

Beacon Lights

February
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*"But when thou doest alms,
let not thy left hand know
what thy right hand doeth."*

Matthew 6:3

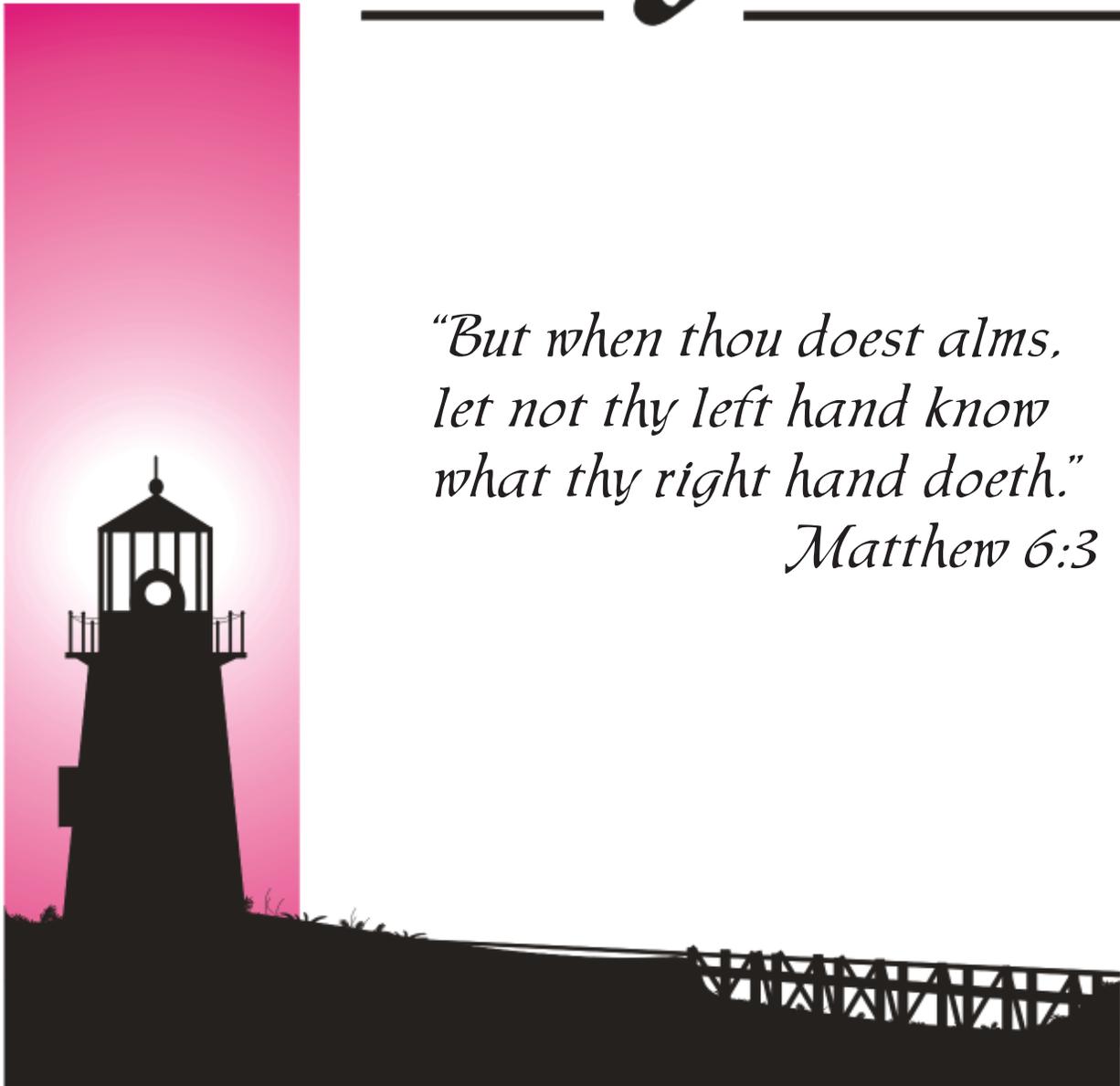


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BEACON LIGHTS

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The *Beacon Lights* encourages its readers to contact the editorial office with any questions or comments. Letters may be edited for printing. We will not publish anonymous letters, but will withhold names upon request.

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Running Low on Oil for the Beacon Light

by John Huizenga



When I first took the position of editor, I compared the position to that of a lighthouse tender. Years ago lighthouses were built high upon a rocky coast with an oil lamp on top that would throw a beam of light out over the storm tossed seas to warn ships of danger and guide them safely to the harbor. The lamp needed to be cared for 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The lamp required a plentiful supply of oil and the mirrors and lens needed constant attention. This publication also serves the purpose warning especially the youth as they deal with life in the storm tossed sea of this world and guiding them to the harbor of God's word, the church, and the Christian home.

As with every analogy, the analogy of a lighthouse goes only so far and then it fails to convey the concept it is supposed to explain. Really, the *Beacon Lights* is more like a mirror. All the readers, as ships in a storm tossed sea, receive the light of God's word from their various local churches. We are commanded in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." The *Beacon Lights* magazine is then like a mirror that gathers some of that light in the form of writing and broadcasts that light in such a way that it serves to guide, encourage, and warn others. It is a communication tower designed to give a voice to the young people and also give others in the church a channel to speak to the young people.

I have very much enjoyed my role as editor. Going back again to the analogy of a lighthouse keeper, it is like I have strained my eyes trying to peer into the darkness and every now and then I see a flash of light here and another there as readers direct their spotlight to the *Beacon Lights*. What a thrill it is to find a letter in the mail with an article for publication from someone who had received some light that they felt would be beneficial for others. More often, however, we on the *Beacon Lights* staff need to ask you to beam some light our way.

Our staff members are not always able to continue helping out in the work, and as a result our numbers have dwindled. In addition to lower staff numbers, the sparkles of light out there in the darkness have become more sporadic. That is rather discouraging, and has prompted us once again to reexamine our goals, purpose, and our way of managing *Beacon Lights*.

At this point I just want to send out the signal that we need some of your light. Due to our lack of staff and man-hours, the only option open at this point is to make a general request for articles and trust that God will so move you to shine some light our way. Some of the best articles we have gotten have been unsolicited and I am quite sure there are many more out there.

The rubrics we have established in *Beacon Lights* cover a very broad spectrum of topics. You may have read an article somewhere else or have a paper you wrote for school that will fit one of the rubrics. Let me give you a few specific article needs for the rubrics we have:

Poems—We reserve some space in each article for a poem. The topic range here is wide open. If your mind has been captured by a few lines, by all means try developing your idea into a poem and send it to

me. I can't guarantee every poem will be published, so if you have sent one before and it did not get published, don't give up. If you would rather not have your name published, I will honor your request as long as I know who it is from.

Letters—Sometimes writing a letter may be the easiest way for you to get a point across. Such a format is just fine and the variety is welcomed.

Articles especially from new writers—you do not need to be a polished and experienced writer to let your light shine. Rough edges can always be smoothed out a bit by the editor before it is published. I think most of our young readers find articles from other young writers to be the most interesting to them. We have the rubric "Fruitful Branches" for our younger writers who are looking for a place to let their light shine for the first time. It has worked out in the past that most of the articles here come from the scholarship articles or papers written for school. But if you simply have something you want to say and you are looking for a place to get it published, try it here.

Articles on nature—This is my favorite topic and I have tried to write my articles from the perspective of looking through the spectacles of Scripture. You may have a different way of approaching the topic and that is just fine. Look at some of the articles written by others in the past for some ideas.

Devotionals—Many readers are very thankful for all the work Mr. Hunter and Mr. Jonker have put into the daily devotionals. This is a great deal of work but also very rewarding. It is really too much work for two men who are already busy with their daily work and families and the only way for us to produce fresh new material is to have some others who are willing to help. Please consider helping us out if you have some time. One or two more writers would make the load much more manageable. Next month will probably be reprints from earlier devotionals.

Church Family—We are looking for articles here that deal with life within the church. Topics range from ways to become active in church life to issues dealing with the way our churches are organized. Church attendance, what to do on a date, how to deal with problems between church members, etc. are all possible topics.

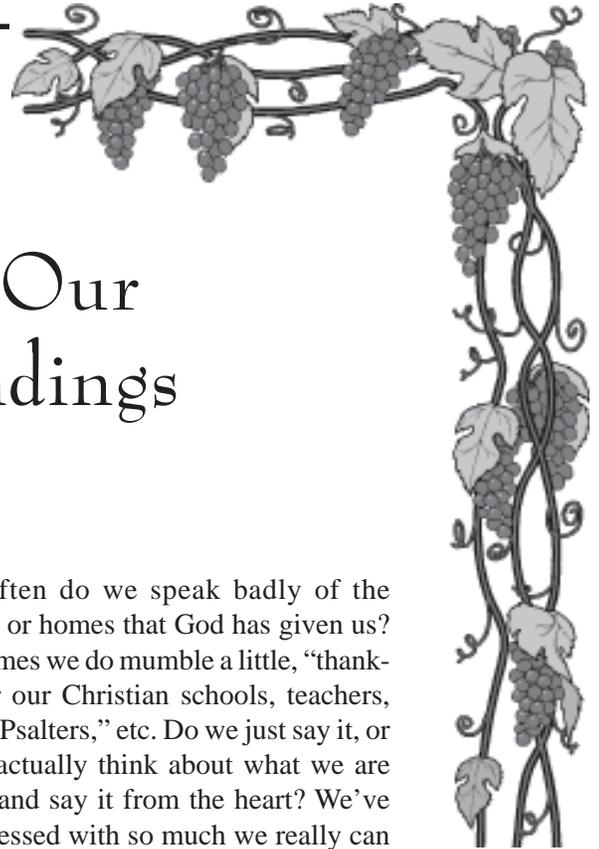
Book Reviews—If you have read a good book (or a bad book you want to warn others about) you can be certain there are others who would like to know about the book. Anyone can write a brief review that encourages others to read it, steers readers away from it, or recommends it with some reservations.

Attention all ministers. The rubric entitled "From the Pastor's Study" is a rubric set aside for ministers. Is there anything you would like to say specifically to the young people? Please consider doing some exegesis on a passage you feel applies particularly well to the young people. Or if you are encouraged by a particular young person or group and would like to write an article that encourages other young people to take notice, please put it down on paper and send it in. If you see something that really bothers you, speak up with an article in *Beacon Lights*.

We are always open for ideas and suggestions. If you have trouble writing, you are welcomed to send a note indicating some topics you would like to read about or you can direct our attention to someone who you know would be able to write.

Here is where you can send your ideas, suggestions, articles, etc. I look forward to hearing from you.

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Appreciation for Our Christian Surroundings

by Pam Westing

All of us should take a moment and think of all the wonderful things that God has blessed us with. He has given us so much in our lives that we can not even begin to name them all. All too often we forget to thank God for the little things, but we can also forget to be thankful for the major things in our lives. One of these things is the Christian atmosphere that God has put us in. Our Christian surroundings are so common, that we forget that they are a privilege and a blessing. We take for granted our Christian environment, and we must learn to continually give thanks to God for the circumstances that He has blessed us with. Furthermore, evidence of our gratitude must be shown through our actions.

Christian schools, homes, and churches are extremely important in our spiritual lives and especially in our spiritual upbringing. Our teachers and parents began to teach us the basic truths of the Bible before we even realized it. We were baptized as young infants, enrolled into Christian schools, and taught in Sunday School classes before we can even remember. We've grow up with these Christian surroundings, so we do not think twice about them.

Try to think what it would be like if we weren't blessed in the way that we are. We would not be able to begin our school days with the word of prayer. The temptations around us would be even greater than the ones we encounter in our lives today, and to whom would we look to help us overcome those temptations? The majority of people around us encourage evil thoughts and actions. We can not look to the world like we can do with so many of the people God has placed in our lives. Our Christian friends, parents, and teachers have done so much more than we realize. Sadly to say, we do not pay attention to these sorts of blessings. How many of us pay attention to our parent's or teacher's entire prayer?

How often do we speak badly of the schools or homes that God has given us? Sometimes we do mumble a little, "thank-you for our Christian schools, teachers, Bibles, Psalters," etc. Do we just say it, or do we actually think about what we are saying and say it from the heart? We've been blessed with so much we really can not even comprehend what it would be like without them.

There are those in the world and in our communities who do not know what it's like to have these same blessings. Think about what a non-Christian home could be like. The parent-child relationship that should exist would be totally distorted. The children would have no real respect for their parents because they do not have a Father in heaven upon which they can base their earthly relationship with their parents. The parents would have no real reason for discipline. "Because I said so," has no spiritual backing to it. If our parents say that, we understand that our parents have based their beliefs on the Bible. It isn't only what they think. Also, the divorce rate is unbelievably high these days. We should thank

We should thank God every day that He has blessed us with godly parents who know the importance of a marriage and know that it can not be broken by some document.

God every day that He has blessed us with godly parents who know the importance of a marriage and know that it

can not be broken by some document. What if one of your parents was an alcoholic? What if your older brother that you used look up to was now a drug addict? Things would be a lot different for us, and not for the better. These are common things in the world that we often think will never affect us. They could affect you, and we must be thankful that God has kept them from us.

This is not to say that we are totally sheltered from these types of things, and that they will never affect us, because they can. God has put some of these situations in Christian's lives. This does not make them any less of a Christian, and they may not think that God is punishing them for something. Often God puts these trials in His people's lives to strengthen their faith and the faith of those around them. If you talk to someone who has been in a situation like this, they will often say that they did not realize how good they really had it. It's true that all too often we do not realize how much we have until it's gone. We should not have to have our circumstances change in order for us to realize that God has blessed us. We must recognize right now all the blessings that God has mercifully bestowed upon us.

**all too often we do not realize
how much we have until it's
gone.**

There are also Christians with other types of situations which may seem like a burden for them. The Christians in places like Ghana and Singapore do not have the religious freedoms that we do here in the United States. Many of them grew up not knowing the Lord. They did not have the strong spiritual upbringing that most of us have had. Some are Christians themselves, but their parents or other loved ones were not converted with them. How awful would it be to be rejected by your own family for your beliefs? How sad to know that your loved ones will not be spending eternity with you in heaven!

Having a Christian family is definitely one of the blessings that we too often take for granted. In most of our communities it can be said that God has shown that He continues His covenant through the generations. Our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and other relatives are mostly Christians also. This is how the majority of us were taught to live our Christian lives. Loved ones with whom we can share the good news of Christ are

one of the greatest things God has given us here on this earth. We can look to those who are older and wiser for advice in our lives. They have been given to us as great examples of how we are to live. We are responsible to thank God for our Christian families, and we must strive to show our true thankfulness for our families and our other many blessings.

**To show our gratitude for our
parents and teachers, we
must respect them.**

How can we show that we are truly thankful for the blessings in our lives? Is it enough to thank God when we pray? Although prayer is a major part of our thankfulness, it can not be the only way to show it. Our lives must be a continuous life of praise and thanksgiving. To show our gratitude for our parents and teachers, we must respect them. If we do not exhibit respect for those in authority over us, it is like we are saying that we really do not want them to rule over us. We, in our pride, want to do whatever we want. This not only goes against the fourth commandment, but it shows no sign of thankfulness. What about thankfulness for our friends? How should we do that? One of the best ways is to be a friend ourselves, and not just when it is convenient. At all times we must be willing to help those around us and be a friend unto them. Christ never put Himself first. He was willing to sacrifice His own life for His people. Christ is our greatest friend in the world, and we must strive to follow in His actions to be a good friend. Also, just by living a godly life reveals our gratitude. If we live thoughtlessly, doing whatever we please, it is like saying to God that we really don't care that He has given us wonderful opportunities and blessings. We would rather be without them. We must not do this but show our love to God by loving everything that God has given us.

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever." This is a passage that we must take to heart. God truly is unbelievably gracious and merciful to us. He has bestowed upon us more than we will ever comprehend. His lovingkindness will never end, and neither should our praise and thanksgiving for all of our blessings. We are forever indebted to Christ for giving us the wonderful blessings here on this earth and the most blessed gift of eternal life in heaven. There is no

way in which we can try to make up for that, but we must live godly lives out of gratitude. May we no longer take these things for granted, but see how wonderful God has been to us. ❖

Pam is a member of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan and wrote this as a Church History paper for Mr. Van Uffelen at Covenant Christian High School.

Story Time

The Fourth Man

A Story from the Time of the Afscheiding

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

Chapter 15

“Floris V”¹ Brings News

Evert Splint and his family had joined the Secessionist Church in Hilversum, after having been refused aid from the deacons of their former congregation. As a result of their church move, Evert was fired from his job as weaver. But Gerard Ham, the owner of another mill and the son of a godly “minister-weaver” who had started the mill, gave him a job, though at a decrease in pay.

In the past weeks the appearance of the Gooise² acres had changed completely. The farmers had once again thoroughly fertilized their soil with sheep manure³ and, if possible, with dove manure. About the tenth of May the buckwheat was sowed, which was at that time a common commodity from which grits were prepared.⁴

Under favorable weather conditions, after about three months it was ready to be harvested and threshed. “Out of and into the sack in a hundred days” was the common saying. But night frost could bring severe damage and cause a crop failure. Therefore, raising buckwheat always involved a great risk. According to the Gooise farmers, it could be a “golden ring” or a “copper collar.”⁵

An extensive bee industry was inseparably connected with all this. Around the Gooise towns were numerous

bee enclosures, which were square fields surrounded by a wall of oak trees.

In the summer months within these oak walls were placed simple beehives made of rye straw, which were protected in these enclosures from the wind and the sheep who grazed on the moors. These bee enclosures were rented out during the summer months to the beekeepers who came from far and wide with their hives to the Gooi.

As soon as the buckwheat began to bloom, millions of bees were released among the reddish-white flowers. They took care of the pollinating. As soon as the buckwheat had stopped blooming there was nothing left for the bees but the purple-colored moor.

The first Saturday of June had arrived. In the bee enclosure of Ko Boelhouwer, which was at the end of his field, right by the moor, two boys were romping on the ground. They were Maarten and Koen.⁶ Evert Splint, who diligently worked in Ko’s small field in the little free time that he had, had once taken his son along to the field and since then a strong bond had developed between the blonde farmer’s boy and the dark weaver’s boy. This friendship meant much to both of them.

Maarten’s life was a lonely one after his father joined the Secessionists. Many of his friends more or less ignored him. Even his friend Cornelis Ravenswaay more and more associated with others. Maarten had become attached to the frail weaver’s chap even though through

Koen's constant contact with the rough atmosphere of the weaving mill he at time used some coarse language.⁷

And Koen enjoyed every minute of it. His friend unawares taught him many things of which he formerly had no knowledge whatever. That evening Maarten's father had sent them to the bee enclosure to inspect it and if necessary to fix it up. He did not attach much value to their "inspection," but on the farm they were constantly in his way.

After a few seconds Maarten had already declared with a straight face that the enclosure was in tip-top shape, which earned him a punch from Koen. And so the enclosure became the arena for a wild wrestling match in which Maarten proved to be the strongest and Koen the most agile.

Now both "inspectors" lay panting on the ground recovering from their unexpected fatigue. Soon Maarten got up. He stared at the waving buckwheat and saw Koen's father working off in the distance.

"Say," he whispered softly, "shall we act as if we are beggars and your father is Alva? Then we'll creep up on him!"⁸

"Alva, who was that?" asked Koen suspiciously, for he knew very little of the history of his fatherland.

"Well, then we'll act as if he is a Belgian officer," Maarten corrected hastily.⁹ If only he could sneak up on someone unexpectedly!

"No, thanks," Koen protested, wishing a better role for his father than being a Belgian. He looked angrily in the opposite direction, but promptly ducked down, pulling Maarten with him.

"Look who is coming, Maarten," he whispered. Maarten stared carefully through the growth of the protective wall and to his amazement saw Thijs Van Vliet, a hired servant of "Father Jacob,"¹⁰ who went to their church.

"Maarten, we'll act as if he is Floris V,"¹¹ Koen chuckled. That was one of the few stories that the weaver boys knew from their part-time attendance at school.

They were, after all, only a few kilometers away from the very spot where the count had been captured.

When the servant of the farmer innocently arrived at the entrance of the enclosure both "nobles" unexpectedly fell upon his neck. "Your adventures are over!" they shouted. "Count Floris" staggered on his feet for a moment because of his great surprise, but then he treated his attackers with such a severe kick in the rear that the dust blew from their britches. Soon they all three stood together laughing heartily.

"Why did you actually come here to our enclosure?" Maarten asked inquisitively.

"To see it for myself," the servant answered, and in the meantime he went on to state his business. "Did your father rent it out as yet?"

"Not that I know of," answered the boy with surprise. "You go and ask him."

"Good idea," mumbled Thijs, at the same time lighting up an impossibly crooked pipe.

"My nose warmer," he explained cheerfully. "This is to calm me from the scare you gave me."

Soon after, they were walking along the narrow path between the buckwheat in the direction of the farm. For safety's sake Thijs let the two boys walk in front of him. "First the dirt, then the broom," he explained. "And if you once more have something to say about my precious nose warmer, my foot will accidentally shoot forward."

When the cheerful group came to the farm they saw Maarten's father sitting on the broad, white painted seat in front of the house, enjoying the beautiful Saturday summer evening. Next to him sat grandfather and Gijsbert Haan, while Bas constantly nipped at flies.

"There is Thijs van Vliet," shouted Ko Boelhouwer cheerfully. "There is just enough room left for you, man!" The servant sat down beside them, while Maarten and Koen sat cross-legged, in Indian fashion, on the grass.

"I have a matter I want to discuss with you, Boelhouwer," Thijs began at once. Gijsbert Haan immediately arose, but the servant restrained him. "It is nothing weighty. And I also have news for you, Haan."

Having said that, he again turned himself to Boelhouwer. "Have you already rented out your bee enclosure for this year?"

"No," answered the farmer, "I took it over from the church last year, but I have had no callers as yet."

"Did you buy it from the church?" Thijs asked in surprise.

"Yes, didn't you know that recently the Hervormde Kerk rented out at least 22 bee enclosures? Yet in the last few years I have been able to purchase this one for 25 guilders."

"If they had known that you would separate from them, you would never have gotten them," Gijsbert Haan remarked grimly.

"Why do you want to know all about that?" Ko Boelhouwer asked inquisitively. "Do you want to become a bee-keeper?"

Thijs began to laugh. "No, I cannot manage that. But I have an uncle in Nieuwere-ter-Aa who is engaged

in bee-keeping. He has been looking for a bee enclosure in the Gooi for a long time.”

“Your uncle may come as soon as possible with his hives!” the farmer said happily, “for the buckwheat is ready to bloom.”

“We will surely agree on the price. Only the enclosure is small and has room for only twenty hives.”

“I already looked at it, although I found looking at it a dangerous business,” answered the servant with a wink at the boys. “Uncle Albert does not have more than 20 hives. I will write him a letter yet tonight.”

After chatting about this and that, Gijsbert Haan asked: “Did you still have something to tell us, Thijs?”

“Yes,” he answered hesitantly, after filling his “nose warmer” for the so manyeth time. “You know that lately I have been going to ... Bunschoten.”¹²

The men began to laugh knowingly. “You seem to have nothing there but a girlfriend,” grandfather winked mischievously. To their satisfaction Maarten and Koen saw him coloring.

But he manfully continued his message. “In Bunschoten a number of people have separated themselves. A congregation has not yet been organized, as is the case here, but they do hold meetings. Lately Reverend Buddingh¹³ from Zeeland has appeared in the town.”

“I have heard about him already,” Gijsbert Haan interrupted Thijs, “...a remarkable man.”

“How is that?” asked grandfather curiously.¹⁴

“Well, he still dresses like someone of the last century. He wears knee breeches, a black skirt and a bib, while his head is covered with a three-cornered hat.”

“There are more ministers like that,” the old man remarked. “However, I do like their sincerity. You take Reverend Scholte,¹⁵ he even wears a military medal on the pulpit, the medal cross of the Ten Day Campaign.¹⁶ That is not proper at all, Haan.”

“Clothing is not the most important,” answered Gijsbert Haan somewhat sharply. He would hear nothing bad about Reverend Scholte.

Ko Boelhouwer was wise to request Thijs to continue his story.

“Well, I talked to Reverend Buddingh this week. I told him about the situation here and he said he was willing to come to Hilversum to preach a week from tomorrow!”

These words were followed by a deep silence. Even the boys, who were engaged in tussling with Bas, suddenly gave full attention to the men much to the dog’s

disgust. They all had to have time to digest this important news.

Until now the enmity of the town against this small group was not as great as they had feared. It had been nothing more than an exchange of abuse. Yet how would they react to the coming of a Secession minister? And besides that, such a well-known person as Reverend Buddingh? But the men also had a keen desire to have a minister in their midst, even though he might be an objectionable figure.

Finally Gijsbert Haan stood up and looked at Thijs. “I’ll bring this matter to the consistory as soon as possible. When are you going again to Bunschoten?”

“I intend to go there Wednesday evening.”

“Before you go stop a moment at my house. You may have to take a letter along.”

At that moment Koen’s father joined the company and took notice of the important news. “For the time being do not tell anyone,” said the weaver, glad yet at the same time careful.

Gijsbert Haan nodded in agreement. “For the present it remains among us, folks!”

“Maarten and Koen, come here a moment.”

In amazement the boys stood before the elder. “You have just heard that which maybe could have better been kept from your ears, but that’s the way it is. If in the next few days you talk past your mouths, this could become dangerous for Reverend Buddingh, for your parents, for all of us. Can I depend on your silence? Give me a hand.”

Spontaneously they laid their hand upon the hand of Gijsbert Haan, impressed by the serious tone of the elder. Bas jumped up, barking around them.

“It is a good thing that you are not forced to be quiet, you noise maker!” laughed grandfather while he threw a lump of dirt at the dog.

His words broke the tension. Thereupon the visitors said farewell, even though the long summer evening had not come to an end. Suddenly each one longed to go home.

That night Koen as well as Maarten went to sleep later than usual.

Vaguely the boys suspected that important events were about to take place.

In that they were not mistaken. ❖

¹ A Dutch nobleman from the last part of the 13th century. He was so famous in Dutch history that every schoolboy learned of him and his exploits. Here the name is put in quotes for reason which will become evident in the story.

² Gooi was the name given to the farmland surrounding Hilversum. It ended at the moor, which was the rather wild and uncultivated land bordering on the sea.

³ The sheep grazed on the moors.

⁴ “Buckwheat” literally means “beechwheat,” because the grain is very similar to beechnuts. The crop, which belongs to a family of grains called “The Thousand Button” Family, is very rich in honey and can sometimes grow to the height of one meter (39.37 inches). The coat of arms of the village of Hilversum and Bussum (where the events of this book take place) has the buckwheat kernel on it since this area was famous for its buckwheat. Since the introduction of fertilizer the interest in buckwheat disappeared for a time, but it is once again in demand. It is highly recommended because of its high food value and it is a means to control high blood pressure. When buckwheat disappeared from Hilversum, the api (bee) culture also disappeared. Of the forty Hilversum groups of bee hives, there is only one left in the so-called Corvers Grove on the west border of the town. (footnote of the author.)

⁵ The harvest would be a “golden ring” if it was abundant and brought the farmers income. It was a “copper collar” if the crop failed and the farmers lost their investment in seed, for oftentimes they went into debt to buy the seed and the debt became a shackle.

⁶ We met Maarten in Chapter 1. He was a son of Ko Boelhouwer, the farmer. Koen was a son of the Evert Splint, the weaver.

⁷ Perhaps the reader will recall that the children of the poorer class often had to work in the mills. For some opportunity was given to these children to go to school during the lunch hour so that they could acquire a little education at least. This was true of Koen.

⁸ The reference here is to the Spanish Duke of Alva who was the most detested man in Netherlands because he led the Spanish forces against the Dutch armies to destroy the Reformation and keep the Netherlands under the rule of Spain. The beggars were sea-faring men who harassed Spanish shipping, raided coastal towns held by the Spaniards, and were instrumental in delivering the northern part of the Lowlands from Spanish rule. These same beggars broke the dikes and flooded the land so that they could sail overland to lift the siege of Leiden. The story is of the heroic resistance of the inhabitants of Leiden even though starvation was their lot.

⁹ In the war with Spain the northern part of the Lowlands became Protestant Netherlands, while the southern part remained Roman Catholic and became what later was called Belgium.

¹⁰ “Father Jacob” was the nickname of the deacon who had refused financial help to the Splint family. He was a member of the apostate State Church. But apparently Thijs Van Vliet went to the Secessionist Church.

¹¹ See footnote 1.

¹² A nearby town.

¹³ A Secessionist minister.

¹⁴ Grandfather, whom we met earlier, lived with the Boelhouters

¹⁵ One of the original ministers of the Secession. Scholte with his followers eventually settled in what is now Pella, Iowa.

¹⁶ A military campaign.

Frost Faces

*Frost-faces and frost-flowers,
Dingles, dales, hills and towers,
Curlicues and sprinkled bowers
Etched on transparent canvas,
Sketched on a canvas of glass.
Silently, unseen God plies
His etching tools of frost.
Silently, unseen God plies
His etching tools of trial,
And pours from His sacred vial
Acids that mark the soul,
Etching on life's little scroll,
Frost-faces and frost-flowers.*

— Simon Walburg

Watching Daily At My Gates

by Chester Hunter

February 1 Read Exodus 25:1-9

After receiving the law on Mount Sinai, Moses was given the plans for the tabernacle. God not only taught them what must be done to honor Him, He taught them how to honor Him. He starts out by instructing them in cheerful and willing giving. Giving is done with a proper heart. Israel had to learn that this was one of the ways in which they would show gratitude for what God had done and would do for them. What about us? Do we give with a willing heart? Do we make sure that the work of the church and school is well supported in a proper manner? Notice that this was God's offering according to verse 1. The same is true for us. Each offering we take belongs to God. It is His. Let us vow to give willingly each and every opportunity that we have giving as God has blessed us. Sing Psalter 207.

February 2 Read Exodus 25:10-22

On Mount Sinai God gave to Moses the plans for a building. We must understand that this was not any building. This was the building in which God would meet with His people and would commune with them. The plans were not concept drawings; these plans were exact blueprints giving every detail of the tabernacle. Today God does not give to us blueprints for the buildings in which He meets and communes to us. But in His Word He does tell us how we must worship Him. We may not take those directions for worship and change them into some manner, which suits our fancy. We must worship our God in the way that He has directed us in His Word. Let us remember this as we attend church tomorrow and each and every Lord's day. Sing Psalter 227.

February 3 Read Exodus 25:23-30

This section of the plan for the tabernacle is devoted to the table of showbread. It is fitting to meditate on this part of God's Word today. The table of showbread pictured the food that God would provide for His people. This was not just their earthly food; this was the heavenly spiritual food without which man cannot live. Today we are fed from the table of God's Word. We cannot exist spiritually without the food that we receive from the Word of God as it is expounded to us by a faithful minister. Young people and children, are you ready to be fed today? Do you see that in that sermon is the sustenance that you need for life now and in the world to come? All of God's people, are you prepared to meet God in

church this morning and evening? Let us be ready to receive the Word of Life as we hear it today. Sing Psalter 42.

February 4 Read Exodus 25:31-40

In the Holy Place of the tabernacle were found three articles of furniture. It contained the altar of incense, the table of showbread, and the golden candlestick. The candlestick is the subject of today's reading. A candlestick gives light to the room in which it is placed. This candlestick was special because of the significance that it held. First of all this candlestick was made to burn all night without being attended to. The priest would fill it with oil and light it during the time of the evening sacrifice. Then it would light up the holy place through the long night. The night is a picture of our life in this world of sin. The light is the picture of Christ lighting our world through the operation of the Holy Spirit pictured in the oil. The seven lights were a picture of the blessed covenant of grace which God has established with His people. Today we need no candlestick to picture for us Christ's light. We can find that in the Holy Scriptures. In Heaven we will need no external light to light our way as Christ will shine and there will be no night there. Let us consider all the pictures of the Old Testament and see how they apply to us. Sing Psalter 334.

February 5 Read Exodus 26:1-6

"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness" are the words Psalm 29:2 and other passages of Scripture. Israel was reminded of that beauty every time they saw the building of the tabernacle. As the craftsmen put it together they saw that they were making a structure dedicated to worshipping the Lord in His beauty. Do we see the beauty of holiness in our worship? No, I do not mean the physical beauty of our places of worship. We know that the church has often met in buildings that were not physically attractive but the beauty of holiness was evident during the worship service. What about us? Is the beauty of God's holiness evident in our worship? This is something we must strive for in all our worship whether it be in church, at home, at school, or wherever we bow the knee before the holy God. Sing Psalter 76.

February 6 Read Exodus 26:7-14

Even though the tabernacle was the house of God, it needed to be protected from the elements. That is the meaning of today's reading. This tabernacle had to last during the forty-

year journey through the wilderness. This shows to us that the every day concerns including those of worship must be cared for. Fathers, as you earn the daily bread for the family, do you see this as your calling before God? If you perform manual labor do you see each hammer blow or shovel thrust as God's work? Those of you who spend long hours at the computer, is each keystroke done with God in mind? Children and young people, what is your attitude concerning your schoolwork? Do you look at it as drudgery or God's calling for you? Let us see that what may seem as ordinary matters to us matter to God. Sing Psalter 407

February 7 Read Exodus 26:15-30

It is to the last verse of the reading that we want to consider today. In the middle of the plans, God stops and reminds Moses to construct the tabernacle according to the plans which He gave him on Sinai. There were to be no deviations to that plan. The builders could not come up with a "better idea." They were not to "cut corners" in order to save money. This is our calling today as well. We must live our lives and worship our God as He has commanded us. We must not deviate from His plans in any way. Our desires and wishes must be in subjection to His most holy will. This is hard for us to do. Satan works within each one of us to go our own way and not the way of Jehovah. As we bow our heads in prayer, let us pray for the strength and grace to carry out the way of Jehovah in our lives. Sing Psalter 383.

February 8 Read Exodus 26:31-37

After giving the instructions for the Holy Place, God now gives to Moses instructions for the Most Holy Place. In this place God would dwell with His people through the Shechinah Cloud and the mercy seat. Once a year the high priest would enter to commune with God by use of the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. The veil that is described in verse 33 was torn asunder by Christ's death on the cross. We now enter into fellowship with God through our high priest the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us approach the throne of grace boldly every day. This is not something done only on Sunday, but this is to be done each and every day of our lives. Israel of old needed types and shadows. We are blessed with the reality shown by those types. Sing Psalter 374.

February 9 Read Exodus 27:1-8

Now our attention is turned to the court of the tabernacle. It was in this area that the congregation of Israel could observe what was being carried out. Only the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place. Only the priests would enter the Holy Place. God's people would bring their sacrifices to this court. The primary object was the brazen altar. On this altar were burned the sacrifices as ordained by God. Here thousands upon thousands of animals gave their lives as pictures of the one sacrifice accomplished by Christ upon the cross. Again we must know that Israel only had the types to point them to Christ. We have the reality accomplished by Christ. Are we thankful for His sacrifice for us? Are we thankful for

God's sacrifice of His son for our lives? Let us live a life of gratitude as instructed in our Heidelberg Catechism. Sing Psalter 109.

February 10 Read Exodus 27:9-19

Here we have the directions for the curtains which surrounded the court of Jehovah's tabernacle. These curtains served several purposes. First of all they shut out from the worshippers all distractions of the world around them. We do this in prayer as we close our eyes and bow our heads before God. Secondly, they shut out the world from the worship of Jehovah. Jehovah's worship is only for the people of God not for the whole world. Thirdly, it was a sign that the worship of Jehovah was holy. For the most part the curtains were pure white signifying God's holiness. Finally, the curtain signified the antithesis between the church and the world. We today must have a "curtain" around us as we worship Jehovah. Sing Psalter 321.

February 11 Read I Cor. 16:1-7 and Exodus 27:20-21

We come to the end of the instructions about the tabernacle given in this place. In the final two verses we see instructions about the oil used to burn in the candlestick. The church had to bring an offering of this oil in order that the priest could supply the lamp. This was not a once in a lifetime offering; this offering was to be made often. This is instruction to us about our offerings. We do not take offerings each Lord's Day out of convenience, but rather we do this to show that we must always be bringing our offerings to God. Fathers then had to tell their children what this offering was for. Fathers today must instruct their children about each offering and its significance. Let us teach our children about the worship of Jehovah. Sing Psalter 215.

February 12 Read Exodus 28:1-5

After giving to Moses the patterns for the tabernacle, God now names Aaron and his sons as His priests. Before they could take up their office, they had to be clothed in suitable garments. The garments were called holy. They were not holy in themselves but rather they were holy because of what they signified. They signified the glory and beauty of the worship of God. Only the best of the craftsmen in Israel were used to make these garments. Aaron and his sons did not pick out or design their clothes but the design came from God once again signifying that worship of Jehovah must be only that ordained by God. Sing Psalter 163.

February 13 Read Exodus 28:6-14

As part of the clothing the names of the tribes of Israel were engraved upon two stones. These stones were then placed upon the clothing that the priests wore. This signified that their work was the work of God for His people. The sacrifices that the priests performed were done for the people. We have a high priest who has worked for us. Jesus has taken our names upon Himself and fulfilled the one perfect sacrifice upon the cross. Each day as we pray, "Forgive us our sins," we must pray, "In Jesus' name." Only through Christ

can we go to the Father in prayer throughout our lives. Sing Psalter 350.

February 14 Read Exodus 28:15-29

Every time that Aaron appeared before the children of Israel, his clothing would remind them of what God wants for His worship. They would see the beauty of his garments and be reminded of the beauty that must be present in worship. They would see the gold and precious stones and see the richness of the grace of God toward His people. They would know that on those precious stones were their names. They did not have to wonder if the ceremonies applied to them. By seeing the stones with their tribes' name their faith was assured by God. Especially on the Day of Atonement they would know that the high priest was bringing their sins to the mercy seat. We, too, have a high priest who cares for us and brings our sins before the mercy seat of the most high God. Let us thank Him for this great salvation in song and prayer. Sing Psalter 252.

February 15 Read Exodus 28:30-35

Besides the names of the twelve tribes the priest carried two stones on the breastplates. These two stones were the Urim and the Thummim. Israel used these stones through the high priest to ascertain the will of God for His people. Now it may not be known for sure how often the stones were used or even how the stones were used. But we know that Israel of the old dispensation did use them. We, too, must seek to know God's will for our lives. We do not use stones, but we do use a high priest. Christ, through the Word of God, makes known to us His will. Let us be diligent to read and study that Word so that we may know God's will for us. Sing Psalter 189.

February 16 Read Exodus 28:36-43

As part of the clothing of the high priest was a mitre or an article of clothing like a hat. On that mitre was a plate with the words, "Holiness to the Lord." As we have seen before the worship of a holy God was to be a holy worship. Israel needed those words to remind them that each animal that was killed, each drop of blood that was sprinkled, and each stick of incense that was burned was to be done in a holy manner. We, too, need to remember to worship God in a holy manner. This is why our worship services should be characterized by solemnity and quietness. Let us be holy as we worship Jehovah whose name is holy. Sing Psalter 181.

February 17 Read Exodus 29:1-14

After choosing Aaron's family to be the priest for Israel, and after detailing for them and us the clothing that they would wear, God now gives to Moses the ceremony that would be used to install them into their office. In some ways this reminds us of installation services that we use for the special offices. The difference is that we do not use all of the rites because the High Priest has fulfilled those rites and ceremonies for us. Aaron and his sons had to be clothed with the clothing ordained by God even as we wear the robes of righ-

teousness washed clean in the blood of the Lamb. Because Aaron and his sons were sinners, a sin offering was made for them. As we continue to worship each Lord's Day let us be thankful for our High Priest who sits at the right had of God making continual intercession for us. Sing Psalter 147.

February 18 Read Exodus 29:15-28

Along with installing Aaron and his sons into the office of priest, two other significances must be noted. First is the idea of the office of priesthood. Now this idea was known before this time. Every time a sacrifice was made the idea of the priesthood is seen. We also know about Melchizedek, priest of the most high God. This office continues today in the special office of the deacons as they show the mercies of Christ to the church. It is also present in the office of believer as we all are priests before God. Secondly, we see some of the sacrifices and their significances. We, the church of the New Testament, can learn much by paying heed to the words of the Old Testament. Let us do that now and in our studies of God's Word in the future. Sing Psalter 119.

February 19 Read Exodus 29:29-37

Not only did God ordain Aaron to be high priest, but He also made known to Israel that this office would continue in Aaron's generations. It became known to the church that God's covenant would stand with them and with their children in this way. When Aaron died the office did not die. Israel could trust that God would continue His covenant with them. We have the same assurance. With each baby that is baptized we know that God will be gracious to us in our generations. Let us not forget these things, and let us teach them to our children as we make known to them the wonderful works of God to the church of all ages. Sing Psalter 182.

February 20 Read Exodus 29:38-46

As Israel made their way through the wilderness, they were constantly reminded that God was the Lord their God. As they saw the tabernacle, and its furniture, as they observed the priests going about the business of sacrificing daily as well as carrying out all the other duties that they had, Israel was reminded that it was God that had delivered them from Egypt and would bring them to Canaan. We, too, know that God dwells with us and is the Lord our God. We, too, are daily reminded of all of His acts of goodness toward us. We also know that He will deliver us from the Egypt of this world and deliver us to the heavenly Canaan. Thanks be to God! Sing Psalter 394.

February 21 Read Exodus 30:1-10

After describing to Moses and Israel the clothing and work of the priest, God next describes the altar of incense and the work of the priest concerning it. The altar of incense was closely connected with Israel's prayers. God's people are to be a praying people. Do you make prayer an important part of your daily life, people of God? Fathers, do you pray for and with your family, and do you teach your children to pray? Young people, do you work hard at learning how to pray so

that when called upon you can lead brothers and sisters of the faith in prayers that are acceptable unto God? Prayer has been described as a holy art. Good art takes hard work and so do prayers pleasing to God. Let us seek to make prayer an important part of our lives. Sing Psalter 246.

February 22 Read Exodus 30:11-16

One of the many requirements of religious life in Israel was that of the tabernacle or temple offering. This offering was to be used by the priests for the expenses of the worship of Jehovah. This was by no means the only offering. There were many other offerings, but this offering had very specific instructions concerning it. This offering also pointed toward the one atonement offering made by Christ upon the cross. Notice the similarity here between the offices of priest and deacon. As we live our religious lives today let us not neglect those offerings taking for the service of worship. These offerings are constant reminders to us of the atonement wrought for us by Christ on the cross. Sing Psalter 242.

February 23 Read Exodus 30:17-21

It would be worth our effort to study these chapters of Exodus in more detail than we can do in these short writings. Notice how all of a sudden we have come back to furniture in the courtyard. It would do us well to try and understand God's Word to us in the order that He gave these plans. The laver was the second piece of furniture in the courtyard. In this large bowl of water not only were the sacrifices made clean for offering, but the priests themselves cleansed themselves as they entered into service of the most holy God. This cleansing, of course, points to the cleansing that Christ gave to us by His death on the cross. Cleansing is a picture of holiness. Once again Israel and the church of today is instructed about holy worship of an holy God. Let us worship and live in holiness all the days of our lives. Sing Psalter 140.

February 24 Read Exodus 30:22-29

One of the truths that we discover as we read through this account of God's ordaining the manner of worship of Old Testament is that repetition was used to instruct Israel. Once again God instructs Israel that His way of worship is not to be added to or taken from by man. In these verses we have laws concerning the ointment which was used to consecrate or make holy the worship. Proper worship is sweet smelling before God. Proper worship is sweet smelling to man as well, not because he has decided how worship must go, but rather because God makes that worship sweet for man. We also see the reiteration of the fact that we worship a holy God. Sing Psalter 348.

February 25 Read Exodus 30:30-38

Notice in these few verses how jealous God is concerning His worship. The ointment which we spoke of yesterday was not to be used for man. No matter how much a man desired to use that sweet smelling ointment he could not use it. This is God's express command. God is jealous of His worship because, as the second commandment tells us, He is a jealous

God. He is jealous toward the manner of worship in which we take part. This tells us that we must be jealous of it for God's sake. If we are jealous of God's worship, we will know that He will be jealous towards us. Let us not worship any other god or worship our God in other ways than He has commanded. Sing Psalter 337.

February 26 Read Exodus 31:1-6

In this section we see that God uses people in other ways than in the special offices. Aholiab and Bezaleel were appointed to use their gifts of craftsmanship to construct the tabernacle and its furniture. God will use all kinds of talents in His service. Some may have talents of music, others of organization, others of the use of technology, and others are given different abilities. Our children and young people need to discover their special talents and develop them for the service of God. Not all of us are ministers, elders, or deacons, but even sweeping floors can be used in the service of Jehovah. Let us use all of our talents to the best of our abilities and to God's glory and honor. Sing Psalter 311.

February 27 Read Exodus 31:6-11

Here we find a list of all that pertained to the tabernacle. The purpose of the tabernacle was for worship. God gave to the builders the ability to do the work. They had the plans which were complete down to the last detail. Even the clothing that Aaron and his sons would wear were designed by God for the service of His worship. The final warning for Moses to give to the builders and all of Israel was that they were not to deviate from the plan given to them by God. We need to heed this admonition as well. We are sometimes tempted to change the worship to suit us. Or we want the worship to glorify our gifts and talents instead of God's. Let us bow to His wise way, and let us worship Him in spirit and in truth even as He has directed us in His word. Sing Psalter 278.

February 28 Read Exodus 31:12-18

As God came to an end of giving to Moses the law on Mount Sinai, He reemphasized the necessity to keep the Sabbath holy. God had instituted the proper keeping of the Sabbath at creation when He rested from all of His works. He gave that as the basis for our keeping the Sabbath holy in the fourth commandment. Now as Moses prepares to leave Mount Sinai, God again admonishes him and Israel in proper Sabbath observance. What about us? How do we keep the Sabbath? Is it a holy day in our homes? Do we put away our weekday employments and recreations in order that we may keep the Sabbath holy? Do we instruct our children in proper Sabbath observance or do we think that they need to "run a little steam off after sitting through church." God will not be mocked. He demands that we keep the Sabbath. Let us "remember the Sabbath to keep it holy. Sing Psalter 421:1, 2.

Music: A Wonderful Source of Strength During Trials

by Melissa Van Baren

“God is our refuge and our strength, A helper ever near us.” (Ps. 128) Imagine the saints of old and especially Martin Luther as they lustily sang out this song. What comfort this song must have given them in their time of reforming the Church. What spiritual strength and encouragement they must have felt as they sang this song. They were able to look back and see the preservation of the Church and the strength they had through God. They were able to see that God was on the Church’s side through all the ages. They were able to bond and know David’s feelings as they sang this song. What a blessing that must have been to the saints during the Reformation! They knew God had brought His Church numerous times through troubles times and was at their side through the whole thing. What a blessing the Psalms must have been to the reformers! What a gift!

It is wonderful to think that God prepared and preserved the Psalms. They were, and will continue to be, a blessing over and over to the Church. The Psalms especially were a blessing in times of trouble. The Lord brought comfort and peace to the reformers and martyrs. As the reformers were being persecuted, they still sang. We often hear accounts where the Christians were imprisoned and continued to sing God’s praises in the damp dark prison. The glorious songs could be heard from the lips of the martyrs as they burned to death at the stake. Their families could be heard singing the songs through the tears as they watched their loved one die. What strength and yet comfort those songs must have brought all of them! What a great godly witness!

I hope and pray that you and I can have those songs on our lips in the time of persecution. I hope I can sing God’s praises in the midst of everything and not be afraid. I hope to be as Paul and Silas in Act 16:25 where they “prayed, and sang praises unto God!” or as John Hus when, even as the straw and wood were being piled

around him, he was found “Praying and singing until the smoke began to choke Him.” (*Portraits of Faithful Saints*, 116) He sang even in the midst of death and while the persecutors tried to silence him. What a great thing to remember that no matter where we are or what circumstances we are in, we may always pray and sing to God. I pray for that strength that the martyrs and their families had, and I pray for that strength in you too, should that time ever come.

We are to start learning the Psalms while we are young and continue to teach our children the Psalms. We are to memorize them. The Psalms must not only occupy our minds but our hearts also. There may be a time where we will not have them and oh what a sad thing if we do not have them written in our heart! Work on memorizing them. Work to help your children memorize the Psalms. What a glorious day, when we are in persecution and will be able to sing the words of the Psalmist in Psalter #150 “Oh God give thou ear to my plea, and hide not thyself from my aid, O hearken and answer thou me, so restless and weary I sigh... The Lord for thy help will appear... And He shall thy weakness sustain; the righteous who trust in His Word unmoved shall forever remain.”

Paul and Silas found comfort in these words. Martin Luther found comfort in these words. John Calvin loved and found comfort in these words, as did John Knox, John Huss, and many others. The reformers were richly blessed by these words. I hope and pray that we may be too! May God grant us blessings through the singing of His Word.

“Come let us sing before the Lord new songs of praise with sweet accord, for wonders great by Him are done, His mighty arm has victory won.” (Psalter #264)



Melissa is a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Our Calling To Give As We Are Blessed

by John Kalsbeek

Some time ago when I was asked to write an article for the *Beacon Lights*, the staff suggested I address the question “Is our method of taking church collections proper? This is a legitimate concern and one that should be considered. However, before I become involved in this question I will first of all consider the idea of personal giving.

Giving is a personal matter. Everyone of us has an attitude about giving. Either we are happy to give in order to help others or we find that parting with our hard earned money is a burden.

Giving has always been a very important part of a Christian’s life and worship. When we as children of God give we do so and must do so out of love for God and His kingdom. Giving gifts is proper, good, and pleasing to God. Let’s consider together the question “Are our own personal giving habits and attitudes proper, good, and pleasing before God?”

Christ commanded us in Matthew 6:3-4 “But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret.” A quick glance at the first two verses of this chapter tells us how not to give. Here we find that we must be careful that in our giving our chief desire and concern is not the praise of men. Many well known philanthropists of our day leave large legacies to hospitals, universities, libraries and other charitable institutions in order to gain the praise of men. Such giving is condemned. Such giving receives no spiritual reward. It’s obvious that the motivation for such giving is wrong. We may not with a lot of fanfare announce our intention of giving alms before others. Further, it is equally important that we must not announce our giving even to ourselves. Christ says “let not your left hand know what thy right hand doeth.” We must not keep spiritual accounts of credits and debits, of profits and losses. Give out of love for God and forget what you

have given. So often we tend to pride ourselves in the amounts we give and the consistency of our giving. We take pleasure in the thought that we have given more than others and more even than the budget calls for. Christ says to give and to forget. Rev. Ophoff in a *Standard Bearer* article writes, “We certainly must give in secret if there is not cogent reason for making our gifts before the eyes of men” (Vol. 9, p. 37).

Christ says to give and to
forget.

With the above as a basis let’s scrutinize our own personal giving habits. Many of us write out checks for the weekly budget and possibly for some of the special collections as well. I’m sure that the reasons for this are many and most of them are probably legitimate. It’s convenient to write out a check. One doesn’t have to carry with him large amounts of cash. It’s a good record for income tax deductions. It makes it easier for the deacons to count. Whether these reasons are proper or not the fact remains that we really are not following the principle laid down by Christ Himself in Matthew 6. By writing out a check we make a permanent record of our giving. A record that not only the deacons see and know but also one of the bank officials can see and know. And when the bank statement arrives each month with our cancelled checks we are reminded, whether we want to be reminded or not, of the amount we gave last month. At the end of the year we are again reminded when we total up our contributions in order to gain the biggest deduction we can, hoping for that elusive refund. Obvi-

ously, we are not giving in secret—our names are attached to our gifts.

Along these same lines we often find it appropriate to give to worthy causes as a year comes to its end in order to avoid paying additional income taxes. These contributions are certainly welcome and appreciated but again is that really the proper, the Godly motivation for giving? Christ says to give secretly. Wouldn't it be far better to give cash anonymously instead of writing out a personal check? Should we keep a record just to avoid paying Caesar what belongs to Caesar? Are we letting our government influence us to use questionable methods of giving in order for personal gain?

Do we in our personal giving follow the principle laid down by the apostle Paul in II Corinthians 16:1-2 "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him?" Do we give

Should we keep a record just to avoid paying Caesar what belongs to Caesar?

as He has given us? Or are we holding back in order that we might save up for a more expensive car or home that we really don't need? Or have we gone so far into debt that we have to hold back on our budget responsibilities in order to meet our financial obligations? Can anyone of us really say we have given the last farthing? Would Jesus be able to say of our giving "Verily I say unto you that this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury, For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living"? Now Jesus certainly doesn't tell us we must give all of our earnings to the neglect of our families, but He does insist that we give in proportion to how He has prospered us.

How do you react when the new church budget is proposed each year? And what is your reaction to the yearly increase in the synodical assessments? The typical reaction is that we complain about it. But are we being fair about this. Fifteen years ago the budget amounted to a little more than a tenth of my wages. Today the budget I pay isn't even double what I paid then but my wages are at least four times greater. I suspect this is true in many more cases than my own. Do we really have a right to complain about budget increases

and increases in synodical assessments? Such complaining is indicative of our attitude toward giving and certainly mars in God's eyes our gift giving to kingdom causes. I personally believe that if we all gave as God blessed us we would have a surplus in our general funds and our mission efforts could be greatly increased.

Consider carefully your giving habits and your motivations for giving. Think about these things. Discuss this together as the members of the same household of faith. Make personal giving to kingdom causes your number one priority. God knows our attitudes towards giving. Is He pleased with what He sees? The angel came to Cornelius and told him "Thy prayers and thy alms are come up for a memorial before God." Could this same angel say the same to you?

Many years ago when I was still in high school I had the opportunity to go on a drive for our Christian school with one of the older men of the school society. Our first stop was at the home of a family with but one child. He was probably a fifth or sixth grader. In the driveway stood a fancy boat. In the back yard was a brand new camper—a luxury in those days. A late model car rested in the garage. The home was richly furnished. It soon became evident that the father resented our presence at his door. Hurriedly he pulled out his wallet and handed us a ten dollar bill. Later that same evening we went to the home of a man with seven or eight children. Five or six of them were in grade school or high school. He welcomed us and expressed a godly concern for the financial needs of our school. He wanted us to know how much he appreciated the covenant instruction his children were receiving there. We left that home with two hundred dollars—two hundred dollars I've always suspected he had to borrow from the bank.

To the one giving had become a burden—a rather disagreeable part of a self centered life. To the other giving was a joy and a privilege. Judge for yourself which one was blessed in his giving.

Personal giving must be our prayerful concern. It must be spiritually motivated. Only when we give out of love for God and His kingdom will we give as we are blessed. ❖

John is a member of Faith Protestant Reformed Church in Jenison, Michigan. This article is reprinted from Beacon Lights, Volume 40, #9, p. 18.

When I In Awesome Wonder...
The Golden Coast Of Michigan
Hairy Puccoon

by Deane Wassink

Hairy what? Does it crawl or bite? Jump or squeak? I just love this name! Would you believe that, with its brother, the hoary puccoon, we have a pair of the most strikingly beautiful dune flowers to surprise you when you are on a dune hike? They have a bright yellow flower cluster on top of 18 to 24 inch stems. They surprise you because they grow in the scorched, elevated, and dry area immediately behind the flat beach. They are perennial flowers, which means that they come back year after year from the same roots once they get started from seed.

To my mind wildflowers like the hairy puccoon are the frosting on the cake of the creation. As if the normal flora and fauna were not beautiful enough, our Creator has adorned His handiwork with the myriad colors and shapes of wildflowers. They are His paintbrush; each one a stroke that together paint His beauty. Once you spend time in the creation they become old friends who greet you with little surprises of joy on your pathway.

The names are fascinating and expressive, but you have to sound them out loud to get the full idea of them. Say them with me: cardinal flower, golden rod, blue gentian, blood root, jack in the pulpit, trillium, wormwood, little bluestem, Joepyeweed, brown-eyed susan, dutchman's breeches, goat's beard.

As expressive as these names are, can you imagine what it would be like to see the particular revelation of God in each plant that Adam saw? What a wonderful ability we will have when we enter into the new creation. Now, because of sin, we can only just begin to see God's revelation in creation. Yet, we must strive to see God's revelation of Himself in the creation around us. Why? Because, it glorifies God. Sure, it leaves a witness to the wicked to leave them without excuse. But, who can better understand the things are made (Romans 1) than a child of God? We should be the best naturalists and conservationists. We should give expression

to our wonder at His handiwork and teach it to our children at home and in our schools. I can't understand how our science and biology classes can sometimes be the most dry and boring in the curriculum. If you've never gotten the goose bumps when beholding His handiwork—wake up and smell the roses.

Read the Psalms. You will find that King David learned to see the wonder of God in the creation by sitting for many lonesome hours with the flocks of his father upon the hills of Judea. With our greatly increased knowledge we should appreciate God's handiwork even more than David. Also, God's handiwork in the creation is a starting point in our witness to the ungodly as in the example of Paul on Mars Hill.

Take a walk. Look at His handiwork. Find a wildflower. There's one just around the corner. Marvel at His glory!

*Lord, open my eyes that I might see,
The wonder of Thy creation surrounding me.*

*Open my lips that seeing I may speak,
In witness to those whom in life I meet.*

*Open my heart that my love may increase,
For Thee, The Creator, Who gives me peace.*

*If the lowly flower Thy hand daily dresses,
How much more dost Thou care for me in my distresses.*

*Nothing shall befall me not in Thy plan,
If the flower Thy care knows, how much more so man.*

*In them let me Thy wonder see,
Then shall I know Thy care for me. ❖*

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

A Pastor's Prayer for Young People

by Rev. Gritters



O blessed Father, the great God of spiritual Israel, of Thine elect over the whole world; we raise this prayer especially on behalf of the youth of the church, who are Thy chosen, on whom Thou dost look with loving eyes of favor, for those in the strength of their youth—the covenant young people.

Their needs are great, Father—sometimes greater than the needs of others. And if not greater, yet the position and experience of the young people in the battle of faith make their needs different and unique. We raise a special prayer for them that they might receive a unique blessing from Thy hand.

Grant to them, Lord, the grace to know Thee as Father, as the Father Who has written their names in the palm of Thy hand. May they know Thee as the Father Who has adopted them in everlasting love, and now made them alive again by the powerful Spirit of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Grant them faith to call Thee their Father, for the sake of Jesus Christ their Lord. O, so much would take that trust away from them. Bind on their hearts the knowledge and trust in Thee that will pulsate in their hearts daily.

Grant, Father, that their fathers would reflect Thy great Fatherhood, so that through them, our young people might come to know Thee as a gracious and merciful God. Grant that their fathers might not be stern, unforgiving, aloof, and violent, under whose rage they cower in fear, but fathers who have patience and understanding toward them, forgive them, walk with them, speak to them, love them. Then, Father, we are confident of Thy blessing on their hearts and minds as regards their view of Thee, the most blessed, merciful, speaking, loving, Father.

O, blessed Father, may they know Thee as a heavenly Father, not only One to be revered, but One able to supply their needs. May they never become flippant in their prayers, even when many in the church today commune with Thee in language we would be ashamed to

use in our prayer now. May they know Thee as a Friend, a Father, the Sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. May Thy name be set apart in their heart as a holy name.

Our hearts burn within us
with a hope that they be
assured of their salvation
through Jesus Christ alone...

Father, our heart's desire and prayer for them is that they be saved. Our hearts burn within us with a hope that they be assured of their salvation through Jesus Christ alone, and confess that faith with a good confession before Thee and before men. In the strength of their youth, may they not trust in their own works, or will, or worth, for their standing in Thine eyes. And yet, we confess, that is a fault of us all because we become overly confident in our ability and worth. When all is well, we think we are sufficient in ourselves. Help them submit, rather, to Thy righteousness through Thy Beloved Son.

So work faith in their hearts mightily by Thy Spirit and Word—confidence that Thou canst wash their hearts clean; faith that Thou wilt not remember the sins of long ago... Ah, Lord, our sins rise up against us, prevailing day by day; but Thou wilt show us mercy, and take our guilt away. O, teach them to sing victoriously from Thy wonderful songbook, from Psalm 79:

*Remember not, O God, The sins of long ago;
In tender mercy visit us, Distressed and humbled low.
O Lord, our Saviour, help, And glorify Thy name;
Deliver us from all our sins And take away our
shame...*

*Then safe within Thy fold, We will exalt Thy Name;
Our thankful hearts with songs of joy Thy goodness
will proclaim.*

And then, washing their hearts clean, Father, kindle in them an unquenchable fire of zeal for Thee and Thy great kingdom, so that the strength of their youth may be for Thy glory.

...kindle in them an unquenchable fire of zeal for Thee and Thy great kingdom, so that the strength of their youth may be for Thy glory.

May Thy kingdom come in their lives more and more. Rule them so by Thy Word and Spirit that their lives more and more be transformed by Thee and then conformed to Thee. May they know Thy law, and know it not as a list of rules that constantly hinder them, but as a wonderful guide for showing their thanks to Thee. O, may they be thankful for their covenant privileges, for their blessings, for their salvation. And, thankful for them, may they submit in gratitude to Thy will. Destroy in them all the works of the devil; break to shivers all violence in them that exalts itself against Thy kingdom. Father, be their all.

There are many cares in their lives. For these we pray too. Hear every cry. Answer every request for strength. Receive with favor each petition they raise, especially from those with special struggles. Bind up the broken hearts. Heal the wounds they receive in the battle of faith. Apply the balm of Gilead to their wounded souls.

Grant that help especially when all seems lost, when the temptations are too great (and the flesh so weak), when friends forsake, when mockery stings and ridicule cuts deep, when they sink in deep mire where there is no standing; when the deep waters overflow them; when they are weary of their crying, their throat is dried and their eyes fail. Let them wait for their God. O, that they know Thee as a refuge and their strength, a helper ever near them. Then they will not fear though earth be moved, for Thou art nigh to cheer them. Their mighty God will hear them.

Nor are their lives easy, Father. And we confess that we are not always sympathetic to that. For what occupation shall they study? To what church shall they join themselves? To what school shall they go? With what leisure shall they entertain themselves? To what acquaintances shall they join themselves? What about marriage?

What about dating? What about drinking and smoking? These are the questions they struggle with, Lord. Give them grace to seek Thee for answers; then show them the good way.

Give the young men direction in their lives regarding occupation. Grant that their work might be fully in the service of Thy kingdom, whatever work it be. Train men to work with the gifts given in Thy wise providence. Make each know that their divine calling and station in life is a place divinely ordained. And then, in their labor for bread, may they withdraw their trust from their own care and industry, and place it alone in Thee, the Giver of all good things.

Raise up among them those with the desire to serve Thee in the ministry of Thy Word. Prepare them from their youth for that great work, so that Thy church will always have pastors who feed the flock purchased with Thine own blood.

Influence young men for good so that they will grow up not only with a desire to serve in the other offices in the church (although that too), but with qualities necessary for that service. Raise up young men who are spiritually minded. Train them for faithful service in the kingdom. And use every experience for their good. An awesome calling awaits them—to be responsible for the ongoing of the church in a few years. Provide for the needs of Thy church.

Give the young women direction as to their future beyond their required schooling. Many face the question of college or work. And what work? Others are perplexed because Thou hast not yet led them into permanent friendships that would lead to marriage. It is a time of worry, Lord. Thy will be done, here, too. Strengthen against the temptation to date and marry contrary to Thy will. Always may they marry “in the Lord.”

Raise up young men and young women with a desire to teach in the schools. O, Father, Thy covenant is a blessed covenant, Thy children precious children. And we need teachers committed to covenant education, Christian education, Reformed education, for our youth. May it ever be that the young people see that great need. May it ever be that some train well and give their lives for it.

We pray for their parents and teachers and pastors and elders as well, that we would not only see the weaknesses and sins of the young people, but their struggles and hopes and strengths as well. May we encourage them in their confession, motivate them in their work, love them in their good works.

We desire to help the young people, Father, We desire to give them guidance, to encourage and support them. Our prayer is that we may be used mightily for that great work among them.

So this, too, we pray: Grant the young people the willingness and freedom to come to us as pastors for counsel. Continue to give to us pastors the grace truly to be concerned for them in their needs; that we may so show our love in our actions that it hardly need be spoken aloud. May the young people find in us a friend and counselor at any time, who is not surprised at their sins, nor hasty in criticism, but one who is able to exhibit the wisdom, love, the grace of God, the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ.

May we then be a help. Use us. Please, Father, use us.

But we also know, Father, that we cannot direct them in every decision, cannot counsel them in every problem. They will, in the strength of their youth, make many decisions on their own. Then bestow them with a sanctified heart.

Bless them in Bible study, catechism, sermon listening... Attend these means with the indwelling of Thy Spirit, the Spirit of Christ.

May they know Thy Word, able to make them wise to salvation.

Teach them to pray.

Grant, Highest Majesty, that these Thy young people may learn to know Thy voice. O, that they might live so near to Thee as to be familiar with Thy voice. O, that amid so many other voices today, so many alluring sirens, the voices of all the other gods crying to be worshiped might be voices strange and hideous.

The day, oh, the day is evil. Shorten the days for their sake. Hasten the day when our faith shall be sight, the clouds be rolled back as a scroll. The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend—O, so make it well with their soul.

May these Thy sheep rejoice in the strength of their youth!

The young people of the church we commit to Thy care, Father, with the confidence that Thou wilt hear and answer our prayers. ❖

Rev. Gritters is pastor of Hudsonville Protestant Reformed Church in Hudsonville, Michigan. This article is reprinted from the Standard Bearer, Volume 64, #1, p. 9.

Where We Stand

The Rapture

by Rev. Ronald Hanko

Reprinted from the Loveland PRC newsletter.

The word “rapture” is not in Scripture, but can be used without objection to describe the sudden, visible appearing of Christ in the heavens, and the catching up of His saints to be with Him at that time. Of this the Word of God speaks in I Thessalonians 4:15-17.

We reject as unbiblical, however, the teaching that this rapture is *secret*, that it takes place prior to the final great tribulation, so that God’s people do not go through the tribulation, and that it comes 1000 years before the end of the world (i.e., that it is *premillennial*). These ideas have no support in I Thessalonians 4, nor in the rest of Scripture.

That this rapture is secret is very clearly not the teaching of I Thessalonians 4. The events described there are anything but secret! We read of a shout, of the voice of

the archangel, and of the trump of God. It could safely be said, we believe, that this will be one of the noisiest and least secret events in all history.

Other passages which speak of the same event leave us with the same testimony. Matthew 24:30, 31, one of these passages, is describing the same event as I Thessalonians 4. Both mention angels, a trumpet, and the gathering of the elect to Christ. Matthew 24:30, 31 also tells us, however, that the tribes of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man - nothing at all secret about that.

I Corinthians 15:51, 52, undoubtedly is describing the same thing as I Thessalonians 4:15-17, i.e., that there will be two groups of saints who will be raptured, those who have died, and those who have not. The latter are described in Corinthians as those who will not sleep, and in Thessalonians as those who are alive and remain

to coming of Christ. I Corinthians 15:51, 52 in describes the “rapture,” shows that it is anything but secret.

These same passages make it crystal clear that this rapture takes place at the end of all things and after the final tribulation. Matthew 24:29 says, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days...” And, when we read of the tribes of the earth mourning, that mourning has reference to Christ’s second coming for judgment at the end of the world, as is clear from a comparison with Revelation 1:7 and 6:12-17.

Matthew 24:37-41 and Luke 17:28-37 likewise describe this “rapture,” but as something that takes place just before the last judgment. The taking and leaving of persons described in these passages is *as in the days of Sodom*, and *as in the days of Noah*, that is, those who are left, are left for judgment, judgment exactly like that of

Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. also Jude 6, 7) and of the world in Noah’s day (cf. also II Pet. 3:3-7).

Furthermore, I Thessalonians 4 speaks of the resurrection of our bodies, something which Scripture everywhere says shall take place at the last day (Jn. 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24. Surely the *last* day is not followed by 365,000 other days. Not only that but John 12:48 tells us that the last day is also the judgment day!

We look, therefore, not for a secret rapture 1000 years before the end and prior to the great tribulation, but for a public rapture of saints at the end of all things, the result of which shall be that we are ever in glory with the Lord (I Thess. 4:17). ❖

Rev. Hanko is a minister in the Protestant Reformed Churches.

Church History

In the Center of Ruinen

by J.P. deKlerk

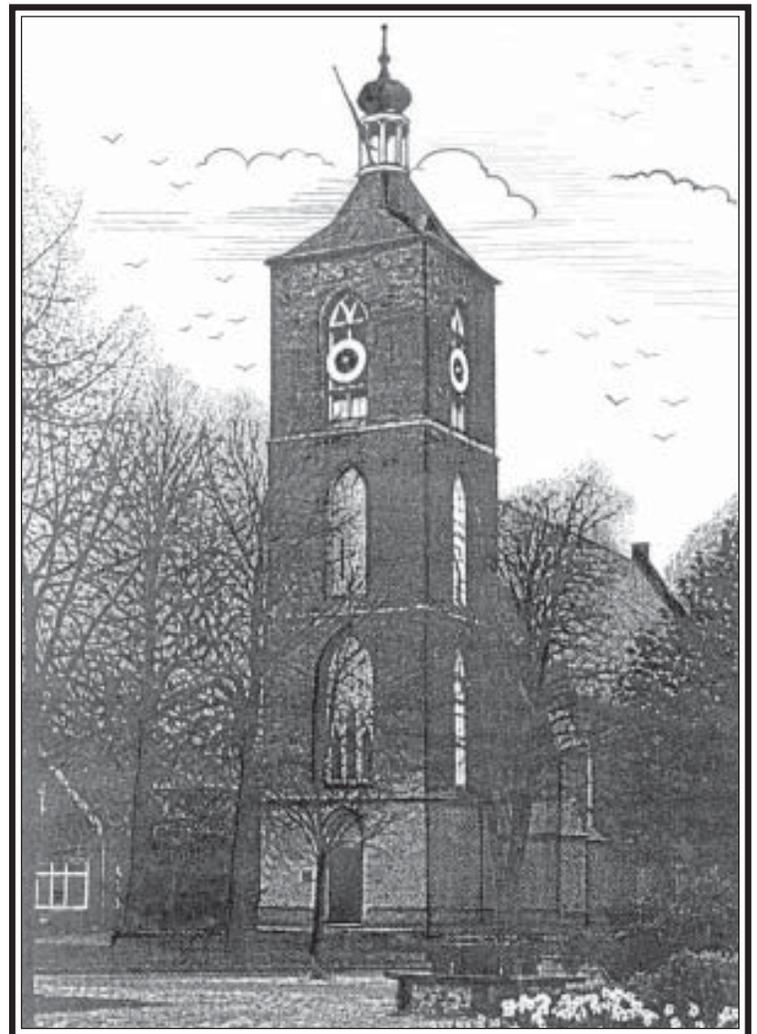
In the southwest part of the Dutch province of Drenthe you find a town with the name Ruinen. There in the center stands a State Reformed Church with a tower that was already built in 1423.

The whole Church is built on the remnants of a church and a monastery of the Benedictines, which was built in 1140, but left behind in 1325. So the tower is Gothic, the chapel and the chancel were broken away, and when the Reformation came all that reminded of the Roman Catholics was removed.

In 1928 the whole church was restore; some old paintings were recovered from under layers of chalk.

Ruinen is surrounded by farms, but in the Northern part of the municipality lays a nature reserve of 800 hectares, till the town of Dwingeloo (the biggest tract of heath in the country). ❖

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



"LITTLE LIGHTS"

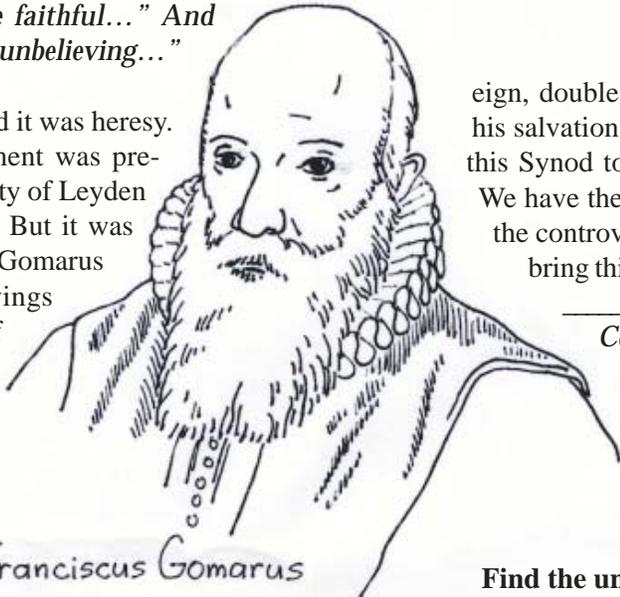
February 7, 1604

... *let it shine!*

by Connie Meyer

"Divine predestination is the decree of God...to justify...the faithful..." And "...to condemn...the unbelieving..."

There it was—and it was heresy. The deceiving statement was presented at the University of Leyden on February 7, 1604. But it was not unexpected. No, Gomarus had harbored misgivings about the author of these words all along. It was not the first time this man was embroiled in controversy. But now here it was, and the spiritual poison landed right in Gomarus' lap. The doctrine of double predestination (election and reprobation) was being attacked by his own fellow-professor, Jacobus Arminius. It was cold in the Netherlands on this winter day in 1604, but the battle for the truth was just heating up.



The words sounded so Reformed. And Professor Arminius was so friendly and so nice. What could be the trouble? But Franciscus Gomarus knew the trouble. The truths of Calvinism, of election and reprobation, had been taught for almost 100 years already—long enough for those truths to be understood, embraced, and loved. Gomarus was one of those who loved them. He would defend them. Even if people thought he wasn't very nice.

The professors debated. People took sides. Either God chose His people because they were faithful, or—God chose His people only because of His good pleasure. Either man must do something for his salvation, or—man can do nothing for his salvation. Even the Reformed churches in the Netherlands became divided!

The battle raged. Twelve years later the Synod of Dordt would be called to settle the matter. Ministers and elders would meet together, apply Scripture, and debate for many months. Gomarus would be there, too. God would use this Synod to preserve the truths of sover-

eign, double predestination. Man can have no part in his salvation; the glory is God's alone! God would use this Synod to preserve these truths even for us today. We have them in the Canons of Dordt. And God used the controversy between two professors at Leyden to bring this battle—and thus the victory—about. ❖

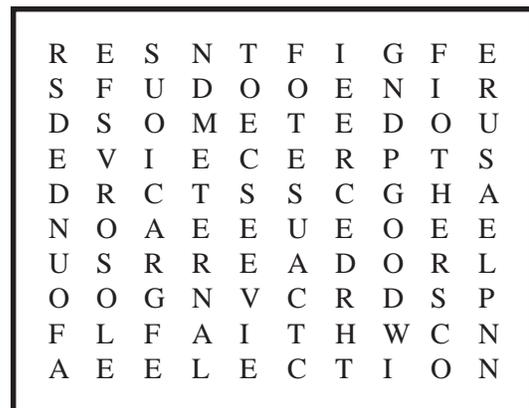
Connie is the mother of 5 children and a member of Hope Protestant Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Find the underlined words in the puzzle below from the following articles of the First Head of the Canons of Dordt:

Article 6. That some receive the gift of faith from God, and others do not receive it proceeds from God's eternal decree...

Article 9. This election was not founded upon foreseen faith...

Article 10. The good pleasure of God is the sole cause of this gracious election...



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Church News

BAPTISMS

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

Mark 16:16

The sacrament of Holy Baptism was administered to:
Drew Aaron, son of Mr. & Mrs. Aaron Gunnink—Byron Center, MI
Garrett Hadley, son of Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Miedema—Hudsonville, MI
Jason Mark, son of Mr. & Mrs. Barry Pollema—Hull, IA
LilliAnne Lorraine, daughter of Mr. & Mrs. Dan Wiersma—Peace, IL

MARRIAGES

"...and they twain shall be one flesh."

Matthew 19:5

United in the bond of Holy Matrimony were:
Mr. Matt DeJong and Miss Stacy TeVelde—Doon, IA
Mr. Michael Holstege and Miss Nicole Carpenter—Grace, MI
Mr. Tom Moore and Miss Jodee Vander Muelen—Loveland, CO

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:
Gary Boverhof—Byron Center, MI
Sarah Gunnink—Edgerton, MN
Lydia Kamps—Grandville, MI
Jeff Veldman—Grandville, MI
Bill Kooiman—Grandville, MI
Rachel Joostens—Grandville, MI
Mari DeBoer—Grandville, MI
Kari DeVries—Grandville, MI
Nathan Dykstra—Hope, MI
Rachel Kuiper—Hope, MI
Missy Lubbers—Hudsonville, MI
Ellen Zandstra—Hudsonville, MI
Dawn Vermeer—Hull, IA
Brenda Bekkering—Hull, IA
Richard Elzinga—Loveland, CO
Shari Hanko—Southwest, MI