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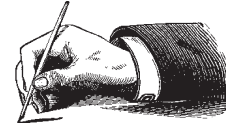
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# Called to Watch: Not Sleep

by Mike Feenstra



**T**he command of Christ that we watch for His second coming is seen often in Scripture. The reason for this exhortation is that we, “know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 25:13). Because of this uncertainty on our part, we must keep a constant watch. The opposite of watching as we learn from various passages is sleeping. Just as sleep is the greatest temptation for a guard keeping watch during a lonely dark night, so it is for the Christian who at times thinks that he is all alone and that his Saviour will never come. Nevertheless, we as young people must still watch. We do this through prayer as our Lord has commanded us. But, as I want to show in this article, we must also watch for the sudden coming of our Lord Jesus Christ by being awake and paying attention to the Word preached in the public worship services of the church.

The seriousness of the calling to listen attentively is brought out when we notice that the Word being preached is the very Word of Christ. Christ is the One who preaches to us just as He preached peace unto the Ephesians as we read in Eph. 2:17. When we remember that we must be watching at all times for Christ then it follows that we will desire to know as much as we can about Him and about His coming. What better place is there to do this than in the House of God during public worship? It is in public worship on the Lord’s Day that we hear the voice of Him for Whom we are watching!

We must watch for Christ Who is the Sun of Righteousness. It is He alone Who shines the rays of truth and right into our dark hearts, “to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (II Cor. 4:6). He enlightens us also because He is the Light as Jesus says in John 8:12: “I am the Light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Because He is the Sun of Righteousness and the Light, He is also, “the Dayspring from on high [that] hath visited us” (Luke 1:78). He is the One for Whom the Old Testament saints were watching. He is the One Who finally came in the darkest hour of the many years of silence as the Dayspring to lead us out of the weary night.

Because of this work of sovereign grace in our hearts, we as the people of God are called “the children of the day” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14a). We are both of these things as Paul teaches also in I Thessalonians 5:5-6 where he says: “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.” Here again, the Word of God brings up our calling to watch because Christ has shined the Light into our hearts. He has opened our eyes so that we are able to watch. Therefore let us watch out of thanksgiving to Him.

As the children of the day Christ has also given unto us confidence that when He comes again we will not be overtaken suddenly as by a thief. This is our great comfort as Christians. Christ has led us out of the darkness of sin

We have no fear of the  
end of the world!

so that when the Day of the Lord comes we shall not be as the unbelievers who have no escape! We have no fear of the end of the world!

This confidence only comes in the way of watching. Therefore we must not sleep as the wicked men of this world do. Yet this is so easy for us to do because of the weakness of the flesh. Think of parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13. Before the Bridegroom came back, all the virgins were sleeping including the wise virgins. Or think of Peter who declared, "Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33). Yet, after Jesus commanded him to watch with Him while He prayed to God, Peter fell asleep. Upon seeing Peter sleeping, Jesus says, "What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:40b-41).

Although the passage just quoted doesn't focus on Peter's calling to watch for Christ's second coming, the command of our Lord Jesus is the same to us today. We must watch and pray, not sleep, because we are weak. We watch and pray for Christ's second coming by worshipping God on the Lord's day in spirit and in truth. Our minds must be vitally interested in the congregational prayer that is offered up so that we can make that prayer our own. When we sleep, it is impossible to do this. In congregational singing, our hearts ought to meditate on the words while we sing with all our strength. During the sermon we need to concentrate on the Word spoken and apply that Word unto our own lives by faith.

We can only do this when we are awake. Therefore we should prepare ourselves by getting enough sleep on Saturday night. In the worship service we must not, "sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

when we physically sleep  
in a worship service we  
act like unbelievers

When we sleep in the worship service we are indeed doing as "others", which undoubtedly is referring to unbelievers. Although the text is talking about sleep in a spiritual sense, we must conclude that when we physically sleep in a worship service we act like unbelievers for we manifest an indifference to the Word spoken.

On the other hand, we should not either be like the scribes and Pharisees of Matthew 15:7-8 where Jesus says, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you

saying, This people draw nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me." This text makes plain that even though we may be wide awake in a worship service, and outwardly looking as though we are listening, if our heart is far from God we are spiritually sleeping. We are not following Christ's command to worship in spirit and in truth.

When we worship God in the way He has commanded us then we will find joy in our God and confidence that at the last day we will be justified in our Lord Jesus Christ. Worshipping God's way is being awake and watching for the coming of His Son Jesus Christ. Worship is not a time for sleep. The true worship of God that comes from the heart is because of the work of Christ Who makes us arise out of sleep and become the children of the day. So fellow young people let us watch and not sleep in the worship services of the church for by this we show to all the world our thankfulness to God for His sovereign wondrous work of transforming us from darkness into light. In this way our God alone will be glorified.

*"And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light" (Romans 13:11-12). ❖*

# Questions About the Suffering of Little Ones\*

by Rev. Richard Moore

## Question #15

I know you don't know me but I know you'll pray for my family. My four-year-old niece, (name), will be undergoing brain surgery on January (date). She has a disease called tuberous sclerosis which, in the short-hand version, causes hard tumors to form on the brain and possibly other organs. This has caused her to have continuous brain seizures since she was born. She also has many physical seizures. The nature and frequency of the seizures have changed as she has grown. Medication no longer can control them. She has 10-15 (on bad days even more) very hard seizures each day. This is very frightening and painful for her as well as life threatening. The doctors feel that the only thing left is to try surgery. On January 6 they will perform surgery to insert probes into her brain. She will remain tethered to the probes for 5-10 days until they get sufficient information to determine the site on the brain that is causing the seizures. Depending on what they find, if the location is safe, they will remove the probes and perform the operation to try to alleviate the seizures. If the location is too close to a site that controls a major function (such as vision), they will only remove the probes. In any case, the insertion and removal of the probes are major surgery unto themselves as they must remove the top of the skull. Please pray for her healing, wisdom and guidance for the surgeons and her caretakers. Also, for strength and comfort for my brother and sister-in-law. Thank you for your prayers. Thank God for (name); she is a beautiful and loving little girl.

## Answer #15

The above is not strictly a question, but it did require an answer, and the answer given to her leads us to consider an important question of the need for affliction and trial, which we will treat in my answer to the sister that sought my prayer in behalf of this little child, and a follow up question.

Many times God's people must be placed in trial, for God will prepare us through the trials to stand ever in faith, prepares us for the heavenly dwelling place that we shall have for ever with our Lord. We are led to see through these trials that because of God's eternal covenant of grace with His chosen, and because of His faithfulness to His covenant that all things shall work together for our good. He has sent His Son to come into our flesh to bear our guilt so that now all penalty for sin is taken away, thus we understand that the afflictions of this present time serve our eternal welfare. The text I quoted in part above is from Romans 8:28-30 "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to {his} purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate {to be} conformed to the image of his Son, that he

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Trial reminds us of our  
own helplessness

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might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." May God be with (name) and her family during this time of trial, and if it be His will we do pray that He may deliver this little one from some of her suffering. But we do know that if it is not His will that with the trials He will give the way of escape. It will work out as does all things for the true blessings of God's children. May God grant (name) and her family the grace to wait upon Jehovah, knowing that He careth for you.

## Question # 16

The former request leads us to many questions concerning trial, which my readers may want to follow up with in questions to this page.

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However, we will at this time treat one such question that is from time to time confronted in the church of Christ. The question arises because of the young age of the little one that is suffering such severe trial. There are quite a few times when little ones in the church of Christ are afflicted with very serious diseases or disorders, and other occasions when there is a full term still birth, and many godly parents face the sorrow of miscarriages. The question arises why does this have to be? Why must these little ones so suffer? Why do parents have to see this suffering, or even why do they have their hopes raised to expect that they shall be given one of the covenant

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*God loves His children  
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trust in self or man.*

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seed to care for, only to have that life taken away in the womb, or soon after?

#### **Answer #16**

**T**he answer to these questions must come from the Scripture, there is no human reasoning that can answer such questions. In the first place we must understand that it is necessary for God's children to be passed through trials to be prepared for the eternal glory that shall be our portion. This is why James can say in James 1:2ff. "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing {this}, that the trying of your faith worketh patience." Jesus is pleased to work patience in the lives of His children through the way of their trial. This patience is the attribute of the child of God whereby He waits and trusts upon the God of His salvation for all things.

Understand we must learn and confess that salvation is impossible in our own strength, and learn and confess that we cannot rely upon ourselves at all to serve God and glorify Him. Trial reminds us of our own helplessness, and as it were, God by trial forces us to rest only in His grace to save. When we read the Psalms we are struck with this fruit of trial whenever the Psalmists reflect upon the trials that they must face. For example

in Psalm 4 we read the words which the Psalmist speaks to his own soul, when facing sever trial at the hand of his enemies and he says, "But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah." God loves His children and brings them near unto His throne of grace by removing all possibility of trust in self or man. And He works then, all things together for the good, the salvation of His children. And if you do not understand James says, if you have questions, then in faith let us ask God. God shall give us grace to bear the affliction, and grace to trust in Him. The apostle states it in a blessed way in I Corinthians 10:13 "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God {is} faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear {it}." By the trial God leads us to rest in His Son for comfort and strength, for principally the way of escape is Christ. He entered our flesh, He took upon Himself our guilt, He suffered the penalty of our sin, and He satisfied the judgment of God, bore our curse to its end, so that there remains no more penalty for sin for His elect. Therefore we have the assurance that the trials He sends us now are the means to draws us near unto the God of our salvation, and to prepare us for the eternal life that is reserved for us in glory. And by the grace of God we know that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:31ff). ❖

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*\* Rev. Moore serves the Hull Iowa congregation and receives and answers these questions on his Web Page.*

# God's Sovereignty in Conception—Part 1

by Mrs. Geri Klaassens

“...we must not believe as the Roman Catholics do that any use of birth control is wrong. No Christian husband and wife should use birth control without searching their heart to be certain that they are not using it for the wrong purposes. They must realize that one of the ways that their sexual relations can glorify God is through bringing forth children. Thus they will want to have as many children as they can. On the other hand, they may realize that for a season, perhaps for the health of the wife or to make it possible to raise the existing children, they may try not to have children. Still their sexual relations can glorify God, because their relations can still express the oneness of flesh in their marriage.”

*“Theologians’ Views on Dating and Marriage (II) Augustine on Sex and Marriage” by Steve Spencer; Beacon Lights, December 1996 issue.*

**O**ur God is sovereign in salvation. He governs, upholds, and maintains all things. We must submit to his will in our lives; this includes knowing that the food on the table is from his hand, but also the families we have come from him—in his time. We are bombarded in our day by the ideas of the world that large families cost too much, children are a burden, and we have to think of ourselves. Scripture has much to say on the issue of raising families, and “birth control.”

What *is* birth control? Birth is the process of being born. The baby must be born—can *we* control this process? God has given us control, to an extent, over the methodology, and if we would, we have even the means to control the time of birth using interventionist methods, i.e. intravenous promotion of labor or cesarean section. Is this what is being referred to? When ‘birth control’ is discussed, the idea is actually that of “conception prevention.”

What do we know of conception? We know that God grants conception. We think of Sarah—how humanly speaking she had no hope of being pregnant, she was

past age. Before this, she coerces her husband to take her handmaid because, she says, “the Lord hath restrained me from bearing.” Gen. 16:2a. Later, God promises, “I will bless her and give thee a son of her,” Gen. 17:16 and “the Lord visited Sarah as he had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as he had spoken, for Sarah conceived and bare Abraham a son...” Gen. 21:1, 2. And earlier when Abraham deceived Abimelech, and he took Sarah into his home, we learn that “the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs of the house of Abimelech, because of Sarah, Abraham’s wife,” Gen. 20:18; and “so Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children,” Gen. 20:17.

We think of Leah and Rachel. “When the *Lord* saw that Leah was hated, *he* opened her womb; but Rachel was barren. And Leah conceived and bare a son, and she called his name Rueben...” Gen. 29:31, 32a. “And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children,” she complained to him, and he became very angry with her, acknowledging that *God* “withheld from thee the fruit of thy womb,” Gen. 30:1-2. Further we read “and *God* hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived and bare Jacob the fifth son,” Gen. 30:17. “And *God* remembered Rachel, and *God* hearkened unto her, and opened her womb and she conceived and bare a son; and said, *God* hath taken away my reproach,” Gen. 30:22,23.

We know of Hannah and how “the *Lord* had shut up her womb,” I Sam. 1:5 and after she prayed and vowed a vow, and wept sore, that “the *Lord* remembered her... after Hannah conceived and bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the *Lord*,” vs. 19, 21. Hannah’s prayer in Chapter 2 rejoices in the sovereignty of the *Lord*. As he is sovereign in bringing the mighty low, and making the weak strong, so do “the barren bring forth seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble,” vs. 5.

God is sovereign in conception. Are we to interfere with his almighty knowledge and wisdom? Do we not confess with the Psalmist that “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart,” Ps. 73:1? We

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“want to have as many children as (we) can.” Let me revise: We must have as many children as God wants us to have, as many as he chooses to give us. Is he not the all-knowing, all-wise God?

Now come our excuses. “Yabbut, I can’t handle more than three or four.”

Won’t our almighty God give us grace in time of need? “For great is thy mercy toward me: and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell,” Ps. 86:13. Psalm 136 repeats, “For his mercy endureth forever.” And Psalm 118:14: “The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation.” Whenever we read in the Bible of saints praying regarding children, it is because the children of God want *more* children, not fewer; they want their children to be a part of God’s covenant and they want his kingdom to come, meaning that all the elect must first be born (conceived?). When God blesses us with children, we can be comforted that he will give us strength and wisdom to raise them as we draw nigh unto the throne of grace.

“Yabbut, do I have to have one every year? I’m tired and need a break.”

Who are we, mere creatures, to determine *when* God fulfills his covenant? When he gives us many children, in close succession, and we know we need a rest, is not God saying, “Come to me all ye that labour and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” Matt. 11:28? Is this not a wonderful opportunity for brothers and sisters in the Lord to provide help and encouragement to a fellow saint—either by helping with meals, housecleaning, babysitting, and most importantly, prayers?

Is this also not a great opportunity for existing children to learn to become servants in the home? God often

puts hardships, trials, and afflictions in our path—“for good to them who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose,” Rom. 8:28.

“Yabbut, we just can’t afford a large family. School tuition costs much as does health care.”

“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus,” Phil. 4:19. God gives us our vocation, hands with which to perform our work and a means to provide for our families, for which we thank him daily.

“Yabbut, it is not enough to sustain a large family.”

When God blesses our family with more children, he will also grant the means to provide for them. And when it seems that after taking care of the priorities—church, education, other bills—there is not enough left for food on the table, are we not called to seek the diaconate?—another wonderful opportunity for the love of the brethren to manifest itself. Our sinful pride often stands in the way...“Yabbut, if everybody did...” (go to the deacons)...everybody doesn’t. God gives to each what he deems best. To some ten talents, some five, and some one. But stewardship is another issue.

In Part 2, we will discuss more “Yabbuts” which we tend to have ourselves. We might think that this isn’t a problem, but even being discouraged about having more children is raising objections to our Almighty God. We must know that we can come to Him with all our concerns in prayer, and He will comfort our souls. ❖

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*Mrs. Klaassens is a member of the First Protestant Reformed Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. She and her husband, Herman, are the parents of eight children.*

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## Dating and Marriage

# God’s Sovereignty in Conception

by Steve Spencer

I want to thank Ken DeJong and Geri Klaassens for their thoughtful letters in response to my article in the *Beacon Lights*, “Augustine on Sex and Marriage.” In that article I pointed to the fact that Augustine (and the Roman Catholic Church to this day)

error in their teaching that only when a married couple desires to have children is their sexual relations pleasing in the eyes of God. I argued that sexual relations that express the union of husband and wife as one flesh and symbolize the relationship of Christ and the Church are



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pleasing to God even when bearing children is not the objective. From this point of view I argued that birth control under certain circumstances is permissible for a Christian husband and wife.

Mr. DeJong and Mrs. Klaassens disagreed with this view. Although their specific arguments differ at points (I hope to take up these specific issues in the next article in this rubric) much of their argument is the same: we should leave the issue of bearing children to God to determine in his sovereignty and not take the matter out of God's hands and put it into our own hands.

I disagree with this basic point that both letter writers make in that it appears to present a faulty notion of God's sovereignty and our duty as Christians. Simply put we cannot take the matter out of God's hands, we cannot put the matter into our own hands. God in his sovereignty controls all things even our sinful actions and the sinful actions of the world. When the unbelieving world commits countless murders through abortion they do not take the matter out of God's hands. Even these sinful actions are part of God's divine counsel that He established before the foundation of the world. We often have difficulty understanding this teaching, but it is the plain teaching of scripture. God is sovereign in everything, even in our sinful actions and those of the world.

So the fact of God's sovereignty (which we must believe with all our hearts and is a great comfort to Christians, Romans 8:28) alone is not a sufficient guide in this matter. God in his sovereignty has given us a different guide for our actions his law and commandments. At a conference I heard one of our ministers put it this way, "Our duty is not determined by God's sovereignty, counsel, or eternal decrees it is determined by his commands." If you doubt this for a moment imagine what horrible sins could be deemed permissible if one says, "well I did thus and so because it was part of God's sovereign plan." Calvin noted such a tendency in all of us and replied to those who take such a view with the teaching, "let them inquire and learn from Scripture what is pleasing to God so that they may strive toward this under the Spirit's guidance." (*Institutes*, Book 1, Chapter 17, article 3)

So what are God's commands concerning sex and marriage. The first command we must consider is in Genesis 1 and is literally the first command that God gave, "Be fruitful and multiply." We must not view the matter of having children indifferently. In our marriages we must want to have children and try to have children. This command teaches us that we should say, "I want to have a child now." We should actively try to have as many chil-

dren as we can. This is the simple command of our Heavenly Father and the first words we need to consider whenever we consider sex and marriage.

Does this command, however, mean that we can never refrain from trying to conceive a child in our marriages? At first it might seem so, but if we allow Scripture to teach us on this matter we will see that it is not so. Mr. DeJong asks, "but where in God's Word is birth control ever supported?" If we examine I Corinthians 7 verse 5 we read, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, . . ." Here the Spirit teaches us an exception to the general rule that in our marriages we must be fruitful and multiply. This passage teaches that a husband and wife may abstain from sexual relations (which certainly is a form of birth control or conception prevention) for a season for the purpose of serving and glorifying God if they both agree. I believe this passage teaches that we may use birth control in our marriages but only for a season and only to glorify God in some other way.

Mr. DeJong in his letter described the difficult decision that he and his wife had to make when they decided not to use birth control. To illustrate my position, I will give an account of the difficult decision that my wife and I have made to use birth control. When my wife was pregnant with our first child, my daughter had a very serious infection while she was still in the womb and was taken by cesarean section a little over 2 months early. She nearly died and we thank God daily for the wonder that she is happy and healthy. My wife's second pregnancy appeared to proceed without difficulty—my son was born on his due date by cesarean section. However, two weeks later my wife developed a serious infection from which she almost died. In analyzing my wife's situation several doctors came to the conclusion (as I understand it) that she probably carries bacteria in her body (a variant of the flesh-eating bacteria that you may have heard about) that normally is held in check by her immune system. When she is pregnant, however, her immune system seems to weaken and allows the bacteria to grow and develop. This they feel caused the premature birth of my daughter and caused the severe infection my wife experienced after the birth of my son. Three different doctors have advised that having another child would put my wife and the child in serious jeopardy. The near death of my daughter and then my wife makes this account quite believable.

Given this knowledge we feel it would be wrong to try to have another child. We feel deeply the desire to follow God's command to be fruitful and multiply. We would dearly love to have another child and we hope that we will find a way for my wife to have another child without the serious risk that appears at this time. However, we believe that to simply wait and see if my wife were to get pregnant—that is to have sexual relations without using birth control—would be to violate the sixth commandment. To use the language of the catechism (Q & A, 105) to allow my wife to become pregnant would be to willfully expose her to danger, which is, of course, a violation of the sixth commandment. From our perspective we must for a season put aside the commandment to be fruitful and multiply in order to serve God in keeping the sixth command not to commit murder. We pray that this season is short and that perhaps a treatment for my wife's condition will be found. For now we often shed a tear that we are not able to serve God by bringing forth more children, but we firmly believe that we are following the teaching of scripture. This conviction and the

knowledge that this too is all part of God's sovereign plan provides tremendous comfort.

We believe that God is acting sovereignly in our decision to use birth control in our marriage. Calvin put it much better than I ever could (Institutes, Book 1, Chapter 17, article 4) "We are not at all hindered by God's eternal decrees either from looking ahead for ourselves or from putting all our affairs in order, but always in submission to his will. The reason is obvious. For he who has set the limits to our life has at the same time entrusted to us its care; he has provided means and helps to preserve it; he has also made us to foresee dangers; that they may not overwhelm us unaware, he has offered precautions and remedies. Now it is very clear what our duty is: thus, if the Lord has committed to us the protection of our life, our duty is to protect it; if he offers helps, to use them; if he forewarns us of dangers, not to plunge headlong; if he makes remedies available, not to neglect them." ❖

*Steve is a member of Grandville Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.*

## Gem of the Month

# Blessed

The poor in spirit, they are blessed,  
 God's kingdom they'll inherit;  
 And those that mourn will comfort find  
 Imputed by Christ's merit;  
 The meek are blessed and shall possess  
 God's kingdom through Christ's righteousness.

God fills with good the souls who thirst  
 And hunger after right;  
 Those who show mercy shall obtain  
 Compassion in His sight;  
 The pure in heart who love Him well  
 Shall in God's presence surely dwell.

The peacemakers, they shall be called  
 The children of the Lord;  
 And they who persecution bear  
 And walk in sweet accord  
 Shall in God's presence ever stand  
 And praise Him in the Heavenly Land.

So when the wicked persecute,  
 With cruelty revile,  
 And villify and injure us  
 With viciousness and guile,  
 Then we're commanded to rejoice  
 And praise our God with thankful voice.

Afflictions, though they seem so great,  
 Are light when viewed through eyes  
 Comparing them with heavenly bliss  
 Of God's own Paradise.  
 Unending ecstasy and love  
 Will be our portion up above.

*Thelma Westra*



## March 1

### Read Psalm 9

Psalm 9:1-2. This Psalm starts with a declaration of praise. David will praise God for the mercies that He has given him. In reading through the Psalm we see that David wrote this after enduring affliction and being delivered by God. We, too, while living an antithetical life will endure affliction on this earth. Will we be able to praise God during such affliction? Do you remember that Paul and Silas sang Psalms as they lay in the Philippian jail? Let us live lives in which we are constantly magnifying the praise of God. Let us do that tomorrow as we enter the courts of praise. Sing Psalter 16:1 and 17:1.

## March 2

### Read James 5:1-11

Psalm 9:3-4. Here we see David's knowledge of the enemies that were around him. But his experience was that God protected him from those enemies. Not only did God protect him, but God also showed those enemies that David had done that which was right in his life and therefore was deserving of that protection. When we live a life marked by the antithesis, we can be assured that God will protect us and will justify us. When we refuse to live the antithetical life, God will chastise us in this life. Today as we frequent the house of God we must account before Him of our actions. How do we stand? Will God say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant."? Sing Psalter 16:2 and 17:2.

## March 3

### Read Habakkuk 1:5-12

Psalm 9:5-8. The first two verses of this section shows us what God will do to His enemies. Are the enemies of God our enemies for His sake? Or do we join with the world and go against our God? It is a fearful thing to be judged by God and found wanting. But we have the beautiful promise found in the last two verses. Our covenant God, Jehovah, endures for ever. His justice is righteous. And because Christ has died for us, we know that we are innocent before the righteous judge. These two sections put together give us direction for daily life. They are good for us to consider as we begin our work week. Let us flee evil and seek that which is good. Sing Psalter 16:3.

## March 4

### Read II Corinthians 4:1-11

Psalm 9:9-10. Do you know God's name? Some of you may be saying, "Of course I know the name of God, who doesn't?" But do you know His name from experience? Do you have the confidence that God is your God and heavenly Father? If you do, then you have a beautiful refuge during times of affliction. You have a safe haven in which to flee. You will have someone in which to trust when situations become very bad. You have the blessing that God will not forsake you no matter what your circumstances are. How can you know God's name? Verse 10 tells us to seek Him. That is our command from God. Are we seeking Him? Sing Psalter 16:4 and Psalter 17:3-4. (Maybe try the second tune today.)

## March 5

### Read Ephesians 5:15-21

Psalm 9:11-12. These verses, like the first two, speak of singing the praises of God. These, however, emphasize singing with God's people. We are blessed in our schools that we have this opportunity for our children and young people. As adults we need to make more opportunities to sing with God's people so that we speak of His great works which He has done for us. Verse 12 tells us why we must do this. Our songs are remembered by God as He avenges wrongs done by the wicked to His people. We must sing songs that portray us as humble saints declaring a majestic God. Let us make an effort to sing among God's people often. Sing Psalter 16:5 and 17:5.

## March 6

### Read Matthew 20:29-34

Psalm 9:13-14. God's mercy can be expressed as His compassion toward His people. We need that compassion for two reasons. First of all is our sins which rise up against us prevailing day by day. Secondly we need mercy because of the troubles caused by God's enemies. The Old Testament saint had the picture of the high priest pouring the blood of atonement upon the mercy seat each year. Hebrews 4 teaches us to approach the throne of grace in order to find mercy. Verse 14 tells us the reason for desiring mercy from God's enemies. We need this mercy so we can praise God by showing the joy of our salvation. Let this be our daily desire. Sing Psalter 16:6.

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## March 7

### Read Proverbs 4:14-19

Psalm 9:15-16. Here in these verses we read of the end of the wicked. Those who continue in the way of sin only have their own wickedness to look forward to. God will continue to trap them in this wickedness. This is the testimony of Scripture. Think of Cain, Esau, Ahab, and Judas. They had no hope and only became more and more ensnared in sin. What does this tell us? Do we shake our heads and thank God that we are not like these men? We better not as Romans 3 tells us that “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” If you are walking in sin, beloved people of God, flee from it to Him and ask for His guidance that you not become trapped in it. Sing Psalter 16:7.

## March 8

### Read Deuteronomy 15:7-11

Psalm 9:17-18. Verse 17 continues the thought of the previous verses. Those who do not repent from their sin go to hell! This is the clear teaching of Scripture. In verse 18 we have the poor used as a picture of the people of God. As a rule God’s people are not the rich of the world. A materially rich Christian has a great obligation before God. He cannot buy his way into heaven; he must use his wealth in the service of God. One way that we must use our financial gifts is to care for the poor in the church. They are there; the passage we read today tells that to us. Christ tells us that also. The poor is anyone who has less than we do and are in need. God cares for the poor, and He expects us to do the same. We are poor spiritually, and He gave us His only Son to die for our salvation. Are we grateful? Then let us care for the poor. Sing Psalter 16:8.

## March 9

### Read Psalm 9

Psalm 9:19-20. The Psalmist finishes this Psalm by asking God to judge the wicked. This is an imprecatory prayer. This is not popular today. We are told to love, love, love. But loving sin is hatred against God and the neighbor. Must we pray such prayers? Yes, we must. Why? First of all because they are given to us as examples in Scripture. Secondly by praying such prayers, we show that we wish God’s name to be hallowed. As we see sin around us, we must not glory in that sin, but we must not ignore it either. God’s enemies blaspheme His name. We must pray that for the glory of His name, God will punish them and give to us the salvation wrought for us by Christ on the cross. Let us do it today as we meet with the believers of God and throughout our lives. Sing Psalter 16:9.

## March 10

### Read Psalm 10

Psalm 10:1-2a. Once again we see the Psalmist crying to God for relief. He feels that God’s people who are always the poor of the land are being oppressed by the wicked. He prays that God would deliver them for His names sake. Do we make this our prayer? When we are oppressed because of our faith do we ask God for divine deliverance? Even though we do not live in the day and age when we can see God using the armies of Israel to bring vengeance, we must pray this prayer in the faith that God will deliver us. We must not rely on our strength or cunning, but rather we must throw ourselves upon God’s grace and mercy for deliverance. Sing the first stanzas of Psalter 18 & 19.

## March 11

### Read I Kings 21:1-14

Psalm 10:2b. In this passage, taken from the history of God’s people, we see a poor righteous man preyed on by a wicked queen. He was afflicted and eventually killed because he stood for his faith. He would not sell his inheritance. People of God, are we ready to make Naboth’s stand ours? Young people, will you cancel your wedding plans because your intended will not share in your faith? Business men, can you let a businesses deal fall through because to carry it out would cause you to compromise your faith? We must have the faith of Naboth in these matters and also in the matters of praying to God to stop the advance of the wicked in our lives. The wicked’s traps are crafty, but we must believe that God works all things for our salvation. Sing Psalter 18:2.

## March 12

### Read I Kings 21:15-29

Psalm 10:3-6. In the conclusion of the chapter that we began yesterday, we see God bringing justice for Naboth. No, he did not receive it in this life, but it was received nonetheless. In the verses of Psalm 10, we see the impunity of the wicked. They care not for God or His ways. They are crafty and seek to bring us down. We must pray daily for safety from such a foe. We must also realize that this safety does not always come in what we may think is the best way. Naboth’s deliverance was through death. Ours maybe through other circumstances that we have trouble understanding. Not only must we pray for deliverance, but we must also pray for the grace to accept any deliverance God has decreed for us. Sing Psalter 18:3.

## March 13

### Read James 3:5-12

Psalm 10:7-8. One of the most damaging weapons the wicked has at his disposal is the tongue. In this day and age in which language and communication is so available and so widely used, the tongue can cause much damage to the child of God. As we draw nearer and nearer to the end of time, we must realize the wicked will say things to cause the church much harm. They will use the language of the court and news media to stop the advance of the gospel. There are two lessons for us in these verses. First of all, we must recognize our enemy and pray for grace to withstand him. Secondly, we must not fall prey to this sin ourselves as we go about our daily lives. Sing Psalter 18:4.

## March 14

### Read I Peter 5:5-11

Psalm 10:9-11. In I Peter 5:8 the devil is described as a roaring lion. This is the same language used in Psalm 10 to describe our enemies in this world. Even as a lion crouches in hiding waiting for his prey, so do Satan and all his hosts which includes the wicked in this life. Lions wait for the weak to kill and so do the wicked. We must constantly be sober and vigilant in our daily lives. Young people, are you watching for the traps of Satan as you engage in entertainment? Are you looking for Satan’s traps as you choose friend? Parents, are you carrying out your baptismal vows as you help your children avoid the places lions are often hiding? Let us pray to God for such grace. Sing Psalter 18:5.

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## March 15

### Read John 17:6-19

Psalm 10:12-13. In His high priestly prayer our Savior asked His Father, who is our Father for Christ's sake, to watch over us. Christ knew the troubles that we would face. He knew the wiles of Satan personally and experientially. He knew that it would be so difficult for us that he made it part of one of the last prayers he prayed before he faced great affliction. We can and must be thankful for such care from our elder Brother. We, too, must make petition to God that He would keep us from evil. Notice that we are not taken from the world. He has placed us here for a purpose. We must live out that purpose but in the trust He will care for us and protect us from all evil. Sing Psalter 18:6 and 19:2.

## March 16

### Read II Kings 9:22-29

Psalm 10:14. Later on in the history of Israel, we see that God did see Ahab and Jezebel's treachery against Naboth. We see using Jehu as His divinely-ordained instrument that he carried out justice against wicked people who boasted that God did not see their work. What a great comfort it is to know that our all-seeing God knows all that is happening and will care for us! We must know that He sees our needs and cares for our needs in the way that is best for us. We must also know that He sees our deeds and will chastise us when we fall into sin. Hagar knew this as she fled from Sarah; we must know this as well and live our lives accordingly. Sing Psalter 18:7 and 19:3.

## March 17

### Read Revelation 19:7-16

Psalm 10:15-16. As we come to the end of this Psalm we come to the Psalmist's grand conclusion. He first repeats his plea that God will bring judgment upon the wicked. He does this, however, because he has a sure confidence in God. This confidence is based on the confession that God is King for ever! This is the confidence which must be ours as we face the difficult days which lie ahead. This will be the churches triumphant cry as it enters heaven. This is for what we look forward. No matter how dark it seems now, we know from creation that it is always darkest before the dawn. Christ will return and we will join with all the saints which have gone before us and praise God, the King, forever. Sing Psalter 18:8.

## March 18

### Read Psalm 10

Psalm 10:17-18. The concluding words of this Psalm are a continuation of the two verses we considered yesterday. For the past nine days we have been looking at this prayer of a child of God. It is a prayer that is not heard much today because the nominal Christian does not want to believe that people are enemies of God's church. But it is a prayer that we must pray and that we can pray. It has a beautiful ending. Jehovah loves righteousness. Does He see us as righteous? Yes, He does through the blood of Christ. Will he see us doing righteous works? Sing Psalter 18:9 and 19:4-5.

## March 19

### Read Psalm 11

Psalm 11:1-3. People of God, is your trust in Jehovah the I Am That I Am? Do you truly trust Him to deliver you from all evil? It

appears that in this Psalm David is once more being harassed by Satan through an enemy. Satan does that to us as well though he may use the material goods of this life or the problems of this life to cause us to flee from God's care. David asks a question in the third verse. It is a rhetorical question to which there is only one answer. We can do nothing unless God is with us. Let us make that our confidence and hope. Sing Psalter 20:1.

## March 20

### Read Hebrews 4:11-16

Psalm 11:4-5. People of God, do we live in the realization that God looks upon our deeds and judges them according to His Holy Law? These verses speak of the trying of both the wicked and the righteous. David knew that God would try those wicked who were oppressing him. This was a comfort for him. But David also knew that his life was open before the Almighty Judge of Heaven and Earth. We, too, must know and confess this daily. This should help us live a walk of gratitude before Jehovah God. Pray for the help needed to walk this way and do not despair when evil seems to get the upper hand. Our God is on His throne. Sing Psalter 20:2.

## March 21

### Read Psalm 11

Psalm 11:6-7. David concludes this short Psalm with the verses of our meditation for today. Young people, as you prepare for your activities of tonight, read these verses and ponder on their meaning for you. Verse 6 gives you no reason to gloat. Your old man of sin is described in that verse. The condemnation described there would be yours except for the grace of God. Verse seven says that our God loveth righteousness. Will He see any in you tonight? No, this righteousness is not of the flesh but because of the quickening Spirit which dwells in you. Do not quench the Spirit tonight, but rather let fruits of repentance rule your actions. Sing Psalter 20:3.

## March 22

### Read Psalm 12

Psalm 12:1-2. David looked around him and seemingly saw that there was only wicked on this earth. These wicked made themselves know with sins of the tongue. These sins caused David to cry to God for deliverance. He could see no other way out. David was concerned for the well-being of the church. Is this our concern as well? Do we make this our prayer daily? Are our ministers, elders, and deacons named in our prayers as they should be? Tomorrow we will attend the house of God. We need to stop and thank God for such a refuge in this world of lying and deceit. Let us make the house of God our care as we pray daily. Sing Psalter 21:1.

## March 23

### Read Acts 5:1-11

Psalm 12:3-4. Yesterday we began speaking about the sin spoken of in this Psalm. We discovered that the wicked use the tongue to cause much hurt to the righteous. Today's reading points out how Satan takes this sin and brings it into the church. As we attend the House of God today, we look for truth. Satan would have the lie preached. He causes men to say, "I am God," and, "I will do what I want." These sins are prevalent in the world around us. We must not make them our sins. We must not glorify this sin through our use of the music and the entertainment of this day. Television programs are

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based on these sins. Let us look for truth and not the lie. We can only do this by looking to Jehovah. Let us constantly pray for grace to do this. Sing Psalter 21:2.

## March 24

### Read Exodus 3:1-10

Psalm 12:5. Moses tried to help the oppressed Israelites by his own strength. To teach him that this was not God's way, God drove Him into the wilderness. For forty years God taught him the way of meekness and patience that was needed. Then God showed him the burning bush at Sinai. God told Moses that He had seen the plight of Israel and would deliver them. God would deliver them and not Moses. We must keep this before our consciousness daily. God will help us in all kinds of afflictions and will deliver us. He has promised this in His Word and He is faithful to His promises. Sing Psalter 21:3.

## March 25

### Read Psalm 12

Psalm 12:6-8. The Word to which we referred to yesterday is the Word of God. It is a word that is pure even as silver that has been melted and all impurities have been burned away and removed leaving only pure silver. It is the pure silver to which the word is compared. God's Word never had any impurities in it. Of this we may be sure. It is as pure as silver that has gone through purification seven times. It will be kept pure by God Himself and that Word cannot be corrupted by any generation though they strive mightily to do so. We can confidently turn to the Word of God and receive only truth. We must thank God daily for this gift. Sing Psalter 21:4.

## March 26

### Read Psalm 13

Psalm 13:1-2. Sometimes God's ways seem so mysterious to us. We suffer disease and we cannot find the cure. Or we suffer some other affliction with no end in sight. David felt this as he waited for God to give him the throne. He knew that it was his, but yet he had to live a life of much discomfort. David knew that he had to pray to God. We, too, must pray for deliverance. However, we must pray for the grace to have patience and wait upon the Lord. We know that He loves us and will care for us. His way is best; we must wait for it. Sing Psalter 22:1.

## March 27

### Read Revelation 21:10-27

Psalm 13:3-4. David continues his prayer asking for relief from those that oppress him. He asked God to lighten his eyes. This is an interesting expression. We find much the same idea in the twenty-third verse of the passage we read for today. David needed to know, as we also do, that God is our light. His glory will lighten our way in this life as well in the new heavens and the new earth where there will be no need of a sun. Our eyes are dark and clouded by the sin that is both around us and in us. We need God to make it possible to see the way that He leads us. Sing Psalter 22:2.

## March 28

### Read Psalm 13

Psalm 13:5-6. That little three letter word, but, begins today's text. David confesses that he has trusted in God's mercy and lovingkindness. And because he knows that God will deliver him, he can rejoice in the salvation afforded by God's mercy. The expression of such rejoicing by way of song. David is known as the Sweet Singer of Israel. We must following his example and sing songs of gratitude for our salvation. These songs will not be the world's music, but these songs will be those which help us to best express our thanksgiving for our salvation. Let us sing these songs often and lustily. Sing Psalter 22:3.

## March 29

### Read Psalm 14

Psalm 14:1-2. Here we have another Psalm in which David has surveyed the wicked around him and sees their evil. He does this using an anthropomorphism. Even as a king surveys the subjects of his kingdom, God evaluates those who live on this earth. His judgment is that there is none that doeth good. Paul echoes this evaluation in Romans 3 when he states that all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. By nature we are included in this all. We sin and come short of the holy God's glory daily. Only through the blood of Christ can God look on us in His mercy. We must be careful about saying that we are better than our neighbor, or as Nathan said to David; God will say to us, "Thou art the man." Sing Psalter 23:1-2.

## March 30

### Read II Timothy 3:1-17

Psalm 14:3-4. David had to deal with evil doers in Israel which did him and the cause of God much harm. Timothy had the same experience in Ephesus. If you read through the two epistles addressed to this young minister, you will see many places where Paul instructs him about this fact. This is the lot of the child of God in the world today. The wicked are all around us. They wish to do the cause of Christ much harm. We might despair that it is not worth it to follow Christ. We must take instruction from these men of faith and call upon God even in this trouble. He will send help to us and preserve us and the cause of the gospel. Make this your prayer today and everyday. Sing Psalter 23:3-4.

## March 31

### Read Psalm 14

Psalm 14:5-7. In these three verses we find three main thoughts. First we see the reason for the wicked's scorn. They hate us because God is with us. This is as it should be. If we are loved by the world, then we better know there is something wrong with our life style. Secondly David longs for the salvation that comes out of Zion. We need to long for that salvation as well. This earth is not our home and we better not wish to remain on it. Finally we know that our restoration is sure. God will come and we will rejoice and be glad. Being glad is not something that we can hope for in this vale of tears. Being glad can only come to be when we are joined with God and the Lamb in heaven. Sing Psalter 23:5-6.

# Springtime Window

by John Huizenga

The bitter cold  
hard wind whipped snow  
like mountain ranges piled high  
along the fences  
squeaked and cracked in shards  
beneath my feet.

There,  
amid the peaks and hollows  
etched by wind born flecks of snow  
I came upon a roundish hole  
that disappeared below  
‘mid feathery flakes of frost  
like lace adorned the face  
and lined the walls inside.

Whence,  
this hole enshrined  
with angel wings of frost?  
Peering down the blue lit cavern  
my wind burned cheeks could feel  
the gentle warmth of air perfumed  
and soft with skunk aroma.

Somewhere,  
there, beneath the snow,  
beneath this lifeless lunar landscape lay  
a skunk all curled and snug  
within its dry and grass-lined den  
just waiting  
waiting for that whiff  
first whiff of warm spring air.

Hope  
for spring lay curled up there  
behind that frosty springtime window  
framed by snowy shivers.  
Hope that life would come again  
when once the snow was gone.



Though  
appearing dead  
with heart rate lower  
body cooler  
breathing slower  
yet she longs for summer  
straining for the faintest signal  
of the new life to begin.

Waiting  
for the summer time.  
She's waiting for her life  
of caring for her young  
her life preparing for the winter  
sure to come.

Life,  
that frosty hole  
a springtime window to our life  
of caring for our covenant young.  
A life of knowing God in love.  
Our life preparing for the winter  
sure to come.

Though  
icy winds of death destroy  
this life our bodies bury,  
the window of God's Word reveals  
the hope of life to come.

Through  
the springtime window of His Word  
we see the life beyond  
the life of perfect cov'nant friendship  
here only begun. ❖

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*John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church in Randolph, Wisconsin and the editor of the Beacon Lights.*

## [L] - Love

## 7-Eleven?

by Tom Bergman

God is love. Our love for Him is a primary concern. Our relationship with the living God is awesome and important. But, it is very difficult. So God gave us a way to understand love. In His providential care and love, He did not place us alone in separate little pockets of the human population. He made us churches. We are a body, the body of Christ. What a great picture! Living as members of a living organism with Christ as Head is a complicated, beautiful picture. We can learn a lot about God and love for God from our life interactions with the other members, even Christ Himself.

Check out some of Paul's letters, however, and you will soon see that the church down through the ages has had trouble with this picture. It, too, is difficult. Still, the Lord in His constant care, has given us another picture.

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We are a body,  
the body of Christ.

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The human body has intricate workings which can teach us amazing things about life in the Body of Christ. It is a picture of a picture—a double whammy! Patterns of the human body teach us about the church body which, in turn, points to the lovely name of our God. “For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations” (Psalm 100:5).

Created with 11 distinct systems, this human body is a marvel. God created Adam with a heating and cooling system, muscular system, circulatory system, skeletal system, nervous system, endocrine system, digestive system, immune system, lymphatic system, respiratory system, and excretory system.

The skin is like a waterproof poncho that keeps us all in place. As part of the heating and cooling system, it

contains about two million sweat glands. To cool off, their tiny ducts can secrete almost two gallons of water in a day. Most of our hundreds of thousands of hairs come also with a muscle that contracts to make the hair “stand up” when we are cold. This helps keep us warm.

Getting under our skin, we find the muscles. The muscular system operates everything from our fingers and toes to our hearts and intestines. Combined contraction power of all the muscles would be enough to lift 25 tons. But, they don't pull at once. God designed them to work in harmony and balance with each other to perform various tasks.

Muscles would be no good if not for the strength and stability offered by the skeletal system. Muscles can perform the simple tasks and feats of strength and agility by maneuvering different segments of the bone structure. Not to be outdone, the bones showcase an astonishing building material. Not only can a cubic inch of healthy bone withstand over 2000 pounds of pressure, it can also repair itself. Evolution or the hand of God?

Likewise, the muscles cannot move a single ounce without the instruction and guidance of the nervous system. With bulging biceps, the muscles get all the attention, but nothing is performed unless a sensory organ, by sight or touch, perhaps, sends a chemical signal to the brain which then commands the muscular movement. In the nervous system headquarters, the brain continues to astound computer manufacturers today. Billions of nerve cells (complete with protective casings) manage our decisions, reason, will, emotions, imagination, speech, sight, hearing, and even remember what fragrance the other one was wearing upon the occasion of your first kiss. You can still smell it! When you do, it recalls a flood of memories that were tucked away in long-term storage in the form of chemical signals.

Partially centered in this three-pound lump of nerve fibers, we find the activity of yet another system. Glands in the brain and elsewhere in the body regulate growth



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by means of hormones. The endocrine system is vitally important, but not alone. For example, fear (nervous system) can trigger the release of the hormone adrenaline (endocrine system) into the bloodstream (circulatory system) which then releases sugars (digestive system) that are stored for just an emergency. “The works of the Lord are great!” (Psalm 111:2). And what lessons for the church on how to love and work with each other!

After the rush of adrenaline, you may be hungry. The digestive system can take care of that. Not only did the Creator design this 30-foot system, He tells us in Genesis 1:29 what to put in it. Such food that we eat is broken down by an ever-present mixture of acids and enzymes in the mouth, stomach, and intestines. As muscles send it down, the food undergoes an exothermic reaction in the digestive tract. This means that from our daily bread, we obtain life-saving heat and nutrients for the muscular system and the rest of our body.

Not only do the muscular system and other body tissues have to be fed, they must be cleaned as well. Lymph nodes are placed in a patchwork of vessels all over the body. These filter out many of the foreign particles that wriggle past the skin. The lymphatic system also produces the white-blood cells which travel the circulatory system to stave off infectious intruders.

This same bloodstream which carries the white-blood cells is dependent on yet another system. The respiratory system provides each breath of fresh air which stocks the blood with precious oxygen and whisks away the carbon dioxide. The nervous system instructs the muscular system to breath in and out so the circulatory system can receive enough supply. “Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity!” (Psalm 133:1).

When the respiratory system hands the baton to the circulatory system, the blood takes off on a marathon. Its job is to pump oxygen-rich blood through to all the tissue along the supply route. The circulatory system is similar to the postal system except that it has far more “addresses” to reach. Likewise, the circulatory system is faster, more complex, and far more efficient. At each fork in the road where blood vessels meet, the angle of intersection is precisely set by God so that energy loss due to friction is minimized. Not only so, but this is the case thousands upon thousands of times in billions of bodies around this planet. “I will praise Thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are Thy works...if I should count them, they are more in number than the sand...” (Psalm 139: 16,18).

Within the church body, this marvellous balance can be offset by a lack of love. When all is not right in our

hearts before God, the people of God encounter unnecessary work loads, stress, and obstacles. Similarly, when all is not right with the body that houses the actual, beating heart muscle, problems also arise in the midst of members. For example, the heart needs to pump blood through an additional mile of blood vessels for every two pounds of excess baggage—undue stress on the other members. How strikingly accurate is the picture!

God also graciously equipped the body to purify and protect. The excretory system serves as a waste removal facility. Working closely with the digestive and circulatory systems, the excretory system uses the specialized kidneys, bladder, and intestines to perform its thankless yet invaluable labors day in and day out. Maintenance and purification of the eleven systems is not enough. The immune system comes into play when there is a battle to be fought. Protector of the body, this fierce army will seek to destroy any bacteria or virus that got past the skin’s first line of defense. The immune system includes the spleen and thymus gland as well as its saliva, tears, and specialized fighter cells. With slick communication and open supply routes, it serves the role of protector against all antigens. Even a fetus or baby acquires fully-ranked armies from their mothers until he can develop his own active immunity.

It is amazing to see that even the immune system embraces teamwork and sharing. Yet such a sturdy defense also allows the body to go about its “simple” tasks like heartbeats (as many as two billion in a lifetime), eye blinking (a single teardrop is so potent that even when diluted in a half gallon of water, it can still destroy germs), and breathing. Like each breath of the respiratory system, let us pray for the breath of God to fill us with His love in our church-body life. “And the Lord God formed man out of the dust of the ground, and breathed into His nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). May the Lord be pleased to teach us about Himself and His love through these eleven complete systems so that we may grow in His love!

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

—Ephesians 4: 15,16

\* Author’s note: Most of the facts can be learned from a biology textbook, but this idea and some of the

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statistics were borrowed from an issue of *Creation Illustrated*. It is a relatively new magazine out of Weimar, CA and I strongly recommend it for your personal growth in the Reformed faith. ❖

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*Tom is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan.*

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## Church History

# The Church of Heelsum

by J.P. de Klerk



**T**he State-Reformed Church of Heelsum (in the Eastern part of The Netherlands) was built in the years 1517-1519. Kolonel Leonhard van Dorp (in my childhood my next-door neighbor), retired chamberlain of H.M. Queen Juliana, was so kind as to give me a picture, draw the ground plan and to dig up some particulars of its history in the files of the church.

Heelsum was first a small settlement of the manor of Doorwerth nowadays it is part of the town Renkum.

The church is built on a hill amidst the woods of the region In 1859 a second part was added and the first part restored.

To reach the front door, the churchgoers have to climb long stairs with steps of 1.25 meter long.

In an old document it says, “In the year of our Lord 1517 Squire Frederick of Voorst, Seigneur of Doorwerth, laid here in Heelsum the first stone, at Tuesday before St. Geertruiden.” And, “In the year of our Lord 1519 pastor

Willem van Kerckhoff laid the first slate here above the high altar.”

The walls have been laid of bricks of 28x13x6 centimeters. The nave of the church has walls with four vaulted arches, the corners made of tuff. The tower is on the inside 1.50x2.20 meters—very simple.

In 1580 the Reformation reached Heelsum but Seigneur Johan Schellard of Doorwerth refused to send the Roman-Catholic pastor Arnt Hendrikx away. The Reformed Classis Overveluwe protested repeatedly. The Classis Arnhem decided to send Rev. Georgius Heshusius of Renkum to Heelsum. The Seigneur of Doorwerth remained angry. The case came before the Court of Arnhem, which decided that Rev. Heshusius indeed would

be minister of the Reformed Church of Heelsum; that was in 1635.

In the meantime the maintenance of the church was neglected, but the church had no money available. In 1656 it became possible to organize restoration. The tower became higher and got another shape. The buttresses were renovated. In 1667 Duke Albrecht van Aldenburg became Seigneur of Doorwerth. He was Reformed and provided money for the maintenance of the church. During the 18th and 19th century Heelsum and Renkum had each a congregation, but worked together when a new minister had to be called.

In 1850 the church in Heelsum had a congregation of 300 members. The supervision was in the hands of the dowager Baron van Brakel and she decided to enlarge the church building. Windows of cast iron, the chancel closed off by a high screen and a new vestry with separate entry.

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In 1919 the church became property of the Society “Hendrick de Keyser” in Amsterdam, which took care of the building. During the Second World War the church became severely damaged. The Society took care of the restoration, but that work was completed by the independent congregation of Heelsum in 1952. In 1978 the

State-Reformed church got four stained glass windows made and installed, in 1993 followed by two more. ❖

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*J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from the Protestant Reformed Church in New Zealand.*

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**57th Annual Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention**

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**Rev. Carl K. Haak: What I AM DOING To Know Him**

*We're looking forward to seeing you this summer!*

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**Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church Young People's Society**

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# The Menace of Islam

by David Overway

**B**y the grace and direction of God, Paul established some of the first Christian churches in Asia Minor. Some of the letters that he wrote to these churches (at Ephesus, Colosse, and in Galatia) we have today as a part of our Holy Scriptures. This area, modern-day Turkey, which at one point in history was a land scattered with thriving Christian churches and from which Christianity spread, is now known as a country in which 98% of the residents are Muslim. The residents of Turkey are not the only ones who have been swallowed up by the menacing monster of Islam. In fact, today, approximately 900 million people world-wide are Muslims. Yet the monster is not satisfied. At the present, Islam is a steadily growing religion and it is projected that by the year 2000 there will be more Muslims in the world than those who call themselves Christians.

Because it posed as an enemy of the Church of the past and because it is still a menace today, we should understand what the religion is. The November issue of the P. R. Theological Journal quotes Bassam M. Madany as saying, "Never has the world known a more anti-Christian faith, and never has the church of Jesus Christ encountered a greater challenge to everything which is dear to its heart!" We must be knowledgeable about this our enemy that we may be prepared and armed to defend ourselves, stand against its lies in an age of religious tolerance, and warn others also to beware.

We cannot begin a study of the Islamic religion without at least a brief introduction to the man with whom it all began, the "Prophet" Muhammad. This false prophet lived approximately 600 years after Christ, and was born in Mecca near the western coast of Arabia. To dispel a fairly common misconception, we must understand that Muslims do *not* view Muhammad as a savior and do *not* worship him. They do, however, view him as a man who lived a superior and exemplar life, and one who had a

special relation to God. This special relation led to a series of visits by the angel Gabriel who recited his message to Muhammad. Muhammad, in turn, wrote down the words of these recitations in a book which became known as the Koran, or Qur'an, and which is a source of ultimate authority for all Muslims.

Soon after these visits began, Muhammad started to proclaim his message and revelation in Mecca. He was not received there, however, and so fled the city and migrated to Madina (Arabic for the Illuminated City.) This migration took place in 622 A.D. This date marks the beginning of the Muslim calendar. Within two years, Muhammad became the leader of Madina and soon after also succeeded in asserting his authority over Mecca.

Before we continue with the spread of Islam from these initial cities, it must be mentioned that this early community founded by Muhammed in Madina and Mecca plays an important role in Islamic religion even today. Muhammad's life and the community which he organized have been studied in-depth by Islamic scholars. Together, these are viewed as an important source of authority and guidance to be used alongside the authority of the Koran. The concept of an Islamic community is an integral part of the religion and is largely why so often in the news we hear about Muslims in connection with politics and often violent political protests. In fact, religion and community are so closely connected that the religion and the culture share the same name of "Islam."

Returning now to the spread of Islam from this early community at Medina and Mecca, it is interesting to note that Islam, like Christianity, is one of the few "missionary" religions in world history. However, whereas the Apostle Paul was able to witness conversions through the simple preaching of the gospel and the power of the Holy Spirit working in the hearts of the elect, Muhammad resorted to the force of arms. He began the practice of

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raiding and conquering territories in the name of the new religion and justified his militant attitude and practices by declaring it a “holy war,” or “jihad.” (The reader might recognize the term “jihad” as it has been used frequently in the past years by the News media when reporting on the Middle East.) Within a decade after Muhammad’s death, this tactic had resulted in the Muslim possession of Persia, Egypt, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Arabia. By 720 A.D. they controlled an expanse of territory from India across North Africa to Gibraltar.

Having explored the role Muhammad played in the founding, the practice, and the spread of Islam, we turn now to the basic teachings set forth in the Koran which he wrote. Some of these teachings include the belief in the Koran as the final revelation of God, a high regard for showing mercy to all, and a particular emphasis on submission to God’s will in all areas of life. That the concept of submission is so important is realized when one understands that the very word “Islam” means “submission” in Arabic, and the word “Muslim” means “one who has submitted.”

The supreme way in which one can demonstrate his submission to God is by performing the five best works, or the five pillars of Islam. These five pillars are actually often viewed as four pillars set on one. This sole pillar being the most important of all good works that a Muslim can perform. Therefore, the most fundamental good work is to bear witness to the oneness of God and the truth of the final revelation. This is done by reciting: “There is no god but God, and Muhammad is his prophet.”

The second pillar is the requirement of all Muslims to pray facing Mecca five times a day. These prayers are often memorized formal addresses to God and involve a series of standing, kneeling, and bowing. The third pillar involves giving alms to the poor. As with all of the pillars, there are qualifications to this requirement. For example, if one is poor himself then he is exempted from having to give alms. The fourth pillar is the discipline of fasting. All Muslims refrain from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk for one month each year. The fifth and final pillar is the requirement of pilgrimage. Again, there is one month every year in which all Muslims are expected to do their religious duty. During this month, if it is at all possible, a Muslim should make a pilgrimage to some holy site, preferably to Mecca and Medina.

In summary then these are the most basic deeds that all Muslims are expected to perform. The last four are done only if no other obligations are pressing. However, the first pillar, that of reciting: “There is no god but God,

and Muhammad is his prophet” is absolutely mandatory and must be recited faithfully throughout a Muslim’s life.

The most important point about all of these requirements is that Muslims believe that God judges a person based on how they have performed and have balanced out the performance of these obligations. In other words, one earns one’s salvation based on how well they have lived in submission to God’s will as revealed in the Koran. It follows, then, that Muslims feel no need for a Savior outside of themselves. Each individual is responsible for his or her own salvation. In order to escape hell and gain heaven one must simply perform enough good works done at the right time and in the right way and subsequently earn the favor of God.

This is possible because in Muslim doctrine there is no concept of the depravity of man. In other words, a person can sin (by not submitting to the will of God) but has no innate, pervasive sinfulness that needs to be atoned for. Muslims not only deny the divinity of Christ, His role as Savior, and His crucifixion, they even deny their need for Him.

In this light, it is interesting to note that some medieval Christian theologians regarded Islam as a Christian heresy rather than as a new and distinct religion. May we now and in our generations know the Scriptures well enough that we never make such a mistake. As the Islamic religion continues to spread we will very likely find ourselves coming into contact with Muslims more and more frequently. It is our duty then to be both well-versed in the Scriptures and knowledgeable about the Islamic belief system. In this way we will be able to expose the lie of Islam and bring the truth to those who walk in darkness.

Throughout medieval and modern history, Islam has stood as a powerful and hate-filled enemy of the Church of Christ and the Truth she proclaims. Even today, however, as the Church seems to grow weaker and Islam seems to gain strength, we do not fear but look the more eagerly for the Second Coming when we shall have the victory even through the very Christ that Muslims deny.



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*David is a member of First Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan.*

# Board of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies Financial Report

This report is the result of an account inspection of the federation's funds. It has been found that the funds have been kept with care and honesty. Although this report is a little tardy, it is the intent of the present Federation Board, that an annual reporting will be given not only at the Young People's Convention but also in written form in the *Beacon Lights*.

As of April 30, 1996, the Federation Board had a very large cash balance, much of which was due to funds which were left over from the past couple of conventions. A small portion of this was due the Scholarship Fund and the *Beacon Lights* for dues collected in the past year. However, the Federation Board is concerned to deal most carefully with these remaining funds. A decision was recently made to respond positively to an urgent need presented to the Federation Board by the Protestant Reformed Young People's Scholarship Fund for money because their balance was very low and the requests many. In August, the Federation Board gave \$10,000 of their funds to this need on two grounds. First, the need to increase the size of the scholarships to a figure which would be of real assistance to the recipients. And secondly, the funds in the Federation Board Fund, while not given specifically for the Scholarship Fund, were given to the general cause of assisting Protestant Reformed Young People, and what better way to do so than to help decrease the college costs of those young people pursuing a calling as a teacher in a Protestant Reformed school or as a minister in a Protestant Reformed church. Also, in the past few years, the Federation Board has had an opportunity to give financial help to Loveland Protestant Reformed Young People's Society as they annually host the Spring Retreat.

It is the conviction of the Federation Board that we are in a financial position to help a smaller congregation host a convention in the future.

The Federation Board is committed to fulfill its calling as given in its Constitution. Our goal is to guide our Young People's Societies unto the goal of stronger faith and godliness. Also, we are committed to being good stewards of the money given for the cause of God represented in the development of godly young men and women in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

## Federation Board of the Protestant Reformed Young People Annual Report for the Year Ended April 30, 1996

<b>Cash Balance as of May 1, 1995</b>	<b>\$19,000.98</b>
<b>Receipts:</b>	
Dues	3,822.20
Fundraisers	6,852.67
Pie Sale	1,750.00
Singspirations	1,452.50
Collections from Churches/Individuals	530.25
Interest Income	210.85
Received from Grandville Y.P. (convention excess)	23,160.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>37,778.47</b>
<b>Disbursements:</b>	
Scholarship Fund Payment	675.33
Beacon Lights Payment	168.84
Rent for Singspirations	675.00
Fall Retreat—Loveland	308.00
Spring Retreat—Loveland	1,000.00
For Conventions:	
Grandville Y.P.	8,898.04
South Holland Y.P.	5,000.00
<b>Total Disbursements</b>	<b>(16,725.21)</b>
<b>Cash Balance as of April 30, 1996</b>	<b><u>\$40,054.24</u></b>

# "LITTLE LIGHTS"

## What Is Pure (4)

*... let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

*Swish-sh.* My sled could race down the hill faster than anybody else's! Well, almost anybody's. I didn't even feel the wind bite my face as I slid down. What fun it was! The sun shone brightly and made the snow sparkle. It didn't make it any warmer though. It was cold!

"Hey, Philip, come over here! Let's race down this side," called Jacob.

"Okay, I'll be right there." I adjusted my hat and joined Jacob on the next hill.

"Wow, this side is steep. We'll really go fast," I said.

"Yeah, but watch out for that dip," he warned. "See the dirt on the snow? That's where they've been digging. It drops off right there."

I surveyed the slope carefully. We were sledding next to a gravel mine and I wondered if we should be so close. Jacob sensed my hesitation.

"C'mon, it'll be okay. Just make sure you stay on the pure white snow."

I knew my sled didn't steer very well. I didn't want to do it.

Jacob added, "Look, I'll forge a path and you can follow me."

"Well, I don't know—" but before I could say any more, Jacob was going headfirst down the hill on his sled.

And he was headed for the drop-off! "Jacob, look out!" I screamed.

Somehow he managed to fall off the sled before it went over the edge. The sled clanked eerily as it hit the rocks below.

When I got home, I told my parents what had happened. My mother shuddered and my dad shook his head. I explained, "Jacob was going so fast that he hardly had time to think, but when he saw the dirt on the snow, he knew he had to get off."

"Sounds like a good lesson," Dad said. "As long as you're on the pure path, you're on the right path."

I knew he was talking about sin, not snow. I hoped I wouldn't need any harder lessons than that!

\* \* \* \* \*

"Finally, brethren,...whatsoever things are pure...think on these things," Philippians 4:8. ❖

*Connie is the mother of 5 children and attends Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Walker, Michigan.*

What advice does the apostle Paul give to a young man named Timothy in I Timothy 5:22?

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# Church News

**BAPTISMS** *“He that believeth  
and is baptized shall be saved.”*

*Mark 16:16*

### DOON, IA

Blake Mitchell, son of Mr. & Mrs.  
Brent Meyer was presented for baptism.

### FATH, MI

Mr. & Mrs. Joel Mulder presented  
their daughter, Dana Lynn, for baptism.

### EDMONTON, ALBERTA

Baptism was administered to Daniel  
Patrick, son of Mr. & Mrs. Ed Huizing.

### HOLLAND, MI

The sacrament of baptism was  
administered to Sara Elizabeth, daughter  
of Mr. & Mrs. Scott Bartelds and to Karl  
Anders, son of Dr. & Mrs. Eric  
Gustafson.

### HOPE, MI

Baptism was administered to Jared  
Seth, son of Mr. & Mrs. Joel  
Minderhout and to Deanna Marie,  
daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dave Tanis.

### HUDSONVILLE, MI

The sacrament of baptism was  
administered to Mackenzie Lynn,  
daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Brad Kuiper.

### LOVELAND, CO

Mr. & Mrs. Pat Alsum presented their  
daughter, Allyson Rose, for baptism.

### SOUTHWEST, MI

Holy baptism was administered to  
Caleb Lee, son of Mr. & Mrs. Randy  
Dykstra, to Kelly Grace, daughter of Mr.  
& Mrs. Steve Kamps, and to Natalie Joy,  
daughter of Mr. & Mrs. John Ophoff.

### CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

*“...and with the mouth confes-  
sion is made unto salvation.”*

*Romans 10:10*

### GRANDVILLE, MI

Confession of faith in our Savior was  
made by Brad Butgereit, Melissa  
Corson, Sarah Hoeksema, Rebecca  
Kuiper, Lindy Lotterman, Thomas  
Spriensma and Michael Vander Kolk.

### HOLLAND, MI

Public confession of faith in our Lord  
was made by Scott Meeuwssen.

### HUDSONVILLE, MI

Anna Kamps has made public  
confession of her faith in the Lord Jesus  
Christ.

Thank -you to those of you who sent in  
bulletins this month. Please continue to  
send them in. We *welcome* more news  
from the other churches who have not yet  
sent in their bulletins. You may send your  
bulletins to:

**Melinda DeMeester**

**1171 Sunset Hills NW**

**Grand Rapids, MI 49544**

or e-mail to:

**melindad@juno.com**