that I am constantly learning new things from my students, as they often expound on a certain aspect of the story that they remember from when their minister or another

teacher taught the same story. While teaching these stories, I enjoy listening to the discussion between students and the thought provoking questions that students ask which help us to relate these stories to our lives as Christians.

The Bible stories taught in the second grade curriculum follow the Biblical history starting with the death of King Saul and ending with the prophet Malachi. Therefore, lessons typically center on the kings who God placed as leaders over His people, as well as on God's prophets who serve as the spiritual guides. Following the death of King Solomon and the split of the kingdom of Israel into the separate nations of Israel and Judah, this history becomes exceedingly complex at times. As students begin to realize that the nation of Israel then consisted of 10 tribes, while the tribes of Judah and Benjamin combined into the nation of Judah, so begins many side by side stories of these separate nations.

Following are a couple examples to show how complex these stories can become for the students. During one lesson, students learn about Abijah (a son of Jeroboam who is very sick), Ahijah (one of God's prophets), and Abijam (the son of Rehoboam and second king of Judah, who is also called Abijah in the book of Chronicles). It takes a lot of thought to keep these men straight and can lead to much confusion, especially when I slip up and say the wrong name at the wrong time! During another portion of lessons, the students learn about King Jehoram of Israel and King Jehoram of Judah simultaneously, as well as two kings named Ahaziah (one is the brother of Jehoram of Israel, and the other is the son of Jehoram of Judah).

Working through these stories (along with the confusion) is always very rewarding! The accounts of the kings provided in the books of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles reveal to us much about God's expectations for a leader. We learn about characteristics that God wants in leaders, which is important for even second graders as they look ahead to their future as leaders... as students in school, workers on a jobsite, teachers or board members in the school, parents in the home, and elders in the church.

This history also shows how God follows through on the many promises He makes, both to His people and to the wicked. As we study this history in the Bible, we see that God always protects the line of Judah so that Jesus is born from this line, even while Satan continuously attempts to destroy this line. We also learn of many kings who go on murderous sprees driven by their own greed and paranoia in order to keep themselves on the throne. In the end, the throne is always taken from them, as God follows through on His many promises to take the kingdom of Israel away from the kings who dishonor His name.

During a recent free write in my classroom, I asked my students to write a few sentences on the king that they enjoyed learning about the most. Although many students chose to write about kings who loved the Lord, we all decided that it was both interesting and necessary to learn about the ungodly kings as well, since their stories help us to better understand and obey the commands of God. Here are some excerpts:

**Westin Knott:** My favorite king to learn about was all of them because there were many cool and interesting things that happened. There were lots of fights, and it was fun to learn about them. Some kings reigned for over 51 years.

**Quinn Bergman:** My favorite king to learn about was Ahab because he reigned for 21 years. The stories based on Ahab are good to listen to, but he was wicked and so was his family. His wife was Jezebel.

**Elise Bruinooge:** My favorite king to learn about was David because he took care of God's people. David reigned for 40 years. He killed Goliath. David was king in Israel. He loved God. His best friend was Jonathan.

**Martin Langerak:** My favorite king to learn about was Jeroboam because he was yelling at God's prophets and his hand got stuck. He was very very wicked.

**Kent Kuiper:** My favorite king to learn about was Joash because he was only 8 years old when he became king and I am 8. And Joash repaired God's temple.

**Shane Cnossen:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he was godly. The land grew larger, stronger and richer while he was king. He reigned for 41 years.

**Mallory Vander Kolk:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he loved God and he was 7 years old when he became king. He was king for 41 years.

**Brennen Gritters:** My favorite king to learn about was Solomon because he was the wisest person to walk on this earth. He was a very godly king. And Solomon built the temple.

**Bailey Dykstra:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he loved God and he was godly. Asa ruled for 41 years.

**Gracia Vander Waal:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he lived in Judah. He was a godly king. He loved God. He became king when he was 7. He destroyed idols.

**Easton Schimmel:** My favorite king that we learned about was Joash because he became king when he was 7 years old and he was godly at the beginning of his reign. At the end of his reign he allowed there to be idols in the land and at the beginning of his reign he repaired the temple. And he ruled in Judah.

**Daniel Ondersma:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he was godly. Asa reigned for 41 years.

**Eli Kamps:** My favorite king to learn about was David because he ruled in the fear of the Lord and built the temple. He made the nation larger, richer, and stronger.

**Maddy Noorman:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he feared the Lord. He reigned for a long time, for 41 years. I like when we can put hearts by the kings names (*We put hearts by the kings who loved the Lord.*) and Asa got one.

**Natalie Van Uffelen:** My favorite king to learn about was Zechariah king of Israel because you learn to love the Lord with all your heart and how he only reigned for six months. And he was the son of Jeroboam II and his father reigned for forty one years.

**Avery Dykstra:** My favorite king to learn about was Uzziah because he was godly. He ruled for 52 years. He made the kingdom larger, stronger, and richer.

**Brady Holstege:** My favorite king to learn about was Joash because he loved God at the beginning of his

reign and he was 7 years old when he became king. And he repaired the temple. He ruled in Judah.

**Jordan Koole:** My favorite king to learn about was David because he loved God. He saved the nation because he killed Goliath. And because he ruled for 40 years and David is my middle name. He prepared the temple.

**Callie Dykstra:** My favorite king to learn about was King Jehoshaphat of Judah because he loved God. But, he became friends with wicked Ahab, King of Israel. Jehoshaphat reigned for 25 years. His son was Jehoram. In fact, Jehoshaphat went to war with Ahab (He fought with Ahab).

**Madalyn Karsemeyer:** My favorite king to learn about was David because he took just one stone and he killed Goliath. And he was just a young boy when he killed Goliath. David was a lowly shepherd before he became a king.

**Colin Corson:** My favorite king to learn about was Asa because he was a godly king. He was king for 41 years.

### **Upcoming Dates for this School Year**

**March 11, 2017** – Spring Children’s Clothing and Toy Sale

**March 16, 2017** – Solo & Ensemble Festival

**March 31 – April 7, 2017** – Spring Break

**April 19, 2017** – Volunteer Breakfast

**May 4, 2017** – Kindergarten Round-Up

**May 4, 2017** – HCS Band and Choir Concert (grades 5-8)

**May 8–19, 2017** – MAP Testing (grades 3-8)

**May 10, 2017** – Elementary Music Program

**May 19, 2017** – Kindergarten Program

**May 23, 2017** – 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Mini Olympics

**May 23, 2017** – All Schools Band Concert

**May 24, 2017** – K-3 Field Day

**May 29, 2017** – No school (Memorial Day)

**May 31, 2017** – Last day of school (1/2 day) and Graduation

**2017-2018 School Year Calendar (Next year's calendar!!!!)**

**August 29, 2017** –School begins

**September 1 & 4, 2017** – Labor Day Break

**September 30, 2017** – Fall Clothing and Toy Sale

**October 19–20, 2017** – Teachers' Convention

**November 23–24, 2017** – Thanksgiving Break

**December 25, 2017–January 2, 2018** – Christmas Break

**February 16, 2018** – Mid-winter Break

**March 30–April 6, 2018** – Spring Break

**May 28, 2018** – Memorial Day, no school

**May 31, 2018** – Graduation