

REFLECTIONS

GRACE OPC

50th Anniversary Edition

Volume 18, Issue 5

Special points of interest:

- May 6 Men & Boys Breakfast at K-A State Park
- May 8 Session Meeting 6:30 pm
- May 11 Ladies' Night/Anchor of Hope Shower at church
- Prayer Meeting 5/3, 5/10, 5/17, 5/24

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Remembering God's Faithfulness

By Pastor Brian De Jong

True religion involves memories of the past. In an age where present experiences are highly valued, and past memories are typically discounted, this may seem strange. Yet it is true – true religion involves memories of the past.



This is seen in the Old Testament regarding the Feast of Passover. In Exodus 12, the Lord delivered His people from Pharaoh and the Egyptians. He smote the firstborn of Egypt while protecting the Hebrews from the destroying angel. Even before the actual event, God established the annual Passover observation as a permanent ordinance for Israel. Each year they were to observe this festival, reminding themselves

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MERF News

Middle East Reformed Fellowship—“Declaring the Whole Counsel of God”

April 2023



MERF's Augustine Program

By Pastor Timothy Burden, Coordinator



MERF Lokichoggio trainees come from South Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania

The Augustine Program provides intensive biblical training for God's servants in MERF fields. It was developed for those in church leadership lacking opportunity for Bible and Christian doctrine education, especially in war-torn South Sudan. Over the years, the program has extended to train church leaders in Kenya, Ethiopia and Tanzania and beyond.

During Covid, online Bible study resources were developed. Now some are being adapted to Indonesian languages. Most engaging to both young and old, the 6-minute illustrated simple catechism video series is on YouTube: www.merf.org/thecat (Please enjoy & share the link.)

Augustine

Was born in 354 A.D. in the Numidian city of Tagaste, now Souk Ahras, Algeria. His search for truth led him to Carthage, Rome, and Milan, where he was captivated by the preaching and Christ-like love of Ambrose. He began reading Paul's Epistles. One day, after a conversation that led to deep personal conviction of sin, specifically his addiction to lust, God powerfully spoke to him through Romans 13:13-14 and he came to faith in Christ.

Returning to North Africa, he became the Bishop of Hippo and served God's people through his powerful pastoral preaching of Scriptures.

His belief that the Bible is the authoritative Word of God and that God feeds souls through the preaching of His Word, led him to open a training school for clergy. This had a great impact on the church in Africa. Augustine was also the first man in church history to write a manual for preachers. This positively impacted preaching during the following centuries.

The same conviction, that the Bible is God's authoritative word and that God's people are fed by the preaching of it, lies behind the four units of MERF's Augustine Program. The course was established in 2003, but is regularly reviewed, revised and developed to maximize clear presentation of the biblical content.

Preparations are underway for PowerPoint presentations and workbooks on Isaiah, as well as for a survey of the Pentateuch. Most importantly, study materials are designed as tools to be taken home to teach others.

The Augustine Program is taught intensively over a period of three months in MERF's Lokichoggio ministry center, located in Kenya. (MERF's Center was established just south of the South Sudanese border due to the continual unrest and armed conflicts in South Sudan.)

Lokichoggio

Here most of those enrolled in the course are pastors, evangelists or choir-men from South Sudan. Others

from northern Kenya and Tanzania join them in classes of 25-30 trainees. The course runs three times a year with different visiting teachers from faithful churches focusing on the various units. As well as attending himself, one senior Tanzanian pastor has regularly sent young men to be trained. This has led to continued engagement to encourage churches in Tanzania.

Tanzania

Repeated requests for more materials for church leaders brought about MERF's current project of establishing a Reformed lending library in Mwanza in northern Tanzania on Lake Victoria. This has so far been hampered by transport difficulties. *Please pray that the consignment of books will arrive.*

Also, as MERF Augustine Program coordinator, I will be addressing church leaders on the Five Solas of the Reformation at a July Reformed Church of Tanzania conference. These studies will then be



Ethiopia study group

included in Unit 2 of the Augustine Program. My wife, Rosalind, will lead teaching sessions for ladies.

Two other Tanzanian Lokichoggio graduates have teamed up using the Augustine Program material in an organized training program for pastors and evangelists from villages in the Mwanza region. Men come for two weeks of training at a time on sections of the program. So, rather than an intensive three months, the whole course will be spread over an extended period. Arranging trainee accommodation for two weeks is a problem. *Please pray for a resolution.*

Ethiopia

The Ethiopian team has a very active training program. They hold 3-day training courses at the invitation of churches in various parts of the country. Weekly evening classes and 21-day courses are held at a purpose-built training center.

These 21-day courses lend themselves to using units of the Augustine Program material either by a visiting teacher or the Ethiopian team leaders themselves. They have translated parts of the material into Amharic.

Testimonies from a teacher & students

Pastor Miramoe Nickleby
"By God's grace we had 25 students of different nationalities participating in the learning sessions. I managed to teach the Pastoral Epistles & Homiletics. We had wonderful times in each session; every learner participated fully in reading the Bible and doing class tests/assignments. Through this system, some of the trainees who had difficulty in reading the Bible learned to read efficiently."

Gilo Otholi Oboya *"I have been equipped with head, heart and hand knowledge to work to serve, guided by the serving style of the Lord Jesus. The persistent efforts of teachers enable us to know how to spell the words and read God's word and preach it. Your commitment means a lot to me personally. Thanks."*

Joseph Lokoyo Manath
"I gained more knowledge. Christians are justified by faith. When I go back to where I came from, I will encourage the brothers who are in our church to continue to grow in understanding the Word of God."



Pastor and Mrs Timothy Burden



Augustine Program Workbooks

*"What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also."
 — 2 Timothy 2:2*

Front Page Continued...

and their children about how the Lord delivered the holy nation from their persecutors.

Lest the memory of God's deliverance be forgotten in coming generations, there was a prescribed ritual at the Passover meal. A child would ask, "What does this mean?" That was the cue for the father to recite the events of the Passover, and explain to a new generation that the Lord had done great things for His people.

A similar purpose is served in the New Covenant celebration of the Lord's Supper. As we come to the Lord's table, we remember his suffering and death upon the cross. We recall how He himself instituted the sacrament on the night in which he was betrayed. As we are served the bread and the wine, we partake "in remembrance of Me." As often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we are proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes again.

In this way, we refresh our own memories about those important events so long ago. Additionally, we instruct our children and our children's children of the Lord's great kindness to us. We are engaging in Christian education for the whole covenant family.

In all of this, the Lord tells us to not forget the past, but instead to remember and believe. Our trust and confidence is rooted in His great faithfulness to His people in days gone by. We can conclude that He will be faithful to us also, as He was to our forefathers. We have hope for tomorrow because of what we recall about yesterday.

On the occasion of our 50th anniversary celebration, let us remember the past days of Grace Church. In those times, God faithfully provided His servants to serve this congregation. The names of John Hilbelink, Jonathan Falk, Bill Laun, Lawrence Eyres, and Ivan DeMaster call to our minds God's goodness in supply faithful ministered who proclaimed the word. We have seen their conduct, and observed the fruit of their faith. Thus, we may safely imitate their faith. (Heb 13:7-8)

We also do well to recall to mind the faithful elders, deacons and trustees who have given of their time and energy to this congregation. Remembering, for instance, Rich Nagle and Don Schlernitzauer, can bring joy to our hearts.

The same could be said for many who have volunteered in various capacities. Think of our musicians and how they have carefully assisted us in singing the praises of God. Or look to the various folk who have cleaned the church weekly, cut the grass and plowed the snow. Sunday School teachers, VBS helpers, Bible study leaders, sound system technicians – many have played parts to our overall life as a church.

Front Page Concluded...

But above all, as we stir up our memories, we ought to focus on the Lord who has sustained us through good times and hard times, through seasons of reaping as well as times of planting. More than any person, we ought to remember Him who loved us and gave His life a sacrifice for our sins!

May God be glorified in our celebration of our anniversary, but also in our going forward into the next 50 years of our life as a congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The following paper was delivered by Dr. Don Whitney at the 2022 meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. It is reprinted by permission from Dr. Whitney. This paper will be broken up into several installments which will appear in Reflections in upcoming months. Any questions should be directed to Pastor De Jong.

V. CONCLUSION

So “come, let us worship” (Ps. 95:6) “in spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24) the one, true God who desires and deserves to be worshiped in public, in private, and in the family. Let us teach these things to our students, encourage them in our churches, practice them with our families, and experience them in the rhythms of our personal lives.

BOOK OF GENESIS CROSSWORD

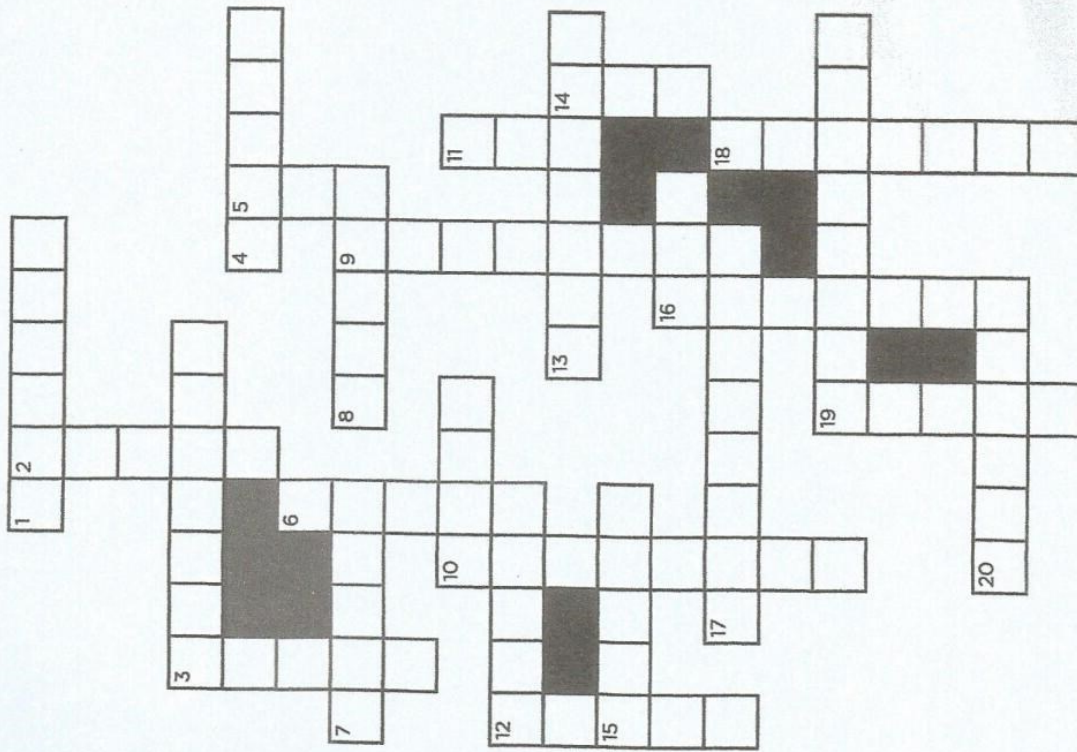
"In the beginning God . . ." -Genesis 1:1

Across

1. What event led Jacob's sons to have to go to Egypt?
3. First son of Abraham.
4. According to Genesis 2:24, a husband and wife were to become one _____.
7. The people of this city built a tall tower to reach the heavens.
8. Where Joseph was taken after he was sold by his brothers.
10. This brother committed the first murder.
12. Noah found this in the eyes of the Lord (6:8).
13. The wood God told Noah to use to build the ark.
15. The first bird Noah released after the rain stopped.
16. What God sent Abraham to save Isaac's life.
17. Abraham's reaction when God told him he would have a son at age 99.
19. What family prize Jacob and Esau fought over.
20. Son of Jacob who dreamed about his brothers.

Down

2. A man who was called by God to move from Ur to the Promised Land.
3. Sarah and Abraham's son.
5. Nephew of Abraham, he took the good land.
6. What Noah built to honor God after the flood ended.
9. This man's wife wrongly accused Joseph, landing him in prison.
10. The type of promise God made to Noah after the flood.
11. The serpent told Eve she would not do this if she ate the fruit from the tree.
12. Number of days rain fell on the earth during the flood.
14. What God called the "expanse" in 1:8.
16. Jacob and Esau's mother; Isaac's wife.
18. God sent this to tell mankind that He wouldn't flood the Earth again.
19. What Joseph made his brothers agree would someday be taken to the promised land.



Can you Crack the code

PALM SUNDAY: SECRET CODE

Clues:

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

Matthew 21:9

Playpen Sports Coming to Grace Church

The Session has agreed to a request from a group called Playpen Sports to conduct activities on our front lawn on Saturday mornings and Tuesday evenings. These are activities for children ages 2-5. They will not be using our building, but will be storing equipment in the garage. This is community service and outreach for our church. See a Session member for more information.



May 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3 Prayer Meeting	4	5	6 Men & Boys Breakfast at K- A State Park
7	8 Session Meeting	9 Playpen Sports 5pm - 7pm	10 Prayer Meeting	11 Ladies' Night/ Anchor of Hope Shower at church	12	13 Playpen Sports 9am - noon
14	15	16 Playpen Sports 5pm - 7pm	17 Prayer Meeting	18	19	20 Playpen Sports 9am - noon
21	22	23 Playpen Sports 5pm - 7pm	24 Prayer Meeting	25	26	27
28 Lord's Supper	29	30 Playpen Sports 5pm - 7pm	31			



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May Birthdays

Gracie Froh 6th

Scott Onnink 20th

Jean Wilke 6th

Deborah Arndt 27th

Steve Boss 9th

Roman Bingham 15th

Ivan De Master 16th

Linda Damkot 17th

Stuart Ver Velde 17th

Ilah Arndt 22nd



May Anniversaries



Rodney and Sanna Nyhof

May 15th 2 Years



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excellencies of Jesus Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

"All that believe are justified."

Acts 13:39

The believer in Christ receives a *present* justification. Faith does not produce this fruit by-and-by, but *now*. So far as justification is the result of faith, it is given to the soul in the moment when it closes with Christ, and accepts him as its all in all. Are they who stand before the throne of God justified now?—so are we, as truly and as clearly justified as they who walk in white and sing melodious praises to celestial harps. The thief upon the cross was justified the moment that he turned the eye of faith to Jesus; and Paul, the aged, after years of service, was not more justified than was the thief with no service at all. We are *today* accepted in the Beloved, *today* absolved from sin, *today* acquitted at the bar of God. Oh! soul-transporting thought! There are some clusters of Eshcol's vine which we shall not be able to gather till we enter heaven; but this is a bough which runneth over the wall. This is not as the corn of the land, which we can never eat till we cross the Jordan; but this is part of the manna in the wilderness, a portion of our daily nutriment with which God supplies us in our journeying to and fro. We are *now*—even *now* pardoned; even *now* are our sins put away; even *now* we stand in the sight of God accepted, as though we had never been guilty. "There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." There is not a sin in the Book of God, even *now*, against one of his people. Who dareth to lay anything to their charge? There is neither speck, nor spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing remaining upon any one believer in the matter of justification in the sight of the Judge of all the earth. Let present privilege awaken us to present duty, and now, while life lasts, let us spend and be spent for our sweet Lord Jesus.

Morning, May 15th, C. H. Spurgeon