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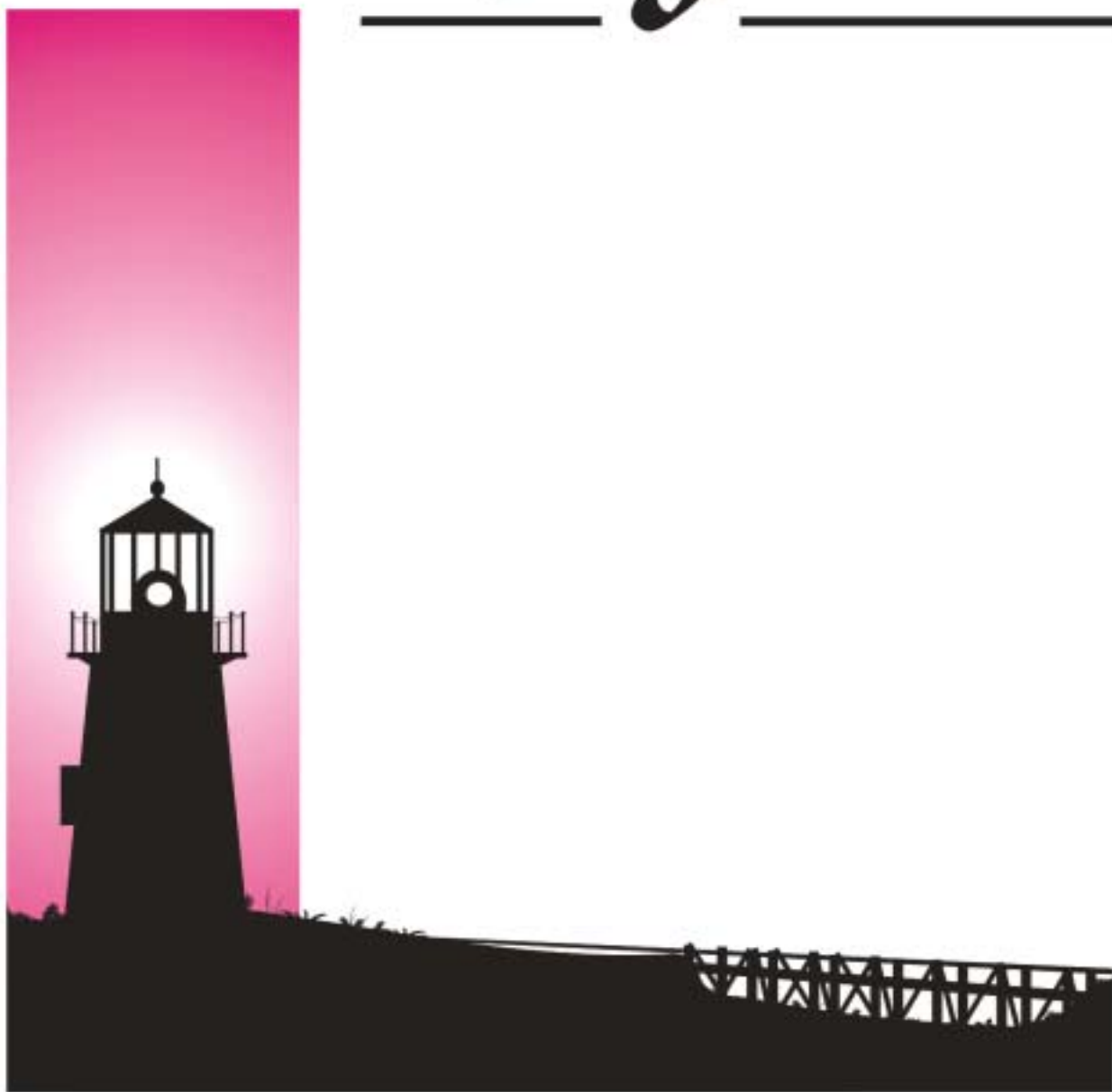


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BEACON LIGHTS

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Numbering Our Days

by Aaron J. Cleveland



“So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.” The above verse is found in Psalm 90:12, and is part of a prayer of Moses. The ninetieth Psalm is a contemplation of the frailty of man in contrast to the everlasting power of God.

It seems strange from many points of view that Moses would ask God to teach him to “number” his days. The same holds true for us, especially as young people. Why would we want to be taught to know that we are going to die? We are living now. We can begin to worry about death when we are older. What does it profit us to know and to meditate upon the shortness of our earthly life during our youth?

Yet this is Moses’ and our prayer. It is a petition which only the child of God can make by faith. Only the believer continually desires to be made aware of the true nature of his earthly life. This is in contrast to the unbeliever who does not desire to know his end and does everything in his power to push these thoughts from his mind. It is foolishness to the ungodly to entertain such humbling thoughts of one’s mortality.

The believer, however, numbers his days. What is it to number our days? Centrally, it is to know our true spiritual condition. The Catechism speaks this way in the very first Lord’s Day. In order that we “live and die happily” it is first necessary to know “how great my sins and miseries are.” This is where we must start. We must know that of ourselves we are dead in sins. We must know that we are under the curse. We must know the wrath of God against us because of our sins. Read verse 11 of Psalm 90. This is what Moses was meditating upon before he prayed to God.

When we know our true spiritual condition we will also know our physical condition. Our bodies are the bodies of death. David prayed an almost identical prayer to Moses’ in Psalm 39:4,5 where we read, “Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am. Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity.” We must know the frailty of earthly life. As we read in Genesis 3:19, we must know “for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.” We are not like the wicked who dig their roots deep into this earth in the hope that their earthly life will continue for ever (Psalm 37:35).

Because we do have an evil nature which prevents us from numbering our days, it is only by God’s teaching us that we do know our end. In fact, apart from God’s work in us, we could not and would not know our earthly end. John Calvin is careful to point this out in his explanation of Psalm 90:12. He tells of how the worldly man is adept at counting the precise distance from the center of the earth to the moon. He measures the distance between the planets. He knows very precisely many of the angles and measurements of God’s creation. Yet,

The worldly man may say,
“life is short,” but it is no more
than a hollow observation
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activity of faith as it does in
the believer.

he fails to reckon with the span of his own life. This is true because he is not taught by God to know his end. The worldly man may say, “life is short,” but it is no more than a hollow observation because it produces no activity of faith as it does in the believer. Rather, the worldly man is only hardened in his rebellion and sin when he thinks about the shortness of his earthly life.

When we pray to God to teach us to number our days, we do so in the awareness that it is only by His work that we do number our days. God uses a number of means to teach us. First, He teaches us by events in our life which He sovereignly brings to pass. He may take from us a loved one in death. A grandparent, parent, relative, or classmate is taken and we are reminded of the brevity of life. We may hear a grandparent say to us that even though they may be very old, when they look back on their life, it passed by very quickly. Secondly, God teaches us by the many afflictions that come upon us and upon others we know. Cancer, heart disease, and a thousand other diseases all serve to remind us of the frailty of the body. In a moment, a person who was the picture of health, can be reduced to lying helpless upon a bed. Thirdly, and most importantly, God teaches by His Word and Spirit. There are many references in the Psalms alone which bring to our remembrance the reality of our condition. We sing of this reality when we sing from our Psalter. We can see that this numbering is an activity of faith, a gift of God.

The numbering of our days, however, is of no use to us unless it goes along with the application of our hearts unto wisdom. We can know our end, but that knowledge of itself is worthless and even depressing, unless it produces within us a longing for wisdom. By faith, we seek wisdom. What is this wisdom? Centrally, it is Christ. Christ is wisdom as we read in Proverbs 8, and “whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord” (vs. 35). When, by faith, we seek Christ, we have life. Knowing our deadly spiritual condition, we desire life in Christ. According to the new man we do have this life within us. Further, as we read in Psalm 111:10, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments.” When we are applying our hearts after wisdom, we desire to do God’s will. In the fear of the Lord, in submission to His will, we have wisdom.

The believer who applies his heart unto wisdom lives very differently in this life from those around him. His walk is antithetically opposed to the walk of the world. The ungodly man drowns himself in the pursuit of the goods this life. Psalm 49:11-13 records for us how the worldly man lives on earth:

Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names. Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish. This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings.

The man of this world devotes all of his energies to securing for himself a name among his fellow men, he accumulates as many of this world’s goods as he can, and he tries to obtain for himself a hold on this life which he foolishly hopes cannot be broken. And when he dies, his posterity foolishly follow his lead.

In contrast, the man that finds wisdom is content with his possession. To him “it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold” (Proverbs 3:13,14). Fame and recognition, they die when we die. A nice car, closets full of clothes, elaborate vacations, gold rings, we cannot take them to heaven. In fact, we find that when we have in our possession wisdom, all of the goods of this world are harder to come by. Submission to God’s will means the denial of our own will. This

may mean that our place in this life, even as young people, may not be very outstanding by all the measures of this world. Our place will be quite lowly.

The spiritual reward which we enjoy in the numbering of our days and applying our hearts unto wisdom is great. We have all of the riches of salvation. A portion of Article 7, of the First Head of the Canons summarizes for us these riches which the elect have:

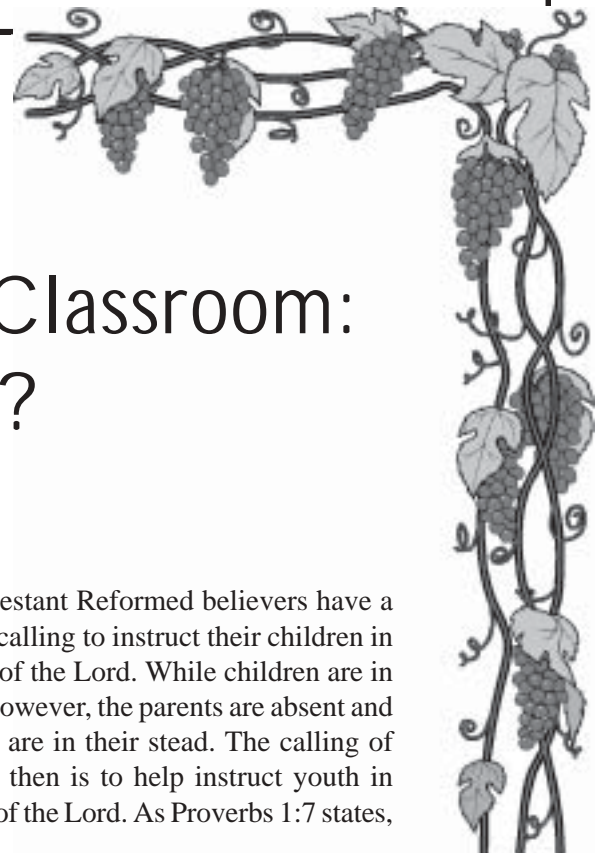
This elect number, though by nature neither better nor more deserving than others, but with them involved in one common misery, God hath decreed to give to Christ, to be saved by him, and effectually to call and draw them to his communion by his Word and Spirit, to bestow upon them true faith, justification and sanctification; and having powerfully preserved them in the fellowship of his Son, finally, to glorify them for the demonstration of his mercy, and for the praise of his glorious grace.

We must think of these blessings when we number our days on this earth. We must have these blessings before our eyes when we are tempted to go the way of those around us who are given over to the pursuit of that which passes away.

John Calvin ends his explanation of Psalm 90:12 with a couple of sentences which provide a good conclusion to our consideration of numbering our days. He writes:

True believers alone, who know the difference between this transitory state and a blessed eternity, for which they were created, know what ought to be the aim of their life. No man then can regulate his life with a settled mind, but he who, knowing the end of it, that is to say death itself, is led to consider the great purpose of man's existence in this world, that he may aspire after the prize of the heavenly calling. ❖

Fruitful Branches



Teaching Christ in the Classroom: Why and How?

by Audra Bol

Protestant Reformed teachers have a high calling to fulfill. Their classrooms are an extension of our homes where the instruction from mothers and fathers is Christ-centered. When parents send their children to Protestant Reformed schools, they are trusting that teachers will be taking their place in teaching their youth, not only in the academic sense, but in a spiritual sense as well.

Protestant Reformed believers have a distinct calling to instruct their children in the fear of the Lord. While children are in school however, the parents are absent and teachers are in their stead. The calling of teachers then is to help instruct youth in the fear of the Lord. As Proverbs 1:7 states,

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

It is so important today, as in times past, that our covenant children be taught Christ in the classroom. We believe that these children are God’s chosen, a part of a special people. We teach them Christ because we carry the title “Christian” meaning that we are followers and imitators of Christ. Everything we do is to imitate Christ and to glorify God. Ephesians 5:1-2a says, “Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us...” We teach them Christ in order that they may learn about God and what He has done for them by His work on the cross, and in His continual blessing of our lives. We teach them in order that they may truly know God, and love Him with all their heart, soul, and minds. Christ-centered instruction lays a foundation for a child’s life. A well-known verse, Proverbs 22:6, says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

Teachers teach Christ in the classroom in order to prepare students for what lies ahead on life’s pathway. Imagine life without any knowledge of Christ. What a hopeless state. Having Christ is essential to life—He is the key to survival in a dying, sinful world. Teachers teach Christ in the classroom to instill in students an unshakeable faith and hope in Christ. Children are instructed and taught so that they may be able to give a good answer of the hope that lies within them.

Christ is also taught in our classrooms because the students today are the future church. What we teach there today will have its affect tomorrow. Teaching Christ brings good hope that the church of tomorrow will hold to the same doctrinal truths that we cherish today. The Lord has been faithful in the history of the Protestant Reformed Church and much credit is due to the diligent instruction in our homes and schools.

Teachers and parents do not teach Christ merely for the sake of tradition. There is a desire to watch children grow in God’s grace. A desire to see them embrace the truths of Scripture and to live out a life of thankfulness and service to God. Reformed believers say along with the words of III John 1:4, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Teachers also teach Christ in the classroom in order that students can see how Christ applies to every subject as well as every aspect of our lives. How do teachers incorporate Christ into every subject? There are several areas where the answer is obvious, such as daily class devotions, singing from the Psalter and other spiritual

songs, and Bible class. These are areas where it is easy to see that Christ is being taught. However, what about the rest of the school day? How can teachers apply and teach Christ throughout every subject matter?

Teachers teach Christ in every subject by applying texts of Scripture to the material being studied. They can read the texts to the class and explain or have the students explain how the passage is applicable to the subject at hand. For example, in a science class learning about the anatomy of the human body one could read the passage concerning all the members of the body and how they represent the church and her members, each one having an important function. In a physical education class, one could teach about our bodies as temples of God and being good stewards of them. In a math class where students are learning how to balance a checkbook, a teacher could apply the idea of being good stewards of earthly possessions and how we must take out money to give to the cause of God’s kingdom. A government class can apply Romans 13 concerning submitting to authority. An English class can even center on Christ by studying the eloquence and literary structure of books of the Bible.

Yet another way to teach Christ in the classroom is for teachers to be an example of Him for the children to see. One of the most important things a person can do to teach a child about Christ is to *act* Christ-like. I Corinthians 16:14 says, “Let all your things be done with charity.” When teachers show love, kindness, gentleness, peace, faith, etc., it is a good example, and their students will also bear the fruits of the Spirit.

And finally, teaching Christ in the classroom is important so that these children can stand and confess with their mouths and hearts the words of Question and Answer 32 of Lord’s Day 12 in the following paragraph.

But why are thou called a Christian? Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of his anointing; so that I may confess his name, and present myself a living sacrifice of thankfulness to him: and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life: and afterwards reign with him eternally, over all creatures. ❖

Audra is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan.

Electricity Through the Spectacles of Scripture

by John Huizenga

When we use electricity we are using something that is foundational to everything earthly that God has created. Electricity is the flow of electrons. Electrons are minute particles that whiz around the nucleus of each atom like planets around the sun. These electrons have a negative charge which is attracted to the positive charge of the protons in the nucleus. This force of attraction between the positive and negative forces can be thought of as the glue that holds the atoms together.

Man first witnessed the great power of these positive and negative electrical charges when the first terrifying bolts of lightning arced across the sky and split trees and rocks during the upheaval of the Flood. God reveals His wrath against sin and wickedness in the lightning. We read in Nahum 1:6 “Who can stand before his indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.” Yet this manifestation of His power is understood by the righteous as the power to save and deliver as we read in the song of David after God delivered him from Saul. He sang, “And he sent out arrows, and scattered them; lightning, and discomfited them” (II Samuel 22:15).

Throughout most of the history of the world, man has known very little about the electrons that surround him and fill his very body. Many discoveries and inventions were made even before the time of the Flood. Many more discoveries about the elements and characteristics of this world and inventions were made since the Flood. God has created the earth and He has filled it with wonders. We read in Psalm 104:24, “O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.” Because man has fallen into sin, all these wonders that he discovers he attributes to his own wisdom and refuses to give God all the glory. In this the day of the Lord, man has discovered how to harness this great foundational power and, like never before, he has used it to develop in wickedness.

We must not forget, however, that electricity is a good gift of God. “For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (I Timothy 4:4). Though man uses it sinfully, God turns all these things to serve His purposes. It is our desire as believers to look at these wonders ourselves that we may give God the glory and use them in His service.

Let us look a bit at how electricity was discovered. As believers, when we look at the discoveries of electricity and its uses, we must put the emphasis on God making known this work of His hands rather than put the emphasis on the men making discoveries.

The Greeks at the time of Christ were some of the first to record observations of static electricity. They noticed the small blue discharges of static electricity when pieces of amber were rubbed with fur. I remember well the fascination I had with static electricity as a young boy. I would stand for hours in a pitch-dark room rubbing my pajamas in my hair and watching the light blue flashes of static.

Benjamin Franklin was born in 1706. He is best known for his experiments with kites and lightning. He came to the conclusion that the bolts of lightning in the sky were the same as little flashes of static electricity generated by friction only on a much larger scale.

In 1745, E. J. von Kleist and Pieter van Musschenbroek discovered a way to store electrical charges in something called a Leyden jar. The Leyden jar was simply a jar wrapped with a thin metal on the outside and a separate layer on the inside. The attracting positive and negative electrical charge was held apart by the glass separating the metal.

In 1800, Alessandro Volta discovered how to use chemicals to push electrons through a conductor, thus inventing one of the first batteries. This discovery of making electrons flow through a conductor in contrast to the static electricity that remained fixed until instantly

discharged led to the discovery in 1821, by Michael Faraday that electricity flowing through a wire produced a magnetic field. In that connection he also discovered that a wire moving through the magnetic field of a magnet would cause the electrons to flow in the wire, thus inventing the first generator.

Through the spectacles of Scripture, the believer sees in such a discovery a great wonder of God's creation. Move a magnet along a circular piece of metal and you can make the very glue of the creation surge and move like a river through the metal! God soon made known the usefulness and power of this amazing feature of the creation to Samuel Morse. Mr. Morse put together a long circuit of wire. On his end he put a simple switch. On the other end he wound some wire around an iron bar. When he turned on the switch the electrical current produced a magnetic field in the iron bar. The magnetic field, in turn, pulled down a pen which put marks on a piece of paper. Thus the first telegraph was invented. ("tele" is the Greek root for "far off, and "graph" is the Greek root for "writing.") Electricity had the power to enable one to write something to someone else from a distance. By 1843, Morse with some friends strung wire from Washington to Baltimore and sent the following message from the Supreme Court "What hath God wrought?" These principles of using electricity were then enhanced by Alexander Graham Bell, when he invented the telephone in 1876. By the 1890's, Thomas Edison's light bulbs were trying to chase away the night in entire cities.

The next great leap took place about 100 years ago when Wilhelm Rontgen discovered how to use electricity to produce X-rays, and Guglielmo Marconi discovered that an electrical spark produced a wave of energy that traveled through space. Since then man has quickly discovered ways to use radio waves to carry sounds and pictures almost instantaneously around the globe. The invention of the computer employs electrons today for the storage and transmission of vast amounts of information.

Today man revels in the awesome control he has over the electrons. The electron has become his servant. As we consider all that can be done with electricity, we must be mindful that God has created the electrons. He providentially upholds the properties and forces of the electron and has the power to turn the world upside-down if He wills. We must remember also that we and all that we discover are but creatures of God. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever: the Lord shall rejoice in his works" (Psalm 104:31). We also must understand that the church is the kernels of wheat and everything else in this world is the chaff which is used until the harvest for the service of the wheat kernels. We can use all the inventions of this world as we serve God on this earth, but we must remember that it will all be burned up once the harvest comes. ❖

John is a member of Randolph Protestant Reformed Church and is the editor of Beacon Lights.

Pastor Profiles

Professor Herman Hanko

edited by Kris Moelker

The son of Rev. and Mrs. Cornelius Hanko, Professor Herman Hanko was born in Hull, Iowa. Prof. Hanko lived in three different places before coming to Grand Rapids, Michigan. He lived in Hull for five years, then he and his family moved to Oak Lawn, Illinois, for ten

years. He spent three years in Manhattan, Montana, and then he moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Growing up during the Great Depression, Prof. Hanko had no hobbies. "We had no toys, no bikes, no scooters. We made our own toys and played our own games, but we had more fun than most children today.

When I started 11th grade, I had to work to earn my tuition and board, for I was living in Grand Rapids, and my parents were in Montana. From then on it was only school and work.” Prof. Hanko still does not have time for hobbies.

During his grade school years, Prof. Hanko attended Evergreen Park Christian School and Roseland Christian School. He received his high school education from Chicago Christian High, Manhattan Christian High and Grand Rapids Christian High. He then studied at Calvin College and the Protestant Reformed Theological School. He also took classes at Calvin Seminary.

Regarding the experience of peer pressure as a young person, Prof. Hanko says he and his brother and sisters were teased a lot for being preacher’s kids, but he doesn’t remember being bothered by peer pressure. “We were taught by our parents to do what is right without regard to what others say. We were taught that to be different is good, if we are different in obedience to God. If others did not like what we did, well, that was too bad about them.”

Prof. Hanko does not remember any time during his entire life when he desired to be anything else but a minister, and his memories go back to being 4 or 5 years old. During his childhood and teenage years, no one ever questioned him about his desire. When he began his seminary training, there were some people who wondered why he wanted to be a minister. Two or three ministers went to the mission field because there were no vacant churches. At the end of his first year of Seminary there were so many vacant churches that as a second year student Prof. Hanko spent 16 weeks away from school serving these congregations. Even after that, Prof. Hanko preached twice a Sunday almost every Sunday. “The Lord has His own way of doing things.”

Undoubtedly, the split was the most memorable event for Prof. Hanko to experience as a seminary student. As a professor, he can’t say that there was a particular memorable event other than moving into a new Seminary building.

On May 27, 1953, Prof. Hanko married Wilma Knoper. This was the last wedding in First Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan before the split of 1953. They have 8 children and 26 grandchildren. “That is a blessing indeed!”

During the controversy surrounding the split of 1953, Prof. Hanko was living with his family in the parsonage of First Church. He could write a whole book about it because the whole split swirled around First Church.

Prof. Hanko was ordained in 1955, and began his pastoral labors in Hope Protestant Reformed Church of Walker, Michigan. He labored at Hope until 1963, when the Lord called him to labor in Doon, Iowa. In 1965, he began his labors as a professor in the Protestant Reformed Seminary.

As a pastor and catechism teacher, Prof. Hanko really enjoyed teaching the youngest children and also teaching the young people in Essentials class.

With the exception of 1924, Prof. Hanko has memories of all the controversies we faced as churches and was actively involved in many of them that came to classis and synods. The other memories he recalls are of “God’s abiding care, great faithfulness, and infinite patience with us in our follies, stumbling, stubbornness, and sin.”

To young men considering the ministry of the Word to be their calling, Prof. Hanko would almost tell them to forget it because it’s too difficult, demanding, and dangerous if you are a faithful servant of Jesus Christ and not out to please men. “If you are a man pleaser, you are of no good to God or to man. If you want to be a faithful servant, be prepared for heartache, opposition, and just plain hard and never-ending work. If you do not want to spend yourself in the cause of the gospel, and if you are not ready to deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow Christ in the ministry, then the church is better off without you.”

Prof. Hanko says that prosperity and worldly pleasures have turned the attention of young people and adults from the life of the church. “While the church ought to be at the very center of our lives, consuming our time and abilities, the church is usually at the very periphery and we are able to give it only those fleeting spare moments in which we are not occupied in the pursuit of material possessions.

Even though some people are materialistic, Prof. Hanko is encouraged to see many young people who make the church the center of their lives. They read, study, attend meetings, labor in various causes, and do a lot of praying for the church. ❖

Kris is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, MI.

Attention!

All who are looking for a good way to become involved in the life of the church. The *Beacon Lights* could use some help. We have had a recent decline in our staff membership due to upcoming weddings, job relocations, etc. Mindy DeMeester and Beth DeVries are getting married and will no longer be able to continue their years of dedicated work on *Beacon Lights*. As mentioned in an earlier issue, Mike Feenstra needed to resign due to his commitments as a new teacher in our schools. We thank them for their work and dedication and their testimony of the great blessing they have received in doing this work.

Now we need some replacement help. We are quite flexible and are willing to arrange the necessary means to use your help wherever you may be. You need not be in Grand Rapids to help, but the secretarial work would require that you be able to attend our monthly meetings in Grand Rapids. You can call with ideas, send material in the mail, or use email. Here are some specific needs: 1) a second associate editor to assist the editor and write some editorials, 2) a secretary to record minutes at our meetings and maintain correspondence with the staff and others involved in the work of *Beacon Lights*, 3) an assistant secretary to help out the secretary, 4) rubric editors who are responsible to write, find, or solicit material for individual rubrics such as "Minding Missions," "Music," "Poetry," and material related to the Young People societies and the Federation Board. Perhaps you feel you could help out in another way. Please let us know what you may be able to do. Call me at 920 675-0231 or email me at huizenga@jefnet.com. Your prayerful consideration is much appreciated.

My Body

*My body is God's temple
Entrusted to my care;
His Holy Spirit indwells me:
God's love is shining there.*

*So I may not abuse it
Nor endanger needlessly,
But keep it pure and holy,
From all corruption free.*

*For God has bought me dearly,
The price: His only Son
Who suffered all the pangs of hell
For me, a chosen one.*

*I must control this body
Which He gives me to wield,
That I may nurture it, and strive
Unto His will to yield.*

*Alone, this task is hopeless,
Tis only by His grace
That I can even want to seek
To see my Father's face.*

*Lord, may I not be tempted
To think this body's mine;
Fill my whole being with Thy love,
I'm not my own; I'm Thine!*

Thelma Westra

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

March 1 Read Proverbs 25:15-20

People of God, do you know someone of a heavy heart? Have you tried to help them by speaking to them? Have you sent them a card, email, or letter? Have you called them up on the phone when you thought they needed some words from you? All of these are good ideas to help those who feel down. In fact all of these are something that we should be doing daily. In his wisdom, Solomon gives to us another way of helping those downhearted children of God. He has given to us His words which we can sing. What about visiting the downhearted with others and singing for them, to them, and with them? By singing the Psalms of Zion, we may bring the comfort such a person needs. Do not sing the songs of the world or the empty songs of today's church world. Sing Psalms and be assured that God will use these for His good and His glory. Sing Psalter 259:1, 2, & 6.

March 2 Read Proverbs 25:21-28

In verse 28 we read words that each of us must not only take to heart, but must also put into action. We must be temperate in our spirit. This is one of the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit that Paul enumerates in Galatians 5. If our spirit is wild and leads us into all sorts of wickedness, Satan will feast upon us and use us in his cause of bringing despite to God's name and His church. Children, you must rule your spirit. This means that you do not become angry with fellow classmates. Parents, you must help your children in this way. Young people, you must also control your spirit. Do not think that sowing wild oats is a rite of passage. It is not walking the antithetical walk demanded of us. Adults, we must also constantly work at ruling our spirits. If we do not, Satan will have his way with us to our hurt. Pray to God for the grace to rule your spirit, people of God. Sing Psalter 209:1-4.

March 3 Read Proverbs 26:1-12

This chapter is a good one to read often. In it Solomon warns against evil walks of life that even a child of God may be prone to fall into. In the first twelve verses we have warnings against folly. Folly is the walk of a person contrary to the good commands of God. Folly is the opposite of the wisdom that we were admonished to get in the earlier chapters of this book. Not only must we avoid folly and its ways, but we must also not associate with the fool. Verse four warns us about that type of action. Sometimes on our daily walk we encounter a fool. What must we do? We must not communicate with him at his level. By doing this we drag ourselves down into his folly. Stay away from fools, young people. And stay away from their foolish ways. You will not help them, but only cause yourself to be splashed with the mud of their folly. Listen to your parents when they warn you against ways of folly.

They have the experience of life to lead you into wisdom. Sing Psalter 69:1 & 4-6.

March 4 Read Proverbs 26:13-16

This section of Proverbs 26 warns us against the sin of laziness. Laziness goes right along with folly as being a chief weapon of Satan against young people. If Satan can cause a young person to do something foolish, there will be much joy in Hell. Likewise, if he can get a young person to become slothful, that young person will not have the will to glorify God, because God calls us to be diligent in all that He has called us to do. You do not want to learn your catechism; what a joy that is to Satan. You are fond of lying in bed and not doing the work that is waiting for you; Satan does not have to spend time watching you. God has called each of us to work. This work is there for the littlest saint to the oldest one. Each of us has a calling to glorify God in the station of life that we have. Let us do it! Let us do it today as we work hard listening to the preaching of the Word. As we work hard in keeping the Sabbath holy. Make Satan weep with your working and not laugh because of your idleness. Sing Psalter 407.

March 5 Read Proverbs 26:17-28

The final section of this instructive chapter concerns sins of the tongue and some of the evils that these sins bring into the church. Sins of the tongue do not have to be out and out lies. Some sins of the tongue are those in which the truth of someone's wickedness is spread to those who have no need to know of it. This speaking of the "truth" is not rooted in love. It goes against the admonition of Paul to "speak the truth in love." This is foreign in today's world. People love to tell things about their neighbors. The "did you hear about..." is so prevalent in our lives. Reread this passage of Scripture often, especially when you are tempted to be a tale bearer. Parents, instruct your children and young people in this truth daily. Children and young people are prone to fall into this sin. Help them to have pure lips. Help them to love their neighbor as themselves. Only in this way will God be glorified and His church kept in peace. Sing Psalter 343.

March 6 Read Proverbs 27: 1-7

Children and young people, I hope you take the time to reread verse two. In fact write it out, memorize it, and take it wherever you go. This verse deals with one of the sins so prevalent in today's society. And horrors of horrors, it has made its way into the church of Christ. The sin of pride has caused more trouble than many other sins put together. In fact, it is the root of many other sins. The world tells us to glorify ourselves so that we can get a better job or salary. This is not what the Word of God says. We need to fight every minute of every day against the sin of pride in our lives. Adults, we are not left off of the hook either. We teach our

children this sin. The easiest way to remove this sin is to remove the word “I” from our vocabulary except when it is used in the phrase, “I am sorry for my sin.” Let us ponder this verse, people of God, and let us bring peace into the church by removing the sin of pride far from us. Sing Psalter 403.

March 7 Read Proverbs 27:8-14

Friends! What a wonderful idea that God has given to us! What does being a friend mean? We only have to look at Christ’s love for us to learn what we must do as friends. He laid down His life for us that we might have eternal life in heaven with Him. A friend, according to Proverbs, is one that counsels his friends. This counsel is not based on any worldly philosophy but rather is founded on the Word of God. It is the sweet ointment of Scripture poured upon another. When our counsel to our friends is in accordance to the Bible, it will rejoice the heart. The friends will rejoice together and live together in true brotherly harmony even as we live in harmony with our elder brother Christ. Are you friendly? Do you bring counsel to your friend not as a busy body but as one who has the love of Christ in his heart? If you do, you gladden the heart of your friend. Sing Psalter 371.

March 8 Read Proverbs 27:15-21

We continue our consideration of Solomon’s words about friendship. In verse 17 he gives a very earthy example of what this friendship means. If a farmer or machinist wishes to sharpen a tool, he would use another material as hard as the original tool. He would not choose something softer, for then his sharpening would be in vain. Our friends must be as spiritual or more spiritual than we in order for our communications with them to bear good spiritual fruit. Of course, this assumes that we talk with our friends about spiritual matters. Is this true? What gains more of your talk: the upcoming baseball season, the fishing trip around the corner, your business dealings or the things of God’s Word? Do you spend more time in the game room or the church society room? Do you ask questions in catechism or count the minutes until you leave? Young men and women, what is your conversation about with those whom you think that you love? Is it based on the love of Christ for His church? Get sharpened people of God! You will only do that with fellow believers. Sing Psalter 350.

March 9 Read Proverbs 27:22-27

Take another look at verses 23 and 24. I believe Solomon is using picture language to speak of the same things that Jesus did in Matthew 6, when He taught the church about the riches after which they were to seek. As we look at our businesses or our farms, we must realize that they will not bring eternal riches. Solomon saw that even being the king was not a guarantee of heavenly joy. Wisdom is the principal thing, and it is wisdom that will last forever. This is what we must seek after. This is what we must teach our children to seek after. To do anything else is folly and will be destroyed by the fires of God’s wrath. Let us remember this even as we look to another Sabbath day. Sing Psalter 352.

March 10 Read Proverbs 28:1-7

In verse 5 we have another instance of an antithetical parallelism—one in which the second phrase is opposite in meaning to the first. Evil men think that the punishment never fits the crime. Are we guilty of this as well, sometimes? Children, do you think your parents or teachers are unjust when they correct you for your sins? Young people, are you at odds with authority when you are reprimanded for some misdeed? Adults, we are no better some-

times, are we? Solomon sees that those who seek the Lord understand all. They understand that it was our sin which nailed Christ to the cross. We must strive to understand all. We must know our sin, be sorry for it, and be thankful for the salvation wrought by Christ on the cross. Sing Psalter 327.

March 11 Read Proverbs 28:8-14

Verse 13 contains thoughts that are much like that of yesterday’s study. Once again we have an antithetical parallelism. Once again we are taught to consider our sin and the proper course to take when we fall into sin. We are told not to cover our sin. We must not follow David’s example as he tried to cover his sin with Bathsheba. We must not be like Adam and Eve and use the fig leaves of our own works to get away from our sins of disobedience to the most holy God. We must first of all confess our sins. We must go to those against whom we have sinned and make a confession. We do this in order that the offense between us and a brother may be removed. Sometimes this involves public confession as our sins affected the church of Christ. Secondly, we must flee away from that sin. We must not walk in it but rather walk in a life of gratitude for all that Christ has done for us. Think of these things as you listen to the Word of God being preached today. Make them part of your prayer today and every day. Sing Psalter 321.

March 12 Read Proverbs 28:15-21

As we work through the book of Proverbs we cannot but help be struck with the similarities to the book of James. In verse 21 we have another of these similarities. What gives us the right to judge men and decided who is better? What allows us to say I am not going to associate with so and so because someone else is more attractive? Now, of course we must see that the obvious evildoer must be avoided. But in the church we must not have respect of persons. Christ did not when he came to earth to save us from our sins. He took us in our blackness and made us His own. Are we going to shun someone because of the clothes that they wear or for some other frivolous reason? God forbid. Let us not have respect of persons toward those Christ has made our brothers and sisters. Sing Psalter 26.

March 13 Read Proverbs 28:22-28

As we look around us, do we see those who are in need? If we do, and remember Christ said that the poor we have always; what do we do about it? Do we help them or close our eyes to their need? It may be that they just need a ride somewhere. It may be they need a meal in a time of crisis. It may be that they need a sheet of paper to do a school assignment. Are our eyes open to such needs or are they closed? Christ’s eyes were and are open to our needs. In gratitude we must have open eyes as well. If we do not, then we are in danger of many a curse according to verse 27. Pray for the grace to have open eyes to those who are in need. Sing Psalter 305.

March 14 Read Proverbs 29:1-7

Solomon, by the way of another antithetical parallelism, reminds the young people of their calling to seek the things of God and not of Satan. He uses the words wisdom and harlot in this poetical device in order to teach this truth. Young people, are you seeking the things of God? Are your Bibles as worn out as your sports shoes, as your Game Boys, or as your CD players? Do you seek Jehovah in music or Satan? Are you fond of the world’s fun or the things of God? Seeking God is not something you watch your

parents or other adults do. Seeking God must be your one desire in this life. Seek God and see your earthly father rejoice in you. Seek the things of this world and see his grief as you wallow in sin. Sing Psalter 40.

March 15 Read Proverbs 29:8-14

Solomon was king over one of the influential nations of his day. He understood what must be true of governments and what should not characterize them. The church today usually is not in a position to rule in the world. The world does not want the things of God to characterize its government. But yet we must learn the lesson of verse 12. We must seek to have rulers that seek the truth? Why? Because we can expect the rest of his government will be truthful. This must be true in the church as well. We must have office bearers who love the truth. Only in this way will we have the peace in the church that reflects the peace that will be ours in heaven. Sing Psalter 223.

March 16 Read Proverbs 29:15-21

Parents and children, reread verses 15-17 together. A correct understanding of those verses will cause peace in the family as well as in the church. Notice that fathers and mothers are mentioned in these verses. Children are not whipping boys for the pleasure of the parent, but rather children are those who are to grow up into all wisdom and righteousness. How is this possible? Not in giving to them their heart's desire. Not in being buddy buddy with them. It is done in correcting them when they stray from Jehovah's paths. It is done by showing them the way they must go. Children, fear not the rod of reproof; fear the fires of Hell from which that rod saves your soul. This is a spiritual matter which must be followed in a true Christian family. Sing Psalter 386:1-5

March 17 Read Proverbs 29:22-27

The truths of verse 27 seem backwards in today's society. It seems that the evil person gains favor with all around them including those in the church. Just look at the pictures that might adorn the walls of our children's bedrooms. How many Sabbath breakers are found there? How many are there who would not be caught dead singing the songs of Zion or if they do twist the words to give man the credit for salvation? The evil person should be shunned by the child of God. The righteous person should be held up in honor among God's people. Do we respect our churches' elders as much as we do the nation's sports stars? Are the words of Jehovah's songs found on our lips rather than the evil rantings of the present day music stars? Let us honor those who are righteous and not those who are wicked. Sing Psalter 5.

March 18 Read Proverbs 30:1-6

In this chapter we have proverbs of another wise man—Agur. Verse 5 is one that is worth rereading. First of all, we see the infallibility of Scripture proclaimed. This is something which we must hold onto. As we seek pure food for our bodies we must seek the pure Word of God for our souls. As we would not want a tainted medicine, we would not want to apply tainted balm to our souls. Secondly, because His Word is pure, God is a shield to His people in times of trouble. We do not need to doubt that He will protect us at all times. To trust in God gives to us utmost confidence that He will care for us in all of our needs. Let us contemplate these words even as we bow the knee in worship to Him today. Sing Psalter 38.

March 19 Read Proverbs 30:7-14

Which generation is Agur pointing out in verses 11-14? Before we point the finger, we must examine ourselves. What beam must we remove before we start looking for motes in someone else's eye? Agur could be and is talking about all of us. I have heard grandfathers say that they are the worse sinners there are. Each generation must examine themselves to see how they have failed in relation to the law of God. Let us take time for self-examination. Then let us go to Him Who forgives sins and seek forgiveness in the blood of the Lamb. We must do this daily. Make this a part of your prayers today and everyday. Sing Psalter 83.

March 20 Read Proverbs 30:15-19

As Agur looks around him in God's creation he notices that there are many things which have messages for man. Some of the messages are of the negative variety as are found in verses 15-17. Others are of a more positive nature as we find in verses 18-19. Some of God's ways are so wonderful that they are past finding out. These are ordinary experiences, but yet what they picture of God is unfathomable. Look around you, people of God, and seek to find the message that He has left in His creation. Then go to His Word and seek truth. Sing Psalter 37.

March 21 Read Proverbs 30:20-23

Agur, like Solomon, recognized sin that was all around him. Not only did he recognize sin but he saw it in its most vicious light. You see that right away in verse 20 when he uses the figure of an adulterous woman. It is especially that last phrase to which we must pay attention. How many times have we said, "I have done no wickedness?" If we think this is true than we forget what Scripture says elsewhere when it states, "that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We must battle hard against sin, and instead of denying that we have sinned; we must confess our sins to the only sinless One. Sing Psalter 146.

March 22 Read Proverbs 30:24-28

Once again Agur draws our attention to that which God has created. What do we see there? Do we see evidence of evolution or evidence of the glory of God? Children and young people, do you see that one of the purposes for our study of science is to see the glory of God in nature? Do you listen as the teacher is telling you about creation? Do you study science in order that you may know more about God, the God of order? Do you pay attention on the field trip to that which is around you? Parents, do you take the time to show your children that creation is the handiwork of God? Agur saw it and praised God. Will we? Sing Psalter 15.

March 23 Read Proverbs 30:29-33

It is Friday again. Another school or work week has come to a close. Now we must stop and look back over the past week and see where we have come short of God's glory. We must see when we allowed pride to lift its ugly head in our lives and cause us to sin. We must see when we did not love God with all of our beings and deliberately trampled His commandments underfoot. We must see when we failed to love the neighbor as our selves and put our own interests ahead of our neighbors. Have we forgotten to cover our mouths when the words which were coming out of them were evil? All of this we must do. And then we must prepare ourselves for the Sabbath day so that we can confess our sins. We must also strengthen ourselves in God's Word for the next week and try to walk in a more sanctified matter. Let us do this tonight, and let us see our sins. Sing Psalter 140.

March 24 Read Proverbs 31:1-9

There are two main thoughts in this chapter. First of all we have the words that a God fearing mother taught to her son. This man Lemuel was a king. Who he was is not apparent from this chapter. Like many subjects in Scripture there are probably many theories. This mother instructs her son to not drink strong drink, because it would affect his judgment. She acknowledges the place of wine in people's lives, but it must occupy a very narrow place as indicated by verse 6. She also instructs him to use his powers in good ways. He is to help the helpless. Young people, do you listen to your mothers when they give you good counsel? Mothers, are you counseling your sons and daughters in the things of the Lord? Sing Psalter 398.

March 25 Read Zechariah 7:8-14

Let us look at verse 9 more closely. Yesterday we saw that these were the words of a God-fearing mother to her son the king. She gives to him in this verse instruction on the right way to rule and use his authority. Is this verse only for kings? Of course not, because the Bible is for all children of God in all ages. This Word is for anyone who has been given authority by God. It is true for the President of the United States, the governor of a state, the mayor of a city, and any other public office of authority that you can think of. But it is also true for the elder in the church, the father in the home, and even the older child placed in authority over the younger children. It is true of children and young people on the playground. There are many places in which this verse must be applied. We must apply it. This is God's Word to all of us. Sing Psalter 253:1-5.

March 26 Read Proverbs 31:10-16

The portion of Scripture that you read today forms the second part of this chapter. In this part of the Bible we see the description of the God-fearing woman. It starts out with the question, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" First of all, this question implies that you are looking for such a woman. Are you doing that, young men? Are girls whom you seek to date virtuous? Are you discarding those who are not and seeking to find the one that the Holy Spirit calls virtuous? Secondly, it implies that women seek to be virtuous. What about you, young women? Do you live virtuous lives? Lives that would put your worth far above rubies? This is not based on how well you do according to this world's standards. This is based on how well you do according to God's standard-His law. Look for a virtuous woman, young men; be a virtuous woman, young ladies. Sing Psalter 360.

March 27 Read Proverbs 31:17-22

Verses 11-22 continue to describe this virtuous woman. There are some that would interpret these verses as the woman's prerogative and even God-given right to work in her everyday life. But to do this would be to go against other portions of Scripture. These verses are telling us that the virtuous woman will be busy with the business that God has given to her. That business, as is summed up in verse thirty, which we will consider, is to fear the Lord. These verses tell us, I believe, that the virtuous woman must seize the opportunities God has place before her in the life of her family and serve God. She must be busy in this work daily. The description of the business woman is for our instruction as to the manner in which the virtuous woman is to occupy her time. She is to be industrious. In Solomon's day the virtuous woman may have done some or even many of these things, but she did them from

her home and with her children. Strive to be virtuous women, young ladies, and seek to serve God. Sing Psalter 25.

March 28 Read Proverbs 31:23-26

The virtuous woman not only is industrious in her daily life, but she is also marked by a propriety of speech. The historical portrayal of a woman is that of a gossip and of a person given to a sharp tongue. This is not the virtuous woman, however. Her tongue is used wisely. She speaks the truth in love, not out of envy or hatred. She knows kindness and gentleness as she speaks. Young women, are you cultivating that tongue? Older women are you helping your daughters and granddaughters to cultivate this grace? Notice the virtuous woman is not silent in this life, but she uses her tongue wisely. She is silent in the church, but she is ready to speak when necessary. Sing Psalter 333.

March 29 Read Proverbs 31:28-31

We continue with our examination of the virtuous woman. In verse 28 we find that her children and husband praise her. Is this because she is a Mother Teresa, a Joan of Arc, an Eleanor Roosevelt, or a Margaret Thatcher? The answer, of course, is no! They call her blessed because they see in her true wisdom. They see in their mother and wife someone who is blessed by God. This implies that family life is important in her home. Mother is home with the children. Mother is there when her husband needs her to be a help meet for him. They can count on her to carry out her God-given blessed calling in this life. We also see that the children and husband are God-fearing as well. They know what they want in their mother and wife. They want a virtuous woman. Sing Psalter 393.

March 30 Read Psalm 128

In verse thirty we find more about the virtuous woman. She is not one who spends a lot of time seeking to make herself beautiful. Her outward appearance is not her chief concern. She also does not try to belong to the in crowd or try to curry favor with those who are powerful in this world. The virtuous woman spends her time doing that which characterizes those who fear Jehovah. This means that her time is spent in the study of God's Word. In that Word she will find how she should appear to be pleasing unto God. Young women, is this your goal? Do you seek man's favor or do you seek to fear Jehovah? Wives and mothers, do you show your children and husbands that you fear the Lord? Young men, is this the woman that you seek to marry? The virtuous woman will be praised not just in this life but in the life to come. Sing Psalter 360.

March 31 Read Proverbs 31:25-31

With these verses we come to the end of our study of this book of Holy Scripture. It is a book full of instruction for every child of God, no matter what their age or station in life. It is a book that instructs us to get the wisdom which is the fear of the Lord. It also instructs us how to walk in wisdom's ways. We do well if we read this book at least once a year all the way through. Fathers and mothers should do this with their children often. Young people need to be instructed by the words of this book. And there is much for the older saint as well. The final verse sums up the reward of the virtuous woman. But the thoughts of this verse can be applied to all of God's people. Get wisdom, people of God, and with all thy getting get understanding. Fear Jehovah and walk in His ways. In that way you will hear the blessed "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your Lord." Sing Psalter 334.

Church Government

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the mission newsletter circulated in the UK by Covenant PRC.

One thing that has often divided the church of Jesus Christ is the whole matter of church government, particularly the whole question of independency versus denominationalism. It is with some trepidation, therefore, that we approach the subject.

We do believe that independentism is not only wrong but deadly, as far as the existence of the church is concerned. We see it as a most significant reason for the decline of the church in many places.

Independentism leaves both the members and officers of the church without recourse or help when problems arise. It therefore ignores the Word of God in Proverbs 24:6 and similar passages. It does not follow the pattern of Acts 15, and it fails to promote unity on any broader basis than the local church.

Nevertheless, faults are found on the other side also. All too often the church is run “from the top down” by committees and boards for which there is no Biblical warrant, so that neither the local church nor its members have any “say” in the church. Nor are the church’s leaders answerable to the members (or anyone) for their conduct.

This, in Presbyterian and Reformed denominations, is heirarchicalism, a kind of popery in which assemblies and committees have the kind of power in the church that only Christ should have. This, too, we abominate.

We believe the Bible gives us an answer that avoids the problems on both sides. That answer is, first, that congregations *must* join in the work Christ has given them to do for mutual help and supervision (Acts 15).

This is necessary to “keep the unity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3).

Second, the autonomy of the local church must be maintained. It is to the church, not to church assemblies or committees, that the work of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, and exercising Christian discipline belongs (Acts 13:1-4, I Cor. 5:4, 5). The authority Christ has given for these things resides in the local church. The church is not, therefore, run from the top down.

This means, too, that the assemblies must be carefully limited in their functions. As in Acts 15 they must be for mutual help and advice. When they make Biblical decisions on such matters as come to them, those decisions must be heeded (Acts 15:23-29). But they must be heeded not because some higher authority has decreed it, but rather because the *churches themselves together* have decided it in harmony with God’s Word.

Third, in the local church the offices must function according to the pattern laid down in Scripture, and all the officers of the church must be answerable to the church itself, that is, to the body of believers. With all the authority Christ has given them, they are not lords over the church, but servants of it (II Cor. 4:5, Col. 4:17).

These are the first steps at least in seeing to it that things are done decently and in good order in the church of Jesus Christ. Such good order is necessary for the safety and well-being of the church. ❖

Rev. Hanko is missionary/pastor of Covenant Protestant Reformed Church in Northern Ireland.

Reformed Education

by Prof. David Engelsma
reviewed by Mike Feenstra

Young People, most of you have had the benefit of a solid, Reformed education in our Protestant Reformed Christian Schools. Do you value that education? In a time when the wicked of this world are wrangling over the poor schools in our land, does not the presence of our own schools inspire thankfulness in your hearts? Certainly, they are a treasure that should be maintained and developed. Therefore, this book by Prof. Engelsma is heartily recommended. It is called *Reformed Education: The Christian School as Demand of the Covenant*. In this book, Prof. Engelsma succinctly explains how we are to go about running a Protestant Reformed Christian School.

In fact, one of the best features of this book is that it is short and sweet. It is a book that can be read by anyone that is zealous for promoting Christian Education. However, as a young person, you may be thinking that this is not important right now. It is important, and Prof. Engelsma is sure to include you also. On page 18 he says that “all of the covenant people should take an interest in this basic aspect of the covenant of God.”

Reformed Education was originally published in 1977 by the Federation of Protestant Reformed School Societies after Prof. Engelsma taught a “mini-course” on the same subject. Since then, it was reprinted in 1981, by our own young people’s societies. Because the book has been out of print for a long time, the 2000 reprint by the Reformed Free Publishing Association is very welcome.

Except for a thorough editing job, some added references, and a new section on home-schooling, the content of the book is the same as in the previous editions. Yet, this book is not out of date because many of the same issues dealt with in this book are still relevant.

Furthermore, the Christian School is still the demand of the covenant even as it was twenty years ago. This is the clear point that Prof. Engelsma continually makes throughout the entire book. He especially shows this in the first chapter where he explains that the basis of the Christian School is the covenant. In the covenant, we have a relationship with our God. We know that He is our God and that we are His friend-servants. Yet, this covenant extends not only to us but also to the whole creation. As Prof. Engelsma explains on page 4, “God’s covenant is cosmic. It extends to, and brings into its compass, the entire creation of God and all creatures in the creation, organically considered. This is an aspect of the covenant that is of greatest importance for Christian day school education by virtue of the fact that the Christian school gives instruction concerning the whole of creation.”

Prof. Engelsma also points out that the covenant is graciously continued in our generations. Therefore, the parents of the church are called to bring up their children in the fear of God’s name. This is the covenantal demand from God. It is for this reason that we set up schools. According to Prof. Engelsma, we are not to set up schools to try, “to get the children saved” (8). Neither must our schools, “rest on the foundation of the [postmillennial] determination to make a grand, earthly kingdom” (8). Finally, our schools must not be based on a “negative” reaction against “the evil of the state school” (8).

The author continues his treatment of how we are to run our schools by explaining the place of the Scriptures in our schools. He rightly emphasizes the unspeakable blessing that we have the freedom to teach every subject through the spectacles of the infallible and inerrant Holy Scripture. Furthermore, the value of *Reformed Educa-*

tion is that it gets down to the nitty gritty: how our teachers should use the Scriptures in our schools. Prof. Engelsma emphasizes that the Scriptures should permeate all of the subjects. Therefore, to merely have a Bible class does not comprise Christian education. In fact, Prof. Engelsma even recommends that parents should be able and willing to teach Bible to their own children:

As regards Bible as a subject, even though tradition weighs heavily against doing so, it would be in keeping with the idea of the Christian day school to drop Bible as a separate subject in the curriculum. Teaching Bible is not something that parents cannot do themselves, or ever may be unable to do themselves. It is, in fact, something that they should do themselves. It might be beneficial for parental exercise of their calling that parents knew that they, not the school, would have to perform this task. The teaching of Bible, as a distinct subject now, is not the reason for establishing Christian schools and may hinder the accomplishing of the real purpose for the school as regards Scripture. (33-34)

What is the purpose of the school as regards Scripture? Prof. Engelsma says, "Scripture must be taught thus: as the foundation, light, and center of every subject" (34). This is especially true when our teachers impart how we live in this world. This is the subject of chapter three, "Reformed Education and Culture." In this chapter, Prof. Engelsma tackles the difficult question of what our worldview and what our view of culture should be. In other words, how ought we to live as a Christian in every sphere of life? To answer this question, Prof. Engelsma warns us against the danger of building a Christian culture that is founded on common grace. Over against many in the church world who can see no way to live in this world apart from holding to common grace, we reject it because it wrongly, "compels the people of God to join in with the world in their development, to make a contribution" (47). However, in our rejection of common grace, we must not fall into the error of world-flight which, "advocates physical separation from the world, shunning normal, earthly life" (49). Rather, our Christian school should teach the antithesis between two cultures of the wicked and the righteous. As Prof. Engelsma says, "It teaches discrimination between them. It instructs the covenant child to pursue the one way and reject the other" (59). While Prof. Engelsma does not like the term "culture," he says that the Christian school is, "instrumental in producing a Reformed culture." The school does this not by helping to set up a carnal kingdom, but by teaching the children to live every day of

their lives, "in obedience to the law of God and to God's glory, using to the utmost of their power the abilities that God has given" (59).

The fourth chapter deals with the calling of the Protestant Reformed teacher. Since many of you may be contemplating teaching, I ask you to read this chapter. It is especially helpful because it summarizes what a teacher should be. Teachers should realize that they are the humble servants first of all of God Who has called them. Second, teachers must work diligently to prepare themselves academically and spiritually to be the humble servants of parents. Indeed, Prof. Engelsma calls for a unity between home and school: "The home and school must be one in mind, one in will, and above all, one in heart as to who the child is, what the required instruction and discipline are, and who God is" (78).

This brings us to the point of the last chapter: What is the aim or goal of the Christian school? To do this, Prof. Engelsma explains his goal for the Christian school. That goal is the following: "Our goal is a mature man, or woman, of God who lives in this world, in every area of life, with all his powers, as God's friend-servant, loving God and serving God in all of his earthly life with all his abilities, and who lives in the world to come as a king under Christ, ruling creation to the praise of God, His Maker and Redeemer" (84).

Lest we rely on our own strength to achieve this goal, Prof. Engelsma reminds us to place our trust in God and remember that the ultimate goal for our whole life is the glory of His Name. He states on pages 93-4, "But this is God's work. Here, Christian teachers and Christian parents rest. The covenant is God's. The covenant promise is gracious. They depend on no man. God makes covenant children. God brings them to spiritual manhood. God works in them to will and to do the life and labor of the kingdom." For all of you young people who have been brought by God to maturity through the instrumentality of our Christian schools, it is your calling to prepare yourselves to maintain these schools. The book, *Reformed Education*, will help you. I again recommend this work to anyone who is zealous for the instruction of the covenant seed. It can be purchased by writing to the RFP, 4949 Ivanrest Ave., Grandville MI 49418, USA, or by calling 616-224-1518. ❖

Mike is a member of Southwest Protestant Reformed Church in Grandville, Michigan.

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

by P. S. Kuiper
translated by Rev. Cornelius Hanko

Chapter 5 The Weaver Boys¹

Koen Splint, the rascal schoolboy, who brushed past Maarten at 1:30 in the afternoon,² had crossed the Kerkbrink at his leisure and sauntered into the Kerkstraat. He figured he had the time and it was nice weather. At 2:00 he had to be back at the looms.

He took a slice of rye bread from his sack and began to eat it with pleasure as he was walking along. Mother had actually put a scraping of lard on it, which did not happen to him every day. He had eaten the first slice earlier on the way to school. He knew it had lard on it and could not wait to eat it.

In the meantime Koen treated his eyes as well as his stomach. There was not much that escaped the rascal. He did not have much opportunity to see what was happening in the town and therefore took full advantage of the few free moments that he had.

Just as he passed the Kattensteeg a thin, young boy of about sixteen years of age appeared, carrying a winter coat over his arm.

He was Geert de Gooier, the only son of a widow. Koen knew him well, for Geert worked as “stripe weaver”³ at the same weaver’s mill as Koen’s father.

“Hi,” said Geert indifferently. “Hi,” Koen answered him with surprise. “I thought that you had to start already at 1:00.” “My mother is sick,” answered Geert sadly. “Now I have to help a bit at home, therefore I begin this noon at two o’clock.”

“Well!” shouted Koen, “do you get that hour with pay as a gift from your boss?” “Gift?” He laughed scorn-

fully. “Imagine anything like that. Especially from Egbert Peet. The fellow that would drop dead at losing a half cent. No, that hour I can nicely make up after 7:00 this evening! However I will work after 8:00, because we do not have mother’s earnings as wash woman at present.”

Koen was silent. He knew enough stories about Egbert Peet to believe his companion. He ate the last slice of rye bread, failing to see how longingly Geert eyed it.

“Do you expect snow today?” he asked with a full mouth. “What?” Geert’s voice sounded surprised. “Because you have your winter coat with you,” explained Koen. Geert colored. “I am bringing it to the pawnshop,” he mumbled. “At home we do not have a half cent, and the whole day I have had nothing to eat.” Koen felt ashamed of his foolish question. “Don’t take me wrong, Geert,” he stammered. “I won’t,” the other said good naturedly.

“It is actually only for a few hours. Tonight I receive my wages. It is Good Friday, you know.”

The pawnshop was at the corner across from the Kattensteeg, a small building in which money could be loaned upon security.

“Do you want to go along? It will take but a moment,” Geert asked his companion in a friendly manner, and out of curiosity Koen entered the little pawn shop with him. Koen stared in amazement. They stood in a poorly lighted room packed to the brim with every possible item: coats, carpets, wooden shoes, tools, even mattresses and beds.

The pawn broker soon came forward from behind the junk and with an expert wave caught the coat that Geert threw at him. “Must it hang or lie?” was his routine question. To hang up a coat like that would cost a

few cents more than when it was simply thrown down upon the big heap. Geert thought for a few seconds. "Hang," he then decided. "It is one that my father had," he added. "He was also a steady customer here," remarked the pawn broker, who in his business was not accustomed to being sensitive.

"But here is your money! May you be happy with it!"

A minute later they again stood outside. With their hands in their pockets they trudged through Kerkstraat. They crossed a small street that bore the remarkable name of "Zeedijk."⁴ About an hundred meters⁵ beyond that the Kerkstraat crossed what at that time was a wide street that bore the name of "Groest." The reason for the name was that in former times this was swamp with a small path on both sides.

This "grassy meadow" or "groest" was later dried up.

On the Groest stood a number of weaving mills, also those of Geert and Koen. From early morning into late at night one could hear the clattering of the looms.

In one of the houses on Kerkstraat stood the bakery called "De Gezonde Apotheek" (The Healthy Apothecary).

The pleasant odors of bread and cake drifted outside and caused the mouths of both weaver boys to water, especially Geert's. He suddenly stood still. "What are you going to do?" Koen asked uneasily. Geert silently looked around for a moment in all directions. "I'm going to buy bread here," he whispered softly, to the great surprise of Koen.

The shock was not without reason. Most of the weavers were strongly forbidden to buy their daily necessities from a general store in the town.

Almost every weaver boss had a small store and demanded that his employees buy their daily necessities exclusively there. They called that "forced good will."⁶ Thus a portion of the wages that were paid came back into the pockets of the bosses as additional money, especially because they raised the prices in their stores by rounding them off to the nearest dime.⁷ Few of the weavers dared to slip into one of the cheaper stores, for if he were caught or reported there was a real possibility that they might immediately lose their job, because of the "thievery of the boss."⁸ Some bosses paid their employees mainly with vouchers, which naturally could be used only in the boss' store. "Geert, don't do it, man," Koen anxiously warned him, "if Albert Peet finds out you will be without a job!" But Geert refused to listen to reason.

"What do I care about that skinflint?" he growled with scorn. "He is now standing with a cigar in his jaws spying on your father to see whether he is working hard enough. In this store I can nicely buy a loaf of bread." Once more he looked alertly around and then disappeared hastily into "The Healthy Apothecary." Koen stayed waiting outside. Inside he heard a vehement exchange of words. A few minutes later Geert came out with a red face and empty hands, whereupon he slammed the door shut.

"Did he have no more bread?" inquired Koen with curiosity. "No more bread? He had piles of it! But he will not sell to weavers. If he does, he gets all the bosses against him. Bah!" Geert spit on the ground in disgust. Now he would still have to go to the expensive store of Albert Peet.

They turned around and went up the Groest and soon reached the weaving shop of Rinus Nieuwenhuizen, where Koen worked. The boy shouted a good-bye to Geert, who barely answered, walked past the house of Nieuwenhuizen and entered the weaving shop where he worked. The boss did not answer his greeting, but only glanced at his silver watch.

Koen moved carefully between the weaving looms, careful that he did not knock over any wine glass. A few moments later he sat on his stool behind the trustworthy spindles where he worked from 8:00 to 12:00 noon, and from 2:00 until 6:00. With his right hand he turned the big wheel, while with his left hand he led the thread around the spool.

Thus he spooled hours on end, his ears picking up the racket of the weaving, the swearing and boasting of the weavers, and with his nose he picked up the floating cow hairs, the smell of wine, and the odor of the cigar smoke of the boss.

When Koen once more stood outside at six o'clock with his weeks wages of 20 pennies in his pocket, he took a deep breath of the fresh air outside.

He trudged along the Groest, dead tired but content.

On the opposite side stood the weaving shop of Elbert Peet. Koen saw him just as Elbert entered his house.⁹ At the same time the boy saw this as an opportunity to greet his father, for his father still had to work for another hour. Father was a black weaver, the highest position that could be attained in the business. Koen knew exactly at which loom his father always stood. Most of the time he worked with Lammert Vlaanderen. Lammert sent the spindle to the left, while father sent it to the right.

To his amazement Koen saw that now some one else was Lammert's companion.

Where was his father?

"Hey, there is a son of Pious Evert," Lammert Vlaanderen shouted. Koen felt deeply the bitterness in that nickname given his father. He was given the name because he did not swear or drink. Geert de Gooler appeared at the opening of the door. "Ha, Koen, your father was called home already at four o'clock." "What, he isn't sick, is he?" Koen asked in fear. A boisterous laugh filled the weaving shop. "Sick?" laughed Geert, "he is as healthy as a little fish, although he never takes a pepper-upper. I would hurry home."

Lammert Vlaanderen again made a strange remark, upon which they once more burst into loud laughter. But suddenly the laugh was silenced and Geert ran behind his loom. Elbert Peet had entered.

"Get to work, lazy thieves!" he thundered, "I'll teach you to stop working when I am not here!" Then he saw Koen in the opening of the door. "You get out of here, I have had more than enough with one pious sniveler!"

Koen saw to it that he got away. He understood for the first time somewhat of what his father had to swallow here every day.

He began to realize what was happening at home. Quickly, he put off his wooden shoes, ran without stopping through the Groest and thereupon raced to the right into the Langewind.

¹The scene changes in this chapter, and another aspect of life at the beginning of the 19th century is introduced. The reference in the title is to young boys who worked in small shops where weaving was done.

²Koen Splint was briefly mentioned, although not by name, at the end of Chapter 2. Because they came from poor families, these boys had to work in the weaving shops. They were permitted to go to school for a couple of hours during noon mealtime, if they or their parents wished them to do this. Although neither Koen nor Maarten knew it at the time, they were to become life-long friends.

³I am not certain as to the meaning of this expression. It may refer to one who was responsible for the pattern in what was being weaved on the loom.

⁴The name means "ocean dike."

⁵A meter is about 39 inches, or just over a yard.

⁶What amounted to robbery on the part of these owners was said by them to be a gesture of good will. It was, however, obligatory.

⁷This may not seem to us to be much, but we must remember that the wages were only five cents a day or less.

⁸Jobs were almost impossible to get, and those fired had no other resources at their disposal. They often starved.

⁹Most of these weaving shops were right in the house. Sometimes they were on the main floor while the family lived upstairs. ❖

Our Young Peoples' Federation

The Federation Board

by Mike Noorman

If someone asked you what the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies is, would you know how to answer? You might never have guessed that its purpose is built specifically around your lives within the church. The Executive Board of the Federation consists of ten people who work for the benefit of the Protestant Reformed Young People. This group is comprised of seven officers, a youth coordinator, and two advisors, each of whom serves a two-year term. The officers are usually members, or recently were members,

of a Young People's Society; the youth coordinator is a lay member of the Church; and the two advisors, who give council and guidance, are chosen from the ministry of our churches. These members meet together to discuss matters that pertain to the purpose of the Federation.

The Constitution of the Federation lays out three specific purposes: First, to enable all Protestant Reformed Young People's Societies to work in close unity; second, to guide these societies so they develop in faith and

doctrine, particularly by means of a Federation Publication; and third, to give united expression to our specific Protestant Reformed character. We are only able to accomplish these three purposes with the help of our almighty God who guides each and every decision we make, and continually provides for His people.

One of the major ways that the Federation is able to accomplish each of its purposes is through the publication of the *Beacon Lights*. The *Beacon Lights* staff is responsible for carrying out the publication of this magazine. The *Beacon Lights* is “a magazine designed primarily for the Protestant Reformed Young People, to give expression and application of the Protestant Reformed truth in various spheres of life, and through this means of edification to draw our young people closer in their common bond of unity”(Constitution, 12). There are over twenty-five different Young People’s Societies, and over 600 young people all believing in the same truth, which is the basis of the *Beacon Lights*. So we encourage you young people to read this magazine that is designed primarily for you. Also, read and study it because it has a purpose of “drawing our young people closer in their common bond of unity.” With that in mind, the *Beacon Lights* could very well be used by the leaders of the Young People’s Societies as a possible source of discussion material.

There are three opportunities, organized by the Federation, that give the different Young People’s Societies the chance to gather together to promote the unity that our Constitution calls for. These are Mass meetings, Singspirations, and the annual Young Peoples Convention.

One of the most meaningful activities that the Federation looks forward to every year is the annual Convention. Every year the Federation asks one of the Societies if they would like to host the largest gathering of Protestant Reformed Young People. This year’s convention is being hosted by our Protestant Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan. By accepting, Holland has taken on a gigantic task that requires months of planning, organizing, fundraising, and just plain loads of work and cooperation. However, they also have taken on a task that has a reward that far exceeds the expectations of all their hard work. They give the future church, you as young people, a time to grow spiritually, with new and old friends, creating memories and relationships that will last a lifetime.

It would be very difficult for a single society to gather together the funds necessary to host the Convention. This

is where the Churches and the Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies come in. The Federation holds each society responsible for a number of financial responsibilities.

One of these responsibilities includes the payment of dues from each member of the society. A part of these dues goes towards the Convention, a part to the Scholarship Fund, and another part to support the publication of the *Beacon Lights*. Each member, then, has a part in the financial support of the Federation activities.

The other responsibility is one that gives each society a chance to grow as a group of young people while working to raise money for the Convention, fundraisers. These fundraisers also give churches the chance to come together to support their young people.

There is another committee that is used by the Federation to carry out its work in the lives of Protestant Reformed Young People. This committee encourages continued work in the areas of the ministry and teaching in our Christian schools. The Protestant Reformed Scholarship Fund Committee has a purpose of “aid[ing] financially those who are attending or planning to attend college to prepare themselves to be either teachers or ministers in the Protestant Reformed schools and Churches” (Constitution, 8). This fund has been extremely helpful in decreasing the burden of paying for college for those seeking to go into these areas of Christian service. With your support and prayer we hope to be able to continue to support other future teachers and ministers.

This gives you a brief look at an organization that rests wholly on the guidance, love, and grace of a God that continually provides for you, His covenant children.

The Federation is only a small group of people. God has provided and will continue to provide, Lord willing, dedicated people and the abundant resources needed to continue organizations and events such as the *Beacon Lights*, the Scholarship Fund Committee, Young People’s Societies, Mass meetings, Singspirations, and Conventions.

It is always our prayer as the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young People’s Societies that God is directing our work in a way that glorifies Him by serving the future church, as well as today’s Church. ❖

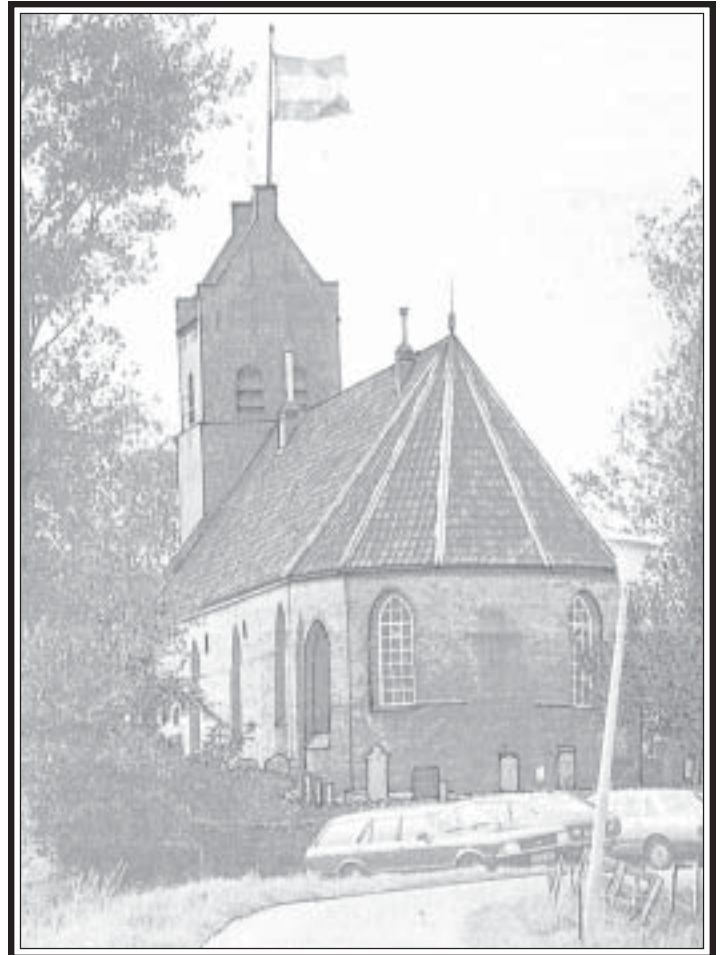
Mike is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan and is President of the Federation of Protestant Reformed Young Peoples’ Societies Board.

A Very Old Church

By J.P. de Klerk

In the village Hogebeintum, in the Dutch province of Friesland, you find this State Reformed Church, with double brick walls of thirty centimeters and a tower solid and fit for a fortification but younger than the church itself, shown from the back (used as a parking place for the cars of the members of the congregation). Over the centuries changes have been made, windows broken away or shifted. Because there was a commemoration service going on for the liberation of The Netherlands on May 5, 1945, the national colors were attached to a pole, next to the lightning conductor. The church is surrounded by numerous sepulchral monuments, headstones and tombs. ❖

J.P. de Klerk is an author and journalist from Ashherst, New Zealand.



Church News

Church News

BAPTISMS

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:

Ethan, son of Mr. & Mrs. Mike VanBemmel—Doon, IA

Jacob Benjamin, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Kamps—
Hope, MI

Sara Michelle, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. David Langerak—
Hope, MI

Brett Willem, son of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Kalsbeek—Hope, MI

Nicole Colleen and Jennifer Doreen, twin daughters of
Mr. & Mrs. Tim Zylstra—Lacombe, Canada

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

"...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."

Romans 10:10

Public profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ was made by:

David Kuiper—Byron Center, MI

Dwight Kuiper—Southeast, MI

Jordan Pipe—Southeast, MI

Marc Velthouse—Southeast, MI

Dean Poppema—Southwest, MI

Just Plain Caught

Sunlight twinkled on the water. Brandon squinted his eyes and lowered his cap without loosening his grip on his fishing pole. Here and there the surface of the lake rippled in circles from the nose or fin of a fish, but none of them seemed to be very hungry—yet.

Brandon whispered to his father, "I put the biggest, juiciest worm on my hook that I could find. I don't know why they aren't biting."

"It does seem strange," his father answered as he cast in a new line. "We don't have much time left before dark. I hope we get a nibble soon."

Brandon yawned and blinked. But look—was his bobber swaying against the ripples? Yes—it was. He clenched his fingers around his pole with all his might. And the bobber disappeared under the water!

"I got one! I got one!" he yelled as he yanked the line up.

"It's a beauty, Brandon!" his father admired his catch.

The unfortunate perch flopped on the pier while Brandon attempted to remove the hook.

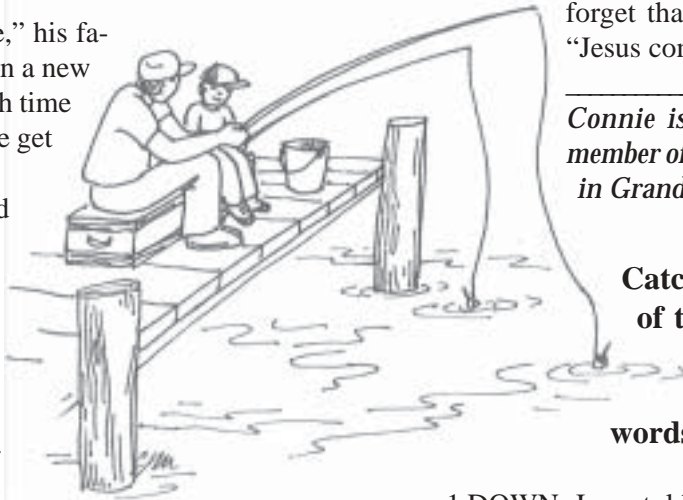
"This is like the story about Peter," Brandon said. "You know—when Jesus helped him catch all those fish. We have to be fishers of men, like Peter."

"Well," Father paused, "It's not quite like that."

"What do you mean?" Brandon asked.

"It's very true that we must be fishers of men, as Jesus said. But he didn't tell Peter, or us, to fish in *this* way—with bait and hook. He told Peter to cast his net in the deep water. Then all those fish swam into the net and were caught. It was a miracle. There was no bait. There were no offers the fish had to take. They were just plain caught—and Jesus made it happen. Fishing with a net is the Reformed way to fish."

Brandon dropped their lone catch in a bucket of water. "Should we try using a net next time we fish?" he asked.



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

... let it shine!

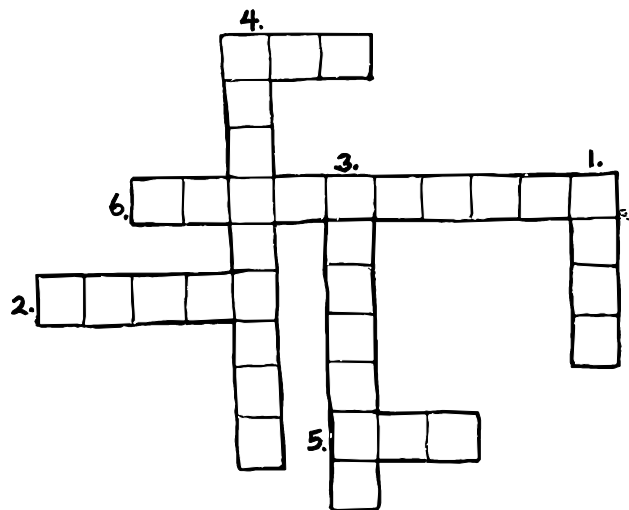
by Connie Meyer

"No," Father grinned, "for these kinds of fish we'll stick with hooks and worms. But we shouldn't forget that—" he pulled up his empty line, "Jesus commanded Peter to use a net." ❖

Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Catching a fish reminded Brandon of the story we find in Luke 5:4-11. Read those verses in the Bible to find the following words in the puzzle:

- 1 DOWN: Jesus told Simon (Peter) to "Launch out into the ____." (vs. 4)
- 2 ACROSS and 3 DOWN: They had "toiled all the ____" and had "taken ____." (vs. 5)
- 4 DOWN and 5 ACROSS: It was because of the "great ____ of fishes", that "their ____ brake." (vs. 6)
- 6 ACROSS: Because of this great miracle, Peter was "____." (vs. 9)
- 4 ACROSS: Jesus told Peter, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch ____." (vs. 10)



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Rev. Gritters- Cost of Discipleship

Rev. Spriensma- Rewards of Discipleship

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New Jersey and Covenant Protestant
Reformed Church for fellowship and
fun at Long Beach Island.

Covenant Protestant Reformed
Young People's Society